

Introduction

*A Critical Feminist The*logy of Liberation: Reality and Vision*

Almost twenty years ago, I published *Discipleship of Equals*,¹ which gathered together my work on feminist the*logy in the 1970s and 1980s. Like *Discipleship of Equals* so also the present volume circles around *power, struggle, and vision* as central topoi of my feminist the*logical work. This work is motivated by the imperative expressed by the ancient prophet Habakkuk:

Write the vision down,
inscribe it on tablets to be easily read.
For there is still a vision for its own appointed time, eager for its own
fulfillment.
It does not deceive!
If it seems to tarry, wait for it;
it will surely come, it will not delay.²

Contemplating the command to “write down the vision,” I have decided to gather some of my essays that were written after *Discipleship of Equals* appeared and make them available to readers who do not have easy library access to the journals and collections of essays where they have first appeared. Whereas this volume gathers my feminist the*logical essays, the next book will focus on my work in feminist biblical method and hermeneutics. In a third work, I will gather essays and interviews reflecting on the experiences and social locations which have shaped my feminist the*logical voice and theoretical vision.³

1. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesia-logy of Liberation* (New York: Crossroad, 1993). See also *Grenzen überschreiten: Der theoretische Anspruch feministischer Theologie* (Münster: LIT, 2004).

2. Habakkuk 2:2-3 (RSV).

3. I am grateful for the very perceptive and generous discussion of my work in *Früchte des Verstehens: Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza zum 60. Geburtstag* (Sonderheft der feministisch-theologischen

Originally the word *theory* was a technical term derived from ancient Greek *theoria*, meaning “looking at, viewing, beholding.” Feminist theory is not so much concerned with technical precision and completeness but with generating “analyses, critiques, and political interventions and open[ing] up a political imaginary for feminism that points the way beyond some of the impasses by which it has been constrained.”⁴

Vision equally has something to do with seeing and looking. I understand feminist theory to enable us to see full circle where otherwise we would see only a segment. Hence, I understand feminist the*logy and studies in religion as a vision quest, seeking to articulate the dream of justice as well as searching for transformative theories and practices of well-being in an unjust and violent world. Hence, the analysis of domination and struggle must be central to a critical feminist political the*logy of liberation.

This volume recontextualizes the individual essays in four sections that seek to reflect on sites of feminist struggles and their transforming visions. The contributions of the first section attempt to name the theoretical struggles involved in articulating a critical⁵ feminist political the*logy of liberation. The chapters of the second section in turn discuss the global wo/men’s movements in religion and society as sites of struggle against violence⁶ and prejudice. The third section explores my own socioreligious location, Catholicism, as an institutional

Zeitschrift Fama, 1998); *Walk in the Ways of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza*, ed. Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, Melanie Johnson-Debaufre, and Shelly Matthews (Harrisburg: Trinity International, 2003); *On the Cutting Edge: The Study of Women in Biblical Worlds*, ed. Jane Schaberg, Alice Bach, and Esther Fuchs (New York: Continuum, 2003); *Toward a New Heaven and a New Earth: Essays in Honor of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2003); *Vermessen! Globale Visionen konkrete Schritte*, ed. Andrea Eickmeier und Jutta Flatters (Bonn: Schlangenbrut, 2003); Glenn Enander, *Spiritual Leaders: Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza* (Philadelphia: Chelsea, 2005); Elizabeth Green, *Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2005), and especially Nam Kim and Deborah Whitehead, eds., *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, Special Issue in Honor of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, 25/1 (2009).

4. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott, eds., *Feminists Theorize the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1992), xiii.

5. For the discussion of the relation of my work to the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, see Marsha Aileen Hewitt, *Critical Theory of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

6. Cf. Shawn M. Copeland and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, eds., *Violence against Women* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994); Carol J. Adams and Marie Fortune, eds., *Violence against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook* (New York: Continuum, 1998); Nantawan Boonprasat Lewis and Marie M. Fortune, eds., *Remembering Conquest: Feminist/Womanist Perspectives on Religion, Colonization, and Sexual Violence* (Binghamton: Haworth Pastoral, 1999); Leela Fernandez, *Transforming Feminist Practice: Non-Violence, Social Justice, and the Possibilities of a Spiritual Feminism* (San Francisco: Aunt Lut, 2003); Joy A. Schroeder, *Dinah’s Lament: The Biblical Legacy of Sexual Violence in Christian Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007); Elizabeth A. Castelli and Janet R. Jakobsen, eds., *Interventions: Activists and Academics Respond to Violence* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), and Daniel C. Maguire and Sa’diyya Shaikh, *Violence against Women in Contemporary World Religion: Roots and Cures* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2007).

site of struggle.⁷ The volume ends by looking at the*logy proper, our speaking about the divine, as a site of struggle for naming the fullness of feminist religious vision.⁸

All of the chapters seek to present aspects of a critical feminist political the*logy of liberation. Nancy A. Dalavalle has criticized Catholic feminist the*logy as being too closely aligned with liberation the*logy. She argues that

the assumption that the important cry for justice and liberation provides an exhaustive framework for feminist theology forecloses a thorough examination of the possibilities raised at the intersection of feminism and Catholic theology. Indeed, reducing either the insights of feminism or the complexities of Catholic theology to justice concerns ignores the fact that some feminist theories reflect exclusively on being female and the fact that the object of Christian theology, and the ground of the Catholic tradition's catholicity, is God, not human concerns for justice.⁹

While I can not speak in the name of all Catholic feminist the*logians who are indicted here for being too much concerned with human worries about justice rather than catholicity and the divine, I hope that these chapters convince readers that the concern for justice is not only essential to catholicity and G*d, but also fundamental to feminist the*logy, that is to feminist *the*-legein* which means *speaking about the divine*, since justice is the prerequisite for such feminist *the*-legein*.

The Power of Naming

Around forty years ago, Mary Daly wrote in *Beyond God the Father* that “under patriarchy wo/men have had the power of naming stolen from us.” Daly directs our attention to the second creation story of the book of Genesis in which Adam names all the animals as well as the woman who names no one and nothing. Daly draws the conclusion: “Wo/men are now realizing that the universal imposing of names by men has been false or partial because to exist humanly is to name the self, the world, and God.”¹⁰

7. Cf. Mary J. Henold, *Catholic and Feminist: The Surprising History of the American Catholic Feminist Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Susan Abraham and Elena Procaro-Foley, eds., *Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology: Shoulder to Shoulder* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).

8. Cf. Carol Christ, *She Who Changes: Re-Imagining the Divine in the World* (New York: Palgrave, 2004), Melissa Raphael, *The Female Face of God in Auschwitz: A Jewish Feminist Theology of the Holocaust* (London: Routledge, 2003), and Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroads, 1992).

9. Nancy A. Dalavalle, “Toward a Theology That Is Catholic and Feminist: Some Basic Issues,” *Modern Theology* 4/4 (1998), 535.

10. Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (Boston: Beacon, 1968), 8.

However, wo/men did not simply lack the sacred power of naming.¹¹ Rather, we were actively prohibited from exercising it. After centuries of silencing and exclusion from the*logical studies and religious leadership, wo/men have moved into the academy, assumed religious leadership, and claimed their religious agency and heritage.¹² The second wave of the feminist movement has not only engendered a wo/men's rights movement in religion resulting in wo/men's admission to ordination and academic faculty status. It also has created new areas of research.

In the context of the second wave of the wo/men's movement, research in wo/men, gender, and feminist studies in religion and the*logy has exploded.¹³ Nevertheless, just as in other academic disciplines, the knowledge produced by feminist studies in religion remains marginal to the overall the*logical or religious studies curriculum and the self-identity of the disciplines. It appears as a "special interest" topic and often remains restricted to those who are already "converted." Feminist students still have to do "double" or even "triple duty" if they belong to a minority group. They study feminist or black or Asian the*logy because these forms of the*logy speak to their own experience, but in order to be judged professionally competent, they still have to know the hegemonic intellectual work of "the*logy" as such.

Feminist theories and the*logies have emerged from wo/men's participation in emancipatory movements such as the struggles for full democratic citizenship, religious freedom, abolition of slavery, civil rights, national and cultural independence as well as those for democratic, ecological, labor, peace, or gay rights. In these struggles for religious, civil and human rights which are going on in the Middle East and in Wisconsin at the writing of this introduction, feminists have learned that words such as "human" or "worker" or "civil society" are gender typed and often do not include the rights and interests of wo/men. Hence, I do

11. Cf. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, ed., *The Power of Naming: A Concilium Reader in Feminist Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996).

12. Cf. Ann Braude, ed., *Transforming the Faith of Our Fathers: Women Who Changed American Religion* (New York: Palgrave, 2004), which seeks to dispel the myth that feminism and religion are "inherently incompatible."

13. See among many others Melissa Raphael, *Introducing Theology: Discourse on the Goddess* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2000); Darlene M. Juschka, *Feminism in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (New York: Continuum, 2001); Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro, *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics: An African Perspective* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2002); Rebecca S. Chopp and Sheila Greeve Davaney, *Horizons in Feminist Theology: Identity, Tradition, and Norms* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997); Serene Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace, Guides to Theological Inquiry* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000); Rita M. Gross and Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Religious Feminism and the Future of the Planet: A Buddhist-Christian Conversation* (New York: Continuum, 2001); Anne M. Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001); Susan Frank Parsons, *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Stephanie Y. Mitchem, *Introducing Womanist Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002); Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed., *Feminist Theologies: Legacy and Prospect* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007); Marcella Althaus-Reid and Lisa Isherwood, *Controversies in Feminist Theology* (London: SCM, 2007); Margaret D. Kamitsuka, *Feminist Theology and the Challenge of Difference* (New York: Oxford, 2007); María Pilar Aquino and Maria José Rosado-Nunes, eds., *Feminist Intercultural Theology: Latina Explorations for a Just World* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2007).

not see feminist the*logy primarily as a philosophical inquiry concerned with ontological and metaphysical questions but as a cultural, sociopolitical one concerned with power in general and the power of naming in particular.

The story of feminist the*logy and studies in religion is generally told either in progressivist-temporal or in descriptive-definitional terms. I want to tell it here with reference to its analytical categories and feminist practices. As far as I can see, the field of feminist studies in religion and the*logy is presently construed in four divergent methodological ways: Firstly as women studies, secondly as gender studies, thirdly as intersectional-cultural feminist studies, and fourthly as critical political-liberationist feminist studies.¹⁴ These different approaches are distinctive but not necessarily exclusive of each other. They all have developed feminist practices that reclaim the “power of naming.”

By claiming the power of naming, feminist scholars are in the process of reforming malestream¹⁵ the*logies and religious practices, a process that seeks to correct and complete the one-dimensional tunnel vision of the world and of organized religions. They seek to rectify gendered knowledges and spiritual perceptions of the world and the divine, which are still one-sided to the extent that they continue to be articulated in the interest of elite white western men. A different feminist understanding of religion in turn will lead to the articulation of a feminist politics and spirituality that can empower wo/men to bring about further change in society and culture. Although it often remains part of the problem, religion too plays an important role in emancipatory radical democratic struggles. Feminist the*logy therefore needs to discuss critically the theoretical frame and perspective of its approach to religion.

My own theoretical approach is firmly rooted in the decolonizing¹⁶ liberationist paradigm of feminist studies in religion, although it also owes much of its theoretical articulation to other approaches. If I qualify my own theoretical approach as political and liberationist, I hasten to stress that it is first of all critical and feminist. My work cannot uncritically align itself with either political or liberation the*logies, since on the one hand political and liberation the*logies have not made the struggles of wo/men focal points of their theoretical articulations and on the other hand, women/or gender studies have not sufficiently interrogated the sociopolitical function of the category *woman* and the *feminine*.

Such a clarification of a critical feminist political liberationist approach is still necessary because many continue to identify feminist studies with woman or

14. See my article, “Sprache und Herrschaft: Feministische The*logie als Kyriarchatsforschung,” in Renate Jost and Klaus Raschzok, eds., *Gender, Religion, und Kultur: Biblische, interreligiöse, und ethische Aspekte* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010), 17-35.

15. I owe this expression to the feminist sociologist Dorothy Smith.

16. For my argument to qualify my feminist approach as *decolonizing* rather than as *postcolonial*, see my book *The Power of the Word: Scripture and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).

gender studies, which supposedly are the domain of wo/men. While in my understanding feminist the*logy engages both women and gender studies for its work, it is not identical with and cannot be limited to them. In other words, religion is not primarily seen as a woman or gender problem. Rather, both feminist political theory and the*logy focus on issues of power and structures of domination in light of wo/men's struggles against kyriarchal relations. Thus I understand feminist the*logy and studies in religion as social-cultural-political studies.

However, the object of feminist studies as well as the subject of the feminist movement and its identity has been hotly debated in feminist theory and the*logy. Is woman/women the subject or object of investigation? How to define the subject of feminist movements? This discussion has shown that wo/men do not have an essence in common. Rather than understanding "woman" as a unitary feminine ontological entity, "woman" must be seen as a social gender construct that stamps people as belonging to either a feminine or a masculine group category. Femininity and masculinity¹⁷ are thus sociopolitical constructs and not essences. Hence a critical feminist theory articulates the subject of feminist struggles not on the basis of essential difference but in the interest of naming subjects who struggle against structures of domination.

Like those of gender, the social relations that give rise to theories of race, class, or ethnic differences are also socioculturally constructed as relations of domination and not simply biological givens. Nineteenth-century scientists constructed the so-called lower races, wo/men, the sexually deviant, the criminal, the urban poor, and the insane as biological "races apart." Their differences from the white male, and their likeness to each other "explained" their lower position in the social hierarchy. In this scheme the lower races represent the "feminine" aspect of the human species, and wo/men represent the "lower race" of gender. In other words, relations of domination determine academic as well as religious institutions. Thus wo/men do not share an unitary essence but are multiple and fractured in many different ways by race, class, age, sexuality, and gender. To indicate this fracturedness linguistically, I have introduced the writing of "wo/man" in a fragmented way. This mode of writing wo/men seeks to signify an intersectional definition of the feminist subject.

An Analytic of Domination

Early second-wave theorizing "placed patriarchal power relations—the system of male domination and women's subordination—at the center of analysis."¹⁸ Since such an understanding of patriarchy assumes a unitary concept of wo/man,

17. See Judith Kegan Gardiner, ed., *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory: New Directions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

18. Jennifer Einspahr, "Structural Domination and Structural Freedom: A Feminist Perspective," *Feminist Review* 94/1 (2010): 1-19.

it has been problematized by African American, postcolonial, and two-thirds-world feminists as the primary form of oppression. Moreover, poststructuralist, psychoanalytic, and constructivist feminist theorists have sought to show “how patriarchal power comes to be installed in our very subjectivities.”¹⁹ In the process the feminist theoretical focus has shifted from structural domination to the process of “subjectivation.”²⁰ With this theoretical shift the notion of patriarchy as a central structure of domination has been relegated to the historical dustbin rather than critically investigated and reformulated on the one hand and differently theorized on the other.

The term *intersectionality* was coined by the legal scholar Kimberly Crenshaw and entails “the notion that subjectivity is constituted by mutually multiplicative vectors of race, gender, class, sexuality, and imperialism.” Intersectional analysis²¹ has emerged in critical feminist and race studies as a key theoretical tool for subverting race/gender and other binaries of domination. Some have also criticized “identity politics” for eliding intragroup differences. Intersectionality seeks to address such criticisms while still recognizing the necessity of group politics. Finally, “intersectionality invites scholars to come to terms with the legacy of the exclusions of multiply marginalized subjects from feminist and antiracist work,” and “to draw on the ostensibly unique epistemological position of marginalized subjects to fashion a vision of equality.”²²

In a critical assessment of intersectionality, Kathy Davis²³ has pointed out that the meaning of the term is far from being clear: does it designate individual experience, theorize identity, or is it a property of social structures and cultural discourses? Similarly, its conceptualizations “as a crossroad (Crenshaw, 1991), as ‘axes’ of difference (Yuval-Davis, 2006) or as a dynamic process (Staunaes, 2003)”²⁴ differ.

Despite its theoretical fuzziness, Davis argues, the theory of intersectionality is attractive and useful because it “brings together two of the most important strands of contemporary feminist thought that have been in different ways concerned with the issue of difference. The first strand has been devoted to understanding the effects of race, class and gender on wo/men’s identity, experience and struggles for empowerment.”²⁵ The second important strand within feminist theory, Davis argues, welcomed intersectionality because it fits

19. *Ibid.*, 2.

20. Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

21. Cf. Marcia Texler Segal and Theresa A. Martinez, eds., *Intersections of Gender, Race, and Class: Readings for a Changing Landscape* (Los Angeles: Roxbury, 2007).

22. Jennifer C. Nash, “Rethinking Intersectionality,” *Feminist Review* 89/1 (2008): 3.

23. Kathy Davis, “Intersectionality as Buzzword: A Sociology of Science Perspective on What Makes a Feminist Theory Successful,” *Feminist Theory* 9/1 (2008): 67-85.

24. *Ibid.*, 68.

25. *Ibid.*, 68.

“neatly into the postmodern project of conceptualizing multiple and shifting identities. It coincided with Foucauldian perspectives on power that focused on dynamic processes and the deconstruction of normalizing and homogenizing categories.”²⁶

Most importantly, intersectionality provides a shared theoretical and normative platform for a mutually beneficial collaboration between disparate feminist theoretical projects and approaches. It is able to focus on questions of identity as well as on social structures.

However, if intersectionality should hold together and integrate both strands of feminist theory, it needs to be spelled out not only in terms of circulating power but also in terms of structures of domination. Structure is best understood “as a set of socially constructed frameworks, patterns, and material conditions that frame our collective lives and that can be understood only in relation to ‘agency,’ or a human being’s socioculturally mediated capacity to act.”²⁷ Gender as well as race, class, heteronormativity, age, or colonialism are such structures of domination that intersect with each other in a “hierarchal,” or better, kyriarchal fashion.

If the analytic object of feminist theory and the *logy is not simply wo/man or gender but intersectionality, it needs to be also understood in terms of the ontology of kyriarchal power. Kyriarchy²⁸—a neologism coined by me—is best understood as a sociopolitical and cultural-religious system of domination that structures the identity slots open to members of society in terms of race, gender, nation, age, economy, and sexuality and configures them in terms of pyramidal relations of domination and submission, profit and exploitation. The Western kyriarchal system works simultaneously on four levels: first, on the sociopolitical level; second on the ethical-cultural level; third, on the biological-natural level;

26. *Ibid.*, 71.

27. Jennifer Einspahr, *ibid.*, 5 However, I do not think that patriarchy as a analytic concept should be “resurrected,” since it has been replaced by gender.

28. The notion of kyriarchy seems to have arrived in the blogosphere. I am grateful to Elizabeth Gish who forwarded some examples and links to feminist blogs that use *kyriarchy*: First, www.raisingmyboychick.com/2009/08/kyriarchy. This is the link to her glossary, but she uses the word regularly in her posts. Here www.raisingmyboychick.com/category/kyriarchy you can see her posts where kyriarchy is a central theme of the post, including this one called “This Is Kyriarchy in Action”: www.raisingmyboychick.com/2010/03/this-is-kyriarchy-in-action-the-new-york-times-on-mommy-bloggers/

Here is a post at Authentic Parenting: www.authenticparenting.info/2011/02/on-feminism-religion-superiority.html.

Here is a post at feminist philosophers: feministphilosophers.wordpress.com/2008/05/01/word-of-the-day-kyriarchy/

Here is a post at the feminist caterpillar (<http://www.mycdysis.com/2010/11/truthout-about-kyriarchy-an-open-letter-to-feminist-writers-bloggers-and-journalists/>) whose original post on the term garnered a lot of attention in the feminist blogosphere including this post at one of the top-two major third-wave feminist blogs: www.feministe.us/blog/archives/2008/05/01/i-blame-the-kyriarchy/

and fourth, on the linguistic-symbolic level. These four levels are interrelated and strengthen each other's power of domination.

Diverse feminist approaches such as womanist, queer, latina, or postcolonial the*logies work on different nodal sites of the intersecting discourse levels of kyriarchy and hence emphasize different aspects of the kyriarchal system. Kyriarchal power is both repressive and productive: "According to Foucault power subjects individuals in both senses of the term: Individuals are both subject to the constraints of social relations of power and simultaneously enabled to take up the position of a *subject* in and through those very constraints . . . a uniquely modern modality of power, one that differs from previous modalities, is that it is capillary, local, and spread throughout the social body, rather than concentrated in the center of the state in the person of the sovereign."²⁹ While it is true that democratic power is not concentrated in the person of the sovereign, such power still needs to be spelled out also in political terms of domination.

Kyriarchy (from the Greek *kyrios* for "lord, master, father" and *archein* for "to rule, dominate") is best theorized as a complex pyramidal system of intersecting multiplicative social and religious relations of superordination and subordination, of ruling and exploitation. Kyriarchal relations of domination are built on elite male property rights as well as on the exploitation, dependency, inferiority, and obedience of wo/men who signify all those subordinated. Such kyriarchal relations are still today at work in the multiplicative intersectionalities of class, race, gender, ethnicity, empire, and other structures of discrimination.

Since I have developed the genealogy of the concept in my writings, I want to summarize here the structural intersectional aspects of kyriarchy and its shaping of religion:

- Feminist the*logians have greatly valorized relations and relationality but overlooked that such relations are kyriarchally typed.³⁰ Kyriarchy is a complex pyramidal system of *relations* of domination that works through the violence of economic exploitation and lived subordination. However, this kyriarchal pyramid must not be seen as static, but as an always-changing net of relations of domination.
- Kyriarchy is realized differently in different historical contexts. Democratic kyriarchy, or kyriarchal democracy, has been articulated differently in antiquity than in modernity. It is different in Greece, Hellenism, Rome, Asia Minor, Europe, America, Japan, or India; it is different in Judaism, Islam, or Catholicism.

29. Amy Allen, *The Power of Feminist Theory: Domination, Resistance, Solidarity* (Boulder: Westview, 1999), 33.

30. See Katherine Keller, "Seeking and Sucking: On Relation and Essence in Feminist Theology," in Rebecca S. Chopp and Sheila Greeve Davaney, eds., *Horizons in Feminist Theology: Identity, Tradition, and Norms* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 54-78, esp. 69-76, who caricaturizes my position in defense of relation/relationality.

- Not only the gender system but also the stratification systems of race, class, colonialism, and heterosexism structure and determine the system of kyriarchal relations. These structures intersect with each other in a pyramidal fashion; they are not parallel but multiplicative. The full power of kyriarchal oppression comes to the fore in the lives of wo/men living on the bottom of the kyriarchal pyramid.
- In order to function, kyriarchal cultures need a servant class, a servant race, a servant gender, a *servant people*. Such a servant class is maintained through the ideologies of kyriocentrism, which are internalized through education, socialization, and brute violence, as well as rationalized by mainstream scholarship. Kyriarchy is sustained by the belief that members of a servant class of people are naturally or by divine decree inferior to those whom they serve.
- Both in Western modernity and in Greco-Roman antiquity, kyriarchy stands in tension with a democratic ethos and social system of equality and freedom. In a radical democratic system, power is not exercised through “power over” or through violence and subordination, but through the human capacities for respect, responsibility, self-determination, and self-esteem. This radical democratic ethos has repeatedly engendered emancipatory movements that insisted on equal freedom, dignity, and justice for all.
- Feminist political theorists have shown that the classical Greek philosophers Aristotle and Plato have articulated a theory of kyriarchal democracy in different ways, in order to justify the exclusion of certain people, such as freeborn wo/men or slave wo/men and men, from participating in democratic government. These people were not fit to govern, the philosophers argued, because of their deficient natural powers of reasoning. Such explicit ideological justifications need always to be developed at a point in history when it becomes increasingly obvious that those who are excluded from the political life of the *polis*, such as freeborn wo/men, educated slaves, wealthy *metics* (alien residents), and traveling mercenaries, are actually indispensable to it. Philosophical rationalizations of the exclusion of diverse people from citizenship and government are engendered by the contradiction between the democratic vision of the city-state and its actual practices.
- This contradiction between the logic of democracy and historical sociopolitical kyriarchal practices has produced the kyriocentric logic of identity as the assertion of “natural differences” between elite men and wo/men, freeborn and slaves, property owners and farmers or artisans, Athenian-born citizens and other residents, Greeks and Barbarians, the civilized and uncivilized world. A similar process of ideological kyriocentrism is inscribed in Christian Scriptures and traditions in and through the

so-called codes of submission (Household Codes). It is found in modern societies in the form of the patriarchal family understood as the heart of the kyriarchal state.³¹

Finally, it must not be overlooked that the kyriarchal pyramid spells out not only the power of domination over humans, societies, and religions but also over nature, the earth, and the whole cosmos. Global capitalist domination jeopardizes not only the well-being of people but also that of nature and the ecology of the earth.

Religion and Feminist Theory

Such a kyriarchal analytic compels feminist the*logy and studies in religion to make sure that they critically analyze and do not promote or legitimate kyriarchal structures of domination. They also need to articulate alternative religious visions for bringing about the wellbeing of all the inhabitants of the earth and for inspiring planetary justice. Feminism is not and never has been just a theoretical world-view and political movement for change. It has also always articulated itself as a spiritual vision and religious optic insofar as it has sought to bring about a “coming-into a different consciousness.” However, this religious dimension of feminism is barely recognized in feminist theory. The reasons for this are manifold. Let me just point to one.

In modernity “religion” was feminized insofar as European Christianity was dislodged from its hegemonic role and restricted to the private sphere. At the same time religion became a civilizing project of colonialism, the cultural feminization of religion has led both to the societal emasculation of the*logy and clergy and to the reassertion of their masculine roles in the*logy, church, and the home. Feminist research and education in the*logy and religion has brought to consciousness the complicity of religion in wo/men’s low self-esteem, economic exploitation, societal marginalization, and sexual victimization.

Like the “White Lady,” Christianity³² had the function of ameliorating the horrors of rampant capitalism and colonial imperialism. Moreover, the study of religion has turned other people’s religions into an object of the western colonial kyriocentric gaze. Feminist scholars question this modern colonialized and feminized conception of religion and refuse to engage in its further objectification. Consequently, feminist post-colonial studies in religion have become increasingly important in the last ten years or more.

31. See the excellent intersectional analysis of Patricia Hill Collins, “It’s All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation,” *Hypatia* 13/3 (1998): 62–82.

32. For such a focus on Christianity see my article “Critical Feminist Biblical Studies: Remembering the Struggles-Envisioning the Future,” in Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu, eds., *New Feminist Christianity: Many Voices, Many Views* (Woodstock: Skylightpath, 2010), 86–99.

Moreover, in modernity “religion” was rejected as biased because it does not operate within the limits of reason alone. In consequence, many progressive feminists do not distinguish between emancipatory and reactionary forms of religion but take biblical religions’ oppressive character for granted. Hence they do not see biblical religions as a feminist site of struggle for change. Feminist studies in religion in turn have pointed to religion’s ability to articulate liberating visions that can authorize and empower wo/men in our struggles for survival, dignity and self-determination. While feminist scholars in religion carefully discuss and confront feminist research and theories in other fields,³³ our own scholarship and struggle remains mostly unrecognized by feminists in other disciplines. The wealth and importance of scholarship in diverse religions³⁴ is thereby often neglected in feminist studies and global women’s struggles.

Yet this disinterest of academic feminism in religion seems to be in the process of changing insofar as the binary *secularism-religion* and therefore also the dichotomy between secular feminism and religious feminism is theoretically more and more questioned. Niam Reilly has pointed out that most Anglo-American feminist political theorizing seems to assume that secularization has diminished the societal import of religion. However, this assumption is being increasingly challenged in two key ways: *first*, the coherence of the secular-religious binary is questioned on postmodern theoretical grounds and *second*—viewed from a global sociological perspective—“the presumption of secularization as an inevitable and uniform process” in modernity is no longer tenable.³⁵ These feminist debates that challenge the equation of modernity with secularization open up a dialogical space for secular and religious feminist theorists. Different approaches in feminist political theory “emphasize ‘democracy’ and the values that underpin it as the larger discursive frame in which the principle of secularism can be redefined with emancipatory intent in a neo-secular age.”³⁶

33. See especially the variegated contributions in *The Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), which for more than twenty-five years has published scholarship in religion.

34. Paula M. Coe, William R. Eakin, and Jay B. McDaniel, *After Patriarchy: Feminist Transformations of the World Religions, Faith Meets Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991); Rachel Adler, *Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1998); Mahnaz Afkhami, ed., *Faith and Freedom: Women’s Human Rights in the Muslim World* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995); Jane H. Bayes and Nayereh Tohidi, eds., *Globalization, Gender, and Religion: The Politics of Women’s Rights in Catholic and Muslim Contexts* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Irshad Manji, *The Trouble with Islam: A Muslim’s Call for Reform* (New York: St. Martin’s, 2004); Judith Plaskow with Donna Beerman, *The Coming of Lilith: Essays on Feminism, Judaism, and Sexual Ethics, 1972–2003* (Boston: Beacon, 2005).

35. Niam Reilly, “Rethinking the Interplay of Feminism and Secularism in a Neo-Secular Age,” *Feminist Review* 97 (2011), 5-31.

36. *Ibid.*, 5.

For instance, in a constructive article entitled “Mapping the Feminist Imagination,” the feminist political theorist Nancy Fraser³⁷ is beginning to take religion and intersectionality seriously into account as central to feminist political theory. She seeks to correct the standard feminist narrative of theoretical progress according to which feminism has developed from an exclusionary white, middle class, heterosexual woman-dominated movement to a broader movement that allows for the inclusion of the needs of wo/men of color, lesbians, working class, migrant, and poor wo/men.

Fraser is critical of this framework not only because it is modernist-progressivist but also because it tells the story of feminist theory and movement as internal development. Hence it is not able to make the connections to the broader sociopolitical developments as sites of struggle for feminism. She in turn reconstructs three phases in the trajectory of second wave feminism. Feminism in its *first* phase, which Fraser characterizes as “redistribution,” began its life as one of the New Left and civil rights social movements that sought to engender the “socialist imaginary” and an “expanded idea of social equality,” arguing for justice and equal rights and presupposing the welfare state and social democracy.

The *second* phase, which coincided with postcommunism and postcolonialism, was dedicated to bringing about cultural change and transformation that were always an important project of feminism but were now decoupled from the project of distributive justice and political-economic transformation.

The *third* emerging phase of the feminist imaginary is that of the transnational politics of *representation*³⁸ that seek to link and integrate the economic politics of redistribution and the cultural politics of recognition within a transnational frame that is also determined by fundamentalist religions. Since transnational maldistribution, misrecognition, and misrepresentation cannot adequately be addressed in a state-territorial frame, transnational feminist theory seeks to reframe the problem of meta-injustice in a global context.

Moreover, Fraser understands *representation* as “claims-making” in political terms not only as ensuring equal political voice for wo/men in national communities but also as a reframing of disputes about injustice. Transnational feminism is in the process “of reconfiguring gender justice as a three-dimensional problem,

37. Nancy Fraser “Mapping the Feminist Imagination: From Redistribution to Recognition to Representation,” *Constellations* 12/3 (2005): 295-307.

38. Since Fraser is concerned with political misrepresentation but not *representation as “representing” wo/men in writing and research*, she does not refer to the intense discussions on the “politics of representation” of white, Western feminists who represent third-world wo/men as passive victims in cultural studies. For this discussion see especially Gyatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-97, and Chandra Talpade Mohanti, “Under Western Eyes” in Chandra Talpade Mohanti, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, eds., *Third World Wo/men and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 51-80. It is clear, however, that Fraser’s concern is with “challenging the state-territorial framing of political claims making” (Nancy Fraser, “Mapping the Feminist Imagination,” 304).

in which redistribution, recognition, and representation must be integrated in a balanced way . . . so as to challenge the full range of gender injustices in a globalized world.”³⁹ In order to do so, one needs to resort also to the language of religion.

The post-9/11 political situation in the United States, which has far-reaching implications for global capitalism, is characterized according to Fraser by the strategy of a “gender-coded politics of recognition” that is invoked to “hide a regressive politics of economic redistribution.” Both the rhetoric of the “war on terror” as well as the so-called “family-values” campaign are sustained by reactionary religions. In the cultural-values campaign pertaining particularly to abortion rights and gay marriage, the manipulation of gender, she argues, has been “a crucial instrument of Bush’s victory” in the 2004 election. This victory was achieved through the alliance of “free-marketeers with Christian fundamentalism.”

In a time when people experience real economic and social insecurities, religious fundamentalisms in general and Christian evangelicalism in particular address this real insecurity. However, they do not actually give people security but provide means to manage such insecurity. With Foucault, Fraser understands evangelicalism “as a care-of-self-technology that is especially suited to neo-liberalism, insofar as the latter is always generating insecurity.” However, she sees that religion as “care of self” can be seen also in positive feminist terms. She concludes that many working-class wo/men “are deriving something significant from Evangelicalism, something that confers meaning on their lives.”⁴⁰

Fraser’s mapping of the “feminist imagination” also opens up a theoretical space for mapping transnational feminist studies in religion. With her I suggest that a transnational decolonizing feminist the*logy also needs to articulate three dimensions: historical redistribution, ideological deconstruction and religious-the*logical re-presentation. This requires a reframing of feminist studies in religion and the*logy so that they can “challenge the full range of injustices in the world” while at the same time articulating “technologies of the care of self” (Foucault) that inspire wo/men to struggle for justice and well-being rather than to adapt to kyriarchal domination.

Like Fraser, I thus understand this third mode of feminist studies as reframing *representation*, not so much in cultural as in political terms. To operate in the third mode, we need at one and the same time to reframe feminist the*logy and studies in religion in such a way that we can analyze not only the struggles of wo/men in religion but also and equally importantly, make the political-religious

39. Nancy Fraser “Mapping the Feminist Imagination,” 305.

40. *Ibid.*,” 303. However, she concludes that feminists have not yet “figured out how to talk to them or what feminism can offer them in its place.” This remark reveals not only the ignorance of the feminist work done in religion and the*logy by a leading feminist theorist but also the assumption that feminism can be substituted for religion.

connections to the struggles, interests, and aspirations of wo/men for survival and justice today in global capitalism that makes life increasingly more poor and insecure for the majority of people. We can do so, I suggest, by constructing an imaginative space for articulating an alternative radical egalitarian discourse.

Religious Optic, Struggle, and Spiritual Vision

An intersectional kyriarchal analytic compels feminist the*logy and studies in religion to articulate not only an analytic of domination but also alternative religious visions for bringing about the wellbeing of all the inhabitants of the earth and for inspiring planetary justice. Religious feminism is not and never has been just a theoretical worldview and political movement for change. It has also always articulated itself as a spiritual vision and religious optic insofar as it has sought to bring about a “coming-into a different consciousness.” Four vision practices seem crucial.

First, religious optic: Such a religious optic facing the devastations of kyriarchy is first of all a call to *metanoia*, to a turning around for engaging in a different mindset and way of life. It becomes realized again and again in wo/men’s struggles to change relations of inequity and marginalization. Therefore it becomes necessary to focus specifically on wo/men’s struggles for self-determination in society and religion that lead to a different self-understanding and vision of the world. To quote the nineteenth-century African American educator Anna Julia Cooper:

Woman . . . daring to think and move and speak—to undertake to help shape, mold, and direct the thought of her age, is merely completing the circle of the world’s vision. . . . The world has had to limp along with the wobbling gait and one-sided hesitancy of a man with one eye. Suddenly the bandage is removed from the other eye and the whole body is filled with light. It sees a circle where before it saw a segment. The darkened eye restored, every member rejoices with it.⁴¹

Feminist studies in religion and the*logy seek to correct the one-sided vision of G*d and the world and to articulate a different the*-ethical optics and religious imagination. How then can feminist studies in religion restore the world’s full spiritual vision? How can we correct the fragmentary circle of religious understanding and change its narrow and biased perception of the world and of G*d? These are central questions for feminist the*logy and studies in religion that call for theory and vision. Such a theory needs to take into account how gender discourses have shaped religion and how religion has engendered and authorized prejudices against wo/men.

41. Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice From the South*, 1892; republished in the Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers (New York: Oxford University Press), 134.

To again quote Anna Julia Cooper, who has underscored the key position of wo/men of color for articulating such a feminist theory and the*logy: “The colored woman of today occupies, one may say, a unique position in this country. . . . She is confronted by both a woman question and a race problem and is as yet an unknown or an unacknowledged factor in both.”⁴²

In other words, the struggle of feminist intersectional studies in religion and their ability to challenge inscribed, religiously justified power relations of domination must be located at the juncture of racial, sexual, colonial class politics. Only when the unique hermeneutical viewpoint of multiply oppressed wo/men comes into focus will the “darkened eye” be restored. Only then can feminist studies in religion begin to “see a circle rather than just a segment.”

*Second, struggle:*⁴³ Like *Discipleship of Equals*, so also the present collection of essays understands feminism in terms of struggle against kyriarchy and for the transformation of sociopolitical and internalized cultural-religious structures of domination. The following chapters seek to present integral aspects of such a critical⁴⁴ feminist-political the*logy of liberation in terms of *struggle*, a term at home in Latin American liberation the*logies.

According to the Encarta Dictionary, the word *struggle* has multifaceted meanings. It means to make a great effort to deal with a challenge or to achieve or obtain something, to fight by grappling and wrestling, to move forcefully in an attempt to escape, or to move with great effort. The noun in turn expresses similar meanings: struggle is a great effort made over a period of time to overcome difficulties or achieve something, a prolonged fight or conflict, a strenuous physical or mental effort, or something requiring such. All these meanings of struggle circumscribe the difficulties to change and transform structures of domination and violence.

I understand struggle therefore not in the restricted sense of resistance. Struggle includes the power to resist but it also seeks the power to change. Amy Allen⁴⁵ offers an analysis of power that proves adequate to feminist theorists who analyze, critique, and seek to transform relations of domination. She insists that feminists need a complex notion of power understood as *power over*, as *power to*, and as *power with*. She characterizes the two analytic perspectives from which feminists view power as the *foreground perspective* and as *the background perspective*. The first investigates the power relations between individuals or discrete groups of individuals. However, such an approach does not take into account the institutional-structural contexts of such power relations. Hence a second strategy

42. Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 134.

43. See especially also Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *En La Lucha/In the Struggle: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

44. The qualifier “critical” belongs to European political the*logies.

45. Amy Allen, *The Power of Feminist Theory: Domination, Resistance, Solidarity* (Boulder: Westview, 1999), 119-38.

of inquiry is necessary. The *background perspective* is concerned with *situated power*. It can be differentiated into five distinct aspects that need to be analyzed and discussed: *subject-positions, cultural meanings, social practices, institutions, and structures*. She concludes: “Taken together, this definition of power and these methodological considerations provide a feminist conception of power that can illuminate the complex multifarious relations of domination, resistance and solidarity with which feminism is concerned.”⁴⁶

While fully agreeing with her, I would want to modify her conclusion somewhat. In my view it is important to name domination as *kyriarchal*, to articulate resistance as *struggle* and to empower solidarity with creative vision and imagination. Hence, the four sections of this book explore and reflect on such sites of struggles and their transforming visions.

Third, vision: However, in order to struggle against the variegated kyriarchal structures of domination, one needs both a different vision of the world and a site or location alternative to kyriarchy from which to see the world. Feminist theorists for instance have named as such a site the “standpoint of wo/men.” According to standpoint theory, a standpoint is a place from which one looks at the world and that influences how people socially construct it.⁴⁷ Christian feminists have suggested religion and church as homeland or insisted on the exodus from patriarchal religion to the margins as such alternative feminist strategic sites. In light of my theoretical historical-political analysis of kyriarchy, I have suggested the notion of the *ekklēsia* of wo/men⁴⁸ as such an imagined alternative space and community of struggle.

However, it must be understood that the word *ekklēsia* does not mean in the first place “church.” Rather, it means “congress,” or the democratic assembly of full citizens who come together to decide issues pertaining to their rights and well-being. It is moreover important to qualify *ekklēsia* with wo/men, since democracy has been kyriarchally deformed insofar as throughout the centuries wo/men and other non-people have been excluded from democratic rights and decision-making powers. For instance, the ongoing struggles around the right to birth control and the termination of pregnancy document that wo/men still have to struggle for their full citizenship and

46. Ibid., 135.

47. See especially Nancy Hartsock, *The Feminist Standpoint Revisited* (Boulder: Westview, 1999).

48. Elizabeth A. Castelli, “The Ekklesia of Women and/as Utopian Space: Locating the Work of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza in Feminist Utopian Thought,” in *On The Cutting Edge: The Study of Wo/men in Biblical Worlds* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 36-52. In *Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Theological Context: Restless Readings* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), 32-59, 142-62. Jännine Jobling discusses the concept of the *ekklēsia* of wo/men but chooses *ekklēsia* without the qualification of *wo/men* as her hermeneutical key concept in order to restrict the concept to the Christian feminist movement (143). In so doing she re-inscribes the division between the Christian and the so-called secular women’s movements that I sought to overcome with this radical, democratic, counter-kyriarchal image.

decision making democratic rights in kyriarchal democracies and religious communities. This struggle is not a question of choice but a claiming of our right to decide. Hence, the radical democratic *ekklēsia* of wo/men is already an alternative reality to kyriarchy and at the same time a not yet realized imaginary space.

However, it has been correctly objected⁴⁹ that the term *ekklēsia* is too Christian typed and therefore cannot function in different cultural and religious contexts as such an alternative site to kyriarchy. While I first introduced this term in the context of the Catholic wo/men's movement,⁵⁰ I have sought to develop the political aspect of *ekklēsia* in my subsequent work. To avoid narrowing the meaning of *ekklēsia* to church, I have found Kwame Anthony Appiah's notion of cosmopolitanism helpful.⁵¹

Cosmopolitanism is derived from the Greek word *kosmos* ("world") and the political term *polis* ("city state"). A *cosmopolis* is then a world city-state. The cosmopolitan tradition combines two strands of thought, one stressing global visions and obligations and the other celebrating local differences. The connection between the two is made through the imagination. To quote Appiah elaborating our connection to art:

One connection—the one neglected in cultural patrimony—not through identity but *despite* difference. . . . But equally important is the human connection. My people—human beings—made the Great Wall of China . . . the Sistine Chapel: these things were made by creatures like me. . . . The connection through a local identity is as imaginary as the connection to humanity . . . [it] is a connection made in the imagination; but to say this isn't to pronounce either of them unreal. They are among the realest connections that we have.⁵²

In this cosmopolitan imaginary the *ekklēsia* of wo/men is the decision-making assembly that seeks to create the connection between the local/particular struggles of wo/men and the vision of a *cosmopolis* of justice and well-being that no longer can be imagined without wo/men. However, as Christine Delphy so forcefully has pointed out: "We do not know what the values, individual personality traits, and culture of a non-hierarchical society would be like and we have

49. See, for example, Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Saint Louis: Chalice, 2000); and Dube, "Villagizing, Globalizing, and Biblical Studies," in Justin S. Upkong, et al., eds., *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Cape Town* (Atlanta: Scholars, 2002), 41-64.

50. See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, Tenth Anniversary Edition (New York: Crossroad, 1994).

51. Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: Norton, 2006).

52. *Ibid.*, 135.

great difficulty in imagining it. But to imagine it we must think that it is possible. Practices produce values: other practices produce other values.”⁵³

The same can be said about religion. My hope is that the religious practices of the cosmopolis of the *ekklēsia* of wo/men also can produce egalitarian values and visions of justice and well-being for everyone without exceptions. It is the imaginary site of feminist religious “world-making.”

Fourth, religious “world making”: Such religious “world-making”⁵⁴ is difficult but possible. I suggest that feminist the*logy has the means to imagine and to articulate the “not yet” of a domination-free, violence-free, and just world. The*logy is usually understood as the science of faith. As such it attempts to adhere to historically congealed experience and thought, to scripture and tradition, which seek to preserve traditional thought as the truth of faith and to explore its efficacious power for today. In so doing, it overlooks that traditional truth not only already speaks the language of kyriarchy, but also continues to inscribe historical structures of domination.

Thus, it becomes necessary that a critical political feminist the*logy of liberation articulate *the*-legein* not only as science of faith but also as science of hope, which seeks to realize change and transformation through critique and new perspectives. The*logy as science of hope seeks to imagine the domination- and violence-free world intended by G*d and to envision it anew with the help of religious traditions and language as an alternative to kyriarchy.

Whereas *faith* often is understood as believing in something as true that excludes other religious perspectives, *hope* refers to the desire for something that we lack, to the longing for justice, happiness, life and well-being, to the yearning for a different more just world and future. The words of the Jewish-German poet Hilde Domin express that hope is something delicate and fragile, something that can vanish and succumb to despair: “The longing for justice does not decrease, but hope does. The yearning for peace does not, but hope does” (my translation).⁵⁵

Hope needs strength, defiance, it needs—I would say—religion, in order to remain alive. Religion is a slippery concept, which is differently defined and understood. No generally accepted definition of religion exists. In my view the understanding of religion as “world making,” as “world creating,” is important for a critical feminist the*logy. Religion and the*logy rely on existing symbol systems and myths for such a process of “world making.” In and through symbolic

53. Christine Delphy, “Rethinking Sex and Gender,” in Darlene Juschka, ed., *Feminism in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 422.

54. Cf. Darlene M. Juschka, “General Introduction,” in Delphy, ed., *Feminism in the Study of Religion*, 18; and William E. Paden, *Religious Worlds: The Comparative Study of Religion* (Boston: Beacon, 1994).

55. Die Sehnsucht nach Gerechtigkeit nimmt nicht ab, aber die Hoffnung. Die Sehnsucht nach Frieden nicht, aber die Hoffnung.

actions and imagination, religion creates again and again a world of grace different from our present world of injustice and violence.

Such an understanding of religion does not conceive of transcendence as “hereafter,” but envisions it as the alternative world of G*d that radically questions and challenges the systems of domination and the injustices of our present world. The means to realize such a radical different imagination are language, ritual and art. However, it must not be overlooked that religious language, as all other language, has a double-effect: It can either mirror our historical-kyriarchal world and legitimate the status quo religiously, or it can articulate G*d’s intended world as an alternative world of justice and love.

The imagery of both worlds, that of the kyriarchal world of domination, violence, and injustice on the one hand and that of the gender-free divine world of wellbeing, justice, and love on the other, is linguistically inscribed in holy scriptures and formative traditions. Hence, Christian the*logy must develop a the*logical hermeneutics that is able to differentiate between and critically evaluate these two very different worlds. It must ask again and again what kind of G*d Christian religion proclaims, how the divine is imagined, to what ends the name of G*d is (mis)used, and what its accountability is for the kyriarchal exploitation and colonial injustices of our world.

Such critical querying and imagining is necessary so that Christian the*logy, liturgy, and ethics are able to annunciate the non-violent divine world of justice, wellbeing, and love that was proclaimed by Jesus of Nazareth and Mary of Magdala.

All religious discourses, not just Christian the*logy, I argue, have to learn how to understand critique as a science of hope. If Christian the*logy wants to proclaim the *domination-free alternative world of G*d* effectively and to continue such proclamation in the future, it has to engage intentionally in the process of religious and ethical “world making.” I hope that these essays will convince readers to develop such an imagination and science of hope in struggle.