In his most recent encyclical, *Laudato Si*, “On Care for Our Common Home,” Pope Francis articulates his interest in how “spirituality can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world.” Calling for interior ecological conversion, Francis emphasizes the Christian “vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork” as a vital—not voluntary—part of a virtuous life. Ecofeminist voices within the Christian tradition contribute to the development of such spiritualities by crafting fresh visions of the human person that place individuals and communities in relationship with the rest of creation. Such anthropologies ignite new ways of talking about God and inspire solidarity and praxis. Ecofeminist spiritualities paint an inclusive vision of “life-integration,” give value to embodied experience, and undergird a concrete imperative for justice. In the privileged culture of consumption in the United States, ecofeminist-inspired spiritualities move us beyond individual religious experience by initiating them into the intricate web of life.

As defined by Sandra Schneiders, spirituality in its broadest sense indicates “the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives.” The “awareness that there are levels of reality not immediately apparent” and “the search for personal integration because of fragmentation and depersonalization” prove two constant factors in describing spirituality. Because this paper will intentionally focus on the implications of an ecofeminist Christian spirituality within the context of the United States, a brief look at contemporary culture in this locale serves to situate our discussion.

Contemporary North American culture is leading people to yearn for and craft spiritualities that attend to their cultural belonging. Michael Downey, author of *Understanding Christian Spirituality*, cites Ronald Rolheiser’s analysis of the spiritual trend so evident in the conglomeration of books and websites promising spiritual renewal. Rolheiser points out the narcissism, pragmatism, and unbridled restlessness present in Western culture. In this culture, the person is conceived as an individual who strives for self-sufficiency and self-determination over community, and societal value is placed on results and achievements. There also seems to be omnipresent noise and clutter surrounding a person in her daily life. This climate undergirds several challenges for authentic spirituality. For example, much literature focuses on the individual at the expense of the community, and many individuals

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2 A Bernardin Scholar at the Catholic Theological Union, Ellen is a second year student pursuing her Masters of Arts in Theology with a Research track. Ellen is concentrating in Systematic Theology and minoring in Spirituality Studies.
may seek results and strive for change as an approach to spirituality that stems from their goal-oriented pragmatism. These tendencies have also led to a bifurcation between spirituality and religion in popular imagination. Nevertheless, Downey reasserts that “spirituality is concerned with the full range of human experience, every inch and ounce of it, and with integrating the whole of one’s life in light of more than meets the eye,” a journey in which religion can play an important role.7

Downey notes that authentic Christian spirituality checks individualism and pragmatism as it emphasizes communion and relies on God’s gifts and grace instead of individual achievement. Neither restrictive nor expansive to the point of losing its roots, Christian spirituality encompasses “the whole of Christian life in response to the Spirit,” lived out differently by different people and communities.8 Christian spirituality takes into account a common “ultimate value” (recalling Schneider’s definition), including “the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ.”9 The believer’s spiritual project “involves the living of [Christ’s] paschal mystery in the context of the Church community through the gift of the Holy Spirit.”10 This “horizon of ultimate value” shapes how a person relates to reality,11 and brings her into a believing community and the human family in a certain way.12 As a lived experience, spirituality forms a core dimension of the human person and accounts for the inclusive spectrum and expression of human experience “as it is brought to bear on the quest for integration through self-transcendence.”13

Ecofeminism is “the position that there are important connections—historical, experiential, symbolic, theoretical—between the domination of women and the domination of nature,” an understanding that is essential to both feminism and environmental ethics.14 The word literally brings together “ecology” and “feminism,” drawing on both dimensions.

“Ecology” examines how natural environmental systems “function to sustain a healthy web of life and how they become disrupted, causing death of plant and animal life.”15 Ecofeminists take this definition a step further by resonating with deep ecologists who contend that social and technological reasoning alone cannot explain the devastation of the earth; rather, the “symbolic, psychological, and cultural patterns by which humans have distanced themselves from nature, denied their reality as part of nature and claimed to rule over it from outside” must also be considered.16 Springing from this notion, “ecotheology” explores what brings about flourishing for members of the sacred web of life, which, in the Christian tradition, is understood not only as nature, but as “creation, sustained by God’s love.”17

“Feminism” is “the critique of the cultural and socioeconomic system that defines women as an inferior group to be marginalized from public life.”18 The term feminism captures a multi-faceted movement, and feminists come from various backgrounds and represent a diversity of voices and experiences. “Feminist theology” reveals how traditional theology has retained patriarchal and androcentric patterns within social and church settings and in

7 Downey, Understanding Christian Spirituality, 22-23.
8 Downey, Understanding Christian Spirituality, 46.
12 Downey, Understanding Christian Spirituality, 30.
13 Downey, Understanding Christian Spirituality, 43.
doctrinal assertions.\textsuperscript{19} A theology of ecofeminism “brings feminist theology into dialogue with a culturally based critique of the ecological crisis.”\textsuperscript{20}

The oppression of women and the exploitation of the earth has both cultural-symbolic and socioeconomic dimensions. Basic to the ecofeminist perspective is the assumption that each person, consciously or not, functions from a “socially constructed mindset or conceptual framework (i.e. a set of beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions which shape, reflect, and explain our view of ourselves and our world).”\textsuperscript{21} The logic of domination inherent to patriarchy forms an oppressive conceptual framework, justifying and explaining away the subordination of women by men. Such a framework spills over into justification of domination of persons by other characteristics, including race, ethnicity, and class.\textsuperscript{22} Extending beyond human relationships, the logic of domination easily imperializes human-nature interactions, as mankind lords over and profits from the earth and its resources. The logic manifests itself in attitudes of superiority, exploitative value systems, and concrete abusive practices. The ecofeminist movement works to debunk this conceptual framework and uproot well-worn, and often unconscious, paradigms undergirding oppressive relationships. Transforming this mindset directly relates to working for justice, in that the logic of domination at the cultural-symbolic level provides the “ideological superstructure that reflects and ratifies” socio-economic exploitation.\textsuperscript{23}

Spirituality forms an integral part of ecofeminist movements. As leading ecofeminist theologian Carol Christ has remarked, “the crisis that threatens the destruction of the earth is not only social, political, economic, and technological, but is at root, spiritual.”\textsuperscript{24} The materialist perspective, propelled by the logic of domination, validates economic productivity and dismisses cosmological consciousness, cutting persons off from contact with “the sacred whole,”\textsuperscript{25} the web of life to which humans belong alongside other living and inanimate beings. Recognizing this, ecofeminists work to recover, respect, and re-enliven these innate connections.

Ecofeminist spiritualities challenge the Christian tradition with “new vision[s] of intercommunion, radical interrelatedness, and the interdependence of all creation,” and by emphasizing a sacramental perspective where humans encounter God in material reality, not by fleeing from it.\textsuperscript{26} These two key aspects of the dynamic between Christianity and ecofeminism birth a rethinking of what it means to be human in relation to the world and to God.

\begin{itemize}
  \item 19 Radford Ruether, “Ecofeminism and Theology,” 199.
  \item 20 Radford Ruether, “Ecofeminism and Theology,” 199.
  \item 22 Warren, “The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism,” 177.
  \item 27 Susan Rakoczy, “Discerning Divine Presence in the Web of Life: Ecofeminist and African Theologians in Dialogue with Teilhard de Chardin” in To Discern Creation in a Scattering World, eds. Frederiek Depoortere and Jacques Haers (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2013), 102-3. Rakoczy also cites ecofeminist insights on the work of the Spirit and the ecofeminist challenge to develop “the hermeneutical privilege of nature/the earth” in this section. These two points will not be discussed in this paper.
\end{itemize}
The Human Person in Ecofeminist Theology

An understanding of the contributions of ecofeminist theology to Christian anthropology demands a brief look at the development of traditional Christian notions about the human person. Both the Genesis creation account and the influence of Hellenistic philosophy in early Christianity can be surveyed to better grapple with the helpful and harmful ways in which the Church has defined the human person. The stories of creation and of “the fall,” as they have been interpreted from Genesis, have contributed to Christianity’s embrace of dualistic rationale. Human beings, created in God’s image, are given “dominion” over the earth, a place which soon cannot be humanity’s sacred home because “God, who used to walk in the Garden of Eden, has removed himself from the earthly realm and is now distant and separate from humanity.”

This separation is philosophically sanctioned by Hellenistic thought in which reality is split into two pre-ranked spheres: spirit and matter. “Spirit” is the transcendent principle that finds its expression in “act, autonomy, reason, soul, whatever is light, permanent, and infinite.” “Matter,” the inferior principle, is characterized by “passivity, dependence, emotions, the body, whatever is dark, transitory, and finite.” This dualism exalts the rational human over the earth, men over earth-associated women, and the spiritual realm over the material world. The Platonic notion of the soul as “an ontological substance separable from the body, living in an alienated state on earth, whose true home lies in heaven” seeps into Christian thinking and develops in the work of theologians like Saint Augustine.

Nevertheless, to attribute the ecological crisis completely to a biblical mandate or early Christian contextual influences would be too simplistic. Prominent ecofeminist theologian Ivone Gebara identifies the human tendency to exaggerate disproportionately what has the potential to be good.

Ecofeminists recognize the need to reshape the “dualistic concept of reality as split between soulless matter and transcendent male consciousness.” This twisted anthropology forms the core of the Western conception of the person in relation to herself, other created beings, and the entire cosmos, and has underpinned the conceptual framework that has encouraged dramatic destruction of the earth. Prophetic in ecofeminist theology is the notion of the human person that starts with her as a person in a network of relationships. This experiential reality realigns the superiority complex that has tagged along with the exaltation of human consciousness, and pushes human beings to accept their dependency on other inanimate and living forms. An anthropology that takes

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34 Rakoczy, “Discerning Divine Presence,” 100.
seriously these aspects of the human condition demands a holistic vision, and acts as potential kindling for the development of “a world view that recognizes the Sacred in the whole web of life.”

Thus the reality of interdependence among all beings grounds an ecofeminist anthropology. The vision of Brazilian ecofeminist theologian Ivone Gebara proves especially insightful here. Instead of beginning by making assertions, Gebara opens her theology with an epistemological inquiry, remarking that “knowing is not primarily a rational discourse on what we know,” but rather “to know is first of all to experience, and what we experience cannot always be expressed into words.” This idea leads Gebara to be critical of both traditional assertions and her own work: both must be able to answer to the question, “to what human experience does this affirmation correspond?” Stressing the importance of the recovery of human experience, of allowing “the meaning of our deepest beliefs to develop in our minds and bodies,” in her theological endeavor, Gebara situates the human person as a being on earth and as a part of the cosmos. With this guiding light, she develops her method not in disregard of earlier theological propositions, but by cultivating a balance that can take seriously the needs of today’s world.

Gebara asserts that “we are all one and the same Sacred Body in multiple and diverse expressions,” a belief which she sees as arising from human experience and capable of accounting for the presence of diverse realizations and reflections. Critiquing the traditional view of the human person as it “fails to acknowledge our intimate and articulated bond with the earth and with the entire cosmos,” Gebara develops the concept of “relatedness” as the heart of her anthropology. A focus on relatedness moves beyond individualist and anthropocentric paradigms. Relatedness is not a value judgment; rather, the term “points to the vital power of the interconnection among all things.”

Proposing relatedness as a human condition, an earthly condition, an ethical reality, a religious experience, and a cosmic condition, Gebara posits that “we are, fundamentally, relatedness.” Affirming and surpassing the ideological, cultural, and philosophical connotations of consciousness, the concept of relatedness shows that consciousness is one kind of conscious relationship, conditioned by our context and experience. Relatedness as a core affirmation demands that other life forms, even those without human consciousness, or those historically deemed “less rational” (i.e. women), be respected and celebrated as part of the Sacred Body of the universe. Relatedness springs from our experience as earthly beings, from our direct material reality. It can be seen as encapsulating the interdependence between beings, and undergirds an honest and concrete ethical imperative. Though ingrained patriarchal patterns prevent this transformative perspective from taking hold easily, Gebara calls for conversion, for a re-education “aimed at rebuilding our self-understanding.”

Relatedness also feeds into religious experience and situates the human person in the cosmos. Stressing that religious experience is not predetermined by institutional affiliation, Gebara attributes the opening up of oneself to the relatedness that shapes us as constitutive of what may be termed “religious experience.” Additionally, relatedness as a cosmic condition means welcoming the cosmos “as our body” and as “subject,” instead of judg-

37 Gebara, Longing for Running Water, 49.
38 Gebara, Longing for Running Water, 50-1.
39 Gebara, Longing for Running Water, 82.
40 Gebara, Longing for Running Water, 79.
41 Gebara, Longing for Running Water, 84.
42 Gebara, Longing for Running Water, 84.
43 Gebara, Longing for Running Water, 90.
“object” to be exploited for our profit or convenience. Recognition of human relatedness with the cosmos puts anthropocentricism in check and strips the ideological foundation of the human domination of nature. The conversion inherent to this perception takes experiential re-education “in order to feel ourselves to be a reflection on, and an expression of, the universe story.” Relatedness as the core of what it means to be human calls for openness and evolution towards the bodily experiences that teach us awe, hope, and suffering. The human capacity to know is limited, and the ecofeminist perspective holds that even humans “can know neither God nor human beings by an a priori deduction.”

Granting relatedness as the essential character of what it means to be human affects theological discourse about God. For Gebara, speaking of God as “relatedness” describes an experience but goes beyond all experiences. It speaks of God as possibility, as opening, as the unexpected, the unknown; as physical and metaphysical. This is a relatedness that has no exact definition: it cannot be reduced to a given being, a given species, or a given system. It is not relatedness in itself, or separate from the fullness of all that exists; rather, it is relatedness as a continual presence that is made explicit in different ways in different beings. It is, then, the relatedness in all beings; it is not in itself and for itself. In describing relatedness in this way, we are trying to say that this seems to be the only way, limited as it is, to grasp this reality, to express it and to live it out. It is a multiple relatedness, encountered in its variety of expressions...Relatedness is utterance, word, attraction, flux, energy, and passion, insofar as it is the materiality and spirituality of all that is.

This way of thinking surpasses dualistic theology that would posit God as an untouchable, ontologically separate being. It remains true to the ecofeminist tenet of interconnectedness and impacts Gebara’s later analysis of Jesus and of the Trinity. The concept of relatedness engages both what it means to be human and how to talk about God, ultimately providing fodder for the growth of spiritualities honest to this experiential interconnection.

Other scholars, including American ecofeminist theologian Sallie McFague, present different ways in which recognition of the interdependency of earthly beings affects how one speaks of humanity and of God. McFague, in *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology,* observes that humans are “embodied beings,” not abstract minds. Like Gebara, McFague contends that human experience is embodied experience, and that this must influence how we perceive and speak of ourselves. Conditioning embodied experience is the human experience in the natural world, as well as “culturally, economically, sexually, socially,” etc. influenced factors. Nevertheless, the common creation story put forth by modern science provides a basis from which inquiry into Christian theological anthropology can be done. As a key source, McFague draws on this common creation story to affirm that human beings belong to and on the earth. The notion of humans as “at home on the earth,” rather than in flight from it, sustains her theological anthropology.

Proposing that we “look at ourselves from the earth up, rather than the sky down,” McFague promotes “a decentering and recentering of human beings.” Humans are just a piece of the earthly evolutionary narrative,

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51 McFague, *Body of God,* 104.
and must be acknowledged as “citizens of planet earth” in an unromantic, unsentimental way.\textsuperscript{53} The individuality and interdependence inherent to the development of species allows McFague to admit that humans, though “profoundly interrelated and interdependent with everything living and nonliving in the universe and especially on our planet,” have a special role as “guardians and caretakers,” who must be “responsible for all the rest upon which we are so profoundly dependent.”\textsuperscript{54} Our “planetary citizenship” forms a base for speaking about who we are.\textsuperscript{55} This embodied anthropology pushes McFague to develop the metaphor of the universe as God’s body. Without giving a comprehensive account of her theology, it must be noted that living in God’s body, “a body that in the Christic paradigm is characterized by God’s liberating, healing, and inclusive love,”\textsuperscript{56} permits the human experience of God as both immanent and transcendent, and reimagines God’s relationship to the world. It can also be said that if the world is to be honored as God’s body, humans are called to act in a way that cares for it as such.\textsuperscript{57}

Gebara and McFague both present visions of the human person that challenge traditional Christian anthropology. In seeking to undo dualisms that divide our minds and bodies, spirits and flesh, both authors delve into the experience of cosmic interconnectedness to talk about humankind in new ways. Their work uproots any theoretical ground for the logic of domination, and challenges humanity to reimagine itself in relation to the world, universe, and God. Rather than crafting unrealistic visions, both also tackle the reality of sin and degradation. Hatred, barbarity, and destruction exist, and wound our Sacred Body. Gebara posits that “original sin” cannot be discussed as a break from God or a blemish on what used to be a perfect humanity. “Original sin,” if the term is to be used, is “the development within us and outside of us of a capacity for destruction and exclusion in which all human beings are at once victims and culprits.”\textsuperscript{58} McFague likens human sin to “a refusal to accept our place.”\textsuperscript{59} Taking the classical view of sin as “living a lie,” living “out of proper relations with God, self, and other beings,” she senses that living falsely has had drastic ecological consequences.\textsuperscript{60} Writing as an American to a Western audience, she pays special attention to the insatiable consumerism inherent to Western culture, a selfishness that distorts all of our relationships. Ecofeminist theology takes sin seriously; its call to conversion identifies not only the need for new conceptual frameworks but new ways of being and acting in the present.

**Life-Integration: Ecofeminist Anthropology and Christian Spirituality**

How can ecofeminist visions of the human person inspire meaningful spiritualities for persons and communities today? Recalling Sandra Schneiders’ definition of spirituality as “the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives,”\textsuperscript{61} it can be seen how ecofeminist anthropologies contribute to Christian spirituality in three compelling ways: (1) by defining “life-integration” in a holistic way; (2) by prioritizing experience; and (3) in calling for justice for the earth and its creatures (including marginalized human persons) through concrete praxis. These three ideas take on specific nuances and imperatives for Christian spirituality in the United States.

\textsuperscript{55} McFague, *Body of God*, 110.
\textsuperscript{56} McFague, *Body of God*, 129.
\textsuperscript{58} Gebara, *Longing for Running Water*, 95-6.
\textsuperscript{59} McFague, *Body of God*, 112.
\textsuperscript{60} McFague, *Body of God*, 114-5.
Life-Integration and Experience

The project of life-integration must have an expansive vision of life if it is to remain true to the ecofeminist emphasis on relatedness in the sacred web of life. While it is helpful to describe spirituality as touching all aspects of a person's life, we need to reinterpret the scope of "our lives" in an explicitly inclusive way. In "Sacredness and Sustainability: Searching for a Practical Eco-Spirituality," Annalet van Schalkwyk notes that "in our time, society is superficially aware of the ecology and the ecological crisis which humanity has brought on itself," but then easily returns to its comfortable, consumerist ways. In other words, we understand that there is an ecological crisis, but we go on with "our lives" feeling as if they are separate phenomena. Intentional eco-spirituality can provide a corrective to this. The project of life-integration towards "the ultimate value one perceives" must prioritize "one's relationship with the whole ecology and cosmology which is filled with and contained in the presence of the Sacred." A Christian ecofeminist spirituality is panentheist, embracing the idea that "God is in all and therefore all is sacred," though it takes a life-long conversion to integrate this belief fully into our daily lives. Anthropocentric spiritualities that focus on the privatized interaction between an ontologically separate God and an individual person do not hold water within an ecofeminist schema. Relatedness as a basic tenet precludes it.

A person’s experience of her relationship with the cosmos and of her own intrinsic relatedness nurtures her spirituality. Spirituality studies generally stress the importance of experience, and ecofeminist spiritualities affirm this emphasis as they highlight how one discovers and comes to trust in her own relatedness. For example, a person’s first experience with the earth does not place her in relationship with a planet but with the shadow of the trees lining her path, the touch of soil in her garden, or the sound of birds outside her window. Experience is multi-dimensional—"bodily, social, historical, personal, religious, communal, and cultural"—and all of these factors contribute to the development of a holistic spirituality. As Gebara’s epistemological inquiry shows, experience forms the crux of our knowledge, contextual as it is, and pushes us to move beyond blind trust in authoritarian statements to allow "the meaning of our deepest beliefs to develop in our minds and bodies." An emphatic trust in embodied experience must be reaffirmed. On this note, an area for further study could be an examination of liturgy/prayer practices springing from living out ecofeminist spirituality. Poetry, dance, color, music, and interpersonal sharing have shaped ecofeminist spiritualities, but it remains to be seen how they could influence mainstream Church practices, which remain entrenched in patriarchal traditions.

Praxis: Working for Justice with an Ecofeminist Vision

As previously stated, a theology of ecofeminism "brings feminist theology into dialogue with a culturally based critique of the ecological crisis." In American culture, this critique first requires recognition of ecological and socioeconomic havoc wreaked by our privileged consumerism and a commitment to change our personal habits and social structures. Though material "standards of living" and wealth may be rising, "the earth and the very earthliness of humans [are being] sacrificed" as our now-normative consumerism changes our relationships and  

65 Sentence inspired by examples given in Gebara, Longing for Running Water, 89.
67 Gebara, Longing for Running Water, 50.
68 For further reading, see Radford Ruether, “Ecotheology: Roots in Tradition, Liturgical and Ethical Practice for Today.”
70 Radford Ruether, “Ecofeminism and Theology,” 199.
Our need to “reintegrate our production and consumption patterns so that they are in harmony with nature” has both global and local implications.

In crafting an ecofeminist vision suitable to the American context, “the myriad ways in which we North Americans oppress poor people...by being the world’s major economic power and its chief exporter of consumerism” must be acknowledged. In speaking of the ecological crisis and ecojustice, all persons across the world cannot be seen as contributing in the same way or to the same degree. Sallie McFague points out that ecological sin includes refusing to share land and space with the “have-nots,” remarking that the injustices among human beings must be addressed if we hope to have any real change in the way we treat the earth. This is a complicated task, one that mandates both conversion and a new set of ethics grounded in our relatedness. In looking at structural injustices, ecofeminists from the so-called Third World can help call Western believers into question. For example, Indian Christian ecofeminist Aruna Gnanadason challenges the vision of development put forth by donor countries that “measure the value of the gifts of creation only in terms of their use in the marketplace.”

Living out ecofeminist spirituality necessarily engages a person in the political, social, and economic realms.

This lifestyle calls for political and civic engagement. Gnanadason also asserts that though women are “special victims” of environmental destruction, “they do not speak merely as victims when they participate in environmental movements.” “Sacred activism” is a key aspect of ecofeminist spirituality. Here, Western ecofeminists deserve special warning. American ecofeminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether cautions that ecofeminist spirituality must not be reduced to women’s ceremonies that provide “cultural escapism for a privileged Western female elite.” Informed praxis, as a crucial part of ecofeminist spirituality, must begin with an admission of where we are in the global balance of power. Though Western ecofeminists may lack firsthand experience of the connection between the impoverishment of women and the destruction of the earth, they are nonetheless called into action in contextually meaningful ways.

Different ecofeminist voices develop diverse ways of living out the ecofeminist vision in the American context. Ruether contends that being an ecofeminist involves cultivating “that kind of awareness about the invisible underside of goods and services readily available to me.” In her book Gaia and God, Ruether also speaks to the development of equity not by technological solutions but in the “restoration of relationships” from exploitation to mutuality. Americans seeking to engage an ecofeminist vision could, for example, eat lower on the food chain, make an effort to return to the rhythms of the land, engage in personal and communal therapies and liturgies, and partake in politics. There must also be a conscious empowerment of women, as women sense their own integrity and have it affirmed by others (i.e. men). By recovering the covenantal vision for an ecofeminist

71. Anne Primavesi, Gaia and Climate Change: A Theology of Gift Events (New York: Routledge, 2009), 44.
74. McFague, Body of God, 117.
75. McFague, Body of God, 117.
82. Radford Ruether, Gaia and God, 258.
83. Radford Ruether, Gaia and God, 265.
perspective, Ruether also promotes a return to Sabbath in both personal and agrarian practices, observing that the Biblical tradition is a “model of redemptive justice,” and a “righting of relationships.”

Another voice can be found in Sallie McFague’s call for the development of a philosophy of “enoughness” that could shape the daily living of North American believers. McFague invites Christians to follow Jesus in the revolutionary sense, breaking down hierarchies and dualisms, learning to see the world in a new way, rejecting individualism and exclusion, and forming communities. The practices put forth by Ruether and McFague involve both personal and communal commitment, and call for a radical reshaping of how we live. Inspired by their theologies, perhaps it can be said that choices at the grocery store, habits of composting, participation in environmental activism, or taking intentional rest can all be spiritual practices.

It must be restated that diversity and contextuality play a large part in the ecofeminist movement. Ecofeminist voices address harmful practices and beliefs in the wider world as well as in the movement itself. As evidenced in the previous discussion of anthropology from the perspective of ecofeminist theology, ecofeminism steers away from anthropocentrism, advocating the sacred web of life in which humans have their place, without distorted reification. Kristen Gerdes, however, tells the story of Aruna Gnanadason’s Dalit student who voiced her critique of this tendency: “Please do not ask us to be less anthropocentric, when it is only now that we Dalits are ‘becoming a people,’ who can speak of our lives with dignity as human beings.”

Taking into account the complexities of context, ecofeminists are challenged to avoid or nuance monolithic assertions or overarching ideals.

Conclusion

The ecological crisis as a spiritual crisis demands a reexamination of the foundations of our relationships with the cosmos, God, and ourselves. Indeed, “only when we have come to understand that God is the source and foundation calling us to live in relationships of mutual support can we effectively rebuild our vision for the world.” Because dualisms separating and elevating humankind from the earth have such deep roots in our thinking, and have in fact “estranged us at the very heart of our being,” any conversion to the God who is relatedness must be rooted in a new way of viewing ourselves, a new anthropology. Our vision of ourselves is inextricably linked with our spirituality, with the project of life-integration that we undertake. When taken with an ecofeminist bent, the key theme in feminist spirituality that indicates women’s need “to find their true selves” forces us to reassert that “our true selves” are rooted in and surrounded by our earthliness and our embodied experience. In honoring the cosmos that may be seen symbolically as the Body of God, we are called into action for justice and the righting of relationships. Ecofeminism inspires rich visions from which spiritualities that “motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world” can be born, nurtured, validated, and challenged.

88 Radford Ruether, “Ecofeminism and Theology,” 204.
91 Francis, *Laudato Si*, no. 216.