A FULLY HUMAN SPIRITUALITY: A GENDERED RESPONSE TO THE HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN CHURCH

by

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ABSTRACT

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is a crisis for the South African government, society and Church. About sixty percent of the HIV population are in Sub Saharan Africa with women being three times more likely to be infected with HIV than their male counterparts. Governmental, societal and Church responses seem to have had little effect in reducing the pandemic as can be seen from the rising prevalence rates. Responses to the HIV/AIDS pandemic lack a gender focus. Some churches have not responded to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Other Church-based responses have been isolated and simplistic in that they have concentrated on one aspect of the HIV illness. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is a growing crisis to which the Church should respond.

The hermeneutical point of departure in this thesis is to express a preferential option for the poor by standing in solidarity with a group of women living on the margins of society. To this end the perspectives of black people, who are materially poor, HIV positive and part of support groups are articulated in the study. The research project suggests that the preferential option for the poor has the potential to contribute to the personal and social transformation of society.

Focussing on the deep-seated longing many desire for fullness of life, this thesis explores and describes a gendered Christian response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic that could contribute to the full humanity of people. Full humanity is understood as transformation to wholeness and incorporates unity with God, others, creation and within oneself. A multifaceted, integrated and gendered response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic is suggested by way of a model of full humanity.

The South African context of HIV/AIDS, patriarchy and poverty pose a challenge to the way that Christians develop their spirituality. This thesis aims to explore and describe aspects of a fully human spirituality emerging from the South African situation. The study suggests that a clearly integrative and holistic approach that embodies the gender perspective is necessary for churches to adopt in responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

I declare that **A fully human spirituality: A gendered response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic for the South African Church** is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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SIGNATURE   DATE

(Rev Desiree Snyman)

KEY WORDS

Fully human, preferential option for the poor, feminist theology, feminism, Christian spirituality, feminist spirituality, feminist Christian spirituality, HIV/AIDS, gender, practical theology, Ken Wilber, agency, embodiment, community, liberation theology.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis with love to my husband Marius

our children, Keehan and Connor

and to all South African orphans who are and are yet to come.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

CHAPTER TWO

GATHERING LANGUAGE:

DEFINITIONS AND ESTABLISHING AN INTERPRETATIVE FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER THREE

GATHERING STORIES: METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

CHAPTER FIVE

LEARNING TO BREATHE UNDER WATER: A GENDERED RESPONSE TO THE HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

CHAPTER SIX

ASPECTS OF A FULLY HUMAN SPIRITUALITY:

A GENDERED RESPONSE TO THE HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC

TABLE OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE
BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

1.1   INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

The spiritual quest, which is a desire for transformation to wholeness, is ultimately characterised by unity or friendship with the Godhead, with the cosmos, with other people and within oneself. In a South African context, the desire for transformed wholeness, which I describe as a *fully human spirituality*, is shaped by poverty, patriarchy and HIV/AIDS. In describing a fully human spirituality as transformed wholeness and unity with God, others and creation, my aim is similar to that of Ken Wilber[1] (2000 (c):416-7) who states

> I will try to suggest the one location of Spirit that damages none, embraces all, and announces itself with the simplest of clarity, which leaves no place untouched by care, nor cuts its embrace for a chosen few, neither does it hide its face in the shadows of true believers, nor take up residence on a chosen piece of real estate, but rather looks out from the very person now reading these words, too obvious to ignore, too simple to describe, too easy to believe. In the eye of the Spirit we will all meet, and I will find you there, and you me, and the miracle is that we will find each other at all. And the fact that we do, is one of the simplest of proofs, no doubt, of God's insistent existence.

The experience of a fully human spirituality may be refractions of meeting each other and all creation, in the eye of the Spirit, which is unity or friendship with God. In this thesis I explore a fully human spirituality from the perspective of the poor and express these reflections in theological language. The etymology of the word theology describes words about God or even with God. Theology is how my experience of God influences how I pray and how I relate to others, God, creation and myself. Theology is about conversation and how that conversation with God and others transforms me, others and even God. In this thesis I describe theology using the images of weaving, talking and dancing (see section 1.6). In addition, I agree with Daniel Erlander (1992:v) who says that authentic God-talk can only take place in the context of trembling, laughing at oneself, praying for forgiveness and realising that words often fail to capture the reality they are meant to represent. In the attitude of fear and trembling, a theologian is one who gives poetry to the conversations with God and choreography to the dance.

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[1] One of the issues that feminist scholarship highlights is that knowledge-making is a gendered process. Being in a woman's body or a man's body influences the creation of knowledge. It is therefore often useful for readers, who are part of the weaving, dancing, talking process of theologising, to know the gender of the authors that are cited. For this reason, the first names of the references used are cited. People's first names often give helpful clues to their gender. In section 1.6, I describe how one of the demands of feminism is to find new ways of thinking and writing that are different from traditional academic models; the use of the first names of writers is one such attempt.

The purpose of this first chapter is to provide a background to the research study, to outline the problem statement and research questions and to describe the value of the research in terms of the weaving and dancing of the theological reflection that follows in chapters two to seven. Hence, section 1.2 of this first chapter depicts the background against which the theological conversations take place, as context influences the content of the weaving, dancing and dialogue. The background attempts to make clear the unholy alliance between HIV/AIDS, patriarchal oppression and feminised poverty, thus to show that HIV/AIDS is a gendered disease. Against this backdrop of HIV/AIDS, the research problem is stated and the research questions, which shape the conversation of the thesis, are outlined (section 1.3). The fourth section of the chapter, section 1.4, suggests the value of the thesis. The final aspect of the chapter, section 1.5, delineates the chapters that follow in the thesis. I turn now to a discussion on the background of the research problem.

1.2   BACKGROUND

The background information will offer definitions of HIV and AIDS, information on how HIV is transmitted, suggest the extent of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and offer reasons why there is a link between HIV and gender.

1.2.1   WHAT IS THE HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (HIV) AND ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME (AIDS)?

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) causes Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, commonly abbreviated as AIDS (Maria Cimperman 2005:1, Hannes van der Walt 2004:9). The difference between being HIV-positive and having AIDS is that AIDS is the final stage of a long process of deteriorating health which is caused by being infected with HIV. HIV attacks the individual's immune system and as the victim's immune system breaks down, opportunistic infections attack the body and the person becomes gradually weaker and susceptible to a variety of illnesses (Hannes van der Walt 2004:9,10). As the HI-virus multiplies, the CD-4 cells, which are types of white blood cells, are destroyed, the immune system weakens further and the person develops AIDS. Thus the AIDS syndrome indicates a group of illnesses, opportunistic infections and the conditions that degenerate a person's health to the final stages of the HIV infection (Christian AIDS Bureau, 2002:2.2/2; Hannes van der Walt, 2004:10).

The human body contains different types of white blood cells. The T-lymphocyte or CD-4 cells emit chemical signals, which activate the other white blood cells to combat a virus or germ that may enter the body (Christian AIDS Bureau 2002:2.2/5). HIV is different from other viruses because as it enters the body it attacks the CD-4 cells. When HIV enters the body of

its host, it takes over the body's reproductive material and reconfigures it to produce new viruses (Hannes van der Walt 2004:10;,Christian AIDS Bureau 2002:2.2/5). Once HIV enters its host it attaches itself to the receptors on the CD-4 cell and uses the CD-4 cell as a factory to reproduce itself. In this process the CD-4 cells are destroyed leaving the body vulnerable to other viruses (Christian AIDS Bureau 2002:2.2/5). The progression of the illness and the difference between HIV and AIDS is illustrated in figure 1.1 and is discussed accordingly.

Figure 1.1   The progression of HIV
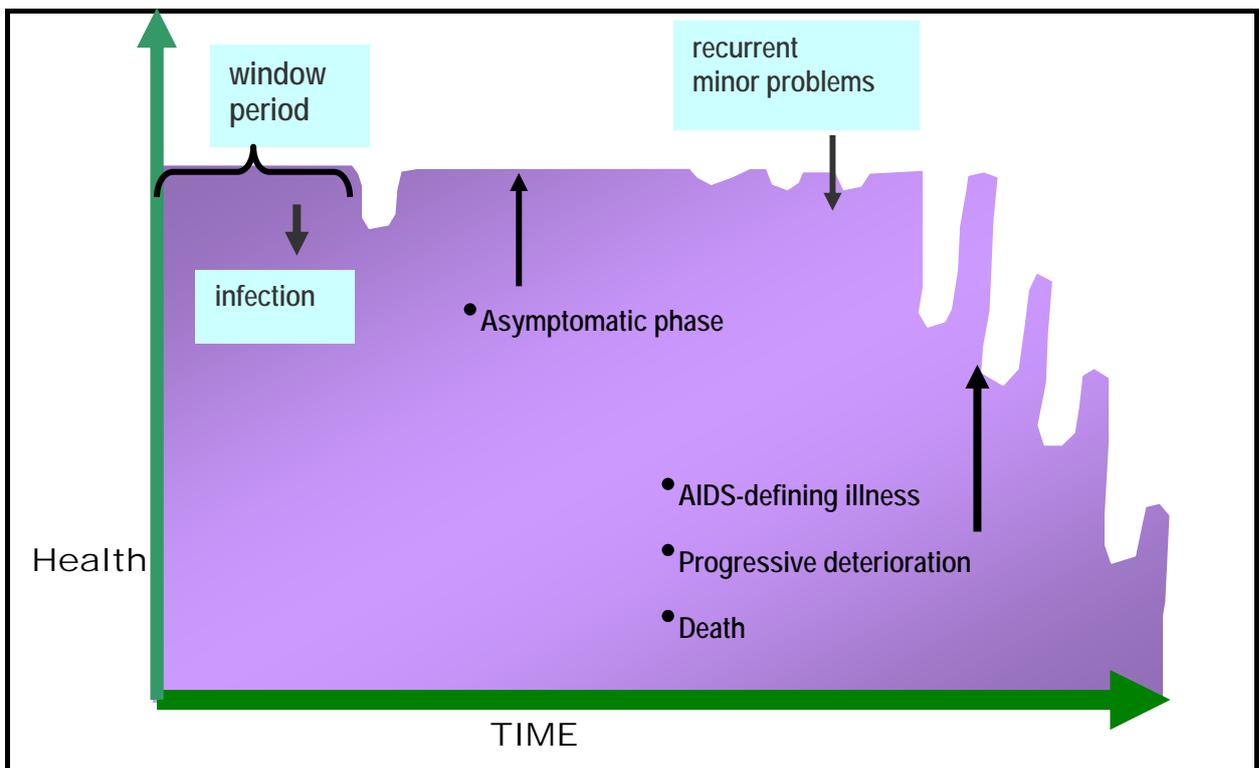
Source: Christian AIDS Bureau (2002:2.2/13)

The vertical axis of the graph indicates a person's health while the horizontal axis indicates time. When a person first becomes infected, she or he may experience a slight dip in health that will in all likelihood not be cause for much concern. This is the first phase of HIV infection, which may present itself in flu-like symptoms. HIV is not detectable in many of the tests during this phase, which is referred to as the window period. The second phase of HIV infection is called the asymptomatic phase because the infected person is healthy and her/his immune system is still quite strong (Christian AIDS Bureau 2002:2.2/13). The third phase is often characterised by recurrent minor infections and may include night sweats, skin infections and mouth sores (Christian AIDS Bureau 2002:2.2/13). These recurrent infections suggest that the immune system is suppressed (Christian AIDS Bureau 2002:2.2/13). If the person receives treatment for minor opportunistic infections she/he will often be healed of these minor infections. The final phase of HIV infection is indicated by habitual opportunistic infections as the health of the person deteriorates. As the number of CD-4 cells drop, the viral load increases and the person becomes sicker more frequently. The final stage of the

figure 1.1 indicates AIDS. While the graph illustrates the typical progression of HIV to AIDS, it must be pointed out that each person's journey is different. The time that it takes to progress from HIV to AIDS is different for individuals and depends on factors such as emotional and physical health.

It is helpful for people in the Church to understand that there is a difference between being HIV-positive and having AIDS. The person who is HIV-positive can still lead a fulfilling life, as being HIV-positive does not impose an immediate death sentence. People who are diagnosed as being HIV-positive can be encouraged to live full and satisfying lives, provided that they take the necessary steps to look after their vulnerable health through strategies such as healthy diet, exercise, stress control and anti-retroviral drugs (ARV'S). Having offered brief definitions for HIV and AIDS, the next section explains how the virus is transmitted.

1.2.2 HOW IS HIV TRANSMITTED?

There are four necessary conditions for HIV to be transmitted: HIV needs to be free of contact with air, it needs a moist environment, the correct temperature and the correct ph-balance which means that if the environment is too acidic or alkaline the virus will die (Christian AIDS Bureau 2002:2.2/21). Body fluids such as blood, semen, vaginal fluid and breast milk contain high concentrations of HIV (Christian AIDS Bureau 2002:2.2/21; Ronald Nicholson 1995:9). The transmission of body fluids may be through infected needles, through childbirth, breast-feeding or sexual intercourse. HIV is also transmitted through blood transfusions although this risk is quite small since donated blood is routinely tested. The most common way to contract HIV is through sexual intercourse (Maria Cimperman 2005:1, Hannes van der Walt 2004:9). During sexual intercourse, HIV enters the blood through the lining of the vagina, vulva, penis, rectum or mouth (Maria Cimperman 2005:1). Figure 1.2 provides a model of the transmission of HIV in South Africa.

Figure 1.2   Model of the transmission of HIV in South Africa
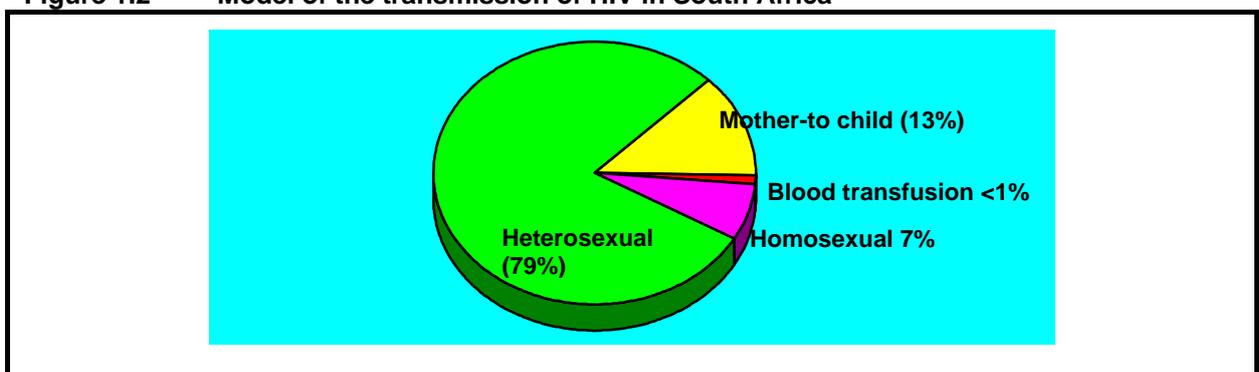
Source: Christian AIDS Bureau (2002:2.1/7)

4

Figure 1.2 illustrates that in the South African context the predominant mode of transmission of HIV is through heterosexual sexual activity, with sexual intercourse among heterosexual couples accounting for 79 percent of infections. This is useful information for churches; the lack of response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic is often because of a moral debate surrounding homosexuality. Churches should be made aware that HIV/AIDS is not only a disease of drug addicts and homosexuals. One criticism of the graph relates to the terminology of "mother-to-child transmission". It is better to refer to parent-to-child transmission to prevent implying that women are more culpable than men in the transmission of HIV/AIDS. Having offered definitions of HIV and AIDS and having explained how HIV is generally transmitted, the next question arises:

1.2.3 HOW SERIOUS IS THE HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC?

Figure 1.3 illustrates the global concentration of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in 2005. Notice how the greatest concentration of the prevalence of HIV/AIDS resides in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Figure 1.3   Global view of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in 2005
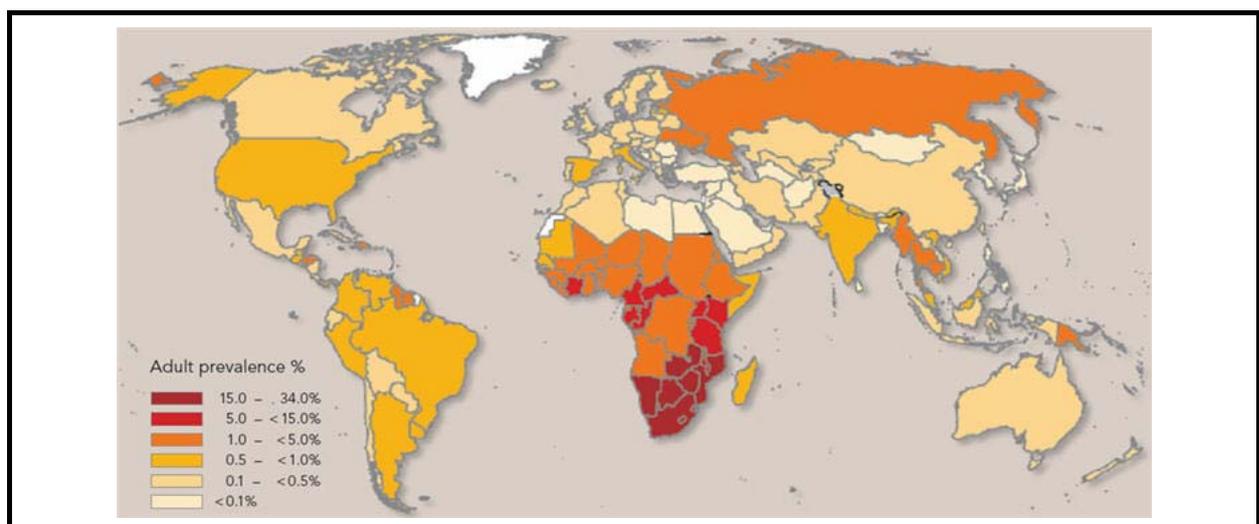
Source: WHO (2006:1)

Figure 1.3 illustrates that HIV/AIDS is concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa with the prevalence rates as high as 34 percent compared to Australia, which has a prevalence rate of less than 0.5 percent. While HIV prevalence in South Africa in 1990 was less than 1 percent, it has spread at an alarming rate to a level of between 15 and 34 percent in fifteen years (Sue Parry 2005:9). According to UNAIDS fact sheets, the worst affected regions in the world are Sub-Saharan Africa (Maria Cimperman 2005:3; UNAIDS fact sheet 2004:1). To put it into perspective, while Sub-Saharan Africa has about ten percent of the global population she has about 60 percent of the total population who are HIV-positive (Maria Cimperman 2005:3, UNAIDS fact sheet 2004:1). Within this high rate of infection in Sub-Saharan Africa,

women are three times more likely to be infected with HIV than their male counterparts (UNAIDS fact sheet 2004:1). Unfortunately, there is no suggestion yet that these high levels of HIV prevalence are declining: of the women attending antenatal clinics, 30 percent [range 28.5–30.5%] were HIV-positive in 2004. In South Africa, Kwa-Zulu Natal is the worst affected province with an HIV prevalence rate of 40 percent (Department of Health in Sue Parry 2005:9).

The purpose of these statistics is to tell both a global and national story about the prevalence and extent of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. However, it must be noted that the methods used in gathering this data are not without critique. Women have been the targets of research that aims to understand the growing prevalence of the disease. In these profiles, statistics relating to men are absent (Vicci Tallis 1998:11). Women are often tested for HIV when pregnant and are stigmatised because they are perceived to be the carriers of disease while men deny their involvement (Commonwealth Secretariat 2002:31). Since the fathers are not tested, the wife is often blamed for the virus even though it is invariably the husband that would have infected her (Commonwealth Secretariat 2002:31).

While this may be a strong statement, research suggests that 60 – 68 percent of women who are HIV-positive have had sexual intercourse only with their husbands (UNAIDS 2001 in Commonwealth Secretariat 2002:26). Researchers need to be careful not to further stigmatise women in the HIV pandemic. HIV/AIDS is a symptom of our patriarchal culture. Women are often the victims of AIDS because of patriarchy and ironically are further marginalized because of their HIV status as AIDS is seen as a women's disease (Vicci Tallis 1998:6-14). Thus, in answer to the question "How serious is the HIV/AIDS pandemic?": It is very serious indeed especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and especially for women. The link between HIV/AIDS and gender is now discussed.

1.2.4   THE LINK BETWEEN HIV/AIDS AND GENDER

Both empirical data and literature sources indicate that HIV/AIDS is a "women's disease" in Southern Africa. Underpinning the statistics and definitions, are key questions that need to be asked (Maria Cimperman 2005:11). What are the factors behind the transmission of AIDS and who is HIV-positive? Under what circumstances are people more likely to be infected? (Maria Cimperman 2005:11). There is strong evidence to suggest that there is a virus that is more deadly than HIV that is behind the high rate of infection: it is the virus of patriarchy which breeds in people's minds and attitudes and is made manifest in their cultures (Teresa Okure in Maria Cimperman 2005:11). AIDS is a symptom of the patriarchal system that is sucking the life out of South African women.

6

The patriarchal virus is the reason why the situation that carries the highest risk of infection in the developing world, is that of being a married woman (Teresa Okure in Maria Cimperman 2005:11). It is often the case that the Christian Church has given ideological and theological support to patriarchy. It is because of the patriarchal system of oppression that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is highest among South African women. According to Deborah Dortzbach (2003:50) "AIDS rips through our families in Africa, exposing the worst of our hidden lives". That there is a direct link between the disempowerment of women and the rate of infection among women is seen from figure 1.4. It depicts the HIV prevalence among women and men in the 15–24 year age group.

Figure 1.4   HIV prevalence among men and women 15–24 years of age
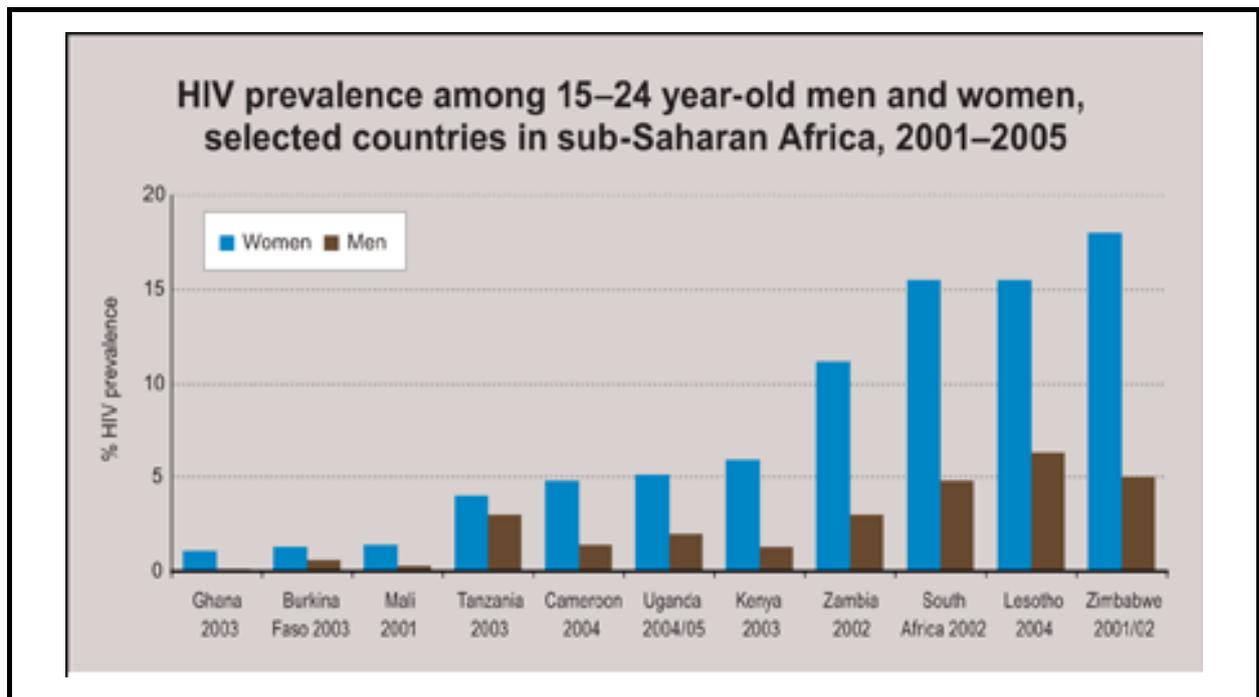
Source:UNAIDS (2005:1)

Figure 1.4 illustrates how the prevalence of HIV among women is considerably higher than among men in Southern African countries. The blue bars, which are more than double the grey bars, indicate the prevalence of HIV among women while the grey bars suggest the prevalence of HIV among men. South Africa, third from the right, has one of the highest prevalence rates of HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa. The rate of infection among women is cause for deep concern, especially when combined with the workload that women have in terms of caring for AIDS patients and their own families (UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNIFEM 2004:7).

Sub-Saharan Africa is the only place in the world where infection is greater among women than among men (Isabel Phiri 2003:8). William Cockerham (1992:32) an American medical sociologist, comments that in Africa, HIV is transmitted through "conventional (*sic*) sexual intercourse among heterosexuals". Married women appear to be at high risk for HIV/AIDS in

Sub-Saharan Africa where 60-68 percent of women who are HIV-positive reported having had sex with only their husbands (UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNIFEM 2004:16). However, according to an UNAIDS report, Sub-Saharan young women are withstanding the worst of the AIDS epidemic, with 36 women between the ages of 15-24 being affected for every 10 men (UNAIDS update 2004/11). This is comparable with an anonymous population based survey conducted in KwaZulu-Natal that demonstrates that HIV is four times more common in young women compared to men, especially women between the ages of 15-24 (Quarraisha Abdool Karim 1998:15-33).

HIV/AIDS is increasingly infecting monogamous women in South Africa (Quarraisha Abdool Karim 1998:19). This is due, in part, to the migrant labour system in this country. William Cockerham (1992:32) references research by Charles Hunt who explains that the migrant labour system is a significant contributing factor to the high rate of transmission in Southern Africa (William Cockerham 1992:32). Typically, rural African women will remain in the villages to work and care for the family while their husbands seek employment on commercial farms and in the mines. This labour system causes family disturbances and an increased number of sexual partners because of long absences from home (William Cockerham 1992:32). These factors have resulted in a sector of the population that suffers from a wide range of sexually transmitted diseases, which increases susceptibility to HIV/AIDS. The pattern of transmission is different in Europe and America where HIV is transmitted primarily through drug users and homosexual and bisexual men (William Cockerham 1992:32).

William Cockerham's perspective (1992:32) that AIDS is a social disease is significant, as are his comments regarding the different patterns of transmission of HIV in Europe, America and Africa (William Cockerham 1992:28). His statements about the influence of the migrant labour system on the rate of HIV infection in women are also helpful. Yet his perspective reflects his andocentric bias in three ways. Firstly, with regards to his reflection on AIDS in America, it seems that he relegates HIV/AIDS to drug addicts and homosexuals thereby implying that certain sectors of the population, for example heterosexual men, are immune to the disease. He does however acknowledge that this has contributed to the stigmatisation of the disease (William Cockerham 1992:33). Secondly, his comments on the African pattern of HIV transmission seem to suggest that it is a problem faced predominantly by rural and poorer people in a time where it is critical that we all acknowledge our vulnerability to infection. Thirdly, the drastically different pattern of HIV transmission in Africa "remains a mystery" that he deduces is because of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's) (William Cockerham 1992:32). He is unable to unearth and analyse the patriarchal ethos that is responsible for the high rate of transmission in Africa, especially among women.

Women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS is a result of several factors. Feminised poverty and the social disempowerment of woman are two factors contributing to the high rate of infection among women. Other factors include, cultural traditions, socio-economic factors, a lack of education and physiological factors. However, at the heart of the AIDS epidemic is the strong indication that it is a crisis of gender inequality with women having less control over their bodies and lives (UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNIFEM 2004:7). Different writers, for example Rosemary Radford Ruether (1983), Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1993, 1995, 2001) and Mercy Amba Oduyoye(1986, 1995, 2001), acknowledge that in most societies there are unequal power relations between men and women and that this is illustrated by fewer legal rights protecting women, less access to information, health services and education for them and less negotiation around how and when they engage in sexual intercourse (Commonwealth Secretariat 2002:xi). Gender disparities are further linked to the lack of access to financial resources that characterises the lives of many women, making them more susceptible to abuses of power (UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNIFEM 2004:7). A number of the factors that make women more vulnerable to contract HIV/AIDS are discussed below.

Feminised poverty

There are more poor women than men in Africa (Meredeth Turshen 1994:77). A lack of financial resources means that there is insufficient food and medical attention for dealing with an HIV/AIDS condition (Musa Dube 2003:79). Moreover, women are often economically powerless and financially dependent on a "male protector". Not only does a low financial and social status compound women's dependency on men, it also influences their ability to negotiate safer sexual practices (Quarraisha Abdool Karim 1998:15). To challenge men's behaviour carries risk for women and their children because it could mean being evicted from their homes (Musa Dube 2003:80). Men, even when they are poor, have a choice as to when, where and with whom they have sex, women do not always have that choice (Commonwealth Secretariat 2002:26).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the advice of the World Bank to privatise public health services increased the hardship and poverty of people whose access to health and education was reduced (Meredeth Turshen 1994:90). This has particularly affected women who have high medical bills before, during and after pregnancy (Meredeth Turshen 1994:90).

Social disempowerment

Male dominance is pervasive in all aspects of a woman's life including the legal, religious, institutional and family domains (Quarraisha Abdool Karim 1998:18). The social disempowerment of women is illustrated by the link between violence and HIV. Women are not empowered to say no to men's sexual demands. Women want men to use condoms, but they have little power to insist that they do so (Musa Dube 2003:80,81). In marital

relationships, a wife is viewed with suspicion if she insists that her husband uses a condom (Beverly Haddad 2003:151). In many cases women risk violence if they insist on protection (UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNIFEM 2004:7).

Women who are dominated and abused by their partners are far more likely to become infected with HIV/AIDS than women who live in non-violent homes (UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNIFEM 2004:45). *Women and HIV/AIDS: Confronting the crises* (2004)*,* a publication distributed by UNAIDS, describes a study involving South African women attending health centres in Soweto, a township south of Johannesburg. The women attending health centres in Soweto were interviewed about their lives and tested for HIV (UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNIFEM 2004:45). Out of the 1,366 women who were interviewed, the findings show that women who experienced physical violence from their partners were 48 percent more likely to be infected with HIV, while those who experienced emotional and financial abuse were 52 percent more likely to be infected (UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNIFEM 2004:46). Such statistics suggest a close link between HIV transmission and the social disempowerment of women.

Cultural traditions

A cultural tradition such as *lobola* contributes to women's vulnerability to contract HIV/AIDS. The lobola system creates a situation where women are treated as if they are property owned by their husbands (Beverly Haddad 2003:151). This increases their experience of disempowerment because their human dignity and agency is subjugated in the haggling over a bridal price. Some people argue that lobola is a good practice, suggesting that the original practice of offering cattle was a way to safeguard women. However, the traditional intentions of lobola are different from current practice where the woman is considered cheap if lobola is not paid and as a result her husband therefore treats her badly (Beverly Haddad 2003:151).

Another cultural tradition that influences the spread of HIV is *wife inheritance* (Commonwealth Secretariat 2002:xi). It is often the case that when a wife is widowed her brother-in-law inherits her. If her husband died of an AIDS related sickness, HIV could then spread to the wider family. It must be pointed out that the cultural practice of wife inheritance has its roots in a caring practice of making sure the family is looked after in the event of the death of provider. Currently, however, the practice is being abused in that women are subjugated by being forced to submit to undue sexual demands.

Socio-economic factors

In South Africa large corporate companies rely on migrant labour to work in the mining industry. This mobility separates families and increases extramarital sexual activities (Musa Dube, 2003: 79; Vicci Tallis, 1998:6). Miners often leave their families in the rural areas and adopt "city wives". When they return home to their "rural wives" they spread HIV/AIDS.

Lack of education

Women are frequently less educated than their male counterparts (Musa Dube 2003: 78-80). This is often because the family depends on the girl-child to drop out of school and care for them when a parent becomes ill or dies. Women's lack of education means they do not always have access to the necessary accurate information on AIDS and its prevention or management (Vicci Tallis 1998:9).

Physiological factors

The vagina has a greater surface area than the penis which means that women are at greater risk of exposure to the HI-virus (Quarraisha Abdool Karim 1998:18; Beverly Haddad, 2003:151). Added to this are histological factors in that the mucosal surface of the vagina is more susceptible to the disease than the penile skin surface (Karim 1998:18). In some cultures, women submit to men's preference for 'dry sex' and the resultant vaginal tissue damage provides easy entry points to the disease (Beverly Haddad 2003:151).

Having offered background information on HIV/AIDS with particular reference to the link between HIV/AIDS, I now outline the problem statement.

1.3   PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the background information I provided definitions relevant to HIV/AIDS and described the scale of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. I showed the link between gender and HIV and how HIV/ADS affects the most vulnerable in society: the poor, the displaced and the marginalized, who are often women (Vicci Tallis 1998:12). Throughout the world, a strong association of poverty, AIDS, oppression and gender is emerging (Quarraisha Abdool Karim 1998:15, Beverly Haddad 2003:151, Vicci Tallis 1998:12, Isabel Apawo Phiri 2003:8). Poverty is the social context in which HIV/AIDS flourishes. Gender roles and the power imbalances between men and women are recognised as contributing factors to the increased vulnerability of women to the AIDS pandemic (Quarraisha Abdool Karim 1998:15). This does not mean that men are not vulnerable to HIV/AIDS but, because of a patriarchal culture and feminised poverty, women are more vulnerable (Vicci Tallis 1998:9). As feminist writers such as Beverly Haddad (2003) and Isabel Apawo Phiri (2003) have pointed out, the position of women in society needs to be challenged if the AIDS crisis is to be dealt with effectively: a gendered Christian response to the AIDS pandemic has become necessary.

Governmental, societal, and Church responses seem to have had little effect in controlling or reducing the pandemic. That this is so can be seen from the rising prevalence of HIV/AIDS, particularly amongst women. The deficiencies in some responses to the HIV/AIDS pandemic

are that they have lacked an intentional and conscious gender focus. The South African situation and the challenges of HIV/AIDS, patriarchal abuse, and poverty disempowers women and poses a challenge to the way that they express their full humanity and grow their spirituality. The gender lens is a necessary assumption in the Church's response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, thus the focus in this thesis is on gender issues within the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Part of the response that the Church can make to the HIV/AIDS pandemic is within the field of spirituality. Patterns of spiritualities as tools for deepening one's relationship with God are borne out of a particular place and time. Thus, the aim is to contextualise the gender issue for the Church within an HIV-positive world. In sum, this research project not only offers a gendered response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic for the Church, but also outlines aspects of a fully human spirituality that could facilitate the full humanity of people and, in particular, women who live in an HIV-positive world.

1.4   AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

Three research aims were formulated from the research questions:

1. The first aim attempts to answer the question: How can I stand in solidarity with the poor? I aim to answer the question by expressing a preferential option for the poor by standing in solidarity with and listening to the voices of the poor, especially women, in HIV/AIDS support groups who live life on the margins of society. A preferential option for the poor, which allows for holistic and integrative transformation, is seen to be a key factor in the transformation of the rich and the poor on personal and social levels.

2. The second aim of this study attempts to answer the question "How can the Church respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic? I aim to answer the question by exploring and describing a gendered Christian response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic for the Church from the perspective of feminist liberation theology and Christian spirituality. To this end I develop and describe a model of full humanity that can guide Church praxis in an effective response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

3. A question that may be asked is: "How do you live a life of faith in the midst of poverty, oppression and patriarchal power" (Susan Rakoczy 2004:389). In response to the question I ask: What are aspects of a fully human spirituality that can promote the full humanity of people and how may a fully human spirituality be applied in one's personal and social transformation? I aim to answer the question by describing aspects of a feminist liberation spirituality that are carved out of the South African context. Spirituality can be used as a means to address or redress the disabling aspects of patriarchal culture that are revealed symptomatically through HIV/AIDS, stigma and poverty. The reason for this is that spirituality is a source of empowerment, transformation and liberation. In this thesis, my conviction is that God desires the full humanity of all people and so I describe

how aspects of a fully human spirituality that emerge from the context of an HIV-positive world may be applied in one's personal and social spiritual transformation. These aspects of spirituality are framed within the fields of Christian spirituality and feminist theology, which form the theoretical and theological framework that guides this research study.

1.5   THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

How one experiences the world is dependent on how one understands the world (Norvene Vest 2000:7). The internal framework through which one experiences and understands the world helps one to see reality more clearly, while at the same time limits what one can see. It is sometimes the source of one's blind spots (Norvene Vest 2000:7). One's theoretical framework and presuppositions influence one's experience of reality while at the same time they grow out of reflection on one's lived experience (Michael Fox 1991:73). There is thus a dance and a dialogue between theoretical underpinnings and empirical research. The "box" that contains and informs the theoretical framework of this research study is Christian spirituality and feminist theology. The "box", however, has open sides and other influences, which include ethics, ecclesiology, practical theology and feminist theory are woven into the discussion.

Feminist research and Christian spirituality are necessarily interdisciplinary. The complexities of women's lives demand that feminist theologians explore conversations with other disciplines, as this is the way in which one uncovers how women's oppression is maintained through social, political and religious paradigms (Vanessa Farr 2002:39). As Mercy Amba Oduyoye (2001:16) rightly says: "The African woman's theological reflections intertwine theology, ethics and spirituality. It therefore does not stop at theory but moves to commitment, advocacy and transforming praxis." An image that may be used to understand this process is the weaver's loom. It is represented in Figure 1.5 and is discussed accordingly.

Figure 1.5   The weaver's loom representing the theoretical framework of the study

Ecclesiology
Ethics
Action research
Practical theology
Feminist theory

FEMINIST THEOLOGY

CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY
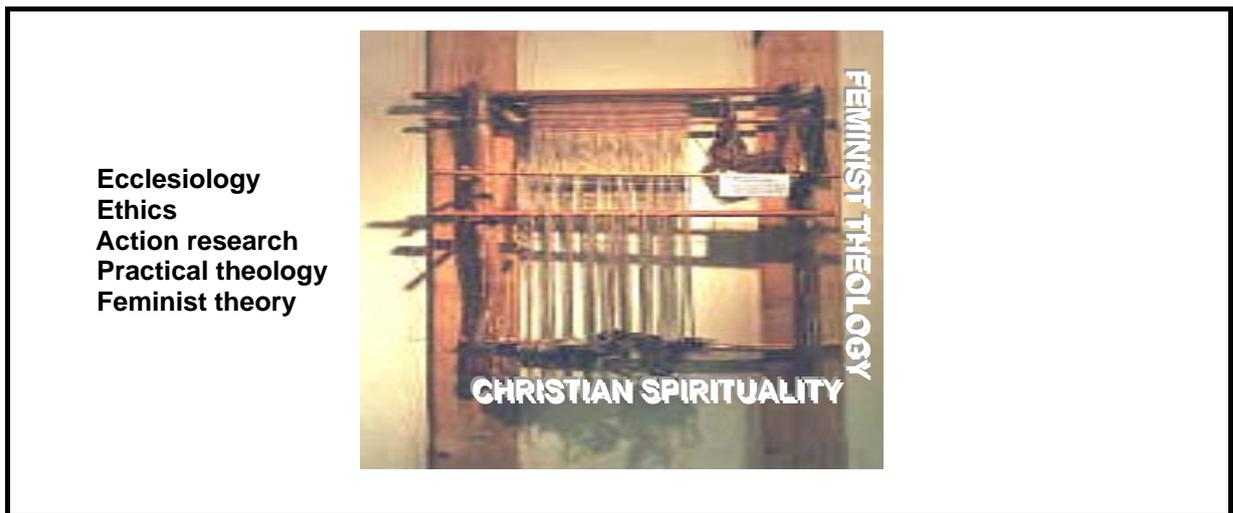
While the disciplines of feminist theology and Christian spirituality are the vertical and horizontal beams of the weaver's loom holding the picture of reality in place, ecclesiology, ethics, action research, practical theology and feminist theory are some of the threads that form part of the tapestry that is produced. The fields of feminist theology and Christian spirituality were chosen as they offer powerful resources of transformation to wholeness. The mechanism of the weaver's loom includes a shuttle that moves back and forth, gathering the different coloured threads into a pattern. Likewise, theology and research in this thesis is the shuttling back and forth and the weaving of theory and experience together into a picture of reality.

If the Church's response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic is to be effective (Commonwealth Secretariat 2002:10) it is necessary to include gender in a multi-sectoral approach to AIDS (Commonwealth Secretariat 2002:x) as gender analysis is a tool that uses gender and sex as a way of understanding information. This thesis focuses on the application of gender-based knowledge in a Christian response to AIDS (Commonwealth Secretariat 2002:1) while the holistic, multi-faceted and integrative nature of contemporary spirituality is a resource in offering healing and wholeness to people within an HIV-positive world. A gendered approach to HIV/AIDS is necessary because of the links between HIV and gender. An integrative strategy is necessary because transformation has to happen on both personal and social levels. An holistic response is necessary in responding to HIV/AIDS because of the multi-faceted nature of the disease. The fields of feminist theology and Christian spirituality offer resources for empowerment and transformation to wholeness of people and society in such a way that society values the humanity of men, women and children (Isabel Phiri *et al* 2003:9). These fields invite researchers to use the *interpreted* experience of people, and women in particular, as the central resource in theological reflection. With its emphasis on the fields of feminist theology and Christian spirituality, one of the tasks of the thesis is to be creative about how paradigms are used, especially those relating to how academic research is done

and presented. In the light of this, theologising is described through the images of weaving, dancing and talking.

1.6   THE WEAVING, DANCING AND TALKING NATURE OF THEOLOGY

Feminist scholarship calls for new ways of thinking and writing that are different from traditional models (Phyllis Kaminski in Karen Trimble Alliaume 1998:241). To this end it is helpful and appropriate to use images from women's spirituality such as dancing, weaving and talking. The domestic tasks of weaving, cooking, gardening, along with dancing and conversation are sacred activities in the history of religion (Melissa Raphael 1996:53). Although one should be careful not to romanticise these tasks or to endorse a patriarchal division of labour, research in this thesis is seen as a weaving together of different voices in dialogue and dance with each other. "Weaving, dancing and talking" is one way to image theology; it is a contemplative task: the dancing, weaving and talking aspects of theology, if they are to be authentic, emerge from the still point and lead to the still point of the turning world, as the poignant words of TS Eliot (1959:16) echo:

> At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
> neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
> but neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
> where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
> neither ascent nor decline, except for the point, the still point,
> There would be no dance, and there is only the dance …

In this thesis I attempt to allow the style of writing to be "dialogical and interrogatory rather than doctrinal and dogmatic" (Maryanne Confoy 2000:261). What is woven together in this thesis includes the voices of the participants in the study, the voices of scholars articulated through their published and unpublished works, my voice as the research writer and to a certain degree your voice as the reader because, as you read my interpretations, you offer your own analysis. Research is described as a weaving together of these different voices in dance and dialogue and my thesis is a record of that dance: a record of how theory influences data, how data influences theory and how the participants influence me in the process of my own theory making. In this dancing, weaving, and dialoguing nature of (feminist) research, the reader is drawn into the story.

Another helpful image to describe the process of theologising is the Trinity. The image of Rublev's Trinity in conversation, depicted in figure 1.6, offers one a way to understand theology. At the heart of the Christian's experience of God is the understanding that one of the ways God is revealed to us is as **relationship.** Rublev's Trinity is a fitting example of how God is revealed to us as relationship.

Figure 1.6   Andrei Rublev's Trinity Icon
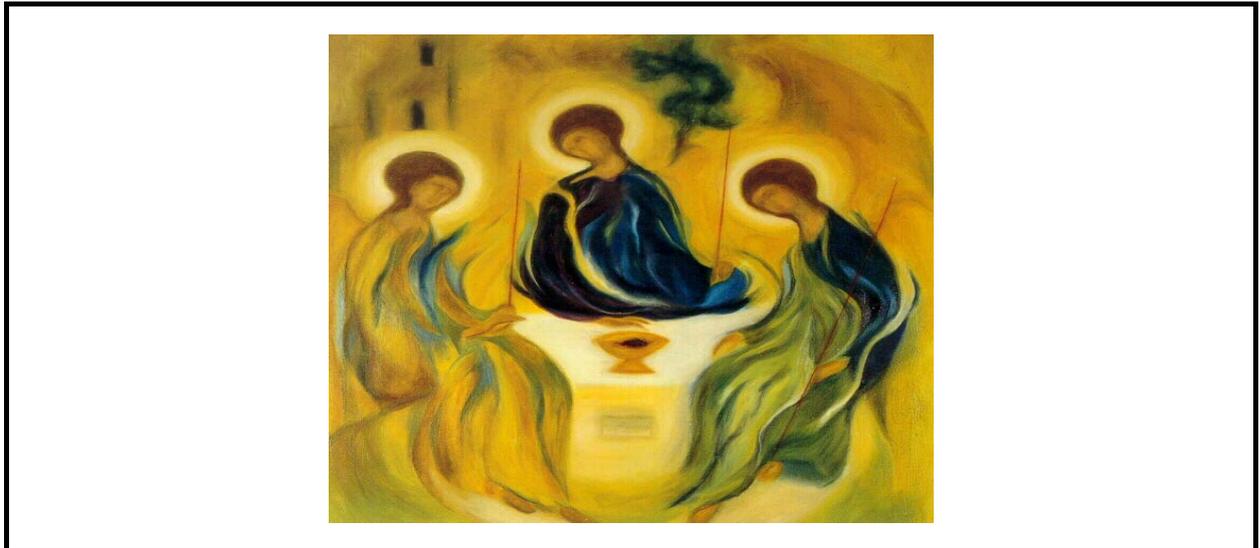
Andrei Rublev's Trinity icon depicts God in three persons having a conversation around a table (Desiree Snyman 2000:1). The conversation of the three Persons of the Trinity influences each other as the Creator pours out everything that She is, into the Liberator who pours out everything that *She* is into the Sustainer. This dance of mutual giving and receiving, their conversation, is the source of unity and community within God. The Spirit, depicted on the right hand side of the icon, points to the space that is left open at the front of the table. This space is left open for the cosmos as the whole cosmos is invited to become partakers of God: all creation is invited to participate in the conversation, in the dance. Humankind's participation in the dance and conversation with God is a way for them to keep their hearts centred on God (Henri Nouwen 1987:20), while living in the midst of the political and religious upheaval of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which is the immediate context for the thesis. Participation in the dance and conversation with God is the source of personal and social transformation.

In promoting the full humanity of women, my thesis is meant to express a commitment to the foundational right to a full life for the impoverished majorities of the two-thirds world, many of whom are women (Victorio Araya 1983:xiii). Within the consciousness of people is a yearning for life in all its fullness (Norvene Vest 2000:1). For many South African women this longing often occurs within the context of the dehumanising effects of patriarchal oppression, poverty and HIV/AIDS. The desire for full humanity and the unholy trinity of patriarchal oppression, poverty and HIV/AIDS is the context for the weaving, dancing and talking nature of theology.

1.6.1 THE CONTEXT OF THE WEAVING, DANCING, TALKING THEOLOGISING

The goal of the weaving, dancing and talking theology is the full humanity of people. St Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, an early Church Father said that the glory of God is the human person fully alive, fully God (*Against Heresies* 4.20.7). The fully human person is one who experiences life in all its fullness, who experiences a relationship with God, has a sense of worth as a person, participates in society and Church in a life-giving way and expresses a certain degree of wholeness and integration. God desires the full humanity of all people. God's desire coincides with the deepest longings of the human heart: people want to be fully human, fully alive. The forces of patriarchy, poverty and HIV/AIDS often choke these desires.

In many places around the globe, including South Africa, gendered poverty is the breeding ground for AIDS. The immediate context for the theology in the thesis is the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa, which is further aggravated by patriarchy and poverty (Barbara Schmid 2006:97,100). Patriarchy refers to attitudes and behaviours where life is organised in such a way that males are dominant legally, politically, religiously, and even culturally (Susan Rakoczy 2004:10). In a patriarchal environment which ignites the HIV/AIDS pandemic, "theological commitment is seen by one's insertion with and commitment to the poor and oppressed", in this case marginalized women who are HIV-positive (Susan Rakoczy 2004:8). This theological commitment to the poor and oppressed is the key hermeneutical axis in the thesis. The necessity for standing in solidarity with the poor is spiritually important not only for the poor but also for the rich. Standing in solidarity with the poor is seen as a strategy to allow for integrative transformation on personal and social levels for the materially rich and poor alike.

1.6.2 THE KEY HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLE IN THE WEAVING, DANCING AND TALKING THEOLOGISING

Hermeneutic can be defined as a tool that is used to interpret and understand reality. The hermeneutical point of departure in the thesis is the preferential option for the poor. The hermeneutic of friendship with the marginalized is an attempt to find a method that allows for speech with those whose lives are marginalized and separated from others by economic and social power (Carrie Pemberton 2004:253). In the dancing, weaving, conversing nature of theology, the voices of the poor are given priority. The poor have a privileged perspective on the kingdom of God in humanity's shared task with the Godhead of mending the entire universe (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983, 1991, 2001).

The theology in this thesis does not attempt to offer definitive answers. Rather, it is an attempt to offer some insights that will stimulate action within the different churches in

different contexts. The hermeneutical point of departure as standing in solidarity with poor, marginalized women is an attempt to offer a gendered response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This relationship with the poor becomes the key to the research. The thesis is not a "dry dissection of the cool, uninvolved, rational bodies of knowledge" but a way of immersing one's theologising into a "hot-blooded encounter, with hearts beating with desire as well as frustration in bringing relationship to life" (Carrie Pemberton 2004:254). This theologising therefore is not necessarily placed within a corpus of literature, the feminist approach is thrust into the relationship of dynamic co-counselling and co-mentoring; it is messy and fluid and a living embodiment of relationship (Carrie Pemberton 2004:254).

The participants in the study are women who live life on the margins of society, are HIV-positive, have little or no financial resources, and their lives are further complicated by patriarchal oppression. They live on the margins of society due to their physical location outside of the financial capital of Johannesburg, due to their status as HIV-positive people, their poverty and their experiences as black women in an unjust social structure. They are members of AIDS support groups and are given a voice through this thesis. The group of people who are central to the thesis are the women from the Maskopas HIV support group in Orange Farm, which is on the outskirts of Johannesburg, one of the larger cities in South Africa. My attempt to stand in solidarity with them has meant that I have grown in friendship with them since 2001. Their friendship has changed me. Thus, the call to stand in solidarity with the poor is centred on the Maskopas. I approached other HIV support groups in an attempt to increase my learning from the poor, to expand my awareness through their influence and to further explore the learning that was emerging from my relationship with the Maksopas. These groups were the Green Tea group from Martindale, near Sophiatown, which also has male members, and the Somelele group from Bekkersdal which only has female members, all of whom have little or no employment. Bekkersdal is an impoverished mining town on the western outskirts of Johannesburg.

The women are described as marginalized because they live life on the margins of society. The Oxford dictionary defines the word margin as at the edge and close to the limit. Life is a daily struggle for these women who live at the edge of society and are daily pushed to the limit by poverty, HIV and the effects of an unjust social system. Authors are accustomed to using the word margin in the art of writing; a margin gives structure to a piece of writing by justifying the text so that all the paragraphs begin in the same place. In the same way, the voices of the poor from the margins of society give structure to a pattern of liberation spirituality described in the thesis as a fully human spirituality, which is discussed in detail in Chapter six. The stories of the marginalized are the hermeneutical point of departure, yet in many ways the lives of the marginalized are unknowable because what ultimately defines being human is the experience of mystery. Their self-disclosure is through their words and

actions, interpretations and life stories, mediated through my experience of standing in solidarity with them in the process of data collection (Carrie Permberton, 2004:254).

1.7   VALUE OF THESIS

This section offers a defence for the value of the research. Theologians are required to describe the weaving together of voices and reflections that are offered in conversation to three different but interrelated audiences which include academia, the Church and wider society (Karen Trimble Alliaume 1998:240). Theologians are all part of these multiple conversations. The thesis has value for these different "audiences": for the Church, for the academic community, for me personally and for the women being studied who are part of wider society. The value of the research for the people involved in these multiple conversations in the weaving and dancing process of theologising is subsequently described.

1.7.1   THE VALUE OF THE THESIS ON A PERSONAL LEVEL

The thesis has personal value for me in terms of my own spiritual growth in that my studies are a means of grace for me. As Sandra Schneiders (1986a:269) suggests, one studies spirituality to understand spirituality, but also to nurture one's own spiritual growth. The thesis is transformative for me through the reading of books on spirituality, through the spiritual disciplines of prayer and discernment that are part of the academic study of spirituality and through the process of standing in solidarity for the poor. My early formation in Wesleyan spirituality taught me the discipline of practising the "means of grace" while waiting for the gift of God's grace, which is Christian perfection. Wesleyan spirituality is the spiritual foundation of Methodist Christians. According to John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, the means of grace are the spiritual disciplines, which open people to the influence of the Spirit in their lives. Christian perfection, which is defined as the love of God and neighbour, is really John Wesley's term for the praxis of Christian spirituality. Thus, in the first instance, the thesis has value for me personally because it is a way for me to grow spiritually through practising the spiritual disciplines associated with the research such as reading, reflection, prayer, discernment and solidarity with the poor.

The research project is also a way for me to express my personal vocation to stand in solidarity with the marginalized. As has been suggested in the introduction, people are transformed through their encounter with the poor. My friendship with the participants in the study has been a means of grace that has facilitated my spiritual growth. Some aspects of this growth are reflected in the way that I read and understand Scripture. The influence of the research participants means that I interpret Scripture through the lenses of God's bias for the poor. The research emerges out of my commitment, which is shared by other people in the

Church, to build a just world. The word "shalom" best describes this goal as healing, wholeness and the balance of relationships (Annalet Van Schalkwyk 1999:8). Thus, in the second instance, this thesis has value for me personally because it is a way for me to fulfil my vocation of standing in solidarity with the poor.

Finally, the thesis has value for me professionally as an Anglican priest in that it equips me to offer a Christian response to the AIDS pandemic. I have also grown in research techniques such as different methods of data collection and data analysis that will further equip me to understand the needs of the poor whom the Church is called to serve. In this way the research also has value for the Church whom I serve in my capacity as a priest.

1.7.2   THE VALUE OF THE THESIS FOR THE CHURCH

Secular organisations such as UNIFEM, the Global coalition on women and children and UNAIDS recognise that HIV/AIDS is a gendered disease, with young women between the ages of 15–24 being more than three times as likely to be infected as young men (UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNIFEM 2004:iv). In June 2001 the United Nations General Assembly Special Session made the gender aspects of HIV/AIDS pandemic explicit (UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNIFEM 2004:9). Their purpose was to address the triple threat of gender inequality, poverty and HIV/AIDS. Increasingly AIDS is becoming a feminised disease that is exacerbated by and reinforces feminised poverty.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic requires that churches mobilise for action. Isabel Phiri (2003:15), for example, calls for "concrete ways of confronting HIV". People want to know what the Church's specific contribution to combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic is. Increasingly government is recognising the need for faith-based organisations to participate in a comprehensive strategy to help resolve the HIV/AIDS problem.

The thesis is an urgent call to Church leadership to recognise the gender links with HIV/AIDS, to address the inherent patriarchy within Christianity that further sustains it, and to find ways of promoting a liberating spirituality that promotes the full humanity of all people, but especially women. The Church must break the chains of poverty and gender inequality that ignites the spread of the disease. The empowerment of women and gender equality are key elements; the Church must participate in the project of challenging attitudes and stereotypes. Often the stance that churches take is to promote abstinence and faithfulness. The patriarchal context in which many South African women find themselves prevents them from being able to negotiate safer sexual practices. A more nuanced, gender based strategy is required from the Church in her response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In this respect the value of the thesis for the Church is that it offers a model that can guide the Church in

offering a gendered Christian response that may contribute to subverting the patriarchal culture which is often inherent in Church life and the wider society. The research thus offers a contribution to Church praxis.

It is not that the churches have not responded at all to the AIDS pandemic. Several denominations, such as the Anglican Church of the Province of South Africa, the Lutheran World Federation, the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, the Roman Catholics and others have already developed denominational policies concerning HIV and AIDS. Some of these denominations even have HIV/AIDS co-ordinators (Sue Parry 2005:38). In some areas, networks have been formed involving different denominations in their response to HIV/AIDS (Sue Parry 2005:38). Furthermore, initiatives have started within Church structures and have matured to become independent organisations. However, Churches generally seem to be some ten years behind in their response (Sue Parry 2005:38); some of these church-related agencies seem to lack "an explicit, robust theological rationale for what they are already doing" (Neville Richardson 2006:39). Many Christians still do not see HIV/AIDS as an issue for the Church and are unable to articulate the justice issues surrounding the spread of the disease. In addition, large numbers of churchgoers still believe that contracting HIV is "a choice" and is the result of personal, sexual sin and as such deserves God's punishment. In cases where there is willingness on the part of churches to respond to HIV and AIDS, there is a lack of training and information on how to deal with it (Sue Parry 2005: 38), precise ways in which the Church can respond and reasons why they should respond are not given (Neville Richardson 2006:38). Government is also to blame in that it does not assist Church-based HIV/AIDS projects, in some cases churches such as the Roman Catholics, are doing more than government and funding projects from Church resources. In view of these issues, this thesis has value in offering guidelines for the Church's response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic opens up the doors to the greatest possibility for outreach that the Church has had in many decades (Sue Parry 2005:47). In order for the Church to be relevant in the era of HIV/AIDS, it cannot turn away from any possibilities of showing holistic care and support to communities, especially the poorest of the poor and the most marginalized (Sue Parry 2005:47). One example of the church's lack of involvement in the AIDS pandemic is its non-involvement in issues such as Anti-Retroviral treatment, which it considers the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Health (Sue Parry 2005:47). However, in a holistic model the Church, in partnership with government, can play an active role in managing the AIDS pandemic.

Another response of the Church to the AIDS pandemic is to be a channel of hope. One way that this can be achieved is for the Church to offer the gift of spiritual mentorship. This thesis

offers the Church a "map" of spiritual mentorship with stigmatised people. Through knowledge gained during the data collection process, I outline how aspects of a fully human spirituality may empower personal and social transformation to wholeness. The knowledge is a useful tool for Church leaders who wish to journey alongside women who are HIV-positive in a way that will make a positive difference to their spirituality. Further, the hermeneutical principle of solidarity with the poor followed in this thesis is a social vocation for the Church. The thesis is thus offered as a service to the Church that seeks to be faithful to the demands of Jesus in the service of the poor (Victorio Araya 1983:xiv). The thesis also has value for the academic community as suggested below.

1.7.3   THE VALUE OF THE THESIS FOR THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

This research has value for the academic community in that it offers a contribution to the fields of research methodology, practical theology, feminist theory, feminist theology and Christian spirituality. The value that the research has for each of these academic disciplines is briefly outlined below.

The thesis offers a contribution to aspects of research methodology in the fields of both feminist theology and Christian spirituality. It adds to the literature in both fields and, through intersecting the two disciplines, new knowledge is created. The weaving together of these main disciplines with other academic influences such as Ken Wilber, ethics, action research and practical theology was described in section 1.5 of this first chapter using the image of the weaver's loom. Moreover, through a process of adopting a multi-perspective approach to the data-collection and data-interpretation processes and being innovative in the choice of data collection techniques, new knowledge is created. The thesis also offers suggestions to the way research methods are designed in the fields of feminist theology and Christian spirituality through innovative contributions such as the deliberate inclusion of the prayer journal or research diary which is summarised at the end of each chapter under the heading, "Personal reflections on the research journey".

The thesis has value for the discipline of practical theology by offering a model that guides the Church's engagement with HIV/AIDS. There is a rising increase in HIV infection, which may suggest that current strategies are not having an effect on reducing the spread of HIV. Some of the literature emphasises the importance of an integrated and multi-focal approach to the AIDS pandemic. One aim of the thesis is to offer a model that suggests an integrated and holistic response to HIV/AIDS for the Church. The model that is offered also provides a systematic way in which the Church can articulate "a vocal, vital and accurate theology of AIDS as a disease" in a holistic and integrative fashion (Sharlene Swartz 2005:195-6). A theology of HIV/AIDS that avoids simplistic, selective and judgmental responses is a

necessary aspect of the Church's healing response to HIV/AIDS. This thesis provides a framework that is comprehensive in that it incorporates both personal and social aspects of theology and spirituality (Sharlene Swartz 2005:195-6).

The thesis offers a contribution to the field of feminist theory in highlighting the gender perspective in responding to HIV/AIDS. Gender analysis is crucial to understanding HIV/AIDS transmission and developing programmes for action (Commonwealth Secretariat 2002:13). Gender mainstreaming is described as a process whereby women's and men's concerns and experiences are an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS (Commonwealth Secretariat 2002:14). The background information has shown that gender analysis should be the basis on which change is initiated to create a place where women and men can protect each other (Commonwealth Secretariat 2002:13). The goal is more than just gender equality; it is for women to express and grow their full humanity.

The thesis has value for the field of feminist theology. A comment that is often heard in Church and society is that feminism has run its course. It is true that feminist theology has achieved many goals in the last few years. For example, feminism has challenged androcentric models of humanity that imply that men are normative and women are "other" (Rita Gross 2004:17). A measured success of the challenge to androcentric model of humanity is that the generic masculine (where, for example, mankind is meant to represent all humanity) is mostly out of style (Rita Gross 2004:18). In numerous universities and courses in theology, the issues relating to feminist theology are highlighted. The problem is that feminist theology has not fully penetrated the Church environment and social context. An example is the 1989 prayer book of the Anglican Church, which still insists on using the image for God as Almighty Father, even though this image is only used 12 times in Scripture (Sandra Schneiders 1986b:29). The Anglican Church has women priests, but still there are no women bishops and in the Johannesburg diocese, there is only one woman archdeacon and no women canons. The paradigm shift toward gender inclusivity is not by any means complete (Rita Gross 2004:19)[2]. The thesis is an attempt to allow the gender perspective to penetrate the way the Church is structured.

Finally, the research offers a contribution to the discipline of Christian spirituality. Writers such as Philip Sheldrake (1995) describe the burgeoning interest in spirituality which is often accompanied by a theological vacuum. There is always a need for academics to articulate theological reflections on spirituality. This goal is achieved through the numerous doctoral programmes in spirituality at universities and through journals such as *Studies in Spirituality*

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[2] Rita Gross (2004:19) argues further that part of the problem relates to the fact that the issue of gender is carried mostly by women; men do not feel that the term gender applies to them.

and *Spiritus*. The value of this thesis is its attempt to outline aspects of a spirituality that are shaped by the South African context and in this way contribute to the discussion and literature on spirituality in South Africa.

1.8   THE DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

Against the backdrop of HIV/AIDS, chapter one outlines the background and problem statement and contextualises the research questions of this thesis. The background information offered definitions of HIV/AIDS, outlined the seriousness of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and established the close link between gender and HIV. The research problem and the research questions that shape the conversation of the thesis are outlined in this chapter. Finally, Chapter one delineates the division of the chapters in this thesis.

Chapter two offers operational definitions or ways of understanding the key terms that are used as tools in the thesis. A reflection on the meaning of what it means to be a fully human person in the contemporary South African situation demands that an explanation and definition of the term fully human is offered. I also pay attention to key terms such as the preferential option for the poor, Christian spirituality, feminist theology and feminist Christian spirituality.

Chapter three describes the rhythm of conversation and dance between theory and data and how these two aspects of research influence and change each other. The epistemological assumptions emerging from the disciplines of feminist theology and Christian spirituality are discussed. In the light of this framework, the research procedures relating to methods of data collection and analysis are offered.

Chapter four records the results of the data collection process using Renalta Tesch's (1990) analysis. This chapter explains how the data is interpreted and summarises the key findings of the empirical research.

Chapter five uses the data that emerges from Chapter four to suggest a model offering a gendered response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic for the South African Church. An explanation as to the influences, which helped form the model, is offered and each aspect of the model is then described and discussed with reference to the data drawn from the participants in the study.

Chapter six discusses aspects of a fully human spirituality and how these may be applied in one's personal and social transformation to wholeness. The aspects of a fully human

spirituality promote the experience of being a full human person and are based on the model described and discussed in chapter five.

Chapter seven, the concluding chapter, summarises the findings and knowledge-creation process with respect to HIV/AIDS, Christian spirituality, the Church and women. The seventh chapter also offers ideas for further research.

1.9   CONCLUDING REMARKS

People at different levels of society experience the impact of AIDS. The obvious impact is that it will exhaust the medical resources of governments which means that home-based care will become a necessary alternative to hospital care (Ronald Nicholson 1995:16). The impact of HIV/AIDS includes the personal cost to families, such as the huge number of people that are left without breadwinners and children without parents (Ronald Nicholson 1995:17). The following quote reflects the impact of AIDS on the Church: "We are burying people many days of the week, and our pastors are sometimes more busy with the affairs of death than the affairs of life" (Deborah Dortzbach 2003:51).

The theology in this thesis is understood through the images of weaving, talking and dancing. Included in the theological conversations that take place in the thesis are people from HIV/AIDS support groups who are materially poor and have little or no employment. The reason for this choice is that the hermeneutical point of departure in the thesis is the preferential option for the poor where solidarity with the poor is seen as a pivotal key in personal and social transformation.

A summarised conclusion of chapter one, offered in dialogue format is:

> What am I doing? I am working out a gendered response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic from the perspective of feminist theology and Christian spirituality.
>
> Why am I doing it? HIV/AIDS is death dealing and not the reign of God. It elicits a response from the Church because it is dehumanising and God desires the full humanity of people.
>
> How am I doing it? Through listening, in small groups, to the voices of the poor, mainly women, who are HIV-positive.

CHAPTER TWO
GATHERING LANGUAGE:
DEFINITIONS AND ESTABLISHING AN INTERPRETATIVE FRAMEWORK

2.1   INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

Chapter one offered background information on HIV/AIDS, outlined the research aims and described the weaving, dancing and talking nature of theology. The aims of this research are to stand in solidarity with the poor, to develop and describe a model that could offer the South African Church a gendered way to respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and to discuss how aspects of a fully human spirituality may be implemented in one's personal and social transformation to wholeness. The purpose of this second chapter is to offer operational definitions for the theological terms that are used in the thesis.

The process of defining theological terms is described as the gathering of concepts. The gathering of concepts suggests that as one gathers information in the weaving, dancing and talking process of praying and theologising, one's definitions evolve and develop. After key concepts used in the research are defined, my personal reflections of the research journey are outlined. These personal reflections highlight that knowledge making in this thesis is a dance and a dialogue that is woven together with voices of scholars, research participants and myself as the research writer. Finally, I offer a summary in conclusion of the chapter.

The five main theological terms applied in this study are clearly defined below so that the context in which they are used may be understood. The terms are: fully human, the preferential option for the poor, feminist theology, Christian spirituality and feminist spirituality. Fully human represents the goal of the thesis. The fully human life is the desire of God for God's people, and people's desires for themselves. The preferential option for the poor as expressed in solidarity with them is a key hermeneutical principle in the thesis. Feminist theology, Christian spirituality and feminist spirituality form the theoretical framework in which the thesis is situated.

2.2   FULLY HUMAN

Jesus understood his vocation as offering to people life in all its fullness (John 10:10b). The glory of God is the person that is fully alive, fully human (St Irenaeus, *Against heresies 4.20.7*). What does it mean when one says that a person is *fully human*? To someone without a theological ear it may seem like a strange term. Either someone or something is human or she/he is not.

The term fully human relates to the existential questions that people ask of life: How do we fulfil our true selves? How do we relate to others, God and the world? How do we become whole? How are we healed? (Esther de Waal 1984:29). To be fully human is to be catholic in the etymological sense of the word. It includes wholeness at all levels, personal and communal, private and political, intellectual and emotional. One of the tasks of this thesis is to present a model to address the concern for wholeness, healing and transformation. Humans need to love and be loved if they are to be fully human and in the journey to full humanity, people need belonging, freedom and authority (Esther de Waal 1984:29). The expression of "full humanity" also means authentic service to others. As Alan Jones (1992:16) says: "The fully human life is a consecrated life in service of others".

The journey of a fully human person implies growing in wholeness: wholeness within as people discover their authentic selves, wholeness with others as they find space to belong, love and be loved and wholeness with God as they experiment with freedom and authority. To be a fully human person is to live the interconnectedness of life within one's self, with others and with God. In order to live the interconnectedness of life, one must discover one's essential unity with the Godhead as this is the wholeness that characterises being fully human. Ken Wilber (1985:3) describes wholeness as a growing awareness of unitive consciousness where the individual feels that he or she is at one with the entire universe, which is the authentic nature of the human being, the true self. It is a loving embrace with the universe as a whole.

Full humanity is transformation to wholeness which may be defined as friendship with oneself, others, creation and God. The path of transformation to wholeness is cosmic in that it involves ever-widening circles of unity (Daniel Erlander 1992:92). This means that human identity expands to include more of God, more of other people, more of one's shadows, more of creation. The writer of Ephesians 1:9-10 uses the word *anakephalaisosasthai* to suggest that what God is doing in the universe is uniting and gathering all things together into Christ the head, into one harmonious, well-managed household[1] (Daniel Erlander 1992:77). Ephesians 1:9-10 promises that God is uniting all things into Christ the head. This is the state of full humanity – the Spirit's invitation to oneness with all of creation. This means that every part of the universe works in harmony with every other part for the good of the whole. It is about interconnection and interrelationship in the household of God. A fully human spirituality is to participate in the household of God that is characterised by

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[1] The Scriptures often describe the kingdom of God as an image to suggest the spaces where Christ's influence is felt. It is used as an image of salvation suggesting unity with God and others. The image of the household of God is the preferred image as the word 'kingdom' sometimes implies hierarchy and male space. The image of a well-managed household (*oikonomia* in Greek) where all are embraced, loved and accepted is God's dream for humanity.

relationships of justice and shalom, which is wholeness and health at all levels of society. Full humanity is thus a personal and a social dream. It is God's unfolding promise to mend the entire universe (Daniel Erlander 1992:77).

The term "a fully human spirituality" is a concept that inspires transformation to wholeness on all levels; for women and men as individuals, for people in community, for the society in which people make their home and for the cosmos as a whole. There is thus a necessary social aspect to defining the term fully human spirituality. Transformation towards full humanity has, according to Aurobindo (in Felicity Edwards 2003:259), three integral aspects which include the journey within as well as the descent and ascent of consciousness. Moreover, because of humankind's interconnectedness, a change in one person produces a transformation in the whole cosmos. Thus the personal and social aspects of transformation to wholeness and full humanity are linked. Felicity Edwards (2003:259) states

> … when there is a positive change qualitatively and/or quantitatively this is what is meant by transformation. Further, because of the interconnectedness of the places of being from which all arise, when one person changes in this way, whatever changes take place in that one person affects others and the cosmos; transformation in one person is not only a positive change in that person but also a contribution to the transformation of the whole. As a result of the smallest change the whole comes into being differently.

The opposite of full humanity is dehumanisation. The experience of dehumanisation is the experience of isolation and alienation: from creation, from God, from others and within oneself. It is disintegration. To be dehumanised is to be an alien in a foreign land. In the Hebrew Scriptures, land is a gift from God. A foreign land is a hostile and unjust place (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:11). The feeling of being lost in a foreign land is epitomised in Psalm 137 where the people in exile cry out: "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:11). The realities of poverty, HIV/AIDS and patriarchal oppression are contrary to the reign of God as the Scriptures proclaim and as a result people may experience themselves as aliens in a foreign land (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:10).

The desire for full humanity emerges from a Christological and an anthropological base. In terms of Christology, Christ, who offers authentic humanity, is the goal of human destiny. Fully human is also about anthropology which relates what it means to be human and what humans need to "survive and thrive" (Maria Cimperman 2005:19). The nature of human persons is that people have a transcendental aspect to their being: "It is our nature to become fully transcendent, fully cosmic and fully personal. It is our destiny" (Felicity Edwards 2003:247). The necessary spiritual discipline in the growth towards full humanity is hope. The dynamic power of hope is that it helps humans to continue to struggle when their growth is hindered, especially by the dehumanising effects of the patriarchal system (Howard Clinebell 1995:30). It is a resource for coping with crises when people's full

potential is blocked. Hope is nurtured by the belief that people have the power to change and that the God of Life desires their full humanity. These beliefs affirm the growth potential latent in people (Howard Clinebell 1995:31).

Thus, full humanity is being transformed to wholeness, which is the experience of unity with God, others, the creation and within oneself. The cry of the poor is a cry for full life against the dehumanising effects of structural oppression; it is a desire for full humanity.

2.3   A PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR

A hermeneutical key or point of departure refers to the overall meaning paradigm that is woven through a thesis (Victorio Araya 1983:xiii). In this research study, the hermeneutical key is *a preferential option for the poor,* which is expressed through standing in solidarity with the poor. What is a preferential option for the poor? What does it mean to stand in solidarity with the poor? Why is it important to do? To answer these questions one needs to reflect on who the poor are.

2.3.1   WHO ARE THE POOR?

Who are the poor? In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel Jesus says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit", referring perhaps to the humble (Matthew 5:3). In Luke's Gospel the same beatitude says: "Blessed are the poor" (Luke 6:20). In the context of Luke's Gospel it refers to the economically poor (Luke 6:20). New Testament scholars explain that there are several words to describe the poor, the usual word being *tapeinoi*, which describes the peasant classes (Richard Rohr and John Feister 1996:130). The word used by both Matthew and Luke in the beatitudes, is *ptochoi*, which means the empty ones, describing those who are unclean and expendable (Richard Rohr and John Feister 1996:130). In Jesus' time the poor were those who lived as outcasts: beggars, widows, orphans, the sick, the disabled, the blind and the dumb. Those referred to by the Pharisees as sinners, were the poor that Jesus came to reach (Albert Nolan 2001:27,28). Sinners were the *am–ha arez* who were peasants unfamiliar with the law and included prostitutes, shepherds, tax collectors and social outcasts (Albert Nolan 2001:29). Jesus subverted the taboos to which the social classes were subjected by socialising with these scandalised outcasts out of choice even though, as a tradesman carpenter, he was not part of the outcasts from society (Albert Nolan 2001:34, 45).

The poor are those who live on the margins of society, on the periphery, the underside of history, the oppressed. Poverty is not always the result of insufficient resources or the result of laziness (Victorio Araya 1983:23). It is a sin of social injustice (Leonardo Boff 1982:50)

and the product of unjust economic, social and political structures and mechanisms (Victorio Araya 1983:23 & Leonardo Boff 1982:83). These impersonal systems have a dynamism and momentum of their own and threaten to destroy the world (Albert Nolan 2001:9, 10). These systems, geared towards profits, rather than people, produce wealth and poverty; allowing the rich to get richer and the poor, poorer (Albert Nolan 2001:9,10). In the face of confrontation and threat, these systems defend themselves with violence, which includes institutional violence, injustice, oppression, exploitation and military power (Albert Nolan 2001:10). In other words, the poor are poor because of the way society is designed.

Gustavo Gutierrez (1983:114) says: "All those who are trying to live in close proximity to the poor will bear witness to the intermeshing afflictions that form a chain and turn the life of the poor into a prison sentence". These intermeshing afflictions refer to unjust social, economic and cultural orders (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:114), leading to poverty, which disrupts people's relationships and creates barriers to the explorations of their vocations by the poor (Leonardo Boff 1982:50). The term *poor* does not refer to individuals but to a social and cultural grouping of men, women and children who are downtrodden, oppressed and marginalized (Victorio Araya 1983:23). Gender specific realities of poverty and oppression mean that women are "double oppressed and marginalized"; they are the "least of the least" (John Douglas Hall & Rosemary Radford Ruether 1995:98). In the context of this thesis, the poor are defined as black women who have little or no employment and are HIV positive.

2.3.2   WHAT IS A PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR?

A preferential option for the poor describes how God favours those who live on the margins of history. The outcasts, the marginalized, the rejected and the poor have a privileged perspective in the household of God[2]. A preferential option for the poor is a reflection of the faith conviction that God is made manifest in history and that He is a God of the poor (Victorio Araya 1983:xiii). Put simply: God does have favourites - God favours the poor.

God's preferential option for the poor runs through the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian New Testament. The God of the poor is the God of the Bible (Victorio Araya 1983:xiii). God takes the side of the poor and is on the side of their life and liberation to full humanity (Victorio Araya 1983:xiii). In the Hebrew Scriptures we see that particular care was demanded for the marginalized. For example, the Mosaic law expected that widows, orphans and foreigners, be given special care. Some of these ethics are seen in the book of Ruth 2:1-3 where Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi, as marginalized people, were able to glean from the wheat fields belonging to Boaz (see also Leviticus 19:9-10, 23:22, Deuteronomy 24:19-22). The attention to foreigners is indicated in Leviticus 19:33 where the

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[2] Some aspects of a preferential option for the poor are critiqued in section 2.7.2.

Israelites were told to treat foreigners as fellow Israelites. The Jewish Exiles were instructed by the Mosaic Law to love foreigners as they loved themselves, remembering that they too were once foreigners in Egypt. The Sabbath laws included resting every seventh day, allowing the land and animals to rest every seventh year and the year of Jubilee after seven times seven years (Leviticus 25:8–55 and Deuteronomy 15:1-11). Jubilee meant that every fifty years land was to be restored to those from whom it was bought, debts were cancelled and slaves set free. These Sabbath laws were designed with the poor in mind in that they prevented the rich from becoming too rich and the poor from becoming too poor.

In the New Testament Scriptures, God makes a deliberate choice for the downtrodden. One example of this is the *Magnificat* or the Song of Mary where Mary celebrates that God has brought down the mighty, lifted up the lowly, filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty (Luke 1:52&53). Another example is the Beatitudes or the Sermon on the Mount. The teaching espouses how Jesus expects Christians to take the low road and to operate from the position of marginalisation (Richard Rohr and John Feister 1996:130). A third example is the social manifestation of Christian spirituality where a close link is intimated between how we treat the poor and how we treat Christ (Matthew 25:31-46).

The following creed that I wrote for use in an AIDS-awareness worship service highlights God's preferential option for the poor. It expresses in creedal form the points made in the above paragraphs.

> I believe in God
> The father and
> the mother who gives birth to us and nurtures us
> whose compassion for us is described as "wombishness".
> I believe in God who lives within me, within those around me, within those who are HIV positive, but who is also beyond everything I can know and experience.
> I believe in God, who, like a mother hen, gathers her children beneath her wings and says children are the first in the kingdom of Jesus.
> The energy of God's love is made manifest in the world.
> I believe in a God of extravagant love, abundant and reckless mercy who offers compassion to all and has a soft-spot for the "underdogs".
>
> I Believe in Jesus Christ:
> A vulnerable child born in a draughty stable.
> Friend of the outcast:
> Lover of the unlovable:
> Toucher of the untouchable:
> Caregiver to children:
> He noticed those that others ignored.
> He was confronted by those who had everything to lose and loved by those who had nothing to lose.
> In the fullness of time he accepted the penalty for this:
>> The penalty for offering good news to the poor,
>> Freedom to those in chains,
>> Liberating the oppressed.

> But death did not have the final word!
> By rising on the third day Jesus declared that LOVE and LIFE go on and on and
> on and on and on and on and on and on and on and on and on and on and on.
>
> I believe in the Spirit of Love
> Who broods over creation:
> A rushing wind and roaring fire!
> Who is the love-bond creating fellowship between Yahweh and Jesus and
> immersing us into that love affair, which we share with the world as the Church.
> I believe in the all-embracing Church that knows no boundaries and remembers,
> retells and relives the stories of Jesus forever.

The principle of the preferential option for the poor is woven through Scripture. God's preferential option for the poor is seen in the Exodus from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey. The Christian Church expresses a preferential option for poor by standing in solidarity with them.

2.3.3   WHAT IS SOLIDARITY WITH THE POOR?

Solidarity with the poor and the hope for their liberation is characterised by authentic friendship with them (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:96). To enter into the world of the poor one must embrace spiritual childhood, which is the attitude of spiritual poverty, humility and openness described in the Matthean version of the Beatitudes (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:126,127). Jesus teaches that to enter the kingdom of heaven, one must become like a child (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:127). Spiritual childhood implies being open to God's presence and influence and describes people who accept the gift of communion with the divine and respond to it by building fellowship (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:127). Spiritual childhood is a requirement for solidarity with the poor because entry into the world of the poor cannot be associated with triumphalism of any kind (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:126). It demands a humility which encourages authenticity in one's friendship with the poor; a friendship which requires that one learns from them and does not try to impose one's own solutions on them – true to the principle that authentic love exists only among equals (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:104). Thus solidarity requires continual conversion, in other words a continual changing of attitude and behaviour (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:106). Nevertheless, spiritual poverty is more than humility. The commitment to solidarity with the poor requires that one lives with an attitude of spiritual poverty, which is detachment from goods (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:123). Solidarity with the poor is a statement of the rejection of poverty as poverty is not compatible with the reign of God (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:123).

Christians undertake the commitment to the poor knowing in advance that it cannot be done alone as the situation of the poor will overstrain their human capacity for solidarity. For this reason the call to stand in solidarity with the poor is both a personal vocation for Christ-

followers and a communal vocation for the Church. Christians cannot romanticise the poor, those involved in the lives of the marginalized will confirm that it is exhausting and that the poor, like all people, are not always saints. There is a need for the whole Church to be transformed in expressing the preferential option for the poor through solidarity (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:101). Solidarity needs to be written into the very structures of the Church because following Jesus does not happen alone, it is a collective vocation (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983: 42 and 102). If friendship with the poor is not easy, why then do Christians do it? The next section suggests some reasons why it is necessary to express a preferential option for the poor by standing in solidarity with them.

2.3.4   WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR EXPRESSING A PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR?

The reasons why Christians answer a call to stand in solidarity with the poor relate to their spirituality and growth in God. Firstly, as spiritual people, Christians want to experience God. Since God is a God of the poor, God is experienced through the poor. Gustavo Gutierrez (1983:38) defines spirituality as following Jesus. To follow Jesus means to walk with the poor because the presence of God is hidden and revealed among the poor (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:38) just as God's mystery is hidden in the poor and experienced from the "antihistory of the downtrodden" (Victorio Araya 1983:xiii).

The second reason Christians stand in solidarity with the poor relates to the summary of the law, which is love of God and love of neighbour; it teaches that people encounter God through their relationship with people. Spirituality is expressed in love of God and love of neighbour; one's neighbours are the poor (Albert Nolan 2001:75). God is love. Love among and between humans is one of the ways that people approach God (Victorio Araya 1983:57). In the teachings of Karl Rahner (1969b:236-8; Karl Rahner and Johann Baptist Metz 1980:53), there is a unity of love of God and love of neighbour. In the very moment that people authentically love their neighbours, who are the poor, they are loving God (Gerald McCool 1975:239-244; Karl Rahner and Johann Baptist Metz 1980:56-7). Thus, if Christian spirituality is about being made one with God, then Christians also experience unity with all with whom God is one, which includes one's neighbours who are whole groups of people who suffer oppression and marginalisation (Victorio Araya 1983:4). To believe in God is to enter into communion with God and others, especially those who are poor. Christian spirituality is love for neighbour expressed by standing in solidarity with the poor, which makes Christian loving rooted and practical.

A third reason why Christians answer the call to stand in solidarity with the poor is found in Scripture, particularly Matthew 25:31-46, which depicts the judgement of the nations where the righteous who fed the hungry, clothed the naked and cared for the sick are welcomed into the household of God. The message of the text is that the way people treat the poor is the way they treat Christ. The text suggests more than the social justice aspect of lived faith. It includes the contemplative aspect in that people encounter God among the poor and at the heart of their expressions of love (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:104). That this is so is suggested by God's reply to the righteous: "Whenever you did this for one of the least of these you did it for me!" (Matthew 25:37). What the Biblical text calls for is faith in action, expressed in concrete terms as an authentic love for the poor, which is made possible through the grace of God (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:104). This work of love suggested by Matthew 25:31-46 is not a duty, but a gift of the self made possible through integrating oneself into the world of the poor and creating a bond of friendship with those, such as the poor, who suffer injustices (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:104).

Spirituality requires that we read the signs of our times, which means understanding the context in which we find ourselves. Hence, a fourth reason why we stand in solidarity with the poor is the context in Africa and Southern Africa. South Africa is characterised by first world pockets living in what is essentially a two-thirds world environment. The gap between the rich and the poor is wide. In the South African context, a small percentage of the population controls the majority of the country's wealth and resources. In this context the Church is called to stand in solidarity with the poor majority and so express God's preferential option for the oppressed.

Finally, solidarity with the poor relates to the praxis of transformation. Expressing God's preferential option for the poor is a transformative praxis for both the rich and the poor (Leonardo Boff 1982:49). Poverty dehumanises the rich and the poor alike as there seem to be natural boundaries and contradictions between those on the outside and those on the inside, between the rich and the poor. The practice of solidarity overcomes these boundaries because friendship requires that these boundaries be crossed. Solidarity with the poor allows space for personal and social transformation because as the rich experience their worldview being opened, they are converted to the cause of the poor and can listen and respond to their life stories and experiences.

In summary, the preferential option for the poor, as expressed through solidarity with the oppressed, is a key principle in the thesis. Christians stand in solidarity with the poor because as spiritual people they want to experience God through the poor. According to the law of God, spirituality is expressed in love of God and love of neighbour, who are the poor.

The preferential option for the poor is also followed as an example suggested by the Hebrew Scriptures, the New Testament Scriptures and Jesus. Finally, the South African situation requires that the Church that is called to bring Good News to the oppressed, expresses an option for the poor as a key praxis of integral transformation. Mercy Oduyoye (1986:147) summarises the insight of a preferential option for the poor outlined in section 2.3

> Africa belongs to the world of the powerless and the dispossessed. As a woman who feels the weight of sexism I cannot but go again and again to the stories of the Exodus, the exile and to other biblical motifs in which "the least" are recognised and affirmed, are saved or held up as the beloved of God … These narratives have been for me the bearers of good news.

The quotation highlights the pervasive influence of sexism as a component in the experience of poverty and oppression and serves as an incentive to describe the term **feminist theology,** which denounces sexism.

2.4   FEMINIST THEOLOGY

Feminist theology is a contested term and because of the perceived negative connotations of the word; people may sometimes shy away from using it (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:54). For example bell hooks[3] (2000:vii), who remarks about the negative connotations of feminism for the average layperson, says

> I tend to hear all about the evil of feminism and the bad feminists: how they "hate" men. How "they" want to go against nature and god; how "they" are all lesbians; how "they" are taking all the jobs and making the world hard for white men, who do not stand a chance.

The quotation highlights the emotional responses that some people have to the word feminism. In response to the negativity surrounding the term, it is important to say what is meant by *feminist theology*.

2.4.1   A DEFINITION OF FEMINIST THEOLOGY

In the introduction of the thesis, I described theology as how my experiences and beliefs shape how I pray and how I relate to myself, others, creation and God. Feminist theology becomes a particular way of doing theology and a particular way of speaking about God. In this thesis, feminist theology is based on the theological conviction that God desires the full humanity of all people, women included. Feminist theology argues that women should be free to respond to the fullness that God expects of all human beings (Mercy Amba Oduyoye 1995:5). That which militates against the full personhood of people, particularly women, is critiqued and denounced. This may include patriarchal oppression, poverty and structural sin

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[3] bell hooks does not write either her name or god with capital letters.

(Mercy Amba Oduyoye 1995:56). Feminist theology seeks to liberate the human community from entrenched attitudes and structures that are maintained through patriarchy, hierarchy and dichotomy since these structures are harmful to men, women and children (Mercy Amba Oduyoye 1986:121). Rita Gross (1998:x), for example, defines feminism as the "radical practice of the co-humanity of women and men". The constructive task of feminist theology is thus to offer a new vision of reciprocal relationships for humanity and begins the journey of making that vision a reality. Feminist theology is not a reversal of oppression at all but seeks to reconstruct society so that all people are embraced and included in a social order characterised by mutual reciprocity.

Feminist theology highlights a woman's worldview in her struggle to realise her full potential (Mercy Amba Oduyoye 1986:121). The emphasis in feminist theology is the gender perspective. Gender is seen as **THE** category that shapes people's lives and moulds their consciousness (Patti Lather 1991:71). The lack of the gender perspective in mainstream theology results in an androcentric worldview. From a feminist's perspective, interpretation of discourse on God and with God requires reflection from the point of view of women's interpreted experience where the goal is the full humanity of women (Anne Carr 1993:9,10). The influence of the gender category is seen in how society is structured and how resources and power are shared (Anne Carr 1993:71). The goal of feminism is to correct the invisibility and distortion of women's interpreted experience such that it creates a new equal society, replacing hierarchy as an organising principle (Anne Carr 1993:71). This is achieved through the concept of full humanity which is the goal for people on a personal level and is the principle defining how society should be transformed on a social level.

2.4.2   FULL HUMANITY: THE GOAL AND TOOL IN FEMINIST THEOLOGY

A way of embracing feminist theology in this thesis is to use the concept of being fully human as a goal and a tool for analysis. A fully human person is one who realises that at the deepest level of her being she is one with the Infinite. A fully human person is one who is on the journey of transformation to wholeness.

Women theologians describe feminist theology as the promotion of the full humanity of women (Rosemary Radford Ruether 1983:14; Susan Rakoczy 2004:15). Whatever denies or hampers their full humanity is dismissed as not of God (Rosemary Radford Ruether 1983:19, Mercy Amba Oduyoye 1995:4). The drive for full humanity encourages women to realise their full personhood through seeking economic and social independence and by refusing to accept that human talents are gender specific (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 1993:58). Women's sin is the way in which they deny themselves the gift of full humanity as it may be considered as a failure to develop the self (Susan Rakoczy 2004:266).

Why do women find it necessary to ask for full humanity? Women are shaped by a religious and social context that mars their development by prescribing their ontological inferiority to men (Anne Carr 1993:10). Christian religion plays a legitimising role in patriarchal oppression and how women are denied the opportunity of developing their full potential (Anne Carr 1993:8, Mary Daly 1973:13). A sexist society advocates that a woman's place is as man's helpmate thus women are socialised to view themselves as "derivatives" (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 1993:57). They are the "other" and are taught to live their lives through their husbands and children (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 1993:57). In Christian theology, a woman has been described as a "misbegotten male" by Thomas Aquinas and as the "Devil's gateway" by Tertullian (Anne Carr 1996:7). In some interpretations of Scripture, women are presented as inferior and as the descendents of Eve and as such they bear responsibility for bringing sin into the world (Sandra Schneiders 1993:34; Anne Carr 1993:9). Moreover, God is depicted in male terms offering women no capacity for imaging the divine (Sandra Schneiders 1986b:5). According to Sandra Schneiders (1986b:16) "God is not male but we experience God as masculine".

The retrieval of the full humanity of women is rooted in right speech about God (Kathleen Fischer 1995:101). The concern to speak rightly about God is a modern dilemma for women that emerges out of the growing awareness that the masculinity of God sanctions social structures that oppress women and deny them the opportunity for full participation in life, in Church and society (Sandra Schneiders 1986b:1-6, Mary Daly 1973:13). Against this backdrop, the task of the spiritual mentor is firstly to help women grieve the loss and collapse of religious symbols and structures. For this the tradition of contemplative prayer is a helpful resource as it can lead toward an *apophatic*[4] expression of connection with God. Secondly, the spiritual mentor can create sacred space for the healing of these images through the therapy of religious imagination (Sandra Schneiders 1986b:19). For example, one image of God that some feminists critique is the patriarchal Father image. Jesus healed the father metaphor in the way that he experienced God in the intimate babble word "Abba" (Sandra Schneiders 1986b:44,48). Moreover, the metaphors are not meant to be taken literally; they are there to create a linguistic tension which destabilises the literal mind and forces it to reach beyond the literal reference into experiencing the ineffability and mystery of God (Sandra Schneiders 1986b:38).

It is necessary to emphasise that feminism does not seek to reverse the pattern of oppression, but seeks a new way of being and becoming that promotes the full humanity of all people. Based on the understanding that patriarchy damages the souls of men as much

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[4] The term *apophatic* is discussed in section 2.5. It describes a path in prayer that approaches God without the use of images while the *cataphatic* path approaches God using images.

as it does women, feminism seeks the full humanity of **all** people. The goal is liberation from patriarchal oppression in order to attain freedom and full humanity. Women are freed from the experience of patriarchal oppression and men are freed from the damaging effects of being oppressors. The goal of liberation is achieved through the humanisation of structures of society (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 1993:66). This does not refer to women having equal access to patriarchal institutions; the goal is the transformation of these structures (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 1993:11). The inspiration for a fully human society that would allow all people to flourish is Jesus. Jesus calls together a new, non-patriarchal community of equal disciples (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 1993:49). His attitude to women reveals the true nature of God and humanity. Through his teaching and life he exposed the inadequacy of the male definition of humanity by repudiating power, domination, violence and control of others. He affirmed what some might call stereotypical feminine virtues of humility, non-violence and nurturing (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 1993:58,9).

Based on the conviction of the full humanity of women, feminism offers a critical and a constructive approach to theology that begins with women's **interpreted** experience (see section 2.4.3) as the source of the content and method of knowledge creation[5] (Rosemary Radford Ruether 1983:13, Anne Carr 1993:13, Susan Rakoczy 2004:11). Broadly speaking, the methodology of feminist theology, using full humanity as a goal and a tool of interpretation is twofold, namely to criticise patriarchy and to contribute to the reconstruction of a mutual society. These two tasks are now discussed.

2.4.3   THE CRITICAL TASK OF FEMINIST THEOLOGY

The critical aspect of the work of a feminist theologian is to analyse those patriarchal systems, found in Church and society, which denigrate the full humanity and dignity of women. But what is patriarchy? The etymological roots of the term patriarchy define the word as the rule of the fathers. Patriarchy is an ideology and a way of thinking and organising life where male dominance is enforced legally, politically and religiously (Mercy Amba Oduyoye 1995:10, Sandra Schneiders 1986b:12). Although patriarchy is a societal system of male domination designed to benefit the male, I need to also acknowledge that there are occasions where women themselves benefit from a patriarchal system and contribute to the maintenance of patriarchy.

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[5] In section 1.7.3, I suggest that this research has value for the academic community in that it offers a contribution to the field of feminist theology. It is necessary that feminist theology offer a reorientation to androcentic theology and Church structures using women's interpreted experience. The goal is a fully human society of mutuality and reciprocity as an environment where people can be transformed to wholeness. I agree with Anne Car who believes that feminist theology is a life-giving moment, a powerful transforming grace for the Church, Christianity and theology (1998:xxi).

Sexism, which is a daily experience in the life of an African woman (Mercy Amba Oduyoye 1995:89), is incompatible with being in Christ (Mercy Amba Oduyoye 1986:137). The critical task of feminist theology requires that feminists untangle the web of women's oppression (Mercy Amba Oduyoye 1986:133-136). People are not always aware of how patriarchy influences their lives because of the subtle ways that patriarchy is mediated through culture.

Culture may be defined as the interior meanings and value that similar communities share (Ken Wilber 2000b:122). The following quote is a critique of patriarchal culture that brings to light how it promotes men and suppresses women. Bongi Khuluse (in Lesanne Schwellnus and Ingrid Clanch nd: 6) says

> From that day on I realised that culture stinks, because even though I was angry toward this I could not do anything to defend myself. Culture, I have come to believe, was constructed to favour men at the expense of women. All the rules that are laid were meant to keep us under guard, to monitor all our movements and, if we try to protest and fight, keep us in our place.
>
> I often blame our upbringing because it teaches men that they have a God-given right to do with women as they like and moulds women to accept this and not to question it. We then grow up with a sense of conflict wherein we are expected to love the very people who abuse us, devalue us and treat us as if we are second to all that is important in life.

In the critique of patriarchy that is mediated through culture offered by Bongi Khuluse, she highlights how culture becomes an experience of conflict for women; there is dissonance in the meaning that culture offers. Bongi summarises the conflict well: "we grow up with a sense of conflict wherein we are expected to love the very people who abuse us".

Part of the process of liberation from patriarchy is listening to women's experience of structures and how this limits them (Mercy Amba Oduyoye 1986:137:131). Feminists therefore analyse dualist ways of conceiving and organising human community. They examine the traditions that justify the domestication and oppression of women (Mercy Amba Oduyoye 1986:133-136). To this end feminist theologians question gender role assignment in society, which is often based on gender scripting where tasks are divided according to gender stereotypes. These stereotypes have a "hemming-in effect" (Mercy Amba Oduyoye 1986:128). It is difficult to challenge these socially constructed patterns of thinking and behaviour. This is partly because society has been so conditioned by male and female divisions of labour and society that some people are often embarrassed by those who suggest it could be different (Mercy Amba Oduyoye 1986:128). In this context the "free woman" spells disaster (Mercy Amba Oduyoye 1995:4). A single woman who manages her affairs successfully is an affront to patriarchy because it is interpreted as a direct challenge to the masculinity of men (Mercy Amba Oduyoye 1995:5).

Ken Wilber (1981:218) defines the origins of patriarchy. He suggests that women's power is associated with the mysteries of menstruation and childbirth and is therefore automatically associated with the "birth-body-earth" realm (1981:229). This means that the development of mental culture is left to men (Ken Wilber 1981:229). In other words, the Earth principle belongs to women so therefore the heavenly principle belongs to men and the product is a close correlation between heaven and masculinity (Ken Wilber 1981:230). Taken further, the mind represents the masculine principle while the body represents the feminine (Ken Wilber 1981:232). Therein lies the source of the oppression of women. The separation of the ego from the mind is in parallel with the separation and then the sociological oppression of women by men (Ken Wilber 1981:232). A basic drive in humankind is fear of death (*thanatos*). The body reminds the mind of its own mortality, to deny the body is a tactic of denying death. In other words, the body is a perceived threat (Ken Wilber 1981:232). In the same way, the feminine principle, so closely associated with the body, is seen unconsciously as a threat to the masculine, and this is why the feminine principle is oppressed in the same way that the body is denied (Ken Wilber 1981:232). The explanation offered by Ken Wilber suggests the intimate link between dualistic notions and patriarchal oppression. For this reason feminist theology offers a challenge not only to patriarchy but also to systems that are based on hierarchy and dualisms. The vision of feminism is described with the words *integral* and *holistic* as is illustrated in the outline of feminist spirituality in section 2.6.

By way of summary: the **critical** task of feminist theology is to analyse patriarchy and dualistic structures, which are anti-Christ. Ken Wilber (1981:218-232) provides a helpful link between gender-based oppression and dualistic ideas. Based on the assumption that God desires the full humanity of all people, feminist theology not only challenges that which dehumanises, it also offers a **reconstructive** contribution to building a fully human society where life can flourish. The reconstructive task of feminist theology is subsequently described.

2.4.4   CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMINIST THEOLOGY

Feminist theology in this thesis has three dimensions. First, it has as its central focus women's **interpreted** experience. Second, liberation of the oppressed and oppressors are seen as the purpose of feminist theology. Third, solidarity in sisterhood provides the community of support for this agenda. Each of these dimensions is now discussed.

Women's interpreted experience

The purpose of this section is to highlight that for feminist theologians women's experience[6] is the beginning point and the *modus operandi* of theologising. An important issue to highlight before we begin our discussion on the use of women's experience in theology is to emphasise that there is no such thing as "raw" experience. **Experience is mediated through interpretation, we cannot separate experience from interpretation.** In this thesis we will therefore be referring to **interpreted** experience as the main source in theologising to highlight that even the moment of experience is not free from interpretation. Two people will offer different stories of how they experienced the same event as no two people experience the same event in exactly the same way. Anatomists, for example, show that our brains, although similar in structure, are different in detail so that no one person sees the world in the same way (James Churchill and David Jones 1979:143). In the same way, no one truth could be the same for two people (James Churchill and David Jones 1979:143). The purpose of the diagram provided below is to visually represent how an event is experienced and at the same time interpreted and filtered through the lens of assumptions about the world, culture and one's context and is influenced by past experiences and personality. Inevitably, the way one understands the event influences one's experience of the event.

Figure 2.1   A visual representation of women's interpreted experience
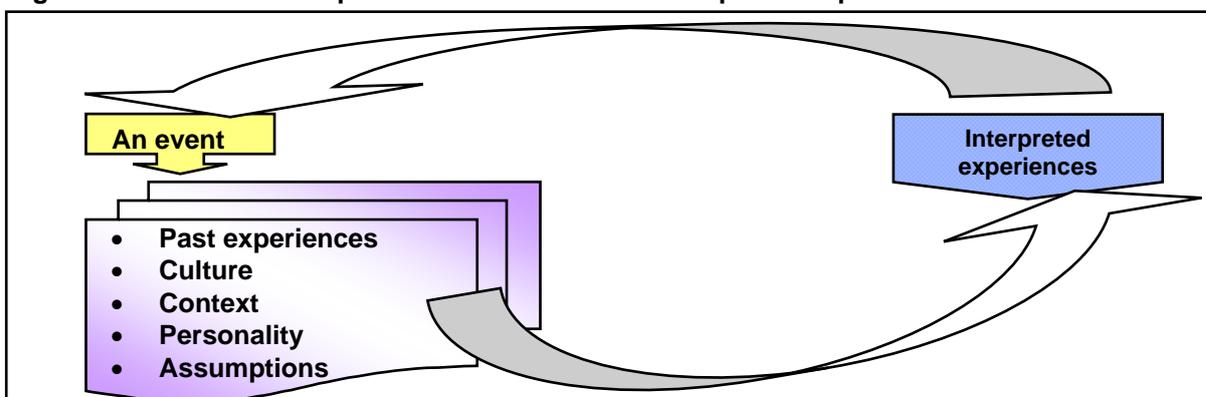
Experience is a complex word and open to several understandings. Experience is inseparable from interpretation and is not *a priori* to interpretation. Hence, my description of *experience* in theology as **interpreted** experience. The term women's experience is not a monolithic but a diverse phenomenon. The fact there are often **different categories of experience** adds to the complexity of the word **experience**. The gender lens alone is not sufficient when it comes to talking of women's interpreted experience, as experience is diverse and multifaceted. Other categories of experience include sexual preference, class, race and nationality, language and culture. Experience is socially constructed and culturally

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6   As feminist theology matures as a discipline, it may be that it highlights the gender perspective rather than just women's perspective in knowledge-making. Feminist theologians may need to create space for male voices to contribute to the knowledge-making process as well as women's voices. The gender perspective includes both men and women. The use of men's experience is discussed further in chapter three, section 3.4.1 and chapter 4, section 4.3.3.

generated. Culture refers to the common framework that holds a community together (Denise Ackermann 1996b:143). This common framework gives meaning to experience and is communicated through language, symbols, rituals and art (Denise Ackermann 1996b:143). It is, therefore, important to include other categories of experience as suggested by the example of class distinction, which allows some women to exercise decisions over the lives of other women, while still other women are immersed in survival issues (Denise Ackermann 1996b:139).

The different categories of experience are further suggested by the criticism from women theologians writing in a two-thirds world context. Women from the two-thirds world argue that feminist theologians must be intentional about including the voices of marginalized women in the dialogue on women's interpreted experience. Since the term women is not a universal category, it becomes necessary to explain which women feminist theologians mean when they describe reality from women's perspective (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:58). Race, sexual orientation, economic mobility and poverty are some categories that shape women's experience of patriarchy in different ways (Susan Bordo 1990:150). For women in Latin America, Africa and Asia, marginalisation is a multifaceted experience of "interlocking oppressions" (Susan Rakoczy 2004:14).

Women theologians from the two-thirds world have pointed out that while some white feminists criticise the patriarchal bias in Christian theology, their writings can also be critiqued on the basis of their class and race bias (Maggie Kim, Susan St Ville and Susan Simonaitis 1993:2). For example, in South Africa, some white women exercise dominant power over black women in the domestic sphere. Feminist theory during the period from 1960-1980 reflected that which it sought to critique: its analyses were the viewpoints of white, middle-class women (Linda Nicholson 1990:1). Despite the fact that feminist theology's most powerful critical tool of analysis was to warn against the universalising tendency of androcentric scholarship, feminism itself had blind spots. Early feminist theologians were guilty of essentialising women and overlooking marginalised voices. Patriarchy cannot be seen as the decisive category of oppression that underlies other forms of subordination as Sandra Schneiders (1986b and 1993), Rosemary Radford Ruether (1983) and others have suggested. This understanding minimises the experience of other forms of discrimination. Ellen Armour for example points out that issues of class and race are interwoven in Rosemary Radford Ruether's critique of patriarchy (1993:150). Rosemary Radford Ruether sees the categories of race and class as extensions of patriarchal oppression. This stance may infer that race and class are sub-categories in the experience of patriarchal exclusion. The issues of class, race and gender need to be unravelled and analysed as separate though interdependent categories. As a way of balancing the

shortcomings in the writings of one-third world feminists, Delores Williams (in Susan Rakoczy 2004:14) coined the phrase womanist theology as a way of embracing feminist theology that meets the needs of black African-American women.

African-American writers use the term womanist, to define theologians who are dedicated to the survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female included. Latino women use the term *mujerista* to give voice to their experience of interlocking oppressions (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:55). *Mujerista* theology suggests a type of feminism that is culturally distinct from the feminisms of Europe and North America (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:55). The aim of *mujerista* is the empowerment of Latin women (Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz 1996:153,154).

The fruits of the critique of these women theologians from the two-thirds world are that feminists today pay attention to diversity and how geographical, historical and cultural contexts shape women's experience of oppression (Susan Rakoczy 2004:15; Anne Carr 1996:xii, Linda Nicholson 1990:1,2). As a way of avoiding the universalising tendency of some scholarship, Jane Flax suggests that an attempt should be made to replace the assumptions of universalism by designing feminist knowledge that begins from the fragments of one's own body (1990:177). In other words, "my body"; is the site for theologising and not "the body". "My body" is the place from which I speak as woman; the contours of the body (white, middle class, educated, English speaking) are not projected onto a universal female body (Jane Flax 1990:177). Susan Bordo (1990:143-4) also emphasises the importance of seeing the body as a metaphor for locatedness and the vehicle through which the world is formed and knowledge is created. What is helpful about Susan Bordo's suggestions is that she has created one way in which feminist researchers can break away from disembodied, objective, rational knowledge that is informed by a dualist paradigm. If research is located in my body, what that means is that I am an agent in the research process of collecting and understanding data[7]. It also invites me to do research from my whole self rather than just one aspect of who I am, i.e. my mind.

In answer to the valuable critique offered by two-thirds world intellectuals, Patti Lather (1991:29) acknowledges that some women experience both privilege and marginalisation. She suggests that this dual experience is a "fertile breeding ground" for self-interrogation and analysis (1991:29). The inclusion of my journal as part of the data collection process is used as a way of facilitating the process of self-reflection described by Patti Lather (1991:29)[8].

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[7] See section 3.3.5.
[8] The use of the personal journal is described in detail in chapter three, section 3.7.6.

Rosemary Radford Ruether (1983:12) reminds Christians that even the Biblical and traditional sources of theology are codified experiences. She defends the use of women's interpreted experience as a starting point in theologising by arguing that humans cannot escape the primacy of experience. Human experience is the starting point and ending point of all theologising (Rosemary Radford Ruether 1983:12; Susan Rakoczy 2004:15). Rosemary Radford Ruether explains that a watershed moment, experienced by a person or group of people, is cemented in a community, which communicates the story of this watershed experience to younger generations using religious symbols that convey the reality represented in the story (Rosemary Radford Ruether 1983:13, Anne Carr 1993:13). Likewise, Stanley Hauerwas (1983:24-25) says that

> The nature of Christian ethics is determined by the fact that Christian convictions take the form of a story, or perhaps better, a set of stories that constitutes a tradition, which in turn creates and forms a community. Christian ethics does not begin by emphasising rules or principles, but by calling our attention to a narrative that tells of God's dealing with creation. To be sure, it is a complex story with many subplots and digressions, but it is crucial for us to see that it is not accidentally a narrative.

There is a threefold process in the documentation of what Rosemary Radford Ruether (1983:13) calls revelatory experience. First there is the life-changing event and the storytelling of what happened. In the second stage, codification takes place. At first the codification is through the oral tradition. It is written down at a later stage (1983:14). Third, teachers and leaders emerge from the community to control and manage the process of telling the story to younger generations (Rosemary Radford Ruether 1983:14). A crisis of faith occurs when the meaning of contemporary experience cannot be elucidated in the light of the codified tradition; in other words tradition and contemporary experience contradict (Rosemary Radford Ruether 1983:14).

While Anne Carr agrees that women's experience should be used as a source in theology, she disagrees with Rosemary Radford Ruether's expectation that it become normative for it would then fail to offer a space for self-criticism (1993:21). For Anne Carr (1993:25) the distinctive feature of feminist theology is that it is a woman-centred approach. Another disagreement with Rosemary Radford Ruether's stance that women's experience should be normative in feminist theology can be offered from the point of view of Richard Rohr's *Cosmic egg* of meaning (Richard Rohr and John Feister 1996:127). Richard Rohr encourages Christians to see that there are three domes of meaning in story telling: *My story, our story and **The** story*. While *My story* is the level of private meaning, *Our story* is the tribal and ethnic identity and ***The** story* refers to the patterns that are always true, it being the Great Story that offers eternal and transcendent meaning (Richard Rohr and John Feister 1996:127). Delving into my story is not an end in itself; it is a way to connect with

The story, as the transcendent meaning-making process (Richard Rohr and John Feister 1996:127).

In my discussion on the interpreted experience of women as the source and methodology of feminist theology, I pointed out that experience is mediated through interpretation and that there are different categories of experience. Experience is thus complex and pluralistic. As such it provides a rich source for theologising in a feminist framework that has as its goal the liberation to full humanity of all people. The practice of liberation becomes an important aspect of feminist theology.

The practice of liberation

The word liberation suggests that feminist theology finds a home in liberation theology. When the paradigm of liberation theology is expanded, it includes the gender-based realities of poverty and oppression (Douglas Hall and Rosemary Radford Ruether 1995:98). Liberation theology is not necessarily a new approach to theology. Rather, it is a theological method for discernment of the presence and absence of God in history and a response to God's manifestation in reality (Victorio Araya 1983:2). Although the early expressions of liberation theology were negative towards feminism, it still falls within this field. This is because the liberation theology movement has informed the praxis of Feminist theology in its 'see, judge and act' methodology. Feminist theology is also informed by an understanding of faith from a conscious, conscientious identification and solidarity with those on the underside of history (Victorio Araya 1983:19). Liberation theology emphasises the importance of reflecting on praxis in the light of the word of God, Gustavo Gutierrez (2001:21), for example, defines liberation theology as "… the critical reflection on Christian praxis in light of the word of God". Feminist theology also finds it important to analyse Scripture before using it as a source in theology because of the patriarchal fashion in which Scripture has been received, transmitted and translated.

Christian feminist theology has to be rooted in the practice of liberation (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 1993:67). The liberation of the oppressed is achieved through consciousness-raising, which aims to make women aware of their oppression (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 1993:67). Feminist theology not only has to name and point out sins such as dehumanisation, for example, but also has to discern moments of grace, which may be defined as the household of God breaking through into our midst (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 1993:67). The tasks of confession, conversion and the vision of full humanity are spiritual disciplines that women need to build into their lives as a way of opening themselves to the influence of the Spirit of God through whom and in whom and with whom the liberation from oppression for freedom is ultimately mediated.

Solidarity

Christian feminist theology is rooted in solidarity (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 1993:67). Solidarity with the poor is a key component of liberation theology, which calls for a theology that stems from engagement with pastoral ministry and the desire for life (Douglas Hall and Rosemary Radford Ruether 1995:94). Likewise, the theme of sisterhood is common in many expressions of feminist theory. Sisterhood in feminist theology provides a "community of emancipatory solidarity" (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 1993:67). Solidarity is community that is built with and among the marginalized. A feature of the Gospel is that the Good News is learnt among those excluded from society, the poor being the icon of exclusion (Richard Rohr 1993:71). The view from the disestablished position of the poor provides a clearer vision of reality (Richard Rohr 1993:82). For this reason this research was conducted among support groups of mostly women who are HIV positive and who have little or no employment.

In summary, the discussion on feminist theology suggested that the term *fully human* be used as a guiding principle in describing the goal and process of feminist theology as having both critical and constructive tasks. I return to some of the themes expressed in feminist theology when I reflect on the meaning of feminist spirituality. It is necessary first to reflect on what is meant by the term Christian spirituality.

2.5   CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality generally has drawn wide interest, not only in Church circles and theological studies, but in commercialised ways in the form of self-help books and diverse new age movements (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:1, Gordon Wakefield 2001:1, Kenneth Collins 1996:76, Joann Wolski Conn 1993:235). Spirituality is commercialised in the sense that it is marketed as a product (Kenneth Leech 1992:3). As a result of this phenomenon, the term spirituality has become nebulous in the sense that it is applied to a wide range of human experiences without concrete descriptions pertaining to the meaning of the term. Even within church circles, the word spirituality is used in a variety of ways.

In the Church environment, spirituality was used after Vatican II as a form of prayer mainly by practising Catholic Christians[9] (Sandra Schneiders 1986a:254, Anne and Barry Ulanov

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[9] Historically the reluctance of some Protestants to "dabble" in spirituality arises out of the theological conviction that the world is saved by grace through faith alone. In the light of this theological approach to the world, spirituality and the spiritual disciplines seem to have a hint of working for one's salvation. To put Protestant minds to rest, it may be helpful to include in a discussion of spirituality some

1986:24). A second group of people understood the term spirituality in a slightly broader sense as describing the intensified faith life (Sandra Schneiders 1986a:254). A third group had still a wider view of the term spirituality and used it to express personal experience especially relating to the emotions and the body (Sandra Schneiders 1986a:254). There were also those who reflected on spirituality as it applied to Christian influence in social and political living (Sandra Schneiders 1986a:254). The influence of Vatican II and its ecumenical intentions allowed for the term spirituality to be adopted amongst Protestants who offered their own understanding of the interior life and its political ramifications (Sandra Schneiders 1986a:255). Further dialogue with people of other faiths has widened the use of the term even further. For example, Jewish theologians, who may previously have spoken of the mystical dimension of their faith, now use the term spirituality to describe the holy life in obedience to the law, as well as the contemplative aspects of their faith (Sandra Schneiders 1986a:255).

The difficulty in defining the word spirituality arises out of its over-usage. Philip Sheldrake (1995:40) says that there needs to be conceptual limits to a term otherwise it means nothing. Ultimately, spirituality is an experience of God. It is an ineffable experience and part of the struggle with defining the term spirituality relates to the fact that is difficult to concretise in words humankind's ineffable experience of God.

In section 2.5 below, I will concretise a meaning of Christian spirituality by firstly suggesting the etymological roots of the term spirituality and how these influence the interpretation of the word. A brief historical overview of the term spirituality illustrates how meaning has changed through the ages. Building on these etymological and historical roots, I then outline how scholars in the discipline of spirituality have defined the term spirituality. Next, I examine the scope and patterns of spirituality through the ages using typologies. The purpose of this section is to provide an important literary context for a discussion on spirituality and the use of typologies allows for a systematic survey of patterns of spirituality. The reason for this is that patterns of spirituality are shaped by the context in which they are immersed, but they are also influenced by traditions that have been passed down through the ages. This indicates that the literature also forms part of the context shaping present day spirituality. Finally, I outline aspects of spirituality as an academic discipline.

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explanations of the spiritual significance of Greek grammar. In Greek the use of the pluperfect tense, which is best defined in English as the continuous-past, significantly changes the meaning of some words. For example, in the language of salvation, the Greek word saved in the pluperfect tense suggests that people are saved but are still in a process of being saved. This process of being saved is what may be called the process of spirituality. Ephesians 2:5 is one such example where the word *sesosmenoi* implies Christ followers have been saved by grace. This past action influences present living in that they have been saved, but still continue to be saved. In other words, justification is an event and a process.

2.5.1 ETYMOLOGY

Etymology describes the origins of a word and is a useful tool for determining the meaning of words. The English term spirituality is derived from the Latin *spiritualitas*, which is a translation of the Greek *pneuma* and *pneumatikos* (Kenneth Collins 1996:77). It describes that which pertains to the Holy Spirit of God, as can be seen in Pauline language (Kenneth Collins 1996:77, Sandra Schneiders 1986a:257). In Pauline terms the spiritual person is one who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Sandra Schneiders 1986a:258, Joann Wolski Conn 1993:236).

In the Hebrew Scriptures, spirituality derives from the Hebrew word *ruach,* meaning breath or wind (Alister McGrath 1999:1). Here the word spirit suggests that human life is energised by a power beyond human knowledge (KC Abraham and Bernadette Mbuy-Beya 1994:197). For example Elihu in Job 32:8 acknowledges that there is a "spirit in a human being" (Gordon Wakefield 2001:1). It is this spirit that sparks the desire for a full life and motivates communities to be life-giving and life-affirming (KC Abraham and Bernadette Mbuy-Beya 1994:197). Spirituality is celebrated in ritual, discipline and symbol that shapes how the spirit animates community living (KC Abraham and Bernadette Mbuy-Beya 1994:197) and it invites people's resistance to dehumanisation (KC Abraham and Bernadette Mbuy-Beya 1994:198). Spirituality is a cry for life in all its fullness!

If the point of departure of appreciating an understanding of spirituality emerges from the philology of the word as spirit or *ruach*, then spirituality has to incorporate some understanding gleaned from pneumatology or a study of the Spirit. An important feature is that the purpose of the Spirit is that She is the love-bond that unites people to God and each other, and by uniting, transforms all that She unites (Brian Gaybba 1987:141-147). The Spirit as the love-bond unites Creator and Jesus with each other (Brian Gaybba 1987:141-147). She also unites humankind to the Godhead by offering them a sharing in the love relationship of Abba and Jesus. The world is transformed through the dynamic unity it shares with the Godhead (Brian Gaybba 1987:141). The Spirit emerges from God and Jesus as an outpouring of love, thus there is a close link between Jesus and the Spirit. In John's Gospel, Jesus is described as being so filled with the presence of God, that he becomes a source of that presence for other people. He breathes on his disciples praying: "Receive the Spirit" (John 20:22).

The Spirit becomes the way in which the risen Christ is actively present within God's people and the way in which Jesus continues to be present today. Jesus is the prototype of Christian spirituality. Therefore, the Christian vocation on the path of authentic spirituality is, like Jesus, to be so filled with the presence of God, the Holy Spirit, that they too become a

source of that presence for other people. It is a journey of mutual indwelling actualised by the Spirit: God in humankind and humankind in God such that humankind is divinised. Accepting the call to be partakers and bearers of the Spirit and being transformed through that indwelling is not something humans carry out in their individual selves. It is in community that they each become a source for God's presence in the world. Being partakers and bearers of the Spirit is possible through the total democratisation of God: owing to Pentecost, God is now directly available to all people. The reason that I can become a source for the Spirit in the world is that the Spirit, as the loving presence of God, is available to me as She is available to all people. Spirituality is thus a gift and a task. It is a gift because the Spirit is given to me. It is a task because I respond to the gift in certain ways. Spirituality is the process of transformation to wholeness: The process of transformation involves being so filled with the Spirit, the loving way in which Jesus and his Abba are present to each other and to all creation, that Christ followers become a source of that presence for other people. Spirituality, as the experience of God, thus has social consequences in how it shapes relationships with other people, creation and the poor, it *interpenetrates the whole of life*. Christians bear the mystery of that presence as the body of Christ.

In summary, the etymological root of the word spirituality in the Hebrew word *ruach*, breath, and in the New Testament word *pneumatikos,* suggests that spirituality refers to the inner life actualised by the Holy Spirit of God and Jesus. Building on these New Testament reflections, Jesus, as the unique bearer of the Spirit, is seen as a prototype for Christian spirituality. As such, spirituality means to be so filled with the loving presence of God, the Holy Spirit, that one becomes a source of that presence for other people. The effects of this presence of God in one's life are integrated in one's social living. Having gleaned some insight into the meaning of the word spirituality from a discussion on the significance of its philological roots in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, I reflect now on the historical development of the term spirituality.

2.5.2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The focus of this section is to reflect on the history of the term spirituality and how it developed through the ages. While the Biblical roots of the term imply that spirituality pertains to the **whole of life**, the brief historical overview shows how spirituality was divorced from theology and relegated to one small aspect of life.

In the patristic period until the eleventh century, the term spirituality was understood in a similar way to the way used predominantly by Paul in the New Testament when he describes that which is filled with the Holy Spirit (Sandra Schneiders 1986a:258). The twelfth

century saw the emergence of a new theological and philosophical trend known as Scholasticism (Kenneth Collins 1996:79). The methodology of Scholasticism was to integrate the truths of reason and the truths of revelation (Kenneth Collins 1996:79). This was done by integrating the insights of Aristotle with those of Augustine (Kenneth Collins 1996:79). The theologians of this epoch began to separate the spiritual life from theology as an intellectual discipline and by the time of Thomas Aquinas a century later, spiritual theology was a mere sub-division of moral theology (Kenneth Collins 1996:79).

A further development was that the term spiritual, loosed of its theological home, began to take on more philosophical overtones with the result that it referred more and more to the intellectual realm as opposed to the material (Kenneth Collins 1996:79, Sandra Schneiders 1986a:258). In the field of philosophy, the word spirituality was used to describe that which contrasts with the material world (John Macquarrie 1992:40). A later development, seen especially in the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, used the word spirituality to refer to clergy and ecclesiastical goods. In this instance, the term spirituality was divorced from philosophy and theology and described those things which do not belong to secular society (Sandra Schneiders 1986a:258). In the time of the Renaissance and the Reformation, the split between dogmatic theology (systematic theology) and moral theology (ethics) was further cemented (Kenneth Collins 1996:80). The separation of spiritual theology from ethics was characterised by the discipline of spiritual theology reflecting on the contemplative aspects of faith while ethics related to the praxis of Christian living (Kenneth Collins 1996:80). The seventeenth century saw a revival of the term spirituality in religious circles where it was used to describe the interior life and the quest for perfection that transcended the ordinary requirements of the Christian life (Sandra Schneiders 1986a:259). In the eighteenth century, the word spiritual defined the path of perfection leading to mystical encounters and it continued to suggest a distinction between the ordinary Christian life and the life of perfection (Kenneth Collins 1986:83).

This brief overview reflects that spirituality from the twelfth century to the eighteenth century presupposed a dualistic worldview that separated the spiritual from the material and Christian "athletes" from ordinary disciples. Spirituality is therefore conceived in negative terms and refers to people preoccupied with inward reflection (John Macquarrie 1992:40). The implications are that spirituality is a privatised affair, an aspect of one's life that is separate from one's body and the body of the world and is the reserve of the spiritual elite. The difficulty with this dualistic notion is that God is unknowable except through matter; the cornerstone of the Christian experience of God is that God became flesh and dwelt among people (John 1:1). Writing in the field of feminist spirituality, the dichotomy is unhelpful because feminists encourage theologians to understand that the way people experience

their bodies shapes their experience of God, that is, what happens to their bodies makes people who they are. Feminists also try to picture spirituality holistically in that it encompasses all of life in an integral fashion that weaves together being and doing, the inner world of contemplative prayer and the outer world of social action.

Having suggested some ways in which the term spirituality has been adapted historically, I reflect now on how scholars in the discipline of spirituality have defined the term. One will notice that their definitions heal some of the dualistic tensions suggested in the succinct historical overview. In this way, these scholars have been able to link spirituality with theology and the whole of Christian living.

2.5.3   DEFINITIONS OF SPIRITUALITY

The human condition is such that humankind experiences a restlessness and boredom. Kimberly Snow (1994:1) says that this experience of dissatisfaction with the world is a symptom of yearning for spirituality, which she describes as interconnection. The restlessness and boredom are indications of humankind's transcendental nature, our inner drive for full humanity while spirituality is about becoming a human person in the fullest sense (John Macquarrie 1992:40). Other authors such as Alister McGrath describe the yearning for interconnection and spirituality using different words. Alister McGrath (2003:13, 14), writing from the evangelical tradition, describes spirituality as the process of internalising faith, which means that belief in God changes the way people think and live. He says that spirituality is how individuals and groups of people deepen their experience of God and describes the process in terms of experiencing God to the full, transformation, authenticity and knowing God as opposed to mere knowledge of God. This means loving God with heart and mind (Alister McGrath 2003:14). He further reminds spiritual seekers that healthy spirituality is grounded in good theology (2003:14) and specifically that Christian spirituality is living out of the encounter with Jesus as well as the practices that sustain and develop that relationship with Him (Alister McGrath 1999:2).

Philip Sheldrake's (1991&1995) definition of spirituality also highlights the discipline's link with theology in that he articulates his understanding of spirituality according to the doctrinal categories of the Trinity, Christ and church. For Philip Sheldrake (1995:60), spirituality is a relationship with God in Christ made possible through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and lived in the community of believers (Philip Sheldrake 1995:60). He understands spirituality as involving a conscious decision to choose a relationship with God in Jesus through the infilling of the Spirit. This relationship is then shaped within the context of the community of believers. The basis for spirituality is that the very nature of being human is the ability to enter into a relationship with God (1991:60,61).

John Wesley, who was one of the principal leaders of the Evangelical revival in England in the eighteenth century, never used the word spirituality (Kenneth Collins 1996:83). In John Wesley's doctrine, spirituality is Christian perfection (Kevin Williams 1997:17). He emphasised that spirituality was a possibility for all Christians and not just the spiritual elite (Kenneth Collins 1996:83). His articulation of the spiritual experience also relies on the aspects of transformation, authenticity and knowledge of God reflected in Alister McGrath's formulation (2003:14). John Wesley's project to spread scriptural holiness throughout the world embraced an inward and outward transformation (Kevin Williams 199716-21, Aubin de Gruchy 1989:77). John Wesley was adamant that an inward change in attitude had to be accompanied by an outward change in behaviour and action. His teachings hold in balance the inward experience of God's love with the outward expressions of justice and mercy. In essence, Wesleyan spirituality is holiness of life and heart.

Philip Sheldrake (1995) and Alister McGrath (2003) define spirituality by expressing its relationship to theology. They argue that theology is the attempt to speak about an understanding of God while spirituality is living in the light of that understanding. Gustavo Gutierrez (1983:1, 33) on the other hand argues for an *a priori* experience of God – spirituality - in the light of which theologians formulate our understanding of God – theology. He says that spirituality is about following Jesus while theology is reflection on the experience of following Jesus. Therefore, before spirituality can be defined by its theological disciplines, it is a way of being in the world. Other writers whose definitions suggest that spirituality is *a priori* to theology include Jim Cotter (1993:5), for whom spirituality is the whole of life orientated towards God, shaped by God and graced by God. Jim Cotter (1993:5) understands spirituality holistically and includes corporate and individual sexuality. Michael Fox (1991:11) defines spirituality as being filled with *ruach* or Spirit; spirituality is the life-filled path that moves people away from living superficially to living from the depths of reality. This personal, political and relational definition implies a holistic approach to experiencing spirituality that includes humankind's rational as well as their sensual selves (Marjorie Procter-Smith 1990:164). Writers on the spiritual life who have embodied the call to stand in solidarity with the oppressed express this holistic dimension in their definitions.

Jean Vanier, who started the L' Arche communities, where able-bodied people and people with disabilities live alongside each other, is one such example. He describes spirituality as being founded on the mystery of the poverty and weakness of Jesus (Jean Vanier 1995:15). Jesus became poor (Philippians 2) and came to bring Good News to the poor (Luke 4:18). In this mission he broke down the walls that separate the rich from the poor and the strong from the weak by inviting the rich to share and the poor to have hope (Jean Vanier 1995:18,

24). Befriending the poor as an expression of spirituality opens the human person to transformation of the heart (Jean Vanier 1995:30). Jean Vanier (1995:56,65) outlines a spirituality that has a twofold character as it is centred on the mystery of the poor and is lived in community. These two motifs are connected since the ministry of Jesus destroys barriers between people and allows them to open themselves to each other. Vulnerability becomes a hallmark of the spiritual life. It is incarnated at L'Arche where the paradox presented by poverty is revealed as that which people push aside becomes the means of grace and unity, freedom and peace (Jean Vanier 1995:93).

Gustavo Gutierrez, who connects spirituality with discipleship and uses the terms almost as synonyms for each other, is another example. For Gustavo Gutierrez (1983:34), spirituality is to follow Jesus. He looks at Scriptures first as a way of understanding spirituality, suggesting that as Christians read the Bible so the Bible reads them. Based on his reflection of Scripture, Gustavo says that discipleship is rooted in the experience of the encounter with Jesus Christ as to encounter Jesus is first to be encountered by Jesus (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:38). Spirituality is first a friendship with Jesus established when he said to his disciples as he says to Christians: "I no longer call you servants but friends" (John 15:15) (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:33). The dimensions of a spirituality of discipleship include an encounter with Jesus, a journey to the Father and life in the Spirit (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:34). Following Jesus is not an individual practice, but a collective one with the Church and with the poor (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:42). In Latin America, to follow Jesus means to walk with the poor because the Lord is revealed and hidden among the poor (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:38).

Having outlined some definitions of spirituality by reflecting on the roots of the term, its historical development and how different writers have used the word spirituality; I now offer a broad understanding of the different patterns or traditions of spirituality through the ages. It is an important aspect in a discussion on Christian spirituality as it offers a literary context that influences how spirituality is interpreted today. Such a discussion on the different patterns or traditions of spirituality through the ages best happens using typologies.

2.5.4   TYPOLOGIES OF SPIRITUALITY

A typology is a broad framework or categorising system that allows one to discuss a wide range of material systematically. If one looks at patterns or traditions of spirituality through

the ages one will notice two features. First, patterns of spirituality are deeply connected with the historical circumstances in which they emerge as they are shaped by historical situations and respond to those circumstances (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:26). According to Gustavo Gutierrez (1991:xv): "Human beings believe in God in the context of a particular historical situation; after all, believers have their place in a cultural and social fabric". Philip Sheldrake (1995:218) also says that traditions of spirituality develop in direct relation to historical situations. He argues that even the use of the word contemporary spirituality suggests the important lesson that throughout Christian history, spirituality has changed its meaning (Philip Sheldrake 1995:40). The historical situation in which people find themselves provides the context in which they receive God's presence and God's absence (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:7). Spiritualities are passed down through the generations. Not all patterns of spirituality travel well through the centuries; those that are still helpful offer advice about the spiritual journey that is perennial in nature and provides helpful ways of following Jesus (Philip Sheldrake 1995:172). These patterns of spirituality include those of the Dominicans, the Franciscans and the Carmelites (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:53).

The second feature that one will notice if one looks at patterns of spirituality through the ages is that traditions of spirituality are closely linked with key people and are not exclusively about ideas and doctrine. This is seen by the fact that spiritualities are described after the people who first articulated them. For example one speaks of Benedictine spirituality, Wesleyan spirituality and Ignatian spirituality. The advantages and disadvantages of the use of typologies are now discussed. It is followed by an overview of typologies with reference to particular authors.

The advantages and disadvantages of typologies in discussing spirituality

Typologies of spirituality are helpful for a discussion on spirituality for several reasons. First, typologies help readers in the field of spirituality to appreciate the diversity available in spirituality. On the one hand, there is diversity in spirituality as through the centuries people have found diverse ways of following Jesus (Philip Sheldrake 1995:197). On the other hand, the unity in these diverse spiritualities is that they are moored in the person of Christ and the desire to be Christ through the transformation of the Spirit. This unifying element makes the different patterns of spirituality specifically Christian. The second reason why typologies are helpful is that they help to prevent the student of spirituality from suggesting that spirituality is a generic or universal concept that is the same for all people (Philip Sheldrake 1995:218). People experience God differently as there are diverse ways of loving and being loved by God (Philip Sheldrake 1995:218). The third value of typologies in discussing spirituality is to provide insight into spiritual growth. Typologies allow students of spirituality to understand their own flavour of spirituality, identify its strengths and growth areas, and look to other

patterns of spirituality to address these growth needs. Richard Foster's book *Streams of living water* (1998) is a particularly helpful example in this regard. He offers a thorough bibliography and synopsis of different people and movements in spirituality. These tools guide students of spirituality to explore other patterns of spirituality that are new and thus help to broaden their own experience of spirituality. For example, those who follow the contemplative approach to spirituality may find that its focus on solitude and silence can become unbalanced as it sometimes leads to the neglect of community life. Such a person may choose to address the potential imbalances of contemplative spirituality by exploring a pattern that emphasises community living such as the social justice stream. Finally, using typologies to discuss spirituality offers a way for one to understand the tradition of spirituality on which one bases their Christian beliefs and so helps in self-understanding. This is important as knowing who we are, is an essential aspect of the spiritual journey (Philip Sheldrake 1995:218). In sum, typologies help students of spirituality to appreciate the particularity, plurality and diversity of spirituality that nevertheless has Christ as the cornerstone (Philip Sheldrake 1995:217).

There are certain dangers in using typologies to discuss spirituality. Firstly, spirituality is a complex phenomenon and distinctions between the various types of spirituality cannot be simplistic (Philip Sheldrake 1995:218). Some traditions of spirituality may overlap with and share categories with other belief systems (Richard Foster 1998:304). A second danger relates to interpretation as placing a pattern of spirituality under a certain heading in a typology is largely a matter of subjective opinion (Philip Sheldrake 1995:216). Another danger, related to the theme of subjectivity, is that one may be tempted to view one type of spirituality as being more valid than another (Philip Sheldrake 1995:217). In this thesis the task of describing and interpreting spiritual traditions is influenced by my personal assumptions and my own cultural and religious conditioning (Philip Sheldrake 1995:222). Bearing in mind the strengths and weakness of using a typology to frame a broad discussion on spirituality, I now peruse the different frameworks suggested in the discipline of spirituality. **Philip Sheldrake** (1991 and 1995) divides patterns of spirituality into schools of spirituality or *cataphatic* and *apophatic* approaches. **Geoffrey Wainright** (1986) uses Niebhur's typology to examine Christian spirituality in terms of the attitude to the world and human history (Philip Sheldrake 1995:198). **Richard Foster** (1998) in *Streams of living water* offers a broad framework of understanding the scope of the traditions of spirituality using the metaphor of streams flowing from a river to offer six basic approaches to spirituality. **Paula Huston** (2003) has captured the art of spirituality in offering a broad overview of the different patterns of spirituality by integrating her reading and research with the praxis of her own everyday life. Her typology is structured around the theme of **journey**. The four typologies presented by the different authors are now discussed.

Philip Sheldrake

According to Philip Sheldrake in *Spirituality and history* (1995:198), a common typology used to describe spirituality is to divide the different patterns of spirituality into **schools of spirituality.** In this approach, patterns of spirituality are either grouped according to institutions or they are presented according to their chronological and historical development (Philip Sheldrake 1995:198). The value of grouping patterns of spirituality according to institutional affiliations is that it describes the different schools of spirituality that share common features even though they cross the boundaries of time, culture and place. An example of this approach categorises spirituality into desert spirituality, Benedictine Spirituality, Franciscan spirituality, Ignatian spirituality and reformed spirituality (Philip Sheldrake 1995:198).

Different patterns of spirituality may also be framed according to historical development (Philip Sheldrake 1995:199). While this structure is helpful in connecting spirituality with history, the danger with the approach is that spiritual movements that share time and place do not always share a common identity. For example seventeenth century France produced both quietists and Jansenists who have very different flavours of spirituality (Philip Sheldrake 1995:199). The editors of *The study of spirituality* (Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright & Edward Yarnold 1986) have adopted a schools of spirituality approach based on historical development. They have, nevertheless, allowed for nuances in time and place by subdividing their historical structure using the names of significant people. For example, in one section they discuss the Eastern tradition until the twelfth century including Hesychasm, Symeon, the New Theologian and Russian influences, the medieval west with a focus on Gregory the Great, Anselm of Canterbury, the Dominicans and Franciscans as well as Italian authors such as Catherine of Siena, Catherine of Genoa and the English Mystics.

Criticism may be levelled against the use of the schools of spirituality typology outlined by Philip Sheldrake (1991 and 1995). Liberation theology in general and certain perspectives of feminist theology in particular may offer insights that highlight potential blind spots in the schools of spirituality typology. Although female authors such as St Catherine and St Teresa are included in writings on spirituality, the focus is generally on the writings of male authors. Secondly, the discussion of spirituality focuses predominantly around Church figures and issues in Europe whereas African and other liberation theologies remind students of theology that authentic spirituality in the African and Latin American continents were a reality before and in spite of the influence of the western Church through colonisation and evangelisation. For example, Luke Pato (2000:92) argues that spirituality was at work in Africa before the missionaries arrived, African spirituality is **not** a product or consequence of missionary activity.

In his book, *Spirituality and History* (1991&1995) Philip Sheldrake also discusses **apophatic** and **cataphatic** **typologies**. The word apophatic refers to types of spirituality that emphasise silence, passivity, solitude and the absence of imagery (Philip Sheldrake 1995:199). It is often called the *via negativa*, meaning the negative path. In contrast, the word cataphatic refers to types of spirituality that emphasise the use of images, creation and human relationships as the context in which God reveals Godself to us (Philip Sheldrake 1995:199). It is important to note that cataphatic and apophatic paths are not alternative spiritualities but grow into and out of each other. How are they related? Cataphatic spirituality is based on the outpouring of Godself into the cosmos and God's self-manifestation in the universe and in Scripture and liturgy. Apophatic spirituality is based on humankind's movement inwards into God often through contemplation that takes place in a process of denial (Philip Sheldrake 1995:201). An example of apophatic spirituality is the anonymous work *The cloud of unknowing* which seems to draw on the work of Pseudo-Dionysius, but which has changed his interpretation to suggest a mystical theology of darkness and unknowing (Philip Sheldrake 1995:202). Another example of apophatic spirituality is Meister Eckhart who describes the possibility of union with the Godhead through detachment.

According to Philip Sheldrake (1995:203) in the minds of many authors, the apophatic way is synonymous with contemplative and mystical paths and thus there is the subtle suggestion of apophaticism being a higher and better path. Although Pseudo-Dionysius may not have meant these to be contrasting spiritualities, the apophatic way and cataphatic way did develop into two different spiritual consciousnesses especially in the thirteenth century with the apophatic school dominating (Philip Sheldrake 1995:204). The Franciscan movement opened the door to a different appreciation of spirituality, one that was not as world-transcending as emphasised in apophaticism (Philip Sheldrake 1995:204). St Francis' devotion to the humanity of Christ and his practice of spirituality that was rooted in the contexts of people and his ministry to the lepers and the poor, allowed for a cataphatic spirituality that celebrated the revelation of God in the world (Philip Sheldrake 1995:204).

Appreciating apophatic and cataphatic movements in spirituality is an important dynamic to remember when articulating a spirituality that emerges out of a South African context, which is one of the goals of the thesis and is summarised in chapter six. The South African context thirsts for a cataphatic expression of spirituality that finds God in the concrete mundane reality. The apophatic side of spirituality is still present; in the process of living through the pain of oppression, marginalisation, poverty and sickness one may experience darkness and the absence of God. Having outlined the schools of spirituality and apophatic and cataphatic

approaches to spirituality as described by Philip Sheldrake, the next typology by Geoffrey Wainwright is discussed.

Geoffrey Wainwright

In his typology of spirituality, Geoffrey Wainwright uses Richard Niebuhr's typology of the relation between Christ and culture, which he formulated in line with social ethics. Geoffrey Wainwright (1986:592) suggests that the five typologies of Christ against culture, Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture in paradox and Christ transforming culture may provide a helpful framework for describing the relation between praying and living, which is how he defines spirituality. In categorising spirituality according to this system, Geoffrey Wainwright, (1985:592 & Philip Sheldrake 1995:214), using an "*in the experience of the yet and the not yet*" eschatological lens, asks: Does a particular type of spirituality emphasise the present or the future?

The first typology, **Christ against culture**, describes a practice of spirituality that sees the world as an obstacle to the development of spiritual consciousness and so the world is renounced (Geoffrey Wainwright 1986:592; Philip Sheldrake 1995:214). Examples of this type of spirituality include accounts in the New Testament, which describe the suffering and martyrdom of Christian disciples (for example Mark 13:9, 1 Peter 4:12-5:11). Another example is the flowering of desert spirituality in about the fourth century, which offered an alternative to the seemingly corrupt society, and the accommodating attitude of the Church to the world (Geoffrey Wainwright 1986:594). The anti-world attitude is expressed in the ascetical practices adopted by the desert fathers and mothers, and their withdrawal from society (Geoffrey Wainwright 1986:594).

The strength of the *Christ against culture* types of spirituality is their insistence that Christian spirituality has to offer an alternative community to the prevailing worldview. In today's consumer culture this message is sorely needed. Walter Brueggemann (2001:1) for example says that the Church has been enculturated by the American ethos of consumerism to such an extent that it has little power to believe or act and is the cause of the Church's loss of identity through leaving behind her faith tradition. The weakness of this type of spirituality is that in renouncing the world it underestimates how much the world remains in us even after we are converted (Geoffrey Wainwright 1986:596). It is for this reason that other spiritualities such as Christ of culture emerge to balance the Christ against culture models.

The **Christ of culture** typology describes patterns of spirituality that are world affirming and simplistically accepts the world as it is (Geoffrey Wainwright 1986:596; Philip Sheldrake 1995:215). It may also be referred to as the Christendom model, which dominated after Constantine's conversion in 314 CE and precipitated the institutionalisation of Christianity as

the state religion (Geoffrey Wainwright 1986:596). The Christ of culture approach describes how Christian spirituality is used as a vehicle to support political goals (Geoffrey Wainwright 1986:596). Examples of this approach are seen in the time of Constantine. A modern example is the Calvinist Dutch Reformed Churches and their theological support of Apartheid ideology in South Africa during the Nationalist Party's regime (Joan Millard 1994:254). A third typology that stands midway between the Christ against culture and the Christ of culture typologies is the Christ above culture typology.

The **Christ above culture** typology has a positive view of the world and describes how it is necessary for Christ to still transform the world (Geoffrey Wainwright 1986:598 & Philip Sheldrake 1995:215). In these types of spiritualities, the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Resurrection are often emphasised (Geoffrey Wainwright 1986:598). Thomas Aquinas and Clement of Alexandria are the examples given for the Christ above culture spirituality (Geoffrey Wainwright 1986:598). These examples suggest that the patterns of spirituality that fall within this bracket are often intellectual. While intellectual pursuits are satisfying as part of a broader quest for God, knowledge is still the servant of wisdom which is understood as grace[10] (Geoffrey Wainwright 1986:596). A fourth typology that is slightly different from the Christ above culture approach is the Christ and culture in paradox typology.

Christ and culture in paradox emphasises struggle and conflict. It is dualistic in expression because the belief is that God saves the world but also judges the world (Philip Sheldrake 1995:215). The example suggested for this type of spirituality is Lutheran spirituality, which polarises themes such as the grace and wrath of God, and law and the Gospel (Geoffrey Wainwright 1986:600). A key text for these type of spiritualities is Romans 7:15-25 which in itself suggests the conflicting nature of spirituality in Christ and culture in paradox[11].

In the **Christ the transformer of culture** typology, the world is viewed positively in that the corruption of the world is understood as a disruption of the nature of the world but not inherent to it (Philip Sheldrake 1995:216). The eschatological outlook of this typology is that the kingdom of God is experienced now through the process of discipleship which involves patterning one's life according to Christ, dying to sin and living fully in God (Philip Sheldrake 1995:216). Geoffrey Wainwright offers Wesleyan spirituality as an example of this typology. Liberation spirituality is another key expression of Christ transforming culture. Describing aspects of spirituality that emerge from the South African context and that promote the full humanity of people is one of the goals of this thesis as these aspects affirm the world and the body as the sites where God is encountered. Aspects of a spirituality unfolding from the

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[10] See section 3.2.1.
[11] Romans 7:15-25 describes the human condition such that what we want to do, we do not do, yet what we do not want to do, we do.

South African context must also provide an analysis of structures, which prevent people from encountering God in their lives; it therefore wants to co-operate with the Spirit in the transformation of people and society.

Geoffrey Wainwright's typology of Christ against culture, the Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture in paradox and Christ the transformer of culture provides a useful framework for outlining the breadth of spirituality. Richard Foster, and his typology of *Streams of living water*, is now discussed.

Richard Foster

Richard Foster's book *Streams of living water* (1998) offers a broad introduction to Christian spirituality and the ways one can enrich one's own experience of the spiritual life. The book is structured around the metaphor of streams that have Christ as their source (Martin Marty 1998:xii). The six streams that flow from the source of Jesus and lead people back to that source are:

- o The Contemplative tradition: discovering the prayer-filled life
- o The Holiness tradition: discovering the virtuous life
- o The Charismatic tradition: discovering the spirit-empowered life
- o The Social justice tradition: discovering the compassionate life
- o The Evangelical tradition: discovering the Word-centred life
- o The Incarnational tradition: discovering the sacramental tradition

The **contemplative tradition** facilitates the thirst for intimacy with God, the human desire for the presence of God within one's everyday life (Richard Foster 1998:25). The contemplative life is the loving gaze of the soul upon God (Richard Foster 1998:49). It is the prayer-filled life. The **holiness tradition** expresses the change of mind and heart of the individual who has experienced the presence of God (Richard Foster 1998:61). Simply put, a holy life is a life that works; it is being able to do what needs to be done (Richard Foster 1998:82). A life of virtue is a life that functions well and includes the good habits that facilitate a moral life (Richard Foster 1998:82). The **charismatic tradition** focuses on the empowering gifts of the Spirit that give people the resources to live their lives in and with God (Richard Foster 1998:125). The charismatic tradition speaks of how the spirit of God empowers Christians for witness and service (Richard Foster 1998:130). The **social justice tradition** focuses on *shalom* in all human relationships and the social structures in which humans live. It is a commitment of compassion and justice for all people (Richard Foster 1998:137). The **evangelical tradition** offers the good news of the freedom of the gospel to people (Richard Foster 1998:187). It suggests a life founded on the Word of God. Finally, the **Incarnational**

tradition experiences God in the activities of everyday life, as the invisible workings of the Spirit are made visible in ordinary living (Richard Foster 1998:272).

The definitions offered by Richard Foster in *Streams of living water* are an important contribution to how aspects of a spirituality of well-being are framed in chapter six. The desire is for a spirituality that is balanced, holistic and integrates the different expressions of spirituality suggested by the six streams. A healthy spirituality requires a prayer filled life, a virtuous life of personal transformation, a compassionate life of social transformation, a life that finds God manifest in the ordinary and mundane reality, a life that is based on the word of God and a life that is empowered by the Spirit who offers full humanity or integrated wholeness. These six streams of living water offer a guiding light to describing and implementing a fully human spirituality in chapter six.

Richard Foster is a worthy spiritual mentor who is able to broaden one's scope of spirituality by introducing one to traditions with which one may not be familiar. The strength of the book is its systematic introduction to the different streams or types of spirituality. Within each of these six streams Richard Foster invites people to immerse themselves in the water and come forth refreshed by offering an historical paradigm, a Biblical paradigm, a contemporary paradigm of each type of stream or tradition. The advantage of this approach is that it solidifies the idea that spirituality is about people and not doctrine and ideas. The book is pragmatic in that it suggests a definition, outlines the major strengths and potential pitfalls of each tradition of spirituality and finally suggestions on how to practise each particular stream. The author also includes a brief overview of the Church's history against the background of the six streams of faith and spirituality. In the appendix, Richard Foster provides thumbnail sketches of important figures and movements within each of the traditions that he described earlier in his book. The book is valuable in providing greater insight into the six traditions of spirituality that he discusses and offers clues and examples, which may help to nurture the spiritual tradition in one's own life.

One of the weaknesses of the schools of spirituality approach described by Philip Sheldrake is that it does not always allow space for the nuances brought by different individuals and historical circumstances. Richard Foster's typology of six streams, on the other hand, improves on these weaknesses in that he offers contemporary, historical and Biblical examples throughout his book. One of the disadvantages of the *Streams of living water* typology is that the categories rest on the subjective interpretation of the writer. As discussed earlier in this section 2.5.4, interpretation plays a key role in determining where a pattern of spirituality is placed when a typology is designed. In addition, as spirituality is a complex phenomenon, it is likely that a person may incorporate all six of the streams of

living water into one's spiritual growth. Richard Foster himself recognises this disadvantage and remarks that many examples that he offers could fit in several other traditions[12]. However, his clear, systematic account of the six streams of living water and wide-ranging examples is a gift to the general body of literature on Christian spirituality and an important inclusion when discussing typologies of spirituality. The value of the book, as mentioned earlier, is in its contribution to one's personal growth. Through engaging in the six traditions of spirituality that he outlines, one is able to identify the growth needs in one's own personal transformation or Church formation. Furthermore, Richard Foster provides the resources to facilitate growth in these areas through the extensive bibliography, historical survey and thumbnail sketches of major examples of the six streams of living water.

The next typology, which could be described as a journey typology of spirituality, is less clinical in its approach than Richard Foster's book. Paula Huston, as the only woman author in the suggested typologies, offers what none of the other male authors offer - the gift of herself and her experiences. She risks vulnerability and lays her soul bare for her readers' edification and spiritual growth. Her own experience shines through the book in a way that is significantly absent from the other authors. Her journey typology illustrates the point which feminism makes, namely that interpreted personal experience is a central way of doing theology for women.

Paula Huston

Paula Huston in *The holy way: Practices for a simple life* (2003) offers a general overview of spirituality that is integrated closely with spiritual disciplines and how these can be implemented in one's journey of growth to wholeness. The goal of the book is to help the reader discover a simpler life, which touches every aspect of human nature. The beauty of her work is that it is a living, breathing definition of spirituality. She has experimented with the different traditions of spirituality and their respective key disciplines and observed the effects on herself. She intertwines her reading of spirituality in her own life and weaves together the writings of spiritual authors with spiritual disciplines and her own experience of them. These interconnected spiritual disciplines and the sketches of saints that embody a particular discipline offer an integrated picture of human nature, of the fully human person, of a type of spiritual anthropology (Paula Huston 2003:xxii). Her broad outline of spirituality is therefore holistic and integrated with her own life experience. Her approach to Christian spirituality illustrates the point made in this section 2.5, that spirituality is about people in specific contexts and not always about doctrine and ideas. The point is further supported by the way that she introduces traditions of spirituality, basing them on people and not institutions. She describes the way of the contemplative, the reformer and the celibate as

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[12] He gives the example of John Wesley whose life exemplifies not only the social justice tradition, but also the evangelical and holiness traditions (Richard Foster 1998:304).

people instead of speaking about contemplation, reformation and celibacy as ideas. The structure of her book denotes a journey theme, shown below, and is based on her own life experience of how *the holy way* took shape in her own life:

1) Withdrawing and taking stock
    i)   Solitude: the way of the hermit
    ii) Silence: the way of the Cenobite
2) Cleansing and finding strength
    i)   Awareness: the way of the Ascetic
    ii) Purity: the way of the Celibate
3) Discovering new community
    i)   Devotion: the way of the Psalm singer
4) Facing the demons
    i)   Right livelihood: the way of the Labourer
    ii) Confidence: the way of the Mendicant
    iii) Integrity: the way of the Reformer
5) Returning to the world
    i)   Generosity: the way of the Servant
    ii) Tranquillity: the way of the Contemplative
    iii) Beginning

The typology is itself a pilgrimage of spirituality in withdrawing from the world, finding strength, discovering community, facing demons and then returning to the world. The journey typology that she uses to describe the different patterns of spirituality is scattered with personal domestic examples, which enrich the book. The effect of this is that the reader of spirituality can appreciate the strengths and potential weakness of the patterns of spirituality she discusses by reflecting on her own personal experience of them. The book does not follow a school of spirituality approach. Rather, it is based on praxis of spirituality and how the theory is moored in one's own life in the process of transformation to wholeness. The focus on the key disciplines within each pattern of spirituality helps to root spirituality in one's life. The fruit of spiritual growth is transformation as embodied in the journey structure of her typology. She also speaks very openly of the effects of both joy and grief in the transformation of her life (Paula Huston 2003:4).

Unlike the other authors, Paula Huston is an English college teacher and not a professional theologian. She is therefore unable to give her typology the historical and theological depth that Philip Sheldrake, Richard Foster and Geoffrey Wainwright offer. However, Philip Sheldrake remarks (1995:173) that what the enduring spiritual classics have in common is that they avoid technical language, provide practical advice and are able to translate Christianity into life-style changes such that the link between ideas and practice is very close. Finally they draw on personal experience and values. My experience of Paula Huston's book *The holy way: practices for a simple* way is that it captures these aspects.

I have outlined different typologies in a broad discussion on patterns of spirituality that provide a literary context for defining spirituality. Before articulating a definition for feminist spirituality, a marriage of Christian spirituality and feminist theology, I outline some important aspects of spirituality as an academic discipline.

2.5.5   SPIRITUALITY AND THE ACADEMY

The discussion on spirituality in the academy is framed by the following two questions: "What is the history of spirituality as an academic discipline?" and "What is the nature of the academic discipline that studies spirituality?"

Until the twelfth century, theology was a single subject and had none of its present day divisions (Sandra Schneiders 1986a:260). Its methodology was basically that of reading Scripture for the purposes of living out one's faith (Sandra Schneiders 1986a:260). As such it may be described as Biblical spirituality. It is likely that Thomas Aquinas paved the way for the divisions in theology: His *Summa Theologiae* is divided into three sections (Sandra Schneiders 1986a:260). The first section discusses God; the second section discusses God in relation to humans while the third section describes the Incarnate Word (Sandra Schneiders 1986a:260). This framework allowed for the divisions of theology into dogma, moral theology and Christology that would remain in effect until Vatican II (Sandra Schneiders 1986a:260). In terms of Thomas Aquinas' framework, spiritual theology, which dealt with the lived aspects of the Christian life, was one theme in the subdivision in moral theology (Sandra Schneiders 1986a:260). Many of the great classics on spirituality were produced prior to the 17th century. These include the John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena, Julian of Norwich, Hildegaard of Bingen as well as other authors such as Benedict, Francis of Assisi and Ignatius Loyola.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there was a growing interest in spirituality. In response, spiritual theology, as an academic discipline, investigated the life of devotion and was regarded as the science of the life of perfection (Sandra Schneiders 1986a:261-2). Spiritual theology consisted of two parts; ascetical theology which covered the human experience up to the stage of passive mystical experience, while mystical theology investigated the experience of passive mysticism to the culminating union with God (Sandra Schneiders 1986:262). The development of spiritual theology was accelerated in Anglican circles with F P Harton's *The elements of the spiritual life* as well as the classic by Evelyn Underhill *Mysticism* (Philip Sheldrake 1995:56). The movement from spiritual theology to spirituality happened in the latter part of the twentieth century for two reasons. Firstly, the term spirituality suggested a more dynamic and inclusive concept that allowed for

ecumenical discussion (Philip Sheldrake 1995:57). Secondly the shift in Western theology away from a static and abstract spiritual theology to a discipline of spirituality that reflected on the range of human experience in its cultural and historical particularity and plurality paved the way for spirituality as an academic discipline (Philip Sheldrake 1995:57). A discussion on the nature of this academic discipline follows.

Three aspects of the methodology of spirituality as an academic discipline are important. First, the nature of the study is that it is interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary (Philip Sheldrake 1995:5, Sandra Schneiders 1986a:268, Joann Wolski Conn 1993:239). Second, the discipline of spirituality relies on the use of interpreted experience. Third, contemporary spirituality in the academic environment seeks expressions that are integral and holistic.

The first characteristic of spirituality in the academy is that it is interdisciplinary. The multi-disciplinary nature of spirituality embraces cross-cultural approaches and ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. Bede Griffiths in India and William Johnston in Japan are two examples of writers in the field of spirituality who focus on the dialogue with other religions (Philip Sheldrake 1995:1). The interdisciplinary nature of Christian spirituality is also reflected in my thesis using other sources such as sociology in developing research techniques and in the use of Ken Wilber's perennial philosophy. In addition, I use a helpful image in the weaver's loom where the horizontal and vertical beams represent Christian spirituality and feminist theology while the other influences such as philosophy, sociology and ethics are woven into the picture that is offered of reality.

Second, interpreted experience is a cornerstone of spirituality as an academic discipline. The academic study of spirituality reflects on the interpreted experiences of people and as such, it is descriptive rather than prescriptive (Sandra Schneiders 1986a:267). In this regard spirituality is phenomenological to the extent that it tries to understand the interpreted experiences of people in their own terms. It is therefore a participant-based discipline (Sandra Schneiders 1986a:268). The researcher brings to an investigation her own experience of spirituality and growth and replaces the disinterested observer-researcher of previous research epochs. As objectivity cannot always be achieved, the insights of postmodernism help us to recognise the myth of objectivity. Thus the discipline of spirituality relies quite heavily on the interpretations of the research writer.

Third, contemporary Christian spirituality is integrative and holistic. The holistic approach to the study of spirituality suggests that the whole person within a whole context is explored. Prayer and social justice, community and solitude are knitted together. In the discipline of spirituality there is a tension of opposites (John Macquarrie 1992:140). The one God in three

persons, the transcendence and immanence of God, the two natures of Christ, prayer and action; both have claims on us. Christian spirituality by its nature seeks integration, the discipline of spirituality would also require seeing how a phenomenon being explored fits in with the larger picture.

In summary, the nature of Christian spirituality in the academy is its interdisciplinary approach, its holistic and integrative framework, and its focus on the interpreted experience of people as these aspects promote the goal of transformation to wholeness. I have offered a broad discussion on Christian spirituality by referring to its etymological roots, historical background and definitions by scholars in spirituality. I have also discussed different typologies of spirituality as these provide a literary context for the term spirituality and have briefly described salient aspects of spirituality as an academic discipline. I now reflect specifically on feminist spirituality, which is understood as a marriage of feminist theology and Christian spirituality.

2.6   FEMINIST SPIRITUALITY

The purpose of this section is to examine what is meant by the term Christian feminist spirituality. I outline a definition woven from the points made in the above sections and describe feminist spirituality by outlining its various dimensions.

The connection between feminist theology and Christian spirituality is that though they are two different paths by which people seek God, they subsequently merge as one. Although the two paths may initially look different because of different methodologies, spirituality proceeds by way of prayer and the spiritual disciplines, while theology proceeds by way of intellectual enquiry; the paths converge because knowledge of God merges with love of God (John Macquarrie 1992:72). There is an intrinsic connection between feminist goals and spiritual development in that both strategies are about transcendence and both are connected by the concept of full humanity (Joann Wolski Conn 1995:79).

Feminist spirituality, like all other spiritual paths, emerges out of a particular context. Women's experience of oppression is the context from which feminist spirituality is born. Feminist spirituality, as the lived experience of life and faith in the spirit, indicates to whom a particular style of spirituality is accountable: it is a way of being in the world that is accountable to women (Susan Rakoczy 2004:71, Marjorie Procter-Smith 1990:164). It is a movement of people who experience God in all things and in all circumstances of life and who believe that God desires the full humanity of all people, women as well as men (Susan Rakoczy 2004:71, Kathleen Fischer 1995:96). The vision of feminist spirituality is a new

creation of a fully human society of mutual relationships where diversity is respected and allowed to flourish (Kathleen Fischer 1995:96). The core of feminist spirituality is the understanding that the glory of God is a person fully alive, fully human (St. Irenaeus *Against heresies* 4.20.7). It is at the point of full humanity that feminist theology and Christian spirituality intersect. Spiritual growth is the journey towards being fully human while full humanity also represents the goal of feminist theology. Elizabeth Amoah (1994:50-51) for example, says that spirituality is the result of a personal or corporate encounter with God; the experience restores to people their lost humanity. She also says that spirituality sensitises dominant classes to use their power in ways that restores life rather than takes it away (Elizabeth Amoah 1994:50-51). This suggested use of power provides another link between feminist theology and Christian spirituality.

The heart of the spiritual experience and goal of being fully alive and fully human includes the task of standing against that which militates against our humanity. Feminist spirituality therefore integrates a justice aspect in the way that it is expressed. The starting point for this process, as in feminist theology, is the interpreted experience of women. In the process of liberation, women name and honour their experience in a process that Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1995:67) describes as the power of naming. The role of the spiritual director or mentor is to create a sacred space for this to happen (Kathleen Fischer 1995:97). The raised consciousness of women emerges from the awareness of how women name their experience of life. It recognises the oppression of women and the social, cultural and religious structures that work to maintain this oppression. It also seeks to subvert the energies that maintain the oppression of women to create new life (Shelley Finson 1987:65).

Why is it necessary to articulate a feminist spirituality? Joann Wolski Conn (1995:78) states that spirituality is influenced by gender. She adds that a woman's journey of transformation to wholeness is restricted by patriarchal culture. Moreover the Church tradition is a contradictory experience for women because it offers liberation on the one hand and on the other hand entrenches restriction with its support of patriarchy (Joann Wolski Conn 1995:79). Women within the pattern of institutionalised religion have imbibed the patriarchal language, structures and values that continue to maintain their oppression (Shelley Finson 1987:66). The path of feminist spirituality seeks to liberate people from the experience of this restriction.

An effective way to describe feminist spirituality is to reflect on its characteristics. To do this the following question arises: How do women pray when their consciousness has been awakened and what shape does it take? (Susan Rakoczy 2004:399,400). Susan Rakoczy (2004:404) suggests that there is a sense of *wholeness* when women whose consciousness

has been awakened through prayer, as is demonstrated in rituals such as the use of music and dance in prayer. Flowing from the prayer of wholeness, there is the theme of right relationships, which aims at solidarity and building a *shalom* society (Susan Rakoczy 2004:401). The connection between prayer and justice suggests that feminist spirituality is *integral.* This holistic and integral transformation is possible through the experience of empowerment in the Spirit when Spirit Sophia prays in us, labouring with us to bring about the new creation and groaning for what is not possible now (Susan Rakoczy 2004:401-402). Thus, the journey of transformation to wholeness in feminist spirituality includes the holistic and integral dimensions of transformation.

2.6.1 HOLISTIC TRANSFORMATION: RE-MEMBERING THE BODY

One of the destructive effects of patriarchy is its view of female sexuality (Kimberly Snow 1994:20). Feminist spirituality asserts that people, as the temple of the Spirit, bear the Spirit in and through their bodies. We are therefore asked to treat our bodies and the bodies of others in such a way that the Spirit can shine through them (Kimberly Snow 1994:20). A key theme in feminist spirituality includes embracing our embodied selves such that our sensuality is part of our spirituality (Shelley Finson 1987:75). Feminist spirituality therefore focuses on embodiment by reversing the shame that religion ascribes to sexuality, particulary to women's embodiment (Susan Rakoczy 2004:71). Within this framework women are urged to reconnect with their bodies and to celebrate bodily experiences such as menstruation, menopause and pregnancy as God's gifts to them as a way of re-membering their bodies (Shelley Finson 1987: 75 & Kathleen Fischer 1995:107).

The incarnation, the Word made flesh among us, is the basis on which the embodied approach to feminist spirituality is built. It assumes that God is capable of relationship with matter and that flesh is sacred (Kenneth Leech 1980:77). The meaning of the incarnation is that God has made flesh the place of divine encounter (Richard Rohr 1993:23) while the significance of the incarnation is that God is encountered in history, in human relationships and in the body (Richard Rohr 1993:15). Forgiven sinners and spiritual searchers will find God in the body (Richard Rohr 1993:22). The rigidity and repression that have so often been associated with holiness are evil's greatest triumph over Gospel freedom (Richard Rohr 1993:22). The embodiment of feminist spirituality is developed further, when God is found in our body and the body of the world. Celtic spirituality for example mediates an intense sense of Divine presence through the finite world (John Macquarrie 1992:1550). That God is found in our bodies and in the body of the world also suggests the integral aspects of transformation.

2.6.2   INTEGRAL TRANSFORMATION

Feminist spirituality integrates personal transformation and social transformation in that the inner revolution of prayer and the outer revolution of resistance and struggle are connected as aspects of the same process of transformation (Kenneth Leech 1980:89). Kenneth Leech (1980:68) warns: "To clasp the hands in prayer is to begin an uprising against the world". This has echoes with other patterns of spirituality such as those of John Wesley who taught that an inward change of the heart has to be accompanied by an outward change in behaviour. He further taught that the pursuit of holiness is inseparable from working for justice, peace and reconciliation. What differentiates feminist spirituality from other contemporary spiritualities is its goal for social transformation: the demise of patriarchal oppression.

The Scriptural basis for the link between the inner and outer transformation is found in both the prophetic works of the Hebrew Bible and the teaching of Jesus in the Christian Scriptures. In Jeremiah (22:16), for example, it is noted that knowledge of God is found in the dispensing of justice to the poor and needy and Isaiah and Amos denounce worship without justice (Kenneth Leech 1980:80-1). For the prophet Micah (6:8), to know God is to do justice and plead the cause of the oppressed; for what God requires of us is to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God (Kenneth Leech 1980:73). Matthew 25 is the *raison d'être* of the understanding that Christian spirituality, as an encounter with Jesus, is expressed through the encounter with the poor. The words and practice of Jesus summarise the journey of spirituality as the love of both God and neighbour (Kenneth Leech 1980:81).

Integral transformation also implies that there is an intimate connection between spirituality and ethics in feminism. Historically, theology may have allowed for a division between ethics and spirituality in that spiritual theology reflected on the contemplative aspects of faith, while moral theology regarded the praxis of Christian living. Feminism, on the other hand, considers these principles as two sides of the same coin. The definition of ethics as "a reflection on what ought to be and how we can be liberated and motivated to bring it about" (Klaus Nürnberger in Louise Kretzschmar 2001:283) suggests that ethics encompasses both analysis and action, and personal and social transformation (Louise Kretzschmar 2001:283). Christian spirituality is a relationship with God in Christ made possible through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and lived in the community of believers (Philip Sheldrake 1995:60).

The concept *fully human* may be used to connect spirituality and ethics from a feminist perspective. The desire for being fully alive, fully human includes two related questions: "What kind of persons should we become?" and "What actions do we take as wise persons?" (Norvene Vest 2000:5). These two questions imply integration between being,

knowing and doing. The link between spirituality and ethics is that spirituality is the source of ethical decisions and actions (Louise Kretzschmar 2001:285). This link, with spirituality being the source of moral interaction, is further explained by means of Ken Wilber's *Four Quadrants* (2000b:117), illustrated as Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Ken Wilber's four quadrants
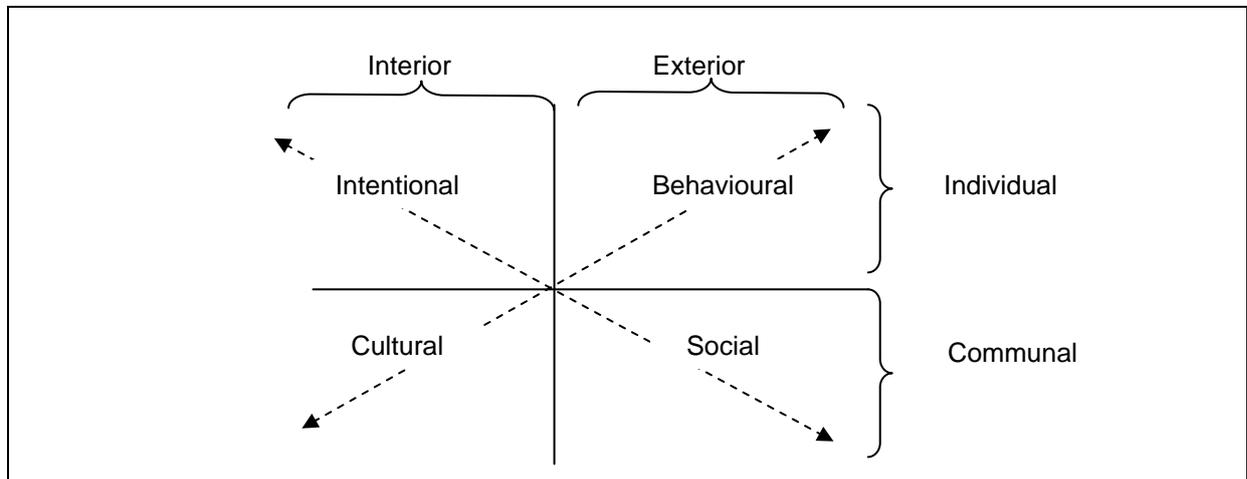
(Ken Wilber 2000b:117)

The purpose of the four quadrants is to show that the four aspects of intention, behaviour, culture and society are integral to the existence of human beings[13]: (Ken Wilber 2000d:372). These four aspects represent the inner, outer, personal and social dimensions. The upper-left quadrant represents the subjective or inner awareness of humans. The upper-right quadrant represents the outward form of humans and the upper-left is subjective while upper-right is objective (Ken Wilber 2000b:121, 122). The lower-left quadrant is the cultural aspect referring to the interior meaning and values shared by similar communities. Social refers to the exterior, material and even institutional forms of a community (Ken Wilber 2000b:121-2).

When applied to the discussion on the relationship between spirituality and ethics, the diagram represents how spirituality, in the upper-left quadrant (individual-interior), is expressed through moral action in the upper-right quadrant (individual-exterior). Spirituality and ethics are not viewed individualistically, but are understood through cultural and social fabrics (lower left and right quadrants). Spirituality and ethics also influence and are influenced by social and cultural aspects. From another perspective, the moral question: "What actions do I take?" can be situated in the upper-right quadrant (individual-exterior) as it represents an exterior expression of existence. The moral question unfolds from spiritual formation described by the question: "What kind of person should I be?" Spiritual formation

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[13] Ken Wilber actually uses the four quadrants to present a schematic summary of 'holons' which is Arthur Koestler's word to describe all entities in the universe that are whole and simultaneously part of another whole (e.g. a *whole* atom is *part* of a whole molecule (2000d:373). For the purposes of my discussion, I relate the four quadrants to humans as a particular type of holon.

may be situated in upper-left quadrant as it relates to issues of consciousness (Ken Wilber 2000b:121). Spiritual formation is influenced by the cultural and historical circumstances in which it is situated, thus it is connected to the lower-left quadrant (communal-interior). Spiritual formation, expressed through moral action and influenced by culture, also affects the social situation in which it is expressed; hence its influence is seen in the lower-right quadrant (communal-exterior).

In sum: the term integral transformation suggests that there is an interconnection between contemplation and activism, ethics and spirituality, and personal and social transformation. Feminist spirituality does not allow for a false dichotomy between the inner and outer revolutions (Louise Kretzschmar 2000:37). An integrated spirituality suggests that who we are and what we do are intimately related (Louise Kretzschmar 2000a:38). Benedictine spirituality is an example that allows for integrated spirituality in the balance it creates with its "rhythm of rest, prayer and work" in that order (Francis Cull in Louise Kretzschmar 2000a:47). The idea is that prayer arises out of rest, and work arises out of prayer such that there is a sense of holism in life (Francis Cull in Louise Kretzschmar 2000a:47). Having described feminist spirituality by reflecting on its holistic and integral dimensions, I now reflect on the research journey in this chapter before offering a summary conclusion.

2.7   PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

My reflections are structured around the hermeneutic of suspicion and the preferential option for the poor. In the light of the information presented in this chapter, I offer my own definition of Christian spirituality. My personal reflections of the research journey are in response to the literature review that is presented in this chapter, which attempts to offer definitions of key terms in an interpretive framework.

2.7.1   THE HERMENEUTIC OF SUSPICION

While feminist theology often uses sources written by women, it is still important to use some texts by male authors, as they remain part of the literary history of spirituality and theology. However, the hermeneutic of suspicion is applied when using literature in these fields. A hermeneutic of suspicion, allowing as it does for the use of a wide range of material written by women and men, means that texts are not accepted at face value but the values or ideologies that a particular text either takes for granted or endorses are analysed (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:175-177). Hence, authors such as Ken Wilber and Philip Sheldrake are used in the thesis in such a way that ideologies that they endorse or taken for granted are analysed. Women have been detrimentally affected by the exclusivity of male

voices as spiritual writers, directors, counsellors and preachers. The inclusion of women's voices and voices from the two-thirds world balances these blind spots. Thus, I use both male and female resources as well as resources from the two-thirds world as articulated in the writings of liberation theologians.

2.7.2   THE PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR

Michael Fox (1991:73, 74) says that theory must grow out of reflection on lived experience and that the art of spirituality is found within this praxis. Liberation theology demands that theology emerges from pastoral practice and from engagement with movements that call for better life conditions (Douglas Hall & Rosemary Radford Ruether 1995:94). In the light of these comments I have some concerns with the expression "preferential option for the poor". In terms of the hermeneutic of solidarity with the poor, I am learning that it is necessary to be careful about applying terms to people. It is implied that the research participants are poor because of their economic struggles and marginalisation. Nevertheless some of the research participants have a high degree of moral agency. The leader of the Orange Farm group serves as one such example. She has started an organisation to care for people who are HIV positive. She is well respected in her community for her strength and participation in the lives of people. She has used her situation of poverty, HIV/AIDS and patriarchal oppression as stepping-stones to become stronger and impart her strength to other people. My concern is that the term "poor" may cast the research participants as victims, which they are not. Part of the ethic of standing in solidarity with the poor has to be learning that at some level all are poor. From this perspective wealth and status are more fragile than people think. I say this cautiously because it is still important to define who the poor are.

2.7.3   MY PERSONAL DEFINITION OF SPIRITUALITY

One of the dangers of spirituality as an academic discipline relates to the nebulous way that the term is used to apply to almost every human experience (Philip Sheldrake 1995:6). A perusal of the sources of spirituality shows that no two authors define spirituality in precisely the same way. To a certain degree this makes sense, as spirituality is not a transcultural phenomenon but is a deeply personal experience and is embodied in people rather than in abstract theological ideas (Philip Sheldrake 1995:41). Based on the discussion of Christian spirituality in section 2.5, I suggest a definition of spirituality that has three dimensions: First, it ought to embody the goal of being fully human. Second, the definition of spirituality should maintain links with etymological and historical influences. Third, the definition of spirituality has to be integral and holistic and include personal and social transformation. Weaving together these different aspects I suggest that

Christian spirituality is about being and becoming fully human. A fully human spirituality is to be so filled with the Holy Spirit of God through Jesus that one becomes a source of Divine presence in the world for other people and creation. This transformation to wholeness is a gift of grace; it is made possible through the spiritual disciplines that maintain and express God's presence in one's personal and social living. Among these spiritual disciplines is a preferential option for the poor, contemplative prayer and authentic community.

2.8   CONCLUDING REMARKS

The vision of the human person fully alive and fully human is the goal of feminist theology and Christian spirituality. The concept of a fully human person offers a bridge between these two disciplines in that it shapes the tasks of self-actualisation, wholeness and transformation. The fully human person is one who is on a journey of transformation to wholeness. The fully human person recognises the humanity of others and walks in solidarity with those who live life on the margins of society.

The purpose of this second chapter was to offer an interpretive framework by defining key concepts that are used in the thesis. **Full humanity** was described as transformation to wholeness. Wholeness includes unity with God, others, creation and within oneself. The desire for full humanity is keenly felt among the poor. The **preferential option for the poor** as expressed through **solidarity** with them was defined as the key hermeneutical point of departure in the thesis. In defining a preferential option for the poor several questions were asked including "Who are the poor?" "What is a preferential option for the poor?" "What is solidarity with the poor?" "Why should we stand in solidarity with the poor?" These questions allowed for a systematic examination of the concept preferential option for the poor.

The fields of the research are feminist theology and Christian spirituality. **Feminist theology** was described as a particular way of doing theology that highlights the gender perspective in order to complete one-sided, androcentric theology. Feminist theology was also described as having both a critical and a constructive function. The critical function of feminist theology is to critique patriarchy as this structure of oppression militates against the experience of full humanity for people. The constructive task of theology, using the *interpreted* experience of women, is to nurture liberation from patriarchy and the effects of oppression.

Christian Spirituality is intricately tied up with history, thus how we define the term is dependent on context. The connection between Christian spirituality and history was

illustrated in a number of ways. The historical overview, definitions by scholars, and discussion of patterns of spirituality through the ages using typologies showed how spirituality is embedded in history. The contemporary understanding of spirituality appreciates that spirituality represents a fundamental dimension of a human being (Kenneth Collins 1996:85). This means that all humans have an inner, transcendental dimension to their nature (Kenneth Collins 1996:85). While spiritual theology in the past tended to focus on the perfection of the inner life, contemporary spirituality is concerned with human growth (Philip Sheldrake 1995:58, Sandra Schneiders 1986a:264). The desire for human growth is defined theologically as the yearning for a fully human spirituality, which serves as the connection between the goals of spirituality and feminist theology.

Chapter three builds on the foundation laid in this chapter and describes the epistemological assumptions that guide the research. Chapter three describes the dance and the dialogue between theory and research methods.

CHAPTER THREE
GATHERING AND INTERPRETING STORIES: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter two defined the key terms guiding the research journey. **Feminist theology** and **Christian spirituality** were discussed, as these are the disciplines guiding the research. **Fully human** as the goal of the thesis, and **preferential option for the poor**, as a key hermeneutical principle in the theological approach followed in this thesis, were outlined. The purpose of chapter three is to discuss the research methodology applied in this thesis.

3.1   INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS: THE WEAVING, DANCING, TALKING NATURE OF RESEARCH

Research methodology refers to a researcher's approach to a research problem as reflected in the research design and the method used to collect and analyse data, which I describe as a process of gathering, listening to and interpreting stories. Stories are dynamic, ever changing and sacred. The telling of stories can be a context where people encounter God, where God encounters people and where they encounter each other and creation. Jesus used parables as a form of story to connect people with God, their deepest selves, and each other. Stories are therapeutic, and on the path to full humanity, are in many ways the simplest and most accessible ingredient to one's healing and the healing of the community (Clarissa Pinkola Estes 1992:12). Mercy Amba Odoyoye (2001:21) highlights the sacred and healing aspects of storytelling

> The stories we tell of our hurts and joys are sacred. Telling them makes us vulnerable, but without this sharing we cannot build community and solidarity. Our stories are sacred paths on which we have walked with God, and struggled for a passage to our full humanity.

In research methodology, there is a dance and a dialogue between the researcher's paradigmatic assumptions and the practical aspects of the research. As I gather stories in the dance and a dialogue of the research process, I am influenced by the assumptions through which I view the world and these, in turn, influence the practical aspects of the research. One's assumptions about the world influence the way one sees reality (James Churchill & David Jones 1979:140). In essence, there is no such thing as a neutral reading of text or data as reading and understanding is done through antecedent presuppositions that colour one's perceptions (James Churchill & David Jones 1979:140). This is so because researchers begin their work in an historically conditioned context that includes a literary framework where work is "inherited" from previous writers in the field in which one is engaged (James Churchill & David Jones 1979:140).

Epistemology, methods and methodology, key words used to guide the discussion on gathering and interpreting stories, are often confused (Gayle Letherby 2003:5). Epistemology refers to a theory of knowledge, the paradigm through which any researcher experiences the world while research methods refer to the techniques used for conducting research and for collecting data or gathering stories (Gayle Letherby 2003:5). Examples of research methods in this thesis are interviews, focussed group discussions, drawings and written work that include the writing of devotions and personal journals. Methodology is a framework that describes the relationship between epistemology, research methods and data or stories and the influence each has on the other in the weaving, dancing and talking nature of research.

The discussion on research methodology reflects on four aspects of the research process. Firstly, there is a discussion on the **epistemological presuppositions** of the research and how these influence the process of gathering and interpreting stories. Secondly, I describe the selected **research design** that is based on the epistemological assumptions and the methods of data collection. A research design can be qualitative, quantitative or a combination of both. Thirdly, there is a reflection on the choice of **research methods** and how these emerge out of the epistemological paradigm. Finally, there is a conversation on the **analysis** of the data/stories including a concern for the **ethical guidelines** in the process of interpretation and a suggestion as to some of the **limitations** of the research methodology.

3.2   EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

In this section, I offer a map of how this thesis is located as "all disciplines rest on a network of philosophical assumptions about the nature of life and reality" (Roger Walsh & Frances Vaughn 1993:202). Philosophical assumptions contain people's views on humanity and their experience of God and provide a framework within which epistemological statements are made (Roger Walsh & Frances Vaughn 1993:203). Epistemological assumptions focus on the knowledge claims made by the researcher (John Creswell 2003:5). A knowledge claim implies that researchers project specific assumptions about "how they will learn and what they will learn during their enquiry" (John Creswell 2003:5). In outlining different epistemological assumptions, John Creswell (2003) teaches that they are usually typified in one of the following three schools of thought: Post positivist knowledge claims, socially constructed knowledge claims, and participatory knowledge claims. These are briefly described to offer an historical background against which the epistemological assumptions in this study are understood.

Post positivist knowledge claims offer a determinist view on reality where causes are said to determine outcomes (John Creswell 2003:7). A typical example of how this paradigm influences empirical research is experiments where scientists examine causes and the effects of these causes (John Creswell 2003:7). Post positivism is usually reductionistic in that ideas are reduced to small components (John Creswell 2003:7). The *modus operandi* of this school of thought is that through careful, objective observation of the world "out there" one is able to reduce reality into numeric representations that can then be measured for analysis. Typically, those in the post positivist school of thought test, verify or refine theories and laws that govern the world and collect data that either support or refute those theories and revise the theories before additional tests are adopted (John Creswell 2003:7). Post positivist epistemological assumptions are most common in quantitative approaches. The essential features of this school include rationality, objectivity and distance in research (John Creswell 2003:7).

The knowledge assumptions embedded in the **socially constructed knowledge** school of thought are that people develop an understanding of the world in which they live and work (John Creswell 2003:8). People build up **subjective** meanings of their experiences (John Creswell 2003:8). The word "social" implies that knowledge arises from interaction in the community. It is therefore important to understand the setting of the research as this context shapes people's thinking (John Creswell 2003:9). Socially constructed knowledge claims are usually found in the qualitative approaches to research. This school is different to the post positivist school in that instead of seeking understanding through an ever-narrowing approach into a few ideas and categories, it seeks diversity and complexity of possible perceptions (John Creswell 2003:8). The purpose of this approach is to rely as much as possible on the participants' view of reality (John Creswell 2003:8). In the paradigm of socially constructed knowledge claims, the questions are broad and general allowing the participants space for their meaning-making which they often do in dialogue with other people. (John Creswell 2003:8). Subjective meanings are negotiated historically and socially (John Creswell 2003:8). This indicates that meaning is formed in culturally flavoured contexts and through interaction with other people (John Creswell 2003:8). Researchers in this paradigm understand that their own background influences their interpretation and so they position themselves in the research to specify how their interpretation flows from their own historical, cultural and personal experiences (John Creswell 2003:8,9). According to John Creswell (2003:8-9) the essential features of the socially constructed knowledge claims are that

- Human beings design meaning as they engage with their world.
- Researchers often use open-ended questions so that participants can express their views.
- Meaning is based on historic and social perspectives signifying that people are born into a world that frames their understanding through culture.

Researchers in the **participatory action** school of thought believe that research is knitted with political agendas that address issues of social justice. Embedded within this research approach is an action agenda that the research may change and reform the lives of those participating in the research. Issues that are addressed include inequality, empowerment, oppression, and alienation. Some feminist perspectives find their home within this knowledge assumption (John Creswell 2003:10). According to John Creswell (2003:11) key components in participatory action consist of an action agenda that includes

- open political debate so that change can happen,
- a focus on liberating individuals from the constraints to their full humanity,
- practical and collaborative in that research is achieved with others rather than on others or to others.

The research in this thesis is in feminist theology and Christian spirituality. The epistemological assumptions that emerge out of an intertwining of these two fields do not necessarily fall neatly into the categories described by John Creswell (2003). However, aspects of socially constructed knowledge claims resonate with feminist theology and Christian spirituality. For example, the suggestion that meaning is historically and socially constructed has parallels with Christian spirituality, which also recognises that patterns of spirituality emerge from particular contexts and respond to the needs of that environment. Feminist theology, which centralises the interpreted experiences of women, also supports the idea that people build up their knowledge through engaging with other people and their environment. Aspects of the participatory approaches, especially the action agenda and the hopes of empowerment and change, find support in feminist theology and Christian spirituality.

While John Creswell (2003) outlines knowledge claims usually adopted by researchers, theology and spirituality make knowledge claims based on belief in the revelation of God. Revelation is faith in the understanding that God communicates Godself to people. Revelation is grace. It encompasses more than knowledge about God and includes the self-disclosure of God in history. The various modes of God's revelation include Biblical revelation, revelation through tradition, revelation through reason, revelation through experience, and, of particular interest to Christian spirituality, revelation as Presence (Alister McGrath 1997:181-183).

Biblical revelation refers to the group of texts that are of authoritative[1] value in the lives of believers. It is not only a source of academic reflection but is expounded in worship services

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[1] The nature and extent of the authoritative value of Scripture is a matter of debate in theology (Alister McGrath 1997:193). From a feminist perspective, the hermeneutic of suspicion is applied to unearth the patriarchal bias evident in some writings in the Bible.

and is used as a spiritual discipline within the lives of seekers (Alister McGrath 1997:193). Thus Scripture is authoritative as a source of theological reflection and spiritual growth because as Gustavo Gutierrez (1983:34) suggests 'as we read the Bible, so the Bible reads us'.

Revelation through tradition highlights how the accumulated teaching of the Church, handed down through the ages, is employed in knowledge creation (Alister McGrath 1997:219). For Roman Catholic neo-scholastics, tradition and doctrine often receive undue weight in theological reflection. It is important to learn that each of the sources of the theology is not mutually exclusive but is woven together to discern God's movement in history.

Reason is also a major resource in theological reflection. During the time of the Enlightenment, the role of reason acquired special significance (Alister McGrath 1997:213). In the discipline of Christian spirituality, the spiritual gifts of discernment and prayer are necessary aspects of revelation through reason and can balance some of the extremes of rationality.

Revelation through experience suggests the influential idea that God is made known in the experiences of individuals and communities of believers. In Chapter two, I explained how the interpreted experiences of women are the point of departure in feminist theology. In Christian spirituality, interpreted experience is also a hallmark of the discipline. In section 3.2.1, I describe how reflected experience, as an aspect of wisdom, is an epistemological assumption guiding the research.

Revelation as Presence expounds the idea that that which is communicated is not only knowledge *about* God, but also a life-giving, life-renewing relationship *with* God (Emil Brunner in Alister McGrath 1997:186). Revelation as Presence is unpacked further in section 3.2.1 where wisdom as an epistemological assumption describes how the Presence of the Person Wisdom is one aspect of wisdom that is communicated.

The vast corpus of literature on these sources of theology are understood and used differently by different scholars in different denominations and are a subject for much debate. By nature, spirituality is interdisciplinary, therefore I have combined the usual sources of theology with other sources in my thesis as suggested by the image of the weaver's loom described in Chapter one (figure 1.5).

Having briefly outlined some aspects of post positivist, socially constructed, participatory knowledge claims and the different sources of theology, I now describe the pertinent

epistemological assumptions informing this research that arise from the fields of feminist theology and Christian spirituality. The key assumptions of feminist theology and Christian spirituality, which include the politics of: wisdom, interpreted experience, subjective involvement, community and of liberative action, highlight the political nature of theology. Each of these assumptions is subsequently discussed.

3.2.1 THE POLITICS OF WISDOM

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (2001:23) says that "Wisdom is the power of discernment, deeper understanding, and creativity; it is the ability to move and dance, to make connections, to savour life and learn from experience". In describing the politics of wisdom as an epistemological assumption in the thesis, I first reflect on the meaning of the word wisdom and how it is used in the thesis and then suggest its links with Christian spirituality and feminist theology. Three facets of the meaning of the word wisdom include that wisdom is a gift of God's grace; it is not something that can be achieved. As such it is God revealed in history, as was discussed in section 3.2. Wisdom is about reflected experience and is closely related to the theological concept of full humanity.

Wisdom as a gift of God's grace
When wisdom is offered as an epistemological assumption it is in the spirit of desiring to be open to God, others, oneself, creation and lived experiences (Elizabeth Johnson 1992:124). Wisdom as an epistemological assumption in this thesis is not offered as 'wise knowledge' but as a gift of God's grace. It is not something that can be earned or achieved. People remain open to the influence of God's wisdom and grace through practising spiritual disciplines (Elizabeth Johnson 1992:125). In this sense spiritual disciplines are practices, rituals or means of grace that believers find helpful in opening their lives to the influence of the Spirit. The disciplines place Christian believers before God so that She can transform them as they are intended for good and bring the abundance of God's life into their lives (Richard Foster 1978:7, 8). This means that the spiritual disciplines of prayer, solitude and discernment are part of the research process. To say that wisdom is a gift of God's grace is to say that wisdom is a Person with whom one can have a relationship. This is because what is communicated to us through the gift of grace is the Presence of wisdom as a Person. In the Christian tradition, the Person that is communicated to us is Sophia, a wise woman "who lives at the end of time" or the "woman who lives at the edge of the world" (Clarissa Pinkola Estes 1992:7). Sophia takes different forms in different cultures. In Spain she is the River beneath the river, the Great woman, the Light for the Abyss, the wolf-woman or the bone-woman (Clarissa Pinkola Estes 1992:7). In other cultures she is a creator-hag, or death-Goddess, the spider-woman or the Mist-being who has lived forever. In Tibet she is the "dancing force who produces clear seeing within woman" (Clarissa Pinkola Estes 1992:7).

The wise woman, Sophia, is at the same time one's deepest, ineffable, unconscious self, and the transcendent Other who is the symbol of one's becoming.

Wisdom is a person, but is also more than a person. Wisdom is practical knowledge. It is the fruit of experience, daily mundane living and study (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:23). Wisdom is not found in textbooks, but is intuitively integrated into who one is through life and relationships and especially through relating to God. Yet wisdom is more than practical knowledge. It suggests insight and deep understanding of the human spirit that is only possible through the indwelling of the Trinity, the gift of God's grace (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:23). Wisdom is lived out in relationships and seeks to make them expressions of integrity (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:23). As such, wisdom is not dependent on education since poor, uneducated people may be wise while well-qualified and educated people may be foolish. Part of being open to wisdom is being able to reflect on experience.

Wisdom as reflected experience

The word wisdom is derived from the Latin *sapientia* or *sapere*, which translates as to taste and savour something (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:23). This means that knowledge that is understood on a purely intellectual level only is not desirable. To taste and savour implies that the research is baptised in experience, one cannot taste and savour something in the head; it is done through the experiences of the body. The word savour suggests that the reflections on the literature need to be percolated and digested with reflections on the stories that are heard through the data collection process.

Wisdom as the process of meaning-making in the world is not only concerned with the interpretation of data and literature, but understanding and experiencing the self, others, the mystery of God and the world (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:3). In other words, the research is more than a desire to make meaning and create knowledge. It is a desire to be open to experience and to reflect on it. At the centre of the understanding is the desire to experience relationships with the poor and to reflect on that experience. The goal of reflecting on experience is full humanity.

Wisdom as full humanity

There is a deep connection between wisdom and the desire for full humanity. Wisdom is asking what it means to be a fully human person and seeks the abundant life (Norvene Vest 2000:14,15). The promise of wisdom is the promise of the good life, thus wisdom teaches justice and mercy for all so that the good life can become a reality for all people (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:28). To walk in Wisdom's path is to walk in the way of justice and peace, which is the social aspect of being fully human (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza

2001:2). Full humanity is the goal of both feminist theology and Christian spirituality. The praxis of this epistemological assumption is that the desire for full humanity should guide the process of interacting with the research participants as well as listening and interpreting their stories.

Wisdom's links with feminist theology and Christian spirituality

In answering the question "what is wisdom?" it has been suggested that wisdom is a gift of grace from God, a gift of God's presence. Nevertheless people open themselves to the influence of the Spirit through the study and practice of spiritual disciplines. The praxis of being open to God, others and self through practising the spiritual disciplines is Christian spirituality. Wisdom is an epistemological assumption that is particular to the field of Christian spirituality. It does, however, also have links with feminist theology: wisdom is often personified as the female form of divine presence in Scripture as in Proverbs 1:20-33 and Job 28 (Elizabeth Johnson 1992:86). In Hebrew, the spirit, (*ruach*), presence (*shekinah*) and wisdom (*chokmah)* of God are feminine terms that express God's action within the world and how She is intimately involved in the ordinary, mundane affairs of life (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:22, Elisabeth Johsnon 1992:83&124)[2]. This in itself suggests Wisdom's intimate links with Spirit; Spirit and Wisdom have a close affinity in that both Sprit and Wisdom describe God's presence and activity in the world: vivifying human life, renewing the earth and inspiring prophetic justice (Elisabeth Johnson 1992:94). Not only is there a close link between Wisdom and Spirit, there is also a close link between Jesus and Wisdom (Elisabeth Johnson 1992:94). In depicting the salvific significance of Jesus, Christians adapted wisdom language to portray Jesus as Wisdom's teacher, Wisdom's child (Matthew 23:37-39) and ultimately as the incarnation of Wisdom (Elisabeth Johnson 1992:95). Thus Wisdom's links with Christian spirituality are reinforced by Her links with Spirit who vivifies the spiritual life and Jesus who is the icon of Christian spirituality.

Wisdom, who is often personified as woman, provides a helpful link with feminist theology. The use of the image of wisdom personified as woman is not without critique. Some suggest that it highlights the ideal of Lady Wisdom, which promotes the romanticised and colonial view of elite women with positions of power who are complementary to western, educated gentlemen and who conspire to mediate European culture to the civilisation of the "native savages" (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:26). Moreover, the Wisdom image is dualistic in that it upholds the good woman over and against the evil woman (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:27).

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[2] The feminine gender of Wisdom is not only derived from the grammatical construction of the Hebrew words, the portrayal of wisdom is through female images such as sister, mother, female beloved, chef, hostess (Elizabeth Johnson 1992:87).

There are those who object to this negative view of wisdom (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:27). They point out that the wisdom teachings are saturated with justice and peace issues (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:27). Second, wisdom cannot be said to represent the "Lady" image of later centuries, as that would not have been part of the worldview of the Scriptural writers. Like the Cosmic Christ, Wisdom is cosmic - She is the leader of her people, the teacher of justice and delights in creation (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:27). She embodies inclusiveness, openness and hospitality. As Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (2001:27) states: "Her cosmic house is without walls and her table is set for all". Wisdom remains an empowering resource for feminine language for God and the spirituality of women (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:28). Wisdom is not domesticated or privatised – hers is a public voice as shown in Proverbs (1:20): "Wisdom calls aloud in the street and raises her voice in public squares".

Another link that wisdom has with Christian spirituality and feminist theology is the idea that "Wisdom is intelligence, shaped by experience and sharpened by critical analysis" (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:23). Thus, in common with the fields of Christian spirituality and feminist theology, Wisdom reflects on lived experience and appraises the world in a critical fashion. Feminist theology has the critical task of analysing patriarchy and its effects based on the interpreted experiences of women. Rumination is an effective word to describe the process of reflecting on wisdom as lived experience in relationships with others (Norvene Vest 2000:16). Rumination is more than mere reflection. The word suggests how wisdom is cultivated over a long period through digesting lived experience, percolating reading, talking and listening. The image for rumination is Mary who "pondered things in her heart" (Luke 2:19). In the process of rumination and percolation the spiritual gifts of discernment, contemplation and prayer are a necessary part of the research journey. Discernment as practical wisdom is being able to point out the presence and absence of God. It is being able to read the signs of the times, which is a prophetic task of pointing out situations that make God visible and those that do not. Contemplation is the mystical experience beyond prayer and meditation where one rests in God and allows God to rest in people. Prayer is being open to God and God's influence in one's life.

In sum, Wisdom comes from living, from listening, from making mistakes and trying again (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:23). As such, it baptises the research process in subjectivity. The ancient art of wisdom strongly suggests that the full life of being a fully human person cannot be advanced from the outside as an objective observer and that the journey of wisdom is undertaken in a subjective mode (Norvene Vest 2000:16). The sister of wisdom, Experience, is discussed next.

3.2.2 THE POLITICS OF INTERPRETED EXPERIENCE

One of the common traits across the different expressions of feminist theology is that *interpreted* experience, especially women's experience, is the starting point and criterion of truth in knowledge-making. Both feminist theology and Christian spirituality emphasise the important role that interpreted experience plays in the process of knowledge-making. There is often a lack of a gendered perspective in the different uses of experience as a resource because feminism focuses on women's interpreted experience, while Christian spirituality describes the human condition in general terms. Even today the voices of male spiritual directors and writers dominate. My experience of God is coloured by the fact that I have a woman's body and is influenced by power imbalances that are mediated through culture and religion. Feminist theology creates space for women to reflect on how they experience God, others and themselves. This is based on the conviction that every woman has something to say about her life and what she needs to become empowered (Patti Lather 1991:xviii).

Experience, as a source in theology, needs to be qualified. In chapter two I made explicit that experience is mediated through interpretation and that there are different categories of experience. It is difficult to account for experience as a "raw" source. One's meaning and understanding of experience is mediated through a cultural, social and historical fabric. Experience as a source in theology is not a blank slate, a *tabula rasa*, from which understanding can be drawn and upon which interpretation can be imposed. Rather, it is filtered through past experiences, presuppositions and personality traits. In the context of this research study, the interpreted experience of the participants is also greatly influenced by factors such as language and my presence as a listener. Regarding **interpreted** experience as a source of theology, Louise Kretzschmar (1995b:101) offers a valuable diagram to illustrate how women's experience is interpreted and filtered, as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 How women's experience is hindered by Church structures and practices, and theology

(Louise Kretzschmar 1995b:101)

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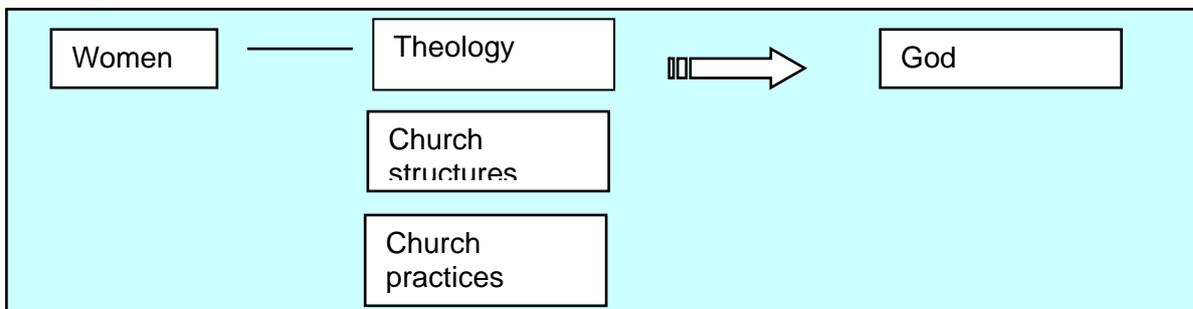
Figure 3.1 explains how a woman's experience of God is hindered by Church structures and practices, culture and theology (Louise Kretzschmar 1995b:102). It also illustrates how women's experience of God is filtered through factors such as theology, culture, Church and through personality, past experiences, bodily experiences, assumptions about the world and views about God, self and others. In that sense the diagram can be redrawn as a way of placing greater emphasis on women's **interpreted** experience as a source in feminist theology, as shown in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2   How women's experience is mediated through interpretation
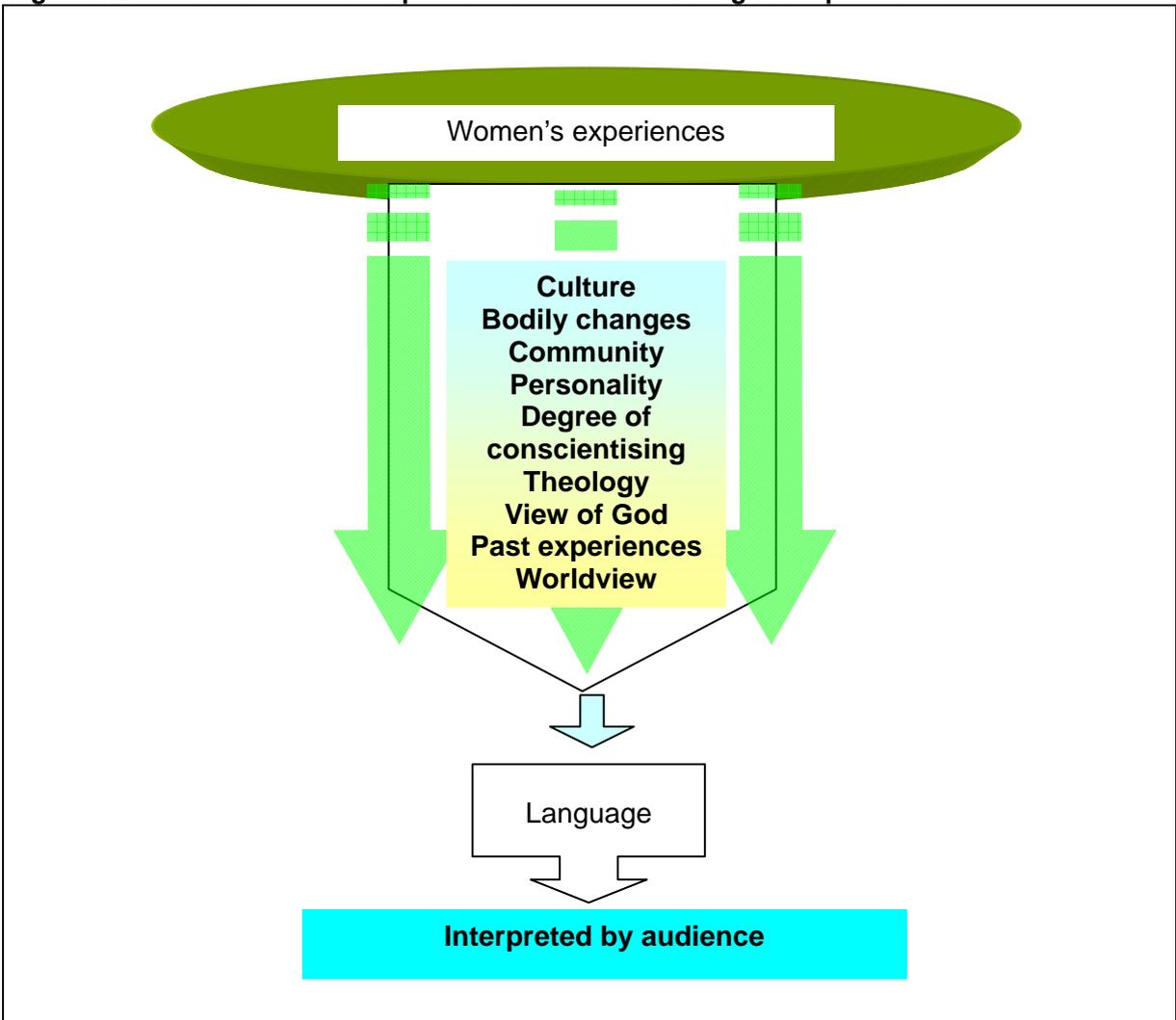
Figure 3.2 visually represents the process of interpretation and shows how experience is filtrated through one's assumptions of the world, personality, past experiences and context. This process of filtration is the process of interpretation. The stories that are offered in the data collection process have been interpreted through this filtration process. The audience, influenced by historical conditioning, assumptions and her/his worldview, further influences the telling of stories. This suggests that interpreted experience, as a resource in theologising, is highly subjective. As depicted in the figure 3.2, the filtration process influences interpreted experience, which is also influenced by the listener who experiences

the stories that are shared subjectively. The audience hears the stories through the vehicle of language. This raises the question based on the insights of post structuralism: to what extent does the language we use reflect our experience or construct our experience of the reality that we experienced? The assumptions of poststructuralism are that language does not reflect reality but constructs reality (Carole Truman *et al* 2000:10). Meaning is thus constituted within language and is not always a reflection by the subject who speaks it (Carole Truman *et al* 2000:10). Therefore, language has the power to shape how people experience the world and how they behave in the world (Carole Truman *et al* 2000:11). Post structuralism proposes that the person is precarious, contradictory, and **in process** (Carole Truman *et al* 2000:10). The "in process" aspect of human beings has links with Christian spirituality, which celebrates the mystery of the person who can never be fully known and the becoming of the person as a result of the Spirit of Love evolving her/him into union with God. Since humans are "in process" they are subjective beings open to change[3]. In the context of this thesis, the research participants are asked to share their interpreted experiences through the vehicle of a language that is not their mother tongue, an issue which further complicates the important use of interpreted experience[4].

In summary, the process of story gathering is done through listening to the interpreted experiences of women, and some men, in support groups. The politics of interpreted experience are a recognised resource in theologising and research, the politics of experience further implies that as the researcher I am involved in the research and am not aiming for an objective distance, but for subjective involvement. The politics of subjective involvement in the research experience is now discussed.

3.2.3   THE POLITICS OF SUBJECTIVE INVOLVEMENT

The politics of subjective involvement means firstly that the **process** of knowledge making requires that the relationship between the researchers and the participants is subjective and involved. Secondly, knowledge creation is not objective, empirical, numerical or measurable. Ken Wilber (1981:33) considers

> … exclusive empiricism to be radically and violently reductionistic, no matter how cleverly concealed; the demand for empirical proof is really a demand to strip the higher levels of being of their meaning and value and present them only in their aspects that can be reduced to objective, sensory value free, univalent dimensions.

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[3]   Feminists have used poststructuralist insights as strategies for change, focusing on language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions. The theory explains where experience comes from, why it is contradictory or incoherent and how it can be changed. However feminists have a problem with the poststructuralist rejection of meta-narratives and its emphasis on the local and specific. Although these insights are an important challenge to modernity, emancipatory research depends on the transcendent goal of liberation as a starting point for the research (Carole Truman *et al* 2000:12).

[4] The issue of language barriers is further discussed under 'Limitations in the study' in this chapter.

In my research study, my deliberate intention was to be involved in the lives of the research participants. My spiritual formation in terms of Christian spirituality initiates this involvement. The influence of Wesleyan spirituality and its emphasis of standing in solidarity with the poor have been particularly formative for me (see section 2.3.3). Feminist theology demands that the researcher be involved, therefore the possibilities of being a neutral observer are rejected. In the research process I am an involved-subject and not an objective-observer. The demand that scholarship be detached and disinterested overrides the link I experience between prayer, justice and theory-making that is emphasised in feminist spirituality. My research study is influenced by the postmodern critique of the possibilities of objectivity. Postmodernists criticise the confidence that people have in the powers of human reason to be neutral and objective. It must be remembered that interpretation of experience of truth and God is conditioned by experience of culture and society and it is historically conditioned (Philip Sheldrake 1995:8). Therefore, subjective involvement, instead of being an obstacle, becomes a stepping-stone to knowledge creation.

The implication of the centrality of interpreted experience and of a desire to be involved in the lives of the participants, is that feminist Christian spirituality as a discipline is subjective. However, the experiencing subjects may interpret their subjective experience against a backdrop of tradition, which is a codified record of a faith community's religious experiential heritage. The centrality of experience locates the philosophy undergirding this work in a different place to logical positivism, which holds that empirical enquiry is possible through objectivity. The nature of theology is that it is a systematic reflection on the content of the Christian faith (Alister McGrath 1999:20). Until the 18th century, believers saw no tension between the intellectual enquiry of faith and the practical outworking. In the Enlightenment, religious commitment was interpreted as being an obstacle to theology in that it countered the ideal of objectivity (Alister McGrath 1999:27).

The language of transpersonal philosophy offers further tools with which to critique the objectivity of logical positivism. The language of transpersonal or perennial philosophy links with the framework of spirituality in that both argue the Fundamental Reality is God, Spirit, Consciousness, Tao or Braham depending on one's context (Vaughn Walsh and Frances Vaughn 1993:204). The core of the perennial philosophy can be summarised in four doctrines:

1. The phenomenal world of things and matter is the manifestation of the Ground of Reality within which all partial realities have their being and apart from which they are non-existent (Aldous Huxley 1993:213).
2. Humans have a capacity to know about the Divine Ground by inference and can realise Her existence by divine intuition. Karl Rahner (in Gerald McCool 1975:2,15), using the

Thomistic synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy, describes a similar understanding by introducing the *Vorgriff* concept, which holds that all humans have a pre-grasp of the Infinite Being. The *Vorgriff* is foreknowledge or a prior experience of being loved and the prior experience of being loved is what energises the search for God.

3. Humans possess a double nature containing the phenomenological ego and the eternal Self, which is the spirit or the spark of divinity in the soul. Thomas Keating in *Open mind, open heart* (1986) and *Invitation to love* (2000) and Richard Rohr in *Hope against darkness* (2001) describe a similar interpretation by referring to a false-self as the phenomenological ego that operates in the world and the True-Self which is one's identity in Christ as the Ground of one's soul. For these two authors the primary task of spirituality is learning to live out of the True-Self which involves the gradual death of the false ego[5].

4. Humans are able to identify themselves with the Spirit and therefore Divine Ground. The important doctrine of transpersonal philosophy is that the Fundamental Reality is beyond all ideas, qualities and metaphors (Aldous Huxley 1993:204). God, as the Ground of Being of the world, manifests Godself as the universe that is organised in an ontological "holarchy" from matter to increasing nuances of mind, soul and spirit (Aldous Huxley 1993:205). A holarchy is made up of holisms, which are at the same time whole, yet part of another whole. The pathology within some traditions of contemporary science is that they focus their investigation on the level of matter and have ignored the subtleties and denied existence in "higher" or "deeper" chains of being (Aldous Huxley 1993:205). This is precisely the problem with logical positivism. Aldous Huxley describes the Fundamental Reality that undergirds all existence as the Highest Common Factor. He argues that this Final Purity can never be expressed in words – it is only through contemplation and experience that it can be accessed (Aldous Huxley 1993:213). Therefore, for feminist Christian spirituality, experience and reflection on experience is a central methodological feature of the discipline.

In describing the politics of subjective involvement, I have suggested that knowledge is based on my subjective, interpreted experience as the researcher and my involvement in the lives of the research participants. The effect that the politics of subjective involvement has is that it undercuts Cartesian dualism. The healing of these dualisms is an important feature for both feminist theology and Christian spirituality.

A challenge to Cartesian dualism

The challenge to objectivity is offered by both disciplines of feminist theology and Christian spirituality. Both disciplines have as their aim the healing of dualisms. The Cartesian

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[5] This is discussed in detail in section 5.6.4, 6.7 and 6.8.

dualism, which is characterised by the separation of the mind from the body, is an almost unquestioned assumption in most of western thinking (Janet Trisk 2003:40).

Dualistic notions, which are healed in the journey of spirituality described in the thesis as transformation to wholeness, have shaped western thinking since Aristotle described the Pythagorean table of opposites (Janet Trisk 2003:41). In the Enlightenment, Descartes, who offered a table of mutually exclusive opposites in which some categories are assumed higher than others, consolidated this principle. Sir James Jeans (in Ken Wilber 1984:138) describes how Descartes was utterly convinced that there could be no possibility of a link between mind and matter. Since these two worlds are parallel, they run together, but will never meet (Ken Wilber 1984:138):

Mind	Body
Light	Dark
Male	Female
Spirit	Flesh

For Descartes, the immaterial substance of the mind is separable from the body it inhabits. The consequences of this notion are that God, identified with the rational mind, is separate from the world, resulting in deism (Janet Trisk 2003:41). The concern for feminists is that by associating women with the body and instability, men have used the dualist understandings to justify patriarchal oppression with arguments of male rationality and divinity (Janet Trisk 2003:42). The resistance to Cartesian dualism shared by the disciplines of spirituality and feminism, opens the path toward new ways of thinking about female subjectivity. The body can become the site for political, economic and intellectual battles (Janet Trisk 2003:49). Several strategies can be employed to undercut the subject-object dualism:

1. The research writer is included as a research participant. It is an attempt to know with others rather than about them (Arvin Bhana 1999:230). In this attempt, a particular type of community that is based on principles of democracy, mutuality and empowerment, becomes a locus for theologising. The model for dissolving hierarchical leadership is John 13, which records Christ's demonstration of servant leadership through the washing of his disciples' feet. The model of servant leadership implies that power is not always a negative principle in community. Power and authority are salugenic in that they contribute to growth in a healthy way if they are used to empower others[6]. Feminist

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[6] The term servant leadership often confuses Christian leaders; the word servant may imply slavery and a sense of powerlessness while the word leader implies one who needs to take action and deal with problems. Servant leadership implies leading out of relationships and not by force; it seeks the growth and development of people not position and recognition (Louise Kretzschmar 2000b:37). Servant leaders do have power, but they understand that power is not a possession, but something that is to be shared with others and is to be used creatively for the building-up of the body of Christ in unity and love. They also understand that power, authority and leadership are moored in their inner

researchers aim to eradicate the power imbalances between researchers and researched (Gill Eagle *et al* 1999:441). It is not at all possible to eradicate these completely. In the case of my research study, my education and status as a priest in the Church separates me from the women in the support groups. I attempt to remain aware of these issues and view the research as an open dialogue where each of us effects change on the other (Gill Eagle *et al* 1999:442). In the words of the poet Cris Williamson (in Patti Lather 1991:56), the process of liberation is such that the researcher and researched become the "changer and the changed".

2. The research writer is encouraged to be aware of her connectedness to the research partners through "partial identification" (Judith Cook & Mary Fonow 1990:76). The critique that feminists offer against objectivity means that the distinction between research subjects and the researcher is carefully negotiated. The participants in the study are not, as has been emphasised, objects from which one distances oneself. Partial identification implies that on the one hand the researcher can empathise with others while on the other hand she can never fully know what others experience. In that sense, their pain and their stories are unique. Partial identification is helpful in the research because while the epistemological assumptions allow for subjective involvement, some objectivity is required in order to appreciate the dance between the particular and the universal and to prevent the research from becoming gross propaganda. To present research that is a fair and accurate reflection of the data or stories, there has to be an attempt to balance objectivity and subjectivity.

3. Through the discipline of self-reflexivity, the researcher situates herself in an open dialogue with the writing process. Thus, in my study there is a relationship between my personal biography and knowledge creation (Julia Hallam & Annecka Marshall 1993:65). My journal is included in the research as a way of admitting my personal perspective, which is both a resource and a limiting factor in the research (Mary Aquin O'Neil 1995:30). The politics of involvement are such that researchers in the discipline of feminist spirituality renounce the temptation of considering themselves impersonal and objective authorities (Mary Aquin O'Neil 1995:730, Judith Cook & Mary Fonow 1990:77).

In summary, with the focus on the researcher as an involved subject in the research, the politics of involvement challenges the traditional objectivist canons of scholarly writing (Mary Aquin O'Neil 1995:30, Julia Hallam & Annecka Marshall 1993:64). There is a direct intention to be involved in the community of the research participants.

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experience of God, thus there is a link between inner spirituality, character formation and leadership (Louise Kretzschmar 2000b:40).

3.2.4 POLITICS OF COMMUNITY

Community as a central theme in Christian spirituality is illustrated with reference to aspects of the spiritual significance of the doctrines of the Trinity, African spirituality and feminist praxis.

The spiritual significance of the **Trinity** for community is that the spiritual life involves being baptised into the love life of the Trinity - becoming one with the unity in community that characterises the Godhead. 2 Peter 1:4 asks: "Do you not know that you are partakers of God?" To be a partaker of God is to be enveloped by the Trinitarian energy of *perichoretic* loving. *Perichoresis* refers to the dance in the Trinity and how the Creator pours out everything that She is into the Son who pours out everything that He is into the Creator with the Spirit as the love-bond between them. To be baptised into the Trinity is to allow this endless flow of loving and being loved to penetrate one and flow through one. The process of being spiritually formed by the Trinity implies a sense of mutual indwelling. This means that one find oneself caught up within the Godhead, but one also finds the very presence of the Godhead within one's soul. Christian spirituality is shaped by God who is community, and it is for this reason that community is the locus for theologising and researching, especially among the marginalized. The mutual indwelling of the God community with the human community is given expression in the Church. Christian spirituality is thus lived and shaped within the context of the community of believers, involving, as it does, becoming what we already are - the body of Christ.

In terms of the significance of **African spirituality,** many South African Christians are influenced by the African worldview for which community is central to a self-understanding. Desmond Tutu (2004:26) teaches the importance of claiming full personhood through one's relationship with others: *umuntu ngumnuntu ngabantu*[7]. What is *Ubuntu*? It is more than humanism. It suggests that a person is a human being because she/he is enveloped in a community of other human beings where, in the words of Desmond Tutu (2004:27), "to be is to be a participant". The achievement of absolute dependence on God and neighbour, as the environment in which human identity is discovered, is what living in the body of Christ is all about (Michael Battle 1998:93). *Ubuntu* is the achievement of vulnerability; it suggests that people cannot claim control of life (Michael Battle 1998:103). In *Ubuntu,* a person agrees to be transformed into a new identity with a new perspective on life (Michael Battle 1993:105). The characteristic of African spirituality is that it has a sense of the wholeness of life (Luke Pato 2000:93). It is further characterised by good and harmonious relationships, which are about co-operation, not competition.

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[7] Translation: A person is a person through other people.

While the philosophy of *Ubuntu* has received positive acclaim in the fields of theology and spirituality as a helpful balance for the extreme individualism in western Christianity, it is not without critique (Neville Richardson 1996:40). *Ubuntu* spirituality represents an ideal, which is not fully practised in South African society. Desmond Tutu (2004:26) confirms, saying "And so we must search for this ultimate attribute and reject ethnicity and other such qualities as irrelevancies". Moreover, *ubuntu* theology is often an oppressive experience for women who have their roles and identities defined for them by the community, often in ways that do not promote their agency as women. Community is often the site of women's oppression as the mechanism through which patriarchal culture is mediated as the following quote by Precious Modula (in Lesanne Schwellnus & Ingrid Clanchy n.d. 58) suggests

> I was denied access to companionship for in my other family's eyes, my purpose was to perform household duties and bear children. I was also denied the right to seek employment; I was reminded that no *Makoti* (young bride) has ever worked that has always been the role of the husband. When I politely tried to question any aspect of the so-called family tradition, my husband who was becoming very angry, eventually became violent toward me.

Ubuntu theology seldom allows a prophetic voice to be articulated in community as it strengthens conformity and weakens personal agency; to be prophetic often entails going against the community. Nevertheless, *Ubuntu* can offer a contribution to feminist spirituality, in that *Ubuntu,* as the essence of being fully human, proclaims that all people rest in a "delicate interdependence" with Creation and other people and appreciates that the oppression of one person diminishes all people (Desmond Tutu 2004:26).

Feminist theology in South Africa promotes groups as a resource for theory-building. For example, Mercy Amba Oduyoye (in Susan Rakoczy 2004:21) emphasises the communal nature of African women's theology. African women's theology is one of relationship, which seeks to replace hierarchical structures with mutuality, reciprocity and equality. Feminist theology is expressed and practised with the vision of a particular type of community, that which Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1993) calls the discipleship of equals. It coincides with the central hermeneutical principle penetrating this thesis, that of the call to solidarity with the marginalized. True community thrives where there is sharing in solidarity (Mercy Amba Oduyoye 2001:21). Community is the locus for African women's theology which is described as being "society sensitive" (Mercy Amba Oduyoye 2001:17). In terms of feminist theory and the aims of emancipation and liberation theology, the relationship of marginalized groups to the research process must be given expression (Carole Truman 2000:25). This is so because on a methodological level feminist theology seeks to counter-balance the non-inclusion, under-representation and alienation of mainstream or "male stream" knowledge

production (Carole Truman 2000:25). The philosophical base on which the research methodology proceeds takes into account the essential importance of community, particularly women's support groups as a locus resource for theologising (Susan Rakoczy 2004:21).

In summary, community is an epistemological assumption emerging from the fields of Christian spirituality with reference to aspects of the spiritual significance of Trinity and African spirituality. It also emerges from feminist theology for whom community is the locus of research and theologising. It is important to emphasise that feminist spirituality seeks a particular type of community, where mutuality, equality and reciprocity and the full humanity of all people is allowed to flourish. The goal of feminist theology is to liberate people, both men and women, and society from the dehumanising effects of patriarchy. The hope for this transformation is discussed as liberative action.

3.2.5 THE POLITICS OF LIBERATIVE ACTION

Christian spirituality and feminist theology both express transformative action as a key feature within their disciplines. The concern and epistemological assumption is to produce knowledge that will not serve the interests of domination and injustice but that offers a contribution to change and justice (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:1,2). The aim is to create knowledge that embraces struggles for self-esteem, survival and transformation for marginalized women, but also for researchers and Church communities (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 2001:2). Three facets of the politics of liberative action are applicable to this research study:

- It is moored in **feminist theology**
- **Christian spirituality** presupposes a process of liberation, transformation and action
- The politics of liberative action are embedded in the **research methods**.

Feminist theology and the politics of liberative action

The purpose of knowledge creation within a feminist paradigm is transformation. The knowledge generated by feminist research has as its goal the liberation and freedom of women (Judith Cook & Mary Fonow 1990:79). Knowledge should not just describe the world, it should change it too (Carole Truman 2000:26). The assumption of the feminist paradigm is that knowledge must be elicited, critiqued and analysed in a way that is useful to women as they strive to alter oppressive exploitive conditions in Church and society (Judith Cook & Mary Fonow 1990:80). Feminist research is action orientated, especially for African feminist theologians. For example, "the African women's theological reflections intertwine theology, ethics and spirituality. It therefore does not stop at theory but moves to commitment, advocacy and transforming praxis" (Mercy Amba Oduyoye 2001:16). Feminist research, with

its action orientation, is shaped towards improving an unsatisfactory situation. The knowledge creation results in an improvement of practice. In the case of this study, knowledge creation improves the Church's influence as salt and light to humankind and to people living in an HIV positive world.

One of the agendas in feminist theology is liberation: but from what do women hope to be liberated? They hope to be liberated from sin and the effects of sin. Why do people want to be liberated? People, particularly women, hope to be liberated for full humanity. In the light of the agenda of liberation from sin, feminist theology reviews the ways in which sin is understood[8]. From a masculine point of view, sin is often thought of as pride and power over others (Susan Rakoczy 2004:263). The remedy for sin in this situation is self-sacrifice and love of others. Therein lies the problem for many women as women are often socialised to a life of self-sacrifice in service of others. The question arises, "how can you give up a self if you do not have a self? Self-giving service on the part of many African women does not serve them well if they have not learnt self-love (Susan Rakoczy 2004:258). It is the ethical and moral task for women to create space for self-love and the development of a positive self-esteem.

Feminist theologians' social understanding of sin is that it is a personal and a collective sickness (Susan Rakoczy 2004:264). The intertwining oppressions of economic, social, cultural, political and religious sins, against women in South Africa, mean that they are vulnerable to being abused (Susan Rakoczy 2004:269). An important moral task for African people is to realise that their relationships are distorted and that this is their experience of sin (Susan Rakoczy 2004:269). The experience of sin is ultimately the experience of division and alienation. Sin is when one is divided within oneself, divided from others, separated from the environment and when one experiences oneself as alienated from God. There are thus different dimensions to sin which include personal and social dimensions. Women are guilty of sin when they participate in their own oppression. The cycle of oppression is complete when those who are being oppressed perpetuate their own oppression. Family households where certain traditions are observed even if these are harmful to women and their daughters serve as examples (Susan Rakoczy 2004:265). In religious circles, Susan

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[8] Another example of a feminist critique of morality is offered in a very brief discussion of morality from the point of view of psychology. The theory of moral development by Lawrence Kohlberg based on interviews he conducted with 84 boys is frequently quoted in psychology (Susan Rakoczy 2004:261) . He applied his theory to girls and concluded that women were less morally developed than their male counterparts. Carol Gilligan (in Susan Rakoczy 2004:261) later offered a feminist critique of his work suggesting that boys and girls hear different moral voices. Using the example of Amy and Jake, she suggested that morality for Jake meant that he had to control his aggression, which might hurt others. Morality for Amy on the other hand meant caring for others (Susan Rakoczy 2004:261). While Carol Gilligan's work was groundbreaking in applying the gender perceptive to critique Lawrence Kohlberg's work, it had blind spots in that it did not take into account other categories of women's interpreted experience such as ethnicity, class and race (Susan Rakoczy 2004:262).

Rakoczy (2004:265) states that Mothers Superior who become the mouthpiece for male institutions reproduce the patriarchal norms of society and so further their own oppression and that of others. Women who seek emancipation by speaking out, and oppress people such as children or domestic staff who are under their control, are guilty of lateral violence through rejecting those women (Susan Rakoczy 2004:266).

How do women overcome sin and the effects of sin on personal and social planes? On a personal level an enhanced self-esteem, solidarity with other women and a desire to be a full participant in life are necessary moral tasks to survive, particularly in the African context where to simply survive from day to day is miraculous given the context of what they face on a daily basis (Susan Rakoczy 2004:275). On a social level women have an ethical task to realise that even in the context of disempowerment they are moral agents who can be aware of their ability to influence and change their lives and social contexts (Susan Rakoczy 2004:276). According to Susan Rakoczy (2004:276), it is the task of women to dismantle the foundations of the social order, not to improve them. The basis for this ethical task is the fullness of life and the dignity of each human being.

Christian spirituality and the politics of liberative action

Feminist Christian spirituality, like action research, encourages an approach to research that has practical and theoretical outcomes as well as providing a model for continued action (Ernst Stringer 1996:xvi). The journey in Christian spirituality is a journey from the old creation to the new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Within the framework of Christian spirituality methodology, it is in one's doing that one's knowing lies and "the most thorough kind of knowledge and understanding comes through efforts" to change phenomena (Judith Cook & Mary Fonow 1990:80; Patti Lather 1991: xv). Christian spirituality in contemporary expressions allows for integration and holism - being, knowing and doing are integrated and understood holistically as unfolding from the inner-self that is connected to the Godhead. New wine for new wineskins is a helpful Biblical image to describe the process of liberation and transformation from the field of spirituality (Matthew 9:17). This suggests that transformation and liberation need to be integrated. A new attitude or approach to life, the new wine, has to be lived out in a changed environment, the new wineskins. New wine in old wineskins will result in the wineskins bursting.

In summary, the field of Christian spirituality contributes to the politics of liberative action by suggesting that it ought to be integral in that it requires an inner revolution of a transformed person and an outer revolution of a changed context.

Research methods and the politics of liberative action

Research methods refer to the techniques for gathering information, for example through interviews, group discussions and journal reflections. The methods of gathering stories embody the aim to liberate people from all that holds them back from a full human life and for transforming society (Anne Hope & Sally Timmel 1995:3). Coherence between content and method can be achieved through consciousness-raising (Anne Hope and Sally Timmel 1995:4). Consciousness-raising implies that the poor begin to analyse for themselves the structures that keep them poor. A feminist epistemology, like other expressions of liberation theology, focuses on consciousness-raising (Judith Cook & Mary Fonow 1990:72, 74). The aim of the central questions asked during the in-depth interviews and focus group discussion offer a way in which the consciousness of the research partners can be raised.

The politics of liberative action refer to the ethical perspective that is woven into the theoretical framework of this thesis. This perspective demands that transformation is only valid if it is carried out *with* people and not *for* them, the emphasis being on working *with* the poor and not *for* them (Ann Hope & Sally Timmel 1995:14). The oppressed, by freeing themselves, can free others (Ann Hope & Sally Timmel 1995:11). The agency of the research partners needs to be expressed and the research process itself is a transformative activity. The emancipatory purpose is that participants reach an authentic understanding of their own reality and are empowered to start changing it (Renalta Tesch 1990:66).

In summary, this section of the third chapter has offered an outline of the main epistemological assumptions that guide the research process of reading, listening and writing. These assumptions were described as the politics of wisdom, experience, subjective involvement, community and liberative action. The politics of **wisdom**, as a gift of God's grace, comes from listening and reflecting on experience. The politics of **interpreted experience** is an essential feature of feminist theology and Christian spirituality while **subjective involvement** challenges the objective canons of post positivist research by the deliberative intention to be involved in the **community** of the research participants. The process and product of the research process has personal and social transformation as a goal. These epistemological assumptions acknowledge that data are patterns into which interpretation has already entered (Ian Barbour in James Churchill & David Jones 1979:140). The research journey is thus a dance between theory and data, assumptions and data collection and analysis, where knowledge claims influence data and these, in turn, influence knowledge claims. The next part of the thesis offers the antiphonal response to the epistemological assumptions and describes the research methods of collecting and interpreting data within a qualitative research design.

3.3   RESEARCH METHODS

The research methodology is described as a dialogue and a dance between practical research and researcher's paradigmatic assumptions. Figure 3.4 visually depicts how these two components influence each other in an ongoing cycle of conversation and dancing.

Figure 3.4   The dance between epistemological assumptions and research methods
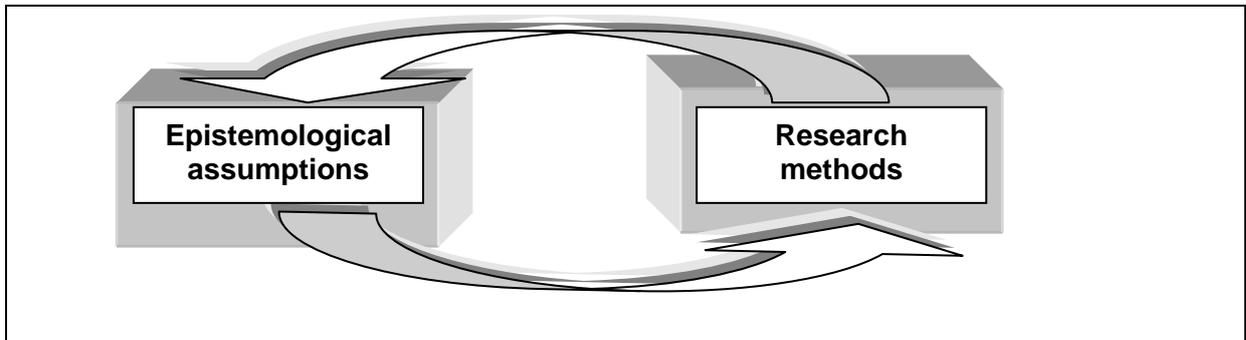
In this section I discuss the practical aspects of the research journey. The contours of this discussion include:

1.   The research questions and research aims guiding the research journey.
2.   The research design as a qualitative approach.
3.   A reflection on the role of the researcher as the main source of data collection (3.3.5).
4.   A brief description of the research sites as the context in which the research is conducted (3.3.6) and the storytellers as the research participants (3.3.7).
5.   Data collection processes, which includes techniques for data collection (3.3.8) and the data collection procedures (3.3.9) that were followed.
6.   A description of the data analysis (3.3.10).

3.3.1   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions emerge from the key components of feminist theology and Christian spirituality and as such are influenced by the epistemological assumptions outlined above. In the light of the background of HIV/AIDS summarized in chapter one and its links with patriarchal oppression and poverty, this thesis investigates ways of promoting the full humanity of people, particularly women as encapsulated in feminist theology and Christian spirituality. The following research questions arise:

- How can the Church respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in a way that promotes the full humanity of people?
- How does one live a full life of faith in the midst of poverty, oppression and patriarchal power? (Susan Rakoczy 2004:389).
- How can I, as the researcher, stand in solidarity with the oppressed?

3.3.2   RESEARCH AIMS

The following research aims are based on the research questions:

1.   To *explore* a gendered response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic for the Church by *describing* and developing a model of Full Humanity that can guide Church praxis in an effective response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

2.   To *describe* aspects of a fully human spirituality that emerges from the context of an HIV-positive world.

3.   To express a preferential option for the poor by standing in solidarity with a group of women who are HIV positive

- The first research aim is to offer a gendered Christian response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic for the Church from the perspective of feminist liberation theology and Christian spirituality. To this end, a model of fully human spirituality that can guide Church praxis in an effective response to the pandemic is described and developed.

- Patterns of spiritualities as tools for deepening one's relationship with God are born out of a particular place and time. This thesis explores and describes aspects of a fully human spirituality emerging from a South African context that is shaped by HIV/AIDS, patriarchal oppression and poverty. Spirituality is a source of empowerment, transformation and liberation. The second aim of this thesis is thus to describe aspects of a fully human spirituality that empowers people to express their full humanity.

- In line with the key hermeneutical principle of this thesis the third aim is to express a preferential option for the poor by standing in solidarity with a group of people, especially women in HIV/AIDS support groups, who live life on the margins of society. A preferential option for the poor is a key factor in the transformation of the rich and the poor on a personal and social level: It allows for holistic and integrative transformation. While the methodology of the thesis is specific to working with small groups in a specific context, the descriptions allow for the information gleaned to be expanded to wider contexts.

3.3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a plan of action that details how the research is carried out (Robert Bogdan & Sari Knopp 2003:49). The three approaches to research design proposed by John Creswell (2003:18) include the quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods research approaches. The different philosophical assumptions or knowledge claims and choice of methods or techniques of data collection contribute to each research approach (John Creswell 2003:18). In a quantitative approach, the researcher uses mostly post positivist or positivist knowledge claims for developing information, which is described as cause and effect thinking, the process involves reducing information to variables (John Creswell 2003:18). In the quantitative approach, the researcher's role is that of an observer who expresses the research data in numbers (De Vos 1998:357; Renalta Tesch 1990:3). By contrast, qualitative research is a multi-perspective approach to research reporting on the spoken words of the research participants. Often a single researcher obtains a holistic first hand picture of the phenomena investigated by immersing herself into the research context (De Vos 1998:358; Renalta Tesch 1990:3). The mixed-methods approach refers to a triangulation of the two approaches, which means that there is conscious combination of qualitative and quantitative methods and assumptions in a single research study. The mixed-methods approach adds obvious complexity to the design, but through this triangulation is able to utilise the advantages of both qualitative and quantitative designs (De Vos 1998:361). In the context of this research project the most appropriate research approach is qualitative research because the researcher immerses herself in the research context by listening to and reporting on the voices of the research participants at first hand.

3.3.4 THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this section is to outline the salient features of the qualitative research design and defend its use from the perspectives of feminist theology and Christian spirituality, the lenses through which the qualitative data is interpreted in this thesis.

The different aspects of a qualitative research design
Qualitative research is conducted in a natural setting (John Creswell 2003:181). The natural setting is an important aspect of Christian spirituality in the sense that the concrete reality in which people find themselves, patterns the way in which they experience God. Gustavo Gutierrez (1983:26), for example, connects spirituality with the historical movements in which spirituality was formulated. Philip Sheldrake (1995:66) also suggests that a better understanding of history will offer a better reflection on spirituality because spirituality is connected with historical, social and cultural contexts that shape the way people respond to God's grace. The emphasis on the natural setting also appeals to feminist

sensibilities, which rejects the notion of a universal overarching truth and emphasises the importance of how context shapes experience. The qualitative researcher therefore finds it important to conduct the research "on-site" as it enables the researcher to develop a feel for the place, to contextualise the data and to be involved with the actual experiences of the participants (John Creswell 2003:181).

In qualitative research the methods of data collection are multiple and varied (John Creswell 2003:181). Within the paradigms of Christian spirituality and feminist theology, scholars argue that there is no specific methodological protocol unique to the discipline that is followed. Moreover, Christian spirituality and feminist theology are by their nature transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary as is reflected in their confidence to draw on information from other fields. In this research project, Christian spirituality and feminist theology form the basis of its theoretical paradigm. The "box" however has open sides and is open to other influences that include practical theology, ethics, feminist theory, participatory research and action research. A valuable image that was used in chapter one to describe the interdisciplinary approach is the weaver's loom (see Figure 1.5, page 14) where Christian spirituality and feminist theology form the vertical and horizontal beams and other disciplines are woven into the picture offered of reality.

In qualitative research the emphasis in data collection is to encourage the full participation of the research participants in the research project. The term "research participants" as a way of referring to the research subjects is meant to convey an understanding of conducting research **with** people as opposed to **on** people, which the word "subject" can imply. This aspect of qualitative research embodies the empowerment and emancipatory aims of feminist theology. The qualitative researcher aims to build rapport with and enhance the involvement of the research participants (John Creswell 2003:181).

The research design or plan of action in qualitative research is fluid, and not cast in concrete, it develops as the research process progresses (Robert Bogdan & Sarri Knopp 2003:49). To this end a full narrative account of procedures is sometimes best offered in hindsight as a description of what happened (Robert Bogdan & Sarri Knopp 2003:49). John Creswell uses the word "emergent" to describe the data collection process adjusting as new opportunities are presented and as other options are no longer viable (John Creswell 2003:181).

Qualitative design is interpretive (John Creswell 2003:181; Shurink 1998:241). This suggests that as it is a complex and multi-faceted meaning-making process the researcher offers personal and theoretical insights into the data (Shurink 1998:241). In the qualitative research design, reality is understood as the meaning people in a certain setting attach to it

(Shurink 1998:415; De Vos 1998:45). Their experience and worldview is uncovered in the process of including them in the research journey. The lens through which this information is filtered is the feminist Christian spirituality approach. Feminist Christian spirituality focuses on interpreted experience, particularly that of women, as the central aspect informing both the content and method of the research. The implications are that reality cannot be explained in terms of universal laws. Moreover, the researcher is part of the world being studied (Shurink 1998:415; De Vos 1998:45). The research is a heuristic process during which the researcher baptises herself in her own experience and that of others (Renalta Tesch 1990:70). She is the research instrument in the very subjective process of exploring and elucidating the issue under investigation (Renalta Tesch 1990:70). Research is not only an intellectual exercise, but is also living, integrative and dynamic (Renalta Tesch 1990:70). This is coherent with the ethos of Christian spirituality where the researcher is open to feelings and able to sense information beyond what can be recorded or known in a factual way (Renalta Tesch 1990:70). "Ineffability", which means that an experience is hard to describe in words, encapsulates this aspect from the paradigm of Christian spirituality, which is such that it allows for mystery.

Finally, **in qualitative research human interaction is seen holistically** (Shurink 1998:182) which connects with the feminist Christian spirituality aims of integrative transformation and opposes Cartesian dualism. Having described some of the salient features of the qualitative research design, the next question arises: What are the reasons for choosing a qualitative research design?

Rationale for the use of the qualitative research design

Shulamit Reinharz's research shows that feminists may use statistical research and feminist survey research in researching women's lives (1993:70). An example is the research conducted by Florence Nightingale who collected and analysed extensive quantitative data to argue for the improvement of military medical and sanitation services (Shulamit Reinharz 1993:70). However, Shulamit Reinharz (1993:69) comments that there is a close link between feminism and qualitative research methodologies. Feminism emerges from a mistrust of pre-feminist research with positivist and post positivist inclinations, which often adopt the quantitative approach (Shulamit Reinharz 1993:69). The symbiosis between feminism and qualitative research occurs as a form of protest against the status quo embodied in the quantitative research approach (Shulamit Reinharz 1993:69). It may also be related to how women are socialised in that they are often discouraged from participation in mathematics and the sciences so feminists naturally adopt a qualitative research approach (Shulamit Reinharz 1993:69). These arguments suggest that there is no obvious choice of a research approach in the feminist paradigm and that the use of either in a particular research study may be defended.

The qualitative research approach was chosen in this thesis because it was the most appropriate design to meet the requirements of the research goals described in section 3.3.2. The research expresses an **exploratory** and **descriptive** purpose for which the qualitative approach is most suitable. In response to the third research aim, the qualitative approach allows the researcher to immerse herself in the research context whilst exploring the meaning and the interpreted experiences of the research participants in ways that the quantitative approach does not do because of its reliance on numbers and variables and the researcher's objectivity and distance from the research.

Having defined the qualitative approach and suggested reasons why it is useful in meeting the research aims, the research process of gathering stories through the qualitative approach is now described, beginning with the researcher's role as the main source of data collection.

3.3.5   THE RESEARCHER'S ROLE

Locating the self in the research process is an essential element in a framework of anti-exclusionary feminist research (Carole Truman *et al* 2000:13; Claire Woodward 2000:43). The researcher's role is described for three reasons:

First, as qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive, it is important that I reflect on who I am in the research process. My worldview and spirituality is embedded throughout the study. I must be sensitive to how my personal experiences and biography shape the interpretation that I offer (John Creswell 2003:182). Thus as the researcher I describe my role with reference to my personal biases, how I gained entry into the field and the ethical issues arising out of my role (John Creswell 2003:184).

Second, I am the primary research instrument in the process of collecting and interpreting data. Already the reader will be aware that the thesis is written in the first person, while conventional academic practice is to use "we" or "the author" which is meant to represent distance and objectivity (Gayle Letherby 2003:7). The danger in using the first person is that it may be considered "unacademic" (Gayle Letherby 2003:7). However, it is necessary in feminist research because of its insistence that research cannot be a sanitised or an objective process. The first person singular indicates my involvement with the research, especially as the primary research instrument and suggests honesty about the subjectivity of the research (Gayle Letherby 2003:7). It is also a way for me to take responsibility for what I write (Gayle Letherby 2003:7).

Third, feminists such as Karen Trimble Alliaume (1998:233) and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1996) teach that there is power in being able to name one's own experience. In this thesis it is part of my own spiritual development on my research journey to begin to name my experiences.

Introducing myself

Susan Bordo (1990:143-145) says that to help prevent the universalising tendencies of research, it should be offered from the location of the body as a situated self. In the light of the totalising approach of much of modern, patriarchal research, Elspet Probyn (1990:176, 177) suggests that one replace the assumptions of universalisms and construct a feminist theory that starts from the fragments of one's own body. Hence, "*my* body" and not "*the* body" is the site for research. The contours of my body are not projected onto a universal female body but are the ground from which to speak as woman (Elspet Probyn 1990:176, 177).

The attempt to speak from "my body" and not "the body" is an attempt to guard against the universalising tendencies of some research[9]. It is used to try to recognise that our assumptions are embedded within a specific historical context (Linda Nicholson 1990:1,2). Feminism today is careful of not essentialising women. Feminists from the two-thirds world have critiqued the work of mainly white feminists from North America and Europe suggesting that they are often guilty of eradicating marginalized black voices in their epistemological projects. Feminist theory during the period 1960–1980 reflected that which it sought to critique: its analyses were the viewpoints of white, middle-class women in North America and Europe (Linda Nicholson 1990:1). This was despite the fact that one of the most powerful critiques offered against the universalising tendency of scholarship was that it was based on limited perspectives (Linda Nicholson 1990:1). Other relevant categories that contribute to the diversity of women's experience include race, class, and sexual orientation. In response to the valuable critique of feminists from the two-thirds world, feminist scholarship since the 1980's is more aware of the diversity of women's experience and has become explicitly more localised, issue orientated and fallible (Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson 1990:33).

The contours of who I am include that I am in my late twenties, a white, English-speaking South African who considers herself a child of the African continent. I am married and have twin toddler boys. I am a priest in the Anglican Church and work at two parishes, one situated in a wealthy suburb east of Johannesburg, the financial headquarters of South Africa; the other, close to the city centre, is a slum area caring for many poverty-stricken

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[9] See section 2.4.4.

people. These localities influence the interpretations that I offer in the thesis, as does my worldview as a postmodern feminist.

My worldview as a postmodern feminist

I cannot escape the fact that I am a child of the postmodern age and that this is the paradigm through which I experience the world. What is postmodernism? Postmodernism means an approach to theory that challenges the tenets of modernism such as the possibilities of objectivity, its high regard for rationality, and its universalising tendencies where the "grand narratives of legitimisation" are no longer believable (Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson 1990:22). It challenges modernity by suggesting the particularity and rootedness of "facts", implying that knowledge is coloured by particular groups of people in particular places. **Plural, local** and **immanent** are words that describe the locus of legitimate knowledge in the postmodern era (Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson 1990:23). Postmodernism is also a cultural phenomenon depicted in art and social practices (Gayle Letherby 2003:51).

The experience of postmodernism can leave one wondering what one actually believes. It influences spiritual growth such that the journey of spirituality is a realisation that doubt is as much a part of faith as belief. Within the postmodern worldview words are deconstructed. This means that the experience of reality is fractured because words do not always convey the reality they are meant to symbolise. Traditional institutions such as marriage and the Church are deconstructed. The roles of men and women that the modern era defined are deconstructed. Yet, even as I see how postmodernism influences me I am also aware of its shortcomings, especially in terms of my spirituality. While reality is fractured and truth dependent on a person's point of view, there is something that is universal that still seems to hold me. The world is chaotic, but Christ still integrates. Postmodernism becomes a contradictory experience for me. Words are deconstructed, but I am a preacher who uses words as a primary means of communicating spirituality to people. Institutions are deconstructed, but I am married and fulfil the roles of mother and wife. The Church as a concept is deconstructed, but I am a priest in the Anglican Church. I sense that I am influenced by postmodernism, yet many of my sources in theologising could still be described as modern and even premodern.

Within the influence of postmodernism my self-identity is that of a feminist. My academic studies in feminist theology at Rhodes University were liberating in the sense that they gave me language for what I experienced instinctively as an "embryonic" feminist and because they gave me a fresh experience of the grace of God stripped free from patriarchal baggage. In my work as priest and through my experiences as mother, wife and friend, I am aware of the cultural, economic and religious forces that hinder my full experience of life and the full

humanity of other women. My interest in spirituality emerges from my own desires for spiritual growth and wholeness and being properly equipped to lead others to an understanding of the presence of God that is the quintessential job description of the priest.

While I sense that I may be shaped by the postmodern consciousness, at the same time there are elements of which I am critical. One reflection of this perception is that one can challenge meta-narratives and absolutes by insisting on the locatedness of facts, yet; at the same there are patterns that connect and that are always true. In terms of spirituality there is the presence of God. In terms of feminist theology, in contrast to Jean Lyotard's criticism of "grand narratives" (in Nancy Fraser & Linda Nicholson 1990:34), feminist theology cannot neglect an analysis of societal macrostructures of the sexism. The methodology of this thesis demands that in line with postmodern influences, I focus on a small group in a specific context. At the same time, rich descriptions of the context are given so that the knowledge learnt from the participants in these specific contexts can be extrapolated to the wider South African Church situation. This is because the pervasiveness of patriarchy and poverty is a meta-narrative that must be critiqued as part of the feminist agenda. The discipline of spirituality also requires that the "grand narratives" of patriarchy and poverty be critiqued, especially if spiritual formation is influenced by friendship with the marginalized and a relationship with God "who so loved the world" (John 3:16).

Friendship with the marginalized

A key aspect of my spirituality is a vocation to learn what it means to stand in solidarity with the poor and to express God's preferential option for the oppressed in the decisions that I make regarding both ministry and life. Although I am an Anglican priest, my early formative experience of Christianity was in the Methodist Church. John Wesley taught the ethic of standing in solidarity with the poor as a means of grace through which authentic transformation is made possible;[10] I learnt the importance of the social Gospel from Wesleyan Spirituality. My grounding in liberation theology, specifically feminism, shaped the vocation to stand in solidarity with the poor through the emphasis on the hermeneutical principle of God's preferential option for the oppressed. The thesis is an expression of this aspect of my spiritual formation. Another aspect of my spiritual formation is how my picture of God has developed.

My emerging picture of God

One of the symptoms of the journey of spirituality is that in the process of growth to wholeness one's picture of God changes. Ken Wilber's (1981:3) opinion is that in Western cosmology, God is not a psychological other who is separated by unconsciousness, or a

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[10] The application of standing in solidarity with the poor is discussed in detail in section 6.4.2.

temporal other separated by time, or even an epistemological other separated from people through their ignorance. He is an ontological other separated by being. One view is that God makes contact with people through covenant, but not absolute union. Within this scope, God becomes a Parent (a Father) who offers protection in return for worship. Salvation is being saved from the effects of evil, suffering, death and pain (Ken Wilber 1981:6). Ken Wilber (1981:4) encourages an alternative view of God where the infinite Godhead is the Ground of all things and is not separated from them. God is The Reality that is "sewn through the fabric of all that is".

There is insecurity in the process of a transforming one's image of God, which Ken Wilber (1981:130) describes as the "terror of leaving home". One leaves behind images of God with which one has grown up in Sunday School and Church, that have sustained the spiritual journey (Ken Wilber 1981:130). When one outgrows the parental images of God, questions that may be asked include: If there are no angels who will protect me? Who will keep me safe? If God is not the Great Someone in the Great Somewhere out there, who will govern the universe?

The emerging image of God in my spiritual formation is awareness that God *is* the Ground of all reality and that everything emerges out of the unfolding of God and is enfolded back into God. The major influence on my picture of God is the invitation from feminist spirituality to recognise the patriarchal ideology in which most images of God have been clothed and to explore new ways of seeing and tasting God. Other influences include Anthony de Mello's *Sadhana: A way to God* (1987). The image of the unfolding-enfolding God that is the Ground of all reality emerges from the meditations described in his book. The practice of these meditations enhances an awareness of the presence of God being everywhere as the Ground of all reality. Ken Wilber's (1993) perennial model of spirituality such as the *Spectrum of Consciousness*[11], where all levels of human identity emerge out of the Godhead, echoes my experience of God as Reality and the Ground of all reality. David Bohm's (1990:271-286; Robert Russell 1985:135-158) explanations of the enfolding-unfolding universe explains in different language my growing intuition of God as the Grounding principle out of which life emerges and into which life is again drawn. Richard Rohr in *New Great Themes of Scripture* (1973) communicates how the whole world is contained in God. Karl Rahner's concept of the *Vorgriff* helps explain for me how one's prior experience of God's love, the pre-grasp of the infinity of God, draws one into a search for God (Gerald McCool 1975). Finally, *The Colour Purple* by Alice Walker (1983a) depicts for me how the interconnectedness of all reality points to God.

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[11] The *Spectrum of Consciousness* is described in section 5.3.4.

The sense that I have of this experience of God as the Ground or Earth out of which life and reality emerge and into which life is again drawn, offers me something that I have always wondered about - the safety of God and the safety of the universe. With the intuition of God as the Ground of all reality, one begins to know existentially that everything is safe and nothing can hurt one and everything can heal one and transform one (Richard Rohr 1973 Tape 1). Theodicy also played a role in my spiritual growth and awareness. Even though the world is contained in, through, and with God, people are still raped, abused and oppressed. In the light of this one would do well to remember that the great religious traditions teach the transformation of pain by allowing one's wounds to become sacred wounds as pain that is not transformed is transmitted (Richard Rohr 1973 Tape 1). The religious traditions of the world also offer a basis on which to challenge injustice and dehumanisation. Hence, the source of one's healing, transformation and wholeness may lie in the process of allowing one's wounds to be the place where one encounters God and encountering God through challenging injustice. The alternative to this seems to the perpetuation of the cycle of pain and violence. Having offered brief insights into aspects of who I am as a way to be open about personal bias, I now outline how I relate to the research participants.

The relationship between the research participants and the researcher

Feminist researchers indicate that the boundary between researcher and "researched", between insider and outsider, is blurred. Patti Lather (1997:31) describes her dance between insider and outsider, articulating that as an HIV negative women researching the lives of HIV positive women, she stands outside the research participants' experience. She describes HIV negative women speaking about stories "which are not ours". Her perspective is influenced after reading Francisco Ibanez Carrascos' thesis. He is HIV-positive and homosexual. In his research he is able to speak of "us" rather than "them". Patti Lather feels that she misses the opportunity to do this. On the one hand, I agree with Patti Lather, as the new wave of feminism emphasises that there is diversity in women's interpreted experience, which is shaped by cultural and social influences. To a certain degree I do stand outside the experiences of the research participants because they come from backgrounds and cultures that are so different to mine. Their daily struggle for survival is a world far removed from mine. On the other hand, there is an existential sense in which we, as members of the body of Christ, share each other's pain in the belief that if one member of the body of Christ hurts we all hurt (1 Corinthians 12:26). At a course on HIV/AIDS that I attended, people shared their stories of how they experienced stigma. I was deeply affected by their sharing. I was also saddened when reading an account of one of the research participants who gave up her twins for adoption (e-mail correspondence). My experience was that of experiencing the body of Christ from within and not from my intellect only.

The AIDS pandemic is no longer "out there" and about "those people". It is in the body of Christ and it is about each one of us. I experience a partial identification with the suffering of those on the margins because of my existential experience of being part of the broken body of Christ. My sense of connection with the participants in the study is reinforced by the comment of Francisco Carrascos (in Patti Lather 1997:32) that all people have HIV labels whether they are positive or negative, all people are involved in the crises. Everyone is at risk and everyone is involved because all are sexual beings (Patti Lather 1997:32). Thus, my role in the research is one of deliberate involvement. The basis for this stance emerges out of my spiritual formation in the Wesleyan tradition and my conviction as a feminist.

In summary, I have introduced my role as the researcher with reference to my worldview as a postmodern feminist, my emerging picture of God as the Ground of all reality and my bias for friendship with the marginalized. I have also outlined some aspects of the nature of my relationship with the research participants. The contours of who I am are described because feminist theory begins from the fragments of my body as the site for research: as the researcher I am a situated-self, while the research participants are also embedded in their specific context. The research sites and research participants, as the storytellers, are now described in brief.

3.3.6   RESEARCH SITES: STORY PLACES AND STORY TELLERS

Community is a key theme in Christian spirituality and an important aspect of feminist methodology. Thus, the selected site for the study was mainly poor rural settlements in or around Johannesburg. As the central "instrument" of data collection, I gathered stories from a combination of research sources at these sites, which include Orange Farm and other areas such as Bekkersdal, Martindale and Bedfordview, thereby offering a multi-perspective approach to research.

Who are the storytellers? Where does the data come from? The central storytellers in the narrative are the **Maskopas** in Orange Farm. They are a support group for women who are HIV-positive. The stories of their interpreted experiences form the core of the research, which is true to my principle of standing in solidarity with the marginalized. In order to broaden the research, stories were also gathered from the **Somelele** support group in Bekkersdal. They have a similar profile to the Maskopas group in Orange Farm. The data was further extended by including the stories of the experiences of the members of the **Green Tea** group from Martindale. The perspectives of women from **St Margaret's** Anglican Parish in Bedfordview were also used in the process of data collection, as was e-mail correspondence regarding material that members of the Maskopas themselves had written. The Maskopas were sponsored to participate in a training workshop on the writing of

devotions, which was facilitated by the *Upper Room,* an organisation that distributes devotional material in South Africa. Included in the **e-mail** correspondence were newsletters that the project manger of the Upper Room had written to a small group of Americans who sponsor some of his work. Aspects of **my journal,** which offers a record of my observations, academic gleanings and reflections on how the dance between theory and data changed me in the journey of the research, are also included in data collection. A full description of the research participants and the research sites is given in chapter four. These sources offer a multi-perspective approach to the study of the phenomenon of HIV. I now discuss my approach to data collection/story gathering.

Selection of the storytellers

Why and how did the storytellers introduced in the previous section come to tell their story? The purposeful sampling method of research was chosen. One of the aims of the research was an attempt to give space for the marginalized to voice their story of how they experience their lives with particular reference to their HIV status. The Gospel expresses the truth that people are transformed though listening to the stories of the poor. Those on the underside of history are glorified; it is in them that God is revealed, perhaps uniquely. The Gospel tries to teach people that the poor have the privileged perspective on the kingdom. John Wesley understood this truth through the experience of standing in solidarity with the poor. It is for this reason that a certain group of people were sought. In the research the desire is to express aspects of spirituality where the voices of those who live life on the margins of society are our teachers. In the South African context, people who have little education, are economically poor, with little or no employment and who experience the violence of an apparent lack of empowerment are understood to live marginalized lives. Women, whose lives are contoured by poverty, racism and a lack of empowerment, were asked to offer their interpretation of their HIV experience. These women were then invited to share their lives with those from a wealthy suburban parish whose reflections on the experience are then also included (the data from the St Margaret's parish is discussed in chapter six). The sampling criteria for the "main core" required several labels.

1) HIV positive
2) Black people
3) Poverty in peri-urban areas
4) Little or no education
5) Little or no employment
6) Member of a support group

In the narrative on the process of the praxis of the research, the participants have been described and how the different groups relate has been mapped out. The criteria inviting their participation have been discussed. The next question that deserves reflection is a discussion on how the stories were gathered: data collection **methods.**

3.3.7   DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The word data is derived from the Latin word which means gift. The research partners offer the gift of themselves and the gift of the stories that they share.[12] How will I listen to stories and record them? How will I listen to the wisdom of the group? Patti Lather (1991:63) says that the first step in creating a reflexive approach to dialectical theory building or generating knowledge that is influenced by empirical findings, is to develop an understanding of the worldview of the research partners. In order for this to be achieved a conversational research design has to be constructed where all participants are involved in the meaning making process. This also balances the researcher's paradigm or worldview. In line with the features of qualitative research and Patti Lather's comments (1991:63), a multiple-methods approach was used in this research study. The process of gathering stories through the research techniques of interviews, group discussions, written work and drawings is a way of trying to discover the social experiences of "silenced women" or other marginalized groups (Gayle Letherby 2003:89). The various threads in this tapestry of data collection that contribute to painting a picture of the experience of these women are:

1. Focussed group discussions
2. Unstructured and open-ended interviews
3. Drawings
4. The writings of devotions
5. E-mails
6. My journal

The multiple-methods approach to data collection is thus a methodological combination of resources where more than one method of data collection is used within a single study (De Vos 1998:359). According to De Vos (1998:359), the advantage of this approach is that it increases the reliability of observation in a study. The next section offers a defence of the use of a multiple-methods approach to data collection and subsequently each aspect of the multiple-methods is discussed.

Rationale for the multiple methods approach

Some academics such as Judith Cook and Mary Fonow (1990:70) and Julia Hallam and Annecka Marshall (1993:71) suggest that feminist "methodology" is not a methodology at all, but that it offers a **perspective** on 'standard' or 'accepted' methods of conducting research. Others such as Gill Eagle *et al* (1999:439) argue that feminist methodology is "an elusive concept" and that there is no unique feminist methodology that details how a feminist researcher may go about collecting and analysing data. Gill Eagle *et al* (1999:439) add to the argument that although it is sometimes described that way, feminism, as an approach to conducting research, cannot really be considered a methodology. Feminism is a more

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[12] In this research study, the words data and stories are used interchangeably.

political approach to research with an agenda to make the link between activism and knowledge (Gill Eagle *et al* 1999: 438). They further argue that feminism should be seen more as a standpoint, which indicates the critical stance being adopted, "made explicit and defended throughout the research process" (Gill Eagle *et al* 1999:438). They refer therefore to these methodologies as standpoint methodologies. Feminist theologian Mary Aquin O'Neil (1995:740) agrees:

> Thus, while women writing theology have mined new sources and introduced the question of women's experience into consideration, I cannot see that there is a distinct "feminist method" in theology or even a method that brings into theological discourse a textual equivalent of the woman's way of being embodied in the world.

These arguments place female researchers in a quandary. We want to develop new methodologies that cater for our needs and address women's experience. At the same time, we need our voices to be heard in mainstream circles. As Mary Aquin O'Neil (1995:740) points out: "We want to present the fruits of reflection on our own experience, but we know we must do so in a way that will be comprehendible to the minds of men and measure up to the codes set by them". In other words, research that is not presented in the set codes may be considered illegitimate by conventional academic standards. Feminists are therefore forced to use the models and ways of expressing research that are generated by men, but because of blind spots, exclude women and do not correspond to women's embodiment or way of being in the world. Nancy Mairs (in Mary Aquin O'Neil 1995:742) for example resigns herself to "just keep inscribing the father's words with my woman's fingers and hope that the feminine will bleed through".

On the one hand, we can respond to the situation outlined in a similar vein to Susan Ross (1990:186) who writes from the perspective of sacramental theology. She suggests that we cannot argue for a methodology that is influenced by feminism as if feminists suggest minor alterations to an existing structure. Rather, our task is to re-think and to re-pattern methodology where women's experience is taken into account in such a way that the assumptions in the so-called mainstream theologies are challenged. In this way feminist methodologies must provide both a critical and a constructive approach (Susan Ross 1990:187). This approach does more than "just add women and stir" to the already existing reality (Susan Ross 1990:187). Theology, spirituality and research will look very different. It takes seriously that living inside a female body produces a different life experience (Kimberly Snow 1994:10).

On the other hand, we may concur with Judith Cook and Mary Fonow (1990:70) who argue that the innovation of feminist research lies more in how it is **applied** than in how it is **formulated**. What is unique about the application is the way that feminist ontology, epistemology, teleology and methodology connect. Gill Eagle *et al* (1999:459) offer a similar

point of view. They conclude their general overview of feminism, Marxism and black scholarship perspectives by restating that these so-called standpoint methodologies of research represent a particular value orientation to research rather than a specific set of methods. It is these principles that determine which research techniques the researcher will adopt. In other words, of interest to the feminist researcher is the way that epistemological assumptions relate to design method and analysis. It may mean that existing research techniques need to be modified and transformed when applied to a feminist project (Gill Eagle *et al* 1999:459). Such a reorientation is, *de facto,* a different method of research.

One of the constructive aims of feminist research is to develop ways of creating knowledge that is particular to the feminist field. I agree with Susan Ross (1990:187) who argues that we cannot continue to have a "just add women and stir" approach to using the usual and standard methods of data collection and analysis. In this study I adopted a multiple-methods approach that attempts to construct different methodological techniques of data collection and analysis and at the same time adapts, reorganises and applies "standard" research methods in a way that is consistent with feminist epistemological assumptions. This approach facilitates my aims of broadening the scope of how information is gathered and interpreted yet still having an acceptable voice to an academic audience. The multiple-methods approach opens the door for me to triangulate accepted methods such as interviews and focussed group discussions with other methods such as creativity and devotions. Each of these methods of data collection is now discussed in detail.

Drawings

Marion Martin (1996:97) argues that visual representations are a way in which shared learning, awareness and communication can occur for the purposes of building knowledge and designing programs. Drawings in particular are an empowering way for unheard voices to be articulated because they encourage "critical awareness" and shift the focus of the attention from the researcher to the drawing as the central element of discussion and analysis. The use of drawings is an unobtrusive way of gathering information and offers a way in which the research partners can directly share their experience of reality (John Creswell 2003:187). Drawings promote a participatory approach to research in that the research participants and researcher writer learn together as the research participants themselves offer an analysis of their drawings. Furthermore, the researcher's own drawing can be submitted to the group for scrutiny and discussion.

The disadvantage of this method of data collection is that drawings are sometimes difficult to interpret and may require a trained specialist to do so (John Creswell 2003:187). However, in this research the important task was for the research participants to offer interpretations of their own drawings. A question that could be asked is whether the presence of the

researcher influences the answers given by the focus group and would they have offered different responses to their pictures if the researcher were absent? (John Creswell 2003:187).

Focussed group discussion

A focussed group discussion is an interview with a group of people that offers them an opportunity to contribute to the knowledge-creation process. It is a social process through which participants co-produce an account of themselves and their ideas, which is often specific to a time and place. This suggests that one cannot really infer consensus from focussed group data as the stories that are shared and that which is expressed emerges out of group dynamics and cannot always be a reflection of individual participants' opinions (Rosalie Barbour & John Schostak 2005:42, 43).

Focussed group discussions, as a method of data collection, has distinct disadvantages and advantages. Specific disadvantages of the focussed group discussion relates to language – both verbal and hidden language. In terms of verbal language the fact that people speak different languages may hinder the research process. Hidden language refers to cultural body language and symbols that are often hidden from one who stands outside the culture. It is also the task of the facilitator to listen to what is not said. She should attempt to listen to the silences and spaces as much as the voices (Melissa Hyams 2004:106). Different people have different levels of articulating themselves verbally and those who can articulate themselves well may dominate the conversation (John Creswell 2003:186). The results from a focussed group discussion may be biased towards those who dominate the discussion (Claire Bless & Craig Higson Smith 2000:111). However, my Church experience in leading Bible studies, workshops and training seminars means I have acquired skills and experience in facilitating group discussions, which enable me to restrain dominant people and to encourage the quiet people to share.

The advantages of the focussed group discussion outweigh the disadvantages. With the emphasis on meaning-making by research participants in groups, the focussed group discussion is congruent with a qualitative research approach. In qualitative research, people are the meaning-makers who interpret their worlds in a cooperative way as they collaborate in the construction and maintenance of meaning (David Hustler & Juliet Goldbart 2005:16). Research participants are able discuss with each other and learn from each other in a way that is extremely comfortable in an African culture (Claire Bless and Craig Higson Smith 2000:110). In the spirit of *Ubuntu*, the group environment can provide mutual support and validation of comments by participants in the sharing of ideas and experiences.

Not only do group members learn from each other, the focussed group discussion also provides a way to confirm interpretations and recycle inferences (Rosaline Barbour & John Schostak 2005:42). This is a significant advantage in focussed group discussions where interpretations offered by some members may not be understood by or in agreement with other members. However, even with the group-checking component, there is a certain level of uncertainty as multiple-meanings and interpretations are generated through the focussed group discussion process (Rosaline Barbour and John Schostak 2005:42).

A second significant advantage of the focussed group discussion is that it is used as a means to give "the other" voice (Melissa Hyams 2004:105). An awareness of the power structures between interviewer and interviewee is an important feature of a feminist paradigm (Melissa Hyams 2004:105). The focussed group discussion is one way of reducing the unequal power balances that exist between "researcher" and "researched." The group discussion is empowering in that knowledge production is a collective process. It offers space for the women to interpret their own lives and not to have interpretation imposed upon them. It is also a means of conducting resistance, especially when the participants are invited to uncover for themselves the directions and sources of their empowerment and oppression (Melissa Hyams 2004:106).

While the advantages of the focussed group discussion outweigh the disadvantages, the effectiveness of the focussed group discussion depends on maximising the advantages and reducing the disadvantages and much of its success depends on the skill of the interviewer. Effective facilitation techniques include creating a safe and open environment for sharing as well as being able to draw out reticent participants and controlling dominant members. In terms of language barriers, an interpreter was available to translate for each of the groups of research participants. The Green Tea and Maskopas groups had members in the group that could provide this service. The Somelele group invited a community trainer to participate in the research to provide translation services.

In the focussed group discussion during the data collection phase, the participants were asked to draw a picture of themselves in a setting or context of their choice. The benefit of starting the group discussion in this manner is that the groups were given space to relax. The pictures proved a helpful way to conduct research among people where education and different language groups were a possible limitation to the study. The pictures were then collected and formed a "code" for the discussion that followed. In the group discussion, the participants were asked to analyse what each person depicted in the picture struggled with and what they needed to be empowered. Again the motivation for this approach was to allow space for the participants themselves to interpret their own lives. The pictures allowed for a non-threatening approach to listening to the interpreted experience of each person's

struggles and dreams for empowerment. A feminist enquiry aims at an egalitarian or democratic approach; as the researcher I also drew a picture and submitted it to the group for their interpretation.

In summary, some of the disadvantages of focussed group discussion are language barriers, that participants have different abilities to articulate themselves and cultural differences. Advantages of focussed group discussions include mutual learning in a group environment and member-checking in that participants can confirm interpretations and reducing the effects of power imbalances between researcher and researched.

Unstructured, one-on-one and open-ended interviews

Taped unstructured, one-on-one and open-ended interviews are a way to gather stories in a qualitative research design. Interviews rely on direct personal contact and are helpful in research where the questions are not narrowly defined. Open-ended questions are broad, not based on already conceived answers and as such are suitable in qualitative studies of an exploratory nature (Claire Bless & Craig Higson Smith 2000:119). The broad questions help the research participants to describe a situation and clarify what problems there are and what solutions are possible (Claire Bless & Craig Higson Smith 2000:107). Like focussed group discussions, interviews are dependent on the skill of the interviewer (Claire Bless & Craig Higson Smith 2000:108). Story gathering or the collection of data is based on interaction between the researcher who creates the situation and the participant's response to it (Claire Bless & Craig Higson Smith 2000:123). An unstructured interviewing technique allows for a relaxed and natural approach to data gathering and helps to facilitate a democratic setting in an environment where there is equality between the researcher and the researched (Bogdan and Knorr 2003:74). It is helpful to view the interview as a conversation unhampered by notes as this allows the researcher to listen effectively to the voice of the participants (Melissa Hyams 2004:105). The use of electronic recording equipment may inhibit the free flow of conversation, but the context of the group meeting may reduce this negative effect.

Why the choice of this method? The method of data collection is used to understand the way in which the research partners experience reality. It therefore has a connection with Christian spirituality and feminist theology. The connection with Christian spirituality is that people all experience God in different ways. The connection with feminist theology is that the starting point of knowledge-creation is interpreted experience. The emphasis for me is also on listening to the voices of the poor. My approach as a feminist aims for participation and empowerment. The standard question at the end: "Do you want to tell me anything else?" is seen in the context of the feminist aim for participation and empowerment. Within the

framework of Christian spirituality, talking about experiences of God and faith struggles is part of the spiritual journey.

Taped interviews with the research participants were conducted in their own setting. Where necessary, a translator was present to allow the research participant to respond to the questions in a way that was comfortable for her. The research participants from the Maskopas, Somelele and Green Tea groups, as described earlier, were interviewed to explore their experience of spirituality, empowerment and being HIV positive.

To begin each interview I offered the research participants eight A4 pictures depicting stigma. They were invited to choose one picture and describe what they thought the picture was about. The pictures were used as a discussion starter; the question: "What do you think is happening in the picture?" was designed to elicit interpretation from the participants themselves. The pictures come from *Churches, Channels of hope*, which is training material used in the Anglican Church to mobilise Christians into action (Christian Aids Bureau 2003). These pictures form part of the training material and are used as a teaching device to help people reflect on stigma. The pictures are illustrated in figure 35.

Once the research participant had offered a discussion on the pictures of stigma represented in figure 3.5, the four questions shaping the interview process were the following:

- How do you experience being HIV positive?
- How do you experience stigma?
- How do you have faith, or how do you pray, or how do you experience God?
- How can you be empowered?

The theory underpinning these questions is the premise that the participants themselves are the best authorities on their lives and that they themselves have the answers to their problems. Gustavo Gutierrez (1991:187) offers a Bible Study on Mark 10:46-52 where the blind man stops Jesus as he is leaving Jericho. Jesus asks the man "What do you want me to do for you?" This is significant for Gustavo Gutierrez (1991:187) in that it shows how Jesus treated the poor as subjects who had desires and rights as persons and not merely as objects of service. When the man is healed Jesus says to him that his faith has made him well. In other words, the man played a part in his own healing. The lesson that Gustavo Gutierrez is trying to show is that the answers and creative responses to the situation of dehumanising poverty lie within the people who experience this reality in their daily lives. The interview questions were asked with the hope that they would inspire this curiosity.

Figure 3.4   Pictures of people experiencing stigma
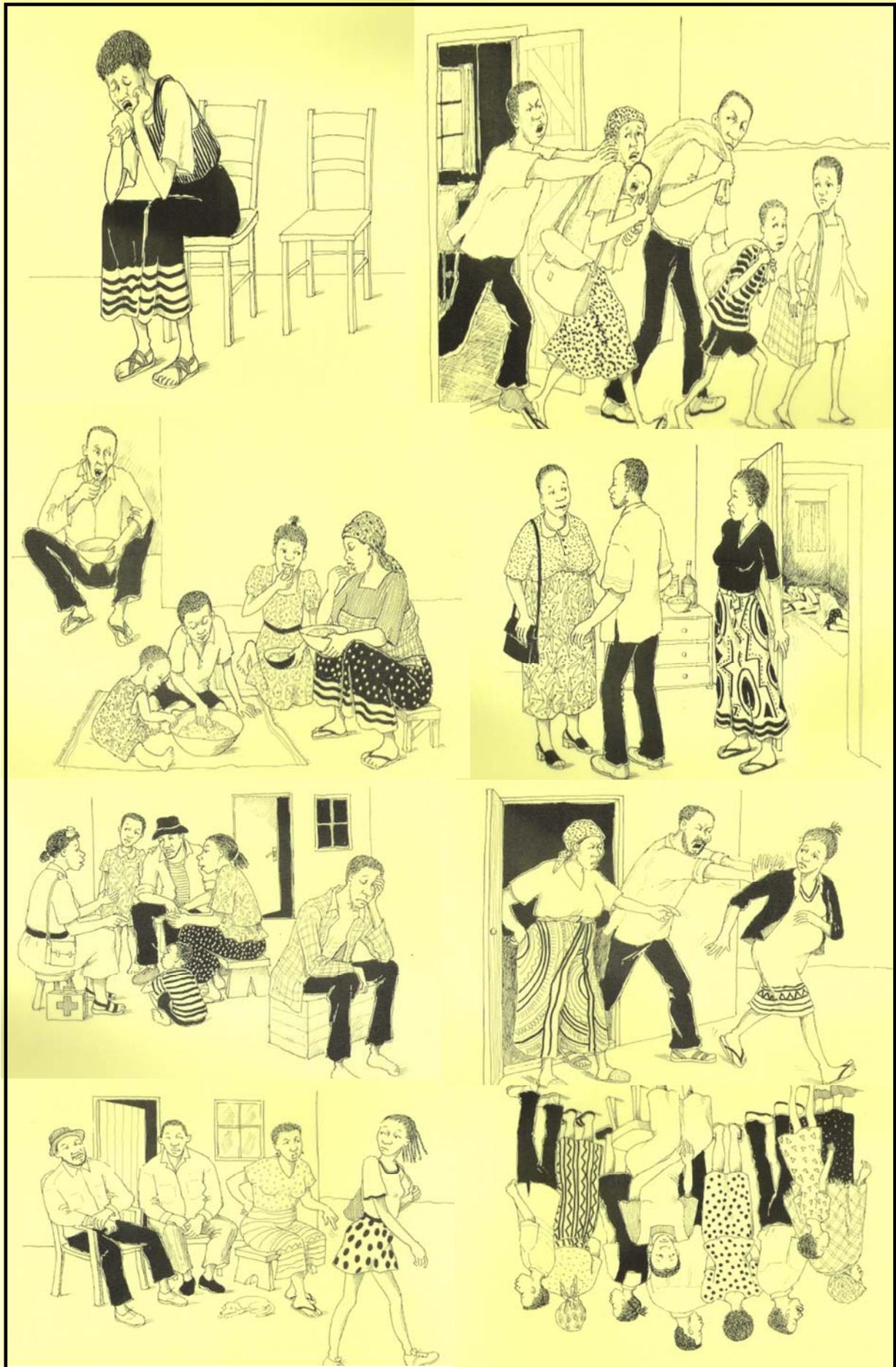
The questions in the unstructured, one-on-one and open-ended interviews were also phenomenological in flavour. Phenomenology focuses on how the individual experiences a phenomenon and how they reflect on their lived experience. Susan Ross (1993:191) describes phenomenology as the description of concrete experience. Because of this experiential focus, the phenomenological flavoured questions are suitable in a feminist enquiry with its focus on the interpreted experiences of women's lives. Phenomenological influences are also helpful in the paradigm of Christian spirituality for which the lived experience of God's presence is the starting point of the hermeneutical cycle of reflection.

One of the questions that was asked was: "How do you pray?" The question emerges out of a curiosity as to how women pray when their consciences have been awakened (Susan Rakoczy 2004:399). For Susan Rakoczy there are three dimensions to prayer. The first is wholeness (2004:400). In the context of the research wholeness is defined as a journey of transformation and integration where the individual who is part of a community, knits together the estranged parts of her identity. The second aspect is right-relationship. Right relationship includes the participation in the building of a better world and solidarity with other women (Susan Rakoczy 2004:401). The third aspect for prayer according to Susan Rakoczy (2004) is empowerment in the Spirit. The dreams and hopes for a cure expressed by the women suggest how Sophia prays in us, groaning and labouring to bring about a new creation that is not possible now (Susan Rakoczy 2004:401-412). The questions regarding the faith and prayer lives of the participants were asked with a curiosity as to their understanding of wholeness, their relationships with others and their experience of empowerment in the life of the Spirit.

The writing of devotions
Devotions are inspirational pieces of spiritual writing that motivate people to grow spiritually. The process of writing offers space for the research partners to give thought and reflection to their responses (John Creswell 2003:187) and to express the presence of Christ within. The advantage of using devotions as a method of data collection is that it expresses the *process* of Christian spirituality. Devotions emphasise the therapeutic aspect of feminist spirituality in that the use of devotions enables people to exercise the belief that the answers to life's questions are within.

While devotions are a helpful way to collect data because of their connection with spirituality and because they allow space for reflection, there are some disadvantages. The disadvantages of any written work with the participants in this study is their lack of education and language differences. These were overcome by the use of scribes and translators.

As part of a written exercise during the data collection phase, participants were asked to write a devotion that would motivate a person living with HIV as depicted in the pictures that they drew (see page 112). The use of this procedure is based on the understanding that the possibilities for transformation and emancipation lie within the participants themselves. The use of devotions is also based on the understanding that spirituality is a resource in releasing the transformational potential within individuals.

Life-stories

Related to the use of devotions as a way of understanding the struggles and desires for liberation among the participants is the task of requesting participants to write a life story. The presence of the desire for liberation is said to be a mark of the Spirit. In their life stories, the participants were asked to answer two questions:

- How has God healed you as a woman?
- How has God used you as a woman to heal others?

These questions emerge from an understanding in spirituality that teaches that God is experienced in ordinary mundane moments that make up our lives; in other words our experiences and the way we live our lives are the raw material that God uses to transform us and teach us. The use of life stories as a technical procedure to gather stories is founded on the knowledge that personal biography is a pivotal resource in spirituality. The purpose of inviting a written response was to allow space for reflection, which then has the potential to allow the exercise to be a prayerful act.

E-mails

The e-mail correspondence that forms part of the content in the data collection processes is from a workshop that trained people to write devotions. Members of the Maskopas group were sponsored to participate in these workshops. Devotions written by members of the Maskopas during this course facilitated by *Upper Room* ministries; who distribute devotional and spiritual growth material in South Africa, were e-mailed to me by the project manager. They were included as resources in the data collection process and enhanced the themes that emerged in the data analysis process.

My journal

As the researcher, I continually challenged my power and assumptions through the spiritual disciplines of self-awareness and self-reflection. The process of self-awareness is facilitated through journaling. Journaling is an expression of spirituality in many traditions as it is a means of spiritual growth through which transformation to wholeness can occur.

In qualitative research a reader may usually expect to find field notes or observer's notes as part of the data collection and interpretation process. Observations or field notes are records of the behaviours, attitude of the individuals and research participants in the research site (John Creswell 2003:185). Field notes may also include the attitudes and behaviours of the researcher throughout the research process (John Creswell 2003:185). However, in my thesis the journal is the preferred method because the research is seen through the eyeglasses of Christian spirituality within which it is a means of grace and a spiritual discipline. Reflective notes are unsystematic and not demarcated and there is no clear observational protocol as the journal is less structured than field notes. The postmodern flavour of the thesis is comfortable with this approach.

What goes into the journal? Narratives of personal growth, descriptive notes and demographics of the groups that were interviewed are included in the journal. The descriptive notes describe the participants, activities, events or dialogues while the reflective notes record the personal thoughts feelings, ideas, intuitions, impressions and prejudices of the researcher (John Creswell 2003:189; Robert Bogdan & Sari Knopp 1992:121). There is also demographic information, which is a record of the times and places and dates of where observations took place (John Creswell 2003:189). The journal also contains participant observations and relevant contextual information, as well as ideas and plans for further research steps (Herbert Altrichter and Mary Louise Holly 2005:24). The journal as a spiritual discipline facilitating growth towards full humanity also contains intimate prayers and spiritual reflections on life and living.

The use of the journal facilitated the research being more than an academic pursuit for me. The space for reflection, which the journal provided, allowed for both theory and praxis to make its home in me and change me. Michael Fox (1991:73) also says that theory must grow out of reflection on lived experience. He says further that spirituality is defined as this praxis (Michael Fox 1991:74). My own personhood is the laboratory for change and transformation, which is one of the goals of the thesis. The journal is both the record and the vehicle for that change. The journal allowed the research to be a spiritual discipline, a means of grace. One of the aims of feminist research is transformation and emancipation; this goal applies to feminist researchers as well as those who join them in the research journey. The assumptions guiding the process of data collection are that data and theory are generated from being in relationship with people (Patti Lather 1991:72). The journal serves as a record of how these relationships instil change. The process of the research is sometimes more important than the conclusions because of feminist methods having as their purpose transformative action (Patti Lather 1991:72). The paradigm of Christian spirituality is intensely subjective. The research methodology within this discipline is the view that research is about discernment. Discernment is listed as a spiritual gift in 1 Corinthians 12:8.

Discernment is defined as the process of pointing to the transformational presence of God within people and other structures. The journal facilitates this process of discernment, especially discernment of transformative moments.

With the exception of the introductory and concluding chapters, each chapter of this thesis includes a section entitled 'personal reflections of the research journey' which are drawn from my research journal. Included in these reflections is a systematic account of how the dance between the theory and the practical research has influenced me. As one of the aims in feminist spirituality research is transformation, the journal contains echoes of the transformational process of the research in the life of the research writer. Often the journal notes are instinctive, clumsy, unsystematic and highly personal. The 'personal reflections on the research' section allows for a processed account of the journal to be offered in the thesis, while not including the intimate records that do not have an immediate effect on the research process.

In summary, data was collected from people in support groups using a mixed methods approach. I combined different research techniques including conventional approaches such as interviews and focussed group discussions, and innovative methods such as devotions, drawings, life stories and personal journals. The next section describes the **process** involved in data collection in this study.

3.3.8   DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The data collection followed in this study is reflected in Table 4.2 and is discussed accordingly.

Table 3.1: Data collection procedures and techniques

Stages in the data collection process	Form of data collection	Questions or invitations during data collection process	Reflection on the research technique
Step one	**Negotiate relationship**	Covenant drawn up between researcher and research participants.	The covenant of understanding allowed for transparency in the research process. The covenant is a record of the expectations of the researcher and research participants.
Step two	**Pictures**	Draw a picture of yourself in a place of your choice (e.g. in your garden, in your house).	The picture acted as a discussion starter. It also facilitated a discussion on issues without focussing on the person concerned.
Step three	**Focussed group discussion**	What does the person in this picture struggle with? What does the person in this picture need to be empowered?	The research participants are in the best position to offer an analysis of the roots of their oppression and their sources of empowerment.
Step four	**Devotion**	Write a devotion that would encourage the person in the picture to grow spiritually.	Spirituality is seen as a relevant resource in coping with the stress of poverty, patriarchy and HIV/AIDS. The research participants have these resources within them. The purpose of this exercise is to allow the spiritual resources within them to unfold.
Step five	**Unstructured, one-on-one interviews**	Choose one of these eight pictures and tell me what you think is happening in the picture. How do you experience being HIV positive? How do you experience stigma? How do you have faith, or how do you pray, or how do you experience God? Is there anything else you want to tell me?	Broad questions in the unstructured interview allow the participants to share their interpreted experiences.
Step six	**Life-stories**	Please answer the following questions: "How has God healed you as a woman?" "How has God used you as a woman to empower others?"	Personal biography is a valuable resource in Christian spirituality.

Data was collected in six steps, which included the drawing of pictures, focussed group discussions, the writing of devotions and life stories, unstructured one-on-one individual interviews with each group member, and field notes which were written soon after the experience of interviewing. The writing of field notes served a two-fold purpose. Firstly, it was a process of debriefing for me. Secondly, it allowed me to record thoughts and reflections as soon after the event as possible.

In step one I made contact with the research participants, explained the research purpose and the reason for their involvement. We negotiated our relationship with each other and signed a memorandum of understanding, or, in the language of spirituality, a covenant.

In step two the participants were asked to draw a picture of themselves in a context of their choice. During the process of drawing the picture, which served both as a fun and creative icebreaker and as the first step to the focussed group discussion, the group members and I were able to talk with each in a relaxed and informal way that allowed the focussed group discussion that followed to be meaningful.

In the focussed group discussion in step three, the members were invited to share stories with each other about the pictures they had drawn. The questions: "What does this person struggle with?" and "What does she need to be empowered?" that guided the group discussion, were broad and open-ended in line with the exploratory goals of the qualitative research paradigm. The open-ended group process allowed the members to offer an interpretation of their own lives and to uncover the routes of their liberation themselves. It also enhanced the aims of the participatory action agenda of feminist research, which affirms that the participants are in the best position to uncover the sources of their oppression and their routes to full humanity, liberation and wholeness.

In step four the group members wrote devotions addressed to the person in the picture offering her hope and encouragement in the situation that she faced. Again, the meta-purpose in this method of story gathering or data collection was to affirm that the research participants had the answers to their own problems. It was also a deliberate intent to include a question that is influenced by the paradigm of Christian spirituality that holds that spirituality is a resource in healing and transformation.

Step five was devoted to individual interviews conducted with each group member. I found that the focussed group discussions served as a valuable introduction between myself, as the researcher, and the participants. They allowed us to talk together, sometimes even to laugh together, so that by the time we came to speaking in the interviews we had developed an easy rapport with each other as was shown by the intimate sharing that came through the

interviews. Some examples of this sharing included concerns and worries over children that they had not yet expressed to anyone else, yet they confided in me. Other examples include the cathartic process of crying while sharing their stories, which were recorded electronically. However, out of respect for the participants' dignity, when there were emotional moments such as crying, I chose to switch off the recorder and put it on again only when they were composed.

During step six the groups were invited to write down their life stories guided by the questions: "How has God healed you as a woman?" and "How has God used you as a woman to empower others?" The writing of a personal biography is a valuable resource in Christian spirituality.

The interviews and field notes were transcribed and analysed for common themes and categories using the protocol prescribed by Renalta Tesch (John Creswell 2003:192-193) and described in section 3.3.9.

3.3.9   DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is generative in that it seeks to discover and construct descriptions of reality from the stories of the research participants (Renalta Tesch 1990:90). The term data analysis refers to the process of systematically identifying patterns of meaning from the stories that have been shared with the researcher and how she uses them to design, test and defend hypotheses or ideas (Renalta Tesch 1990:113). Qualitative research is an inductive approach so the data must provide the organising scheme hence the themes or categories unfold from the data and are not defined before the data collection process (Renalta Tesch 1990:89, 142). They are categorised from the emerging picture of reality that is offered in repeated words and phrases used by the research partners (Renalta Tesch 1990:90). An important aspect of the data analysis process is developing a scheme to organise the categories or themes. Data is analysed in a concrete way. In this thesis I followed the six steps of the "mechanics of data analysis" suggested by Renalta Tesch (1990:113).

Step one involved organising the data for analysis (John Creswell 2003:191). The interviews were transcribed, typed and filed in different sections. Journals were also updated.

The second step involved reading the data to gain a sense of the whole, to check for recurring themes and develop a general idea of the information (Renalta Tesch 1990:90). Early reflections were recorded in the right hand margins of the material. While taking notes, I was alert to content that could become labels for an organising system. This was the first

step in developing categories that can be applied as an organising principle to the data (Renalta Tesch 1990:90).

In step three the topics that were written on the right hand side of the margin were listed together in the same place and redundancies and repetitions eliminated. Similar topics were clustered together and arranged under headings (John Creswell 2003:192; Renalta Tesch 1990:120). The list then became an organising system for common features or patterns in the text (Renalta Tesch 1990:121). The organising system, which has been developed from the data, is applied to the entire data.

Once themes have been developed, step four is to "unitise or segment" the data by dividing it into the smallest piece that can stand on its own, that is "comprehensible by itself and contains one idea, episode or piece of information" (Renalta Tesch 1990:91). The segments must have a potential relationship to the study and "retain meaning even when they are encountered outside of their context" (Renalta Tesch 1990:116). This process is called decontextualising (Renalta Tesch 1990:116).

The fifth step involves the coding of the themes (Renalta Tesch 1990:91; John Creswell 2003:192). The purpose of coding is to identify which segments have similar themes so that they can be assembled together and studied individually.

After coding, everything that belongs to one category is put in one place. This sixth step involves polishing the organising system for the data and is called recontextualisation. It aids the process of reflecting on and the interpretation of data (Renalta Tesch 1990:122). The refining process stops when the researcher is satisfied with the congruence of the data and the organising system (Renalta Tesch 1990:91). Categories are not containers for data pieces but once refined are developed into concepts by the researcher (Renalta Tesch 1990135). In the process of data analysis categories start out as research tools for data management and facilitates interpretation of data but then become part of the research outcomes (Renalta Tesch 1990:139).

In sum, the purpose of data analysis is to reflect on the process and purpose of interpreting the stories that were gathered as data collection. The interpretation occurs broadly in six stages which involve reflecting on themes that emerge, developing a coding system from these comments, decontextualisation, recontextualisation and culminating in an organising schema that is represented in the next chapter as a table and in chapter five as a model to guide the Church in a gendered response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. I now reflect on the trustworthiness of the research process

3.3.10 METHODS TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS

According to Robert Bogdan and Sari Knopp (2003:35), a research study is trustworthy when two independent researchers achieve the same results when repeating the same experiment. Yet no two researchers could repeat the same experiment and obtain the same result because the act of measurement itself changes the data and because methods of data collection are *kairos* moments in time that will never be the same. How one researcher interacts with a person or group of people at a given time in a given place is different to another researcher, the research techniques being influenced by the personality, past experiences and interpersonal skills of the researcher and by the rapport she establishes with the research participants.

Trustworthiness ensures that the data is credible and legitimate and protects research from the limitations and passions of the research writer (Patti Lather 1991:69). What criteria ensure the validity of feminist research in its praxis and emancipatory orientation? In this research study putting measures in place to convince readers that it was credible and legitimate ensured trustworthiness of the data. Patti Lather suggests three principles to ensure validity: construct validity, face validity and catalytic validity (1991:7,66).

Construct validity acknowledges the weak points of the theoretical framework in which the researcher operates (Patti Lather 1991:67) ensuring that there is a conversation between theory and data. Systematic reflexivity shows how the evidence produced by the data has changed the *a priori theory*. By means of a reflexive journal, it provides the necessary safeguard against theoretical imposition on the research study. **Face validity** means that the data is checked and rechecked by the research participants themselves. This happens in a process of recycling data analyses by offering the group tentative results and reflecting on their own personal analyses (Patti Lather 1990:66-69). **Catalytic validity** asks: Does the research change their lives for the better? (1991:68). Catalytic validity emerges from the epistemological concerns of feminist theology and Christian spirituality that regard transformation as a key goal embedded in the research process.

Using Patti Lather's guidelines, the following processes were put in place to try to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. To ensure **construct validity**, there was a **multi-methods approach to data collection.** This involved a combination of resources that included talking data in the form of focussed group discussions and interviews, and writing data such as devotions, life histories and my journal. Not only was there a combination of data collection methods, there was also an amalgamation of research participants where the research base was broadened to ensure the trustworthiness of themes emerging from the Maskopas. To ensure **face validity, community feedback forums** allowed for the data and findings to be

checked by the research participants. **Catalytic validity** is difficult to ensure. My own spirituality has been transformed through the process of the research, the lives of the research participants are changed through my interaction, but to try to define how transformation to wholeness occurs through the research process is not easy, although some quotes from the data suggest that there was transformation [13]. What one may be able to do is to reflect on whether or not the research has transformation potential for the Church. To do this, a **peer debriefing** mechanism was put in place where colleagues offered their opinions as to the efficacy of the research for the Church. The multi-methods approach to data collection and the amalgamation of research participants was discussed in section 3.3.7. I now explain community debriefing and peer reflection as measures to ensure trustworthiness.

Community feedback forums

The community feedback meeting with the research participants is an important aspect of sharing research results (see appendix iii). There are three reasons why this is so. First, it is an ethical way of checking that the research participants are in agreement with the research findings (Karima Effendi and Brandon Hamber 1999:178). Second, it is highly unlikely that the marginalized participants who do not have high levels of literacy would read the findings of the research. The community meeting is therefore a way of sharing the knowledge gained from the research with them. It is a way of empowering them with the knowledge gained from the research; it therefore resonates with the emancipatory and participatory aspects of the methodology of this study. Third, the community meeting is a way of sharing ownership of the research that goes beyond the researcher and the university to other stakeholders such as the community and the research participants. Some of the ways of sharing the results with the research participants is to offer a verbal description of how their stories were used. Another form of community debriefing is for my peers to offer a reflection on my research.

Peer debriefing

Peer debriefing measures the extent to which research goals were achieved (see appendix ii). The peer debriefing mechanism is beneficial in that it may uncover blind spots of which the researcher is unaware. In this study, peer debriefing involved offering a draft copy of my thesis to my colleagues to give them opportunity to reflect on my findings. The purpose of the peer debriefing was to share the research with others and to ascertain whether aspects of the research could help the Church in responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In order to include a diversity of perspectives a range of people were included in the peer debriefing. The portfolio leader of the Diocesan Social Responsibility Committee and the head of

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[13] For example a quote in section 4.6.1 highlights one experience of transformation in the process of the research. The ethic of emancipation and transformation is fully discussed in section 4.6.2.

Training for Ministries were selected for their perspective as white males. To balance these voices a black female and a black male colleague, who is the leader of the HIV/AIDS Diocesan team, were also included. Finally, the research was shared with newly ordained Anglican ministers who participated in a training workshop where I presented the results of the research and the model described in chapter 5. At the end of the workshop they were asked to evaluate the potential pitfalls and the potential value of the research. The results from the peer debriefing and community feedback forums are presented in Chapter six.

In sum the following mechanisms were put in place to try to ensure that the data is trustworthy:

1. A multi-faceted approach to research participants described according to figure 3.5 in section 3.3.6. The multi-faceted approach includes women participants directly and indirectly affected by HIV/AIDS, and male research participants.
2. A multi-methods approach to data collection described in section 3.3.7.
3. The use of a journal summarised in each chapter under the heading "Personal reflections on the research journey".
4. Community feedback forums.
5. Peer debriefing.

The limitations of the study are discussed next as ethical considerations require that these be acknowledged as part of the process of data presentation and interpretation.

3.3.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of the research study were acknowledged in my personal research journal. According to the Heisenberg or observer effect (Robert Bogdan and Sari Knopp (2003:34) the researcher's interaction with the research participants admittedly influences the results of the data collected by means of interviews and focussed group discussions. The small sample may be another limitation in the research, although the focus on particular groups of people in particular places is congruent with the postmodern emphasis on locatedness in knowledge-creation, and feminist spirituality research requires a balance between the universal and the particular. Other limitations that may have influenced the research findings in this study include the expectations that communities may have of the researcher, the lack of education and language barriers of the research participants, and the transient nature of the communities that were interviewed. Each of these limitations is outlined below.

Heisenberg effect

The researcher's presence in the group influences the behaviour of the participants. Robert Bogdan and Sari Knopp (2003:34) describe this as the observer or Heisenberg effect. The Heseinberg principle suggests that people or things are changed through the process of being studied (2003:34). I interact with the Maskopas in a relaxed fashion and as I have

worked with them for a while they have become used to my presence among them. I consider myself a member of the group and fulfil the "ritual" requirements of this role. One example of this is when the group welcomes a newcomer, each one in turn declares her HIV positive status and tells the story of how that has been significant for her. I also introduce myself, say that I am HIV negative and then as part of my story explain that I am involved because of my understanding that HIV affects all of us. The Heisenberg principle does affect my interaction with the Maskopas, but it plays more of a role in my interaction with the others groups where I am more of a stranger to them.

Particularity

A limitation of this study, as with all qualitative research, is that the theory generated cannot be generalised completely to other contexts. Rather, as it is "small scale theorising to specific problems in specific situations" (Ernst Stringer 1996:9), the theory is contextualised in other settings. In order to overcome this limitation, rich information is given regarding the location and nature of the group, which I have done in chapter four. Postmodern research emphasises the locatedness and plurality of the meaning-making process. Feminist theology and Christian spirituality challenge some of these postmodern suggestions arguing that some universal truths and meta-narratives remain. Feminist theologians may offer fresh insight into perennial truths such as the existence of God, for example, using women's interpreted experience, and feminists may suggest different images and models of God. The poverty and patriarchy that characterise the lives of the Maskopas, Somelele and Green tea groups are meta-narratives that are echoed in the lives of different people in different times and places. This thesis is written in the disciplines of feminist theology and Christian spirituality. These influences mean that the research is "small scale theorising to specific problems in specific situations" as suggested by Ernst Stringer (1996:9). Nevertheless, descriptions are offered regarding research participants, research sites and research methods. These descriptions allow theory that is generated in this context to be extrapolated to other contexts.

Expectations

Working with communities raises the expectation that as a trained professional I will provide the solutions to their problems (Ernst Stringer 1996:5). To a certain extent the nature of the feminist Christian spirituality enquiry is that it connects with the lives of people and opens doors for empowerment and liberation. This aim needs to be managed and expectations from the community need to be carefully negotiated. One of the ways in which it can be managed is through a memorandum of understanding or covenant. I signed such a covenant with the research participants at the outset of the study.

Lack of education and language barriers

The qualitative approach invites the use of multiple-methods of data collection. Part of the multi-faceted approach to data collection in the thesis was that the participants draw pictures of and write about their experiences as HIV-positive women as well as participate in interviews and group discussions. The disadvantage of the writing task was that because of the lack of education most were not able to offer much text on paper (Van Manen 1990:64). People generally find it difficult to write. This difficulty is further exaggerated by differences in language. The research participants speak and think in isiZulu, isiSotho or isiXhosa. In the face-to-face interviews people participated more freely. The interviews were taped conversations and participants were invited to tell me their personal life story on how they experience being HIV positive.

Language differences present a limitation in the research. Related to this is the insight emerging from the field of Christian spirituality that some contemplative experiences are ineffable. The academic discipline of spirituality uses the word ineffability to describe how people are often unable to articulate in words the experiences of the Divine in their lives. Spirituality, with its path of embracing the mystery of God, is more often than not ineffable. Richard Foster (1998:x) remarks that words are at best frozen thoughts and cannot easily express the experience of the Divine. Moreover, "language gives people few ways to express the wonder, beauty and sense of integrity and things that lack objective, quantifiable verification" (Norven Vest 2000:17). Not only do people struggle to articulate their experiences of the Divine, but the images and the words and vocabulary that are used can often be misunderstood. Language is thus a limitation in the discipline of spirituality.

Furthermore, feminist writers argue that the structures of language are themselves patriarchal. When women try to articulate their interpreted experience they do so in a symbolic structure that is inescapably masculine. Religious languages and symbolic systems function to legitimise oppression (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 1996:172). Male linguistic systems and theological frameworks render women and their experience of the Divine invisible (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 1996:172).

The language barriers between the research participants and me may invite other methodological queries such as the extent to which the personal narratives of African black women can be told by African white women (Greg Cuthbertson & Louise Kretzschmar 1998:490). Language differences, cultural differences and differences in worldview are some of the potential barriers in presenting research that relies on black women's interpreted experience. Despite these potential pitfalls it is necessary to create space for the voices of marginalized women to be heard, even if the reflections of black African women are recorded by a white African researcher. It is part of the feminist agenda to interrupt the

patriarchal silencing of women and to make women visible as agents of grace, liberation, transformation, healing and empowerment (Elisabeth Schüssler Firoenza 1996:172).

Transience

One of the challenges in working with small groups is that the membership is transient. Membership is usually limited to ten. These ten people are in the process of changing all the time. There are a variety of reasons for this. One reason relates to motivations for participating in the support group. Some people join in the hope of securing food or finances. When they discover that these resources are either limited or not existent, they leave. Many also leave when they receive government grants. Others leave due to relocation. Still others leave once they feel that the support group has fulfilled its therapeutic role in their lives. The transient nature of the groups makes building relationships difficult. My experience was that I ended up building relationships with at least five of the members who then formed a core group while the others came and went.

3.4   PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

An important aspect of feminist work is recognising the "intellectual biography" of the researcher (Gayle Letherby 2003:9). The purpose of the personal reflection on the research journey or intellectual biography is to offer insight into the research through exploring some of the theoretical, practical, methodological and theological issues raised (Gayle Letherby 2003:8). This involves being explicit about tensions that arise in the research and relating how these tensions remain and how they are resolved (Carole Truman *et al* 2000:13). In qualitative research, and particularly in feminist research, the researcher is the laboratory for change and transformation. Research in feminist Christian spirituality is grounded in feminist friendly epistemologies that are also informed by the tradition of Christian spirituality (Gayle Letherby 2003:59). Feminist research is also concerned with the *process* of knowledge creation and not just the *product.* To this end, the role of the researcher in the research process is discussed. The section on personal reflections of the research journey offers the space to admit the role of the researcher and bring in data from the journal in a systematic and coherent way. Often the journal reflections are clumsy and instinctive and need to be refined. In addition, the feminist style is holistic, integral and non-cosmetic. This means is that the journal is untidy in that it has reflections on research experiences, personal anecdotes and spiritual growth all of which are part of the research process. Henri Nouwen in *Reaching out* (1975) advises that the inner sanctuary of one's heart be kept sacred and not over exposed for analysis by other people. Following Henri Nouwen's advice, the journal is not included in its entirety in the research, although where necessary, direct quotes are cited.

In offering personal reflections of the research journey, I reflect on the role of men's experience, the feminist nature or ontology of the research design generally and the coincidence of ontology, epistemology and methodology in research that is feminist and based in Christian spirituality.

3.4.1 MEN'S EXPERIENCE

As feminist theology matures as a discipline, it may be that it highlights the gender perspective rather than just women's perspective in knowledge-making. Hence, the gender perspective includes both men and women. The goal of feminist theology is the full humanity of people, especially women. In order to achieve this for women and in order to understand women's lives, researchers ought to know what is going on in men's lives (Gayle Letherby 2003:137). Men's interpreted experience is diverse (Gayle Letherby 2003:137). Not all men are patriarchal oppressors. Many men share in the feminist vision of a new humanity in a new society of mutuality and reciprocity. Thus the title feminist theologian is not reserved only for women as men can also be feminist theologians. Increasingly there are examples of male authors in spirituality engaging with issues and aspects of feminist spirituality. Examples are Ronald Rolheiser in *The finger of God* (2001) and Ken Wilber who includes an analysis of feminist issues in some of his books, such as *Eye of the Spirit* (2000c)*.*

In section 1.2.3, I highlight that AIDS research targets women such that statistics relating to men are often absent. Researchers inadvertently stigmatise women such that HIV/AIDS is perceived as a "women's disease". In the context of this research highlighting only women's experience of being HIV positive may either excuse or ignore men's involvement and their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS[14].

3.4.2 FEMINIST NATURE OF THE RESEARCH

Shulamit Reinharz (1993:72) conducted extensive investigation into feminist research and found that feminists typically include the following characteristics in their research.

1. With very few exceptions feminism is a perspective not a research method
2. Feminists use a multiplicity of research methods
3. Feminist research involves an ongoing criticism of non-feminist research
4. Feminist research may be trans-disciplinary
5. Feminist research is guided by feminist theory
6. Feminist research aims to create social change
7. Feminist research aims to represent human diversity
8. Feminist research frequently includes a discussion of the researcher as person
9. Interactive research feminist research frequently attempts to develop special relations with the research participants

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[14] The use of the male narrative is discussed further in section 4.3.3, page 147.

10. Feminist research frequently defines a special relation with the reader.

In the light of these characteristics, I reflect now on my own research. First, Shulamit Reinharz suggests that **feminism is a perspective on research** and not a distinctive methodology. While feminist research is an eclectic approach to research methods, using and adapting a variety of research techniques, the use of feminist ontology and epistemology means that research will look different. In section 3.3.7 I argued that the reorientation provided by feminist ontology and feminist epistemology are such that the research methodology provided by feminists is *de facto* a distinctive methodology. An example is the use of interviews, which in this research has a phenomenological flavour. In the traditional phenomenological school of thought, researchers suggest the use of bracketing in the interview process to offer some distance between researchers and participants. Gayle Letherby (2003:82), for example, explains how many of the methodological textbooks suggest that when interviews are conducted the researcher should guard against "over rapport" with the research participants and remain detached and objective. However, while feminists may use "standard" research techniques such as interviewing, these are transformed to coincide with feminist ontological and epistemological assumptions. For example in feminist research the researcher frequently develops special relationships with the interviewees and aims at "over rapport".

The second characteristic of feminist research is that it uses **multiplicity of research methods**. A multi-methods approach to data collection was adopted in this research. The advantage of a multi-methods approach to data collection is that the potential limitations of some research techniques are balanced by the advantages of other research techniques. For example, the disadvantages of written sources of data are balanced by the advantages of individual and group discussions. Moreover, a multi-methods approach to data collection accommodates the diversity of ways in which participants can share stories. While some participants find it easier to communicate through talking, others may find it easier to communicate through writing. Thus, both approaches to data collection were adopted in this study.

The third characteristic of feminist research is that feminist research involves an **ongoing criticism of non-feminist research**. Criticism of androcentric research was offered in section 3.2.3, which criticised the goals of objectivity, promoted the use of subjective involvement as a way to do research and denounced the dualistic worldview prominent in some modern research. The criticism of non-feminist research as discussed in section 3.2.2, is also reflected in the decision to use the interpreted experiences of women as a source in theology.

The interdisciplinary nature of this thesis is a reflection on point four of Shulamit Reinharz's summary, which suggests that **feminist research may be trans-disciplinary**. This research is embedded in spirituality and feminist theology, but is also open to other sources of information such as participatory research, action research and the contribution of male authors such as Ken Wilber. The transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary nature of feminist research in this thesis was summarised in section 3.3.4 using the image of the weavers' loom in figure 1.5. The weavers' loom image suggests that while Christian spirituality and feminist theology provide the framework for the thesis, other disciplines such as feminist theory are woven into the knowledge-making process. This interdisciplinary nature of the research in my thesis coincides with the fifth aspect of Shulamit Reinharz's summary that feminist theory is one of the guiding epistemologies of the research.

The sixth characteristic that Shulamit Reinharz outlines is that **feminist research aims to create social change.** The motive for social change is embodied in feminist ontology and in the participatory, action research strategies adopted. One of the aims of my research is to offer a gendered response to HIV/AIDS pandemic for the Christian Church. The model of fully human spirituality described in chapter five aims to facilitate social change through adopting a holistic and integrated approach to responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Point number seven is that **feminist research aims to represent human diversity**. In the research, there is an acknowledgement that while interpreted experience remains a fundamental source in theology, there are different categories of experience that are influenced by the range of human diversity. Factors such as class, race, culture and language influence the way people experience the world.

The eighth characteristic of feminist research is that **feminist research frequently includes a discussion of the researcher as person**. In this thesis, the use of the first person in the style of writing is one way that the researcher's personhood is introduced into the thesis. The role of the researcher has been discussed with reference to my background influences and picture of God. The discussion of the researcher as person culminates in the personal reflections on the research journey section of each chapter. Through discussing the role of the research and offering personal reflections on the research journey, which are insights from the journal, I am able to suggest a special relationship with the reader, which is another distinctive feature of feminist research according to Shulamit Reinharz.

The ninth characteristic of feminist research is that **feminist research frequently attempts to develop special relationships with the research participants**. The desire to encourage a greater degree of rapport with them is motivated by the feminist aim to create relationships that are mutual and based on solidarity (Shulamit Reinharz 1993:73). This relationship

model of research is an attempt to subvert the exploitive, hierarchical and competitive relationships of androcentric research (1993:73).

Shulamit Reinharz (1993:75) writes that the development of rapport is sometimes an excessive demand in feminist research. In my research, language and cultural differences between the research participants and me meant that the demands of a greater degree of rapport were not always achieved. One should therefore be careful to explain what is meant by rapport. Rapport should be a fortunate outcome rather than a necessary precondition, as the aim of creating relationships of respect need not also include rapport (Shulamit Reinharz 1993:75). Patti Lather (1997:32) argues that sometimes the best a researcher can achieve is a partial identification with research participants (see section 3.3.5). Through my friendship with the Maskopas and by listening to the stories shared by the other research participants, a degree of rapport was achieved in the research. Nevertheless, rapport whether as a precondition for research or a favourable outcome remains a distinctive feature of feminist research. As Shulamit Reinharz (1993:73) suggests, "Rapport … validates the scholar as feminist, as a researcher, and as a human being".

The feminist nature of this research was evaluated according to the nine characteristics outlined by Shulamit Reinharz (1993:72) but was also influenced by Christian spirituality. True to the holistic and integrative nature of feminist spirituality, this research study involves a weaving together of ontology, epistemology and methodology being, knowing and doing.

3.4.3   THE INTERTWINING OF BEING, KNOWING AND DOING

Feminist theology, Christian spirituality and feminist Christian spirituality emphasise the idea that being, knowing and doing as the different expressions of personhood, are integrated. This integration is reflected is some of my journal comments where I ask: "How am I going to live my life in response to what I have seen and what I have heard and what I have experienced?" The desire for an authentic and integrated spirituality is crystallised in the Choristers' Prayer: "Grant that what I sing with my lips (knowing) I may believe in my heart (being) and what I believe in my heart I may show forth in my life (doing)." This focus in this research is not only on what I do, but also on how I do it and the implications of what I receive (Gayle Letherby 2003:97). Being, knowing and doing are integrated so that the inner world of the prayer is stirred and finds expression in the outer world of justice as the inner and outer revolutions amalgamate into one.

My personal reflections on the research journey firstly acknowledge that an investigation into men's interpreted experience may become a necessary aspect of feminist research. Secondly, the feminist nature of the research in this thesis was evaluated according to

Shulamit Reinharz's schema. Finally, the weaving, talking and dancing nature of theology in this thesis suggests also that who I am (being), what I do in the research (doing) and the research findings (knowing) are aspects that unfold from each other. Thus, there is a holistic and integrated approach to theology, spirituality and research methodology, as the concluding remarks of this third chapter illustrate.

3.5   CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this chapter was to explain the dance between theory and data, to suggest how presuppositions and research experiences are woven together in the weaving, dancing and talking process of research and theologising. The process of research as reflected in this chapter on methodology is a conversation between theory and data. As with theology and spirituality, the research methodology is described as a weaving, dancing and talking amalgamation. There is a dance and dialogue between theoretical assumptions and practical research, where each influences, and, in turn, is influenced by, the other. Theory influences empirical findings and these findings change the way one understands theory. In the interplay between theory and data, both of these paradigms shift. Patti Lather (1991:62) describes this process as dialectical theory building where a reciprocal relationship is created between theory and data.

There are thus two broad sections in this chapter on research methodology. The first part, the **epistemological assumptions,** describe the lens though which I view reality. It describes the theoretical framework and presuppositions through which I collect, select and interpret data. The second part of this third chapter explained the **research methods** and offered details on how the data or stories were collected, processed and interpreted. The epistemological assumptions and the research methods are embedded in the conviction that the locus for theological research is solidarity with the poor. In this thesis, "research method" refers to the techniques of gathering information and trying to understand what it means.

The epistemological assumptions in the research were based on an intertwining of the disciplines of feminist theology and Christian spirituality, which were defined in chapter two. These assumptions were defined as political standpoints and included the politics of wisdom, interpreted experience, community and liberative action. These theoretical assumptions guided the choice of research methods.

The **politics of wisdom** suggest that contemplative experience is a source in theology and spirituality alongside conventional theological sources such as Scripture, Tradition and Reason. Wisdom was described as discernment, reflected experience and an aspect of

being fully human. Wisdom as an epistemological assumption has links with both Christian spirituality and feminist theology.

The second theoretical assumption in the research was the use of **interpreted experience.** Experience is understood as a source in theologising, but experience is mediated through interpretation. Thus, there is no raw experience as experiences are influenced by assumptions, worldview, past experience and culture.

A third epistemological assumption guiding the research is the **subjective involvement** of the researcher in the research study. Subjective involvement challenges the objective, dualistic empirical nature of postpositivist, positivist and androcentric research.

A fourth epistemological assumption guiding the research was **community**; therefore research was conducted in support groups. The importance of community was defended with reference to aspects of the Trinity, African spirituality and feminist praxis.

A fifth and final epistemological assumption influencing the research was **liberative action**. Liberative action highlights how transformation of individuals and society are goals in both feminist and spirituality research.

The first section on epistemological assumptions described the paradigm through which women's interpreted experiences and stories were understood. A discussion on research methods included reflection on the qualitative approach, the role of the researcher as the instrument in the research, the research site, the data collection methods and procedures as well as the data analysis and interpretation. In the research process of data collection and analysis, measures were put in place to ensure the trustworthiness of the data while at the same time the limitations of the study were acknowledged.

The qualitative approach was described and defended. The choice for a qualitative research design was that the exploratory and descriptive goals of the research are best met through the qualitative research design. The qualitative research design facilitates exploring how research participants experience being HIV positive while it also allows for the subjective involvement in the lives of research participants.

The researcher's role was described with reference to background influences, worldview, friendship with marginalized people and pictures of God. The purpose of describing the researcher's role was an attempt to speak from the fragments of one's own body as a situated-self to prevent the universalising tendencies of some modern research approaches.

In the research, a multi-faceted view of the HIV discussion was presented. The multi-faceted approach, termed triangulation, included the narratives of women research participants who were directly and indirectly affected by HIV/AIDS and also the stories of male research participants. There was also a triangulation of data collection methods (De Vos 1998:359), which included visual work, focussed group discussions, interviews, devotions and life stories. These sources were analysed according Renalta Tesch's method of coding. Measures that were put in place to ensure the trustworthiness of the data included the multi-methods approach to data collection, community feedback forums where research participants were offered an opportunity to reflect on the research findings and peer debriefing where colleagues evaluated the research according to its potential helpfulness to the Church and potential pitfalls.

Finally, personal reflections on the research journey were offered on the use of male narratives, the feminist nature of the research and the way being, knowing and doing integrate in the research process. Having described the dancing and weaving nature of research methodology where epistemological assumptions influence the practical research, which in turn transforms epistemological assumptions, the next chapter offers a discussion on the results of implementing the research methodology described in this third chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Chapter one offered background information on HIV/AIDS, outlined the research aims and described the weaving, dancing and talking nature of theology. Having considered operational definitions of key terms used as tools in the research in chapter two, and having outlined the dance between epistemological underpinnings and practical research in chapter three, I now reflect on the product and process of the dance and dialogue between theory and praxis.

4.1   INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

While the philosophical framework of this thesis was described as developing in dialogue with praxis, the research process of collecting and understanding data may be viewed as the antiphonal response to the articulated theory. A narrative of the process of gathering stories from the research participants is offered and is followed by an interpretation and understanding of these stories. In some cases the data challenged the theory on which the thesis is based and in other cases confirmed it. Pertinent questions in this chapter are: Who are the storytellers? Why were they chosen? What can they teach? How can what they say be understood? What can be learnt about spirituality, about feminism, about HIV/AIDS and faith from the data? I begin the discussion by shaping my answer to the first question: who are the storytellers?

4.2   THE STORYTELLERS

The participants in the research are the storytellers because the data collection process is understood as the process in which people share the story of their lived experiences. For the participants, the process of telling a story and relating their experience is a way in which they build their identity and wrestle with their suffering in their fragmented world (Denise Ackermann 2001:18). Yet, the stories that are gathered are not only narratives of suffering, they are also narratives of hope, empowerment, resistance and spiritual maturity. Telling these stories in the context of a community of faith has the potential to draw people into relationships where change and transformation can happen (Denise Ackermann 2001:19). My own experience of listening and recording the data was that the stories became part of me.

4.3   THE STORYTELLERS IN THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS: A MULTI-PERSPECTIVE APPROACH

How do the perspectives of the different storytellers relate together? Figure 4.1 depicts the multi-perspective approach to the collection of data on the experiences of HIV-positive people and those directly or indirectly affected by them. It offers a visual map on how the research participants' stories are interwoven and is discussed accordingly.

Figure 4.1   Visual representation of data collection sources
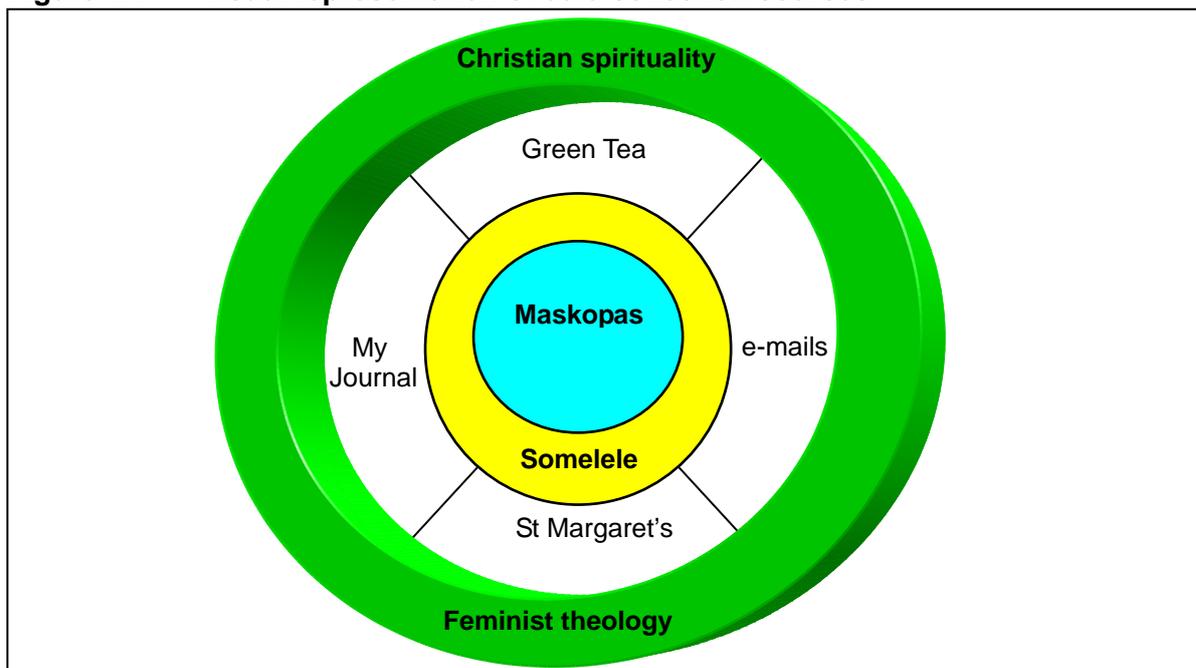
The purpose of the multi-perspective approach is to remain true to the principle of standing in solidarity with the poor on the one hand and broadening the research on the other. The diagram shows how the Maskopas are the central agents in the research as it is with them that the principle of standing in solidarity with the poor was achieved. Closely linked to the Maskopas group is the Somelele group whose profile is similar to that of the Maskopas Group in that both groups are HIV positive black women with little or no employment. In the coding process described in 4.7, the Maskopas group and the Somelele group are analysed first, the codes developed from their data are applied to other sources, namely the Green Tea group, St Margaret's parish[15], e-mail correspondence and my journal. The outer circles represent how the research was expanded to include other voices and secondary resources. The third circle represents the Green Tea group, my e-mail correspondence, the St Margaret's group and my journal. However, in keeping with the principle of standing in solidarity with the poor, the central agents were the Maskopas.

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[15] Data from St Margaret's parish is discussed in chapter six.

The stories that are articulated by the different participants are embraced within the framework of the disciplines of Christian spirituality and feminist theology, as described in chapter three. A preferential option for the poor, defined as women whose experience of stigma and marginalization is shaped by being HIV positive, black, poor, having little or no employment and little education, is the key hermeneutical principle in the thesis. It is one of the aims of the thesis to give voice to women, especially marginalized women. The attempt to centralise the experience of the Maskopas and the Somelele group does this while allowing other voices such as St Margaret's Anglican Church and men from the Green Tea group to enter the dialogue. Each of these groups of the storytellers depicted in Figure 4.1 is now described in rich detail. The purpose of these detailed descriptions is to assist other researchers in the process of transferring the results emerging from this study to other contexts.

4.3.1   THE MASKOPAS SUPPORT GROUP FROM ORANGE FARM

Orange Farm was the main research site selected for the study. The people living there are generally unemployed, they lack financial empowerment and experience unsafe living conditions because of the high levels of crime and the lack of an effective police response in the area. The choice of Orange Farm fits in with the aim of standing in solidarity with marginalized people, fulfilling the key hermeneutical principle of expressing a preferential option for the oppressed. The Maskopas is a support group for HIV positive women who live in Orange Farm. They chose their name after the shack[16] of one of their members was burnt down. After the event each of the groups of people who lived around her contributed the necessary steel sheeting to rebuild her house, which is now a mix-match of different materials. The word Maskopas, a *tsotsi*[17] word describing a group of people in a community coming together for a common purpose, thus depicts the intention of the Maskopas support group. The group meets on a weekly basis for mutual support and encouragement, spiritual growth, story sharing and to work together on community projects. The Maskopas survive disease in various forms: stigma because of their HIV/AIDS status, class distinction, poverty, racism and sexism. The goals of the group are to develop the courage for full disclosure of their HIV status, to disclose to others in the group their status and to support each other in living positively with HIV. They are affiliated to different churches and the members of the group represent a diversity of denominations and language groupings.

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[16] A shack is an informally structured house with made of scraps of steel and other debris.
[17] The word *tsotsi* means gangster.

L[18] is the recognised leader and spokesperson of the group. My observation is that the other members of the group draw a lot of strength from L who plays a mentoring role for the group. She has an entrepreneurial spirit, heads an Early Childhood development program, and has started her own organisation that cares for orphans in the area. She is well known and loved by the other inhabitants of Orange Farm.[19]

The dynamics of the Maskopas group

The dynamics of the group are broadly described with reference to tribal or language affiliation, employment status, educational levels, religious affiliation and family situation. The Maskopas are from Zulu, Sotho, Xhosa, Tshwane and Tshangaan backgrounds. They are all unemployed while three receive a small amount of remuneration for volunteer work including peer counselling, Early Childhood Development and hospice work. One member supports herself by selling chickens and runs a shebeen[20]. Education levels range from three to 11 years of schooling while one member is a trained counsellor. With respect to religious affiliations, one is Anglican, one Methodist, one is a member of the Apostolic Faith Mission, one attends the Assemblies of God, three belong to a Zionist Church while one is a member of a Pentecostal Church. One group member had no religious affiliation yet still believes in God. With respect to family support structures, only two had male partners living with them while two are divorced and one member's husband passed away due to AIDS. Two members lived with their mothers and siblings while one still lived with her mother and father even though she had a child of her own. Only one member did not have children of her own. The other members had between one and seven children each.

The women in the Maskopas group are shaped in part by the environment in which they live. Some of the descriptions of the group are because of the dynamics of the Orange Farm situation. The purpose of the next section is to introduce the reader to some of these factors.

The Orange Farm Context

The selected site for the study was mainly Orange Farm, a poor settlement situated about 60 km outside Johannesburg close to Sebokeng, which is its main service provider. Most people access Orange Farm via the Golden Highway, which connects the south of Johannesburg with the central business district, or via the N1, which is the national road towards Bloemfontein. The Orange Farm community is in all likelihood one of the most densely populated informal settlements in the country with about 350 000 people living there, mostly in shacks (Thomas Thale 2002:1). The shacks are not as rundown as in other

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[18] Codes are used in the place of names to protect the identity of the participants. A full explanation of the privacy agreement is offered later.
[19] One example of this is that when I first visited her in her home, her directions to find her house included stopping and asking any passerby to point me in the direction of her home!
[20] A *shebeen* is an illegal "bar" that sells alcohol from a home.

informal settlements and the inhabitants generally enjoy access to electricity, water, municipal services and fair-sized yards. However, in parts of Orange Farm a single tap is shared between several homes, many of which do not have access to electricity either. All the women in the Maskopas have electricity in the homes and a tap on the property, even if it is not in the house. Many of the homes in Orange Farm do not have indoor sanitation and use the long-drop system, which is located outside the house in the yard. The informal settlement has many gravel roads, which are full of potholes and difficult to drive on and few arterial roads are tarred (Thomas Thale 2002:1). The mobility of people is hampered as many of the taxi drivers, who serve as the main source of transport, refuse to take their vehicles down the roads because of the bad driving conditions. Therefore, the residents are forced to walk long distances. The community is close-knit as shown by the fact that even though the majority have no income to buy food, the residents generally always have something to eat because the community members share maize meal and other groceries with those who do not have any.

How did the Orange Farm community start? Early inhabitants were relocated to Orange Farm from Wielers Farm by the Transvaal Administration, which had bought the land to develop it into a township (Thomas Thale 2002:1). The settlement then attracted people from Soweto, Meyerton, Evaton and even the Free State. Many of these arrivals were farm workers who had been made redundant. Most of the people in Orange Farm are unskilled or semi-skilled and uneducated. Hence, they do not have the necessary abilities to offer service to the formal sector and often remain unemployed and become trapped in an ever-descending spiral of poverty.

The worldview of the residents of Orange Farm can be described as pre-modern because their consciousness has not been shaped by modern technology. They live rural lives on the periphery of the city and do not have access to technological advances such as computers and Internet communication, although several own cell phones. They are subsequently often excluded from the global village. As their worldview is largely divorced from postmodern influences, they do not necessarily read reality through the paradigm of science and technology (Richard Rohr 2001:6) and the belief in God is a predominant characteristic of their everyday living. This is in contrast to the more affluent parts of South Africa where the wide variety of entertainment available on Sundays and the exhaustion of people from working during the week have had a negative influence on Church attendance.

Entry into the field

I was introduced to the gatekeeper in 2002. A gatekeeper may be defined as the person with whom the researcher has contact and who eases her transition into the research group and

context. I met the gatekeeper at a Permaculture[21] workshop in which we both participated. At that stage I was employed as a youth pastor at the Bedfordview Methodist Church. Largely because of the influence of Wesleyan spirituality I was convinced that the leadership that I offered young people had to incorporate solidarity with the poor. I arranged for them to meet the Maskopas in Orange Farm to listen to their stories. This experience offered the Maskopas an opportunity to disclose their HIV status, which is one of their aims as a group. It also offered the young people an opportunity to allow their lives to be influenced and changed by the Maskopas. My friendship with the Maskopas was one of the fruits of this visit. Soon afterwards I began to meet regularly with the group, seeing myself as an ordinary participant. Part of what we did together was to build Permaculture gardens for the members of the group. The long-term relationship was helpful in terms of the principle of prolonged engagement. I now facilitate the meetings of this support group and use the resources at my disposal to assist them in meeting their goals. My experience of being in relationship with the group has been a means of grace for me, a spiritual discipline through which I have been changed. I have found that what I have been taught by Wesleyan spirituality is true: solidarity with the poor and oppressed is life changing. The experience of standing in solidarity with the poor as part of my personal spiritual growth was also a way to link the being and doing aspects of spirituality so well taught by the tradition of liberation theology. Thus, my experience of friendship with the Maskopas allowed me to practice the "see, judge and act" process of theology that is articulated by liberation theologians.

My relationship with the Maskopas fulfilled the desire that I had to write research from the perspective of being taught by those who live life on the margins of society. One of the limitations of this approach is that the "sample" is narrow, especially considering that the Maskopas group only has ten members and not all ten people attend every session. In order to broaden the research I had to find a group that had similar dynamics to the Maskopas. That community was the Somelele group from Bekkersdal.

4.3.2   THE SOMELELE GROUP FROM BEKKERSDAL

The Somelele group meet in a community centre in Bekkersdal. One activity of the group besides mutual support and encouragement is skills development. The name of the group, Somelele, is a Xhosa word meaning, "we are strong." Their meetings are based at the Zamani project facility. Zamani is a Xhosa word meaning "to try". A trainer who teaches the Somelele group sewing and other crafts, translated for the group during the group discussions and interviews. The description of the dynamics of the group suggest that they are similar in profile to the Maskopas.

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[21] Permaculture is a method of sustainable food gardening.

The dynamics of the group

The dynamics of the group is summarized according to their language grouping, employment, family structures, educational levels and religious understanding. The group is predominantly Xhosa and Zulu with one Sotho member and one Tswana. Four members of the group work as volunteers for either peer education projects or home-based care work. The remainder of the group is unemployed. One member lives alone, one lives with her sister and two members live with their husbands while the rest live with their children. One member has three of her own children and two that she has adopted. The rest have either one or two children. The educational qualifications were quite good, many had either ten or eleven years of instruction while one was computer literate and the lowest level was seven years of education. Religious affiliations included one Catholic, one Methodist, several Zionists, two Pentecostals and one Reformed.

The Bekkersdal context

Bekkersdal is located near Westonaria and is about 50 km south of Johannesburg. Bekkersdal is a black community that lives in shacks and small brick homes. The mines and the businesses that support the mines are the majority employers (Interview with the Rev. Anne Poulton, 14 November 2005). The large amount of unemployment is due to so many of the mines closing down. The closure of mines has had a ripple effect and many lives are affected by the loss of employment. The Methodist minister that I interviewed to obtain an understanding of the Bekkersdal context described it as a cesspool of racism, especially anti-white sentiment (Interview with the Rev. Anne Poulton 14 November 2005). This may be a reaction to the staunch Afrikaans racism from the town dwellers in nearby Westonaria. The government has launched an RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme) housing project, which builds homes for people in Simunye, a suburb that is included in the Westonaria municipality. People nevertheless retain ownership of their shacks and appear to drift between their shacks in Bekkersdal and their homes in Simunye.

Leratong is the nearest provincial hospital and Antiretroviral agents (ARV's[22]) are freely available from the hospital. Dieticians, social workers, counsellors, pharmacists and doctors counsel patients who receive ARV's. Some community members complain that as black people they receive negative treatment at the hospital, even though the nursing and auxiliary staff are also black (Interview with the Rev. Anne Poulton 14 November 2005).

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[22] While the ARV's are accessible *de jure,* the *de facto* situation is that the financial requirements for the several taxis that a person has to catch to get to hospital as well as the ill treatment that they receive from the staff, make people in the Bekkersdal township reluctant to put themselves through the trauma of the process. The result is that people in Bekkersdal die from AIDS whereas treatment is available. Another issue that prevents people from obtaining treatment is stigma. Stigma is deadly because it means that an HIV sufferer will not seek the treatment that he or she needs.

Entry into the field

I gained access to the group through a colleague, the Rev Anne Poulton who was the Methodist minister in Westonaria. She put me in contact with Anne Marie Botes who facilities the Somelele group. She discussed the proposed research with the group who agreed that I could interview them. I met with the group in their own context and their trainer translated where necessary. This is indicated in the transcription with the abbreviation (tr). The purpose of meeting with the group in their own setting was an attempt to understand their interpretation of their experiences and to enter into their world (Van Manen 1990:69). The stories that were told by the Somelele group suggested similar themes to the Maskopas group. The data showed that the two groups were often concerned about similar issues. Differences between the two groups were mostly due to the different contexts. For example, the Bekkersdal community felt that the hospitals in their area were part of the experience of stigma in ways that were more pronounced than in the Orange Farm context. To satisfy my curiosity as to whether or not similar themes would emerge from a third group and to create a larger sample, I engaged with the Green Tea group

4.3.3   THE GREEN TEA GROUP FROM MARTINDALE

The founder of the Maskopas group also started the Green Tea group. Their meetings follow a similar pattern and they have similar goals in terms of support of each other. They meet at a Catholic Church in Martindale, which is in close proximity to Sophiatown. As their context is different to that of the other groups involved in this research study, their dynamics are necessarily different too.

The dynamics of the group

One of the differences between the Green Tea group and the other groups is that they are predominantly coloured and speak Afrikaans. Only one member was black and Zulu. The other difference was that there were three males in the group while the other two groups consisted of female participants. Two of the members live alone while one lives with his sister. The last member lives with her thirteen-year-old daughter and with her aunt's family that includes her aunt's six children and her three grandchildren.

The Martindale context

Martindale is located near the city centre close to Sophiatown. In the 1900's, Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare were declared freehold townships, which meant that black African people were allowed to own the land and they were not subject to the controls of the Johannesburg municipality (www.sahistory.org.za 2005:2). Martindale and Sophiatown were unique in that they did not develop along strict segregationist lines as the rest of South Africa did (www.sahistory.org.za 2005:2). Johannesburg expanded after the First World War when a number of factories started. Black Africans moved into the freehold townships of

Martindale, Sophiatown and Newclare. The black African working class grew to such an extent that Martindale and other areas became overcrowded (www.sahistory.org.za 2005:3). My own experience of Martindale in driving through the area was that there seemed to be a mix of people living there, including coloured, black, Indian and white. This is also reflected in the membership of the Green Tea group. The area seems very impoverished with large hostels and blocks of flats.

Entry into the field

St Columbus Presbyterian Church in South Africa manages the funding provided by an American Church to finance the support group meetings of the Maskopas and the Green Tea group. The person accountable for that money put me in contact with the Green Tea group where I was able to negotiate their willing participation in the research. The entry into the field in this case included male participants. This may seem unusual in feminist paradigm that seeks the interpreted experiences of women but the use of the male narrative is now defended[23].

The use of male narrative in a feminist study

The dynamics of the Green Tea group are such that some members are male. What reasons are there to include male voices in feminist spirituality? In the first place, the new research in feminist theory shows that if feminists are going to interpret women's lives they need to understand men's lives as well (Gayle Letherby 2003:137). Taking gender seriously means bringing the experience of men into the debate (Gayle Letherby 2003:137).

In the second place, chapter one of the thesis showed how AIDS is perceived as a women's disease. To a certain degree this is a correct assumption. Statistically, women, especially younger women, are bearing the brunt of the disease (see section 1.2.4 and figure 1.4). Some of the stigma that women experience in relation to being HIV positive is that men deny their involvement in it. Chapter one also showed how researchers are unwittingly partly responsible for perpetuating this impression. This is because statistics are drawn from pregnant women in antenatal clinics. While this happens for practical reasons, the picture drawn from this statistical data is, nevertheless, that HIV affects women in ways that men are not. This is further accentuated by terminology such as mother-to-child transmission, which implies that the mother infects the children whereas it is parents, males and females, who pass on the disease. The preferred term is therefore parent-to-child transmission. The inclusion of male voices is an attempt to incarnate the understanding that all people are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Research should not perpetuate the myth that AIDS is a women's disease by focussing exclusively on women. Men also need to acknowledge their culpability and vulnerability and respond morally and spiritually to HIV/AIDS.

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[23] In section 2.7.1 I suggest that the use of male perspectives is defensible and desirable in feminist research. In section 4.9.1, I reflect further on the use of the male narrative.

4.3.4 ST MARGARET'S PARISH IN BEDFORDVIEW

The storytellers from Orange Farm, Bekkersdal and Martindale have been introduced. The stories that are told by these people need to be heard in other communities of faith (Denise Ackermann 2001:19). These narratives can break the silence, stigma and loneliness of those suffering from an AIDS infection as the stories offer a human face to the statistics (Denise Ackermann 2001:20). This research attempted to do so by connecting the Maskopas with a suburban Church, St Margaret of Scotland Anglican Church in Bedfordview. The inclusion of St Margaret's is a deliberate incarnation of the epistemological assumption of the transformational potential of the principle of standing in solidarity with the poor: The preferential option for the poor provides an integral process of liberation where rich and poor are changed. The poor are liberated from their invisibility, which is partly because of their marginalisation and the rich are liberated from their comfort zones where little spiritual growth is possible. The inclusion of the St Margaret's group offers an example of the transformational potential of the hermeneutic of solidarity with the poor for wealthy people. While the dynamics of the St Margaret's parish group and their context are described in this chapter, their data is summarised in chapter six.

Dynamics of the group

The participants from the St Margaret's parish were elderly English speaking women. Two were retired and the third worked for a non-governmental organisation. They had all completed their Matriculation and had tertiary qualifications in the form of diplomas while one had degrees and qualifications in nursing. These women are all long-standing members of the Anglican Church and are closely involved in activities of the parish.

The Bedfordview context

Bedfordview is situated between Germiston and Johannesburg. Before the turn of the century the area was farm land which was granted to the Van der Linden family in 1867 (B-local 2001/2002 Directory:10). Until 1952, Bedfordview consisted mainly of agricultural smallholdings and when stricter legislation was introduced many farms were sold. New dwellings were bought and shops erected. Today, more than thirty years after 1952, the wealthy area of Bedfordview boasts one of the largest shopping complexes in the southern hemisphere. There are many restaurants, sporting clubs and office parks. Until recently Bedfordview maintained a rural atmosphere while nestled between two large cities (B-Local Directory 2001/2:10). That dynamic is changing and due to cluster homes being erected on large estates, the population in the town is increasing dramatically and municipal services such as electricity, water and sewerage are strained with the accelerated development.

Entry into the field

The involvement of the group from St Margaret's is 'a situation at hand' suggested by Judith Cook & Mary Fonow (1990) and Gayle Letherby (2003). The St Margaret's group became involved in the research through my connection with them as their parish priest. In order to increase sensitivity to the HIV/AIDS pandemic for the parishioners of St Margaret's Anglican Church, an HIV/AIDS service was held which I was asked to design. The worshippers were invited to respond in some way to the material that was presented to them. One of the responses was to participate in a *Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope to Orange Farm* and to dialogue with some of the members of the community. The women who accepted this invitation agreed to participate in the research.

In sum: the storytellers have been introduced and their context has been described. They are in conversation with one another through the research writer. The word "conversation" is transliterated as "turn together to speak" from the Latin "con" meaning together and "verso" to speak. How the storytellers turn together in conversation with one another has been described as mapped in Figure 4.1. In the process of gathering stories ethical decisions guide the research process. These ethics develop out of a concern for the full humanity and dignity of the participants. One of the assumptions of the feminist methodology is that is seeks the empowerment of the participants involved. The requirements of this assumption are that the research cannot be conducted in a way that dehumanises the participants. The ethical values guiding the research are now explained.

4.4   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Different ethical considerations come into play at different stages in the research journey. There are ethical practices involved in the data collection phases, in the data analysis and interpretation phase and finally in the writing process. These ethical considerations emerge from some of the epistemological assumptions described in the first part of the third chapter.

In the **data collection phases**, the ethical concerns included not putting the participants at risk (John Creswell 2003:64) be it legal, personal, social, economic or physical. In addition, the participants give their informed and voluntary consent to participate in the research and maintain the right to withdraw from the study at anytime during the research process (John Creswell 2003:64).

Power plays an important ethical concern in the data collection process for feminists. Ken Wilber (1987:237-264) provides a helpful framework in which to understand salugenic and pathogenic power. The word salugenic describes power that nurtures people's growth while pathogenic describes unhealthy power. Power and authority are good and necessary when

functional. For example, a plumber or a doctor has power and authority to provide a particular service. Power is salugenic when it is benign, as with a teacher who aims at the development of people. Power and authority are salugenic when it is phase specific. A trainer might have authority over her learners but once the learner has gained the necessary skills the authority evaporates and the two are then equals (Ken Wilber 1987:246). In applying the points that Wilber makes to the present study I acknowledge my power and authority. My power and authority is time specific to the research project and when the project is finished my authority and power in the group will diminish. It is also benign in that it seeks the transformation and liberation of the participants because of the emancipatory model it embodies. Feminist methodology is concerned that researchers work collaboratively with participants, implying that power is shared. In this study the data and the results were taken back to the groups for discussion as a measure to ensure trustworthiness (John Creswell 2003:65), thus power was a shared phenomenon in the research process. An image to illustrate the dynamics of power in a group environment is a tennis ball that is passed back and forth in a tennis match. On the one hand I have power in that I ask the questions and guide the interview. The groups participating in the research also have power in what they choose to reveal and not to reveal.

Defensible ethical decisions in the analysis and interpretation phase include the need to protect the anonymity of the individuals who have requested this, as discussed below (John Creswell 2003:66). Data is kept for a reasonable time, approximately 5–10 years after which it is to be discarded in case it falls in to the hands of those who would use it for inappropriate purposes (John Creswell 2003:66). Having community feedback forums (see section 3.3.10) is an important aspect of the research as a way to recycle interpretations and to check the accuracy of the data with the participants (John Creswell 2003:66).

Ethical decisions in the writing process require attention to language so that it does not bias people. For example, the participants are referred to as participants and not subjects as a way to acknowledge their humanity (John Creswell 2003:67). Ethical writing suggests that it is important to release details of the research with the study design so readers can determine for themselves the credibility of the interpretations (John Creswell 2003:67). A central component of the participatory paradigm is that the researcher does not further marginalize or disempower the study participants by the way she depicts them in her research report (John Creswell 2003:63).

Three ethical issues were pertinent during the process of collecting and analysing stories and are discussed further below. Firstly, I had to negotiate a privacy agreement, which included whether or not the research participants names may be mentioned in the research. Secondly, the feminist paradigm demanded that I put into practice the ethic of emancipation

and transformation. Thirdly, democratic participation in the research process had to be encouraged. These three issues are now discussed.

4.4.1   DISCLOSURE OF NAMES AND PRIVACY AGREEMENT

There were different approaches to the disclosure of names in the research. Some of the participants did not want their names disclosed while others did. The use of participants' names in the research was negotiated at the beginning of the research. A covenant was signed which protected the rights of the research participants' decisions. The different sentiments regarding the disclosure of names are discussed with reference to examples from two of the groups involved in the research.

One of the aims of the Maskopas, for example, is that membership in the group is to encourage disclosure to family and friends. For example they all clapped when one member of the group, who had been experiencing depression for nearly a year because she had found it difficult to disclose her status to her family, reported that she had told her children and they had accepted her HIV-positive status. For many of the women in the support group, intimate and extended communities of support are still unaware of their status. They have their reasons for non-disclosure. For example, one research participant from the Maskopas worries about rejection:

> J: And then how I am going to tell my partner my status. Because sometimes I try to talk to him: "but maybe sometimes we are positive."
> P: "No J, to be positive doesn't mean you are already dead. We'll try some other ways to live."
> J: But I am not so strong to tell him. Until so L said no, eh, we make a plan to tell him. So that, because it's not nice because sometime, eh, it seems as if I'm not fair, because I know my status and it doesn't mean anything. So to me it's hard, it seems as if, eh, I'm not good enough to him. So that is why I am struggling.[24]

Excerpt from an interview with J from the Maskopas group

The above quotation suggests that the people closest to the research participant are unaware of her HIV-positive status. The main reason for not wanting to disclose her status is a fear of rejection, even though her partner's response to her "testing the waters" seemed to suggest that he would support her: "No J, to be positive doesn't mean you are already dead. We'll find some other ways to live". The comment may reflect a certain degree of readiness to work through the crisis of being HIV-positive. Support structures other than people with

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[24] In section 4.6, page 159, I explain that the *Comic Sans* font indicates the narration of the research participants while the Arial font shows my interpretation.

whom she is intimate are also unaware of her status. She explains why she is not prepared to disclose her HIV status to her faith community:

> So now, they don't know my status, at the Church, because most of the time, when they talk about people who are HIV, they don't accept them. So, eh, I still get that worry, if I tell these people about my status, they are not going to accept me. They just going to say that, that maybe I'm a sinner and, a what and a what, that is why I'm HIV-positive.

Excerpt from an interview with J from the Maskopas group

Her comment reflects that in some cases churches are responsible for perpetuating the stigma of being HIV-positive. Churches often suggest a strong link between being HIV-positive and a promiscuous lifestyle. This often adds to the burden of oppression experienced by women who are HIV-positive, especially in the light of statistics that illustrate that many women have had only one partner when diagnosed positive for HIV. To respect the fact that some of the participants were struggling with the disclosure of their status, the names of the women participants from the Maskopas and Somelele groups are not revealed. As negotiated with these participants, codes are used to replace their names to protect their identity. Another issue that is related to the privacy agreement is my contact with the group in Orange Farm. The other members of the Orange Farm community are curious at the unusual sight of a young white woman frequenting the homes of this women's group. How is this explained? The Maskopas are considered a women's group and my meetings with them are explained on this basis. Moreover, as I often wear a clerical collar on my visits to Orange Farm the community assumes that my presence there is for ministry and pastoral purposes.

On the other hand the Green Tea group which has male participants were excited about the opportunity to participate in the research as it gave them another chance to disclose their status, which they felt was important for the their health, wholeness and full humanity. For example Jerome says that

> What I would like you to know is that this here what you are doing for us, for the group, you are busy writing a book, and you expect us to help you, and we are willing to help you with your book. And we are very pleased with that. And actually we are very pleased that you called Thelma and said you want to, you want the Green Tea group. This, there are very few people like you that think about us, that heard about us, and they don't come in speak to us and do something. This is important. I'm taking it as a project, helping you; you see, um, and helping ourselves as well because you let us experience something here really. With my name in a book I can think about I can say oh there's my name, I am also featuring in a book and everything. You see it's like, um, something you also keep and you don't throw us away.

Excerpt from an interview with Jerome from the Green Tea group

The quote suggests that for the participant, disclosing his story in the research process is affirming; the privacy agreement would therefore not serve his best interests. There is a suggestion in the quote that he sees disclosing his story as part of his agency as a person. The agency of the participants is one of the agendas of a feminist epistemology. Jerome regards the research data collection process as a project that not only helps me but also himself: "I'm taking it as a project helping you, you see, and helping ourselves as well, because you let us experience something here really."

The next quote also highlights how sharing stories and disclosing one's name during the data collection process is therapeutic:

> You see, um, what I need really, listen to me when I talk and that makes me feel very good. Really. It builds me up and makes me self-confident. Talk to people who listen to me and not feel *skaam*, feel ashamed about me but be as I can be. I am a person that don't want to be pitied. Because **I can stand on my own two feet,** I can help myself day to day, I can see to myself and everything, so I don't want to be pitied.

Excerpt from an interview with Jerome from the Green tea Group (emphasis is mine)

The highlighted text shows that Jerome feels that the opportunity to disclose his status and name is therapeutic and affirming. For some of the participants, the opportunity to talk is liberating. The quote may also suggest the emancipating aspect of the research process. The one aspect of this liberating dimension is the freedom experienced in sharing a story: "It's really a big burden off my soul just to talk about it." The other aspect of this liberating dimension is expressed in his agency as a person who is independent and "can stand on his own two feet". The disclosure of story, identity, and the therapeutic products of this process, may suggest links with the paradigm of Christian spirituality where biography and spirituality are deeply intertwined. Often, spirituality is biography and biography is spirituality. Philip Sheldrake (1995:41) is one scholar who has highlighted that patterns of spirituality, besides being embedded in the context from which they emerge, are also midwived through people rather than from abstract philosophies or doctrine. With reference to the participant's quotation, the articulation of his biography is the process of his growth. Through being listened to, Jerome touches on aspects of being fully human in that it builds his self-esteem: "You see, um, what I need really, listen to me when I talk and that makes me feel very good. Really. It builds me up and makes me self-confident." The therapy and transformation are by-products of the research process in a feminist paradigm. The ethic of emancipation and transformation in feminist Christian spirituality research is discussed below.

4.4.2   THE ETHIC OF EMANCIPATION AND TRANSFORMATION

Another ethical concern for a qualitative feminist researcher is that it is unclear what the participants receive from the research process. For feminists, research is orientated towards transformation and emancipation. Christian spirituality also rests on the idea of integral and holistic transformation through the work of grace, where a person is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Feminist spirituality research views the research process in reciprocal terms. In achieving the goal of reciprocity, the research participants speak back and provide their own interpretation of what their lives are like (Robert Bogdan and Sari Knopp 2003:47). This happened in the focussed group discussion where the participants themselves offered an interpretation of how they understood the struggles and the needs of the people represented in the self-portrait pictures that they drew. The research participants were also given opportunity to provide their own interpretation of their lives in the written exercises so that they themselves were seen as a knowledge-resource for empowerment and transformation processes. Finally, during the community feedback forums, the research participants were able to offer feedback on the research.

The ethic of emancipation and transformation is understood in broad terms. Emancipation and transformation is certainly a desire for the Maskopas, the Somelele and the Green Tea groups as it is mine in the research process. The key hermeneutical principle in the research is that a preferential option for the poor is the doorway for integral and holistic transformation for rich and poor. This suggests that the brief experiences of "friendship" with the poor, through the process of data collection or story gathering, is part of my journey of change that has both inward and outward consequences. Inwardly, one encounters the presence of Christ among the poor. Solidarity with the poor can lead to positive action emerging from that experience of solidarity. Bearing in mind that those who make the commitment to the poor do not usually share in the world of economic poverty, the visit to Orange Farm by the parishioners of St Margaret's Church can be seen an example of the liberation ethic of transformation through solidarity with the poor (Gustavo Gutierrez 2001:17).

In summary, liberation is a comprehensive process, one that refers to everyone: the Maskopas, Somelele and Green Tea groups as the poor with whom Christians can stand in solidarity, the St Margaret's group who visited Orange Farm, and myself as the researcher (Gustavo Gutierrez 2001:23). The ethic and praxis of feminist theology and Christian spirituality is the praxis of solidarity in the interests of liberation and transformation inspired by the Gospel (Gustavo Gutierrez 2001:22). Liberation praxis aims to transform society according to the reign of God. It is the activity of peacemakers who are forging a *shalom* society (Gustavo Gutierrez 2001:22). The ethic of transformation and emancipation also means that data has to be collected based on democratic participation.

4.4.3 THE ETHIC OF DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

The word "democratic" implies that the people together share the power. The nature of relationships in democratic research is that they are ideally personal and co-operative. The democratic participation ethic aims for the processes to be non-competitive and non-exploitive (Ernst Stringer 1996:19). The research happens in a democratic community and is linked to the lives of people (Ernst Stringer 1996:xv). The ethic of democratic participation implies that the participants offer their consent to be involved. This is based on a "contract" where the expectations of the research participants and research writers are clarified. Since the research occurs within the paradigm of Christian spirituality, the ethical expectations of each party take the form of a covenant.

The use of power is an essential issue in feminist research, which aims to cultivate an environment of shared power and equality. Foucault (in Ernst Stringer 1996:18), for example, points out that the dynamics of power are inherent in the production of knowledge. The conversations and stories that are gathered in the process of data collection occur within an environment where changing power balances and politics influence what is said and how it is said: "Discourse and politics, knowledge and power, are, hence, part of an indissoluble couplet" (Michael Apple 1991:vii). My purpose in establishing a democratic atmosphere is to encourage the environment for agency, liberation and empowerment. While my education allows me to fulfil my role as the research writer, it also means that the intricate power balance between the participants and me is not completely level. My interpretation of their lives is the account that is eventually published, even though I have designed research techniques and procedures that maximise that the participants' perspective is heard.

My power and authority in my relationship with the participants is functional. This suggests that it is only operational within a set period and is used with the purpose of nurturing a democratic environment. Yet, how does this effort contribute to oppression or dominance? (Martin Apple in Patti Lather ix). The question as to how I function and what decisions I make is asked in a context where the power relations are not balanced, so how then can I achieve an environment for liberation? (Michael Apple 1991:1991:ix). Part of the aim for liberation is an effort to take away the barriers that prevent people from speaking for themselves. Other group members can prevent people from speaking for themselves; therefore effective small-group facilitation techniques that draw out reticent members and restrain more extroverted members are required.

Part of the empowering approach to generating knowledge is achieved when participants formulate accounts of their situation themselves (Ernst Stringer 1996:15). The data collection process is designed in such a way that this ethic is maximised. Participants may also be

prevented from speaking for themselves in the data analysis phase. Ethical considerations require that initial interpretations be scrutinised by the participants in the community feedback forum.

Ethical considerations are part of the research journey. At each stage of the process of data collection, data analysis and through the narrative of the research process the researcher develops a self-reflexive praxis of examining ethical issues guided by the epistemological assumptions particular to the fields of feminist theology and Christian spirituality. This self-reflexive praxis is facilitated through the journal and is reflected in each chapter under the heading "Personal reflection on the research journey".

In summary, this section has offered a description of the storytellers - the research participants. It has also discussed the reasons for their inclusion and reflected on the ethical considerations when listening to stories. The question that deserves attention now is: How did I make sense of their stories? I now offer a narrative on the process and techniques of data analysis applied in this research study.

4.5   DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

As discussed in section 3.3.9, Renalta Tesch's (1990) method of data analysis was used to interpret the research data. The purpose of the data analysis is to interpret the raw data of the participants' experiences. Although the themes that emerge from the data are organised by the research writer, knowledge must be gleaned from the material and not imposed onto it. The result of the data analysis in this thesis is the development of a model that could guide the Church in offering a gendered response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The model is discussed further in chapter 5.

An inductive, qualitative research approach was adopted in this research study (John Creswell 2003:132). The following flow diagram summarises the steps followed in the data collection and data analysis process. It shows that the generalised model that emerges from the data and the literature is the ultimate goal of the study.

Researcher gathers information through interviews, focussed group discussions, drawings, written work and observations.

⬇

Researcher asks open-ended questions during interviews and focussed group discussion and records observations in a journal. Written responses in the form of life-stories, and devotions are typed.

⬇

The researcher analyses the data to form themes and categories using Renalta Tesch's (1990) suggested methods of data analysis. In this process, general observations and impressions of the interviews are recorded on the right hand side of the data. These impressions are gathered to form themes and categories.

⬇

The researcher looks for broad patterns from the themes. These are summarised in table form (see section 4.8).

⬇

Themes are then applied to the data in the form of codes. In this process the Somelele and Maskopas groups offer the main coding material. The codes that emerge from their data are applied to other sources such as the Green Tea group, the e-mails and the journal[25].

⬇

The themes and categories are described, further analysed and discussed with reference to literature on the subject. In these descriptions there is a dance between the data and the theory in that both influence the other. In some cases the theory confirms the views of the participants. In other cases the interpreted experiences of the participants influences the theory. The result of this dance between theory and data is a generalised model that builds on the evidence from the data and is influenced by the literature studied. This is the focus for chapter five, which offers a model that could guide the Church in offering a gendered response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Having outlined the process of data analysis the next section describes and discusses the themes that emerged from this process of data analysis.

4.6   DESCRIPTIONS AND INTERPRETATION OF THEMES

The purpose of this section is to offer a description of the themes that emerged from the data collection process. The themes are summarised in table form and then discussed under the categories that link the thematic material.

Table 4.1   THEMES EMERGING FROM THE DATA ANALYSIS

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[25] The reason for this choice is two-fold. The first reason is that it is among the Maskopas the principle of standing in solidarity with the poor was embodied. The second is that these two groups fulfil the sampling requirements of being black women, having little or no employment and education, and living on the margins of society. The inclusion of the other sources such as the Green Tea Group, St Margaret's Parish, my journal and e-mail correspondence was to broaden the research experience and explore recurring themes.

Category	Theme	Sub-theme
Ego experience	**negative ego experiences**	suicide
		loneliness
		denial
		regret of risk behaviour
		stress
		fear of dying
		fear of rejection
		why me?
		no hope
		anger
		guilt
	positive ego experience	"we are like other people"
		the need for training
		acceptance of HIV status
Embodiment	**negative experiences of the body**	physical effects of HIV
		stigma of being HIV-positive
		dehumanising medical care
		risk behaviour
		opportunistic infections
	positive experiences of the body	increased spirituality
		positive healthy living
		HIV testing
Financial empowerment	**lack of financial stability**	need for food security
		need for accommodation
		providing for family
	fight against poverty	employment
		skills training
		social grant
Injustice and vulnerability	**stigma**	AIDS is a woman's disease
		rejection
		men in denial
		non-disclosure
	patriarchal injustice	men taking advantage
		abuse
	sexual violence	rape of a child
		rape
	orphans due to AIDS	

Women as agents of social transformation	serving others	community work
		serving others through education
		serving others through care
		serving orphans
	development of moral agency	women as mentors and support
		positive effects of HIV status
		care of caregivers
Community support	family community	acceptance by family
	unity with community	support group
		solidarity
		talking
		visits from churches
		lack of support
	concern for AIDS orphans	
Awareness of God	heightened God consciousness	hope
		spiritual practices
		gratitude
		punishment
		God's anger
		darkness
	renewed spirituality	AIDS brings me closer to God
		dreams
		new life
		planning for the future
		spirituality as a source of empowerment
		spirituality as a source of therapy

The themes will now be discussed under the category headings suggested. The category system structuring the thematic material that emerged from the data collection and data analysis process serves a practical function in organising the material for the purposes of interpretation and discussion. In the discussion, the following format is followed: The category heading that emerged in the research is briefly defined. Second, the emerging view of reality linked to this category as expressed by the participants is presented. Third, the data is interpreted and considered in relation to the relevant academic literature on a similar theme. The **Comic Sans MS** font indicates the interpreted experience that is narrated by the participant herself. The **Arial** font is used to indicate my interpretation, analysis, and

discussion. This editing technique will assist the reader in understanding who contributes what to the conversation.

The categories that organise the themes emerging from the data are merely a tool to aid discussion. The themes grow out of the material offered by the participants and the category structure is interpretive in that I shape and structure it. The categories have fluid boundaries. A theme that finds its home in one category could easily find its home in another. The themes are now discussed under the headings suggested by the categories.

4.6.1 EGO EXPERIENCE

The category Ego is inspired by terms used by the psychologists Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung and philosopher Ken Wilber. Scholars use the term ego, derived from the Latin word meaning "I", in diverse ways. In Sigmund Freud's model of personality structure, the ego referred to the aspect of human personality that relates to the world in a realistic manner exercising control over the "Id" which represents biologically-based drives and instincts (David Edwards 1993:575-6). For Carl Jung, the ego is what we identify as being the whole of ourselves (James Arraj 1986:13). In fact, the ego is one aspect of a greater reality consisting of the ego and unconscious (James Arraj 1986:13). The process of transformation to wholeness, which Jung called individuation, involves balancing the ego and unconscious. Carl Jung used the word 'persona' to describe the face or mask that the ego presents to the world, while 'shadow' referred to those aspects that the ego refuses to admit exists within her/his personality (James Arraj 1986:13; David Edwards 1993:586). In other words, the ego consists of the persona, the mask that is presented to the world, *and* the shadow, which is aspects of the ego that are repressed or rejected. Ken Wilber understands ego similarly to Jung as the self-image or self (1993:24; 2000b:182). By ego I mean simply the self or person[26].

The heading Ego refers to the "self that wants to be a self" and incorporates themes in the data collection that describes an inner dialogue occurring in people as they engage with their different emotions, shadows and masks. The word "ego" refers to the self that each individual wants to present to the world *and also* the negative shadow experiences and emotions such as fear and despair. Themes included under the category ego include **shadow experiences** such as suicidal thoughts, loneliness and denial**. Positive aspects of the ego experience** include the perception that "we are like other people" and an acceptance of the HIV-positive status. Each of the categories and sub-categories are now

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[26] Later I will differentiate between the false self, which represents the ego and the True Self, which is who one is in Christ (Thomas Merton 31). The words ego and false self are synonymous.

discussed in detail with supporting quotations in the words of the participants and support from literature.

> **When she started she heard about being sick and then when she was told, she came back and then she told her younger sister. And then the younger sister encouraged her you must be strong.** And then don't do anything that you'll regret, thinking maybe of eating poison and committing suicide. Because you are not the only one, you've got the children.

Excerpt from a translated interview with SL from the Somelele Group (emphasis is mine)

> So then I just thought that I'm going to die I have no use, what's the use of me being? Why do I have to go look for a job 'cos I'm useless?

Excerpt from an interview with ML from the Maskopas

The above quotes suggest that the shadow experiences of being HIV-positive include **suicide and fear**. The quotations also show how the threat of suicide is intertwined with other emotions such as a sense of worthlessness and hopelessness. Learning to accept these emotions and experiences is a necessary step in the path of transformation to wholeness. The first quote from an interview with a member of the Somelele group shows how the storyteller's close relative appeals to her sense of belonging to others to prevent a potential suicide: "Because you are not the only one, you've got the children." Community support may be a therapy for the shadow experiences of suicide and fear. The second quotation offers an important lesson to the Church. In the process of walking alongside people who are HIV-positive it is important to emphasise that there is a difference between being HIV-positive and having AIDS[27]. With the correct life-style changes and the right attitude, HIV can be managed but AIDS is the final stage of a long process of deteriorating health, caused by HIV. Education regarding the difference between HIV and AIDS may be one therapy to challenge the suicidal tendencies that often accompany being HIV-positive. The threat of suicide as a response to news of an HIV positive result is also communicated through the focussed group discussion as shown in the following picture:

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[27] The background notes on HIV/AIDS in chapter one highlighted the difference between HIV and AIDS: AIDS is the final stage of a long process of deteriorating health, which is caused by HIV (Christian AIDS Bureau 2002: 2.2/2). See section 1.2.1.
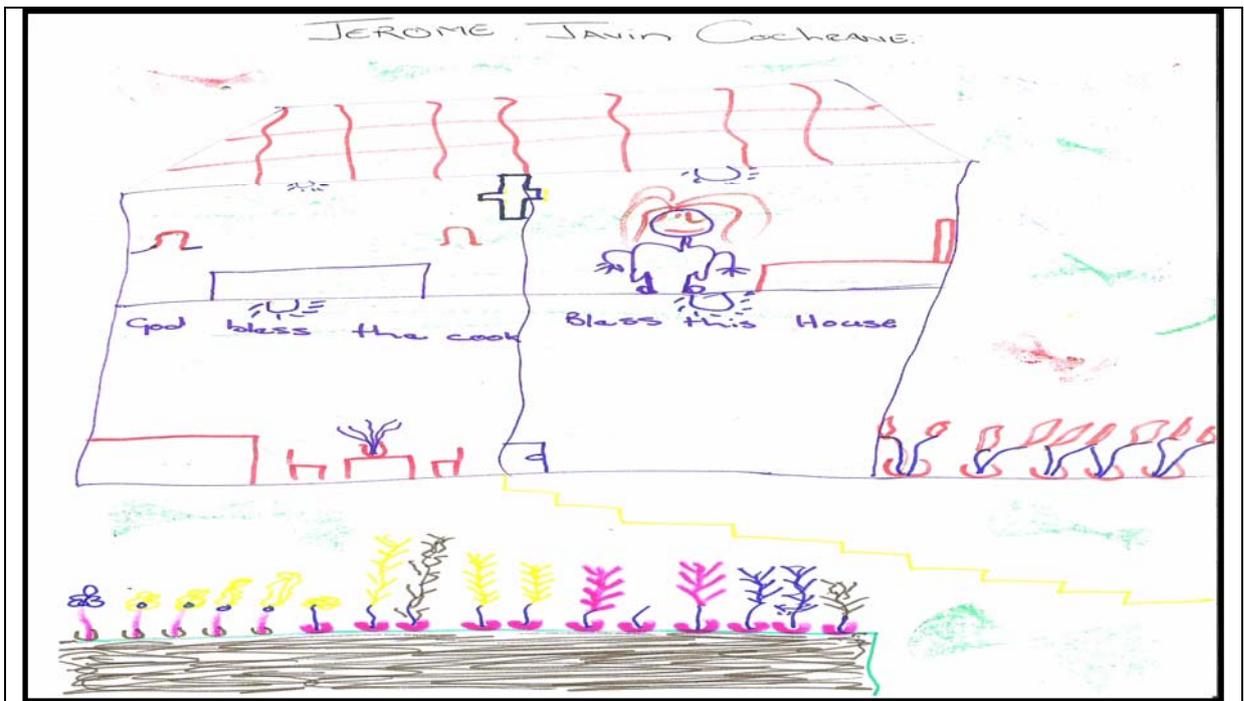
Jerome:	I think the person in that picture is very heartbroken. Because his family was turning their back on him, while he was in um…
Jerome:	A situation that he really needed love and care and his family threw him away and turned their backs on him. And he looks very **suicidal.**
DS:	Why do you say that?
Jerome:	Because when I drew the picture … I thought about … suicide. **Because when you are alone in the room … the first thing that comes to you is … killing yourself.** That is all thanks.

Excerpt from a focus group discussion with the Green Tea group (emphasis is mine)

In the above quotation, the suicidal tendencies are exacerbated by a lack of family support. The focus group reflection on the picture suggests a connection between suicide and loneliness. While the participant Jerome shares that the picture reflects someone who is heartbroken, when viewed through the lenses of growth as suggested by Howard Clinebell (1995:34) there are symbols of hope such as the flowers and the cross representing spirituality.

Another of the shadow experiences of being HIV-positive, besides suicide, is **loneliness.** For example in interviews with members of the Somelele group, they chose to reflect on this picture:

	DS: What do you think is happening in that picture?
	SN: She is alone here. She's got no friends, no boyfriend, no sisters, no anyone. She's got no relatives. She is alone. She needs support when she is being here, she needs support.
	Excerpt from interview with SN from the Somelele group

The participant's reflection on the loneliness of the women and the suggestion that a therapeutic community may help may be reflections of her own experience of the world. The participants also chose this picture:

	DS: Do you want to say something about the picture?
	SF: (Silence). This lady is feeling alone. She's alone. You can see. (Silence). She's even crying, but there is no one who can talk to her. Sitting alone. Everyone is discussing with others, but not her. Even the child is not looking at her. Maybe the child is, she can experience that this lady has something but they don't have it.
	She's all alone. I think she needs someone to talk, but everyone is looking there. There's no one who can look at her and share something with her.
	Excerpt from interview with SF from the Somelele Group

The reflection on the picture again highlights the value of a therapeutic community in responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The experiences of loneliness suggested by the participants may also support the principle of standing in solidarity with the poor as this friendship means that their lives are not invisible and they are not alone in their experiences.

The above quotes from the different participants highlight the theme of loneliness. The experience of being alone leads to the hunger for communion (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:132). This experience reflects the human need for belonging and community. The insights of the storytellers show that one can experience loneliness even in a group environment. For example, the participant from the Somelele group suggests the experience of loneliness of

the woman in the picture despite the fact that people surround her. Philip interprets the experience of loneliness as a result of being abandoned by his family. This is an important part of the reflection on how one should respond to loneliness. Perhaps the wisdom required on the part of the Church as it seeks to be a spiritual sojourner with people living in an HIV world is not to bypass the feeling of loneliness, but to allow loneliness to lead to solitude.

Henri Nouwen (1975:27) believes that one of the inner journeys in the landscape of spiritual growth is the journey from loneliness to solitude. He argues that this movement is not to withdraw from the justice issues facing individuals and communities but is a deep engagement in these issues. The movement from loneliness to solitude converts fearful shadow reactions to a loving response. It is in solitude that the experiences of people living in a HIV world are not just a "random collection of incidents" but a call for change of heart and mind (Henri Nouwen 1975:29).

We have seen that loneliness and the threat of suicide emerge as shadow aspects in the experience of being HIV-positive. Denial is also often a response to learning of a positive HIV result:

So I go and test in 2003. **But I was in denial, I didn't accept it**. I kept it. I kept it. Until I, I didn't talk to anybody. Then in 1999, I got my third child. And then by that time, that thing came back that I was tested HIV-positive. And there is this thing of PCT, mother-to-child transmission. So I talked to myself, I said yes, because I've got that, I was in denial. Let me do it again. If then so let me test this child. Then I went in 2003, no I was pregnant 2004 (it's 2005 now), I went there, I was 7 months pregnant. Then I found that I am HIV-positive.

Excerpt from interview with SF from Somelele group (emphasis is mine)

There is this thing that she should be told that denial is right, but it takes longer. Because if you are in denial you are going to do wrong things, especially taking more time, and that you are wasting it. It is the time whereby you could maybe get help to prevent other things. There are this things of HIV of opportunistic infections, positive living. And you have to practise that. So if you don't know and if you don't let people help you, you are not going to live.

Excerpt from interview with SF from Somelele group

The effect of denial, as suggested by the above quotes, is that it is dangerous for one's health. Dr Andre de la Porte (2001:5) suggests that the emotions of denial, fear, and anxiety even in the form of a threat of suicide often happen when a person is first diagnosed with a HIV-positive status. He (2001:5) advises that the human need for the person is a sense of security with empathy being the focus of counselling techniques. He (2001:5) suggests further that the spiritual focus should emphasise trust in God's compassion. The potential for

the Church and for a pattern of spirituality that is highlighted by these quotes suggests the necessity of the Church to journey alongside people in their grief work so that their potential for a full life may be released.

There are not only shadow experiences of suicide, loneliness and denial that emerge, but also positive ego experiences especially related to how the participants see themselves in relation to others. For example, one participant says that

> I can do everything that a woman can do.
> I can walk, play, work, sing, praise him like everyone. There's no difference between me and other women who does not sick.

Excerpts from Life Stories written by woman from the Somelele support group

The mask that one tries to present to the world is reflected at the ego level of the data analysis in that one of the desires expressed by the participants is to assert that as an HIV-positive person, "we are like other people." The above quote is an example of this. In a face-to-face interview, when asked how she experienced being HIV-positive, one woman from the Somelele group said that:

> What I experience is it doesn't mean it's the end of the world. Doesn't mean I don't have to associate with other people even people who are not infected. I can mix with other people. I can work like anybody else and I can join the groups even the other groups that are not HIV positive. I can join them. I can do anything. Whatever everybody is doing I can do it.

The sentiment that "whatever everybody is doing I can do it" may suggest the need not to feel isolated from the rest of the human family. The journey to wholeness within the category of ego requires a growing acceptance of the HIV status that may start as realising that "we are like other people". Some participants were able to do this, for example:

> So to me HIV is a friend. I'm not scared of it. (Laughter). I'm living just like anyone else.

Excerpt from face to face interview with Philip

This quote from Philip in the Green Tea group offers the goal of wholeness at the level of the ego. The goal of wholeness at this level is learning to integrate the negative, shadow experiences such as suicidal tendencies, loneliness and denial. The quote shows that while he desires to be like everybody else as the women from Somelele group do, there is a certain degree of integration of the positive status into his sense of personhood: He says

that he is "not scared of it". Another example is the reflection that J from the Maskopas group offers:

> And so I collect all those things and then said okay there nothing I could do because, well, nothing will change my status even if I can cry and do what, but nothing will help. I just go home.
>
> So, by HIV positive you must be strong, and, accept yourself. The best way is to accept that you are positive and you are going to live no matter what and then you become strong.
>
> But if you meet with some other people and talk, and firstly you have to, to admit yourself, take yourself the way you are, just belief that you are positive and you are going to live. Then you become strong because if I'm not upset myself nobody will upset myself. So I have to be strong and accept that I am living with HIV and I am positive then I am going to be strong.

Her comments show how she has begun the process of self-acceptance and acceptance of her status as an HIV-positive person which then allows her to integrate negative experiences into her identity. She has facilitated her growth to wholeness through the process of acceptance. The acceptance of the HIV-positive status is not an instant event but a process developing over a long period. The difficulties in learning to accept the status of health are helped by the example of other positive people and the desire "to be like others." The quote below was translated during an interview with a Somelele group member.

> But she said it was difficult for her to accept it, but she had to accept it, because she saw the other people who had the same like her and they're well and they have nothing. And she told herself that: "I'm going to work and I'm going to do as usual as I was doing before."

In sum: The first category of themes in the data analysis is ego, which may be defined as the self that engages with the world and the inner dialogue of the soul. Having described themes such as suicidal tendencies, loneliness and denial, and positive ego experiences such as "we are like other people", the developmental task in the growth to wholeness within this category of themes would suggest a growing acceptance of the self and the HIV-positive status. We now reflect on the next category of themes, which relate to experiences of the body.

4.6.2 EMBODIMENT

The category of embodiment refers to themes that relate to how the participants experience their physical bodies. AIDS is an intensely bodily experience. Denise Ackermann (2001:20) says that "This pandemic is all about bodies". The theme of embodiment recurs throughout the data. Two broad aspects of embodiment are discussed by referring to both negative and positive dimensions of the bodily experience.

Negative experiences of embodiment

Included in the negative experiences of the body are inoffensive physical experiences such as the loss of hair. More serious, negative experiences include the body as the site of stigma and even sexual violence. In sexual violence, bodies are the site of pain and dehumanisation. The quote from a participant in the Maskopas support group is an example of how they experience hair loss because of HIV.

> She's got short hair is means that she is a black woman. (Laughter).
> So maybe the virus has taken her hair. (Laughter).

Excerpt from a focussed group discussion with the Maskopas

The above quotation during a focussed group reflection with the Maskopas shows a humorous approach to dealing with the physical effects of being HIV-positive. The research participants explained that in the later stages of HIV, one does lose one's hair. The next quote from a focussed group discussion with the Somelele group shows a similar theme emerging.

> FG: She lost her hair because of AIDS.
> DS: Does that happen?
> FG: Yes when you are full blown.

Excerpt from a focussed group discussion with the Somelele group

The above discussions were quite fun where the participants laughed because of the lack of hair. However there were some negative feelings relating to how the participants experienced their bodies. Rosetta from the Green Tea group showed some concern about the stigma related to the physical effects of being HIV-positive:

> But I, just, I think it's the full blown people, they got that pimples, stuff like that, it's coming out in their faces. The sores.
> For me it's not that, because like that, every time, every month you must go for your tablets and they take blood they see for your CD4 count. I go by the IC2 clinic, you see some people are heavy, they're whatsaname. Some are small children. The last time I did see a girl that was 15 years old. Stuff like that. But when you come out, come in the

> people look at it. **The people look at your, and the way the things come out on our faces, changing a person's complexion**.

Excerpt from an interview with Rosetta from the Green Tea group

For Rosetta, the experience of being HIV positive opens a negative experience of her body because it is perceived to be the source of her rejection by others. Related to the bodily experience of being HIV-positive is the experience of medical care that is suggested in part by the above quote. The negative attitudes when seeking medical care are part of the negative bodily experiences. These excerpts are from a focussed group discussion with the Somelele group.

> **DS:** How does this person struggle? Or how does she suffer?
>
> **FG:** She wants house and she wants Antiretroviral because she's at the clinic.
> She wants a clinic for people who are HIV
>
> **DS:** A clinic for people who are HIV?
>
> **FG:** Because you go at the clinic and then they, for others, so at the clinic they don't help you.
> They don't help you enough.
> I think this person again. It is better if the treatment is nearer to the people
> She needs support from the clinics.
> The clinics don't handle them well, they don't respect them
> She needs treatment.
> She needs to disclose her status.
> She is suffering because she doesn't go to the clinics because of fear of disclosure.

Excerpt from focussed group discussion with Somelele group

Some of the problems seem to be that the clinics are too far away: "It is better if the treatment is nearer to the people." Another issue is that their dignity is not respected: "The clinics don't handle them well, they don't respect them". While all the groups suggested that the experience of medical care affected their experience of being HIV-positive, this theme emerged more significantly in the Somelele group. The prevalence of this theme in the group relates to the context in which the group finds themselves.

The severe form of a negative bodily experience is through the experience of sexual violence. The link between sexual violence, patriarchy and the high incidence of HIV/AIDS was noted in chapter one. Furthermore, the body is the location for the coalescence of issues intertwined in the AIDS pandemic. For the storytellers, the women and men that are infected, their bodies become the centre of political, social and religious struggles (Denise Ackerman 2001:21). This experience is intensified for Jerome, a gay male participant from

the Green Tea group who experienced in his body the amalgamation of political and social forces when he was gang raped in a Johannesburg prison. While women and children are often the victims of sexual violence, men are not excluded, especially marginalized men such as homosexuals. The following extract tells Jerome's story of sexual violence:

> And then we were sent, the courts sent us to Sun City prison. And then me and Clifford, we are homosexuals, and when we got there, Sun City, it was a big fright for me and for Clifford because we don't know the place, we don't know what's going on in the place and that. When we got there, they've got a lot of black people, big boys, police, normal police. They pay the wardens a lot of money for them to put us in their cells. And so we were put in their cells for that night. And they gang raped us. Seven people, boys, raped me. And when they were finished with me they went to Clifford, they raped him and then they came back to me. I really do believe that we got HIV there because outside, I don't know about Clifford, but outside I was very careful and I am not a sexually active person actually. That's why I really do believe I got HIV, in prison, Johannesburg prison.
>
> And when we told the wardens the next day, policeman that came around, they used to hit us, they hit us, then they put us in a separate cell for the whole day, alone for the whole day. In the evening they just came to fetch us and they put us in the cell. The boys, again they paid the wardens to sleep with us, because we were dressed like very, how can I tell you, like girls. I was wearing cycling shorts, and sandals and I had a jersey on. And I was well built at the time. Of course I'm very thin! (laughing). But they choose me and then Clifford, but they choose me first. It's really not nice to be gang raped. And me as a man, as a homosexual, I really didn't enjoy it. And that time HIV was just started.

Excerpt from an interview with Jerome from the Green Tea Group

The above quote highlights the possibilities of an HIV infection due to sexual violence. The collusion of the warders who neglect their responsibility to protect the prisoners from each other, allows for a pattern of abuse among men in prison. The next quote also suggests the collusion of sexual violence and being HIV-positive.

> When I was a child my parents separated. I could not understand what was happening when they placed me in the orphan's home. Many bad things happened to me. I was raped when I was nine years old, then again at 21 years and 28 years. I was infected with HIV/AIDS.

Excerpt from a devotion written by a former member of the Maskopas group (e-mail correspondence)

The above quote is a disturbing commentary on a society where a young girl is raped at three different stages in her life. Sexual violence is a prominent theme in the data. It is reflected in the category of embodiment and injustice because while it is an invasion of one's personhood, it is also a symptom of the sickness of society. The experience of being HIV-

positive seems to heighten one's awareness of one's body, especially with regard to negative experiences such as stigma and rejection as a result of the physical effects of the HIV, inadequate medical care but especially if the infection was as a result of sexual violence. The experience of being HIV-positive has negative consequences for how the research participants experience their embodiment, as has been outlined. There are also positive experiences of embodiment arising from an HIV-positive status as shown by the quotations and discussed below.

Positive experiences of embodiment

Through being in touch with their bodies, some of the participants recognised the need to be tested. In this case being aware of one's embodiment and listening to the body's signals is a positive experience.

DS: T, how do you experience God?
T: Umm. God has played a very important role in my life. Especially since I have been HIV-positive. When I got ill in … actually I started to get ill in 1988, and I didn't know what is happening with me. I went to the traditional healers, the ZCC churches, wherever, Polokwane, Witbank, until I came back home, not knowing what is happening with me . And then until I got very ill and admitted and got very skew, until I was admitted at Johannesburg hospital.

Excerpt from an interview with T from Maskopas

DS: Now lets talk about you. How do you experience having HIV? What's that like for you? How do you experience it?
J: Before I know that I was positive, eh, **most of the time after I slept with my husband we have some problems, some pains, some what, and then after, eh, I become, my eyes become sore, really. In the morning I can't see clearly; so then I decided to go the clinic.** Um, it was that year, this man I live with, this my third man in my life, so it's not the father of my kids. So, before we, we get together he said, he tested before, and he's positive. So he tried to say, he said to me "J its better to go for the test before, and then after that everything it's fine." So I told him that I am not so strong to go and just to go to test. Because if I come positive, I can't be strong for those results. And then otherwise, if you don't like I won't force you to go there. Okay. So we've got five years together. So life was very nice I had nothing wrong, **until we had this problem, some sort of discharges and all sorts of things.** And then there was, um, a city council, what, what, and then she just inform us it is important to test and then to know your status. Because sometimes, if you don't know your status, its very, very bad. Because sometimes, you are going to be sick and you cover up the very fact that you are positive. So then I decided to go to the test, and then, the thing that made me be strong to test is that the results were there, and it doesn't show anybody if you doesn't know to add the meaning of that word,

> nobody will see the, the, your, your status. And then its fine. Afterwards I was afraid, then I go there, for the test

Excerpt from an interview with J from Maskopas (my emphasis)

> DS: And how do you experience HIV?
>
> K: mmmm. My experience is not good actually. Eh particularly if you are sick you know. One thing that I know is that my own sister is the same, the way, eh, one really, you know, you end up finding out actually, about your status. Myself I started having, this, you **know, my knees were sore, and that's definitely when I started like, wanting to go and test**

Excerpt from interview with K from Maskopas

The quotes show that the experience of being in-tune with one's body, especially when the body is ill, is was what initiated the need for a test. When asked how they experience being HIV-positive, the participants remark on the bodily aspects of the disease. Janet Trisk (2003:48) says that by learning rituals of listening to the body, one can access a way of healing. This is true for the participants in the process of learning to live with the disease; taking care of one's health is a significant theme. Participants in all the groups that were interviewed suggest lifestyle management and an emphasis on positive healthy living. An example of this is offered from each of the groups represented.

> DS: How can you be empowered or transformed
>
> N: Strong?
>
> DS: Yes how can you be strong?
>
> N: I must eat the right foods. I must eat my supplements. I must train myself. And I must get enough time to rest. And I must, if I've got a boyfriend I must use the condom. But, I mustn't have the sex every time. I must maybe, twice a week or twice a month, not everyday. I'm right.

Excerpt from interview with N from Maskopas

> The HIV-positive person must behave himself. He must not do this that will put his life at risk. He must eat healthy foods like fruits and vegetables to keep him strong and healthy. The HIV positive person must not vomit or drink laxative tablets or medicine. If she's smoking and drinking she must stop and eat healthy foods and vegetables.

Excerpts from devotions written by a Somelele group member

> But I'm looking for my health. Like food when I'm eating chicken, veggies, red meat sometimes, not too much fat or oil, no. And if I'm drinking the cool drinks I must know what I must do with the cool drinks. 'Cos this thing, the problem is the acid, the acid makes you sweat at night when you sleep, when you take those pills, the ARV's you feel the temperature is going up, up, up and so you don't sleep well.

Interview with Philip from the Green Tea group

The data that emerges suggests embodiment has implications for spirituality. Part of the process of transformation to wholeness at the level of embodiment is learning to heal the Cartesian dualism of separating identity into body, mind and spirit. One's identity does not reside in one's mind, hence one should learn to incarnate Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel's (1994:1) maxim: "I am my body". Elisabeth Motlmann-Wendel (1994:1) says that the predominant experience of people is that they have a body to perform functions such as work, running, loving, eating or doing what their will and mind wants them to do. When one's body turns against one in the sense that the body no longer does what the mind wishes it to do, one becomes insecure. In the HIV/AIDS situation, the body will eventually take over one's will and understanding and when this happens one will sense that the body is part of the whole of one: we are our bodies. This realisation is in line with Janet Trisk's (2003:50) suggestion that some strands of patriarchal Christianity teach that the path of salvation lies in the process of disciplining the body under the mind. The above quotes suggest that the body is not a stumbling-block which one has to overcome in one's growth to wholeness, but a doorway to that growth. The empirical data in this thesis thus offers a challenge to Cartesian dualism.

The body of Christ is a powerful theological image that the Church can use as an agent of healing and transformation against the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Denise Ackermann 2001:22). The bodies of the sick, women, children and the poor are at the centre of the crisis (Denise Ackermann 2001:22). One of the Church's responses to HIV/AIDS pandemic could be to articulate a theology of embodiment more extensively. Stirred by the lenses of feminist theory and praxis, such a theology of embodiment could begin with a discussion on how women's bodies are the site of abuse in the sense that through the ages their bodies have been feared, despised, burned, tortured and raped (Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel 1994:103). Moreover, such a theology of embodiment could lead to interest in the perceptions that varied and marginalized groups such as homosexuals, the elderly and children have of their bodies. Such a theology of embodiment is orthodox because it recalls the incarnation of Christ as a distinctive feature of the Christian religion: God became a body as part of God's plan of healing and salvation (Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel 1994:103). Closely related to the theme of embodiment with the body as the site of the issues raised by the HIV/AIDS pandemic is the desire for financial empowerment.

4.6.3   FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT

Financial empowerment is a powerful theme that emerges from the data. The term describes how the participants desire enough financial resources to meet their physical needs. In order to be fully human, the participants suggest that they need employment, accommodation and

food security. If they lack these resources, they experience high levels of stress which makes them feel physically weak.

> So, I think maybe if you have work and money you wouldn't be stressed, because everything needs money.

Excerpt from a devotion written by J from the Maskopas group

One of the concerns of HIV-positive people is to manage stress adequately as this influences the effect that the HIV has on the body, the greater the stress the weaker the person can become. The above quote highlights how a lack of financial stability increases the levels of stress. The worries over enough food intensify when there are children involved as the following two quotes suggest:

> Yeah because I'm not working. I am staying with my cousin's child. But I'm right because, my, my cousin just give me the food. And me I am trying. My mother comes to check me. (Cries).

Excerpt from an interview with N from the Maskopas group

> DS: What is changed?
> TR: She was not able to look after the children because she was having a financial problem. But now she started praying to God and sticking to God and sticking to prayers and sticking to talk to God, she's able to work and she's able to bring something for the children that she could not do before

Excerpt from a translated interview with SO from the Somelele group, tr means translation

The following excerpts from the focussed group discussion also highlight the themes of food security and financial stability.
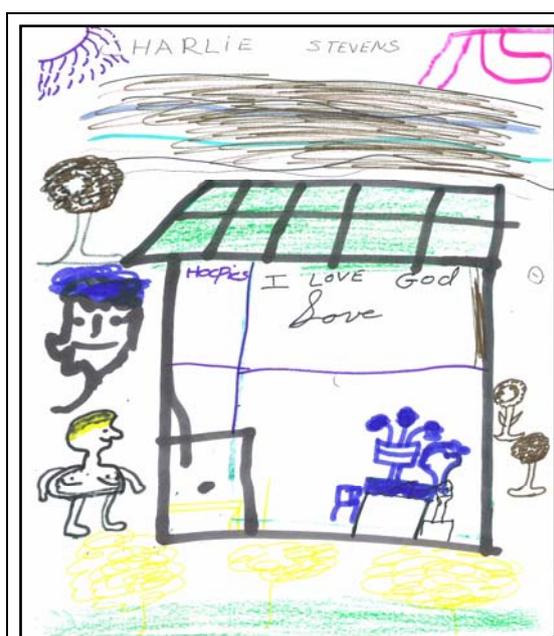
> J: He's struggling to get a job. For his house, to pay rent. And there is no food in that house. Nothing.
> DS: Why do you say that?
> J: You can see its very .. dark. The colours are very dull. Its very dark so its very …
> R: Brokenness.
> DS: Brokenness? Speak more about that. What do you think?
> R: It's heart brokenness. As you can see there is no love. The person that was drawing this, and depression. No work. Unemployed. But sometimes love, sometimes …silence

Excerpt from focussed group discussion with the Green Tea group

Rosetta	If I look at this person here, he needs the love of the Lord and the Lord's love is everything. Heart brokenness. Loneliness
Charlie	There is no incomes. He is suffering he is staying alone in the …
R:	Shack, a one room
C:	**And there is no life. No food for him he must go and struggle**
R:	Struggle to get a plate of food

Excerpt from focussed group discussion with the Green Tea group

The central goal of both feminist theology and Christian spirituality is explained in this thesis as the journey to being a fully human person. One of the descriptions of being fully human is John 10:10 where Jesus promises life in all its fullness. The above quote connects not having food with a lack of life. Food security and financial empowerment emerge from the data as being an important aspect of wholeness, transformation and full humanity.

In the next quotation, the themes of no life and no food are again evident. What is different in this discussion is that the focussed group is now a locus for empowerment in that they start challenging this *status quo* and hint at ways towards financial health.

DS:	How can this person be made stronger or how can she be empowered?
FG:	That's empowerment when for example, she should be told that like if maybe she doesn't work where do we get the starter packs so that she can plant this garden.
FG:	I think she needs money to start her own business.
DS:	She wants to start her business?
FG:	Ja.
FG:	For her to get the money from that little garden, she can make money out of that. Because that one will kick-start of wealth. If she can sell one plot there, and then she can get something, by the time she finished selling the four plots, and then she's having something and then she starting with the other plots. Maybe someone can help her with the house buyers.

The issue of finance is a prominent theme in spiritualities emerging from the two-thirds world. It is an issue that liberation theologies address more than others. The western approach to spirituality often neglects to discuss finances and politics within the umbrella of spirituality. Preaching often reflects a privatised view of the Gospel. This may be because of

a segregated approach to life in the west. Generally, the western view of the human person is a separation between body, mind and spirit. People also separate their space into sacred and secular space. One of the gifts of African spirituality and feminist Christian spirituality is a reminder that God imbues all of life with her presence. In other words, all time is sacred time and all places are holy. It is also significant that Luke's Gospel, which scholars often call the Gospel of the poor, discusses the theme of money extensively. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus taught about money more often than he taught about prayer (Richard Wilke & Julia Wilke 1993:218).

The issue of economic empowerment is related to the need to provide for food and accommodation as indicated by the following excerpts:

> There are so many people that are suffering because of HIV positive. Some of us need money because they want some house, food, vegetables, fruits etc. These are so many problems outside there because of AIDS.

Excerpt from a devotion written by a member of the Somelele group

> Now my problem is that we are suffering. We are staying in shacks, no electrics, no water. If we want some water we go far away, we take it and come back again. And I am losing weight because we are in this situation. We are not right.

Excerpt from an interview with SO

> DS: Are you okay ST?
> ST: (Crying). Ja, it's only that if I am talking with HIV, it's only that. But I am okay. Because every time you can see that we don't have a place to stay. We are suffering, we are paying rent. We are the volunteers and if you are a volunteer you are paying R350, you are going to pay R200 for rent. You don't have money to buy food.

Excerpt from an interview with participants from the Somele group

The above quotes show that poverty means death in the form of a lack of food, housing education, health and permanent unemployment (Gustavo Gutierrez 2001:11). It also means a lack of respect for human dignity and unjust limitations on personal freedom that destroys individuals and communities (Gustavo Gutierrez 2001:11). The poverty, which characterises the lives of the participants, is contrary to the reign of God and the desire for life that God has for all God's people (Gustavo Gutierrez 1971:10).

These narratives from the participants are narratives within meta-narratives of poverty. Their experience of poverty has to be considered in the light of broader structures that perpetuate poverty. It is not enough to describe the situation of poverty. It is also necessary to analyse its causes (Gustavo Gutierrez 1971:11). The struggles against the injustice of economic

disempowerment also involve reflection as to what the causes of these injustices are, and to suggest ways to deal with these issues (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:107).

Albert Nolan (1992:8) believes that the present condition is one where people will be killed by the product of their own progress. The real threat of nuclear warfare, diminished food supplies, pollution and violence describe the current situation. The problem, says Nolan (1992:9), is that people are up against impersonal systems that have their own dynamic momentum. There is nobody in control of the system that has been created. This system is responsible for producing wealth and poverty. The system's central concern is profits and not people and it defends itself with violence. To a large degree it seems that organised religion is of no help, in fact, it may be that it makes the situation worse (Albert Nolan 1992:11).

Leonardo Boff (1982:7) says that the way people live their lives is that everything is created in terms of productivity and that production is orientated towards consumerism, which is based on needs created by the advertising industry. This is not the case for the participants whose financial desires of adequate housing, food and employment are related to the need for human dignity. Leonardo Boff (1982:50) adds that poverty is dehumanising for both the rich and the poor. It disrupts relationships among the poor and means that the poor are unable to explore their vocation. This is especially true in their vocation for full humanity, which the participants interpret in the light of economic empowerment.

Poverty, and the structures that disseminate the violence of poverty, are death dealing. Examples of this in the South African society can be seen in reports where the poorest in our country are not afforded the medical care that they need. That the broader structures of society design poverty and wealth, can be seen from the growing gap between rich and poor that is created by wealth (Jon Sobrino 1988:160). Denise Ackermann (2001:11) describes how African theologian Teresa Okure startled the AIDS symposium held in Pretoria in 1998 by suggesting there were two viruses more deadly than HIV. The one is patriarchy and the other globalisation, in particular its effects in creating the economic injustices that structure poverty in the developing world (Denise Ackermann 2001:11). Global economic practices destabilise traditional infrastructures and create difficulties in accessing the prevention and treatment of diseases. The imposition of specific models of economic development on societies has reproduced economic dependence and social disintegration (Denise Ackermann 2001:12).

In the context of South America, Jon Sobrino (1988:159) argues that the greatest task of the poor is to survive. The hope of the poor in the South American context is not that different from the hope expressed by the South African support groups interviewed in this research

study. The quotes show a desire for housing, employment and food security – a wish that is not orientated towards consumerism, but to their dignity as humans.

The hope for the poor is to succeed in becoming a fully human person (Jon Sobrino 1988:163). The lack of justice in terms of the participants' experience of financial resources and issues of economic empowerment leads to the next category, injustice.

4.6.4 THE EXPERIENCE OF INJUSTICE AND VULNERABILITY

The theme of injustice and vulnerability describes how the participants have first-hand experience of being treated in a dehumanising way owing to the stigma of being HIV-positive.

> Then it's a real pain you always to live answering people, answering people (clicking fingers). Sometimes badly, because what they do to you stabs you. It means you almost have to stab them back so that they should stop. You know it's really difficult. It takes a woman and it takes a man to stand for that difficult.

Excerpt from interview with participant from the Maskopas group

> You go to the clinic. They know that you are HIV positive; they treat you differently. You, you go elsewhere you will always be reminded.
> Because you always, you think that some other people doesn't like you, because most of the time, if you are HIV positive people they take you like maybe, you are, eh, you are not living the same like other people really, you are dirty, you are what, the way they take HIV people like that.

Excerpts from interviews with participants from the Somelele Group

> DS: How do you experience discrimination or stigmatisation?
> SM: I don't know.
> DS: Do you ever find people pushing you away or ignoring you or rejecting you?
> SM: Yes, yes, yes. Some neighbours I telling them: "I'm HIV positive".
>   "Stay away from me, stay away from me you make me sick!" I've got no friends. I've got enemies. Because I told someone I am HIV positive. Eish! He tell others: "She's HIV positive". Around here they knows I'm HIV.

Excerpt from interview with participant from the Somelele Group

Countering stigma is a central aspect to combating the HIV pandemic (Denise Ackermann 2002:C5/2)[28]. The discussion of stigma is complicated in that, while it is the breeding ground for the HIV pandemic, it cannot divert attention from the issues regarding transmission. Stigma describes how a person is "branded" with a certain label and then excluded as being

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[28]   The reason for this unusual referencing (c5/5) is that the article is taken from the *Churches, channels of hope* file; it comes out of the resource section.

less worthy because of that label (Denise Ackermann 2002:C5/4). The stigmatised person is cast as "the other" (Denise Ackermann 2002:5/4). The quotes show how stigma is experienced at a variety of levels: at home in the family unit, in religious communities and in society generally (Denise Ackermann 2002:C5/5). HIV/AIDS stigmas very often operate in relation to other forms of discrimination (Denise Ackermann 2002:C5/5). For example, some believe that AIDS is a woman's disease because of their gender perspective while still others believe that AIDS is a disease restricted to black people (Denise Ackermann 2002:C5/5). One obstacle that has to be addressed in the fight against stigma relating to AIDS is the sense that it is a disease reserved for women.

> The mans, I think, they didn't accept HIV. It's like that HIV it's only for the women, not for the mans.

Excerpt from an interview with SM from the Somelele group

Cultural approaches to the disease further complicate the issue of stigma. Stigma alienates people from one another (Denise Ackermann 2002:C5/5) and in the process of creating blame and victims, social divisions are strengthened. The cultural taboos around sexuality in the Christian tradition and the association of HIV with promiscuity and immorality serve as examples. What theological responses can the Church offer to the reality of stigma? The Church can recognise how stigma destroys human community (Denise Ackermann 2002:C5/7) and cripples the body of Christ for if one person is rejected all people are dehumanised (Denise Ackermann 2002:C5/7).

The above quotes highlight how sin is a personal and social issue. The quotes show the intertwining of social and personal sin in that sin is ultimately a distortion of relationship (Susan Rakoczy 2004:269). The intertwining oppression in South Africa encapsulated in economics, politics, religion and culture means that women are vulnerable to abuse. A more worrying example of the experience of injustice is sexual violence in the form of rape. Sexual violence is a theme that stands with one foot in the embodiment category and the other in the category of injustice.

> My last born had been abused. She was eight years by that time. So this thing was a very painful thing to me. So, she just said to "I've got some stomach pains." And all that. So I didn't take it seriously. So I take her to the clinic so after the check up at the clinic they found that she has been raped. Okay. We asked her. She said she doesn't know the man. Until now I don't know who did this thing. And then I go for counseling. She goes for counseling and everything.

Excerpt from interview with participant from Maskopas group

And there is this second child and she's in grade 7. And then by the time the mother was sick and then coming better, coming better, by the time the mother was sick she was taken by the man next door and he raped her. Raped her, raped her. Most nights he kept on raping the child. And then by the time the mother was sick, very sick, and then it came out this case that it was not this child alone. The child was taken to the hospital they found that she was HIV positive. And they took that guy to jail. And think now, this child, doesn't have a mother, doesn't have a father, doesn't have a home, the home was sold so that they could bill the mother. The mother was not having money. Doesn't have a home, doesn't have mother, doesn't have a father. She's HIV positive at the age of 14 years. Those are the things that, when I try to get them, there is no one who is trying to help. So I don't know. These things they make me feel, I don't feel the right thing. So this thing when I say God makes me strong, I say okay to deal with this situation but somewhere, someway I need to be helped. But no one is helping.

Excerpt from an interview with SF from the Somelele group

The effects of sexual violence against children depicted in the above quotes are devastating. While the research participant from the Maskopas group says " … and then I go for counseling. She goes for counseling and everything", the research participant from the Somelele group has not done so. She herself seems to be coping but her individual resources are limited. She confirms that a broader response is needed before she can feel that God is making her strong: "So this thing when I say God makes me strong, I say okay to deal with this situation but somewhere, someway I need to be helped. But no one is helping".

Philippe Denis (2003:75) suggests that the prevalence of AIDS means that the Church has to view sexuality in a different way. He (2003:74) acknowledges that the Church has addressed sexuality before but that this has been on an individual basis in a defensive attitude seeing it as a force that requires constraint and control through the process of moralising it. It may be in this context that the churches call for abstinence and faithfulness evolves. Such a moralistic tone can be narrow-minded in that it fails to account for the unequal and unjust relationships between men and women. These unbalanced relationships result in the sexual abuse highlighted in these quotes. He suggests that sexuality be seen in terms of cultural, economic and social issues (Philippe Denis 2003:75). As such, it is necessary to offer a broader scope of analysis. Moralistic comments that are divorced from their social and cultural context are counter productive (Philippe Denis 2003:75). They tend toward exclusion, especially for the survivors of abuse (Philippe Denis 2003:74). The moralistic response of abstinence and faithfulness offered by some churches in response to HIV/AIDS pandemic may incur guilt for some women who are HIV-positive because of sexual violence. While moral responsibility and guilt follow from moral choice, the patriarchal structures of society tend to override the moral choice of some women. HIV/AIDS needs to

be understood within the links it has with gender and poverty. The data supports the view that gender, poverty and AIDS are an unholy alliance as seen from a focussed group discussion with the Maskopas:

Me and my little girls as town. (4)

DS: What can be done to make her happier?

FG: She needs employment for an income to provide for her children.

FG: You have to provide everything you want. If you can't provide you suffer. If you can't provide they lose trust and confidence in you.

DS: So if you can't provide for you children you suffer?

FG: Its very difficult. **Most of us are infected because of the the poverty**.

FG: They were infected because of poverty. Most of them were unemployed and then after that … **You have to provide so you have a boyfriend in the hope of providing. You have no choice in saying he must use a condom**

FG: **Some men take advantage knowing you don't have anything knowing you need them.**

DS: So you are saying that they are infected because of poverty because they couldn't provide and so they have many boyfriends in the hope of providing for their children and in that way they become infected. Is that what you are saying?

FG: … he has almost Hitler's coercive power over you (*sic*).

Excerpt from a focussed group discussion with the Maskopas group

This quote demonstrates the point that Philippe Denis is making in that poverty and sexuality are intertwined in the life of this woman. Sexual violence is a manifestation of patriarchal abuse connected with economic disempowerment. Philippe Denis also comments that HIV is a gender issue to the extent that South Africa's patriarchal culture demands that women submit to the sexual advances of men and this may play a role in transmitting the disease.

One of the tools of feminist theology is that it builds a just society where life flourishes as it focuses on society and analyses those systems which damage the souls of people. The theme of injustice, agents of social transformation and community can be bracketed together. The idea is that the women as agents of social transformation may inspire a more just world and positive experience of community life where integral transformation is possible.

4.6.5 WOMEN AS AGENTS OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Jon Sobrino (1988:56) says that to liberate is to bestow life. In what ways do the participants bestow life as agents of social transformation?

We are the volunteers. But we gained something because we didn't know about HIV, now I know about HIV. I am teaching people at the Westonaria clinic, everyday. I am going to the clinic to teach people, after that I come here. It's better that I can make something. Because other people they understand, we can't understand all of us at the same time. But if I teach you, you are going to teach somebody.

Excerpt from interview with participant from Somelele group

God is great because now I am a peer educator. I teach others with HIV and AIDS so that they can be aware that the virus is there and is alive.

Excerpt from interview with participant from Somelele group

Always when I go to Helen Joseph they call me in they tell me: "Don't you want to talk with this people?" So I talk to them and tell them how to cope with this virus.

Excerpt from interview with participant from Green Tea group

During the home-based care I realised how tough this life is, people were sick, dying, all those things. And it was my everyday life to experience those things. So we were given training at the hospital about VCT. They were going to bring us to the clinic to run that project. So the person who was running the counselling was so right that you should be brave and go and test.

Excerpt from interview with participant from Somelele group

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1993:102) says that a Christian feminist spirituality is based on the assumption that people and the community are in need of renewal and conversion. She defines conversion as a new direction in the spiritual life. Although she probably intends these comments from the point of view of feminists having a prophetic and critical role in the Church, one can argue that the role the participants play, as wounded healers, in serving others in education, caring for orphans and in nursing others, shows how they are the agents of renewal and conversion.

Viewing the bigger picture, one can use the tools of feminist analysis and point out that the work that the participants do in serving others is on a voluntary basis. One may question why this is so and wonder if there would be reimbursement if they were male. One may also point out that they fulfil the traditional roles associated with femininity especially in caring for orphans and the sick. While this analysis may be true, the power of this theme emerging from the data is lost if one forgets that their vocation in serving others is a personal growth opportunity emerging from an HIV-positive status. Several participants describe how coming to terms with the positive HIV status was the catalyst in beginning to work with communities.

> But I've got this thing inside me and I promised God that I am going to do something that is the first time that I started to work with the community. I never worked with the community before. And then since then, I never had a job or something to do that makes me happy like now. I am working with the women, motivating them , I am working with the disadvantaged children, I am working with the home-based care women and men. So I am very happy and that is for the first time in my entire life getting something that makes me feel happy and prouder everyday; and when I wake up every morning I've got something to do and I know what to do.

Excerpt from interview with participant from the Maskopas group

> So God has played a very important role in my life and has changed me totally from what I was before, because I didn't care about anyone else. I cared about myself only, and my kids, and my family, so I never worked with the community.

Excerpt from interview with participant from the Maskopas group

The participant from whom the above quotes were taken drew the picture presented on page 182. The picture seems to exude a sense of confidence. This particular research participant has a high degree of empowerment and agency. She is a source of strength and encouragement for many of the women with whom she has contact. Her HIV-positive status was the catalyst in her transformation from someone who, in her own words was self-centered: "and has changed me totally from what I was before, because I didn't care about anyone else". She has started numerous community projects for the improvement of people in Orange Farm where she lives: "I am working with the women, motivating them, I am working with the disadvantaged children, I am working with the home-based care women and men".

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1993:1) introduces her book, *Discipleship of Equals*, by saying that it maps out her attempt to "reclaim and rename women's spiritual power in very concrete situations". It may be that the way these women participants serve others and the community, as part of their growth to full humanity, is an expression of their spiritual power in the concrete situation of the AIDS pandemic, poverty, gender issues and racism. The data shows that women offer a lifestyle of serving others in a variety of ways. It suggests their moral agency to the extent that they are not passive victims but that they exercise responsibility creatively for the community around them (Susan Rakoczy 2004:275). The side effects of their creative responsibility as moral agents is that their self-esteem is enhanced and it is a way for them to participate fully in life and so exercise their full humanity (Susan Rakoczy 2004:275).

For Susan Rakoczy (2004:276), one of the principles and processes of the moral agency of women is their participation in the transformation of their context. She states that women who are moral agents are aware of their ability to influence their lives and their social structures. The participants in the research demonstrate this to the extent that they use their positions to negotiate with authorities either for their sake or for the sake of others. The quotation below shows a participant from the Somelele group pleading for the case of another.

The quotation illustrates the social compassion that the participant senses for the orphan and it is that which gives her the strength to become a healer in her context (Susan Rakoczy 2004:270).

> People are worried, especially since people are dying like this. People, there is not this thing of a neighbourhood. It's not like before. I've got a problem that I am adopting two kids. The other kid, I was taking care of his mother, since his mother was sick, his mother was admitted to the hospital. Since the mother was admitted to the hospital

the family didn't come to take this child, they live alone there, the child was suffering there alone. And this child left school the time the mother was sick. Everyone was coming, the family to come and say to the boy to go to school, it's like this. So he dropped out of school, he was doing grade 6 until the mother was referred to the centre. Still the child was staying alone.

So I take the child by that time. It's not safe for a child to stay alone like this. Okay fine the mother went to the centre and the mother died. After that they were preparing to bury the mother, but they didn't come to say your mother is dead and now you are going to stay with us. They take the boy to the other and then they bring him back to go and stay in that shack alone. So I took that boy and stay with him. I took him to the school. And then the child is still now, he doesn't have shoes he doesn't have anything. They don't do anything they don't come and ask how is life is going.
And when I told him: "Go to your family", he doesn't want to go, even now. **I went to the social worker, talking about this case. I want this child to be taken to the centre where she can get water, food and clothing and be given that space to grow**.

Except from an interview with SF from the Somelele group (my emphasis)

The theme of agents of transformation is situated between the themes of the experience of injustice and the experience of community. Susan Rakoczy (2004:270) says that repentance, caring with others and unity with God, are the necessary "medicines" or gifts that will heal the soul.

4.6.6 COMMUNITY

The term community describes how being offered a sense of belonging and social support is a significant experience for the participants.

DS: What does she need to be empowered and transformed? More healthy, more whole and stronger?
FG: She has received God in herself.
FG: She has been through problems – the paths to the Church show that.
FG: She is supported
DS: She is supported. Who is she supported by?
FG: Maybe the congregation. Friends.
DS: The congregation and friends. And how do they support her?
FG: She needs emotional support
FG: If the Church also failed then God himself failed.

Excerpt form focussed group discussion with the Maskopas group

The stories that were gathered are from participants in support groups; it is natural to find the theme of community emerging from the data. The data reflects that a key aspect of the wholeness of the participants within the crises of HIV/AIDS is being able to participate in supportive communities: "Because if you've got support then you become stronger". One of the roles that the Church can fulfil is that of developing and nurturing these communities of support; to fail to do, in the words of the focussed group, would mean that "God himself failed"; quite a strong statement.

Dr Andre de la Porte (2001:5) suggests that during the symptomatic phase of HIV/AIDS a person may experience isolation and loneliness. The human need at this point is connectivity. The focus of counselling should be community and relationships and he suggests that belonging to a healing and accepting community could facilitate wholeness for the person. The support groups offer this connection. Esther de Waal (1984:29) says that loving and being loved in community nurtures the process of becoming fully human.

What sort of community do we cultivate in the geography of the AIDS pandemic? What characterises Christian spirituality in the community environment? The community that Christians confess in the Nicene and Apostolic Creeds is a unified, holy, catholic and apostolic community (Denise Ackermann 2001:18). Recognising Christian unity means acknowledging that the Church is living with HIV/AIDS, that the body of Christ is infected and is HIV-positive. There is no "us" and "them" (Denise Ackermann 2001:17), in the same way that the problem of HIV/AIDS is not "out there" but among us. The path of holiness entails the way of grace, which is inclusion and not exclusion (Denise Ackermann 2001:18) and is a risky engagement in history where God is present (Denise Ackermann 2001:18). Catholicity implies interconnection and solidarity (Denise Ackermann 2001:18). Hence, the Church stands in solidarity with those who suffer from fear, rejection and poverty (Denise Ackermann 2001:18). Community cultivates the reception of God's kingdom and God's reign (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:133). Community is also the place where Christians remember the paschal mystery signified in the death and resurrection of Jesus (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:133). Within the category of community the data reflects a theme of immense concern for children as reflected in the discussion on the picture.
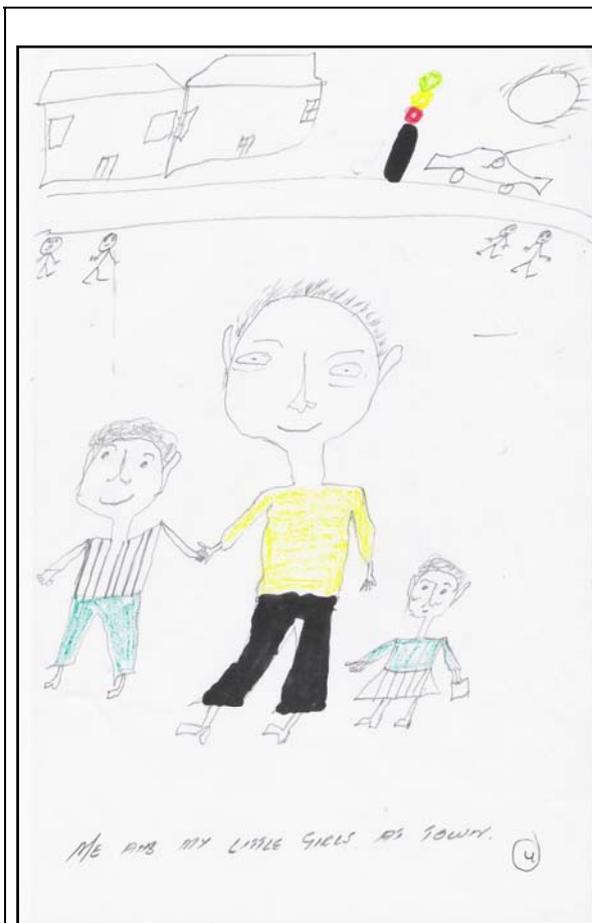
	FG: She is thinking about her kids.
	DS: She thinks about her kids?
	FG: She is worried about her kids.
	DS: She is worried about her kids?
	FG: There there are two that are her own and then she worries about the others.
	DS: She thinks about her own kids and the other kids in the picture are maybe other people's children?
	FG: Ja.
	DS: Okay. Orphans maybe? (Nodding).
	DS: Anything anyone wants to add?
	FG: I think she is going to town to relieve stress to see people even if she doesn't talk to them.
	FG: She has dreams because there is a car there.
	FG: She, she tries to keep to keep, eh, her kids to be happy because she thinks it is the last time, the last moment, she can be alive so that if she passes away … they have got the good memories about her.

Excerpt from a focussed group discussion with the Maskopas

DS:	What are her problems do you think? What does she face everyday?
FG:	She's sad.
DS:	She's sad. Okay.
FG:	She's worried.
FG:	**She's thinking about her small home because she's got many kids the shack is too small for her.**

Excerpt from a focussed group discussion with the Maskopas

The above quotes depict that the community of the family are a concern for the research participants. The quotes depict the reality of what people face in South Africa: that orphans are the most tragic and long-term legacy of the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Daniela Gennrich 2004:9). Children orphaned by HIV/AIDS are likely to be impoverished with few resources to escape the poverty rut (Daniela Gennrich 2004:10). The high number of orphans who are the result of the pandemic place a burden on the resources of most communities (Daniela Gennrich 2004:10). Statistics from 2003 suggest that of the 13.2 million AIDS orphans worldwide, over 90 percent are in Sub-Saharan Africa (Daniela Gennrich 2004:9). Child-headed households are extremely vulnerable to exploitation and abuse as is reflected in the

sexual violence of the young girl described in section 4.5 (Daniela Gennrich 2004:10). Within the paradigm of Christian spirituality, our prototype is Jesus who said children are first in the household of God, moreover to receive a child is to receive the presence of Christ (Mark 9:37). Perhaps one of the Church's responses to the HIV/AIDS pandemic is to reflect seriously on incarnating not only a preferential option for the poor in the way we do Church, but also a preferential option for children who are first in the household of God. The recipients of the authentic community we seek to build are children.

The stories that were part of the data collection process were gathered from participants in support groups. Their positive experience of therapeutic support in these communities also emerges in the literature as a recurring theme. Authentic community is thus one dimension of the growth to wholeness and transformation to full humanity of people within an HIV positive world. However, the chief recipients of authentic community must be children for whom the participants in the research reflect a critical concern.

4.8.7   AWARENESS OF GOD

The category awareness of God describes themes that relate to categories describing a God consciousness, including the fruits of spirituality such as faith, hope and gratitude. While some participants suggest that being HIV-positive may have the potential to distance one from God, for others it enhanced their prayer lives and connection with God

> Most people living with HIV/AIDS distance themselves from the word of God because they think they are sinners, failures in life. But I take my status as a sign of something I need to do or change. The cry of my heart is a cure for AIDS worldwide. The community, friends and family will always discourage us by discrimination. Friends will think that people will assume they are also positive and family members think you are lowering the family's dignity. Ministers give hope because they saved my country during apartheid, blood sheds (sic) among our people and prayed for peace during the election and there was peace. If you are positive you need to forgive, forget and stop pointing fingers and anger. I would like Jesus to give us wisdom to realise this sign and follow his way and be honest to ourselves and to him.

Excerpt from a devotion written by a member of the Maskopas group (e-mail correspondence)

The above quote represents how the participant sees the transforming potential of her new life situation even though there is a temptation to distance herself from God as others have done. She also highlights a positive view of clergy in that in the past they took a stand against apartheid. The insinuation is that they may have credibility to offer hope and other spiritual gifts in the HIV/AIDS crisis.

One of the unexpected themes to be brought to light in the data that may have challenged my prior knowledge is how the experience of AIDS has brought people closer to God. One may be tempted to investigate how a person can be whole, fully human and fully alive in spite of the death dealing aspects of poverty, oppression and being HIV positive. The following excerpts are examples of how being HIV-positive can in some cases be a doorway to further spiritual growth:

> Being young and HIV-positive has changed my life in a way. I could say my life has reached a turning point. I am the breadwinner since my dad has passed away on the 03.04.1995. From the beginning of this year I have learned that pain does pull you away from the world's things and closer to God

Excerpt from a devotion written by K from the Maskopas group

> You see it drew me nearer to God because I didn't know God in the first place. And after that I was diagnosed HIV-positive then it was bad that, because a lot of the time I wanted to commit suicide. And on the other hand God came to me and talked to me and said: "It is not necessary, don't be suicidal. You can live with this HIV for many years if you look after yourself." And that's when I turned my back on the world. And I was drinking a lot. I was smoking a lot of cigarettes. God saved me from all of that, I don't smoke any more, I don't drink anymore, and I'm living a healthy life.

Excerpt from an interview with Jerome from the Green Tea group

Some of the quotes describe how in the process of learning to accept the HIV status the participants were able to see HIV as the beginning of new life and an opportunity for a second chance:

> It is not because we sinned to have H.I.V/A.I.D.S. But I say it was the beginning of a new life. As God has given us a second chance in life let's all live life to the fullest. I personally think the epidemic was an eye-opener that probably there was something we were doing wrong.

Excerpt from a devotion written by C from the Maskopas group

Despite the challenges that life has presented in the form of abuse, AIDS and poverty the following participant still has a sense of God's presence:

> Now I know that God has been with me and loves me very much. When I was a child I thought that God was in heaven and could not hear me. Today I know that he does, and I have the promise that I will live more years with HIV/AIDS. And God will give me strength to strengthen others. He has done that with me a long time, even when I was not aware of it.

Excerpt from a devotion written by former member of the Maskopas Group (e-mail correspondence)

The quote highlights a growing and changing picture of God from "a God out there who could not hear her prayers" to a God that is with her to the degree that she is strengthened to strengthen others. Spirituality is thus an empowering aspect of her life and wholeness. Living life to the fullest is one of the promises of the spiritual life. The drive towards full humanity is what inspires people. The quotes from the participants reveal how something that is death dealing can be resurrected to offer hope. Others describe how the news of a positive status had made them more loving people. During the interviews I asked the question: How do you experience being HIV-positive? One of the participants from the Maskopas felt that AIDS was:

> The beginning of life. Maybe, maybe I wasn't living, very much carefully up to this standard, of the quality of life. Then knowing my status has made me to be aware of many things . and it started to to to , **it built in love so that I should be able to help other people and also to be involved into other people's lives**. People who don't even know where to get a social worker when they have problems. That's how I experience it.

The process of accepting the disease is seen by some participants as an opportunity to build and strengthen their faith:

> Oh I experience God as a father who is who will never say to me I will forgive you provided you do 1 2 3. And being HIV positive has also built my faith very strongly that I started growing in faith that God does things to us sometimes God lets the devil bring difficulties into our lives so that he trusts us just like Job but if he gets this thing, he will never go back and deny me he will rather or she will rather be closer than me and I will help her to be able to conquer that so that everybody will be say that I am the God I am the creator I am everything there is nothing that is impossible with me everything is possible

Excerpt from and interview with participant from the Maskopas group

Karolyn Siegel and Eric Schrimshaw (2002:91-102) conducted a study to determine the perceived benefits of spiritual coping among older adults living with HIV. They recognised that spirituality is often a resource for coping with difficult circumstances (Karolyn Siegel & Eric Schrimshaw 2002:91). They attributed this in part to the healing narratives that are prominent in religious frameworks and to the compassion and practical assistance that religious communities offer to people in difficult circumstances (Karolyn Siegel & Eric Schrimshaw 2002:91). Through interviews, Karolyn Siegel & Eric Schrimshaw found that religious beliefs help people to cope with their HIV status to the extent that these religious beliefs evoke comforting emotions, empowerment and control and thus reduce the emotional burden of the disease (Karolyn Siegel & Eric Schrimshaw 2002:99). Spiritual beliefs do play a central role in the capacity of individuals to cope with HIV through the social aspect of religious practices that offer a sense of belonging and support (Karolyn Siegel & Eric

Schrimshaw 2002:99). By offering spiritual support through a relationship with God, spirituality can also ease the fear and uncertainty of death and facilitate meaning and acceptance of the illness and even self-acceptance (Karolyn Siegel & Eric Schrimshaw 2002:99).

My research supports Karolyn Siegel & Eric Schrimshaw's research to the extent that spirituality is seen to be a resource by the support groups. What this research suggests, that is not indicated in their work, is that the experience of being HIV-positive is a means to experiencing greater connection with God and a means to wholeness and a way of building faith. My study thus differs from that of Karolyn Siegel & Eric Schrimshaw's study in that spirituality is not just a means to cope with HIV, it also strengthens and builds spirituality to the degree that it brings people closer to God. The HIV status is a catalyst in the way that the participants begin to live their lives for others, which is a symptom of a spiritually transformed life.

I have outlined the seven categories that offer a thematic construct for the topics that emerged in the data analysis. I have also offered a discussion on the themes and categories with reference to the stories told by the participants and literature on each subject. The purpose of this discussion on the data analysis can be understood in the light of the key principle of the research namely the preferential option for the poor. Through listening to the stories of the participants I was able to express a degree of solidarity and friendship with them, thus achieving the third aim of the research. By quoting their stories and describing their interpreted experiences, I was able to "give voice" to their usually marginalized perspectives. Through listening to their interpreted experiences and the stories that they offer and gaining insight into what they communicate in the light of the theory, I aim to suggest a model that may offer a gendered response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic for the Church. This is the focus of the next chapter. Before offering a summary conclusion to this chapter, I describe some of my personal reflections of the research journey in line with the praxis of feminist research that aims to make explicit how theory and research impact the personal biography of the researcher as the chief research instrument.

4.7 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

In offering my reflections on the research journey I would like to address two aspects: first the use of the male narrative in the research is reflected on. Second, rapport with the female research participants, especially the Maskopas, is discussed with reference to how emotions are managed in the research process.

4.7.1   THE USE OF THE MALE NARRATIVE

I have already pointed out that one of the blind spots in some feminist research is to focus exclusively on women's voices to the neglect of the male narrative (see section 3.4.1). In the context of this research it further stigmatises women by implying that AIDS is a woman's disease. In the research process, I realised that many of the women experienced men as a problem in their lives. Consequently, I thought it would be important to interview men to investigate their side of how they were experiencing reality. On the one hand I felt quite angry with them at the way they were treating the women. On the other hand I realised that as feminist theory suggests, they too were victims: in a patriarchal system the oppressed and the oppressors are left dehumanised. I was interested in finding out their view of reality and especially their interpreted experiences of HIV/AIDS. What prevented me from doing this is that I felt that it would endanger the safety of the women concerned. First, the stories and interviews suggested a certain degree of emotional and physical abuse. One of the women had even taken a court order against her husband preventing him from contacting her. I could obviously not allow my desire to interview him to further expose her to harm. Second: they had shared their stories with me on the basis that I had offered confidentiality. Speaking to their male partners could have breached that agreement. Third, many of the men had left their wives and children and could not be contacted. I tried then to interview men in factories on the basis that they would have a similar profile of being semi-skilled with little financial empowerment. The directors of the companies I approached felt that this would be inappropriate as it could suggest that the company leadership were implying that they thought their employees were HIV-positive.

Had I been given the opportunity to interview men in factories, some of the issues involved in the process of interviewing them would be to negotiate the gender divide, the language barrier and the race divide. If I had had the opportunity to interview men in focussed group discussions I would have invited a Zulu male colleague to participate in the group discussion with me to help solve these issues of race, gender and language barriers. More than that I would have wanted to be aware of how the men would have reacted to me and their reactions to me as a female interviewer would have formed part of my research reflections.

The male narratives that were offered in the research were from the Green Tea group. The data from Jerome, Charlie and Philip reveals that as men they too experience the negative effects of poverty and patriarchy. Jerome's story on being raped in prison suggests how he is a victim of patriarchal forces that dehumanise him. What emerges from the research process is that it is not only women who need to be empowered, but that men need empowerment too. In the community feedback forums some of the research participants highlighted that strategies need to be implemented to empower men so that men can also participate in the

fight against HIV/AIDS, patriarchy and poverty. Thandi Ruga[29] from the Somelele group noted that the increasing levels of violence toward women might be due in part to women's empowerment. Men feel angry and disempowered and channel these negative emotions into violence against women. Hence empowering men is a vital component in a response programme for HIV/AIDS.

4.7.2 THE MANAGEMENT OF EMOTIONS AND RAPPORT IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

In the previous chapter where I offered personal reflections on the research journey I referred to work done by Shulamit Reinharz (1993). She focuses on some of the excessive demands in feminist research (Shulamit Reinharz 1993:72). While one of the common characteristics of feminist research is that it "frequently attempts to develop special relations with the people studied in interactive research," she feels that it is an unrealistic expectation and an unnecessary burden in feminist research (Shulamit Reinharz 1993:72). On the one hand I agree with her. When my promoter encouraged me to extend my research to other support groups, my first response was that I do not have the emotional, spiritual or physical capacity available to extend my work with the Maskopas to other groups. This was because my point of departure as has been repeatedly stated in the thesis is the hermeneutic of solidarity with the poor as a way to express a preferential option for the poor. This friendship is taxing in terms of time and emotional resources. I balanced the need for emotional involvement in the lives of those interviewed with the need to extend the research by having the Maskopas as the primary locus and the other groups as a secondary focus. This enabled me to maintain the aim of standing in solidarity with the poor and allowed me to extend the research. In response to Shulamit Reinharz's comment that such a rapport is an unrealistic expectation and an unnecessary burden my response is that yes, there is a burden in establishing close relationships among those with whom research is done. I found the whole process of listening to stories as part of the data collection process emotionally and spiritually draining. These stories did not leave me unaffected - I carried a part of the pain with me for a long while afterwards. Yet, I feel that this is a very necessary part of the research process. The emotions, concern and at times even spiritual anger can be woven into the research process. My commitment to the research was strengthened because of the emotional turmoil caused by the listening process involved in my research study.

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[29] Thandi Ruga, who is the chairperson of the Somelele group, was not available when interviews and group discussions were conducted. She was however present at the community feedback forum where she gave permission for her name to be used in the research.

4.8   CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this chapter was to offer a narrative on the process of collecting data and analysing the information. To this end, thick descriptions were given of the research participants as the storytellers. The Maskopas, Somelele and Green Tea groups and St Margaret's Parish were described with reference to their context, how I gained entry into their lives and the dynamics of the different groups. These descriptions revealed that the Maskopas group, among whom the preferential option for the poor was expressed, have a similar profile to the Somelele group. Thus, a multi-faceted view of the HIV discussion was offered where the relationship between the perspectives of the Maskopas, Somelele, Green Tea and St Margaret's group was diagrammatically presented in figure 4.1. The themes emerging from the data analysis on the Maskopas and Somelele groups formed the code that was then applied to the other data sources. Data sources included interviews, group discussions, drawings and written material. The ethics guiding the data collection and data analysis procedures involved an agreement as to whether names could be disclosed or not. The ethics of emancipation, transformation and democratic participation had to be embedded in the research methods as these are important in feminist and spirituality research.

Renalta Tesch's (1990) method of data analysis was used. The themes that emerged from the analysis were grouped under seven main headings. These headings were ego, embodiment, financial empowerment, injustice and vulnerability, community, women as agents of transformation and awareness of God.

Ego experiences referred to the self that is presented to the world and included the inner dialogue within people. Experiences such as suicidal tendencies, loneliness, and denial are included in this category. The second theme referred to the **embodiment** of the research participants and embraced both negative and positive experiences of the body as a result of HIV/AIDS. The participants expressed the desire for **financial empowerment** as a vital aspect of being fully human. The category **women as agents of transformation** illustrate the empowerment of the women to the degree that they serve other people in the form of encouragement, prayer and as mentors for other women. **Injustice** relating to the stigma of being HIV-positive made the research participants vulnerable to abuse and sexual violence. The theme on **community** included the therapeutic aspects of connection with and unity within the community as well as negative community experiences such as a deep concern for the children orphaned by the AIDS pandemic. Finally, **an awareness of God** embraces themes that connote prayer activities and God consciousness.

The analyses suggested a holistic approach to describing and understanding the experience of being HIV-positive. This interpretation was based on the ethic of standing in solidarity with the marginalized and the preferential option for the poor. The interpretive paradigms that were used were Christian spirituality and feminist theology. Taken together the analyses show that an integrative and holistic approach to the AIDS pandemic is necessary for the Church and society. Research aims were achieved to the extent that the goal of standing in solidarity with a marginalized group of people was met through my friendship with the Maskopas. The research aim of listening to their stories was met and is demonstrated in this chapter through the discussion of data offered by the participating groups. The aims of change and transformation were met to the degree that the researcher was changed through the process of listening to stories. For the participants, the process of reflecting on their situation through talking about it in the interviews, writing about it in the devotions and drawing pictures allowed for cathartic change.

Having offered a narrative of the results of the research, chapter five suggests a model of full humanity that could guide the Christian Church in offering a gendered response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The model is based on the themes that were discussed in chapter four.

CHAPTER FIVE
LEARNING TO BREATHE UNDER WATER
A GENDERED RESPONSE TO THE HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC FOR THE CHURCH

5.1   INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

Learning to breathe under water

I built my house by the sea.
Not on the sands, mind you,
not on the shifting sand.
And I built it of rock.
A strong house
by a strong sea.
And we got well acquainted, the sea and I.
Good neighbours.
Not that we spoke much.
We met in silences,
respectful, keeping our distance,
but looking our thoughts across the fence of sand.
Always the fence of sand our barrier,
always the sand between.
And then one day
(and I still don't know how it happened)
The sea came.
Without warning.
Without welcome even.
Not sudden and swift, but a shifting across the sand like wine.
Less like the flow of water than the flow of blood,
slow, but flowing like an open wound.
And I thought of flight, and I thought of drowning, and I thought of death.
But while I thought the sea crept higher till it reached my door.
And I knew that there was neither flight nor death nor drowning.
That when the sea comes calling, you stop being good neighbours.
Well-acquainted, friendly from a distance neighbours,
and you give your house for a coral castle,
and you learn to breathe underwater.

Carol Bialock (2004)

This poem can describe humankind's relationship with God and the journey of transformation to wholeness. At the heart of the human condition is a desire to be more fully possessed by God, to know God more fully. Yet, at the same time, people fear God and try to remain aloof; they become "well-acquainted" and are "good neighbours", "respectful" but also keeping their distance. People remain aloof because to know God more fully requires death; to enter the experience of union with God "one must in a certain sense die" (Thomas Merton 1961:2). One remains aloof because one is afraid to die. The poem may suggest a mystical experience where the journey of a deepened spirituality requires that at some point, one surrenders completely to the Ultimate. People are frightened of God because to

surrender to the Transcendent God requires the "death" of the false and separated self that they take to be real. "Learning to breathe under water" could be interpreted as allowing oneself to be invaded by God and then living from a transformed integral, holistic oneness with the Ground of one's Being. Learning to breathe under water could depict being immersed in God and allowing God to fully immerse Godself in one.

On one level the poem can describe one's relationship with God. On another level the poem may describe the Church's reaction to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. For me, this study has been more than an intellectual exercise; it has been a heart experience that has involved reading, writing and researching through tears and deep questioning. There is a sense of being overwhelmed by the problems that are presented in the literature and what is witnessed in Church and community. In response to the statistics, the stories, the poverty, the abuse and the suffering, one may think of "flight", "drowning", or "death".

Perhaps the art of responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic is to do what the poem suggests, to "give up your house for a coral castle and learn to breathe under water." The main task of this chapter is to suggest a way of "learning to breathe under water" for the Church and to find out ways that the Church can give up her "house for a coral castle" for "when the sea comes calling", in response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Chapter four offered a discussion on themes that emerged through the data collection and data analysis process. The purpose of this fifth chapter, in the light of the research aims of facilitating transformation and standing in solidarity with the poor, is to use the data to suggest a model that could offer to the South African Church a gendered response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. A framework or model is offered rather than a programme so that local Churches and denominations can work out their own pastoral practices in response to an understanding of their unique contexts and needs. The model that is suggested is offered as a guide and a framework for a response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic that a Church may use.

Why should the Church respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Neville Richardson 2006:38)? I begin by highlighting some reasons why the Church should be involved in the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In explaining the *model of full humanity*, I describe the major influences on the model. Theoretical influences such as Abraham Maslow, Howard Clinebell and the seven *chakras* are outlined. I also illustrate how Ken Wilber's theory-making was remoulded, using the voices of the research participants and the lenses of feminist theology and Christian spirituality (section 5.3). The results of the weaving together of the data analysis and the theoretical influences are depicted in the *model of full humanity* (section 5.4). The model is explained by offering an overview (section 5.5). Detailed descriptions of the various

elements of the model are then given (section 5.6). I outline my reflections on the research journey before offering a summary conclusion to the chapter.

5.2 RATIONALE FOR THE INVOLVEMENT OF CHURCHES IN THE HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC

There are several reasons why Churches should respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic[1]. First, **the Jesus imperative shapes the spirituality of the Christian Church** and it is in Jesus that the motive for designing a caring response to HIV/AIDS is found (Neville Richardson 2006:41). Like Jesus, Churches are called to be bearers of Good News (Luke 4:18,19). The Church responds to the HIV/AIDS pandemic because the Spirit of the Lord has called Her to bring Good News to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to let the oppressed go free and to declare a year acceptable to the Lord. Sharing the Good News is evangelism. Compassion is one method of the Church's evangelism (Alison Munro 2003:32). Evangelism is understood as sharing the Good News of hope; in the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the members of the Church recognise that they are "wounded proclaimers of the kingdom of God" (Alison Munro 2003:32).

Second, **Churches have access to more people than any other institution** (Ronald Nicholson 1995:7). Churches see large sectors of the population once a week for Sunday worship. It is therefore practical to use this influence. "Churches are well placed to play a major role in the response to HIV/AIDS" (Neville Richardson 2006:38). Further, in some areas, Churches are trusted as reliable sources of information (Ronald Nicholson 1995:7). In the past, the curricula in schools were used to promote the ideals of a Christian nationalist government. This may mean that in some places people are still suspicious of government-led institutions of knowledge dissemination (Ronald Nicholson 1995:7). Churches on the other hand have a tradition of involvement in both adult and child education and are often seen to have different motives for education, such as a desire to assist in people's development. Churches, because of their contact with people, their influence in society and the trust that people have in the Church,[2] are in a unique position to do something about HIV/AIDS (Ronald Nicholson 1995:7, Edward Green 2003:67). Accepting this, Ronald Nicholson (1995:17) argues that the best method of halting the pandemic is for the Church

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[1] In chapter one, section 1.7.2, I argue that the HIV/AIDS pandemic requires that the Churches mobilise for action and that this research is offered as a service to the Church in guiding a gendered response to the pandemic.

[2] Some sectors of society are influenced by the postmodern milieu, which may mean that they mistrust aspects of the Church's teaching such as the claim for an absolute truth and even the alleged hierarchical ways of operating. Yet, at the same time, there are other areas of the country that may still express trust in the Church, based on some churches' response to apartheid, as the following quote suggests: "Ministers give hope because they saved my country during apartheid, blood sheds *(sic)* among our people and prayed for peace during the election and there was peace"(*Excerpt from a devotion written by a member of the Maskopas group, e-mail correspondence).*

to change behaviour through education. He further believes that this behaviour change is the domain of the Church (1995:17). He bases this on the abovementioned suggestions that the South African Church has developed networks of influence that penetrate urban and rural areas alike and has a tradition of adult and child education (1995:17). The Church therefore has an advantage not enjoyed by other sectors of society (Ronald Nicholson 1995:17).

While Ronald Nicholson offers a positive motivation for Churches to be involved in HIV/AIDS, I suggest that there are two shortfalls with his proposal. The first is that behaviour change of individuals has to be accompanied by change in society. An integrated approach is essential, as I will show in this chapter. Personal transformation and societal transformation have to work hand-in-glove. Individuals who have initiated change in their personal life will find it difficult to maintain this change if they live in an environment that mitigates against the change. Second, the gendered lens is necessary. It is unhelpful for women to agree to a change in their own behaviour if they are unable to negotiate these changes with their sexual partners because of a lack of their own empowerment as women. Ronald Nicholson (1995:47) does say that the Church has a responsibility to find ways of enhancing the rights of women in Africa, to make their own decisions about their future and their bodies; he does highlight the rights of women and children as an ethical issue in response to HIV/AIDS. More is necessary; the gendered perspective needs to turn the theology of AIDS inside out so that it is constructed differently and so that the perspectives of women are taken into account in moulding theology. Other activists may also challenge his notion that the core business of the Church is education; it may be argued that one core function of the Church is compassionate caring (Patricia Fresen 2003:62-9).

Thus, a third motivation for involvement in HIV/AIDS is that the **Church is called to serve the world with love** (Neville Richardson 2006:45). What inspires the Church's response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic is the love of God and love of neighbour (Luke 10:27) such that compassionate caring becomes her core business (Katherine Sakenfield 1990:175-182). The law of love in the context of HIV/AIDS is practised through compassionate care of others, as described in Matthew 25:36-36. Feeding those who are hungry and thirsty in the HIV/AIDS pandemic, visiting the sick and those in prison, welcoming people, especially the orphans who are the legacy of the AIDS pandemic, and clothing the naked become characteristics of Christian discipleship in an HIV-positive world. Poverty, patriarchy and HIV/AIDS are death-dealing and dehumanising; as such they are not the reign of God; this is why Christians respond to HIV/AIDS (Gustavo Gutierrez 2001:11). The Church responds to the HIV/AIDS pandemic because she is an incarnation of God's loving presence in the world; this belief has to translate into moral action (Ronald Nicholson 1995:7).

Finally, the Church responds to the HIV/AIDS pandemic because as the body of Christ, she is HIV-positive, (1 Corinthians 12:12). **The Church has AIDS** (Ron Russell-Coons 1990:35). I suggest a model for Churches wanting to put in place prevention and intervention strategies for the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The model is based on the understanding that what God desires for people and what people desire for themselves is life in all its fullness (John 10:10b). I turn now to a discussion on the theory that has influenced the model.

5.3   INFLUENCES OF THE MODEL

There are various models available in the fields of spirituality and psychology to guide the development of a *model of full humanity*. In the discussion below, the reader will notice that there are no female sources used. I was not able to find suitable models designed by women scholars that could guide my research. The theologising in this thesis is described as a dance and a dialogue between theory and data; thus the **women** research participants with whom I interacted in this study have helped me to develop a model that also has theoretical influences. These include models developed by Abraham Maslow and Howard Clinebell, the seven *chakras* and Ken Wilber. These are discussed below.

5.3.1   ABRAHAM MASLOW

One model from the field of psychology is Maslow's *Hierarchy of needs*. The principle in Maslow's model is that human growth to maturity is prompted by needs, which are arranged hierarchically (Neil Broekmann & Norman Duncan 1993:435).

Figure 5.1: Maslow's hierarchy of needs
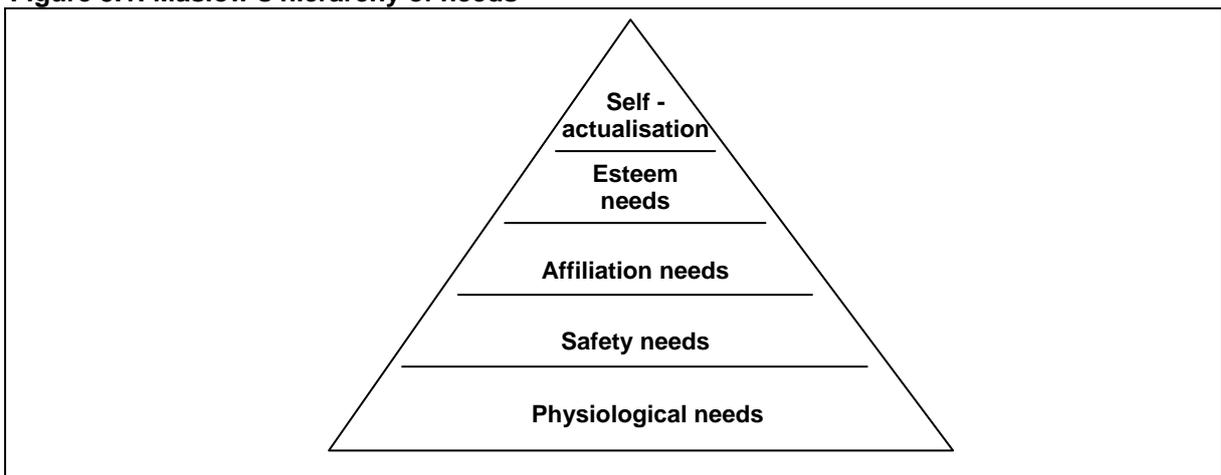
Neil Broekmann and Norman Duncan (1993:435)

The model suggests that as the more basic needs, such as physiological and safety needs, are met, higher level needs such as esteem needs and self-actualisation needs emerge. While the model is helpful in identifying areas of human growth such as physiological needs

and self-actualisation, the reason why this model may be found unhelpful is that it may imply that poor people cannot enjoy self-actualisation unless they find ways of overcoming their physiological and other lower order concerns. The so-called higher order needs such as self-actualisation and esteem needs are only met once the material needs are met. The data has shown that despite the poverty, sickness and the difficult circumstances of the participants, they still demonstrate a high degree of agency and empowerment. In some cases, it was precisely a lack of health and finance that inspired the agency and empowerment. The data shows how in some situations the research participants can experience self-actualisation despite 'lower order' needs such as food and safety not being met.

Howard Clinebell provides a different multi-faceted model that suggests that transformation to wholeness has different aspects.

5.3.2   HOWARD CLINEBELL

Howard Clinebell (1995:1), who offers an understanding of human wholeness, suggests that the task of a spiritual director or counsellor is to help people find the treasures in their lives. The goal of this treasure finding is liberation; liberation from dehumanisation, liberation for hope and liberation for transformation in society (Howard Clinebell 1995:3). In Howard Clinebell's (1995) framework, wholeness happens in a multifaceted way. He suggests that the spiritual director or counsellor should aim to facilitate wholeness in seven dimensions.

First, a person should aim to experience **wholeness at the level of mind**, which Howard Clinebell (1995:3) relates to self-esteem and how one defines oneself and how accepting one is of oneself and others. In the data analysis, the category ego included themes such as a positive self-esteem and the idea that HIV-positive people "are like other people". These ego themes can be described as wholeness at the level of mind (section 4.6.1).

Secondly, a person should enjoy **mind-body wholeness**, which can include re-energizing one's body for example by taking "body pleasure breaks" (Howard Clinebell 1995:8). The data analysis revealed both positive and negative approaches to embodiment (section 4.6.2). In the *model of full humanity* that is depicted in section 5.4, this is described as a healthy acceptance of embodiment.

Thirdly, a person should aspire to have **whole relationships with other people**. Howard Clinebell (1995:10) makes the point that people do not have relationships – they are relationships: "We carry these relationships within us through our lives". In the fully human model this is the positive experience of community building. In the data analysis, the

participants describe how a sense of belonging is a significant experience in coping with the effects of HIV/AIDS (section 4.6.6).

The **fourth** dimension of wholeness according to Howard Clinebell (1995:10) is that there is a **balance of work and play**. The balance between work and play was not an aspect of wholeness emerging from the data analysis. This may be ascribed to the research participants being unemployed so that their routine is not easily demarcated into work time and recreation time. In the *model of full humanity* that is presented in section 5.4, empowering people financially could facilitate the balance between work and play suggested by Howard Clinebell (1995:10). The need for paid employment was a recurring theme in the data.

Fifth, Howard Clinebell (1995:13) uses the term **biosphere** to describe a positive relationship with the universe. St Francis of Assisi is an example of a person who had a healthy relationship with the biosphere (Howard Clinebell 1995:13). St Francis related to the biosphere in such a way that he was able to call on brother wind and sister bird, he recognised the "thouness" of creation (Howard Clinebell 1995:13). The biosphere was not a significant theme to emerge from the data analysis, except when participants expressed the need to grow food gardens; it is therefore not represented in the *model of full humanity*. However, the lack of a positive relationship with the biosphere is a justice issue because the research participants have been alienated from their environment because of their poverty and urbanisation[3]. The domination of women in a patriarchy is parallel to the domination of the earth. Feminist spirituality thus recognises that wholeness with ecology must be a vital aspect of liberation from patriarchy. For example, Sallie McFague (1987:69-71) suggests that Christians view the world as God's body, implying that God's involvement and action in the world is intimate, interior and caring and not distant and aloof (1987:73).

At the **sixth** level, Howard Clinebell (1995:10) suggests a **whole relationship with institutions**. The data describes how many of the participants experience institutions as negative and unjust. For Howard Clinebell (1995:15), growth in relation to organisations inspires a passion for social justice. He says that through wholeness counselling, people can become agents for change in their communities (1995:15). Howard Clinebell (1995:16) does offer a gendered perspective in that he acknowledges power as a central issue in growth work and that personal and interpersonal power is linked with economic and social power systems. For example, he suggests that some women suffer from a negative self-esteem

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[3] Urbanisation affects one's relationship with the biosphere because in a technological age, one secures one's subsistence not from nature, but from machines (Ken Wilber 2000b:100).

due to sexism in society (1995:18). In the context of the data collection and analysis this negative self-esteem is further battered by a negative experience of community through stigma. In the *model of full humanity* that follows, a whole relationship with institutions is depicted at the level of injustice and vulnerability.

The **final** dimension of wholeness in Howard Clinebell's (1995:7,19) framework is **spiritual growth**. The aims of spiritual growth are to enhance hope and inner freedom through a relationship with God; this has an effect on the other dimensions of wholeness (1995:19). In the fully human model this is the level of awareness of God.

Howard Clinebell provides a helpful, multifaceted approach to wholeness that guides the *model of full humanity*. Another model that suggests that spirituality is transformation to wholeness and that was used in this thesis is that of the seven *chakras* found in the Eastern religions.

5.3.3   THE SEVEN *CHAKRAS*

Figure 5.2: The seven chakras
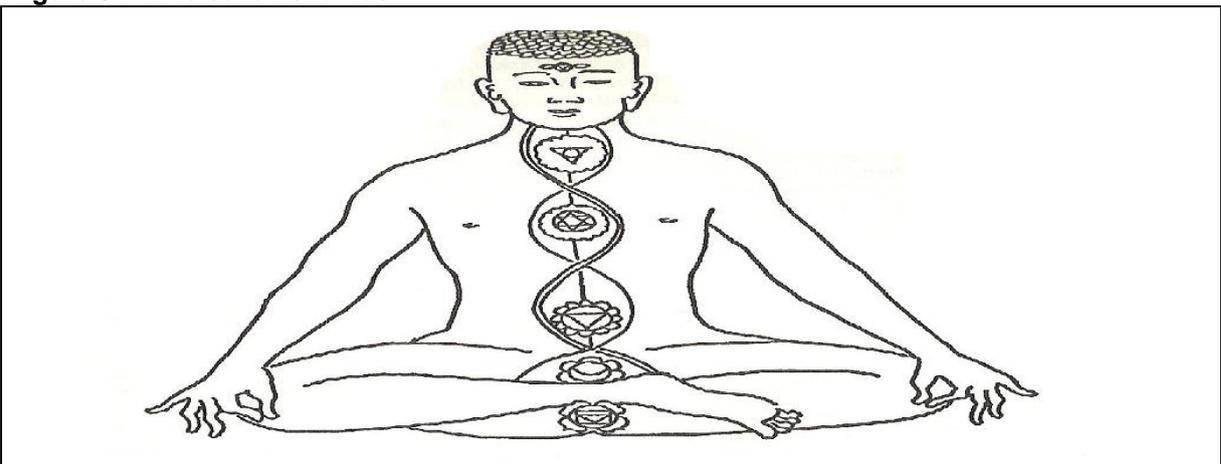
Ken Wilber (1981: 34)

According to the *kundalini* philosophy, there are seven major *chakras* or levels (Ken Wilber 1981:34). The **first *chakra*** represents **matter**, for example faecal matter, as well as earth and food; it is located at the base of the spine (Ken Wilber 1981:34 & 144). In the themes that emerged from the data analysis, a prominent category was the need for financial security as a way to meet food and accommodation requirements. Since financial empowerment is the means through which material needs are met, the first *chakra* representing earth and food, can be compared to the financial empowerment category found in the data analysis and the *model of full humanity* (section 4.6.3).

The **second *chakra*** is located in the genitals and could represent **embodiment** themes emerging from the data analysis (section 4.6.2). In the *model of full humanity*, the second *chakra* describes the embodiment level of wholeness.

The **third *chakra*** is located in the stomach and symbolises **gut reactions** such as emotions as well as power and vitality (Ken Wilber 1981:34). The third *chakra* can express emotions such as loneliness, depression and even a positive self-esteem that emerged from the data (section 4.6.1). In the fully human model it represents engaging with emotions at the ego level.

The **fourth *chakra*** is situated in the **heart** area and is associated with love, belonging or **membership**. In the data analysis, some consistent themes that emerged related how a positive sense of community was an aspect of being whole (section 4.6.6). In the *model of full humanity* the fourth chakra is represented at the level of community.

The **fifth *chakra*,** located near the voice box, represents discourse and **intellect** (Ken Wilber 1981:34). The fifth *chakra* could represent the empowerment of women, which often occurs as women gain voice. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1996:xx-xxv, 83-150), for example, describes the power of naming one's oppression as a necessary process in liberation. In the data analysis, various descriptions of the experience of injustice emerged. An aspect of personal agency and empowerment is being able to name the causes and experiences of injustice. The fifth *chakra* is represented on the *model of full humanity* at the level of injustice and the empowerment of women.

The sixth and seventh *chakras* represent spirituality maturity. The **sixth *chakra*** is found in the **mystical third eye** behind the eyebrows (Ken Wilber 1983:144). It represents the psychic realm. The **seventh level or *chakra*** is depicted on the crown, but in fact is also beyond the head, it suggests **transcendence** (Ken Wilber 1981:34,144). In the data analysis, awareness of God was an aspect of the participants' experience of reality. The sixth and seventh *chakras* together represent the level of awareness of God in the suggested *model of full humanity*.

The seven *chakras* describe the journey of transformation to wholeness also known as *Kundalini* awakening. *Kundalini* power is said to be consciousness itself (Ken Wilber 1981:144). The growth in consciousness is described as moving through the seven *chakras*, beginning at the base of the spine, moving through the other *chakras* until, when fully developed, it passes beyond the seventh *chakra* "into radical Voidness" (Ken Wilber 1981:144). *Kundalini* awakening embraces all seven *chakras* in an integral transformation to

wholeness. Likewise the *model of full humanity* suggests weaving together the different aspects of being human in the journey toward full humanity.

Having briefly discussed the *hierarchy of needs* and the seven *chakras*, which provided tools in shaping the themes and categories that emerged form the data analysis, I have also discussed Howard Clinebell's seven dimensions of wholeness. The major influence on the fully human model was Ken Wilber and the *Spectrum of Consciousness.*

5.3.4 KEN WILBER AND THE *SPECTRUM OF CONSCIOUSNESS*

I have adapted Ken Wilber's *Spectrum of Human Consciousness* to present the themes and categories that emerged from the data collection and analysis described in chapter four. The primary dimensions for the wafer *model of full humanity* (depicted in section 5.4) are taken from the categories in the data analysis described in the previous chapter.

As Ken Wilber's theory was used to shape and present the data, my first task is to introduce some aspects of Ken Wilber and his work. I then offer a defence as to the reasons for the decision to use Ken Wilber's analysis. My third task is to offer a description of Ken Wilber's *Spectrum of Consciousness.* Wilber's *Spectrum of Consciousness* is used, but not fully critiqued. The comprehensives and integration of Wilber's work prevent this from being done within the scope of this research project. Instead, his insights are used as a tool, adapted to the context, and reshaped by the voices of the poor that emerge from the data. It follows that my task is to explain how the themes emerging from the data suggest modifications to Ken Wilber's model and suggest reasons why these differences are necessary.

Ken Wilber

Ken Wilber, "a hard to miss six foot four and bald man" is described as a leading theorist in the new field of transpersonal psychology (Terry Killam Wilber in Ken Wilber 2000a:7). Transpersonal psychology studies the psychology of spiritual experience (2000a:7). Ken Wilber has been hailed as the "long-sought Einstein of consciousness research" (2000a:7). He is considered the most widely read and influential American philosopher of contemporary times (jacket cover Ken Wilber 2000a). Some of his publications include *No boundary: Eastern and Western approaches to personal growth (1985), A Sociable God: A brief introduction to transcendental sociology (1983), Up from Eden (1981), Sex, ecology and spirituality (1995), A brief history of everything (2000b)* and *The Eye of the Spirit (2000c).* These books offer an integral vision embracing the essential insights of Eastern and Western spirituality and are applied to a wide range of fields including spirituality, theology, sociology, anthropology and psychology (jacket cover Ken Wilber 2000a). One of Ken

Wilber's works that impressed me was: *Grace and grit: Spirituality and healing in the life and death of Treya Killam Wilber* (2000a). The book is evidence of an integral and holistic spirituality in that the biography described is spirituality. The book shows how Ken Wilber's work as a philosopher is deeply embedded in the praxis of his spirituality, how he relates to people and how he lives his life. The book intertwines his story, extracts from journals written by his wife, his spiritual growth and spiritual disciplines with some aspects of the perennial philosophy and the wisdom traditions of the world. In *Grace and grit,* Ken Wilber emulates the goal of feminist Christian spirituality when he suggests that there should be no split between the private and public selves.

The main reason for the use of Ken Wilber is the integral vision of consciousness that he offers as transformation to wholeness. The reason for the choice of Ken Wilber is that the model he offers is integrative and holistic and thus embodies the aims of feminist Christian spirituality. I was at first tempted to categorise the themes emerging from the data analysis process according to the headings mind, body and spirit. But, the mind/body/spirit split is the fragmented worldview that characterises the Western psyche and is evidenced in many fields including Psychology, Anthropology and Sociology. My 'knee-jerk' reaction of automatically using this typology itself suggests how I have imbibed the fragmented view of personhood. Christian feminist spirituality, as described in this research, seeks to heal this fragmented worldview (section 2.6.2).

The *Spectrum of Consciousness* (1993) offers a pluri-dimensional view to human consciousness. The integration suggested by this model encompasses a healing approach to the dichotomies that shape human existence, such as the mind, body and soul division. As such it offers a helpful tool to the feminist Christian spirituality goal of depicting a whole and integrated consciousness. The *Spectrum of Consciousness* is helpful to the degree that it provides a map of the journey to full humanity, which is a guiding principle throughout this thesis and a goal of feminist theology and Christian spirituality.

I am aware that one criticism that some readers may level against me is that Ken Wilber is not explicitly a feminist. My response is to point out that being a feminist does not require that one use only resources by women. Moreover, Ken Wilber has covered the theme of feminism in his publications, especially in *The Eye of the Spirit (2000c), A brief history of everything (2000b)* and *Sex, ecology and spirituality (1995).* Further, the integral view that he suggests and the use of perennial philosophy means that he offers an insight that is useful in a wide range of fields. However, it may be pertinent to summarise some of Ken Wilber's views on gender.

Ken Wilber's views on gender can be discerned from his model on human development, described in *The Eye of the Spirit (2000c)* chapter 8 where he suggests an *integral feminism* which attempts to bring together several schools of feminism that have hitherto resisted connection (2000c:591). He states that women seem to emphasise embodied, personal relationships and communion while men seem to emphasise autonomy and agency (2000c:590,600). Ken Wilber (2000c:587,589) argues that many feminists misunderstand hierarchy in the pursuit of democratic, egalitarian structures that he calls web-only models. While many feminists have rightly criticised pathological autonomy (usually masculine) which detrimentally effects communion with others, he argues that exaggerated communion may also be pathological for women who fear being whole in themselves and only want to be part of something else (2000c:589). Many feminist authors would agree with Ken Wilber's analysis and suggest that while some Christian teaching emphasises self-emptying, self-sacrificing love, in reality women have been detrimentally effected by too much self-sacrificing - female sin is not having a self[4] (Susan Rakoczy 2004:266).

Ken Wilber (2000c:598-599) teaches that in the process of transformation to wholeness, neither pathological agency nor pathological communion is preferable. Moreover pathological communion, which is usually feminine, is not the answer to pathological agency, which is usually masculine. The differences between male and female also imply that the spiritual development of women and men often differ. Spiritual practises appealing to women are body-centred and immanent, offering an embodied mysticism that is in contrast to the usually traditional male, transcendental, ascending, driven spiritual practices. Nevertheless, both women and men have access to agency and communion in the process of transformation to wholeness (Ken Wilber 2000c:600).

Having offered brief introductory comments on Ken Wilber, suggested some reasons why his theory is used, and outlined some aspects of his view of gender, Ken *Wilber's Spectrum of Consciousness* is now explained after which some of the dance steps between his theory and the data, and where they differ, will be offered. Most of these differences arise from the fact that the storytellers are African women whose consciousness is shaped differently to the philosophical influences that sculpt Ken Wilber.

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[4] See also section 6.7.

Ken Wilber's Spectrum of Consciousness

Figure 5.3: The *Spectrum of Consciousness*
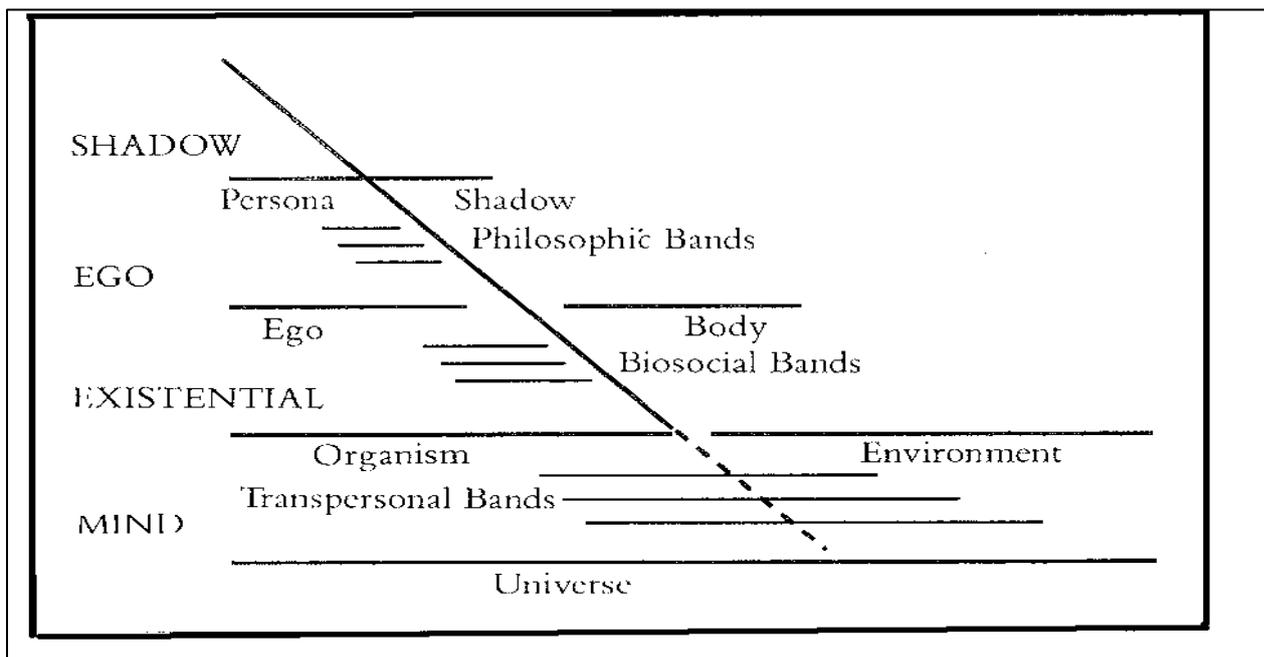
Ken Wilber (1993:21-33)

The *Spectrum of Consciousness* is a pluri-dimensional approach to understanding human consciousness (Ken Wilber 1993:22). At each level of the *Spectrum,* there is a marked and easily noticeable way of understanding personal identity, which ranges from "the Supreme Identity of cosmic consciousness through several gradations or bands to the drastically narrow sense of identity associated with egoic consciousness" (Ken Wilber 1993:22). The deepest level, at the base of the diagram, is the Supreme identity, which is the experience of oneness with the Godhead, that which Wilber calls the level of Mind. The other "prominent nodes" on the *Spectrum of Consciousness,* which evolve from the level of Mind, include the existential level, the ego level and the shadow level. The use of the term nodes is meant to show that the different levels of the *Spectrum of Consciousness* blend into each other.

A diagonal, slanting line, from the top left corner to the bottom right corner, divides the *Spectrum* in two. The line represents the self and not-self boundary. It represents how the human person pushes threatening or foreign aspects of her/his identity out of his or her awareness (Ken Wilber 1993:23). That which is deemed acceptable to the psyche is contained on the left side of the self/other line while that which is foreign or threatening is "pushed" to the not-self area of the slanting line. For example, for the person who identifies with the persona, the shadow or negative aspects of the identity, as well as the body and the environment, are deemed to be outside of the self, either alien or threatening and are "pushed" to the not-self area of the slanting line (Ken Wilber 1993:23).

The self/not-self slanting line also represents how the growth to wholeness happens in a path of descent toward the level of Mind. In the growth toward wholeness, a person may progress between the different levels represented on the *Spectrum* and return to previous levels in the journey to awareness. The slanting line begins to break up at the transpersonal bands and disappears all together at Mind (Ken Wilber 1993:23). The self and not-self boundary disappears at the level of mind to illustrate how the human person can potentially experience complete unity with the Godhead. Thomas Merton (1961:1) describes this state as the realisation that "life and being in us proceed from an invisible, transcendent and infinitely abundant Source".

Each of the levels of the *Spectrum of Consciousness* is explained below, beginning with the deepest and most authentic level, the level of Mind and concluding with the narrowest approach to identity, the shadow level.

At the **level of Mind**, the person realises that her/his innermost consciousness and the Consciousness of the Ultimate Reality of the universe are at one (Ken Wilber 1993:22). The Hindu philosophers explain the concept of *advaita,* which indicates that *atman* and *Brahman* are one. The *atman* is the authentic spirit of the human person while *Brahman* is the Spirit of the universe (Ken Wilber 1993:22). In Christian language, the transcendent God of the universe is present within a person's deepest being; Colossians 1:27, for example, says that the secret of the universe is that Christ is within the human person. For Ken Wilber the word Mind can also refer to the Godhead, Spirit, Allah, Brahman and Tao depending on its context (Ken Wilber 1993:22). From a Christian perspective, the level of Mind depicts the Christian experience of being made one with the Godhead through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. As this thesis encapsulates the fields of feminist theology and Christian spirituality, the word "Trinity" may be more appropriate than "Mind" to describe this deepest level of reality. The *Spectrum of Consciousness* suggests that the level of Trinity is reality. The level of the Godhead is about finding the centre of awareness, the pure Self that is timeless and eternal (Ken Wilber 2000:xv). The other levels or nodes that are described exist because of the creation of dualism and separation from the Ultimate Reality, the Trinity.

The **transpersonal bands** precede the contemplative or mystical experience of finding oneself at the level of Mind. These transpersonal bands depict an area on the *Spectrum of Consciousness* that is supra individual, where one does not define oneself in individualistic terms, neither is one yet conscious of how one's identity is one with the Godhead (Ken Wilber 1993:23).

At the **existential level,** the person has integrated her body into her identity, but experiences herself as being separate from her wider environment. This is the first level at which the self/other boundary line is solidly drawn (Ken Wilber 1993:24). At the existential level, the psychophysical organisms experience herself as separate from her environment; the wider environment is "pushed" to the not-self area of the slanting line (Ken Wilber 1993:23,4).

The **biosocial bands** that occur at the upper levels of the existential node represent the cultural institutions that mediate identity to the person (Ken Wilber 1993:24). The biosocial bands are culturally conditioned sensory screens that filter experience such that experience is interpreted through a particular cultural and social lens (Ken Wilber 1993:24). The biosocial bands influence epistemological assumptions as the theoretical framework through which one interprets experience and sees reality (see section 3.2).

At the **level of ego**, the person identifies with her cognitive abilities and denies her embodied reality. People who most identify themselves at this level say, "I have a body" not, "I am my body" (Ken Wilber 1993:24, Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel 1994). It is as though they exist *in* a body not *as* a body (Ken Wilber 1993:24). The person at the ego level is heard to say: "Mind over matter". The person at this level identifies his or her identity in the mind where intellectual processes dominate and tends to ignore the body.

At the **shadow level**, Ken Wilber (1993:24) observes that sometimes a person separates aspects of her identity and disowns unwanted parts of her psyche. What happens is that she identifies with only parts of her identity; her self-understanding is shallow. Examples of aspects of the human psyche that a person rejects may include anger, jealousy, guilt and other forms of brokenness that are painful or perceived as 'evil' (Ken Wilber 1993:24). In reality, these rejected aspects of the self do not go away; they exist on the "not-self" part of the slanting line boundary. The path of full humanity as transformation to wholeness requires that these shadow aspects be reintegrated into a person's identity. Growth in spirituality at this level requires the spiritual disciplines of confessing a person's denial of the shadow self and learning to acknowledge the shadow aspects of identity.

In summary, the *Spectrum of Consciousness* represents how at each level of the *Spectrum*, a person experiences an increasingly narrow sense of identity, from the universe to one aspect of the universe called organism, from organism to one aspect of the organism called ego and from ego to one aspect of ego called persona as the false self that is presented to the world (Ken Wilber 1993:24-25).

Ken Wilber (1993:21-33) provides a model for understanding spirituality as transformation to wholeness. In chapter two I defined Christian spirituality as being and becoming fully human which, in essence, is transformation to wholeness, made possible as a gift of God's grace (see section 2.7.3). Ken Wilber's *Spectrum of Consciousness* offers a map of this transformation to wholeness and describes the journey of becoming a fully human person. Thus the explicit link between Ken Wilber's *Spectrum of consciousness* and spirituality is in the process of transformation to wholeness.

The core insight that Ken Wilber (1993:21) offers is perennial philosophy, which is described as a universal doctrine as to the nature of reality that underpins the major religious and mystical traditions of the world. The multidisciplinary nature of Christian spirituality embraces not only cross-cultural approaches, but is also confident in the use of sources from other disciplines such as, in this instance, Ken Wilber, perennial philosophy and transpersonal psychology (see section 2.5.5, page 64).

My theoretical framework is feminist Christian spirituality, which means there are some differences between the model that I offer in section 5.4 and the *Spectrum of Consciousness.* The Trinitarian, Christological and grace-filled approach of Christian spirituality means that I differ from Ken Wilber and the perennial philosophy in some instances. For example, what Ken Wilber describes as the Level of Mind, I understand as the mutual indwelling of the fully human person in the Trinity. The centrality of Christ in Christian spirituality means that my method incorporates embodied, incarnational elements. Christian spirituality also emphasises that transformation to wholeness is not something that the individual achieves, but it is imputed; it is a gift of grace. There are also differences resulting from the influence of the data drawn from the participants in the research.

How the data influences the theory

There are differences between the *Spectrum of Consciousness* and the fully human model that is offered in this fifth chapter. One difference between the two models is that Ken Wilber offers an evolving sense of consciousness. His model emerges out of a perennial philosophy and his understanding is that wholeness at one level produces wholeness at another level. I am suggesting that a prevention or intervention HIV/AIDS program can be focussed at any level of identity and will influence wholeness at other levels. It is not necessary to experience the fully human model progressively; as a person does not need wholeness at one level to attain wholeness at the next. Rather, wholeness at any one of the levels nurtures wholeness at the other levels.

There is also a difference between the nodes or dimensions on the fully human model and Ken Wilber's *Spectrum of Consciousness.* The *model of full humanity* explicitly highlights wholeness at a financial level, which is not mentioned in Ken Wilber's *Spectrum of Consciousness.* It may be argued that financial empowerment could be included at the existential level of the *Spectrum of Consciousness*. However, the data shows that for the participants there is a link between experiencing financial empowerment and being fully human.

Another difference between the *model of full humanity* and Ken Wilber's *Spectrum of Consciousness* entails the agency of women. The personal transformation of women is an important strategic aspect of corporate transformation and promotes the dismantling of a patriarchal culture. This difference is directly influenced by the gender perspective.

A fourth difference between the dimensions of the *model of full humanity* that I discuss in section 5.4, and Ken Wilber's *Spectrum,* is related to taxonomy. While Ken Wilber refers to the Ultimate level as Mind (or Godhead or Tao), I use the phrase *awareness of God*. Moreover, in terms of the Christian worldview, God is understood in Trinitarian terms, which is not the same as Ken Wilber's *Mind*. The use of the phrase *awareness of God* is used understanding that the Trinitarian Godhead interpenetrates every aspect of reality and a person's being. God's desire for creation is mutual indwelling: God resting in creation and creation resting in God. Awareness of God is used as a way of expressing the relationship to the Divine that describes the final level.

In summary, I have outlined Abraham Maslow's *Hierarchy of needs*, Howard Clinebell's *Seven dimensions of wholeness,* the seven *chakras,* and Ken Wilber's *Spectrum of Consciousness*. The purpose of outlining these theoretical influences is to structure the themes emerging from the data analysis in chapter four. These theoretical influences and the contributions drawn from the research participants are woven together to offer a *model of full humanity*, depicted in section 5.4. I first offer an overview of the model (section 5.5) before describing each aspect of the model in detail (section 5.6).

5.4   A MODEL OF FULL HUMANITY

Figure 5.4   A model of full humanity
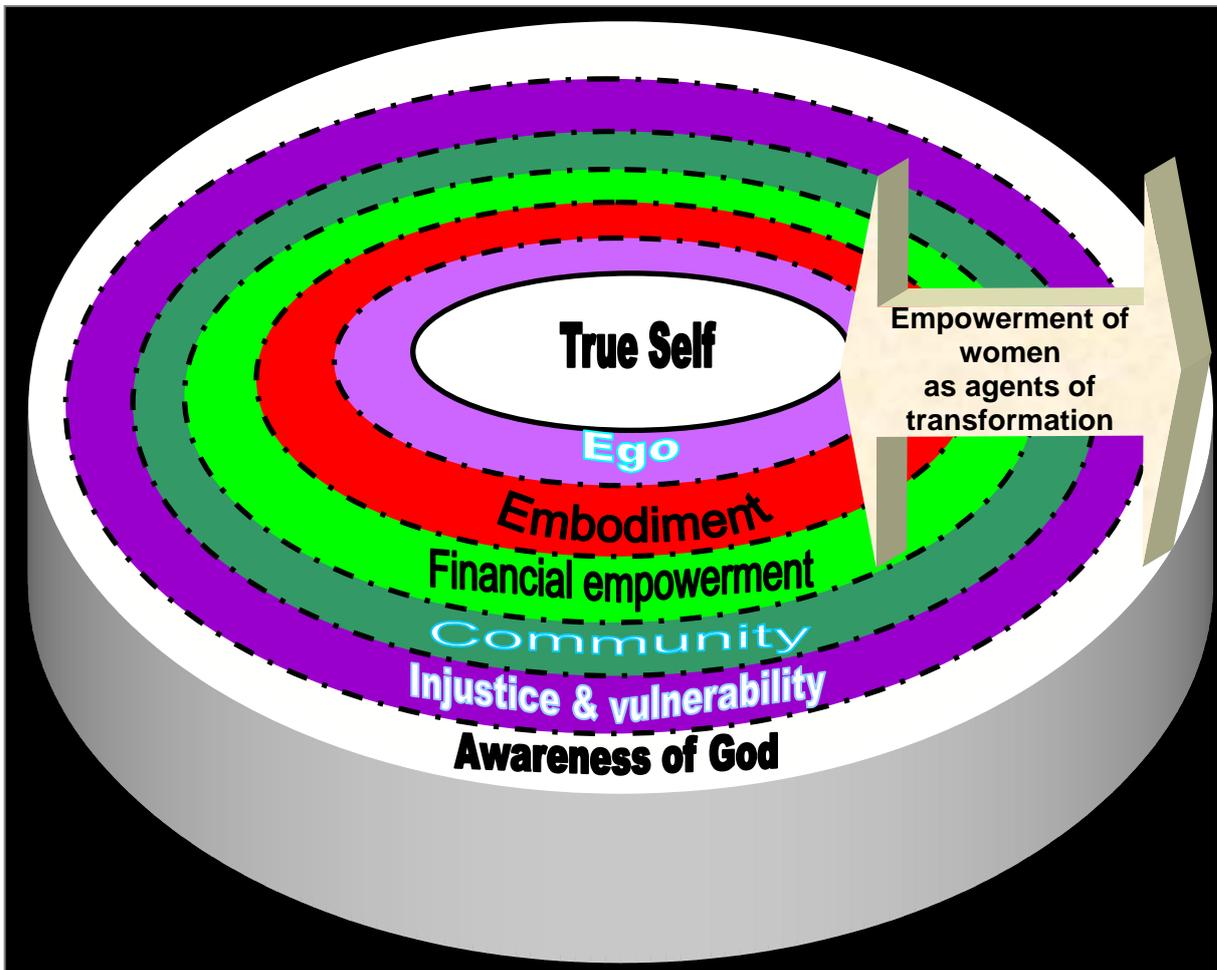
5.5   AN OVERVIEW OF THE MODEL OF FULL HUMANITY

The aim of this model is to provide a systematic way of understanding and practising a spirituality of transformation to wholeness, which is described in this thesis as being fully human or a fully human spirituality. The model is born out of an attempt to listen to and to learn from the poor by walking in solidarity with them (section 2.3). In the course of learning from the poor, the comments of Jon Sobrino (1988:163) point to an accurate picture of reality: "The hope of the poor is to succeed in becoming a fully human person and to live in a society that is "not composed of wolves and sheep". In chapter two, this thesis suggests that the concept full humanity offers a paradigm that expresses God's desire for humans to live in a context of justice and well-being (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 1993:12). Briefly, full humanity is the human person resting in communion with God and learning friendship with

the environment, with others and within herself[5]. In this process of communion with God, others and the self, the person is transformed to wholeness as the fragmented parts of her/his identity are brought together. I understand full humanity as a vision for transformation to integral wholeness. This means wholeness on the level of the individual and wholeness on the level of the community. The aim of the model is take seriously the need for personal and political transformation and to find ways of implementing such an integral transformation. The model depicts a visual presentation of what being a fully human person is, and is a resource for developing a fully human community, by offering a gendered Christian response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The model is in the shape of a wafer, which symbolises the body of Christ at the Eucharist. The model consists of seven **concentric circles** that make up a wafer (fully described in 5.6.1). Seven is considered the number of completeness in Scripture. These concentric circles represent the multiple layers that make up human identity. Humans can experience brokenness at any one or more of the circles represented on the model. The colour of the concentric circles is influenced by the symbolism of liturgical colours. The levels of True-Self and awareness of God are white, signifying celebration in unity with God. Purple is the colour of repentance or mourning and is used in Advent and Lent. The dimension of injustice and ego are depicted in purple because of the hope for repentance. Green is the colour of growth and depicts the dimensions of community and financial empowerment, which have connotations of growth. Red is the colour of martyrs, blood and the Holy Spirit. Red is used to represent the level of embodiment because of the colour's connotation with blood and earthiness.

Each of the concentric circles represents an aspect of human identity. The outer and innermost circles co-inhere as they are connected. The innermost circle is the True-Self or the presence of Christ within. The outer circle is the awareness of the presence of God that interpenetrates the entire cosmos. The connection between the inner and outer layers on the model suggests how the core of the person is one with the Divine Godhead (Beverley Lazetta 2005:155). God is also embodied at each level of the model, hence the dotted lines for each level.

The **seven concentric circles** are levels that are adapted from the categories that emerged in the data analysis process and are summarised in table 4.1 in section 4.6. The category **ego** refers to the inner dialogue that occurs within a person and embraces themes such as

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[5] For example, in section 5.3.2, I discussed how there are different dimensions to wholeness including spiritual growth, wholeness with the biosphere and institutions, whole relationships with other people and mind-body wholeness (Howard Clinebell 1995:3-18).

loneliness, fear, despair, suicidal tendencies and a positive self-esteem. The second category is **financial empowerment** and includes accommodation, food and material needs. The third category unfolding from the data analysis relates to stories describing either positive or negative experiences of **embodiment**. Embodiment groups together themes relating to experiences of the body, such as positive, healthy living and the physical effects of HIV/AIDS. The fifth category summarises **experiences of injustice** such as sexual violence, stigma, abuse and orphans due to AIDS. The sixth category in the data analysis relates to **community** experiences such as the therapeutic benefits of support groups and families that accept the reality of a positive HIV status. A seventh category in the data analysis describes **women as agents of transformation** in their different roles as educators, mentors and care-givers, which is not depicted as a circle on the wafer model but is applied as the gender lens that interpenetrates each level of the model. The final category is **awareness of God** and includes the fruits of spiritual growth such as hope, gratitude and faith. These themes, supported by theory, form the seven concentric circles in the *model of full humanity*.

The categories of themes discussed in chapter four have been adapted in two ways in developing the *model of full humanity*. First, the category **women as agents of transformation**, establishes the gender perspective that needs to be applied at each of the seven levels and is represented with the **arrow** that intersects all seven circles. The arrow suggests that at each level of identity represented by the concentric circles, the empowerment of women as agents of transformation must be nurtured.

The second adaptation is that a dimension of the **True-Self** was added that was not mentioned in the data. Healthy spirituality teaches that the path of spiritual growth rests in living out of the True-Self, which is the presence of Christ within. Often the True-Self is engaged through the disciplines of solitude and silence. The innermost circle of the True-Self did not emerge from the data, yet is depicted in the *model of full humanity* for two reasons. First, the True-Self emerges from evidence in the literature on Christian spirituality. Second, whilst I learn from the research participants through listening to their stories, they also have an opportunity to learn from me. There is a dance and a dialogue such that we influence each other. There is therefore space to include the category True-Self as a moment where the research participants learn from me.

The *model of full humanity* provides a visual representation of full humanity as transformation to integral wholeness. In the model, wholeness at each of the concentric circles is nurtured. The intention is that growth in wholeness also involves an expanding sense of identity. With reference to the model this means integrating more of the circles into

a person's identity in addition to experiencing wholeness at each of these levels (described fully in section 5.6.5). Thus another aspect of the *model of full humanity* is to understand that in using it, one should have a **"needle with many threads"** approach[6]. While a person may identify one level of the model and place the needle there, it is necessary to ensure that each thread in the needle touches all other levels and weaves them together. The "needle with many threads" connects each concentric circle and represents this journey of integral transformation.

In summary, there are four broad components of the *model of full humanity*. First, the model is in the form of a wafer. Second, the model consists of seven concentric circles that were adapted from the categories of themes emerging from the data analysis. Third, the arrow that intersects all seven circles represents how the empowerment of women is nurtured at each level of the model. Fourth, the model is applied through understanding the "needle with many threads" approach, such that all levels of being are woven together in a process of integral transformation.

5.6   A DETAILED EXPLANATION OF THE MODEL

Having offered a brief overview of the fully human model, the next section discusses each aspect of the model. Included in this discussion is the visual representation of the model as a communion wafer, an explanation on each of the circular levels depicted in the model, a description of the arrow and the "needle with many threads".

5.6.1   THE VISUAL PRESENTATION OF THE MODEL AS A WAFER

The image for the model is that of a wafer. A wafer is a mixture of flour and water, it is a round piece of "bread" and is used in some Churches such as the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Lutheran denominations, to symbolise the body of Christ at communion[7]. According to

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[6] The purpose of this fifth chapter is to **describe** the *model of full humanity*. Chapter six suggests how the model can be **applied**. The "needle with many threads" image is discussed further in relation to the application of the model in chapter six.

[7] I understand that the wafer symbolises Christ's body in the manner taught by Karl Rahner. Karl Rahner's theology of the symbol, which is derived from his Christology, argues that Christ is understood as the self-expression or Real symbol of God (Karl Rahner 1974:14; Anne Carr 1973:367). Flowing from this idea, the Church, as the "official presence of the grace of Christ" (Karl Rahner 1974:19&23) is the real symbol for Christ and this real symbol makes present what it represents. The Church is thus a fundamental sacrament of God's offer of grace and of Christ's continued presence in the world. Likewise, the Eucharist is a real symbol for the Church through which the Church fulfils Her purpose of being the body of Christ. The bread or wafer, which is a real symbol for the body of Christ, makes present that which it symbolises. That is not to say that the Eucharist is a production of Christ's real presence in the bread and wine for the purposes of an individual meeting with God (Karl Rahner 1974:82). Through participation in the sacrament of

the Scriptures, Christ instituted the Eucharist at the last meal He shared with his friends before being crucified (1 Corinthians 11:17-33). Eating the bread or wafer and drinking the wine is symbolic of participating in the body and blood of Christ. According to Vatican II (in Lucien Deiss 1975:2), the Eucharist is "the fount and apex of the Christian life. The Eucharist is a sacrament through which grace is communicated to Christians. The priest's wafer is elevated during the Eucharist liturgy, as depicted in figure 5.5.

Figure 5.5   The Communion wafer
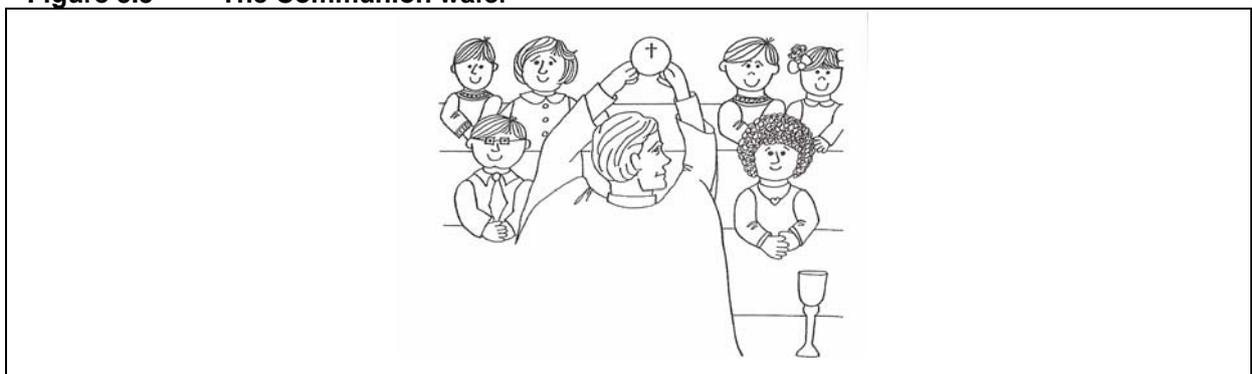
From *Preparation for communion* notes, St Margaret's Parish, Bedfordview

There are two reasons why the wafer image is helpful as a model for a gendered Christian response to HIV/AIDS. The first reason is that it confirms the identity of Christians as the broken body of Christ. In Communion, Christians feast on what they are, the body of Christ (Kenneth Leech 1980:109). Christians are the body of Christ, but they are the broken body of Christ: if one member of the body suffers, all suffer (1 Corinthians 12:26). The image of the wafer as a *model of full humanity* highlights this belief.

When I conduct AIDS services of worship, one of my aims is to make clear for people that the HIV pandemic is not a problem "out there" as if HIV is external to the Church. I clarify for worshippers that HIV is a problem in our own pews by saying to them

> The body of Christ is HIV-positive. We are the body of Christ. We are the body of Christ that is broken. We are the ones who are HIV-positive. The virus flows in our veins. When one suffers we all suffer. We are broken, but we are broken for the life of the world!

Extract from my journal (June 12, 2005)

The above quote incarnates HIV/AIDS within the Church context by implying that the body of Christ, the Church, is HIV-positive. More than understanding solidarity with the whole body of Christ, which is HIV-positive, Christians need also to understand that as a human race, as

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Communion, one is incorporated into the mystical body of Christ in which one shares in the Holy Spirit (Karl Rahner 1974:83).

a "global community", humankind's immune system is deteriorating because of the effects of HIV/AIDS (Patricia Fresen 2003:65).

The second reason why the image is helpful is that it establishes a theme of embodiment, which is important to understand in the implementation of the model. The starting point for using this model, as in the thesis, is the preferential option for the poor and standing in solidarity with those who live life on the margins of society. The use of the wafer reminds Christians how Jesus stands in solidarity with people because in Communion they become one with Christ. This intrinsic, organic unity is illustrated in the prayer of humble access where communicants pray:

> Grant us therefore, gracious Lord
> so to eat the flesh of your dear son Jesus Christ
> and to drink his blood
> that we may evermore dwell in him and he in us
> (Church of the Province of Southern Africa 1989:128).

Jesus is the definitive sign of God's intervention in human history and a declaration of God's intimate connection with humanity. To participate in Communion is to remember that Jesus is an intimate part of a Christian's being. Jesus invites followers, through his own lived example, to solidarity with those who suffer (Patricia Fresen 2003:66).

5.6.2   A DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVEN CIRCULAR DIMENSIONS

The wafer is depicted as having seven concentric circles. Each circle represents a level at which any human person may connect. These concentric circles are the categories of themes that emerged from the data discussed in chapter four. In addition, the True-Self dimension is added as is the transformation of women, stressed diagrammatically through the arrow being interwoven through each of the seven dimensions. In chapter four, seven broad themes were identified from the data collected for this thesis. These include ego, embodiment, financial empowerment, community, women as agents of transformation and awareness of God. Each of these themes is contained in the model, either as a circle or in the interconnecting arrow.

In the discussion that follows, each level is described. Spiritual disciplines that enhance the wholeness and full humanity of people at each of the dimensions are suggested. The phrases spiritual disciplines, means of grace and spiritual therapies are used interchangeably and are understood as gifts or tools that aid the growth to wholeness of people. A spiritual discipline is an activity or lifestyle decision that opens a Christian to the influence of Spirit and grace.

To appreciate how these seven concentric circles operate in the journey of transformation to full humanity, each of the circles depicted in the model is now described and discussed in relation to the data and relevant literature. The descriptions of each of these levels are called dimensions which is meant to imply that each circular layer flows into another and that no one level is independent. The description of each of these dimensions demonstrates how wholeness at that level can heal the fragments of human identity in the process of becoming fully human. To this end, within each description of each dimension, the links with the others dimensions are made clear. In section 5.7, a suggestion as to how these circles are re-membered in the process of spiritual growth and integral transformation is offered.

True-Self

The first circle is the innermost circle. It is the **True-Self** and is embedded in the outermost circle of awareness of God. This outer circle is the ultimate potential of human consciousness itself, which is integral wholeness (Ken Wilber 1981:7). Every other circle has a dotted line to indicate that the different levels of one's identity interpenetrate each other and that the Godhead is present at each level. The dotted lines of the circles also indicate that the human person is a compound identity and that there are many layers to being human. The outer circle has a solid line, which illustrates that all the other circles are contained within the Godhead and emerge from the Godhead[8].

The innermost circle, the **True-Self**, represents the Christ presence within each individual, where each person can say with Thomas Merton (1961:37) "I am held in being by my Creator". The secret of one's true identity, the True-Self, is hidden in God and is identical with God, which is why the innermost circle is embedded in the outermost circle. According to Thomas Merton (1961:36) a person discovers the self in discovering God. Thus, at the deepest root of who a person is, she is united with God. The journey of authentic spirituality is seen as a descent into the True-Self, which is Timeless and Eternal and is the path of mutual indwelling in the Godhead. Meister Eckhart (in Cyprian Smith 1986:317) also taught the possibility of a union between the soul and God; he suggested that there is possibility for the soul to rest in God. He explained that this is because of the grace of God and because there is an intrinsic similarity between the soul and God. The True-Self consists primarily of being true to who one is, for as Thomas Merton (1961:43) explains: "For me to be a saint is to be myself". The True self is about finding oneself in God (Thomas Merton 1961:43). As Teresa of Avila's (in Karen Armstrong 1985: 200) poem beckons:

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[8] The idea that all levels of human identity emerge from the Godhead (or awareness of God) dimension and enfold into the Godhead is inspired by Ken Wilber's model *Spectrum of Consciousness,* which depicts how all levels of reality are manifestations of Spirit (see section 5.3.4).

> Soul, thou must seek thyself in Me
> And thou must seek for Me in thee.

However, people are "shadowed by an illusory person: The **false self**" (Thomas Merton 1961:34). The false self wants to exist outside of God's will and love. The false self has lost contact with God and therefore reflects the darkness and selfishness of sin (Joseph Sandman 2000:12-14). The false self can be traced in the teachings of St Paul's letter to the Ephesians 4:22-24 (Joseph Sandman 2000:12-14). In this passage of Scripture, Paul exhorts his readers to put away the old self, and allow one's heart and mind to be completely renewed. The author of 2 Corinthians 5:17 has a similar understanding of the false self and True-Self. In this passage of Scripture, the writer explains the process of transformation where the old is gone, the new is come and every person united with Christ is a new creation. The new creation is the True-Self. In order to live from the True-Self, this false self must die (Thomas Merton 1961:47). In order to find one's True-Self one must go out of oneself (Thomas Merton 1961:47). Baptism sets the pattern of dying into life, suggested by the poem by St John of the Cross (in Karen Armstrong 1985:231):

> I live, but not myself,
> And I have such hope
> That I die because I do not die

The True-Self is the Ground of being which desires to be connected with the Ground of all reality – God. There is thus a pull between the inner circle and the outer circle in the *model of full humanity*. There is an intimate tension between these two circles as they enfold into each other and unfold from each other. That there is an intimate link between the inner circle – the True-Self and the outer circle – awareness of God, is implied by Ken Wilber (1981:1) who says that nothing can stay removed from God the Ground of a person's being aside from which nothing exists. Teresa of Avila (in E.W. Trueman Dickens 1986:373,374) uses the image of a spiritual marriage to describe the union of the True Self with the Godhead. Some images from Scripture that are offered to suggest the ontological co-inherence of the True-Self with God is the image of Christ as the vine and believers as the branches (John 15:5). In John 10:30, Jesus describes his relationship with Abba where "The Father and I are one". His priestly prayer is to wish the same for all people: "May they be in us just as you are in me and I am in you" (John 17:21).

The journey of full humanity means becoming increasingly connected with the True-Self, which is the presence of Christ within (Joseph Sandman 2000:12-14). One way that unity between the True-self and God can be realised is through the discipline of solitude, silence and contemplative prayer. Centering or contemplative prayer provides a way to nurture inner peace and union with the Godhead (Joseph Sandman 2000:12-14). Contemplation is the direct and actual experience of participating in Divine Life and living from the True-Self

(Beatrice Bruteau 1981:278). Thomas Merton (1961:39) confirms: "We become contemplatives when He discovers Himself in us". Contemplation is the experience of being fully awake, fully active and fully alive (Thomas Merton 1961:1). It is part of the journey towards full humanity. Contemplation is the realisation that life in all people proceeds from an Abundant Source (Thomas Merton 1961:1) yet this knowing is through unknowing, as articulated by St John of the Cross articulates (in Karen Armstrong 1985:220):

> I entered into unknowing,
> And there I remained unknowing,
> Transcending all knowledge.

Ego

The second circle represents the most impoverished level of growth, the **ego**. In chapter four (section 4.6.1), the ego level was described as the self that one presents to the world. It also incorporates the inner dialogue that one has within one's psyche and may include emotional issues such as guilt, anger and suicide. The spiritual disciplines or the means of grace that the Church could offer at this level include offering a support group, attentive listening and confession. In some cases the necessary spiritual therapy may be to challenge the theology of the participants. Two theological therapies are relevant at the ego dimension in the *model of full humanity*. One theological issue relates to images of God, as this affects how the participants see themselves and respond to the world. The second theological issue arises from moral formation. Each of these theological therapies is now discussed.

It is necessary at times to challenge the **theological images that some of the participants have of God**. This is especially true when they express the experience of being HIV-positive as punishment from God:

> Then there sometimes, there don't come days, when um, things don't go alright. And then I say: "O Lord, why me Lord? Why must things happen like this? I am now sick." And then I ask the Lord: "Why me Lord? Why must it happen like me?" Sometimes I'm happy, sometimes I'm unhappy and then I say to my God: **"Did you punish me?"**

Excerpt from an interview with Rosetta from the Green Tea group (emphasis mine)

The feeling of asking, "Why me Lord?" is familiar to people. The participant asks this question in response to her struggles and her feeling of unhappiness. She also questions whether AIDS is a personal punishment for her.

The following participant from the Maskopas group also sees AIDS as God's way of reprimanding her. She experiences God as:

> K: Hmmm. Eh God has his own way, you know, of doing things. And I would say, eh, I always really thought that, eh, that people are dying of Aids actually not even the ones that never really got a chance, you know, of living with the HIV; but just getting sick in that way and then dying. And then I think, eh, as a person, because, there are so many ways of reprimanding a person, I think, that it means that someone was doing, **I was doing wrong somewhere**, eh, you know, a way of me finding out my, my, my status, **it's another way of God wanting to reprimand me for what I was doing wrong you know**, and because that's really the time when my life got to a turning point. I think God has his own way of talking to people.

Excerpt form an interview with a participant from the Maskopas group

The literature on spirituality encourages growth in one's image of God. As part of the journey to wholeness Christians need to leave behind infantile approaches to God, for example imaging God as a reprimanding parental figure. Growth in spirituality entails the courage to embrace God as partner and incarnate within. Trevor Hudson (1995:19-21) says that the way people pattern their lives is profoundly moulded by how they see God. If their picture of God is dysfunctional, so is their way of living. Kenneth Leech (1980:3) points out the wisdom of William Temple who once said: "If you have a false idea of God, the more religious you are, the worse for you – it were better for you to be an atheist". The research participants should be encouraged to redraw their picture of God. The following participant was asked to write a devotion that would encourage a person living with AIDS. In it she explicitly challenges the idea that HIV is punishment for sin and so could encourage the redrawing of God needed for the other participants quoted so far:

> To have faith according to the book of Hebrews 11 where God says we should have faith in unseen things. Nothing is impossible with God. **It is not because we sinned to have H.I.V.A.I.D.S. But I say it was the beginning of a new life. Stop listening to negative people in terms of how to live with our status.** Even if a person is highly educated it doesn't mean they can uplift someone. That's the me that count in this situation. Trust in God is what has kept me so strong until today

Devotion written by member of the Maskopas group (emphasis is mine)

The second theological therapy relevant at the dimension of ego is **a necessary reflection on morality.** Morality is about distinguishing between behaviour that is acceptable and unacceptable (Norvene Vest 2000:117). Morality should not be understood as divorced from spirituality and ethics, as it is an expression of spiritual and ethical living (see section 2.6.2). Spirituality is the deep-seated desire for fullness of life, yearning and learning to live abundantly. Ethics is an expression of that desire and the correct structuring of the desire for fullness of life (Norvene Vest 2000:116). It is the formation of one's character as a response to grace, so that one can behave morally. Morality is creatively strengthening one's ability to choose that which promotes full humanity. In this thesis, moral behaviour is understood in

the light of full humanity: that which promotes the full humanity of people is moral behaviour while that which denigrates the humanity of people is immoral.

When a person is diagnosed HIV-positive, that person often reflects on the source of her/his infection. The research has illustrated how many of the participants were not morally responsible for being HIV-positive. There is a close link between oppressive, patriarchal male behaviour and HIV/AIDS. Many of the women participants were infected by their husbands or long-term male partners. This coincides with the literature survey, which showed that women are vulnerable to HIV because of their poverty, lack of empowerment and patriarchal cultural conditioning that subordinates women. On the other hand, the research participant Jerome related the story of how he was raped while in prison which was the probable cause for his HIV infection. For these participants, there was no moral choice available to them and they are not morally responsible for being HIV-positive. The moral response on the part of society and the Church is to challenge the close link between injustice and HIV/AIDS, and, in the light of much research, to challenge certain aspects of male behaviour.

For the participants who desire empowerment as part of their experience of being fully human, their moral agency may be expressed in challenging the injustices that promote the spread of HIV/AIDS. Some participants realised that they are HIV-positive because of leading disordered lives. Their moral response to being HIV-positive could be to adopt lifestyle changes such as abstinence, faithfulness and condom use.

One caveat may be mentioned. There are no clear answers to why AIDS exists. Ronald Nicholson (1995:26) rightly critiques Augustinian and Irenaean theodicies. AIDS cannot, according to the Augustinian school, be because of human moral failure only. AIDS is caused by a virus and viruses were on earth long before humans were (Ronald Nicholson 1995:26). To say that disasters such as AIDS are because of sin significantly weakens the Church's response to the disaster (Ronald Nicholson 1995:26). It is harmful and unethical to accuse victims of HIV for doing something wrong to deserve AIDS as can clearly be seen in the light of newborn children who are HIV-positive (Ronald Nicholson 1995:26). However, Christians may still rightly point out that certain lifestyle decisions such as having multiple sexual partners increases exposure to HIV infection. Even Irenaean theodicy, which says that pain is offered as an environment for humans to mature through struggle, cannot be used as an explanation for the presence of AIDS (Ronald Nicholson 1995:26). It cannot be credible that the God of love would allow an AIDS pandemic as a way to teach humankind a lesson. The "foot-soldiers on the ground", who daily witness the pain and suffering of HIV/AIDS and poverty would concur (Ronald Nicholson 1995:17).

Perhaps the way forward is to suggest that there is a difference between morality and moralism. Moralism is morality divorced from ethics and spirituality. Moralism includes judgmentalism, in answer to which people can insist that no one deserves AIDS and AIDS is not God's punishment. In the light of this, the question of how HIV infection happened is an aspect of moral responsibility, moral behaviour and moral choice for the story-sharing and healing process in the wholeness of people who are HIV-positive. It is not necessary for other people to ask how the infection came about. Morality and ethics are matters of relationship (Norvene Vest 2000:135). Morality suggests that what one can say about HIV/AIDS is that the rapid spread of the pandemic is because of disordered relationships, particularly patriarchal relationships of abuse (Ronald Nicholson 1995:27, Steve de Gruchy 2006:3). These disordered relationships cannot be healed by moralistic attitudes, thus the integration of morality with spirituality and ethics may offer one response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic (see section 2.6.2 and figure 2.2).

Embodiment

The next circular dimension refers to **embodiment** or physicality and how the participants describe being a body. The spiritual disciplines, means of grace or the spiritual therapies necessary at this level are from the resources of feminist theology. Feminist theology affirms women's physicality (Caroline Sharp 1994:404). Feminist theology can help people to respect the body, "struggle with the body in pain", and celebrate the joys of physical expression (Caroline Sharp 1994:404). One of the ways that the participants begin to acknowledge the body and "struggle with the body in pain" is through living positively, which they associate with their empowerment. The dimension of embodiment is a pertinent reminder that God reveals Godself through matter, and as such flesh and matter are sacred (Kenneth Leech 1980:77,94). The relevant spiritual disciplines at this dimension involve living positively through healthy eating and exercise.

Financial empowerment

Related to physicality is the issue of **financial empowerment** as a means of providing for their families, which for the participants, is an important part of being fully human. There is a link between financial empowerment and embodiment because the needs of the body are addressed using financial resources, for example, being able to buy food and pay rent. This is illustrated in the following analysis that the Maskopas offered during a focussed group discussion on the picture below. As part of a focussed group discussion the participants were asked what the person in the picture needed to be empowered and to be made stronger. They replied that:

Myself in my garden
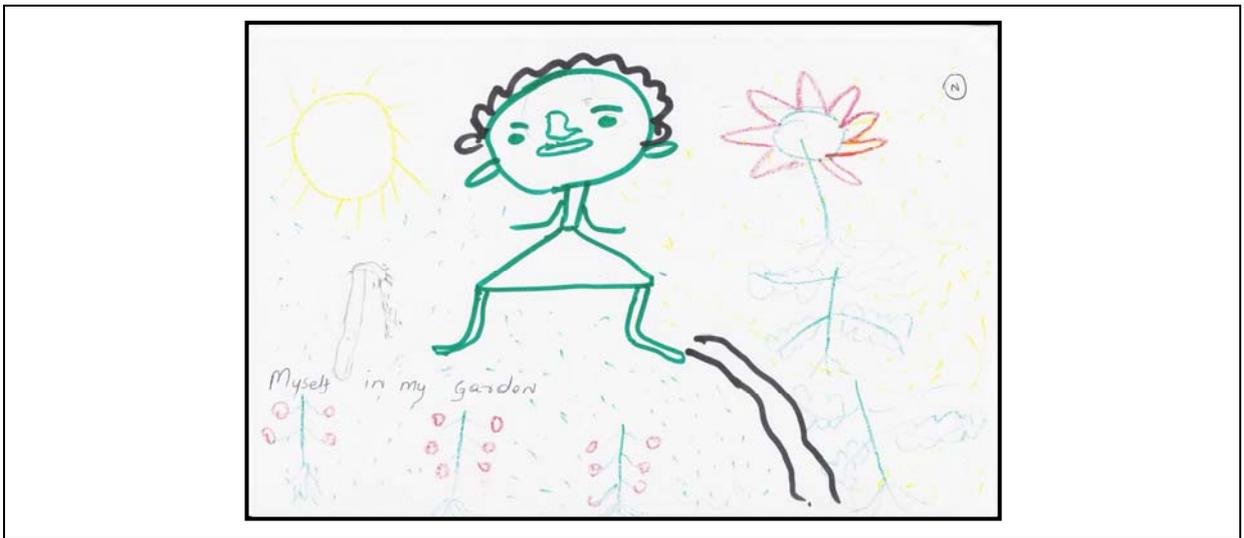
FG: She needs to be empowered with skills so that she can put food on the table and provide for her family **so that she can feel like you are existing like a person**
DS: Okay? … Anything else that she needs?
FG: Nutrition and medication.

Excerpt from a focussed group discussion with the Maskopas support group.

The above quote suggests that being fully human is linked with the ability to provide for one's family[9]. The analysis that the group offered of the picture may be linked to the fact that the participant has illustrated herself standing in a food garden. The spiritual therapies at this dimension are the development of people and assisting their economic empowerment. One example could be to offer skills training and education as this would also be a way to challenge injustice.

Injustice and vulnerability

Linked to the desire for financial empowerment, the next level or dimension on the *model of full humanity* refers to the **experience of injustice**. These levels are linked because a lack of financial empowerment is often associated with institutional forms of violence that structure poverty in society. The experience of being poor is unjust in the limitations it places on personal freedom, and the lack of resources such as education, health, food and housing which inevitably lead to death (Gustavo Gutierrez 2001:11).

The experience of injustice is also the experience of suffering which is often the result of injustice. In recognising both the universal and the particular aspects of suffering in the paradigm of feminist Christian spirituality, it is important to respond to the omnipresent phenomenon of suffering from concrete experience, rather than philosophising about it on a

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[9] I am not suggesting that full humanity is dependent on financial empowerment in a way that Maslow suggested that esteem needs are dependent on safety and physiological needs. I am suggesting that it is only one aspect of being fully human.

removed and abstract level as some theodicies are prone to do (Maryanne Confoy 2000:251). Theological reflection is borne out of the concrete experience of suffering and standing in solidarity with those who suffer, not from sterile philosophical explanations (Maryanne Confoy 2000:251). At this level in the wafer *model of full humanity*, the voices of the participants provide a way for Christians to respond to injustice and suffering in a way that is both concrete and connected to the reality of suffering (Maryanne Confoy 2000:259). An example of how suffering and injustice needs to be critiqued by the Church is offered by this participant's negative experience of health care:

SF: It is just that in my life, I don't like to go to the clinic because I saw how they treat others. They don't treat people nice. I prefer to go to a doctor even though I don't have money. But that right now my family doctor, he doesn't have any problem if I've got no money then he can give me something. So at the clinic, last time, last week Wednesday I was here at the clinic, with my cousin. She found out that she's HIV-positive on, Monday, last week Monday. So I came with her so I try to make her happy you see, then we came here for CD 4 Count. **The way they treated us, it was not nice.** Because they told, they told that guy, who go, who came to the nurse and told her that we are here, she should attend us. So the nurse just said: "Why I must attend them so fast? They must go to the clinic. But the lady that I was going with her, was so diseased you see. She doesn't even know how to, she doesn't know to walk, she doesn't know to walk alone. So that's why I hated to go to the clinics. If I'm sick I don't have money I, I just stay at home. Because it seems like most of the location, I can't say at Bekkersdal, it seems like people are not aware about this disease. **They just hear that there is this disease and if they saw somebody who had the disease they are always going to say: "See! Look at that lady! She has HIV and AIDS. You see. She has that disease!"**

Excerpt from an interview with a participant from the Somelele group

The task of the Church is to use the spiritual gift of discernment when responding to suffering. There are several layers in responding to suffering. Some suffering, which is the result of injustice, has to be challenged in the light of Gospel faith. Other suffering needs to be integrated in the process of transformation to wholeness[10].

The above excerpt shows how the response to suffering requires a structural critique from the Church. In order to inspire fully human wholeness, one mission of the Church is to take responsibility for both local and global justice issues by speaking out on behalf of the poor (Maryanne Confoy 2000:263). This social analysis is a spiritual discipline and a means of

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[10] One example of pain that is integrated in the journey of wholeness is the story of Treya Killam Wilber (in Ken Wilber 2000a:xvi) who brought her meditative awareness to bear on her cancer-pain and freed herself from bitterness and anger. She chose against self-pity: "I will bring fear into my heart. To meet the pain and the fear with openness, to embrace it, to allow it. I'm trying not to "beat" my sickness, I'm allowing myself into it, forgiving it".

grace. The experience of being treated badly by medical personnel dehumanises people that already feel dehumanised by the presence of the HI virus in their bodies. It is part of their experience of injustice and suffering. The stigma the participant experiences from the clinic: "The way they treated us, it was not nice"; is paralleled by the stigma she experiences in the wider community: "They just hear that there is this disease and if they saw somebody who had the disease they are always going to say: 'See! Look at that lady! She has HIV and AIDS. You see. She has that disease!" Part of an integrated response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic is for the Church to find compassionate ways of addressing this stigma of injustice.

While some suffering, such as the negative experience of medical care, is critiqued, the process of discernment may reveal that other suffering is integrated in the process of wholeness. A world free from suffering is an unreachable utopian dream (Maryanne Confoy 2000:252). A feature of the western world is its pain avoidance behaviour in the way it opposes suffering (Maryanne Confoy 2000:252). The suggestion is that the diseases of affluence such as alcoholism, workaholism, drug addiction and anorexia nervosa have their source in a consumer culture bent on pain avoidance (Maryanne Confoy 2000:258). Wholeness may lie in integrating suffering in the process of development (Maryanne Confoy 2000:252). For example one participant from the Somelele group says that:

| My God helps me, in all painful things he meet with us. |

(*Excerpt from a life story written by a participant from the Somelele group).*

By integrating the experience of suffering and the injustice of AIDS, this participant is able to release the empowering aspects of spirituality. God is a source of help to her in the pain that she experiences. One way that the Church may help people do this is to reflect on the paschal nature of the Christian faith as a way of meaning-making in suffering (Maryanne Confoy 2000:253). The life, suffering and death of Christ can provide resources for hope. The paschal perspective can provide a way of connecting human pain and God's pain and suggests that God shares in the pain of the world. The hope is that God is connected to people in their pain, as is also shown in Christ's life. The gospels demonstrate how "Jesus is present to others in their pain" (Maryanne Confoy 2000:255). The process of meaning-making in suffering is to work with the Spirit in an effort to build a new, just earth while at the same time looking forward to the vision of a new heaven (Revelation 21&22).

Community

The negative experience of injustice may shed light on the need to build a community that promotes full humanity. The **dimension of community** shows how growth in unity with God moves in tandem with growth in unity with other people. This is because if one celebrates

unity with God, one celebrates unity with all that God is one with. If a person is one with God, that person is one with other people because of their common unity in God.

One of the helpful suggestions that Ronald Nicholson (1995:24) offers, that is consistent with the findings of this research, is the suggestion that support groups can create a positive environment for behavioural change. The support groups become alternative communities where a different set of values can be enhanced.

In the research, the participants themselves have emphasised that belonging in small groups is an important part of their health and wholeness. Some participants said that they could be transformed or empowered through:

> Getting support from other people. Fellow Christians. Fellow PWAs[11]. Other people who are affected. Just that.

(Excerpt from a focussed group discussion with Maskopas).

Other participants advise HIV-positive people to:

> Join the support groups and avoid being alone. You must be amongst other people. She can also get involved with handwork to avoid thinking about this thing.

(Excerpt from a devotion written by participant of Somelele group.

Part of the sickness in society that allows the diseases of poverty and HIV/AIDS to breed is that people lead such fragmented lives. Torn apart from each another, their living together is characterised by mistrust, fear and competition. In the situation of broken down relationships, "caring for one another must surely be the hallmark of our spirituality in this time of AIDS" (Patricia Fresen 2003:67). Patricia Fresen (2003:64) says that the way that caring can become a hallmark of a fully human spirituality is to look at others, as Simon Weil suggests, with attentiveness and ask: "What are you going through?" and listen attentively to the answer. The process of attentive listening is kenotic (Philippians 2:11). It involves emptying oneself of one's own agendas to be filled with the presence of the person in front of one, a presence which is often marked by suffering. The process of kenotic listening is the transformative ingredient in compassionate community care. Compassionate care is a way to build authentic community - it is what Charles Foucald calls the ministry of presence (in John Viljoen 2003:71). A ministry of presence may be defined as simply being with someone and allowing the Holy Spirit to work through one (John Viljoen 2003:70 – 74).

The following quote from an interview with Jerome confirms the insight of empowering people through kenotic listening:

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[11] PWA stands for person with AIDS.

> You see, um, what I need really, listen to me when I talk and that makes me feel very good. Really. It builds me up and makes me self-confident. Talk to people who listen to me and not feel *skaam*, feel ashamed about me but be as I can be … It's really a big burden off my soul just to talk about it…

Excerpt form an interview with Jerome from the Green Tea group

In the above excerpt, Jerome, a male participant, describes the empowering and healing benefits of really being listened to in a supporting communal environment. He describes his empowerment as an increase in self-confidence: "It builds me up and makes me self-confident." The supportive community is humanising for him because he no longer feels ashamed: "Talk to people who listen to me and feel *skaam,* feel ashamed about me". It heals his spirituality in that it releases him of the burden: "It's really a big burden off my soul just to talk about it." In short it makes him "feel very good". The persons asking, "what are you going through?" with attentiveness and kenotic emptiness require a certain degree of compassionate agency in order to do this. Hence, nurturing the empowerment of women as agents of healing and transformation is a necessary aspect of building authentic community.

Woven into the dimension of community is an understanding that community is cosmic. Creation is part of community, as are the saints, the spiritual ancestors who have gone before. The participants do not verbally describe the inclusion of creation as part of a cosmic community. However, many of their drawings show how they place themselves in gardens, which represent the created order.

The experience of being alienated from creation through factors such as poverty, ignorance and even patriarchy is dehumanising (see section 5.3.2). Alienation from creation and the land is also a justice issue relating to unjust political decisions such as the Land Act of 1913 that prevented black African land ownership, defined segregationist land settlement and uprooted many black Africans (TRH Davenport 1977:335). Furthermore, the resettlement policies of the 1960's and 1970's, which enforced the territorial separation between whites and blacks, established 'locations' on the edges of towns that are still in effect today and an aspect of the experience of injustice for the research participants who live far away from the cash nexus (TRH Davenport 1977:338). Restoring friendship with creation is a fundamental aspect of experiencing authentic community that is also related to challenging injustice. Relationships with creation are vital to daily lives in the form of water, food, fuel and a general sense of well-being.

Awareness of God

All the dimensions on the model ultimately find their home in awareness of God, the outermost dimension. Awareness of God or prayer is the beginning point, the driving force

and the goal of the fully human experience. While all people have this Atman, this Divine Spark within, it is often hidden under "complex layers of our personality" (Paula Huston 2003:143). Other levels of identification and definitions of human personhood are incomplete dimensions of one's true identity which is found in Christ. For the participants it seems that God is understood in therapeutic terms as God is a form of therapy for them. For example,

> With all the struggles of being unemployed I should have been depressed, and unhappy. **But through God I am happier that I got a second chance in life**.

Excerpt from a devotion written by a Maksopas group member.

In the above quote, the therapeutic aspect of spirituality is suggested through the way in which the participant copes with depression. In the next example, awareness of God or prayer is also an emotional release for the participant from the Maskopas group in that it is a way for her to pour out her tears:

> You know when, when, **when, I pray, I pour out all my tears unto God** I know that I because I have learnt that every obstacle that comes in my life it make me strong. It puts me to a blacksmith so that I should be the finest gold that God can use. Except passing though fire you cannot be strong.

Excerpt from an interview with a member of the Maskopas group

There is a suggestion of an understanding that prayer is supportive and transformative. Through prayer the participant is able to see her problems in a different light. They are resources for personal transformation: "When I pray I pour out all my tears to God because I have learnt that every obstacle that comes in my life makes me strong." Her comments echo the sentiments of Kenneth Leech (1980:4) who says: "To pray is to enter into relationship with God and be transformed by him (*sic*)".

In the next example a relationship with God is understood as a therapeutic release from stress described as "burdens". The following discussion is an excerpt from a focussed group discussion with the Maskopas group where the participants were asked to offer an analysis of the following picture:

	DS: What does she need to be empowered and transformed? More healthy, more whole and stronger?
	FG: **She has received God in herself.**
	FG: She has been through problems – the paths to the Church show that.
	FG: She is supported
	DS: She is supported. Who is she supported by?
	FG: Maybe the congregation. Friends.
	DS: The congregation and friends. And how do they support her?
	FG: She needs emotional support
	FG: If the Church also failed then God himself failed.

Excerpt from a focus group discussion with the Maskopas group

In the above example there is a suggestion that the Church is one community through which this spiritual therapy is channelled. The necessity of this role is hinted at in the statement: "If the Church also failed then God himself failed."

In the third chapter of the thesis (section 3.3.5), I suggested that my understanding of God is that She is the Ground of all reality and that all things emerge out of God and are enfolded back into God. I am learning to see that God is accessible, she is accessible in my being. There is an immanent experience of a transcendent God. Meister Eckhart (in Huston Smith 1982:4) describes this experience saying: "God's is-ness is my is-ness". In other words, God is both Immanent and Transcendent at the same time. The danger is to impose my understanding of God as the Ground of Reality on the data and look for suggestions of an immanent God in the participants. It would seem that the participants do not see God in this way. God is seen as a source of transcendent help beyond themselves and their situations. There was no suggestion in the data of an immanent God. The transcendent image of God is suggested by the fact that many of them refer to God in parental terms. For example:

> But my parents are lost, I lost my parents. But because of God I know that I got the parents. He is my parents. My both parents.

Excerpt from an interview with a Somelele group member

Another example of a similar thought pattern is a quote that has already been used. When asked how she experiences prayer, one participant said that:

> I experience prayer as the way I report to my father in heaven.

Excerpt from an interview with a Maskopas group member.

It is important to teach the immanence of a transcendent God as an aspect of spiritual companionship in journeying with people to full humanity. The transformative process of prayer is more than a functional experience of seeing God as a source of help as is suggested by these quotes. God, who is the Ground of one's being, is more than that.

Having described each of the seven circular dimensions on the wafer *model of full humanity*, the arrow representing the empowerment of women as agents of healing and transformation which must be nurtured at each of these levels is now discussed.

5.6.3 THE ARROW

At each level or dimension of the *model of full humanity*, empowering women as agents of transformation is a necessary lens through which each level is understood. This is indicated on the model with the arrow that cuts across each of the levels. Empowering women is essentially feminist spirituality. In chapter two I suggest that the hope of feminist spirituality is the full humanity of all people, women, men and children. Part of the dream of full humanity for all people is the vision of a new creation, a new earth where diversity is respected and allowed to flourish, where relationships are mutual and reciprocal and where the potential of human beings is nurtured. One way to achieve this is to empower women as agents of healing and transformation, at each level of the model, as represented by the arrow.

Howard Clinebell (1995:26) comments that feminist therapies offer useful tools for integrating personal growth and social change. The support group environment has provided a way for the women to mentor and empower each other in this process of personal and social transformation. Within the environment of the support group, the women manage to inspire each other. This contributes greatly to the empowerment for the giver and the receiver. For example:

> And a lot of people really know that never say anything that you want to hurt me and by being so strong I have managed to make my other relatives, that just like my cousin who has just found out. You know she said she thought of me. The first person that came to her mind was me that if C manages to live with this thing I can also . And as I always said to her, it's not a sin. It's just like any disease. You just need to be strong. **And I like the way that I am strong because I manage to drag other people out of the pit, yes, and I hope to be strong.**

Excerpt from an interview with member of the Maskopas group

The participant is aware of her personal strength and integrity and uses this as a resource to build up the people around her: "I like the way I am strong because I manage to drag people

out of the pit." In the next example, the participant views empowered women as role models for how she should respond to her HIV-positive status in her journey to full humanity:

> But now I am strong. And then the thing that made me to be so strong: Eh, I take M. And then, um, how can I put this? Eh, the way M lives, the lifestyle of M, she's normal she's happy, most of the time she's happy, so I thought to myself: "Why M? She's had so many years being positive, but she's still out there, okay and fine and everything, and if I can be like her then everything will be fine."

Excerpt from interview with member of the Maskopas group

One of the spiritual disciplines or spiritual therapies that the Church could offer in this situation is its role in caring for caregivers. This includes preventing burnout (Patricia Fresen 2003:67).

The following participant describes the stress of being an empowered person that other people look up to:

> Um, actually, eh. Sometimes I think, I want eh, the motivation that I need is sometimes to take a stand for me because I, what I realize is just that I cannot act. **I am taking other people's burdens too much more than mine.**

Excerpt from interview with member of the Maskopas group

The quote illustrates that those empowered women who are mentors for others can pay the price for that empowerment. This may include being drained of energy, which is why it is important to maintain links with community and with the dimension of prayer on a *model of full humanity*. Spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible study and rituals could be spiritual resources in maintaining energy levels necessary in expressing personal agency. I offer an example from my journal:

> I led the Maskopas today in a retreat at John Bosco centre (5 November). The key text that we engaged with was Ezra 1:1-11. I explained to them the background of how the people of God had been destroyed by war and their experience of being in Exile. They have now been given a second chance and hope. Under the leadership of Ezra they return home to rebuild the temple. I compared the devastation of the Babylonian exile with the South African devastation in the AIDS crises. I encouraged them to see themselves as priests in their communities, charged like Ezra with the task of rebuilding. They do the work of God by rebuilding people and organisations. C pointed out that L is already doing such work and that she is regarded as a leader in the community. I then anointed their hands as a symbol of their healing and of their service to the community as they carry out the Ezra's task of rebuilding.

Excerpt from personal journal, 5 November 2005

The quote illustrates that the links between the dimensions on the model, awareness of God and community need to be maintained and held in tension with the interconnecting arrow of

women as mentors. Community, living from the True-Self and awareness of God are necessary resources for maintaining empowerment and agency for women mentors. The "needle with many threads" image maintains the links between the dimensions and the interconnecting arrow on a *model of full humanity*.

5.6.4   THE NEEDLE WITH MANY THREADS

In chapter six I discuss how the *model of full humanity* that has been described in this fifth chapter can be applied. When using the model for either personal or social transformation to wholeness, one would discern at which level depicted on the model one requires growth and insert the needle there. The next step would be to imagine that the needle has many threads and ensure that each thread embraces each aspect of the model in a process of weaving together an integral wholeness.

The "needle with many threads" has links with the praxis of theology and research in the thesis, which is described in chapter one (section 1.6) using the images of weaving, dancing and talking. In this thesis, action, critical reflection, interpreted experience, prayer and theory are woven together in the dance and dialogue of the learning process (Denise Ackermann 1996a:41).

Thus the "needle with many threads" links the dimensions on a *model of full humanity* with each other. There is a link between the level of injustice, and the level of awareness of God in that both feed into each other. The danger of divorcing the need to reconstruct a more just society that addresses injustice, from a spirituality that empowers, is that such a quest could leave one drained and empty (Louise Kretzschmar 1996:73). Kenneth Leech (1980:68), for example, says that: "To clasp the hands in prayer is to begin an uprising against the disorder of the world". Prayer is both the inspiration for social reform and the foundation for maintaining that energy necessary for reconstruction (Kenneth Leech 1980:68-89).

There is also a link between the experience of injustice and the ego level. In the journey of transformation and commitment to community, people need to examine oppression in its corporate manifestation and its presence within their own hearts (Maryanne Confoy 2000:265). What is seen on macro levels in society is true on micro levels within one's soul as well. Personal sin results in brokenness and contributes to the brokenness of the world.

Finally, there is a link between injustice and the experience of community on a *model of full humanity*. This is because women are able to face their suffering with community support. Community support in facing the host of injustices for women is of paramount importance in

their empowerment and journey to full humanity. Without it they are sick, emotionally and physically: "But if you are alone you just become more worse sick" (Excerpt from interview with Maskopas research participant).

The significance of the "needle with many threads approach" is that it creates space for a multifaceted and integrated response to the HIV pandemic, that attempts to take into account personal and political change, as well as the gender perspective, believing that the empowerment of women is necessary for a Christian response to be effective as represented by the arrow that crosses all seven circles. This seems necessary if HIV/AIDS programmes are to be successful. Denise Ackermann (2001:12) says that understanding the unholy alliance of AIDS, poverty and gender relations has to be at the centre of HIV/AIDS programmes in the Church and in the broader society. It is gender inequality and the general lack of response to poverty that prevent the effective tackling of the AIDS pandemic (Denise Ackermann 2001:12). By adopting a multifaceted, gendered and integrated approach to HIV/AIDS, this model tries to address the issues of gender relations and poverty. The point of the model is an attempt to make the connections between power, gender and HIV clearer. It does this by encouraging churches and other organisations to address the whole person in a whole environment through the image of the "needle with many threads". The transformation of the individual has to be accompanied by transformation in society. It becomes necessary to see the participants, especially women participants, as agents of this societal transformation.

Other scholars (Ronald Nicholson 1995:77, Anthony Balcomb 2006:105) also acknowledge the need for holistic models of healing, arguing that one of the issues in the Western model of healing is that it is too mechanistic in focusing on the physical aspects of AIDS. The psychology and the spirituality of the disease are also important aspects of the healing process (Ronald Nicholson 1995:77). This is because the experience of HIV/AIDS, as can be seen from the empirical data and supported by the literature, is not just pain and the gradual disintegration of one's physical health, but also depression, fear, anger and feelings of guilt and of being punished by God (Ronald Nicholson 1995:77). The "needle with many threads" image suggests how these different aspects can be knitted together in responding to HIV/AIDS.

The United Nations also highlights the necessity for an integrated and holistic approach to combating HIV/AIDS. The term 'good practice' defines those programmes and activities that research has shown to work (Roger Drew 2003: 15). Key principles of good practice include integrating care and prevention approaches while also reducing vulnerability to infection by

treating sexually transmitted infections, alleviating the social and economic impacts of HIV and addressing the social aspects of the disease (Roger Drew 2003:15,16).

The "needle with many threads" suggests how the different levels illustrated on the *model of full humanity* are connected with each other and interweave each other in an evolving spirituality where one grows, changes and becomes a "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The inner and outer revolution of personal and collective transformation is woven together in a journey toward full humanity, expanding awareness and integral transformation.

5.7   FULLY HUMAN, EXPANDING AWARENESS, INTEGRAL TRANSFORMATION

The *model of full humanity* provides a way of understanding and implementing integral transformation. In other words personal transformation has to be accompanied by social transformation. Love of God, personal transformation, and love of neighbour, social transformation, are part of the same process. The "needle with many threads" is used as an image to represent how each dimension on the fully human model is woven together such that personal transformation happens in conjunction with social transformation.

In his articles *Anonymous Christians* and *The unity of love of God and love of neighbour*, Karl Rahner *(*1969a&b) challenged the Neo-Scholastics. The Neo-Scholastics taught that love of God empowers love of neighbour or that love of neighbour is the fruit of loving God (Gerald McCool 1975:241-244). Karl Rahner (1969b:236-38 and in Gerald McCool 1975:239-240), in contrast, explained that in the very moment of loving one's neighbour, one loves God. Karl Rahner (1969a:181-2; 1969b:236-38 and in Gerald McCool 1975:255) taught that all people are presented with a fundamental option. They could either authentically accept their neighbours in which case they were authentically loving God, or they could opt for self-love which is the rejection of neighbour and God[12] (Karl Rahner 1969a:181-2; Karl Rahner 1969b:236-38; Gerald McCool 1975:255). Karl Rahner's unity of love of God and love of neighbour was more radical than that of the Neo-Scholastics. Karl Rahner takes seriously the incarnation, because Christ is incarnated within people, by loving people, one loves God. Henri Nouwen (1975:23) relates a similar experience when a student commented that he really experienced the presence of Christ within Henri Nouwen; to which Nouwen replied that it was the presence of Christ within the student that recognised the presence of Christ within Henri Nouwen.

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[12] Augustine calls the fundamental rejection of a life ordered towards God *conscupiscentia,* this is self-love. *Caritas* on the other hand is the loving response to God and others (Gerald McCool 1975:240).

Karl Rahner's (Gerald McCool 1975:18; Karl Rahner & Johann Metz 1980:391) concept of *Vorgriff,* which he defines as a pre-grasp of Infinite Being suggests that God is present in all humans as their Absolute Horizon and humans are open to God. Karl Rahner's concept of the *Vorgriff* may suggest how the inner circle or dimension of the True-Self and the outer circle of awareness of God are connected. The *Vorgriff* explains that there is an ontological pull in humankind to journey towards God that is connected to the deepest innermost part of who they are. The concept of the *Vorgriff* is as follows: Karl Rahner (1968:iii) says that the human person is Spirit in the World. Humans are spirit because they are open to the metaphysical realm, to God. As spirit, humans reach out beyond the world to know the metaphysical, which is moreover already present in them through the *Vorgriff*, the pre-grasp of Infinite Being (1968:iii, 391). The *Vorgriff* is also described as the light of the intellect, the lamp of knowledge (1968:iii, 391). Humans are in the world because their knowing is dependent on sense intuition that takes pace in the world. In other words, people can only know, and they can only know God, in spatial temporal categories because knowledge is situated. Human experiences of alienation and loneliness at the shadow level of the *Spectrum of Consciousness* and the ego level on the *model of full humanity* are recognised by their psyches because of a previous experience of being loved and being in union with the Godhead (Karl Rahner's *Vorgriff*). These shadow experiences of alienation, loneliness and sadness can be viewed as whispers of the Eternal One drawing people into Herself. These negative experiences are symptoms of the enfolding-unfolding universe which enfolds creation into the Godhead.

Ken Wilber (1981:13) also says that the discovery of eternal wholeness is the driving force of humankind. In an enfolding, unfolding universe, everything grows towards God and grows out of God. Nothing can remain separated from the Ground of Being, apart from which nothing exists (Ken Wilber 1981:1). God is integral wholeness and as such is a dynamic part of all that is, and is therefore present in humankind at every level of the fully human model, as God is present in all things.

The Scriptural understanding of the relation between God and the human person is mutual indwelling: God living in creation and creation living in God. Jesus, the archetypal human one, expresses the radical union that he experienced with his Creator: the Father is in me and I am in the Father (John 10:30; 14:10,11; 17:20). Transformation to wholeness entails allowing the reality of this mystical experience to be one's own. The co-inherence of one being indwelling another, while remaining distinct is what defines the relationships between the three persons of the Trinity. They are each other's home. It is the same with humankind's relationship goal with the Godhead: Their deepest longing is to make their

home in God and for God to make God's home in them. Human hearts come to rest when they find their home in God.

The nature of spiritual growth is descent and ascent. One can grow from the outer circle to the inner circle or the other way around. The point of the outer circle is that all other circles are contained within it. The goal of human history, the inner drive that characterises the human condition, is the aim to bring God and humankind together (Ken Wilber 1981:2). The process of transformation to wholeness suggests that the person grows and incorporates more circles into her/his identity, as is represented by the image of the "needle with many threads". The circles illustrate a sense of expanding identity, expanding wholeness. The dotted line shows that the different levels are integrated and flow into each other.

The *model of full humanity* suggests how sin is overcome. Sin is the misery of creation separated from God. Sin is defined as separation. Sin divides, and, having divided, destroys that which it has divided (Brian Gaybba 1987:142-143). Sin divides humans from God, from creation, from each other and inwardly. The experience of this division results is pain and suffering. With reference to the *model of full humanity*, salvation through Christ in the power of the Spirit is understood as a unification of the different levels. Salvation is transformation to wholeness - it is growing in unity. Salvation as transformation to wholeness is re-membering, bringing opposites together. In terms of the *model of full humanity*, it is healing the dualisms between the different levels of the fully human model and experiencing healing of each of these levels and weaving together the different "threads" that embrace each of the seven concentric circles.

This vision of salvation is described by the doctrine of *anakephalaiosis*, which is summarised in Ephesians 1:10: God's plan in the fullness of time is to gather all things in heaven and on earth into Christ the head. To become part of the Trinity through Christ in the Spirit is to participate in *perichoretic* love expressed in Scripture: do you not know that you are partakers of God? (2 Peter 1:14). The growing unity with God, others, the environment and unity within oneself is the transformation which love brings about which is the chief work of the Spirit. The Spirit's identity is constituted as the way in which the risen Christ continues to be present in all creation and how the Creator and the Son are present to each other and to creation (Brian Gaybba 1987:138-139): this transfiguration into wholeness is salvation.

Gustavo Gutierrez (2001:33-34) says that to liberate is to give life in all its fullness. This is the process of salvation. He argues that this liberation has three aspects. Firstly, liberation has to be comprehensive and integral and incorporate inner transformation; secondly, liberation includes individual freedom from sin which is understood as broken relationships

and thirdly, there is also liberation from social situations of oppression (Gustavo Gutierrez 2001:33-4). All three aspects of salvation are necessary: the religious dimension of liberation as inner transformation has to happen hand-in-glove with political freedom from injustice; to divorce these two aspects from each other is to diminish both (Gustavo Gutierrez 2001:34).

The fully human model holds in tension these different aspects of liberation to and for wholeness. The purpose of the model is to invite ways to journey to wholeness, integration and transformation. In this way the divisions between the levels are healed. How does one grow from one level to the next in a process of transcending and including? Through compassion. Compassion means to suffer with and it implies a sense of solidarity. A sense of unity with the cosmos will give rise to compassion for the earth and her processes. A compassionate approach to one's personhood will forgive the shadows for being there and allow them to collapse into the self and allow the self, in turn, to collapse into the Godhead through deep prayer.

Compassionate caring is transformative as both the cared for and carer are transformed in the act of caring (Patricia Fresen 2003:68). It is the transformation that is necessary for the Church. The Church needs ongoing conversion from being a social club to being the body of Christ. Transformation is complex as it involves the whole of life and it is integrated. The diagrammatic representation of the themes that emerge from the data shows the integral transformation, which is what being fully human is all about. The word "integral" means inclusive, balanced and comprehensive (Ken Wilber 2000b: 414). It shows how the outer and inner connect and how personal transformation and social liberation are connected.

5.8   PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

In my personal reflections on the research journey, I would like to reflect on two themes, salvation and a privatised view of the Gospel.

5.8.1   SALVATION

One aspect of my personal development through this chapter has been to reflect on theological concepts such as salvation or soteriology from a different angle. A typical teaching that is often carried from Sunday School through to one's adulthood is the understanding that salvation is the forgiveness of sins. Moreover, in "Western" churches, salvation is often conceived of in quite individualistic ways. It is about individuals responding to the Good News and experiencing conversion. My refection on the research shows that salvation is broader than just the forgiveness of sins. Within the scope of this chapter

particularly, salvation can also be understood as journey of transformation to wholeness. Salvation is friendship, friendship with oneself including one's shadow, friendship with others, friendship with the environment and friendship with God. The Scriptural basis for this understanding is the vision of *anakephalaiosis* depicted in Ephesians 1:10: God is in all, uniting all into Christ the head. This verse is interpreted as the weaving together of all the parts into a whole. It is visually represented in the wafer *model of full humanity* and described with the image of the "needle with many threads".

In the *model of full humanity* I depict the True-Self as resting in prayer or awareness of God, which is also a visual representation for soteriology. Sin is living as an independent self, separate from God. With reference to the model, it is to take the ego circle and make it separate from the True-Self circle. The Biblical metaphor for sin is the branch that is cut off from the vine, which dies because it is cut off from the source of life – God (John 15:4). In Karl Rahner's (Gerald McCool 1975:240) language, sin, as living separate from God in one's own strength, is the fundamental option for self-love and not *caritas*, which is the authentic choice for God and others. The journey of spirituality is the living out of salvation and it is learning to live from the True-Self circle.

5.8.2   THE RESEARCH AS A CHALLENGE TO A PRIVATISED VIEW OF THE GOSPEL

I started the research thinking that the Church had a particular response to the AIDS pandemic that was different to the government, the medical field and social concerns. Although I internalised the paradigm of feminist spirituality, I realised that I still had a fragmented view of reality in that I unconsciously excluded material needs. I realised that I still had "leftovers" of a privatised view of the Gospel and that this influenced my spirituality. The research has emphasised for me that full humanity, as God's desire for people, is having a job and having enough food to eat, as the research participants taught me. Churches should respond to these needs because of the love of Christ, the love of neighbour and because of a share in God's preferential option for the poor. The response of the Church is ontologically different to that of government and other organisations because it is specifically located in love of neighbour. Love of God and love of neighbour humanises people.

Concern for the material needs of the poor, especially their financial empowerment, is embedded in a fully human spirituality (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:103). The material world is part of the spiritual outlook. The poor have basic needs such as food, medicine and housing (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:102). Economic and financial empowerment is the way that such needs can be met. Liberation theologians called for a theology that arose from engaged

pastoral ministry in solidarity with the movements of the rural peasantry and urban poor to gain better conditions for life (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:94). The common experience of poverty in Africa and the thirst for liberation from the related issues of financial disempowerment that smear the experience of being fully human is a factor in African spirituality and as such is a key component in a fully human spirituality (Aylward Shorter 1978a:7). In the data analysis, the most common theme to emerge was reference to economics. The following quote by a participant of the Maskopas group offers a summary of the general perspective of the participants who expressed a need for financial empowerment as part of the transformation to wholeness:

> I am glad and praised God for now I am receiving a grant. I wish my children can get jobs. We all want work because we lost our jobs after knowing our status or got ill, the stress of sitting home doing nothing kills all of us and meanwhile our kids are looking up to us.

Excerpt from a devotion written by a participant of the Maskopas group

The lack of financial empowerment makes women vulnerable at other levels. Feminised poverty endangers the physical well-being of some of the participants and is an aspect of their social disempowerment. The following focussed group discussion with the Maskopas suggests an intertwining of feminised poverty and social disempowerment of women:

> FG: It's very difficult. Most of us are infected because of the poverty.
> FG: **They were infected because of poverty**. Most of them were unemployed and then after that ... **you have to provide so you have a boyfriend in the hope of providing. You have no choice in saying he must use a condom.**

Excerpt from a focussed group discussion with the Maskopas support group (emphasis mine)

The quote illustrates how the participant feels the necessity for having sexual relationships as a way to provide for her family: "You have to provide so you have a boyfriend in the hope of providing". The extract also illustrates how this means that she then has little power to negotiate safer sexual practices: "You have no choice in saying he must use a condom." There is a connection between her disempowerment in being able to negotiate her sexuality and her economic disempowerment: "They were infected because of poverty." In interpreting the quote one could suggest that the intertwining aspects of dehumanisation: Feminised poverty, feeling unable to negotiate sexuality and social disempowerment, are factors contributing to the vulnerability of women to HIV/AIDS. Women do not always have a choice when, where and with whom they have sex. Men do, even if they are poor (Commonwealth Secretariat 2002:26). Financial empowerment would contribute to the full humanity of women.

In summary, my vision of salvation has been stretched. Salvation includes all of life and embodied reality. Salvation is not a sterile theological notion, but a full-bodied, full-blooded, living, breathing, earthy, fleshy experience that includes matters relating to my body, my budget, the earth, politics and relationships. Likewise, my privatised view of the Gospel and spirituality was challenged and changed in the research. Financial empowerment and bodily needs are an integral part of one's spirituality.

5.9   CONCLUDING REMARKS

One aim in this research is to explore and describe a gendered response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic for the Christian Church. Based on the emergent themes from the dance between data collection, data analysis and theory, this chapter offers a *model of full humanity*. The *model of full humanity* can guide a gendered, comprehensive and holistic response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The model is best described as developing in conversation with the empirical data. Some of my reading began to give hints of a possible model that was then further moulded by the voices of the women whose stories I recorded in the data collection process. Thus, my contact with the research participants influenced my theory making.

The theoretical influences on the model include Howard Clinebell's *Seven dimensions of wholeness,* the seven *chakras* and Ken Wilber's *Spectrum of Consciousness.* The enfolding, unfolding God who is the Ground of Reality is embodied at each level of the fully human model as suggested by the *Spectrum of Consciousness* teaching.

The *model of full humanity* is presented in the form of a **wafer** with a series of **seven concentric circles** delineating different aspects of human identity. There is an **arrow** across all seven circles requiring that the **empowerment of women as agents of healing and transformation** be nurtured. The model is applied using the **"needle with many threads"** approach in a process of integrating more of the circles into one's identity in a journey of expanding consciousness. The chapter shows that the human person is a compound individual consisting of many layers of being (Ken Wilber 1981:261).

These seven layers are summarised as the True-Self, the ego level, embodiment, financial empowerment, community, experiences of injustice and vulnerability and awareness of God. The journey of full humanity is journey from God, as the Source; to God, as the Goal and through God, who is the grace that makes the journey possible. The **True-Self** represents the presence of Christ within people, the deep centre of one's being. The **ego** describes the self that one presents to the world as well as the inner dialogue in one's psyche including issues such as loneliness, guilt and a positive self-esteem. The **embodiment** dimension

refers to both positive and negative experiences of physicality. **Financial empowerment** is the fourth level on the fully human model and a prominent theme in the data. The **experience of injustice and vulnerability** relates to issues of suffering, often because of social injustices and immorality. The sixth dimension is **community,** as this is an essential feature of how growth in God is nurtured through authentic and supportive communities. Finally, **awareness of God,** the outermost dimension that is also embedded in the True-Self, is the source and goal of the fully human experience.

While chapter five *described* and *discussed* the *model of full humanity*, chapter six will suggest how the model can be *applied* by offering a pattern of spirituality that could shape our relationship with Jesus, each other and the cosmos in the South African context of HIV/AIDS, poverty and patriarchy. Patterns of spirituality are tools, maps, or landscapes that help Christians to follow Jesus and are shaped by the challenges and context of the situation that births them. The *model of full humanity* is applied on both personal and social levels to respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

ASPECTS OF A FULLY HUMAN SPIRITUALITY: A GENDERED RESPONSE TO THE HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC

6.1   INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

The purpose of chapter six is to suggest how the *model of full humanity* **described** in chapter five can be **applied** as aspects of a fully human spirituality. These aspects are framed within the disciplines of Christian spirituality and feminist theology. A fully human spirituality emerges from a South African context shaped by poverty, HIV/AIDS and the patriarchal oppression of women and children even though these limit the resources for personal and social growth (Howard Clinebell 1995:19). The goal of a fully human spirituality is understood as the experience of wholeness and integration, friendship with God, others, creation and oneself as explained in chapter two (section 2.2). Those who live life on the margins and who have shared their stories in the data collection process, which was described in chapters three and four, shape the goal of attaining fully human spirituality.

For ease of reference, the *model of full humanity* developed and described in chapter five, is depicted below as Figure 6.1.
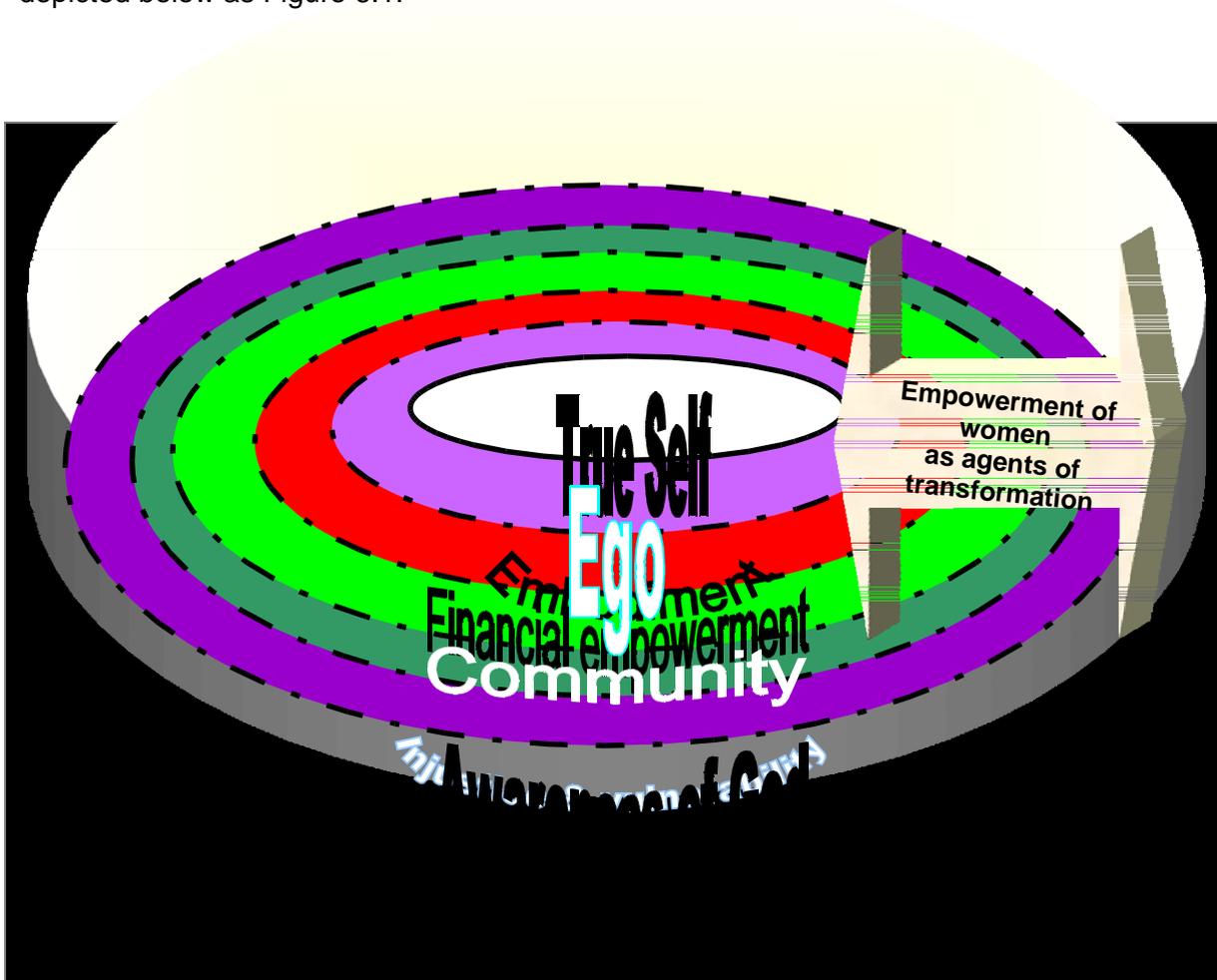
Figure 6.1   A model of full humanity

How can the *model of full humanity* be applied? The model may be applied on personal and social levels[1] by nurturing wholeness at each of the seven dimensions indicated on the model. At each of these seven levels, it is necessary to nurture the empowerment of women as agents of transformation, as represented by the arrow that intersects all seven layers. Feminist spirituality is the resource for nurturing the empowerment of women (see section 2.6). The spiritual disciplines pertinent to feminist spirituality are deconstruction and construction.[2] By implementing these spiritual disciplines, one may grow towards integral wholeness at each level of the *model of full humanity*. The deconstructive task of a fully human spirituality is to analyse those structures that militate against the full humanity of people (see section 2.4.3), since spirituality is a quest for wholeness and is about becoming a person in the fullest sense (Ann Squire 1978:325). The second spiritual discipline is constructive and it seeks to offer an alternative vision to patriarchy (see section 2.4.4). Thus in this sixth chapter, I describe aspects of a fully human spirituality with reference to each layer of the fully human model. In each aspect, the relevant deconstructing tools and constructing therapies are delineated and these can be **applied** on personal and social dimensions. I begin my discussion from the outer circle and move towards the inner circle since the movement in spirituality is toward the True-Self. I conclude my discussion on aspects of a fully human spirituality by offering concrete suggestions on personal and social applications of the *model of full humanity* (section 6.9).

6.2   A SPIRITUALITY OF THE AWARENESS OF GOD

The first aspect of a fully human spirituality is awareness of God, which was described in chapter five (section 5.6.4). The purpose of this section is to suggest how awareness of God may be applied in one's personal and corporate spirituality. In chapter five (section 5.5 and 5.6.4) I describe how in the *model of full humanity*, the outer circle of awareness of God and the inner circle of the True-Self are embedded within each other. The inner and outer circles are connected to suggest how Christ, who is the transcendent principle of the universe inspiring the becoming of people, is also present within people as their True-Self. In the journey of full humanity, one may either journey inwards to the True-Self or expand outwards to the level of awareness of God. Deconstructive tools applied at the level of awareness of God include the power of naming and a critique of names for God, while a constructive therapy suggests alternative ways of imaging God.

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[1] In section 2.6.2 I suggest that one characteristic of feminist spirituality is that it offers integral transformation that incorporates both personal and social transformation.
[2] In section 2.4.2, I suggest that feminist theology offers a critical and a constructive approach to (androcentric) theology that begins with women's *interpreted* experience as the source of content and method of knowledge-creation.

6.2.1   DECONSTRUCTING

At the dimension of awareness of God, theologians can conscientise people as to the effects of structural oppression in blocking their experience of unity with God. One such blockage is suggested by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1993:251), who states that women are the silent and the silenced majority in the Church. She says further that their silenced invisibility is forced theologically by the "well-worn" biblical phrases found in 1 Timothy 2:11-14 (RSV): "Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first and then Eve; and Adam was not deceived but the women was deceived and became the transgressor." Women, thus, need to move into speech. This raises the question: How does one apply the deconstructive tool of the power of naming in one's personal and corporate spirituality?

First, androcentric language is exposed while inclusive language is adopted. One task of a fully human spirituality is to rework language. There are two reasons for this. Androcentric language has defined women as "the other" with the male as the norm. Language is often a form of symbolic violence and exclusion (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 1993:262). Language is alienating for women as is seen by the use of the generic term "masculine" which subsumes women under sons of God, men and he (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 1993:263). Andocentric language grammatically renders women invisible and marginal (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza 1993:263).

Second, women must name themselves and their pain. They need to begin a process of self-authoring and must not allow this to be done for them. Women are often defined according to their relationship to men: they are someone's wife, daughter or mother. The tradition of women taking on the surname of their husbands is but one example of this. In the research project the women were given opportunity to name their pain and begin the self-authoring process during the focussed group discussion and interviews (section 3.3.7).

Third, women must find different ways of speaking about God who is often designated by male images and pronouns. The medieval English classic, *The cloud of unknowing* (Philip Sheldrake 1995:1,9,50,184)*,* which has influenced the practice of spirituality in contemporary times, especially through the centering prayer movement, which seeks to revive the contemplative tradition, is reluctant to name God and in true *apophatic* style moves beyond images. *The cloud of unknowing* was itself influenced by pseudo-Dionysius (Clifton Wolters 1986:333). A pivotal understanding of pseudo-Dionysius is that because God is so awesome, it is safer to understand God in negative terms (Clifton Wolters 1986:333). To describe God in positive terms could never be safe because what one can say about God is never entirely

true (Clifton Walters 1986:333). Yet despite this, Christian culture has had to resort to names for God and these have been predominantly masculine names connoting a hierarchical power. Examples include images such as father, king, lord and warrior. One effect of this is that women are alienated strangers, outsiders who have no share in divine being. The process of divinisation, which is the path of full humanity, is denied to women. In applying a fully human spirituality, women as individuals and the Church as a social institution could critique these names for God. In the light of patriarchal names for God, the constructive therapy for awareness of God is to suggest inclusive ways of naming God.

6.2.2   CONSTRUCTING

While remembering the poverty of words, metaphors and symbols for God, a fully human spirituality seeks to name God in ways that encourage the becoming of women. For example, Sallie McFague (1987) refers to God as mother, lover and friend. Mary Daly (1973:29), on the other hand, believes that calling God She, instead of He, is putting a skirt on the problem that does not resolve the inherent issue of static images, never being able to hold before people an invitation to their full becoming. No image of God can ever fully capture the range of human experience and may be divisive through the language used to describe God and the process of excluding people from that image. The change has to occur within the being of people. Mary Daly (1973:29), for example, suggests describing God as a Verb, which emphasises the being of God, in whom we live, move and have our being. Therein lies the path of liberation from the tyranny of naming God: mysticism, which brings the discussion full circle to the opening comments. God is experienced in the very depths of one's being at the level of the True-Self and through transpersonal encounters with other people. The transpersonal encounter with God, who is beyond people and within them, is ineffable. The mystery of God can never be captured in words, therefore the journey to spiritual maturity requires the courage to leave words and images behind. As Beatrice Bruteau (1981:279) says: "God cannot be seen, cannot be looked at, cannot be objectified, God can only be coincided with, or known from the inside, by experiencing in one's own subjective consciousness the radiant power of out-flooding agape love that is the Divine Life". The mysticism of the task of noetically coinciding with God is unpacked further in the journey of the True-Self, in section 6.9. One of the stumbling-blocks for awareness of God is the experience of injustice. Thus a spirituality that challenges injustice is an integral aspect of applying a fully human spirituality.

6.3   A SPIRITUALITY THAT CHALLENGES INJUSTICE AND VULNERABILITY

A fully human spirituality is characterised by a joyful-sorrowfulness and is rooted in restlessness, in questioning, in unease, in dissatisfaction with the world as it is (Kenneth

Leech 1992:90). In the context of dehumanising poverty, the stigma associated with being HIV-positive and the effects of a patriarchal society, a fully human spirituality is a cry for life (Bernadette Mbuy-Beya 1994:64-676). Gustavo Gutierrez (1983:73) describes the situation of poverty with the Biblical metaphor of living in a strange land. The foreign land is a metaphor for exploitation and slavery. The concept of Exodus is an image for leaving brokenness and moving to freedom, justice and the Promised Land (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:73). A spirituality that challenges injustice encourages people to seek God and leave death (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:74). The Promised Land symbolises the gift of a new situation, which is marked by the presence of God and justice in relationships with others (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:79). In what follows I suggest how a spirituality of injustice may be applied to one's experience of being fully human by answering two questions: Why do people who commit to a fully human spirituality challenge injustice? What are strategies that can be adopted to challenge injustice? Strategies to challenge injustice are constructive therapies in a fully human spirituality while the reasons for challenging injustice provide deconstructive tools for dismantling injustice.

6.3.1 DECONSTRUCTING

For what reasons do people who commit to a fully human spirituality challenge injustice? Firstly, God desires the full humanity of all people, for, as Gustavo Gutierrez (1983:67) says, God is on the side of life; a fully human spirituality challenges that which hinders the path to full humanity. The authenticity of a fully human spirituality is its commitment to life (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:67). It becomes necessary to include these challenges against injustice as part of a pattern of spirituality. The reason a critique of injustice is adopted, as a way of applying a fully human spirituality, is because of the desire to make love an effective force within history (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:108). Concern for effective action is a way of expressing love for the other as one cannot talk of life without also holding in tension an understanding of death (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:65). A fully human spirituality challenges death-dealing structures that sap away the full humanity of people.

The second motivation for standing against injustice is inspired by the Christian vision of the household of God that is characterised by peace, justice and love[3]. Denise Ackermann (1996a:33) prefers the term "the mending of creation" because of the patriarchal connotations imbedded in the metaphor kingdom of God, which may imply the rule of a male king. The challenge of injustice is the liberating praxis inherent in a feminist methodology

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[3] In section 5.2, I argue that one reason the Church should respond to HIV/AIDS is because HIV/AIDS and the related illnesses of poverty and patriarchy that breed HIV, are dehumanising and not the reign of God.

(Denise Ackermann 1996a:34). The vision of a *shalom* society of health, justice and peace is a "goad to action," and invitation to hopeful Church praxis (Steve de Gruchy 2006:5).

A third motivation emerges out of the experience of conversion to Christian discipleship (Steve de Gruchy 2006:2). Frank Chikane (1994:175,6) says that the nexus of Christian spirituality is the point of conversion, a turning around and a redirection of a person's life. Conversion is the call to new life where one makes a deliberate intention to leave a life of sin (Frank Chikane 1994:175-6). Sin is understood as separation: separation from God, others, creation and separation within oneself. Sin divides and having divided, destroys that which it has divided (Brian Gaybba 1987:142-144). The effects of sin are suffering and death. Conversion is the transformation of all reality and is an important theme in liberation spirituality (Frank Chikane 1994:176).[4] Conversion is a dimension of applying a fully human spirituality because out of conversion emerges a commitment to work with the poor and a commitment to the conversion of the world. Conversion is a changed perspective and as such it makes commitment to the poor and marginalized, who in the South African context are often HIV-positive, meaningful (Frank Chikane 1994:177).

6.3.3   CONSTRUCTING

The struggle against injustice is accompanied by an analysis of what causes injustice and suggests ways to deal with these issues (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:107). The source for the analysis is an encounter with the personal God (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:109). The different aspects of the fully human model are woven together in that a spirituality of the True-Self (section 6.9) is the energising source that challenges injustice, which is often supported by an authentic community (section 6.4)[5].

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[4] Other authors argue that spirituality begins before conversion and suggest that the role of prevenient grace, the grace that goes before, cannot be underestimated. Even some of the psalmists (Psalm 139:13-16) describe an intuition of God reaching out towards humankind while they were still in their mothers' wombs

[5] In section 5.6.4, I explain that one aspect of the model of full humanity is to understand that when it is applied on either personal or social levels, the "needle with many threads" approach is adopted. While one may operate on one level of the fully human model, the threads in the needle embrace the other dimensions of the model in an *integral* process of transformation to wholeness.

Daniel Erlander (1992) in *Manna and mercy: A brief history of God's unending promise to*
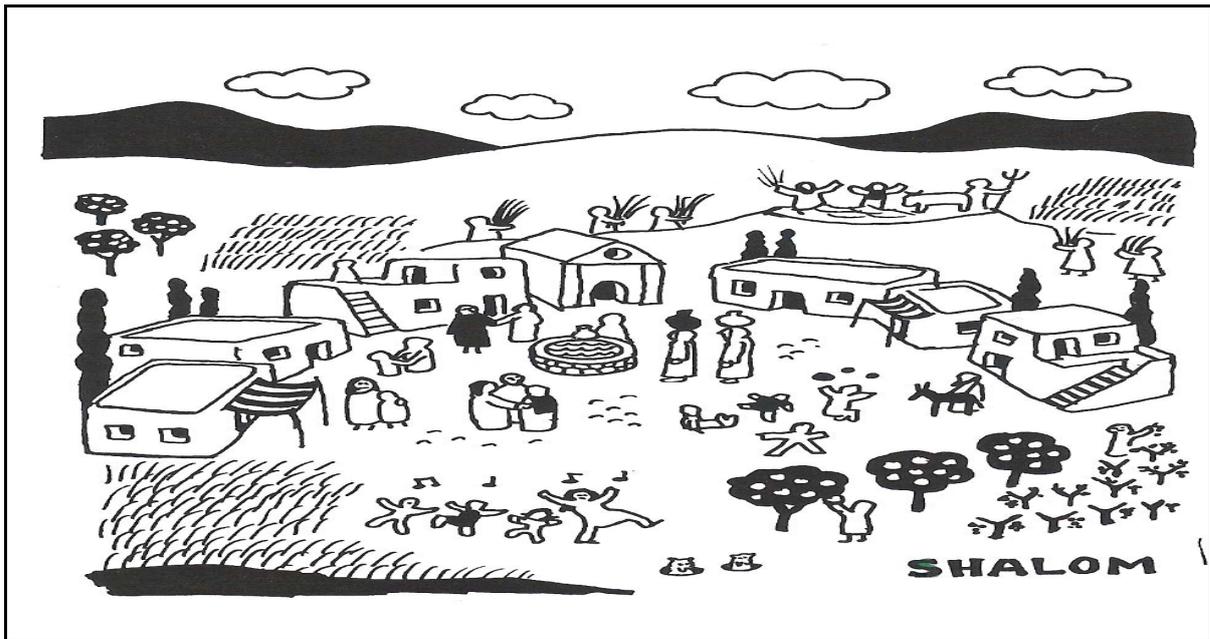
mend the entire universe offers a creative, visual tool for critiquing injustice. The pictures are presented as Figure 6.2, which offers a visual representation of a fully human society, and Figure 6.3 which offers a social critique of the feast and famine in the South African context where some have too much and others too little. The pictures are discussed in detail below.

Figure 6.2   A shalom society: well-being and full humanity for all
Daniel Erlander (1992:22)

In the two contrasting pictures, Figure 6.2 represents a *shalom* society of fully human wholeness where all have access to the well. The houses are of similar sizes, there is a general sense of well-being with children playing and resources are shared co-operatively among the community and all have access to the wheat and fruit trees.

Figure 6.3   A broken society: A land filled with sadness

Daniel Erlander (1992:22)

In Figure 6.3, the balanced community has been destroyed with the rich elite having exclusive access to the water well and the poor having to walk miles to fetch water as is suggested in the top right hand corner where the two women are walking to the well. The communal spirit is no longer present, with some people queuing for work, while others protect the wealth of the rich and the majority of the people live in small houses outside the protective borders of the wall. There is now a barn for storage and only the rich have access to the fruit trees. The sense of joy that was depicted in the first picture with people talking, singing and dancing is no longer present. The mole, depicted in the bottom right hand corner of figure 6.3, offers apt commentary: "A land filled with sadness".

The analysis of injustice is local and global in character as suggested by K C Abraham and Bernadette Mbuy-Beya (1994:191) when they say: "Structures of oppression are global and local, external and internal". Strategies that can be constructed to challenge injustice include a preferential option for the poor, the establishment of base communities, and the use of lament in worship. While applying a spirituality of a preferential option for the poor is discussed fully in section 6.4.2, base communities and lament are discussed below.

Base communities

Liberation theology, which refers to the contextualisation of social theology among African people (John Douglas Hall & Rosemary Radford Ruether 1995:93), is employed to challenge injustice in this research project. The establishment of base communities, which are groups of people in solidarity with each other, is one of the methodologies applied by liberation theology. In this research, the support groups served as base communities and provided the context for empowerment and transformation. Participation in the support groups brought about positive behaviour change, such as healthy living and stress management, and through the process of peer counselling, participants could receive and offer support, advice and encouragement.

Base communities analyse the social meaning of their own experience (John Douglas Hall & Rosemary Radford Ruether 19951995:95), by asking such questions such as:

> Why do people experience low pay, unemployment, homelessness,
> How do we read the Scriptures in light of this experience?
> How is God calling us to take action against these?

The effect of this analysis is the criticism of the privatisation of sin and salvation (John Douglas Hall & Rosemary Radford Ruether 1995:94). Rather, sin is seen in social and economic terms. African spirituality is not an inward looking spirituality, for to be inward looking is to deny the experience of community and social, cultural and economic dimensions

of life. Hence, its denouncement of privatised religions (Aylward Shorter 1978:7) and its revolt against those structures that dehumanise people (Aylward Shorter 1978:7).

The Church, as the people of God, is a group of people meeting together and is a further example of a base community. The Church's response to the experience of injustice is embodied in her very identity. Stanley Hauerwas (1983:99) argues that the ethical duty of the Church is to be the Church because the Church "does not *have* a social ethic, it *is* a social ethic". Through the regular celebration of communion, the Church can be Church. The Eucharist is shared as a foretaste of a new humanity of mutual love and caring for one another (John Douglas Hall & Rosemary Radford Ruether 1995:94). The ritual of "lament" is a further strategy that could be employed to deconstruct injustice.

Lament

A lament is the wailing of the human soul, "a barrage of tears, reproaches, petitions, praise and hopes which beat against the heart of God. It is, in essence, supremely human" (Denise Ackermann 2001:25, 26). Denise Ackermann (2001:25,26) suggests that the lament is a way of offering resistance and hope, of bearing the unbearable and of expressing emotion and suffering and as such it is a useful way of addressing the effects of injustice in one's own life. It is risky for communities to lament because it wails against structures and pushes the boundaries of people's relationships with each other and with God (Denise Ackermann 2001:26). Lament is politically subversive in that the use of lament provides communities with a way of revolting against patriarchy and poverty (Denise Ackermann 2001:27). Thus, lament is a form of prophetic witness against society where the Church can examine unjust social and political institutions and policies that are at times responsible for dehumanising people.

Lament can take place in the context of the Eucharist. There is a link between the lament for HIV-positive bodies, the bodies of women and children that have been abused, and the body of the crucified and resurrected Jesus, which is celebrated and remembered in communion (Denise Ackermann 2001:32). Celebrating Communion is a prophetic witness to the reign of God and the hope for the sort of community that the Church strives to be. A spirituality of community is another dimension that may be applied in the spirituality of becoming fully human and is offered as the third layer on the fully human model (section 5.6.4).

6.4   A SPIRITUALITY OF COMMUNITY

The spirituality of community, creating circles in which to dance and talk together, is the "willingness of human beings to belong to one another in love" (Aylward Shorter 1978:27). It is applied through expressing a preferential option for the poor. In the journey toward full humanity a spirituality of community requires that one differentiate between life-giving and

life-sapping communities. The invitation to belong to others is suggested by feminist spirituality, which emphasises mutuality and reciprocity. Feminist spirituality offers critical tools with which to deconstruct the lack of authentic community that intensifies the HIV pandemic.

6.4.1 DECONSTRUCTING

While some human experiences of community are characterised by isolation, mistrust and disintegration, the whole universe is structured in such way that all aspects of it depend on one another. The "members" of the universe are constituted in a dynamic relationship and their identity is constructed by being in relationship with each other. An aim of a fully human spirituality is to promote authentic communities that enhance the full humanity of people by learning what it means to indwell each other, as the three persons of the Trinity interpenetrate and indwell the other in a continuous flow of giving and receiving love.

Louise Kretzschmar (1995b:98) offers the transformation of culture as a way to create solidarity among women. Solidarity with other women is a means of empowerment, not only against patriarchy, but also against the sickness of HIV/AIDS. For example, the following participant remarks how empowered women provide support for other women:

> But now I am strong. And then the thing that made me to be so strong; eh, I take M….
> and if I can be like her then everything will be fine.

Excerpt from an interview with participant of the Maskopas support group

The feminist, Beatrice Bruteau (1980:127-130), provides a deconstructive tool to distinguish between communities that offer life and full humanity and those that do not. She differentiates between a domination paradigm and a communion paradigm as a way to describe these two communities. She (1980:127) defines the domination paradigm as having "no reciprocal determination of being". This suggests that individuals in the domination paradigm define who they are by negating the attributes of others, each individual pronouncing, "I am I in so far as I am not you" (Beatrice Bruteau 1980:128). Beatrice Bruteau (1980:128) argues that this process of identity forming through negation is the foundation of the metaphysics of alienation and isolation as each person is outside of the other. On the other hand, the communion paradigm, which can also be called the participatory paradigm, is a "reciprocal relation of the enhancement of being" (Beatrice Bruteau 1980:128). Persons that live in the communion paradigm affirm that "I am in you and you are in me" (Beatrice Bruteau 1980:128). There is an intrinsic unity where one person is said to be "in another". The metaphysics of indwelling are built on the "logic of self-identity through the process of mutual affirmation (Beatrice Bruteau 1980:130). Beatrice Bruteau (1980:130) suggests that

people are defined by their relationships to each other, relationships that are mutual, equal and reciprocal as one can only know oneself in as much as one is part of community[6].

In summary, a spirituality of community recognises the brokenness and isolation of human relationships. Gleaning insights from feminist spirituality, a spirituality of community is applied through designing communities that promote the full humanity of people by encouraging them to understand that their lives are intrinsically connected to each other through reciprocal, mutual and inclusive energies. A spirituality of community may also be applied through solidarity with the poor, which is a hallmark of the constructive therapy of standing in solidarity with the marginalized.

6.4.2   CONSTRUCTING: SOLIDARITY WITH THE POOR

Groups of people or the Church who desire a fully humanity can apply a spirituality of community by standing in solidarity with the poor. The theoretical framework for a preferential option for the poor was described in section 2.3. This section motivates the application of solidarity with the poor in one's personal and corporate spirituality.

A preferential option for the poor

A central feature of applying a spirituality of community is the creation of networks with the poor by means of a spiritual discipline. A spiritual discipline is an activity or lifestyle decision that one implements into one's life to open oneself to the influence of the Spirit and grace. A spiritual discipline that is applied in the process of responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and living a fully human spirituality is to stand in solidarity with people who are affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, both in the Church and on the margins of the Church. In this way, friendships are formed and developed.

In section 2.3, the poor are defined as the economically poor, those who live on the margins of society[7]. Spirituality means to witness to life, in the context where structures that perpetuate poverty create a social system that marginalizes the poor (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:45). In this section the discussion on the constructive therapy of solidarity with the poor reflects on the transformative consequences of solidarity on the rich and the poor, and the relevance of the spirituality of solidarity for the poor for South Africa.

The transformative consequences of solidarity with the poor

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[6] In section 5.6.2, I describe community as an aspect of a model of full humanity. I refer to the *Ubuntu* philosophy that emphasises mutuality, but is sometimes unhelpful for women in that the community may define women's identities and roles on their behalf and not allow space for women's self-authoring.

[7] In Luke's Gospel, the beatitude reads, "Blessed are the poor". In Matthew's Gospel the beatitude reads, "Blessed are the poor in spirit". Richard Rohr (1996:130) defines the poor in spirit as those who have an inner emptiness. The poor in spirit acknowledge their need for God.

An invitation to a fully human spirituality is that people stand in solidarity with the poor. As suggested in section 2.3.4, it is a key to transformation for the rich and poor who seek integral transformation and full humanity (John Douglas Hall & Rosemary Radford Ruether 1995:96). The importance of the *model of full humanity* is that it has to offer transformation potential for marginalized people and rich people. The preferential option for the poor is good news for the poor but what is good news for the rich? They will be transformed by their friendship with the poor. John Wesley (in Theodore Jennings 1990:62) suggests that solidarity with the poor, expressed through visiting the poor and building friendships with them, has three positive consequences for both the rich and the poor.

Firstly, class distinction disintegrates and the wealthy are converted to the cause of the poor:

> … the breaking down of barriers between givers and receivers of aid, between those who have and those who have not, is an essential expression of the solidarity that liberates the privileged from the blindness and the marginalized from their invisibility (in Theodore Jennings 1990:62)[8].

The second reason that solidarity with the poor is an important path of transformation for the rich is that it facilitates the renewal of hearts and minds in that the experience of solidarity with the poor leads to compassion:

> In visiting the marginalized we invite them to transform us, to transform our hearts, to transform our understanding, to transform the instruments of divine mercy and justice (Theodore Jennings 1990:57-8).

Solidarity with the poor is transformative. John Wesley (1872d:2) taught that in the journey of authentic spiritual growth, the Christian must stand in solidarity with the poor. Merely giving to the poor is not enough because it may mean that the rich are unsympathetic to the cause of the poor and may romanticise the experience of being poor. For example, Wesley (1872d:2) notes that one reason that "the rich, in general, have so little sympathy of the poor is because they seldom visit them". Romanticising the poor by extolling the virtues of poverty militates against the attempt to alleviate poverty (Theodore Jennings 1990:47). This is why John Wesley (1872d:2) strongly emphasised solidarity with the poor as an important spiritual discipline or means of grace in the diet of a healthy Christian:

> Neither would it do the same to you, unless you saw them [the sick] with your own eyes. If you do not, you lose a healthy means of grace; you lose an excellent means of increasing your thankfulness to God … as well as of increasing your sympathy with the afflicted, your benevolence and all social affections.

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[8] I have found this to be true in my own ministry as a priest. A few metres down the road from the St John the Divine Church in Belgravia where I serve as a priest, is a squatter camp for which our church has a pastoral concern. The entire squatter camp was burnt to the ground and the church responded. Although we offered blankets and food, one resident remarked that our presence there reminded them that they weren't alone in the world; their pain and their plight was not invisible (personal journal).

The third consequence of solidarity with the poor is that the transformation of hearts and minds leads to positive action. In the early Methodist movement, organisations were established to alleviate poverty. Some of these included sewing collectives, "lending stocks" to help the poor finance their own business initiatives, and the building of houses for widows and the poor. The consistent ingredient in this positive action is continued solidarity with the poor. The Methodist preachers and their families expressed solidarity with the poor by living in the poor houses with the widows and orphans (Aubin de Gruchy 1989:78).

The fourth reason why solidarity with the poor and oppressed is transformative is that it is a way in which one experiences the presence of Christ (see section 2.3.4). As explained in the opening comments of section 2.3.4, Christians experience Christ through the poor and Christ in the poor, who are the epiphany of God. Thomas Merton (1977:51-2) confirms:

> Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for him at all, Christ has come uninvited. But because he cannot be at home in it, because he is out of place in it, and yet he must be in it, his place is with those others for whom there is no room. His place is with those who do not belong, who are rejected by power because they are regarded as weak, those who are discredited, who are denied the status of persons, tortured, excommunicated. With those for whom there is no room, Christ is present in the world.

Solidarity with the poor is transformative for rich and poor on personal and social levels. The poor are given the opportunity for self-authoring when they can define themselves and their problems and not have it defined for them. The poor are humanised in the sense that they are no longer invisible because somebody else from outside their context listens to them. Those who stand in solidarity with the poor offer the gift of listening. Listening empowers people with dignity and through the spiritual discipline of listening the rich are offered an opportunity to learn from the poor.

The transformative potential of solidarity with the poor is supported by other projects such as the *Join Enrichment project*, which has spent time collecting the stories of young South African woman. It offers this story from Lioness Madiseko (in Lesanne Schwellus & Ingrid Clanch nd: 6):

> Sharing this story with you feels like turning to a new, positive leaf and closing an old book forever. For a moment the burden which has been shouldered for quite some time now feels off loaded from my chest and conscience.

Aspects of the transformational consequences of standing in solidarity with the poor, supported by the literature, are further illustrated in my research study. As part of the data collection process, I asked the support groups in Orange Farm, Bekkersdal and Martindale to draw a picture of themselves in a particular context. In line with the principle of establishing an egalitarian environment where I am a learner among other learners, I also drew a picture

of myself in a context of my choice and submitted it to the focussed group discussion for interpretation. My picture, shown below, depicts one of the understandings that I have of my work with the Maskopas. The picture shows the Orange Farm community on the one side with a suburban community on the other side and the highway in between. I understand my priestly role as offering to connect the people and resources of the one community with the resources of the other, through the process of solidarity.
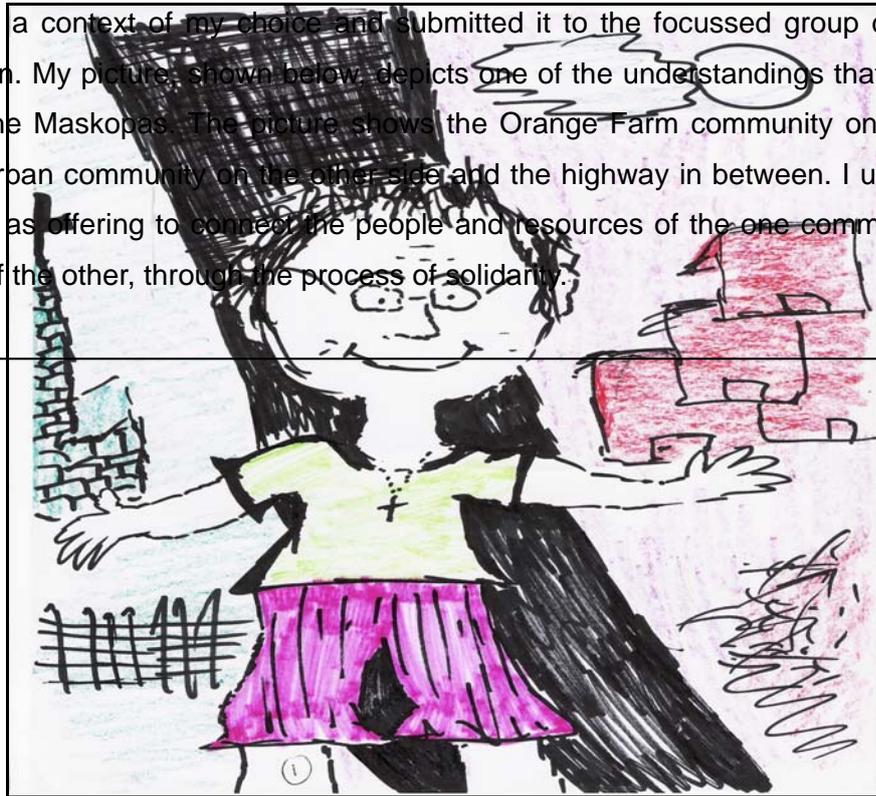
Drawing by Desiree Snyman during research with the Maskopas group

In order to fulfil my priestly role and to sensitise the worshipping community at the St Margaret's parish to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, I facilitated an AIDS awareness service where the focus of the worship, liturgy and preaching was to highlight the injustice of living with HIV. The community were offered three ways to respond to their experiences during the service. The responses ranged from agreeing to wear an AIDS ribbon, to participating in a course, *Churches, Channels of Hope* that could equip them with detailed information on HIV/AIDS, and finally, to participating in a *Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope* to Orange Farm, which I arranged with the Maskopas group in Orange Farm. The Maskopas designed a program where they shared their stories of discovering their HIV status. They also introduced the parishioners from St Margaret's to families in Orange Farm, including child-headed households. While almost all the congregants agreed to wear a ribbon and 30 accepted the invitation to attend the HIV/AIDS training, only three women parishioners from St Margaret's agreed to go on the *Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope*.

Some time after the pilgrimage to Orange Farm, I conducted a focussed group discussion with the three women parishioners to ascertain whether standing in solidarity with the marginalized, even for only a few hours, could offer a *kairos* moment. Excerpts from the focus group discussion suggest that a *kairos* moment, an opportunity for transformation through expressing a preferential option for the poor, is indeed possible.

The participant Trish describes her experience of the *Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope* as an awakening:

> I literally have been awakened to complacency, to selfishness, I've had a good look at my self, to the terrible situations out there, and again how do they ask when there's no-one there to ask, and they shouldn't have to. Like we went out there and I'm so pleased I went because it has awakened something in me and I don't know what I'm going to do about it, you know, but I'm aware now, very, very much aware. Not only out there, but amongst people in our own communities, not only physical needs, but you know there's a lot of emotional needs, supports all sorts of things. **We've got to become a concerned body, a noticing body, a responding body.**

Excerpt from a focussed group discussion with St Margaret's Church parishioners

The above quotation suggests that a transformation occurred for Trish in that she was moved to extend her boundaries and reach out beyond her comfort zone. She further theologises about how the Church should respond to people who experience marginalized living saying: "We've got to become a concerned body, a noticing body, a responding body." The comment illustrates the suggestion which liberation theology makes in terms of allowing theology to be developed from the perspective of the underside of history in that her comments arise from a contextual experience. The description Trish offers of her experience suggests the link between personal and social transformation as she herself experienced an awakening, which then initiated a process of introspection. This led to her examining the needs of the community around her: "I'm so pleased I went because it has awakened something in me and I don't know what I'm going to do about it, you know, but I'm aware now, very, very much aware. Not only out there, but amongst people in our own communities, not only physical needs, but you know there's a lot of emotional needs, supports all sorts of things".

Trish's experience shows that the value of solidarity is that as people's hearts and minds are transformed the experience leads to compassion (Theodore Jennings 1990:55). The result of the transformation initiated through solidarity with the marginalized is that it leads to positive action. In the case of Trish there was a desire to reach out to others, as she gained new insight into the theology of the body of Christ.

The participant Frayne depicts her experience of the *Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope.* The following description of her drawings shows how the experience of standing in solidarity with

the poor, even briefly, has the effect of integral transformation, illustrated through integrated knowledge of head and heart, compassion and a desire for action:

Frayne <u>before</u> the *Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope*

Drawing by Frayne during research with St Margaret's Church

The first picture depicts Frayne before her Orange Farm experience. The second picture depicts her transformation after experiencing the *Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope* to Orange Farm. Notice how the arrows travel through her head and her heart suggests integration. The eyes in the second picture are wide, illustrating how she now experiences a greater degree of conscientisation.
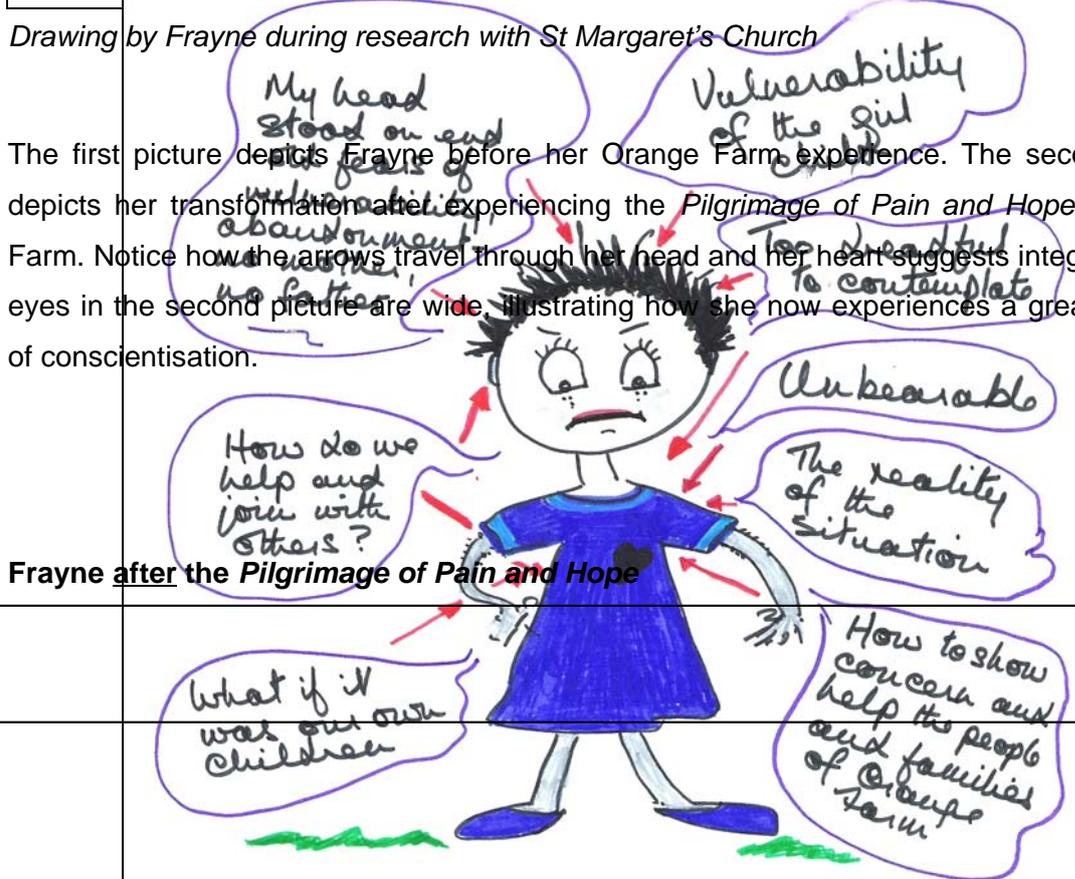
Frayne <u>after</u> the *Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope*

258
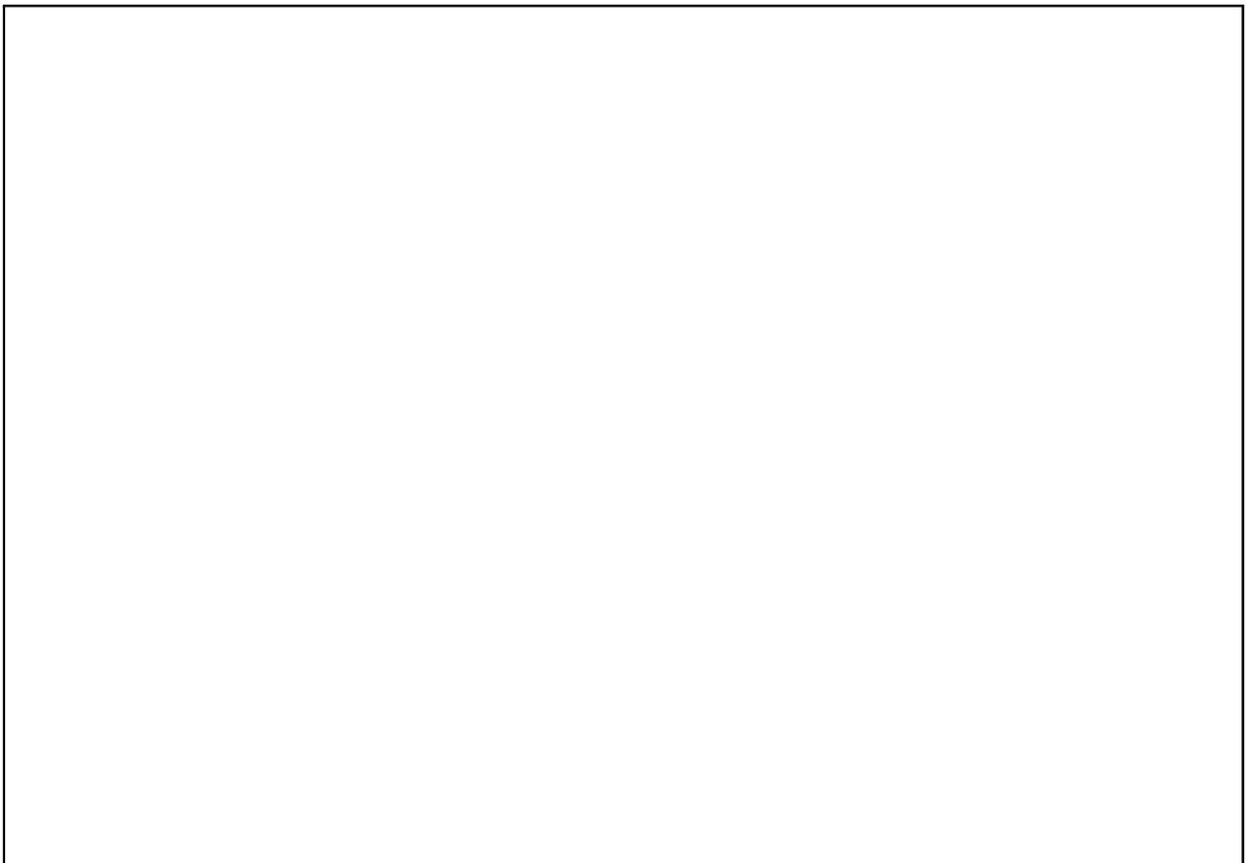
Drawing by Frayne during research with St Margaret's Church

The following is Frayne's analysis of her picture, the emphasis is mine.

My head and my heart: everything came from there it went through the heart and back again, it was too dreadful to contemplate, it was unbearable. So these dark shadows round my eyes are the weight of it all. And my heart is heavy with darkness but kind of, how do we get out that, it **opened my eyes,** it brought home to the reality of the situation and I thought what is it like to have a couple of sandwiches a day? **How do we help and join with others?** What if it was our own community?

Excerpt from a focussed group discussion with St Margaret's Church

Frayne's discussion of her picture illustrates the points that have been quoted from the literature. First, she supports the teachings of John Wesley in that through her experience of solidarity with the poor, she was converted to the cause of the poor; "the reality of the situation" was "brought home" to her. She further supports Theodore Jennings' thesis that the barriers between rich and poor are broken down when she asks: "What if it was our own community?" Second, her experience of solidarity with the poor led to positive action and she begins to question: "How can we help and join with others?"

In summary, the rich are transformed through standing in solidarity with the poor and one of the signs of this transformation is integration of heart and head knowledge. Other signs of this transformation are compassion, a clearer perspective on the reality of poverty and a

desire for action, as suggested in the quotations of the research participants, literature by John Wesley and the commentary of Theodore Jennings. The poor, through being listened to, are given space for self-authoring. Having discussed aspects of the transformative potential of solidarity with the poor for the rich and poor, I reflect now on how such spirituality has relevance for South Africa. I suggest that it has relevance in a Church context and in terms of a consumer, materialist culture. Within an HIV-positive world, solidarity with the poor who are also HIV-positive is an effective strategy to break down the tyranny of stigma.

The relevance of a spirituality of solidarity with the poor

A spirituality of friendship with the poor has relevance in the current South African context. First, it has relevance in a Church context. According to Florence Bulle (1983:23-42) the prosperity messages proclaimed by some Pentecostal, fundamentalist churches are a threat to the Gospel. A drive down any of the main streets in Johannesburg will show that these churches are mushrooming in the inner city areas. Some Pentecostal, fundamentalist churches celebrate wealth, health and power as gifts from God and preach the promise of material blessings and socio-economic mobility as a sign of divine approval (Theodore Jennings 1990:29). For these churches, poverty is a curse from God and HIV/AIDS is a symptom of God's rejection (Theodore Jennings 1990:29). In a context where people are poor and sick because of HIV/AIDS, it stands to reason that these types of spiritualities would be popular, as they promise wealth and health. John Wesley's teachings on standing in solidarity with the poor, as evidence of an increase in holiness of life and faith and as part of the project to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land, are a challenge to these wealth and health messages of salvation. Evidence of holy living is standing in solidarity with the poor. However, in the eyes of the world, those who put into practice a spirituality of friendship with the poor may appear to be a failure (Theodore Jennings 1990:181).

On the surface it may seem that the preferential option for poor has the same agenda for economic empowerment as the health and wealth messages of some Pentecostal fundamentalists. However, there are subtle differences. The "prosperity cult" does not offer a critique of capitalism and poverty. There is also no analysis of how some wealth is at the expense of the poor and no criticism of materialism and consumerism.

A spirituality of friendship with the poor has relevance in terms of the materialistic and consumer culture that characterises capitalistic living. The growing disparity between the rich and poor in South Africa is a direct result of the growing consumerism, spurred on by the

media. The disparity between the rich and the poor is a breeding ground for revolution. The dawn of the new South Africa has seen many South Africans uncritically adopt capitalism from the West without asking the important questions about whether this is the best way for them to govern their society. The fall of the eastern bloc countries and collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) means that the *alternative* to capitalism which the USSR represented, is no longer present in the imagination and consciousness of people (John Douglas Hall & Rosemary Radford Ruether 1995:100). The USSR often funded alternative social experiments in Africa and South America when these were cut off from Western powers (1995:100).

The gap between rich and poor in South Africa is influenced by the global imbalance of the world's resources. According to Theodore Jennings (1990:183), the poor are poor because of how society is organised. He quotes as an example America, which contains only a fraction of the earth's resources, yet consumes the majority of the earth's resources[9]. He (1990:183) adds that social mechanisms generate poverty and:

> Each year there is a new holocaust, a new sacrifice to the Moloch of greed and indifference … The slaughter of the innocents is no fortuitous calamity, but the direct result of economic arrangements that blind us to reality by making us complicitious in calamity. Mortal poverty is not due, as some blasphemously maintain, to an act of God. It is the work of economic idolatry (Theodore Jennings 1990:183).

In the South African context, the situation in Orange Farm supports his statements. Orange Farm is a peri-urban society with little economic development and high levels of unemployment. It is situated 50 km away from the centre of the city where the wealth is concentrated and where there is perceived potential for employment. In order to get to the city it takes three taxis at a cost of about R50, which is equivalent to ten loaves of bread.

In summary, the relevance that a spirituality of solidarity with the poor has in a Church context is that it provides a way to challenge the health and wealth prosperity messages of some Pentecostal churches by providing an alternative vision of holiness as friendship with the poor. Solidarity with the poor inspires another aspect of a fully human spirituality, that of a spirituality of financial empowerment.

6.5   A SPIRITUALITY OF FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT

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[9] According to a report prepared for the United Nations, globally, inequalities in consumption are stark where 20 % of the world highest income countries account for 86% of total private consumption, consuming 45% of all meat and fish, 58% of total energy and where they own 87% of the world's vehicle fleet   (Human development report 1998:2). While the world's dominant consumers are concentrated among the well-off, it is the poor who suffer from the environmental damage due to ever-expanding consumption (Human development report 1998:3).

A key characteristic of applying a fully human spirituality that differentiates it from many other patterns of spirituality is the way that it highlights a spirituality of economics, which I describe as financial empowerment. A spirituality of financial empowerment rests in an unbroken dialectic of searching for a good self in a good society: "Socio-economic humanisation is indeed the outward manifestation of redemption" (Rosemary Radford Ruether 1983:216). The deconstructive tools within a spirituality of financial empowerment recognise that at the foundation of an economic system lies the way in which people address human needs and share resources (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:74). Thus, economic systems are either just or unjust, depending on the moral quality of human choices that design the systems (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:74). The constructive therapies suggest strategies to empower people, especially women, financially.

6.5.1 DECONSTRUCTING

The economy is often a complex phenomenon. People may believe that they are insignificant and that their individual financial decisions are of no consequence in a complex economic system (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:77). Yet Christians cannot neglect their moral responsibility of engaging the economic system. A spirituality of financial empowerment includes analysis into the ways women are held in economic dependency. A key to solving the problem of HIV/AIDS is the transformation of patriarchal society through the gift of a spirituality of financial empowerment (Vicci Tallis 1998:11). Not to participate in this project of necessary transformation may sign the death sentence for humanity.

In Matthew 26:11, Jesus said that the poor would always be with us. This is not meant to be taken as justification for poverty. Sufficient wealth and resources exist to wipe out poverty (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:75). The problem is that economic systems do not meet people's basic needs, not because they are unable to do so, but because of the way that these systems are organised (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:75).

Factors that contribute to an unjust economic system include high levels of poverty, which is revealed through the large gap between rich and poor, discrimination against women, unemployment, the disintegration of family life, materialism and globalisation (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:75, 76).

The **large gap between rich and poor** in South Africa suggests that the interests of a minority are favoured in relation to the interest of the rest of the population. Thus, the majority are denied their rightful share in available resources and wealth (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:75). It also means that wealth and resources are not

properly distributed (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:80). South Africa cannot prosper under the conditions of the rich being so rich because the poor are so poor (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:81). Work place differentials, which is the difference between what the highest paid and lowest paid people earn, is very high in South Africa at 100:1 compared to Japan at 7:1. (*NGO Matters* Vol 2(9):7, in South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:92). This high work differential supports the rich-poor gap in South Africa.

Discrimination against women occurs in South Africa, despite legislation to protect them. The main concern for the participants in this research project was their lack of paid employment. Part of the reasons for this includes a lack of marketable skills, living outside the cash nexus, and cultural influences. Even if the women research participants did enjoy the benefits of paid employment, how empowered would they be? According to literature, (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:84; Rosemary Radford Ruether 1983:218) they would not be that empowered at all. Issues that would face them as employees include the fact that women have less pay, are in lower ranking jobs and regarded as a marginal labour force that is hired when needed and fired at will (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:84; Rosemary Radford Ruether 1983:218). More than that, women's work in a capitalist system is increasingly segregated (Rosemary Radford Ruether 1983:219). While women are nurses, teachers and librarians who receive lesser pay, men are often university professors, lawyers, doctors and business leaders (Rosemary Radford Ruether 1983:219). Granted, there are women who participate in male dominated fields such as ministry, law and business, but often they have lower rank and less pay (Rosemary Radford Ruether 1983:219). Further discrimination against women is that employment practices do not accommodate their motherhood and so women are treated unfairly (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:84). As a social category women are more likely than men to be unemployed (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:84).

These inequalities are summarised in research prepared for the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) based in Pretoria which highlights that in South Africa, women workers are paid less than male workers, earning between 72-85% of what men with similar education backgrounds earn (Baden, Sally; Hassim, Shireen & Meintjies, Sheila 1999:19). The report suggests that in 1999, there were still more men than women in all sectors except services where women dominate. There were large numbers of women in trade and finance, but very few in mining, construction and transport (Baden, Sally; Hassim, Shireen & Meintjies, Sheila 1999:19). Women also predominate in low skill and low paid occupations where 51% of African employed women work in semi-skilled or unskilled jobs compared with 36 % of African men (Baden, Sally; Hassim, Shireen & Meintjies, Sheila 1999:19). Daniela Casale's (2004:3) working paper shows similar research findings in 2001 where a

disproportionately large percentage of African women are found in informal or self-employed employment categories.

High unemployment is another symptom of an unjust economy because people must be able to participate in the country's economy in order to benefit from it (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:82). Humane and dignified work is a vital aspect of being fully human.

Unjust economic practices mean that **family life** is adversely affected. Social dislocation occurs where families are pressurised due to factors such as migratory labour system (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:85). There is an increased tendency toward overtime that robs families of time together. An example is Sunday trading which is more and more commonplace in South Africa, even in non-essential services.

Materialism, another economic injustice, means that money, personal status and possessions are given undue importance at the expense of people-centred values. This is combined with human greed for greater wealth beyond what is necessary for sustainable living, often at the expense of other humans and creation (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:75). Greed and selfishness mean that a small minority monopolise the wealth and resources. While it is legitimate to enjoy the fruits of one's labour, this enjoyment must be in balance with spiritual, moral and social values (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:84).

Globalisation is another factor influencing an unjust economic system. Globalisation refers to how methods of communication and transport are faster and more sophisticated in ways that they have ever been before (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:86). Trade barriers between countries are being eliminated (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:86). Multinational companies operate worldwide and often enjoy greater economic power than developing countries (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:86). Negative impacts of globalisation include the fact that profits enjoyed by rich people in rich countries, are derived from these multinationals that achieve large profit margins from cheap labour in poor nations (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:86). Globalisation thus takes advantage of the economic injustices in some countries such as the gap between rich and poor. South African industries cannot compete with unjust working conditions of international trade. As a result her industries collapse, leaving many people jobless. An example of such a collapse is seen in the clothing industry in South Africa, which is unable to compete with the cheaper, imported clothes from China, which maximises cheap labour.

6.5.2   CONSTRUCTING

A spirituality of healthy financial empowerment arises from the Golden Rule of love of God and love of neighbour. This ethic may be concretised by the principles of seeking the common good, the option for the poor, solidarity, the goodness of creation, understanding that work is a grace and challenging patriarchy. These people-centred principles are guidelines in the journey of a spirituality of **financial empowerment.**

Economics that favour **the common good** does not mean people neglect their own needs and interests (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:78). Personal interests finds expression within the framework of the common good for all. Ultimately, what is good for the community is good for individuals (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:78). One cannot pursue one's own interest at the expense of others as this ultimately jeopardises one's own well-being.

Solidarity means being aware of the needs of others and joining others in a commitment for the common good (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:78). The poor, who live on the margins of community, are especially entitled to solidarity (see section 2.3.3 and 2.3.4).

The option for the poor means not only avoiding harming the poor, but also contributing to their upliftment. Standing in solidarity with the poor means in this research project means that they participate actively in their upliftment programmes.

Human economic activity ought to respect and not exploit the **sacredness of the created order** (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:79). Environment is a justice issue because in some cases poor people are displaced from their environment. A closer link with the biosphere could facilitate the wholeness of the participants. An example is seen in the process of developing food gardens, which may reconnect them with creation and is at the same time a method of financial empowerment and sustainable living. In section 5.3.2, I describe Howard Clinebells' dimensions of human wholeness where a positive relationship with the biosphere is one aspect of being whole. The research participants are displaced from their environment because of their poverty, urbanisation and the after effects of the Land Act of 1913 (TRH Davenport 1977:335), which defined segregationist land distribution. The resettlement policies of the 1960's and 1970's that reinforced black and white territorial separation where black people lived on the periphery of urban areas in 'locations' further displaced black people from the land (section 5.6.2). The lack of awareness regarding the

environment may be owing to their "segregation" from the land due to urbanisation, poverty and the Land Act.

In a spirituality of financial empowerment, **work is a grace**. Esther de Waal (1984:105), for example, says that a sense of God's presence can be mediated through work. The rhythm of work, especially physical work, is a reminder of the incarnation, which allows the rhythm of the body to co-operate with the spirit and mind (Esther de Waal 1984:106). In the following quotation, the participant agrees with Esther de Waal (1984:105) and suggests that work is one aspect of her transformation:

> **… but I think with something to do that will generate an income at least, one of the better ways that you will be having something, at least at the end of the day to put on the table for them to eat.** And at least for me to do something not having to think about the whole epidemic and the stigma around it, the whole thing around HIV and AIDS. I think that's the only way one could be transformed.

Excerpt from an interview with a participant from Maskopas support group

For the above participant the opportunity to work is transformative not only because it offers economic empowerment, but also because it is part of a general framework of wholeness on spiritual and psychological levels. As such, it is something to keep her occupied and work also reduces stress levels.

Vicci Tallis (1998:13) summarises research by the International Centre for Research on women, which highlights **diminishing socio-economic barriers as a way of transforming patriarchy**. The research suggests the following:

- Improve women's economic status through access to education, training, credit, skills and employment
- Strengthen existing community based woman's organisations to improve and expand services to women
- Design programmes through participatory research that mobilises communities to question the unequal power balances in relationships
- Ensure community participation in research, interventions and evaluations (Vicci Tallis 1998:13).

The suggestions show how empowering women financially has links with other aspects of the *model of full humanity*. For example, one dimension of financial empowerment is ensuring community participation in research and strengthening base communities or support groups. Another aspect of financial empowerment is enhancing women's status and education. There is therefore a link with the ego level.

Examples of a healthy spirituality of financial empowerment include situations where the management or ownership of different economic organisations is restored to base communities of workers (Rosemary 1983:232). According to Beatrice Bruteau (1981:282) in

some businesses there is a trend to involve workers in the decision making process and to share the company's profits with workers. Another example of a healthy spirituality of financial empowerment is a remoulded culture that views childrearing and homemaking to be human activities and not only women's work (Rosemary Radford Ruether 1983:232). An example of this new social order is the Discovery Health company,[10] which provides childcare facilities in their office building to enable working parents to pursue their careers near their children (Beatrice Bruteau 1981:283). A third example is seen in the call for an ecological society where relationships with the wider cosmos are mutually supportive and non-exploitive.

In summary, a spirituality of financial empowerment has been outlined with reference to literature and data from the research participants. Economic empowerment would contribute to wholeness at other levels of being human, such as ego development in terms of an enhanced self-esteem. A spirituality of financial empowerment is linked with embodiment since the body's needs for healthy food and shelter is met through financial resources.

6.6   A SPIRITUALITY OF EMBODIMENT

A spirituality of embodiment may be defined as a process of allowing the flesh to be the place of divine encounter (Lisa Isherwood 2004:140)[11]. Other patterns of spirituality do not root the spiritual quest in the experience of being in a body as much as a fully human spirituality has the potential to do. Some spiritual traditions such as Benedictine spirituality and Celtic spirituality do have a positive view of embodiment and are often incarnational in their praxis. The difference with a fully human spirituality is that the presence of HIV in the Body of Christ means that there is strong potential for people to speak about the body and sex in ways that Christians have not done before. Churches that choose to address the HIV/AIDS situation may find themselves saying words as part of an acceptable vocabulary that previously may have been frowned upon in Church environments. Words such as condoms, fellatio, cunnilingus, body rubbing, French kissing, sexual intercourse and masturbation are discussed in Church environments. The context of HIV/AIDS demands a radical integration of one's sexuality into one's spirituality, hence, sexuality needs to be spoken about frankly in new ways. However, the issue is deeper that that. Those who carry HIV-positive labels may experience the betrayal of their bodies in that HIV functions in such a way that it uses the human body against itself. Applying a spirituality of embodiment, as an aspect of a fully human spirituality, can bring healing to the pain of body-betrayal. In an HIV-positive world, sex is part of spirituality: the most intimate part of being a person, sexuality, is

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[10] One member of my parish who works for Discovery Health takes his daughter to work with him where she is cared for on-site.
[11] In section 5.6.4, embodiment is described as one of the layers of the model of full humanity. Section 6.6 suggests how a spirituality of embodiment may be applied on the path toward full humanity.

exploded out of private spaces. The personal is now political and has been made that way because of HIV.

In the sections that follow, I remark on the negative approach to sexuality, particularly highlighting negative attitudes to women's embodiment. The analysis of the negative approach to embodiment is the deconstructive tool of applying a spirituality of embodiment on personal and social levels. I suggest aspects of a positive spirituality on embodiment and point out the relevance that a spirituality of embodiment can have for people living in an HIV-positive world. These aspects of a positive approach to embodiment are the constructive therapies that contribute to a fully human spirituality on both personal and social levels.

6.6.1 DECONSTRUCTING

In previous epochs, spirituality has been marked by a negative view of the body. A fully human spirituality highlights these oppressive elements of the Christian tradition reflected in body denying teachings (Kenneth Leech 1992:65). In many Church contexts, sex and sexuality is a taboo subject. While there are expressions of Christianity, such as *The Song of Songs*, that have celebrated sexuality as a gift from God, Christian theology has mostly felt that sexuality is a force that must be disciplined and brought under control. Kenneth Leech (1992:64), for example, says that the Gnostic and Manichean heresies, with their assertions of the inherent sinfulness of the human body, have left a lasting impression on Christian consciousness in general. Augustine (in Kenneth Leech 1992:64) added to the negativism and his link between original sin and sexual intercourse has been damaging for Christian spirituality. The result of influences such as Augustine, Gnosticism and Jansenism, which greatly influenced Catholicism before Vatican II, has been that the erotic dimensions of human existence are denied and denigrated and sensuality and passion are perceived as threats to holiness (Kenneth Leech 1992:64).

Jim Cotter (1993:108) adds to the argument that the Church often regards physicality as a reluctant necessity that is not central to the experience of being human and is an obstacle to growth in holiness. Tracing the sources of this anti-body approach to spirituality, Jim Cotter (1993:108) suggests that it may have its roots in the eschatological worldview of the early Christians who expected Christ's imminent return and therefore bodily and material needs were not a high priority. In later stages of Christian development, through the influences of Hellenistic philosophy, celibacy was deemed a higher prize than marriage and those who were celibate were seen as possessing greater spiritual power (Jim Cotter 1993:110).

Within the HIV/AIDS context the negative approach towards the embodiment of women particularly deserves to be highlighted. At the level of embodiment, cultural and religious discourses surrounding the disease of HIV/AIDS need to be deconstructed (Christina

Landman 2003:202). Some of these overarching discourses include the belief that a woman's body belongs to her man, that as a woman she is a carrier of disease, and that God loathes female sexuality (Christina Landman 2003:202).

In section 1.2.3, I highlighted how pregnant women and sex workers have been the focus of HIV/AIDS intervention research studies (Vicci Tallis 1998:11). The aim behind these studies has been to prevent further transmission of the HI-virus. In the case of sex workers the aim is to prevent sex workers infecting their clients and having their clients infect them. In the case of pregnant women, the aim of the prevention studies is to prevent the mother passing the HIV onto her unborn child (Vicci Tallis 1998: 11). The analysis lacking in the approach of many prevention studies is an explanation as to the social complexities and psycho-social impact that HIV/AIDS has on women (Vicci Tallis 1998:11). By making women the targets of intervention research that aims to understand the growing prevalence of HIV/AIDS, statistics relating to men are absent. The research then implies that women are the carriers of the HIV/AIDS disease, which in turn adds to women's experience of stigma (Vicci Tallis 1998:11). The result is that women are blamed for HIV/AIDS (Vicci Tallis 1998:11, Commonwealth Secretariat 2002:31).

The data in this study suggests that the cultural and societal views on HIV/AIDS are a negative experience for many of the participants as the following quotation suggests. It highlights how the religious discourse around HIV/AIDS stresses that the sickness is a punishment from God:

> I was very depressed and scared of telling my parents about my status. I just thought that is was a punishment from God that I am HIV-positive because I've sinned against him.

Excerpt from a devotion written (e-mail correspondence)

Besides the religious discourses around HIV/AIDS that have to be challenged, women also need to denounce the way the sickness is so closely linked with their embodiment as women. As the following quotes suggest, women experience that their HIV-positive labels stigmatise them and that the men in their lives consider it to be only a woman's sickness:

> Um actually I experience stigma to my husband only because he doesn't admit that he is HIV-positive, and he thinks, whenever he talks he says that it's (HIV) mine, its my sickness, not his.

Excerpt from an interview with a participant of the Maskopas group

> You find it here… our fathers or our boyfriends didn't accept that we are HIV-positive. When you tell them, when you disclose to him that you are HIV-positive he is

> going to tell you, "You are coming here with HIV" and then he is not HIV. You are the only one who is HIV. The men, I think, they didn't accept HIV. **Its like that HIV its only for the women, not for the men**.

Excerpt from interview with participant from the Somelele group (the emphasis is mine)

As part of a critique of patriarchy, a fully human spirituality needs to firstly find creative ways of deconstructing negative discourses around the sickness of HIV/AIDS and secondly, to offer a prophetic critique of the negative way that women's bodies are treated due to patriarchal cultural influences.

The Church has several tools at her disposal to **deconstruct negative discourses** around HIV/AIDS. These negative discourses include religious discourses that see the sickness of HIV/AIDS as a punishment from God, and cultural discourses that see HIV/AIDS as a women's problem. The strategies that the Church can implement include Bible studies, liturgies, prayers and sermons. In using these tools, particular attention needs to be paid to how an HIV-positive status is linked to the oppression and abuse of women in a patriarchal culture, which is sometimes endorsed by the Church.

Bible Studies, liturgies and sermons are helpful for the Church in mediating a pastoral response to people's negative experience of embodiment. They are also tools with which the Church can offer a **prophetic voice** against the negative ways that people's bodies are treated. Sexual violence, the misuse of male power, the vulnerability of women and children, unfaithfulness in marriage and the disabling effects of culture are some aspects that the Church must analyse (Steve de Gruchy 2006:5). The theme of sin should also be articulated with particular reference to how some men who use violence when they demand sex, are in denial about the reality of HIV/AIDS and contribute to the infection of other people. In section 1.2.4 I suggested that cultural traditions such as dry sex and wife inheritance are some aspects that contribute to women's greater vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. These cultural traditions are a social justice issue for the Church as confirmed by people such as Peter Mokaba (in Anthony Balcomb 2006:107-108) who pronounces

> Yes, we are sex crazy! Yes, we are diseased! Yes, we spread the deadly HI virus through our uncontrolled heterosexual sex! In this regard, yes we are different from the US and Western Europe! Yes, *we, the men,* abuse women and the girl-child with gay abandon! Yes, among us rape is endemic because of our culture! Yes, we do believe that sleeping with young virgins will cure AIDS! Yes, as a result of this we are threatened with destruction by the HIV/AIDS pandemic! Yes, what we need and cannot afford because we are poor, are condoms and anti-retroviral drugs! Help!

The quotation raises a number of social justice issues for the Church. First, there is the prophetic assessment against issues of male behaviour suggested by the quote such as rape, sleeping with virgins and the abuse of women and children. Second, there is poverty

that hampers access to effective treatment of the disease, although condoms and anti-retroviral drugs are not enough to heal HIV/AIDS. Third, Anthony Balcomb (2006:107-108) suggests that the anguished quote with the sarcastic "yes" is in response to the dehumanising and humiliating colonial discourses that the West evokes of Africans as savages, who are diseased, depraved, promiscuous, irrational and intent on self-destruction.

The healing ministry of Jesus that the Church is meant to continue is practised within the dual tasks of compassionate pastoral care and social justice (Steve de Gruchy 2006:5). Compassionate care gives credibility to the Church's engagement in social justice issues, in the same way that the prophetic calling to social justice means that compassionate caring is authentic, holistic and not superficial sentimentalism (Steve de Gruchy 2006:5). Liberation theology's schema of "See, judge and act" should be applied to ascertain whose bodies become sick and why, as the answer to this question is of prophetic and pastoral concern to the Church (Barbara Schmid 2006:102).

The dominant influence of the body in the experience of people who carry labels that are either HIV-positive or negative may require that a different path to relating to the body that does not denounce or suppress the body be found. In the next section I offer suggestions for applying a healthy spirituality of embodiment.

6.6.2   CONSTRUCTING

There are positive resources in Christian spirituality that can be ignited in the fight against AIDS. At the heart of the doctrine of the Incarnation and of sacramental theology is the principle that Grace comes through the body (Kenneth Leech 1992:65). Grace comes through the body of Christ born as a vulnerable human being. Grace comes through the bodies of other people as the body of Christ. Christian spirituality is materialist in that it is the whole person in communion with God through others (Kenneth Leech 1992:66). As Lisa Isherwood (2004:140) points out, Nelle Morton's definition of feminist theology as hearing one another into speech situates theology in the body. Grace also comes through the sacraments of bread, wine and water. Our physicality as human beings is ingrained in our whole being in the same way that bread and wine are intrinsic to the Eucharist, which in this research project is the symbol of a fully human spirituality (Jim Cotter 1993:116). Sacramental theology must be extended in that the presence of God is not only communicated through sacraments but God is found in the magnificent mundane: feminist spirituality finds the Divine present in ordinary, natural things, not only sanctified objects (Melissa Raphael 1996:23). In the next section, I suggest how a spirituality of embodiment,

which is based on how grace is mediated materially, may affect the lives of HIV-positive people, particularly women, in South Africa.

The relevance of a spirituality of embodiment for HIV-positive people

How does one take the lofty ideals of a healthy spirituality of embodiment and hold them when one listens to the stories of those who are HIV-positive? For the research participants, and for many other women who are HIV-positive, the experience of being HIV- positive is a negative experience of one's body as it is often the site of pain and betrayal, discrimination, shame and guilt. The following quotation bears witness to this:

It was the 4th of December 2001, when I was first diagnosed HIV-positive. **I was feeling dirty.** I was asking myself questions and I didn't get final answers. I was blaming myself for being careless and stupid[12]. All I was thinking about was death.

Excerpt from a devotion, E-mail correspondence (Emphasis is mine)

Melissa Raphael (1996:75-6) writes about a spiritual feminism that sacralizes female embodiment, encouraging women to see the normal changes of their bodes and bodily processes as holy and the physical a vehicle for the divine. While her stance is helpful in undoing the mistrust that patriarchal religion instils in women with respect to their bodies, in a South African context that is affected by HIV/AIDS, poverty and patriarchal oppression women's bodies are the locus for pain and torture. It is also the site of betrayal as HIV/AIDS turns the body into the instrument of its own destruction. Added to this is the often unarticulated theological burden that has to be carried by women in churches where a woman's full personhood is denied her on the basis of her having a woman's body, the man's body is the norm (Elisabeth Moltman Wendel 1994:103). The often unconscious theological assumption is that women's sexuality is evil (Mercy Amba Oduyoye 1986:131).

The following quote from my personal journal highlights some of the negative experiences of the research participants concerning their sexuality and embodiment as women:

We had, what was for me, a disturbing conversation on *sex and sexuality* with the women from Orange Farm. They had asked that I bring a doctor who could guide them in details on women's health. The women described to the doctor and me the process of dry sex[13] and how they use yellow dusters, snuff and other substances to dry out their vaginas before sex. I asked them if they ever enjoyed sex as dry sex sounds painful. Their reply was that if they were to show any enjoyment of sex their male partners would feel that they are doing something wrong.

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[12] Some women are HIV-positive because of engaging in risk behaviour.
[13] In chapter one I suggested that some of the cultural practises that make women more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection include *lobola,* wife inheritance and dry sex (see section 1.2.4). Dry sex increases the possibilities of vaginal tissue tearing allowing access for the HIV to enter the body.

Of what relevance is a spirituality of embodiment for women who experience their bodies in the way described by the above quotation? The answer can be gleaned from some of the strategies that HIV/AIDS activists use to encourage people who are HIV-positive to live healthy lives. They adopt the slogan *living positively* to describe the necessity for exercise, a healthy eating plan and controlling stress levels. While some postmodern expressions of spirituality do highlight the importance of integrating physicality into a map of spirituality, the HIV context demands that proper care and looking after one's health becomes a key component of a fully human spirituality. The significance of living positively is that it undercuts a dualistic approach to spirituality by seeing one's physicality as part of one's spirituality. The emphasis on living positively offers helpful invitations to spiritual wholeness as it demands a process of caring for one's health through correct eating and exercise and healthy sexuality.

The following quotations illustrate the *living positively* slogan endorsed by HIV/AIDS activists that are imbibed by some of the research participants in the way they experience being HIV-positive:

DS:	How can you be empowered or transformed?
N:	Strong?
DS:	Yes how can you be strong?
N:	I must eat the right foods. I must eat my supplements. I must train myself. And I must get enough time to rest. And I must, if I've got a boyfriend, I must use the condom. But, I mustn't have the sex every time. I must maybe, twice a week or twice a month, not everyday. I'm right.

Excerpt from an interview with a participant from the Maskopas group

In summary, I have suggested that a significant feature of a fully human spirituality, which emerges from a South African context, is a spirituality of embodiment. Applying a spirituality of embodiment requires deconstructing the negative approach to embodiment while the constructive therapies recognise that grace is bodily and suggest that living positively is one way to implement a positive approach to embodiment. The next section describes engaging the ego as an aspect of a fully human spirituality.

6.7   A SPIRITUALITY OF EGO

The ego may be defined as one's self-image, which may be presented to the world as positive or negative, accurate or impoverished. Thomas Merton (in Beatrice Bruteau 1981:277) describes the ego as the individuality of a person, or as the empirical self. The journey to union with God throws people into the turmoil of inner conflict. This journey happens at the second circle described in the *model of full humanity*. The inner conflict in the

journey to union with God is described as a dialogue between the ego and the shadow where the ego is the self that is presented to the world and the shadow is that which people reject about themselves. The shadow arises when people deny ownership of certain tendencies that they deem unacceptable such as anger, erotic impulses, hostility or joy, (Ken Wilber 1985:89). The shadow side, which is language borrowed from Carl Jung, is the dark side or the unconscious opposite of a person (Ken Wilber 1985:100). The closer one comes to engaging with the True-Self and allowing oneself to live from this centre of the True-Self in God, the more one will engage with the false self. Thomas Keating (1997:72) refers to ego engagement as the unloading of the unconscious.

While much writing on spirituality emphasises the importance of the death of ego in the journey to unity with God, feminists have also pointed out that while male sin is too much ego or pride, female sin is not enough ego. This is because women are taught that they are Christ-like by having no self at all. Having "no self" is sometimes confused with having a True-Self whereas self-sacrifice mediated through "no self" is not life-giving. Further, because of a lack of self-esteem, cultural influences and personality traits, some women believe that they are the suffering servants of Christ by accepting male abuse and domination (Rosemary Radford Ruether 1983:186). Even if there is no male domination, women are socialised into putting others first to the neglect of their self. In this situation, spiritual direction, which promotes the descent or surrender of ego, is not helpful as one must have an ego in order to give up an ego.

Emptiness of self is considered the premier path to enlightenment (Beverly Lanzetta 2005:95). Yet feminist spirituality highlights the need for women to find the true self (Beverly Lanzetta 2005:95). My argument is that the two paths, the descent of ego and the ascent of ego, characterised respectively by the two broad questions "who am I?" and "who is God?" leads to the same place, ultimately to union with God. Whether one chooses to follow the path of descent by surrendering the ego, or the path of ascent by building the ego through seeking an authentic answer to the question "who am I?" eventually these two currents merge into one, namely the underlying unity and identity in the Godhead. As St Clement (in Ken Wilber 2000:154) said: "The one who knows him or herself knows God". Beatrice Bruteau (1981:279) also suggests that the path of ego descent and ego ascent lead people into the same place, unity with God. Beatrice Bruteau (1981:279) describes how meditation is a helpful discipline in engaging the True-Self either through ego descent or ego ascent:

> Meditation focuses the conscious energy on the transcendent level. Sometimes this is done **ecstatically by focusing on God instead of oneself** until one awakens to the fact that one is actually living there in the Divine Life; and sometimes it is done **enstatically by drawing the consciousness energies into the centre of the self**, away from the superficial layers of the descriptive being, until the Divine Transcendent Being is realised at the innermost point (the emphasis is mine).

The process of ecstasy is ego descent in the sense that one is going out of the self to find God, the journey from the inner circle toward the outer circle. By contrast, the enstatic journey is the path of the outer circle moving toward the inner circle. In the first case, ecstatic movement finds God by denying the false self and thereby finding the True-Self. In the second case, a spiritual seeker discovers herself and in so doing finds God (Beatrice Bruteau 1981:279). In both cases, the True-Self says with Christ: "I am in you and you are in me" (Beatrice Bruteau 1981:279). The different paths of ego descent and ego ascent are now discussed as deconstructive tools and constructive therapies respectively.

6.7.1   DECONSTRUCTING (EGO DESCENT)

The process of ego descent is the journey of surrendering the ego. Ken Wilber (2000b:282) quotes Plotinus who describes it this way: " Let [any individual soul] make itself worthy to contemplate the Great Soul by ridding itself, through quiet recollection of deceit [untruthfulness] and of all that bewitches vulgar souls". Dismantling the false self often feels like interior war, yet it is an important part of applying a fully human spirituality (Thomas Keating 2000:58). Richard Foster (1998:173) comments that any spirituality of justice must first begin by rooting out injustice in one's own life. He (1998:173) adds that: "We repudiate and crucify the self-sins within: self-promotion, self-pity, self-sufficiency, self-righteousness, self-worship. We attack the inner citadels of arrogance and independence". Aspects of a fully human spirituality such as seeking financial empowerment for people and a challenge against injustice must begin within oneself as, according to Richard Foster (1998:176), right relationships and right living are embedded in the inner dialogues of the soul. People must first engage with their ego lest their praxis of spirituality become a caricature of that which they seek to stand against. The area where engagement with the ego happens is a critical aspect of a fully human spirituality. Moreover, the heart of one's action and reflection must be rooted in the experience of the True-Self's non-duality with the Ground of All reality as that which energises the spiritual quest, which is often brought about through dissolving the ego. What one must see is that each of the layers on the *model of full humanity* are integrated with each other, grow out of each other and flow into each other. The personal is political as the outpouring of oneself in sexuality and community, coincides with the outpouring of oneself to God in prayer, which, in turn, coincides with the outpouring of oneself to the world in the desire for just living. It is in this outpouring that the ego collapses into the True-Self, which is the living out of integral wholeness, the vision of full humanity. A person can also engage the True-Self through the ascent of the ego.

6.7.2   CONSTRUCTING (EGO ASCENT)

The process of ego ascent can be described in the words of Thomas Merton (in Beatrice Bruteau 1981:279) who says: "There is only one problem on which all my existence, my peace and my happiness depend: To discover myself in discovering God. If I find Him, I will find myself and if I find my true self I will find Him".

In the process of discovering oneself as a self, women may experience *metanoia,* which refers to conversion from sexism and liberation for growth in spiritual wholeness. The spiritual disciplines that can facilitate the growth to wholeness within the ego level are self-acceptance and compassion for oneself. Within the context of an HIV-positive country, Andre de la Porte (2003:9) suggests that AIDS is often experienced as conflict: conflict with one's body, conflict with oneself, conflict with the environment and conflict with God. The HIV-positive person experiences conflict with herself through the emotions of self-rejection and doubt that other people will accept them. This militates against the development of a positive self-esteem. One of the strategies for the transformation of cultures suggested by Louise Kretzschmar (1995b:97), which in the South African context is aggravated by the presence of HIV/AIDS, is that women need to develop a positive self-esteem. The development of a positive self-esteem is deeply connected with the descent into the True-Self which is humankind's identity in Christ (Louise Kretzschmar 1995b:97). The following quotation is an example of how the research participants experience that God promotes the development of positive self-esteem:

> God help me, she makes me proud of myself.

Excerpt from a life history written by a participant in the Somelele group)

The quotation finds support in the literature by authors such as Louise Kretzschmar (1995b:97) who states that as people are created by God with love, the foundation for developing a positive self-image is a positive relationship with God. The development of a positive self-esteem is also nurtured through the acceptance of compassion for oneself (Thomas Keating 2000:135).

In summary, the journey of growth in wholeness invites people to rediscover their inherent unity with the Godhead. The ego can find its rightful place through the process of ego descent or ego ascent depending on the individual's needs, culture, personality and background. Discernment and wisdom (described in section 3.2.1) are the essential elements in determining whether ego ascent, ego descent or both processes are necessary, as engaging the ego allows one to experience the True-Self.

6.8   A SPIRITUALITY OF THE TRUE-SELF

A spirituality of the True-Self recognises the connection between the innermost and outermost cores of the *model of full humanity*. The True-Self, represented by the innermost layer is always one with God which is represented by the outermost layer (Beverly Lanzetta 2005:102). In section 5.7, I highlighted how humans have the ability to be aware of God because God is already present in humankind through the True-Self. It is essential that women, and men who seek the reintegration of the feminine in their soul, practise prayer and contemplation as a way for the True-Self to rest in God because "prayer is the surest method by which the soul moves from oppression and fragmentation to freedom and wholeness" (Beverly Lanzetta 2005:110).

Deconstructive tools in applying a spirituality of the True-Self highlight the links between patriarchy and social structures that may hamper people practising a spirituality of the True-Self. Constructive therapies offer strategies that enhance the potential for the True-Self to rest in God as a resource for other dimensions of full humanity, such as community and challenging injustice.

6.8.1   DECONSTRUCTING

In applying a spirituality of the True-Self on the path of transformation to wholeness, the necessary deconstructive tools recognise that some structures inhibit prayer and contemplation. Second, a deconstructive tool must challenge women, and men, to become mystics as a way of healing these soul-wounds.

Thomas Merton (1961) and Thomas Keating (1986) have offered powerful contributions to the teaching in spirituality with regard to understanding the transformative role of centering prayer in the process of letting go of the false self and living more fully from the True-Self. Thomas Keating is well known for popularising centering prayer as a method of connecting mystically with God. Some of his publications include *Open mind, Open heart (1986), Invitation to love (2000)* and *Intimacy with God (1997).* He emphasises that centering prayer is a way to prepare oneself for the gift of contemplation.

The feminist lens is offered to balance some of their insights. Women have soul-wounds that are related to their womanhood (Beverly Lanzetta 2005:77). A woman's journey to full humanity is hampered by the patriarchal influence in culture and Church (Louise Kretzschmar 1995b:96-7). In this situation, it is simply not enough to follow the programme of centering prayer in the journey to wholeness, as the social situation in which women find themselves also needs transformation. Personal and social transformation have to be

integrated. Thus the True-Self layer has to be developed in conjunction with wholeness at the level of community and challenging injustice.

While it is important to address issues of social injustice that hinder the path of prayer, more is needed to heal the soul-wounds that are the result of these injustices. Beverly Lanzetta (2005:77) suggests that all women should be challenged to be mystics and to rest in the True-Self, which is the presence of the Godhead within their deepest souls. She argues that this is the primary way that soul-wounds, which are either self-inflicted or inflicted through the violence of patriarchy, domination and exploitation, can be healed (Beverly Lanzetta 2005:75). Living out of the True-Self can heal women's suffering and guide the fundamental liberation that women seek through the integration of contemplation and action (Beverly Lanzetta 2005:76).

Yet, the contemplative style of spirituality is unfamiliar to many of the participants in the research. I have taught centering prayer to the Maskopas, but they seem reluctant to experiment with it. This may be because of the emphasis on community living in African culture and spirituality. At first glance, the spirituality of celebrating the True-Self with its mystical overtones of solitude and silence may seem out of place in a spirituality earthed in Africa with its emphasis on community life.

Nevertheless, in rural contexts, the *sangomas* who are solitary people and generally live outside the community, serve as an example of silence and solitude in an African cosmology. In addition, it may be that by articulating the necessity of the True-Self uniting with God, a much-needed balance to the African emphasis on community is provided. Experiencing the union of the soul with the Godhead is not dependent on which spiritual disciplines one practices, although some disciplines such as solitude, silence or contemplative prayer are conducive to contemplation. Experiencing the union of the soul with the Godhead is a gift of God's grace that is given to anyone no matter what their context. As explained in section 5.5, there is a dance and a dialogue in the research, in that while I learn from the research participants through listening to their stories, they also have an opportunity to learn from me. The techniques of centering prayer and meditation, described in the literature of Christian spirituality, are examples of moments where the participants can learn from me.

6.8.2 CONSTRUCTING

When developing constructive therapies that allow for to the application of a spirituality of the True-Self, a two-pronged approach is required. First, women, particularly, can be encouraged to find alternative spiritual disciplines that create space for the True-Self to

emerge. Second, people can be encouraged to see the interconnection on all levels of the *model of full humanity*.

Spiritual disciplines to engage with the True Self

Benedictine spirituality offers a rhythm of rest, prayer and work and suggests that all three are ways to reach God (Esther de Waal 1984:86). Craftwork such as beading and wirework offers a method of engaging the True-Self because, like centering prayer, it slows-down the thinking process. Such manual work lets the rhythm of the body overtake the mind and allows the unconscious to surface, serving as a reminder of the incarnation because of the emphasis on tactile embodiment (Esther de Waal 1984:106). In an African context, craft activities like beadwork provide an opportunity for women to practise the spiritual discipline of contemplation.

Centering prayer, with its focus on solitude and intellectual descent, may not be suitable for women who are predominantly influenced by an African cosmology and whose living conditions are not conducive to solitude and silence, even though African women are challenged to experiment with it. Centering prayer has the potential to be disembodied in its focus on quieting the mind. Centering prayer has another potential danger in that it does have the tendency to be separated from ordinary life, a danger which may be exaggerated by the fact that much of the literature on the subject is written by monastics (Richard Foster 1998:53). As the research participants are encumbered with numerous chores and duties of day to day living, the discipline of centering prayer may seem foreign to them.

Other methods that the Church could use to offer spiritual leadership that encourages people to celebrate intimacy with God include allowing space for silence and contemplation in Sunday worship, using symbols and non-verbal rituals in public worship and equipping Christians to conduct private devotions and personal study. Further methods include adapting contemplative techniques so that they may be used in a group environment. Gustavo Gutierrez (1983:133) comments that the support of community enables one to enter the "desert" of contemplative awareness.

The interconnection on the levels of the fully human model

The constructive therapies offered at the level of the True-Self suggest the importance of understanding that the different layers of the fully human model are intimately and dynamically linked. When applying the model for personal transformation to wholeness, the "needle with many threads" approach is used. The level of True-Self is woven together with other levels such as injustice and community, thus the states of mystic contemplation are integrated with the pastoral needs of people and the world (Beverly Lanzetta 2005:81). The connection one experiences with one's True-Self, the soul resting in God, is integral to how

spirituality is expressed. Each new opening to God has a ripple effect on the other levels of wholeness: one's relationship with others in community and relationship with self in terms of how one experiences one's ego and shadows (Thomas Keating 1997:9). Nurturing silence, solitude and the inner life provides the resources to maintain and develop spirituality at other levels of the *model of full humanity*. The True-Self is the pivotal point of spirituality since without nurturing the inner life, one will not have the resources for pursuing justice and community authentically. This does not suggest that discovering the True-Self solves all problems, but that there are spiritual resources and energy to face challenges. Moreover, people on the path of fully human wholeness realise the importance of connecting the inner circles on the model with the outer circles such that they become contemplative activists. The Spirit of God is made manifest at all levels of the model. It is important that the shadows encountered within one's soul and in society be challenged in such a way that one does not become part of the problem, for example by fighting injustice in an unjust way.

The Scriptural model of spiritual growth suggests that spirituality is about living in union with God and serving those in need (Thomas Keating 1997:24). The summary of the law: love of God and love of neighbour, serves as an example. The literature in spirituality demonstrates that intimacy with God, expressed as the mystical union of the True-Self in the Godhead, is a vital dimension of growth in wholeness. The participants in the study did not articulate a spirituality of intimacy with God, expressed as the True-Self resting in the Godhead. It is, therefore, one aspect of the spiritual leadership that the Church could offer to people in an HIV-positive world.

In summary, I have outlined a spirituality of the True-Self and have suggested that the True-Self is connected with the other aspects of a fully human spirituality described in the *model of full humanity*, such as a spirituality of embodiment, a spirituality that challenges injustice, a spirituality of ego and a spirituality of community. Having suggested how the *model of full humanity* may be applied at each level of the model for personal and social transformation, I now outline concrete suggestions in applying the *model of full humanity* for personal and social spiritual development.

6.9   APPLYING THE MODEL OF FULL HUMANITY

Feminist spirituality is by its nature holistic and integrative (see section 2.6.1, 2.6.2). In feminist spirituality personal and social transformation are two aspects of the same spiritual journey. Likewise, the recommendation is that the *model of full humanity* be implemented for personal and social holiness. First, the model is helpful for individuals to enhance **personal**

spiritual growth, as it provides a "map" for the spiritual direction[14] of individuals. Second, in terms of social development, the *model of full humanity* is useful in **mobilising Churches** to respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and in guiding a South African Church's gendered response to HIV/AIDS. The model can help the Church in designing **prevention and intervention strategies, programs and projects**. These two broad applications on personal and social levels are discussed below.

6.9.1 APPLYING THE MODEL OF FULL HUMANITY ON A PERSONAL LEVEL

The *model of full humanity* is a "map" of the geography of the soul. As part of their growth to wholeness individual Christians can look at the model as a map of wholeness and discern soul wounds as areas of healing growth towards reclaiming the divine image and growing towards full humanity (Beverly Lanzetta 2005:77). It may be necessary to employ the help of a spiritual director, spiritual companion or spiritual counsellor. Together with the HIV-positive person, or one who seeks full humanity, the spiritual director or counsellor can use the model to evaluate at which levels it is necessary to facilitate growth to wholeness.

Spiritual direction may also happen in a group environment. The purpose of spiritual direction is to encourage Christians to be more attentive to God (Patricia Fresen 2000:179). Patricia Fresen (2000:177) argues that cross-cultural spiritual direction may not always work because spiritual direction is highly individualistic. She suggests that Africans be empowered to adopt other paradigms for spiritual direction that are more suited to community life (Patricia Fresen 2000:178)[15]. The support groups that were interviewed in this study facilitate spiritual direction for each other. The *model of full humanity* could therefore guide the journey toward full humanity of individuals in a support group (see Patricia Fresen 2000:178). Community-minded African Christians are more comfortable with other paradigms of spiritual direction that coincide with how they are shaped by their culture, since spirituality is embedded in culture (Patricia Fresen 2000:178, 184). A small group, support group or Bible Study group could reflect on the model as a landscape against which they could decide in which areas they need attention or spiritual growth as a group. In instances where they have particular strength in one area, they could offer this strength to other groups. The model is thus a tool for spiritual direction in individual and group experiences.

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[14] Spiritual direction refers to explicit guidance in how to progress in the life of prayer (James Arraj 1986:143). Some people are uncomfortable with the word spiritual direction and prefer the term spiritual companionship as this implies less of an autocratic leadership.

[15] For a different perspective see Susan Rakoczy's article *Unity, diversity and uniqueness: Foundations of cross-cultural spiritual direction;* in *Common journey, different paths: Spiritual directiopn in Cross Cultural perspective* edited by Susan Rakoczy (1992) and published by Orbis Books, Maryknoll.

To illustrate how the proposed *model of full humanity* could nurture wholeness at the different levels, a table is offered that suggests symptoms of wholeness, therapies for growth in wholeness and resources or organisations that offer guidance. The gender lens has been applied so that the therapies suggested are helpful for women and men.

Table 6.1: The model of full humanity as a tool for spiritual direction

Level on fully human model	Signs of wholeness	Therapies for growth	Organisations or resources
True-Self	- Habitual prayer. - Comfortable in silence and solitude.	- Meditation. - Music. - Art. - Walking. - Dancing. - Waste time for God. - Discover wilderness time, e.g. waking up early (Richard Foster 1998:57).	- Retreats. - Yoga classes. - Churches. - Centering prayer groups and some Bible study groups. - The Eucharist.
Ego	- A positive self-esteem. - Healthy optimism. - A realistic self-understanding. - Humility. - Accept and give physical and emotional affection. - Socialise with family and friends.	- Start a memory box. - Keep a journal. - Participate in spiritual direction either individually or in a group. - Join a cell group. - Learn and practise crafts and other non-stressful activities.	- Churches. - Counsellors. - Social workers. - Priests and pastors. - Lifeline (offers counselling). - Lovelife (conducts programs that enhance self-respect)
Embodiment	- Healthy diet. - Regular exercise. - Listening to one's body. - Be tested for HIV/AIDS.	- Meditation. - Art. - Exercising. - Foot washing ritual on Maundy Thursday. - Become a home-based caregiver.- Anointing with Holy Oil.	- Walking club - Churches - Home-based care training programs at churches. - The Eucharist. - Department of health.
Financial empowerment	- No debt or responsible management of debt - Tithing - Write a will - Draw up a budget	- Join a "stokvel"[16] - Tithing, even for the poor. - Access grants if necessary. - Start a Church food-garden - Join a "burial society" - Create business mentoring programs for men and women	- Short courses through institutions (e.g. UNISA) - Burial societies at Church. - Skills empowerment projects. - Social welfare department (0800601011). - Black Sash offices

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[16] A "stokvel" is a financial club where participants each contribute an agreed monthly amount. Once a month each participant benefits from the money gathered. The "stokvel" is a helpful therapy in that it situates financial empowerment within a supportive community. Thus, it illustrates the integration suggested by the fully human model.

Level on fully human model	Signs of wholeness	Therapies for growth	Organisations or resources
Community	- Relate well to others. - Participate in spiritual companionship. - Gives and receives spiritual direction. - Visit other people, especially the lonely and the sick, spend time with children.	- Join a Bible Study - Establish a friendship with a person who is different to you (poor or rich, white or black). - Join the Manyano[17], Mothers Union, Young women's organisation, Men's fellowship or a choir.	- Churches. - "Revivals" - all night praise and worship sessions in predominantly black communities. - Bible studies. - The Eucharist.
Challenging injustice	- Confession - Become a global citizen by being informed as to what is happening in the world by reading newspapers (Richard Foster 1998:181).	- Write to government. - Recycle. - Permaculture gardens. - Become a volunteer. - Prayer. - Encourage men to be more active in caring for those in the Church.	- Newspapers. - Churches. - The Eucharist. - Prayer chain or group. - Literacy classes. - ACESS lobby for children to get access to education (0837868844). - PACSA distributes factsheets on gender, violence, HIV/AIDS, rape, problems facing youth and poverty (+27333420052).
Awareness of God	- Wide range of images for God, not fixated on particular images. - Serving the poor.	- Meditation. - Dance, art and music. - Craft and beading. - Singing while working. - Silence.	- Retreat centres. - Worship at churches. - Liturgies. - Eucharist.

When applying the model one needs to use the "needle with many threads" approach to ensure that there is an integrated and multifaceted approach to spirituality (section 5.6.5, 5.6.6). A holistic spirituality implies that there is growth in maturity at each of the layers suggested in the model. Applying the model for personal spiritual growth and transformation to wholeness by using the "needle with many threads approach", highlights that there is profound interrelationship between people's social and spiritual status and the suffering of their souls (Beverly Lanzetta 2005:9). The different aspects of the model enfold into and unfold from the Godhead. Elements of one's living, such as designing a budget and writing a will, are thus also spiritual disciplines through which one can experience the Divine.

The recommendation is that the *model of full humanity* is used as a spiritual resource for transformation to wholeness. The *model of full humanity* proposes to "chart a way to God that recognises and transforms the devastation of women's souls and to our world that

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[17] Manyanos are women's organisations in predominantly Methodist Churches and some Anglican.

millennia of oppression have wrought" (Beverly Lanzetta 2005:2). Applying the model for personal transformation instils social transformation in that "by healing the divisions in [ourselves we] would help [heal] the divisions of the whole world" (Thomas Merton in Beverly Lanzetta 2005:3).

6.9.2 APPLYING THE MODEL OF FULL HUMANITY ON A SOCIAL LEVEL

There are different dimensions of applying the *model of full humanity* on a social level. On one level the model can be used as a guide to **mobilise churches into action**. Secondly the model can be used as a project management tool in **designing a therapeutic response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic**. To support the recommendation of using the model as a project management tool, **an example** is given.

Mobilising churches into action

How does the proposed *model of full humanity* help the Church in different stages of their response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic? What follows is a discussion on the usefulness of the *model of full humanity* for churches at different stages in their response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

I distinguish between four types of churches and these categories form a guide to a discussion on mobilising Churches. I distinguish between Callous churches, Concerned churches, Congregationally-focussed Churches and Community-empowered Churches.

The **callous churches** have little information on HIV/AIDS and little understanding about the impact that the HIV/AIDS epidemic has on the country (Hannes van der Walt 2004:4). Callous churches may have little desire to be informed or to respond to HIV/AIDS. Some callous churches may not be responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic because they are in denial, arguing that their personal lives are not affected (Neville Richardson 2006:39). There are several reasons for the lack of response and proactive initiative in obtaining information on HIV/AIDS. The epidemic is invisible and infected persons and communities are unaware of their danger (Hannes van der Walt 2004:5). The invisibility of HIV/AIDS is also due to lack of disclosure on the part of those who are infected because they fear stigmatisation (Hannes van der Walt 2004:5). Callous churches may believe that AIDS is not their problem, that the people who are HIV-positive deserve it and have brought it on themselves (Sharlene Swartz 2005:194; Neville Richardson 2006:39). The view of callous churches may be: "HIV/AIDS is a punishment and must run its course" (Hannes van der Walt 2004:6). The idea that AIDS is punishment for immorality means that involvement in the HIV/AIDS pandemic is not a priority. In some cases, callous churches do not respond to the pandemic because they suffer from chronic fatigue where they do no have the capacity to respond. Some Christian

churches, who may have taken an active lead in the Apartheid era, are worn out because of the negative experiences they faced then (Hannes van der Walt 2004:6). In other cases, callous church members do not respond because they are exhausted from working long hours and need to use the weekend to relax. The needs for restoration, comfort and strength are legitimate concerns that must be met before calling tired Christians to a new phase of service (Hannes van der Walt 2004:6). For callous churches, Ronald Rolheiser (2001:168) teaches that the opposite of love is not hate - it is indifference.

The **concerned churches** have some information on HIV/AIDS. They are concerned about the pandemic and want to be involved, but do not always know how to respond (Neville Richardson 2006:40). Being willing to offer a response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic is a positive development, but an effective plan of action is necessary (Hannes van der Walt 2004:7). The enthusiasm to respond to the AIDS pandemic needs to be channelled and guided and the fully human model may offer one such guide.

The **congregationally-focussed** churches are concerned and enthusiastic about offering a response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Congregationally focussed churches have the necessary information on HIV/AIDS and have designed a response to the pandemic. Often the HIV/AIDS program is based from the Church. The response of congregationally-focussed churches is often isolated and on a small-scale. The growth needs of congregationally-focused churches require developing networks with other stakeholders such as other churches, governmental organisations and non-governmental programs.

The **community-empowered** churches have the information and have designed a response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic that includes projects and programs that responds to HIV/AIDS on a broad scale in partnership with community organisations. Community-focussed churches are aware of HIV and have projects and programs that have grown to the extent that they include other aspects of society, such as government and specific communities. Community-focussed churches have effectively networked and structured their involvement in the HIV/AIDS pandemic so that they no longer work in isolation. Thus, they have a community focus.

In the table that follows, I have offered examples that suggest how each level of the fully human model can be implemented practically. The category of callous churches, concerned churches, congregationally-focussed churches and community-empowered churches is my own. Some of the suggestions listed in the table below are inspired by *The Church in an HIV-positive world: A practical handbook* (Daniela Gennrich 2004) and *Churches, Channels of hope* (CABSA 2003).

Table 6.2   Mobilising Churches to respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic

Type of Church	Callous Churches	Concerned Churches	Congregationally-focussed churches	Community-empowered churches
Needs or issues	-"Defrosting" which means to challenge attitudes and stigma, especially patriarchal biases.	- "Defrosting" - Plan of action. - Training and skills-building. - Strategic planning.	- Networking. - "Defrosting."	- On-going training. - "Defrosting."
Suggested strategies for the preferential option for the poor	- Exposing Church community to HIV-positive people who share their life stories. Include, women, men and Children. - Wear a red ribbon to show solidarity with the HIV-positive.	-Arrange visits to AIDS service organisations to interact with HIV-positive people and professionals (especially women) involved in HIV work to learn from their stories.	- Exposing the Church to AIDS activists (especially women activists) who can share the needs of the communities in which they work.	Continue to develop and maintain friendships with HIV-positive people (especially women) and organisations involved in prevention, care, advocacy, support and skills-building projects.
Ego level therapies	- Challenge attitudes through liturgies, alternative creeds, prayers, workshops and candle lighting ceremonies. - Highlight women's stories and experiences of HIV/AIDS in liturgies and workshops.	- Empower with in-depth information on HIV/AIDS including transmission, prevention and treatment options. - Include in this discussion the link between gender and HIV/AIDS.	- Continue to challenge attitudes and deepen knowledge. - Continue to highlight how women are experiencing the worst effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic as the main caregivers who are often infected themselves.	- Continue to challenge attitudes and knowledge.
Community level therapies	- Sensitising Church community to HIV/AIDS by having HIV-positive people (especially women) participate in Church programs such as a candle-lighting ceremony as part of a worship service.	- Provide support groups for people who are HIV-positive. - Create safe spaces for people to talk about their problems.	- Provide support groups. - Support groups for grannies who are heading households is also necessary; often Manyanos are a good source of support.	- Caring for caregivers (especially women) involved with HIV related work to prevent burnout.

Type of Church	Callous Churches	Concerned Churches	Congregationally-focussed churches	Community-empowered churches
Economic empower-ment therapies	- Provide information on the financial impact of HIV/AIDS in terms of the effect It has on private and government sectors. - For example include an AIDS fact in each pew leaflet.	- Assist vulnerable people in obtaining grants (e.g. child support grant, social relief or distress grant).	- Help people to minimise funeral expenses by preparing a funeral will.	- Encourage the development of community food gardens. - Assist in economic empowerment programs such as women's entrepreneurial programs.
Embodiment therapies	- Voluntary counselling and testing. - Practise safer sex.	- Voluntary counselling and testing. - Providing crises support parcels that include adequate nutrition.	- Provide training for home-based caregivers - Also encourage men to be trained as home-based caregivers.	- Ensure access to medication, focus on vulnerable groups (women, rape survivors and children).
Therapies to address injustice	- Challenge people to wear an HIV/AIDS red ribbon to show support for survivors of HIV/AIDS.	- Participate in advocacy. - Identify leaders to participate in training workshops: include women and youth.	- Encourage men to participate as partners in the fight against HIV/aids. - Allow church buildings to be used as places of safety on weekday afternoons for orphans and vulnerable children.	- Formulating an accurate and empowering theology and spirituality of HIV/AIDS that shapes the church's involvement and co-operation with other organisations in the pandemic.
True-Self and awareness of God therapies	- Writing or using gender inclusive liturgies, sermon outlines and candle-lighting ceremonies. - Visiting AIDS organisations to interact with HIV-positive people, especially women and children.	- Writing or using gender inclusive liturgies, sermon outlines and candle-lighting ceremonies, especially women and children.	- Formulate an accurate and empowering theology and spirituality of HIV/AIDS that shapes the church's involvement and co-operation with other organisations in the pandemic.	- Conducting retreats for caregivers involved in HIV/AIDS. - Include meditations and other spiritual disciplines. - Be aware of spiritual disciplines that are helpful for women, e.g. crafts, dancing and movement.

The suggested methodology of applying the *model of full humanity* to mobilise churches for action requires, firstly, that churches stand in solidarity with the poor. Secondly, when designing a project or a program to respond to the HIV/AID pandemic, churches must be intentional about integrating all aspects of the fully human model in their response. It is vital to maintain an integrated and comprehensive strategy when responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Thus, each suggestion interlinks with all the other aspects of the model.

When the Church offers a response to HIV/AIDS, the Church must provide ministry within the Church to people who are infected with HIV and beyond the Church to assist with AIDS service organisations. The Church should also embrace projects that offer prevention and harm reduction strategies, support groups for HIV-positive people, child and granny-headed households, and care and skills building. It is often helpful to have a specific task-team to co-ordinate an HIV response. In addition, each existing group in the Church structure, such as youth groups, Sunday School, women's groups and choirs could be challenged to make sure that their programs include HIV/AIDS awareness. The research has highlighted the close link between gender and HIV/AIDS indicating that the empowerment of women should be encouraged at each level.

Having outlined churches in different stages of their response to HIV/AIDS and made suggestions to mobilise the Church, the next section suggests how a church can practically use the model to design a therapeutic response to HIV/AIDS.

Project management: stages in applying the model of full humanity to develop a gendered response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic

The usefulness of the *model of full humanity* is specifically located within the Church and people who imbibe a spiritual approach to life. It can therefore be used as a tool for people in the Church who want to articulate and practise a gendered Christian response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The people that would benefit from the model include those who suffer from the effects of living in an HIV/AIDS world that is further complicated by patriarchy and poverty. It would also benefit people who want to apply the model in their own growth to wholeness because, as Patricia Fresen (2003:68) points out, in the act of caring both carer and cared for are transformed.

The model is useful in designing a therapeutic response to HIV/AIDS. The **first step** for the Church would be to **stand in solidarity** with a group of people with whom they intend to develop an integrated, holistic and multifaceted strategy, project or program. A preferential option for the poor expressed through standing in solidarity with them has been discussed as a key hermeneutical principle in this thesis (section 2.3). In using the *model of full humanity*

the Church develops friendships with the marginalized. This can be achieved by asking people: "What are you going though" and then listening with kenotic attentiveness to their response. The process of standing in solidarity with the poor in this way will give insight into their specific needs and context. This information is necessary for the second step.

Based on an understanding that emerges through solidarity with the marginalized and the preferential option for the poor, one would know at what level of the *model of full humanity* a person or group of people experiences the greatest degree of fragmentation. The **second step** would be to adopt a "**needle with many threads"** approach. The suggestion is that one would see the *model of full humanity* as a "map" of wholeness and place the "needle" at the level of most fragmentation. For example, if through attentive listening, one realises that the greatest degree of fragmentation occurs at the level of community, the intention then would be to design a program or any other response that can heal people at the level of community.

The next step is to remember that as the needle has many threads it is necessary to ensure that each thread touches each level of the model. Thus, the **third step** is to **weave together the different dimensions on the *model of full humanity***. The image is of reweaving and stitching together the different aspects of being, when offering an integrated response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This image of the "needle with many threads" weaving together the different aspects of being, has links with alternative images of the kingdom of God as mending the entire universe (Daniel Erlander 1992). It also has links with the weaver's loom image of the praxis of research and theology in this thesis (figure 1.5, section 1.5). The "needle with many threads" approach is offered as a way to develop an integrated and holistic response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Although an AIDS response will be focused at one level, the threads reach out and touch the other levels. It is about being intentional about including the other layers of a human being. This understanding is influenced by what I learnt from the following devotion, written by a member of the Maskopas group.

> To be HIV-positive is a very painful thing. **More especially when you have children**. It makes you to have **stress** because most of the time you think about their future. So, I think maybe if you have **work and money** you wouldn't be stress, because everything needs money. But we must **believe in God**, because he is our creator. Even if you can get medication it wouldn't (*sic)* help because you are stressed inside out. Emotionally spiritually. You need support most. Especially financial support and employment. Because I think that there is life after HIV-positive is not the end of the world. God is there for us. We don't walk alone. Although we don't see his footprint.

Devotion from Maskopas group

This devotion illustrates that the issues, which the participant faces, are integrated. The pain of being HIV-positive includes a concern over the welfare of children, as well as emotional aspects such as stress, the spiritual needs of believing in God and fiscal issues such as a lack of financial resources and employment. To stand in solidarity with this participant requires that an HIV/AIDS response address all these issues in an integrated and holistic manner.

I am not suggesting that the holism is progressive. It is not necessary to be whole at the ego level before one can be whole at the financial level.[18] Growth in one area can produce wholeness in another level or towards another level because they are intimately linked. For example, focusing a program at the level of financial empowerment may begin to heal the pain of a low self-esteem at the ego level and may contribute to a sense of empowerment for women who increase their financial stability. Wholeness at all levels or dimensions on the model is the experience of being fully human. Brokenness at any level is the experience of being dehumanised. The model proposes that spirituality and transformation are seen as a healing of fragments. It is in learning to embrace seemingly opposite notions and aspects of humanity that people become whole. Holiness, wholeness and salvation from the perspective of the model is interpreted as weaving together all the levels of the fully human model into one's identity. The Church can address the different aspects of the *model of full humanity* by networking with other organisations in a process of synergy or working together.

It is not necessary for the Church to provide all the services at all the levels of the fully human model. While all levels need to be touched on and woven together, the Church is able to build networks so that some of these needs are met by other organisations in partnership with the Church. For example, medical missions should not only target the diseases of the poor and improve their access to medical interventions, but should also work with existing partnerships (Milton Amayun 2003:26).

An example of a gendered response to HIV/AIDS and poverty inspired by the fully human model

An example of how the *model of full humanity* could work in practice is offered from my own experience of standing in solidarity with a group of HIV-positive women living life on the margins of society. You have met them already: they have introduced themselves through their contribution to the data in this thesis. They are the Maskopas women living in Orange Farm. One of my tasks is to facilitate a support group with the Maskopas. The aim of the support group is to offer hope, spiritual "therapy" in the form of prayer, Bible study and

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[18] This understanding is in contrast to the hierarchy of needs suggested by Maslow who proposes that basic needs such as food and shelter be met before the need for self-transcendence can be realised. People who struggle with poverty and injustice have the potential to reach self-transcendence even though their basic needs for health, safety and food security are not always met.

listening and responding to their problems. In terms of the suggested model, this fulfils the requirement of standing in solidarity with the marginalized who are to be the recipients of a gendered Christian response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Based on this friendship and listening, I realised that the greatest fragmentation in the lives of these women was financial empowerment. Some of this fragmentation at this level has been suggested in the data. To illustrate the fragmentation at the level of financial empowerment, a few quotations are offered and discussed.

> But I think with something to do that will generate an income at least, one of the better ways that you will be having something, at least at the end of the day to put on the table for them to eat. **And at least for me to do something not having to think about the whole epidemic and the stigma around it, the whole thing around HIV and AIDS. I think that's the only way one could be transformed.**

Excerpt from interview with Maskopas group member

> You need support most. Especially **financial support and employment**. Because I think that there is life after HIV-positive is not the end of the world. God is there for us.

Excerpt from a devotion written by Maskopas group member

> … so that 's my problem but if I can get some job to work and then get paid or get **some skills to do something with my hands so that I can provide my kids and then everything will be fine for me.**

Excerpt from interview with Maskopas group member

> **The other thing is that having something to do that will generate an income will do wonders in people living with HIV/AIDS.** For we can think, work like any other people in the universe.

Excerpt from a devotion written by Maskopas group member

The quotes suggest that skills training is beneficial. First, because of the financial resources it offers the Maskopas to meet the material needs of those for whom they are responsible. They describe that it is important for them to provide for their children and put food on the table. Second, the skills training is therapeutic in that it offers stress relief and something to do: "And at least for me to do something, not having to think about the whole epidemic and the stigma around it, the whole thing around HIV and AIDS. I think that's the only way one could be transformed". Third, there seems to be a need for an enhanced self-esteem that could be nurtured through skills training. One participant describes how HIV people "can think, work like any other people in the universe". This comment affirms that she still has a contribution to offer society despite the fact that she is sick.

Using a process of synergy and the networks in the broader community, the Maskopas were able to attend a skills training course. The *model of full humanity* provides the foundation to co-ordinate and network the course. The resources available to the Maskopas included the Salvation Army who put them in touch with a company which offered training in beading and wirework. Other network supports included a local Church that had access to overseas funding and provided a budget for the training. In terms of the paradigm of Christian feminist spirituality, the motivations behind initiating the project were ontologically different from other organisations, such as government, as the concern for effective action in the project was a way of expressing love for the other (Gustavo Gutierrez 1983:108).

I remind the reader of the image of the "needle with many threads" when designing a response to the AIDS pandemic based on the fully human model. Having placed the needle at the level of financial empowerment it became necessary to ensure that the other levels of human identity were weaved together and intentionally and strategically embraced in the beadwork and wirework skills training project.

At the dimension of ego, the trainers and I made sure that we used the training as an opportunity to encourage positive self-esteem. The efforts of the participants of the course were strongly encouraged and they were consistently affirmed throughout the process. Their successful attempts enhanced their self-esteem with a sense of "I can do this!" At the dimension of embodiment, the beadwork and wirework itself is tactile and reminds participants of their embodiment. In addition, we ensured that they were served a healthy meal as part of their training.

At the dimension of injustice, we opened doors for them to sell their products. A danger in craft skills training is that the participants end up being glorified beggars imploring people to buy their stock. A company selling craftwork on behalf of artists agreed to offer them a contract at a reduced rate. We soon also realised the need to empower them with financial skills, therefore we introduced them to a business mentor who guided them with sound business principles.

At the dimension of community, the support group itself provided a healthy community in which the individuals could be encouraged to grow. In the process of the skills training, the stronger participants assisted those who were struggling. Moreover, Church communities provided opportunities for the Maskopas to sell their crafts after church services and at flea markets.

Their agency as women was enhanced through developing their skills and increasing their finances. One participant enhanced her agency by offering to trade her skill with the different

skills of another community member. The ultimate evidence of the agency as women in the skills training project is if they themselves become trainers in the community.

At the final dimension, awareness of God, beading is a form of centering and prayer. Thomas Keating teaches that centering prayer is a way to prepare for contemplation through slowing the thought process. Likewise, craftwork such as beading may be a spiritual discipline that slows the thought process down to prepare for contemplation. For example, some traditions use the rosary, a string of beads, to assist one when praying.

The full humanity of the members of the Maskopas was enhanced in several ways through operating in a multifaceted, holistic and integrated approach as suggested by the *model of full humanity*. Their self-esteem and empowerment was nurtured through the stimulation of the beadwork training. Their fellowship with each other was given focus through the project, and the training provided them an opportunity to "escape" the poverty and depression of Orange Farm. This, in turn, renewed their energy levels. The prayer life of the Maskopas was enhanced through the singing and prayers that are part of the support group experience and through the activity of beading. Many of the group members remarked that the significance of the support group in their lives is that it keeps them alive. Evidence of the empowerment of the Maskopas as agents of healing and transformation that was nurtured through community, through prayer, enhancing their ego and nurturing their embodiment, is that they have started a Non-Governmental Organisation *Tsa Kopano, Seeds of unity,* that offers home-based care to members of the Orange Farm community. The organisation is formerly registered and is receiving funding for the work. Members of the Maskopas group who started the organisation serve as project managers, administrators, peer educators and home based caregivers.

In the light of the *model of full humanity* and the recommendations of how it may be applied on personal and social dimensions, I analyse the Church's response to HIV/AIDS.

Critique of the Church's response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic
Some Church based responses to the HIV/AIDS pandemic have been isolated, small scale, ineffective and have not integrated their work with others: "There are clouds but no rain" (Tearfund report (2004) in Sharlene Swartz 2005:191). The Church's response to HIV/AIDS is also often simplistic. With reference to the fully human model, the different Church programs focus on one element of the model to the neglect of the other aspects. Some approaches to the HIV/AIDS pandemic by the Church are still reductionistic. I suspect that even when suggestions are made that a multifaceted approach is necessary, these facets seem to work independently from each other. For example, some churches notice the connection between poverty and AIDS, but still see these as operating in different spheres:

they perceive AIDS as a medical issue and a doctor's problem, while they see poverty as a social issue and the government's problem.

Sharlene Swartz (2005:195-6) has highlighted that the evangelical churches have not responded to HIV/AIDS in a comprehensive, holistic and integrated way. She suggests that a seven-fold strategy should include:

1. "A vocal, vital and accurate theology of AIDS
2. Keeping the social factors that aggravate AIDS in the public's awareness and working to reduce these
3. A program of prevention and harm reduction that is context based
4. Challenging sexual abuse, stigma and ensuring that anti-retroviral treatments take effect
5. Compassionate care that is both spiritual and physical in orientation
6. Challenging the views of right-wing fundamentalists
7. Networking so that activism is informed".

In Sharlene Swartz's (2003:196) view, the evangelical churches have been successful in developing networks, moderately successful in offering compassionate care and have satisfactorily offered a program of prevention and harm reduction, but have failed in the other areas. She notes that the response of the evangelical churches is narrow, unbalanced and not integrated.

To illustrate the reductionist approach that some churches adopt I offer a critique on the Church's claim that abstinence and faithfulness are strategies that the church should employ in responding to the AIDS pandemic. Ronald Nicholson (1995:19), for example, makes a strong claim that churches have a responsibility to advise "sexual abstinence or absolute sexual faithfulness"[19]. I am suggesting that the "sexual abstinence and faithfulness" approach focuses almost exclusively on one level in the fully human model that I have offered. It focuses on convincing individuals to change their behaviour at an ego level. I am not suggesting that sexual abstinence and faithfulness are not helpful strategies in the fight against AIDS. The problem is that the ABC approach (**A**bstinence, **B**e faithful and **C**ondoms) presupposes a safe and equal society where all its members enjoy a degree of positive empowerment and self-esteem so that they are able to negotiate abstinence, faithfulness or condom use in intimate relationships. Such a society, I submit, does not exist in many places in South Africa, if at all. In section 1.2.4, I highlight that women have unequal status in South Africa owing to cultural norms that are biased against women, violence against women and economic factors (Isabel Phiri 2003:12). These issues of cultural norms that include dry sex, *lobola* and wife inheritance, different power relations and feminised poverty have an impact

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[19] Ronald Nicholson (1995:20) does acknowledge that the church's teaching on sexual ethics was negative, simplistic and too legalistic. He (1995:20, 21) offers as an example the impression created by the church that sexual sins were worse than other sins because of the way some churches tended to discipline or bar its members from communion in the case of premarital pregnancy and marriage after divorce. In the case of premarital sex, the condemnation does seem to fall almost exclusively on women.

on who gets infected and how infection can be prevented as was illustrated in section 1.2.4, (Isabel Phiri 2003:8-9). The disempowerment of women referred to by Isabel Phiri (2003:8-9) is further suggested by data in this research study, which includes comments by Frayne and a participant from the Maskopas group.

Frayne, a research nurse and participant in this study, refers to another study in which she participated where young women participants were asked what was dangerous in their day-to-day lives:

> I remembered in one of the other researches that was done (which asked) what was moderately or very dangerous in your environment. And girls said things **like bathing in front of my father. And my immediate thought was you don't bath in front of your father! And then I thought, but half the country does!** So the vulnerability of that 14 year old girl distressed me deeply.

Frayne's reflection on that study shows that for many young girls, a daily routine such as bathing was considered harmful because it had to be done in the company of the father. It is likely that this is due to cramped living conditions. Frayne's reflection indicates the unsafe society in which many women live.

Let me illustrate the point that I am making with reference to the stories that were gathered:

> … so I take her to the clinic so after the check-up, the clinic, they found that she was been raped. Okay. (Participant sucks in a deep breath)…

Excerpt from interview with a participant from the Maskopas group.

The above quotation depicts a real situation facing young South African girls. The Maskopas participant outlines how her daughter may possibly have become infected with HIV. At eight years old, her daughter was sexually abstinent. I wonder how she would respond to a message of faithfulness and abstinence? The call for abstinence and chastity can only be responsibly offered if active measures are taken to dismantle patriarchy, which is responsible for the disempowerment that women experience, suggesting that they are ill-equipped to negotiate faithfulness and abstinence. For example, in many Church liturgies, God is continually referred to as Almighty Father. Such imagery excludes women and promotes a patriarchal culture. Part of a gendered Christian response to HIV/AIDS is to re-evaluate how language is used in the Church. Isabel Phiri (2003:16-17) also suggests that the Church should be called to account for its actions towards women and children. A key hermeneutical principle in reading and interpreting Scripture and Christian tradition is the lens of full humanity which proclaims that, that which denigrates the full humanity of God's people is rejected.

Social injustice suggests that the erosion of safety in South African family life, due to the influence of migrant labour and poverty, creates the ideal conditions for abusive sexual relationships (Ronald Nicholson 1995:25). "Behaviour change needs to be conceptualised as a community level phenomenon, involving changes in participants' **social identities***,* their **collective empowerment** and their access to various forms of health enhancing **social capital***"* (Catherine Campbell & Flora Cornish 2003:163). Behaviour change does not result only from changes in individual's understanding of HIV related knowledge and personal attitude and belief systems, as Ronald Nicholson suggests (in Catherine Campbell & Flora Cornish 2003:163). Behaviour change is also dependent on the community in which individuals find themselves. A key aspect in the transformation of gender inequality, poverty and stigma is the social identities of people (Catherine Campbell & Flora Cornish 1995:163). A further suggestion is that marginalized people should come together to challenge their marginalized status by constructing their own identities that better reflect their understanding of their potential and their areas of interests (Catherine Campbell & Flora Cornish 2003:163)[20].

The reader may well ask of me: If you say that you agree that abstinence and faithfulness could be one strategy a church could employ, how would you go about implementing such a strategy, based on what you have suggested in the model that you have outlined?

In response to the question I point out that if members of the Church wish to promote abstinence and faithfulness in marriage, and that they have come to this decision through standing in solidarity with the people they are serving, they should follow the "needle with many threads" approach that I have outlined. It is important not to repress other levels when designing a program. For example, behaviour change cannot be seen in individualistic ways only. Taking a multifaceted, integrated approach as suggested by the model may encourage a leader to see behavioural change as incorporating a community experience as well as seeing the necessity for empowering women, rather than focussing exclusively on the individual. This suggests that if one places the needle in the section at ego level, one should ensure that the other threads embrace all the other levels of what it means to be human. For example, at the level of community, one might ask oneself if the community standing in solidarity is salugenic or pathogenic and does it promote the health of its members in such a way that they can implement their personal desires for behavioural change? More than that, it may also be necessary to create communities of support for like-minded people who are intent in changing their lifestyle.

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[20] Catherine Campbell and Flora Cornish (2003:163) conducted a study on sex-worker led interventions in the gold mining region of Summertown, South Africa. They found that the possibility of behaviour change was dependent on the degree to which female sex workers were able to insist on condoms from reluctant clients. An important aspect of their discussion is the way in which gender abuse and the poverty of the women undercut the possibilities for them to negotiate safer sex practices.

At the level of empowering women as agents of transformation, the Church could look at re-designing liturgies so that women's empowerment is embraced and respected in worship. Thus, with reference to the *model of full humanity*, to teach individuals the necessity of abstinence, faithfulness and condom-use falls within the scope of the ego dimension of the model. To neglect developing community support for attitude change concerning HIV/AIDS is to set the individual up for failure: to use a Biblical metaphor it would be like putting new wine in old wine skins (Mark 2:22). Encouraging individuals to change their behaviour should be done in conjunction with establishing support groups as communities of positive peer pressure that could encourage possible behaviour change. Finally, if feminised poverty is a significant factor in reducing people's ability to abstain from sex and to use condoms, economic empowerment should also be an aspect of a program that attempts to address behaviour change.

Uganda is often cited as a success story because of its decrease in the rate of HIV transmissions. People attribute this success to the influence of faith-based organisations preaching abstinence and faithfulness. Such an explanation may be too simplistic as the message for abstinence and faithfulness had the full political support of the country's president (Edward Green 2003:69). In addition, the message of abstinence and faithfulness was offered in a context where there is less stigma associated with the disease and where women are more empowered (Edward Green 2003:76). Some studies (Edward Green 2003:76) suggest that Uganda has the highest percentage of women who are able to negotiate safer sex. For example, one study investigated whether or not the women respondents believed they could refuse sex or propose the use of a condom if their husbands had a sexually transmitted infection (Edward Green 2003:77). The study showed that 91 percent of women in Uganda, compared with 55 percent in Tanzania, felt they could refuse sex or insist on safer sex (Edward Green 2003:77). Thus, the success of the abstinence message was based on a layered approach where there were fewer stigmas, more empowerment for women and significant political backing from the country's president.

The situation in South Africa is vastly different to Uganda. While Uganda's government and civil society were united in their response to HIV/AIDS, the South African population is vulnerable because of the mixed messages that are communicated by key leaders in government and civil society. In the past, president Thabo Mbeki denied that HIV causes AIDS (Anthony Balcomb 2006:107). The present minister of health, Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, promoted dietary elements such as beetroot and garlic as remedies for HIV. Former deputy president Jacob Zuma made controversial statements during a trial where he defended himself against rape charges. The response to HIV/AIDS from a government level is disintegrated and contradictory. In the words of Mr Stephen Lewis (*Mail and Guardian* 28

October 2006), special advisor to the United Nation's Secretary General, South Africa's response to AIDS is "obtuse, dilatory and negligent" (2006: www.aidstruth.org) and "wrong, immoral and indefensible".

In an open letter to President Mbeki, a group of 81 HIV scientists condemned unscientific statements by Thabo Mbeki that HIV does not cause AIDS. They also condemned the pseudo-scientific views of the South African minister of Health Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang who exhibited garlic, lemons, African potatoes and beetroot at the XVI International AIDS Conference held in Toronto, Canada in August 2006, suggesting that dietary elements are alternative treatments for HIV infection. These 81 HIV scientists were joined by the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) in calling for the resignation of Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang.

An example of damage to the HIV/AIDS campaign is comments made by former deputy president Jacob Zuma during a trial where he had to defend himself against rape charges (Dan Strumf in the *Mail and Guardian* 8 April 2006). Jacob Zuma explained that he was HIV negative and had sex with an HIV-positive woman because he thought the risk was not great: "I had made a decision at that time," Zuma said. "I knew the risk I was facing, but I believed it was small" (Dan Strumf in the *Mail and Guardian* 8 April 2006). Zuma, who was formerly head of the moral regeneration campaign and of the South African AIDS Council, had previously spoken out about the risks of HIV/AIDS in these leadership capacities (Dan Strumpf in the *Mail and Guardian* 8 April 2006). According to Dan Strumf (in *Mail and Guardian* 8 April 2006), Jonathan Berger, researcher at the Aids Law Project said: "The fact that he has a lot of support and that he's known to be someone who is generally more knowledgeable about HIV than many — that's where the danger lies". Zuma's comments during his rape trial took the campaign to increase awareness of the risks of HIV/Aids "20 steps back" (Dan Strumf in the *Mail and Guardian* 8 April 2006).

Another criticism against the government is that it has not always collaborated with civil society in fighting the pandemic. The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), for example, has until recently been at loggerheads with government. On 28 October 2006, the *Mail and Guardian* reported a turn-around on government HIV/AIDS policy government where they promised increased availability of drugs and endorsed the efforts of civic groups battling the disease. Previously in 2003, activists fought a legal battle against Thabo Mbeki that eventually forced his government to distribute life-saving anti-retroviral drugs (ARV's) (*Mail and Guardian* 28 October 2006).

In summary, the key ingredients of a gendered response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic are firstly that friendships are formed with people that are to be served by such a response.

Based on this friendship, programs or other responses are offered at a level where fragmentation occurs with the intent of incorporating the other levels of being in an integrated and holistic approach. However, if any strategy is to be successful, government must have the political will to co-operate with civil society and the Church in offering a clear message regarding the basic understandings of HIV/AIDS, thus contributing to the empowerment of women and supporting community-based initiatives. In this way it is hoped that transformation could happen on personal and political levels.

Having outlined how the *model of full humanity* may be applied on personal and social dimensions, I summarise responses from the community feedback forums and peer debriefing mechanisms. Section 3.3.10 outlined how the community and peer feedback ensures trustworthiness of the data and research.

6.10 RESPONSES FROM COMMUNITY FEEDBACK FORUMS AND PEER DEBRIEFING MECHANISMS

The research results were offered to the support groups who participated in the research and to a group of peers who share similar interests in HIV/AIDS and spirituality. The support groups and the peer group were asked two questions regarding the *model of full humanity*: How is the *model of full humanity* helpful? What are the potential pitfalls?

At the **community feedback forums**, the support groups were offered a poster of the *model of full humanity* depicted in figure 6.1. I also explained to them the *process* of the research and the stages in data analysis. Finally, the support groups paged through a draft of the thesis where they could see how their quotes were used. As explained in chapter 3, section 3.3.10, the benefit of community feedback forums is that they are a way of recycling interpretations through engaging the people that offered their stories. It is also a way of "member-checking" to see that data was offered a fair interpretation. For example, the Maskopas group noticed the theme of women as mentors and support for others. They noted that in their experience other women are a source of empowerment, yet there are times when women fight against each other instead of standing together. The community feedback forum is a way of sharing the results of the research with people who would generally not read the findings of the research, thus empowering them with the knowledge gained in the research.

In the **peer debriefing process,** my colleagues were offered a draft copy of this thesis to reflect on the research study. I also presented the findings of the research in a workshop to clergy in post-ordination training and they were asked to comment on the *model of full humanity* (see section 3.3.10). The benefit of the peer debriefing process was that it allowed

an opportunity to conscientise Church leadership to justice issues such as the link between gender, poverty and HIV/AIDS as discussed in section 1.2.4. It was also a way of disseminating the research findings and equipping churches to use the fully human model in their ministry.

The results from the community feedback forums and the peer debriefing mechanisms are summarised below.

1. The benefit of the *model of full humanity* identified by the community feedback forums is well summarised by the leader of the Maskopas group who noted that if one could be whole at each of the levels represented by the model, one would be a fully human person. If implemented successfully, the use of the model could result in communities of fully human people living in a fully human society. The model provides a way for HIV-positive people to become involved in the leadership of a response to HIV/AIDS. The model provides a way for personal and social responses. People are encouraged as individuals to look at the model and ask what can **I** do? They are also encouraged to work collectively in responding to HIV/AIDS. Some commented that the usefulness of the model is that it can be used on personal one-on-one basis in a counselling relationship and for groups and communities.

2. The Somelele Group identified networking as a key ingredient in a successful response to HIV/AIDS and was pleased to note that this is encouraged by the model. Besides networking with broader society, the model also encourages people in support groups to network with each other in the sharing of experiences, skills and ideas as an aspect of the fully human experience.

3. The Green Tea group suggested the effectiveness of using the model to offer a response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. They were satisfied that the Roman Catholic Church, which was assisting them and stood in solidarity with them, was responding to HIV/AIDS. The Roman Catholic Church offered

- resources to assist with their HIV/AIDS support group meetings,
- food at their meetings,
- skills-training in an effort to secure employment,
- exercise as part of the meetings,
- prayer and devotions, that were led by a member of the parish who also offered weekly counselling.

4. The St Margaret's community feedback forum noted that the Church's contribution to society was often "patchy", limited to prayer, developing community spirituality through Bible studies and fellowship, and challenging injustice (e.g. the *Kairos* movement and the challenge to Apartheid). However, the model provides a way for the Church to respond in a holistic fashion to crises that encompass wider aspects of being human, such as the empowerment of women, engaging the True-Self and ego, as well as economic development.

5. The community feedback forums expressed some concerns that may hamper the effectiveness of implementing the model. For example, the Maskopas support group was concerned that the prevalence of stigma in their community may hamper attempts to heal the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Similarly, the Somelele group noted that in their context, HIV was often pitched at the youth whereas all people, young and old, black and white are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. However, if the *model of full humanity* is applied using the "needle with many threads" approach, stigma as an injustice issue will be incorporated in the therapeutic response. The integrated strategy includes addressing injustice issues as well as supporting people in communities and engaging individuals.

6. Concerning the arrow of the empowerment of women intersecting the seven concentric circles in the model, the Somelele group highlighted the importance of empowering men too, arguing that men are full of anger and violence because they often feel undermined. Thus, empowering women may be dependent on also empowering men. The Somelele group argued that men need to learn that they have a role to play in the HIV/AIDS pandemic. They further suggested that people can be empowered through education on HIV/AIDS, especially in Church environments and using HIV-positive people to conduct aspects of church services such as the candle lighting ceremony.

7. The feedback from the peer reports indicated that the significance and usefulness of the proposed model offered the South African Church a workable method in responding to HIV/AIDS. The benefit of the model was that it was practical and offered a tool in designing a response to HIV/AIDS. Some peers commented that the gift of the model is that several areas of growth were integrated onto one map, which provided a connected view of responding to HIV/AIDS in a contextual and contemporary manner.

8. Other comments were that the model mapped out an intentional, integrated focus in developing programs and projects. The significance of the model for some is that it is integrated, holistic and highlights the gender perspective, often missing in Church-based responses. For example, one peer commented that the diocesan *Voluntary counselling and testing* project due to be launched in each archdeaconry would be more successful if

it planned its work along the methodology of the model. In line with the *model of full humanity*, the voluntary counselling and testing project could adopt an integrated approach by addressing stigma as one aspect of injustice, designing support groups for those who discover an HIV-positive status, incorporating the project into the worship experience of the Church and ensuring that women have access to the resources of the project.

9. Another response from the peer group is that the *model of full humanity*, although arising from an HIV-positive context, can be successfully applied in other areas of the church as well. The model provides a framework for addressing issues such as poverty and is a useful tool in planning mission activities of the Church.

10. Some community feedback forums noted that the model provides a way to integrate communities. Through the process of standing in solidarity with people, communities can be brought together. For example, some suggested that the model offers a way for churches in the same area or archdeaconry to work together effectively. It is possible for the different groups or churches to suggest what they would like to contribute to the model in a synergism of working together and thus allows space for a range of "actors" to be involved in one collaborative strategy.

11. Although my peers endorsed the model, one element in the model that generated comment was the theme of the empowerment of women. Some of the peer debriefing reports suggested that the model centred on women to the exclusion of men or that the focus on the empowerment of women may take the focus away from HIV/AIDS. Another peer debriefing report noted that often people are uncomfortable when the theme of power is highlighted. Perhaps it is necessary to clarify that the feminist movement does not seek the empowerment of women at the expense of men, as that would merely reverse the oppression. Feminists seek the liberation of women as oppressed and men as oppressors, for women are not free if men are not free.

12. Another criticism from the peer debriefing mechanism was that there is a danger that each of the levels depicted on the fully human model could become independently handled, which would then disintegrate the holistic approach. Another report noted that one might be distracted by the smaller issues/layers of the model and therefore lose sight of the overall goal. In the light of these helpful criticisms it is important to remember the image of the "needle with many threads", which embraces the need to be intentional about integrating all aspects of the model in one project or program.

Having summarised the potential usefulness and pitfalls of the *model of full humanity* according to the community feedback reports and peer debriefing mechanisms, I outline my reflections on the research journey before offering a summary conclusion to the chapter.

6.11 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

The significance of the research on my personal spirituality is the emphasis and influence of integration and holism. A spirituality that will help Christians in the context of HIV/AIDS, patriarchy and poverty is one that is deliberately integrative and holistic. All the elements of spirituality, some aspects such as community, engaging the True-Self, confronting injustice, which have been suggested on the *model of full humanity*, have to be woven together in one's personal and corporate transformation to wholeness. More than that, what is becoming clear is that if Christians are to be re-builders of society that has been fragmented by patriarchy, poverty and HIV/AIDS, they need to be "rebuilt" themselves (Richard Rohr & John Feister 2001:83). The whole person experiences healing on each level of being represented by the *model of full humanity* and in this way contributes to healing a whole society. Transformation is multifaceted and weaves together different aspects of spirituality such as prayer, social justice, empowering women, healthy finances*, apophaticism* and *catophatism*. For example, the fight against injustice is maintained through contemplation at the level of True-Self that energises the prophetic act of speaking against social injustice. The True-Self as the journey inward is facilitated through embodiment and balanced with the journey outward to community. God is found within one's soul, within the lives of others, in the challenge to injustice and in reaching out to others. I like Ken Wilber's (2000b:284) description of the result of integrating the different facets and approaches to spirituality and quote it at length:

> Neither Ascent nor Descent is final, ultimate or privileged, but rather, like the primordial ying and yang, they generate each other, depend upon each other, cannot exist with the other, and find their own true being by dying into the other, only to awaken together, joined in bliss, as the entire Kosmos, finding eternity is wildly in love with the production of time, the non-dual Heart radiating as all creation, and blessing all creation, and singing this embrace for all eternity – an embrace we are all asked to repeat in our own awareness, moment to moment, endlessly, miraculously as the immediate presence of the One taste. This is the non dual vision, union of Reflux and Efflux, Eros and Agape, Ascent and Descent – perfectly and blissfully united in One Taste, the radical sound of one hand clapping.

One aspect of theology and spirituality that is more integrated for me because of the research is the concept of the body of Christ. It is less an intellectual idea and more a lived experience, less of a head experience and more of a heart experience. The laboratory for this change is my own soul. I am learning to experience that I partake of the body of Christ at communion, I also share in the body of Christ as the Church and that I *am* the body of Christ. Through listening to the stories that were shared in the course of this thesis I realise that the body of Christ is an internal experience, not an external one. The body of Christ, which is

broken at communion, becomes part of one when one digests it. Similarly, through digesting the stories that were shared with me, I have become an intimate, integral part of the broken body of Christ. I am experiencing the body of Christ existentially. I carry the research participants' stories with me, within me. The women I interviewed suffer. Their suffering is often tangible; in some ways it hurts me too. In a small way, I share in their soul wounds that have been opened to me in the story-sharing process. The poverty, the disease, the abuse, the structural injustices and the stigmatisation are not the reign of God. What am I going to do about it? How am I going to live my life in response to what I have seen, what I have heard, and what I have experienced?

Research often emerges out of one's own desire for personal growth and a desire to contribute to social transformation. The themes in this research unfold from my own desires to be a more fully human person: to be whole, integrated, balanced and transformed, so that the prayer I say every Sunday as an Anglican priest may be a true experience for me: "Grant that what I sing with my lips, I may believe in my heart, and what I believe in my heart, I may show forth in my daily life".

6.12   CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this sixth chapter was to suggest how the *model of full humanity* may be applied to one's personal and corporate spiritual growth towards wholeness. To that end each level depicted on the fully human model was applied as an aspect of a fully human spirituality. The method of application was to suggest **deconstructive tools** and **constructive therapies** for each aspect of a fully human spirituality. Recommendations on how the model may be applied on personal and social dimensions were also made. The aspects of a fully human spirituality include awareness of God, challenging injustice, authentic community, financial empowerment, embodiment, ego and the True-Self. Each of these dimensions of a fully human spirituality is summarised below.

One aspect of a fully human spirituality is **awareness of God**. **Deconstructive tools** at this level included the power of naming and a critique of the names of God. These deconstructive tools help people to recognise the effects of structural blockages, such as gender exclusive language in the Church, in blocking people's awareness of God. **Constructive therapies** suggest naming God in ways that encourages the becoming of women. More importantly, the mysticism of encountering God beyond images was encouraged. Another issue that can be an obstacle in people's awareness of God is injustice.

A fully human spirituality incorporates a **challenge against injustice**. The **deconstructive tools** in challenging injustice offered reasons for people on the path toward full humanity to

dismantle injustice. Some reasons to challenge injustice include the understanding that God desires the full humanity of all people hence, that which saps away people's full humanity should be challenged. The dream that inspires the challenge against injustice is nurtured by the vision of mending creation. The desire to participate with God in the mending of creation is sparked by the experience of conversion. The **constructive therapies** that can be applied in living out a spirituality that challenges injustice include lament, a preferential option for the poor and developing base communities. In the process of challenging injustice, a fully human spirituality must continue to hold in tension its relationship with other aspects of the wafer *model of full humanity*. The unfolding of a new social order that enhances justice emerges from a contemplative centre that is nurtured in community, embraced in the body and reaches toward the True-Self.

A spirituality of community suggests that the triune God, the symbol of mutuality and reciprocity, is made known though the network of relationships that are built around God's people (Richard Rohr 1993: 48). The Christian life is about becoming what we, as Christians, are: the body of Christ (Richard Rohr 1993:49). Mutuality and inclusively are important goals in a society where HIV/AIDS highlights that there is something wrong with the way that people relate to each other (Maria Cimperman 2005:19). At the level of community the **deconstructive tools** in applying a spirituality of community recognise that patriarchal attitudes within the Church and wider society often prevent women from taking their rightful place in society as complete human beings (Bernadette Kunambi 1978:151). One critique of patriarchy that can be offered at the level of community is to examine critically how *ubuntu* spirituality is promoted as a way to address and redress the overemphasis of the individual in some western cultures. While some notions relating to *Ubuntu,* such as the process of establishing identity in community are helpful, it needs to be pointed out that for some women, *Ubuntu* is sometimes a negative experience of community.

In seeking an authentic fully human spirituality on the journey to integral wholeness, the Christian must practice solidarity with the poor as a **constructive therapy** in a spirituality of community. The quest for an alternative vision of a fully human society and the alternative movement that builds that future has to include the poor majority of the world (John Douglas Hall & Rosemary Radford Ruether 1995:103). Solidarity with the poor is transformative for rich and poor alike. The signs of how the rich are transformed include an integration of head and heart knowledge when the barriers between rich and poor are broken down and the rich are converted to positive action. The poor are transformed through the process of solidarity with the rich because they are no longer invisible but are given the opportunity for self-authoring if the rich create a space for listening. The spirituality of standing in solidarity with the poor, as an aspect of authentic community, has relevance for the poverty-stricken situation of the majority of South Africans, many of whom are women. This poverty is

aggravated by the materialistic culture we live in and the rise of, what Douglas Hall and Rosemary Radford Ruether (1995:100) call, "savage capitalism". It is further aggravated by globalisation. Globalisation as "profit oriented trade system" intensifies the economic insecurity of the poor and often exacerbates gender oppression (Musa Dube 2003:69). Within this context of globalisation and the resultant further oppression of women, financial empowerment is another practice that is an important dimension of a fully human spirituality.

A **spirituality of financial empowerment,** which is generally absent from other patterns of spirituality, highlighted how women are held in economic dependency and suggested strategies to empower women financially. Economic stability is a key factor in the wholeness and full humanity of people. **Deconstructive tools** that analysed unjust economics included high levels of poverty, which is revealed through the large gap between rich and poor, discrimination against women, unemployment, the disintegration of family life, materialism and globalisation (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference 1991:75, 76). **Constructive therapies** recommended that love of God and love of neighbour be applied through the economic principles of seeking the common good, the option for the poor, solidarity, the goodness of creation, understanding that work is a grace, and challenging patriarchy.

A **spirituality of embodiment** suggests the necessary task of creating ways for people to experience their bodies positively. To this end, the **deconstructive tools** at the level of a spirituality of embodiment critique the negative attitudes toward women's embodiment and highlight social justice issues such as the abuse of women's bodies and cultural practices such as dry sex. The deconstructive tools also outlined the negative ways in which patterns of Christian spirituality have approached embodiment and made some suggestions as to a positive spirituality of embodiment. The **constructive therapies** discussed how South African women who are HIV-positive may implement a spirituality of embodiment by living positively, through a healthy diet, stress management and exercise.

A **spirituality of the ego** is a necessary aspect of a fully human spirituality as it provides the groundwork in which people can find wholeness through rediscovery of the True-Self and the process by which people authentically engage community and injustice. Authors such as St John of the Cross (2002:31), describe the process of engaging the ego as the dark night of the senses. The **deconstructive tools** at the level of ego discussed the necessity of ego descent or the death of the false self, while the **constructive** therapies argued for ego ascent or the building of self-esteem.

A **spirituality of the True-Self** is transforming union. It is a way of living in the world with the "invincible conviction of union with God" (Thomas Keating 2000:101). The journey is such that when one finds one's True-Self, which is Christ within, the soul resting in God, one

simultaneously finds God in all things (Thomas Keating 2000:318). **Deconstructive tools** recognise that some structures inhibit prayer and contemplation and challenge women, and men, to become mystics as a way of healing soul wounds. **Constructive therapies** in engaging the True-Self include exploring alternative spiritual disciplines, such as beading, craftwork, meditative singing and silence, and understanding the interpenetration of the different levels on the model. Resting in God midwives the birth of a spirituality of engaging with the ego, challenging injustice and building community. Ethics and spirituality are part of the single movement of love – to separate them would be like separating love of God and love of neighbour. This suggests that there needs to be a sense of unity between the journey inwards with respect to the True-Self and the journey outwards with respect to solidarity with the poor and a spirituality of community.

Concrete applications of the *model of full humanity* were suggested on personal and social levels. On a **personal** level, the model provides a "map" of spiritual growth toward wholeness and a tool for spiritual direction that can be used one-on-one or in group context. Individuals or people in groups can look at the model with the help of a spiritual director, discern areas for growth in wholeness and journey to fully human wholeness at each of the levels indicated on the model.

On a **social** level, in implementing a gendered Christian response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the first task for the Church is to stand in solidarity with marginalized people through building friendships. Secondly, when designing a response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the project should focus on the area or level of greatest fragmentation, but in such a way that it intentionally and strategically integrates and embraces all the other levels of being. The image of a "needle with many threads" was used to illustrate the need to knit together an integrated response: the needle pinpoints the level at which the Christian responds while the threads in the needle reach out, touch and embrace the other levels of being human. The chapter offered support for using an integrated approach to respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and suggested a practical example of how the model could be applied. The beadwork project in which the Maskopas participated was suggested as an example of how the fully human model could be implemented in designing a response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The chapter also suggested how the *model of full humanity* may be applied to mobilise churches for action in the different stages of response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Thus, therapies for standing in solidarity with the poor, engaging the True-Self and ego, experiencing community, confronting injustice, being empowered economically and being aware of God were made for callous, concerned, congregationally focussed and community empowered churches.

The goal of a fully human spirituality discussed in this chapter is the full humanity of people and a society and nurtures this fully human experience. Chapter seven reviews the findings of the research, discusses the conclusions that can be drawn and makes recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER SEVEN
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1   INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

Chapter seven provides a summary of the research and conclusions. In discussing the summary and conclusions of the thesis, each chapter of the thesis is summarised. The contribution and significance of each chapter to the research is then outlined. The relevant conclusions that may be drawn from each chapter are stated. Finally, recommendations for future research are made in this seventh chapter before concluding.

7.2   SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter one outlined the **background and rationale** for this thesis. The background information offered definitions of HIV and AIDS and showed that the HIV/AIDS pandemic is a crisis for government, society and the Church. Sixty percent of the global HIV population is in Sub-Saharan Africa, with women being three times more likely to be infected with HIV than their male counterparts. Governmental, societal and Church responses seem to have had little effect in reducing the pandemic as can be seen from the rising prevalence rates where the HIV/AIDS prevalence in 1990 was less than one percent and has, in recent years, increased to 34 percent. The deficiency in responses to the HIV/AIDS pandemic is the lack of a gender focus. While some churches have not responded to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, other Church-based responses have been isolated and simplistic in that they have concentrated on one aspect of the HIV illness, such as behaviour change.

Against this backdrop, chapter one outlined three research aims. The **first aim** of this research study was to express a preferential option for the poor by standing in solidarity with a group of HIV-positive, black women with little or no employment who live life on the margins of society. The research listened to the voices of the poor, especially women, in HIV/AIDS support groups.

The second aim was to explore and describe a gendered Christian response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic for the Church, from the perspective of feminist theology and Christian spirituality.

Since patterns of spirituality as tools for deepening one's relationship with God are borne out of a particular place and time, **the third aim** was to describe aspects of a feminist spirituality that is carved out of the South African context. Spirituality is a source of empowerment, transformation and liberation. The thesis explored aspects of a fully human spirituality in a context that is shaped by HIV/AIDS, patriarchal oppression and poverty.

Chapter one also established the **theological framework** for the study. This research is conducted in the disciplines of feminist theology and Christian spirituality. Within these disciplines, theology was described with the images of weaving, dancing and talking. Interwoven in the weaving, dancing and talking nature of theology are theoretical influences, interpreted experiences from the research participants and my experience as the research writer. The hermeneutical point of departure within this theological framework was standing in solidarity with the poor, as this preferential option for the poor is seen as a key element in personal and social transformation.

The **significance** of *chapter one* is that it **contributed** to the thesis as a whole by outlining the research aims guiding the study and described the HIV/AIDS problem facing the South African Churches. Using graphs and statistical information the chapter sketched the significant proportion of people that are HIV-positive in Sub-Saharan Africa with particular reference to how women are suffering the worst effects from the disease. The **significance** of the background information in chapter one is that it illustrated the close link between gender and an HIV-positive status arguing that women are suffering the worst effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Feminised poverty, the social disempowerment of women, cultural traditions, socio-economic issues, a lack of education and physiological factors are specific reasons why women are more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS than men. The background information showed the close link between patriarchy, feminised poverty and HIV/AIDS: a gendered response to the pandemic was necessary.

A **conclusion** drawn from *chapter one* is that South African Churches should respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in such a way that they recognise that gender and feminised poverty ought to be key elements in their therapeutic response.

Chapter two outlined **an interpretative framework** by defining five theological terms that guided the research aims. **Fully human** was described as transformation to wholeness expressed through unity with God, others, within oneself and creation. Full humanity implies integral transformation in relation to both personal and social dimensions. To be fully human is to recognise one's participation in the Godhead through which one is divinised. **The preferential option for the poor,** the key hermeneutical principle in the thesis, was the

second theological term described. A preferential option for the poor implies that God favours the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized. The Church is called to express God's preferential option for the oppressed by standing in solidarity with them, through whom the presence of Christ is encountered. **Feminist theology,** based on the conviction that God desires the full humanity of people, was described as having deconstructive and reconstructive tasks, using the interpreted experience of women as the main source of content and method. Interpreted experience implies that there is no raw experience and that experience is mediated through interpretation that is influenced by assumptions, culture, personality and past-experiences. **Christian spirituality** was discussed with reference to its etymological roots in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, an historical overview of the discipline, different definitions offered by scholars, and, various typologies of spirituality. Finally, **feminist spirituality**, a marriage of feminist theology and Christian spirituality, was described as having holistic and integral dimensions.

The connection point between feminist theology and Christian spirituality is the desire for full humanity. The vision of feminist spirituality is a new creation of a fully human society of mutual relationships where diversity is respected and allowed to flourish (Kathleen Fischer 1995:96). The core of feminist spirituality is the understanding that the glory of God is a person fully alive, fully human. A fully human spirituality is to be so filled with the Holy Spirit of God through Jesus that one becomes a source of Divine presence in the world, for other people and creation. Thus, a fully human spirituality is integral and holistic, embracing both personal and social transformation. This transformation to wholeness is a gift of grace. It is made possible through the spiritual disciplines that maintain and express God's presence in one's personal and social living. Among these spiritual disciplines is a preferential option for the poor, contemplative prayer and authentic community.

The **significance** of *chapter two* for this thesis is that it established the interpretative framework within which the research was conducted. The **contribution** of *chapter two* to the thesis is that it described key hermeneutical principles such as full humanity and preferential option for the poor that were implemented in the research.

A **conclusion** drawn from *chapter two* is that it a preferential option for the poor may be a key way to offer personal and social transformation to people. The necessity of holding in tension both personal and social conversion in a process of integral transformation is insight drawn from the teachings of both feminism and spirituality in this chapter. A further **conclusion** drawn from *chapter two* is that the concept of full humanity, which represents the goal of feminist theology, Christian spirituality and Feminist spirituality, is a helpful link between these disciplines.

In *chapter three* an in-depth description of the **research methodology** was described showing the dance between the epistemological assumptions that guided the research and research methods. Epistemological assumptions, which are a frame of reference through which one interprets the world, emerged from a weaving together of the disciplines of feminist theology and Christian spirituality. Five epistemological assumptions were described as political standpoints and include wisdom, interpreted experience, subjective involvement, community and liberative action.

The **politics of wisdom**, as discernment, deeper understanding and creativity, allowed for contemplative insight to be the source in theology alongside conventional sources such as tradition, Scripture and reason. The **politics of interpreted experience** highlighted that experience as a resource, method and criterion of truth in feminist theology is not "raw" but is mediated through interpretation, which is influenced by one's culture, past experiences, context and worldview. The **politics of subjective involvement** means that knowledge creation is not objective and that the relationship with the participants is subjective, highly interpretative and involved. The **politics of community,** informed by the doctrine of the trinity and a critical appraisal of aspects of African spirituality, means that research was conducted in support groups. The **politics of liberative action** expressed the idea that transformation is a key feature in the process and product of feminist and Christian spirituality research.

These epistemological assumptions guided the qualitative approach that was adopted in the research design. Due to the feminist nature of the research and the epistemological assumption of the subjective involvement of the researcher, my role as the researcher was outlined with reference to my worldview, my picture of God, my friendship with the marginalized and the relationship between the research participants and the writer.

A multiple methods approach to **data collection** was adopted. These data collection methods were triangulated to provide a full perspective of the experience of being HIV-positive and included drawings, focussed group discussion, devotions, unstructured and open-ended interviews, life stories of the participants and my journal. In the **data analysis** process, Renalta Tesch's (1990) method of coding was followed. The methods to ensure trustworthiness were woven into the research design and included multi-methods of data collection and a multi perspective view of HIV/AIDS discussion, in which a variety of research participants contributed to the research. The inclusion of my personal journal in the research, community feedback forums and a peer debriefing mechanism were additional methods to ensure the trustworthiness of the research study. During the community feedback forums, analysed data was taken to the research participants for feedback. In the peer debriefing mechanism, peers who share my interests in spirituality and HIV/AIDS were asked to

respond to the research results reflecting on its value and also the potential pitfalls. The results of these checking mechanisms were summarised in chapter six.

The **significance** of *chapter three* is that it offered value to the academic fields of feminist theology and Christian spirituality. The thesis offered suggestions to the way research methods are designed in feminist theology and Christian spirituality through contributions such as the prayer journal, devotions and drawings. Furthermore, by weaving together feminist theology and Christian spirituality with other influences such as action research, participatory research, ethics and interpreted experience, a different approach to methodology in spirituality was offered. Finally, the politics of subjective experience as an epistemological assumption is significant in that experience was presented with greater nuance, suggesting that there is no "raw" experience, that experience as a resource in theology and spirituality is interpreted and influenced by culture, society, past experiences and personality. The **contribution** of *chapter three* to the thesis is that it described the techniques for data collection and acknowledged the assumptions that guided the decisions in the data collection and analysis phases of this research.

The **conclusion** drawn from *chapter three* is the awareness that while epistemological assumptions influence research methods, the data emerging from the research also influences the epistemological assumptions. There is thus a dance and a dialogue between data and theory.

Chapter four described the **results** of the data generated from the interviews, drawings, focussed group discussions, devotions and life stories. Feminist spirituality suggests that sisterhood is the community locus for liberation and knowledge making, therefore research was conducted with support groups. The research was conducted through standing in solidarity with the Maskopas support group for HIV-positive people in Orange Farm. The participants were HIV-positive, black women who had little or no employment. In order to broaden the research, other groups were incorporated into the research. The Somelele Group from Bekkersdal shared a similar profile to the Maskopas group. The Green Tea group from Sophia Town had different group dynamics and included men in the research. Finally, HIV-negative members of a Church community from St Margaret's, Bedfordview were included in the research. Thus, a many-sided discussion on the experience of HIV included those directly and indirectly infected. While the methodology of the thesis was specific to working with small groups in specific contexts, thick descriptions of the research participants and research sites allows for the information to be expanded to wider contexts. The rich descriptions provide exposure to the lives of people while the theory-making process is inductive and non-prescriptive.

Using Renalta Tesch's (1990) open-ended coding technique, seven broad categories of themes were identified. The category **ego** described themes such as loneliness, the threat of suicide, despair and a positive self-esteem. The category **embodiment** included themes that related the physical experiences of being HIV-positive as well as the need for a healthy lifestyle. **Economic** themes reflected the need for accommodation, food-security and employment. The **effects of social injustice and vulnerability** described experiences of stigma, rejection and sexual violence. The fifth category was **community** and included themes relating to support groups, concern for children and the therapeutic benefits of talking. The seventh category, **agents of transformation**, illustrated how women are mentors and supporters of others and how they serve the community through care, education and encouragement. **Awareness of God** included themes such as gratitude, faith, hope, punishment and dreams.

The **significance** of *chapter four* in this thesis is that it achieved the first research aim of expressing a preferential option for the poor through the long-term friendship with the Maskopas support group from Orange Farm. The ethic of standing in solidarity with the poor was also attained through listening to the voices of the poor, especially women, in support groups for HIV-positive people. *Chapter four* **contributed** to the research by allowing for the voices of the poor, especially women, to be articulated. To this end, quotations from the research participants were offered and included in the analysis. In this way the feminist aim of giving a voice to women was achieved in this thesis. Thus a **significant** contribution of *chapter four* is that new knowledge was created through recording the perspective of poor people. A further significant **contribution** of *chapter four* is that the financial empowerment and the agency of women as healers and transformers in their context was revealed through the data analysis procedures. Financial empowerment, which is not always a dominant theme in other patterns of spirituality, is shown as a key issue in a Christian response to HIV/AIDS.

From *chapter four,* it is evident are that the experience of being HIV-positive embraces many dimensions. It is a multifaceted disease that affects not only one's physical health, but also spiritual, financial, emotional and psychological aspects. Thus an integrated, multifaceted, holistic and gendered response to HIV/AIDS is necessary for the South African Church because the crises of HIV/AIDS must be understood in relationship to poverty and patriarchy. An important **conclusion** drawn from chapter four is that being healed for full humanity, in the context of HIV/AIDS, poverty and patriarchy, requires the financial empowerment of people, challenging injustices such as stigma and sexual violence and empowering women as agents of healing, transformation and wholeness.

Chapter five **described a model of full humanity** which was offered as a gendered response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Using the themes that were developed in chapter four in conjunction with theoretical influences such as Howard Clinebell, the seven *chakras* and Ken Wilber, I developed a *model of full humanity* that could offer the South African Church a gendered, holistic response to HIV/AIDS. The model, in the shape of a Communion wafer, which represents the body of Christ at the Eucharist, consists of seven concentric circles. These seven concentric circles from the outer to the inner layers are awareness of God, injustice and vulnerability, community, financial empowerment, ego and True-Self. There is also an arrow representing the empowerment of women that interconnects all seven circles. There are two major adaptations from the data analysis in developing the fully human model. First, the level of True-Self is incorporated that is not illustrated in the data. The motivation for this is that in the dance and dialogue of research, while I learn from the participants, the participants can also learn from me and my understanding of relevant literature. Living out of the True-Self is a prominent theme in healthy spiritualities. The second adaptation is that the category empowerment of women as agents of transformation is depicted as an arrow across all seven circles since the agency of women must be nurtured at all levels of being.

Chapter five **contributed** to this thesis by fulfilling the research aim of offering a gendered response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic through describing the *model of full humanity* that could guide such a response. The **significance** of chapter five for the South African Church, government, and wider civil society is that it describes a gendered, multifaceted and integrated healing approach to HIV/AIDS for the South African Church. By highlighting the empowerment of women as agents of healing at each level of being, the model provides a significant method for challenging patriarchy.

The **conclusions** drawn from this chapter is that a clearly integrated strategy, that intentionally knits together all aspects of being such as ego, embodiment, finance, community, challenging injustice and awareness of God must be adopted on personal and social levels in healing the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The empowerment of women as a key element in an effective response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic is a further conclusion that can be drawn from this study.

The purpose of *chapter six* was to suggest how the *model of full humanity* described in chapter five might be **applied** in one's personal and collective spiritual growth. To that end, each level of the *model of full humanity* was discussed as an aspect of **a fully human spirituality.** Each of these levels is implemented through deconstructive tools and constructive therapies. The dimensions of a fully human spirituality included a spirituality of prayer, a spirituality of community, a spirituality that challenges injustice, a spirituality of financial empowerment, a spirituality of embodiment, a spirituality of ego and a spirituality of

the True-Self. The deconstructive task for each dimension of a fully human spirituality required that, that which militates against the full personhood of people, especially women, is denounced. The constructive task required that strategies are suggested to dismantle the marginalization and disempowerment of people to enliven them for the experience of fully human wholeness.

Chapter six discussed concrete plans as to how the *model of full humanity* may be **applied** on both **persona**l and **social** levels for enhancing the full humanity of people in a fully human society. On a personal level, the *model of full humanity* offers a "map" for personal spiritual transformation and a tool for spiritual direction. On a social level the implementation of the model suggests that the first step is to stand in solidarity with those with whom a potential project is to be implemented. The second step is to implement a practical project that would be situated on a level of the *model of full humanity* where fragmentation occurs. The third step is to adopt a "needle with many threads" approach and to ensure that each aspect of the model, the different aspects of humanity such as embodiment, financial empowerment, spirituality, and the community are intentionally woven together in designing a therapeutic response to an HIV/AIDS situation. Chapter six also offered concrete methods of mobilising churches to respond to HIV/AIDS, a critique of how some churches respond to HIV/AIDS in an isolated and individualistic fashion and an example of how a gendered, multifaceted, holistic and integrated project may be implemented.

The **significance** of *chapter six* is that it holds in tension the need for personal and collective responsibility in responding to HIV/AIDS. The significance of this chapter for the research aims of this thesis is that it "maps" out personal and social transformation. Thus, chapter six **contributed** to the research aims by discussing a pattern of spirituality emerging from a South African context that is characterised by the unholy alliance of HIV/AIDS, poverty and patriarchy. This chapter recognised that the quest for wholeness, represented by the desire for full humanity, happens in the midst of forces that repress the humanity of people. Moreover, a perusal of the sources of spirituality may suggest that there is a paucity of material on spirituality written by women for women. The gender perspective highlights how being in a women's body distils a different spiritual experience of self, others, creation and God. Further, the effects of patriarchy and feminised poverty shape women's spirituality differently. The **contribution** of this chapter for the academic community is that it articulates a pattern of spirituality through the perspectives of the research writer and the women research participants. Finally, since the goals of feminist theology are to deconstruct that which militates against the full humanity of people, especially women, this chapter contributed to feminist research by deconstructing patriarchy at each of the levels of the *model of full humanity*. Since feminist theology also incorporates reconstructing a just, mutual, equal and reciprocal society where the potential of people is nurtured, this chapter

contributed to feminist research by suggesting constructive therapies at each level of the model that could enhance people's experience of being fully human.

Conclusions drawn from the *sixth chapter* are that a preferential option for the poor is a key factor in the transformation of the rich and the poor on personal and social levels. It thus allows for holistic and integrative transformation. Furthermore, since the HIV/AIDS pandemic may be ignited by the experience of isolation and disintegration in the human community, aspects of a feminist spirituality of empowerment emphasising the importance of dynamic relationships of mutuality, trust, reciprocity and equality, as ways to enhance a person's development of self, were outlined. A final conclusion drawn from chapter six is that applying a fully human spirituality can be is a significant resource for the Church in responding to HIV/AIDS.

Thus far the seventh chapter offered a summary of the research study and research findings and outlined conclusions that can be drawn from it. Recommendations for future research are now made.

7.3   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The research adopted a multi-perspective approach to the HIV/AIDS discussion that included those directly and indirectly affected by the pandemic. Except for three men from the Green Tea group, who were included in the study because the group showed elements of transformation, men were not interviewed on their attitudes to HIV/AIDS, poverty and patriarchy as this was not the primary focus of the research. However, the research participants highlighted that the men in their lives perceived HIV/AIDS as a "women's disease." Other participants related that they had experienced either violence or dehumanisation at the hands of males. Research has shown that women practise a spirituality of resistance when they refuse to submit to the demands of a patriarchal power which demeans men as oppressors and women as the oppressed (Susan Rakoczy 2004 389). As feminist theologians seek holistic and integral transformation of oppressed and oppressors, **investigating men's experience of patriarchy, poverty and AIDS and exploring how men can be empowered in the process of their transformation to wholeness deserves further investigation.** This may be achieved by exploring ways in which patriarchal male attitudes to women could be transformed.

In this light, a further recommendation for future research is to explore initiation rites in the Xhosa, Zulu and Sotho cultures where initiation schools may be the medium through which patriarchy is mediated. Research into ways of transforming the schools so that men emerge

through the passage from boyhood to manhood as whole people, empowered and encouraging the full humanity of people, is necessary.

In this inductive study, moving as it does from the specific to the general, a small sample of participants fulfilled the requirements of the study. Thus, the results cannot be easily generalised to wider the population. However, the thick descriptions of the group and their context were provided, allowing the generated data to be transferred to other contexts. These descriptions and the direct quotations exposed the reader to the real lives of the participants. Moreover, the data was integrated with literature to provide a broader perspective. This revealed that the stories that were gathered in the data collection are symptomatic of a national problem. **Thus, investigating a broader sample in other areas of South Africa and comparing those results with the results from this research may provide opportunities for future research.**

The peer debriefing and community feedback forums highlighted recommendations for further research. Empowering HIV-positive people to offer leadership using the *model of full humanity* is seen as an important demonstration of the model's potential to contribute towards wholeness, full humanity and empowerment. For example, women who have experienced wholeness from the *model of full humanity* may be encouraged to implement the model to empower girl-children so that the cycle of patriarchy and poverty may be broken. In addition, according to Daniela Gennrich (2004:9) orphans are the tragic and long-term consequence of the HIV/AIDS crisis. In the light of this, **investigating ways of implementing the model for the benefit of orphans and vulnerable children is a necessary recommendation**.

7.4   CONCLUDING REMARKS

This research offers precise ways in which the Church could respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in ways which have not always been well articulated (Neville Richardson 2006:38). Moreover, a distinctive theology on AIDS is often missing (Neville Richardson 2006:39). The description and implementation of the *model of full humanity* explained in this thesis articulates a distinctive theology and spirituality of HIV/AIDS utilising the feminist lens. Spirituality and theology are considered key factors in responding to HIV/AIDS for: "to make sense of the world, of things and occurrences, and to confer them with a religious meaning pointing beyond themselves, is a deeply human activity" (Jorunn Okland 2004:152). But it embraces more than just that: it is the activity of the fully human person and the journey of one who yearns for life (Norvene Vest 2000:1). People desire to live fully and well, honouring all the dimensions of their being, while respecting other beings with whom they share this

planet, and serving God with gladness" (Jorunn Okland 2000:4,5). Shupi Heil (in Lesanne Schwellnus and Ingrid Clanch nd: 6) reiterates these fully human desires:

> I need to live! Through many, many battles with my emotions – standing at the stove trying to cook, and my child crawling right up to me also needing and wanting my full attention, I slowly woke to the fact that I need to take a firm hold of life. I need to live – not just exist.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is a *kairos* moment for the Church in which the Church should engage the poor, the infected and affected as active participants. There is thus a need for the Church to theologise about HIV/AIDS as much as there is a need for women to contribute to the discussion on HIV/AIDS and a theology of spirituality. Such a theology will influence the response that Christians and churches make to the HIV/AIDS crisis. However, the spirituality or theology of AIDS cannot be simplistic or judgemental: it must be integrative, holistic and gendered. This thesis articulates a practical theology and a spirituality of HIV/AIDS that fulfils these requirements.

APPENDIX I: COVENANT

Research partners:

As a research partner I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary and I know that I can withdraw at any point that I want. I agree to share my stories with the research writer. I agree to participate in the group discussion and to have my interview with her audio taped. Through the sharing of my stories I will have an opportunity to express myself and my feelings.

Research writer:

As the research writer I agree to keeping the stories that are shared with me private and confidential. The names of the research partners will be omitted. In the research write-up their names will be coded in order to ensure anonymity. I will respect their human rights and dignity. I will respect them as human beings created in the image of God and as far as I am able will ensure that no harm comes to them through the research. I will offer a copy of the results of the research to the group.

Research partners   Research writer

_____

DATE: PLACE:

APPENDIX II: PEER DEBRIEFING

1. Telephonic interview with the Rev Ann Poulton from the Westonaria Methodist Church on 14 November 2005.

2. Presentation and discussion of tentative research findings in poster format with the Rev Douglas Torr, Head of the Social responsibility portfolio for the Diocese of Johannesburg, Anglican Church, at Kensington on 3 April 2006.

3. Presentation of research findings in electronic format to the Rev Douglas Torr, Head of the Social responsibility portfolio for the Diocese of Johannesburg, Anglican Church at Bedfordview on 28 October 2006.

4. One-on-one discussion on research findings with the Rev Douglas Torr, Head of the Social responsibility portfolio for the Diocese of Johannesburg, Anglican Church, at Bezuidenhout Valley on 20 November 2006.

5. Presentation of research findings in electronic format to the Rev Dr Peter Wyngaard, Rector of School for ministries, for the Diocese of Johannesburg, Anglican Church at Bramley Gardens, Johannesburg on 12 September 2006.

6. Telephonic interview with the Rev Dr Peter Wyngaard, Rector of School for ministries, for the Diocese of Johannesburg, Anglican Church on 28 October 2006.

7. Presentation of tentative research findings in electronic format to the Rev Vicentia Kgaba, Priest-in-charge of Rabie Ridge, Midrand at Randburg on 3 October 2006.

8. Presentation of tentative research findings in electronic format to the Rev Tsepo Matubatupa, Head of the HIV/AIDS portfolio in the Johannesburg Diocese of the Anglican Church, at Randburg on 3 October 2006.

9. E-mail correspondence offering an evaluation of research findings by the Rev Vicentia Kgaba, Priest-in-charge of at Rabie Ridge, Midrand on October 2006.

10. Telephonic interview with the Rev Tsepo Matubatupa, Head of HIV/AIDS portfolio in the Johannesburg diocese of the Anglican Church on 5 November 2006.

11. Presentation of research findings in the form of an all day workshop to priests and deacons in post ordination training at St Margaret of Scotland Anglican Parish, Bedfordview on 14 October 2006.

12. Evaluation reports discussing tentative research findings submitted by priests and deacons in post ordination training at St Margaret of Scotland Anglican Parish, Bedfordview on 14 October 2006.

APPENDIX III: COMMUNITY FEEDBACK FORUMS

1. Presentation of research findings in poster format and discussion with the Green Tea group at Sophiatown on 16 October 2006.

2. Presentation of research finings in poster format and discussion with Anne Marie Botes from Somelele Group at Killarney, Johannesburg on 16 October 2006.

3. Presentation of research finings in poster format and discussion with the Somelele Group at Bekkersdal on 21 October 2006.

4. Continuous discussions and recycling of research findings with the Maskopas group at Orange Farm on 11 March 2006, 6 May 2006, 3 June 2006, 8 July 2006, 25 November 2006 and 11 October 2006.

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