

**ISSN** INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
**ISSN-2321-7065**

**IJELLH**



**International Journal of English Language,  
Literature in Humanities**

Indexed, Peer Reviewed (Refereed) Journal

**UGC Approved Journal**



**Volume 6, Issue 9, September 2018**

[www.ijellh.com](http://www.ijellh.com)

Poonam Setia  
PhD Research Scholar,  
Dept. of English and Foreign Languages  
M.D.U., Rohtak(Haryana) 124001  
Sirsa, Haryana, India  
psetia25@yahoo.in, pchhabra1802@gmail.com

Perspectives on Spirituality: A Study of *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker

**Abstract:**

Religion comes from the Latin word 'religio' which means to bind. Veritably, religion is a doctrine of fusion and harmonization. Any discipline, which binds one with one another in an ethical way, is religion. Religion has very powerful repercussions on society. Whereas the word spirituality comes from root words in Hebrew, Latin and Greek that all mean wind, breath, or air – that which gives life. One has common terms that use 'spirit' as a sense of energy, essence, vitality, awareness or consciousness, such as 'team spirit', 'sing with spirit', 'in high spirits', 'a generous spirit', 'spirit of the law', or 'get in the spirit of it'. Spirituality means feeling of one's unity with all. It is the state of consciousness in which the feeling of otherness is gone and the feeling of kinship and unity with the so called others is established. In the novel *The Color Purple* (1982) by Alice Walker spiritual perspectives are the extent to which spirituality permeates the major characters such as Celie, Netie, Shug Avery and Albert in their lives and engage in spiritually related interactions. Thus, it is spiritual perspectives that guide choices, provide comfort, formulate personal values/morals, and assist them in coping their life's challenges and in the journey called life.

**Keywords:** Consciousness, God, Life, Perspectives, Religion, Spirituality

Religion comes from the Latin word 'religio' which means to bind. Veritably, religion is a doctrine of fusion and harmonization. Any discipline, which binds one with one another in an ethical way, is religion. It is not mere belief but behavior, a sheer deportment and not mere faith but functioning. In religion, the entity of a human being's personality is involved. Emile Durkheim asserts: " A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite

into one single community called a church, all those who adhere to them” (qtd. in Crawford 2-3). Whereas Peter Connolly avers: “Any beliefs which involve the acceptance of a sacred, transempirical realm and any behavior designed to affect a person’s relationship with that realm” (qtd. in Crawford 2).

Religion has very powerful repercussions on society. Religion induces the mindset of a large portion of society and determines the most beliefs of society. Religions are also the prime movers that design the individual. Religion is the decisive factor of the beliefs, attitudes, and frame of mind of the individual. Religion is conducive in uplifting and guiding humanity. Religion is in fact the sovereign, the paramount and the powerful enough to work as an anchor to make many good people do very good or bad things.

Whereas the word spirituality comes from root words in Hebrew, Latin and Greek that all mean wind, breath, or air – that which gives life. One has common terms that use ‘spirit’ as a sense of energy, essence, vitality, awareness or consciousness, such as ‘team spirit’, ‘sing with spirit’, ‘in high spirits’, ‘a generous spirit’, ‘spirit of the law’, or ‘get in the spirit of it’. Spirituality is one of those words which carry with it multiple implications and inferences that convey a personal meaning for each individual. Like words such as love, fear, greed, and joy – spirituality evokes so many human connections and experiences that the word quickly becomes associated with metaphors, images, and symbols. Each individual reacts to these associations based on their particular life experiences and story.

Spirituality means feeling of one’s unity with all. It is the state of consciousness in which the feeling of otherness is gone and the feeling of kinship and unity with the so called others is established. The feeling of unity can be seen in the loving mother. The mother feels that the children are her own or herself. The happiness and suffering of the children are the happiness and suffering of the mother. The bodies of the children are separated from the mother, and in that sense the children are ‘others’ to her, but in her consciousness or in her feeling they are not others. This implies that the mother considers the good of the children her own good, and naturally and on the spur of the moment does good to the children. What she does for the children, she thinks she is doing for her own self, as she feels that the children are herself or her own. This is what is called love. Thus love is the meaning of spirituality. Love is the spiritual value.

Spirituality is in fact the knowledge of the self. For this one has to understand 'self', which is subtle than the body and mind. It starts with indirect knowledge of self, from teachings of the great masters and scriptures; and reasoning of the contemplative mind. Later the spiritual being attains the direct knowledge of self by realizing connection with the all pervading divine and knows the highest reality. True reality makes the material surroundings as 'apparent reality'. Spirituality is the science of developing Higher Consciousness in Man/Woman on the level of the soul, and making one transcend from mere body consciousness into Cosmic Consciousness and further on into Super Consciousness. It is so to enable one to understand the working of the Divine Plan.

Taking into account, Spirituality is about establishing a closer relationship with Super Consciousness whereas Religion is about following the dictates of credenda which is about establishing rituals and routines and beliefs and ways of thinking and doing things. Giovanni contends:

Religion asks you to believe. Spirituality asks you to look.

Religion has dogmas. Spirituality has wisdom teachings.

Religion wants obedience. Spirituality wants experimentation.

Religion speaks of sin and hell. Spirituality speaks of karma.

Religion wants to comfort you. Spirituality wants to liberate you.

Religion is external. Spirituality is internal.

Religion is the form. Spirituality is the essence.

Religion wants to convert you. Spirituality wants to inspire you.

Religion is an institution. Spirituality is a journey. (2)

As spirituality is a journey, a journey of embracing, celebrating, and voicing all the connections with the divine, within me and beyond me, in experiences that give me meaning, purpose, direction, and values for one's daily journey. Spirituality exists in our connection to other humans, our environment and unfolding universe beyond, and the transcendent. Reed contends, "Spirituality is the tendency to make meaning through one's intrapersonal, interpersonal and transpersonal relationships that empower one to transcend" (337). She

further clarified that spiritual perspectives are “the extent to which spirituality permeates their lives and they engage in spiritually related interactions” (337). Thus, it is spiritual perspectives that guide choices, provide comfort, formulate personal values/morals, and assist with coping during illness, suffering, grief and loss.

*The Color Purple* published in 1982 by Alice Walker, one of the best known contemporary African American writers earned her the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1983. Written in epistolary form, the novel stresses on the spirituality and Africanness of customs inherited from African and Native cultural roots works as a means for the characters to fight alienation, and a cure to heal a psyche fragmented by the Middle Passage and then by the post-modern condition. The major characters of the novel such as Celie, Nettie, Shug Avery and Albert all are having unique spiritual perspectives which guide them during the life's challenges and in the journey called life.

The protagonist of the novel Celie is introduced in the novel when she is barely fourteen years old. The girl is repeatedly raped and beaten by her father to whom she call Pa and is emotionally neglected by her mother. She finds refuge in writing letters to God, which keeps her sane and works as a form of therapy. Celie says to her sister Nettie, “Her life made her feel so ashamed that she could not even talk about it to God; she had to write it” (*The Color* 117). The hard fact is that she addresses her letters to God emphasizes Celie's domination by male authority figures. Though at the same time, she shows strong spirit as she says, “long as I can spell G-o-d I got somebody along” (19). Victimized by her stepfather, Celie feels ashamed of herself and of what had happened to her. She considers herself to be a bad and unworthy person. Expecting punishment for her conduct; she does not hope nor pray for a better life. She is just confessing her sins. Deprived of education Celie's image of God is based upon pictures from the Bible rather than from the text itself which results into when imagining Heaven, Celie envisages “angels all in white, white hair and white eyes, look like albinos. God all white too, looking like some stout white man work at the bank” (85).

Even though Celie's notion of God is ambiguous, she is desperate enough to put her trust into this deity. She pictures God as a white male, and even though she is afraid of men she keeps on confiding to ‘Him’. Celie attends services in church but notices the injustice and lack of spirituality there as she says, “women in church are sometimes nice to her and sometimes not” (42). The preacher does not offer support or spiritual mentoring to the girl.

He only acknowledges her hard work cleaning the church by saying: “you faithful as the day is long” (42). Even though Celie realizes the dysfunctional state of the religion she inherited, she does not question her own understanding of God. After she marries Albert to whom she calls Mr. \_\_, a vicious land-owner and widower with four children, her life does not change much. She becomes a victim to her husband and stepchildren and refuses to fight for her rights: “But I don’t know how to fight. All I know how to do is stay alive” (18). She feels inadequate, unlovable and lonely. She bears the physical abuse with no complaints. She suppresses and ignores her feelings which are the only way she can survive and therefore numbness becomes her only defense mechanism. She literally imagines herself being a tree while her husband batters her as she says, “I make myself wood. I say to myself, Celie, you a tree” (23). Despite the difficult life that she has to endure, Celie is a kind and caring woman. She has a capacity for love even though she does not realize it. She feels guilty about advice she gave Harpo to “Beat her[Sofia]”(36). Even though she does not like Mr. \_\_’s children, she tends to them in a caring and considerate way. Being kind and loving she does not experience love back. She has no one to form a nurturing relationship with. Having lost her mother early in life and then later her beloved sister, Nettie, the only two people she could relate to, she lives her life as a lonely and dejected person.

The lack of self-esteem is a primary issue for Celie’s character. As a victim of severe abuse she suffers from a loss of pride and personal worth which are the greatest obstacles in gaining independence. As Claudia Tate, a literary critic observes: “to base one’s self-esteem on self sacrifice by caring exclusively for others, whether it be one’s mate, children or one’s extended family, and not to care for one’s spiritual well-being is a self-destructive proposition”(XXIII). Celie feels worthless, unloved and lonely and that’s why she is unable to progress.

Life slowly improves for Celie when Shug Avery, a dazzling singer and Albert’s former mistress, arrives in town and moves into their house. Celie takes care of Shug ailing from a sexually transmitted disease by cooking for her, brushing her hair and making sure she rests. Shug in return protects Celie from being abused from Albert. Shug also introduces her to simple pleasures in life as she says, “if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and you do not notice” (177). According to Eva Lennox Birch, “Shug loves everybody impartially and functions in the novel as a guide and mentor to those whose capacity for love, of either self or others, is stunted by society” (227).

The two women become intimate friends instead of rivals. Unlike the men who have subjugated Celie, Shug seeks neither to control her nor to possess her. Celie subsequently forms a relationship with Shug which evolves from a maternal, to a sororal, to a physical attachment. It is in the Shug's company that Celie finally starts to "feel happy and alive" (194). Shug initiates Celie into an awareness of her own sexuality and an appreciation of her body as when Celie wistfully says, "Nobody ever love me" (103). Shug replies: "I Love you, Miss Celie . . . and kiss . . . on the mouth" (103). The recognition of herself as beautiful and loving is the first step toward Celie's independence and self acceptance. Renee C. Hoogland celebrates the same-sex relationship and sees it as pivotal for Celie's development:

Since nothing in novels – unlike real life – is either incidental or unpremeditated, Celie does not simply happen to fall in love with a woman. Her sexual orientation, her passionate investment in a female other from whom she gradually begins to derive her sense of self, structurally informs the story of her subjectivity, her empowerment as a subject of speech and writing, and eventually also a social agent. (19)

Celie's spiritual transformation begins after the realization that all she believed about her family is not true as she says: "My daddy lynch. My mama crazy. All my little half-brothers and sisters no kin to me. My children not my sister and brother. Pa not pa. You[God] must be sleep"(160). Celie feels betrayed and abandoned by God and from that moment she begins to question the divinity that she inherited. It is Shug who helps Celie to find her own reality of goodness. Shug shares her own unconventional definition of "God as Nature" (ix), "God ain't a he or a she, but a It . . . . God is everything . . . . Everything that is or ever was, or ever will be" (176). Celie accepts this new version of God and from that moment her life changes dramatically. Her trust in divine is restored and she feels stronger connected to the divine all around her. She frees herself from the oppressive hand of her husband and then proudly she reclaims the right for her existence: "I'm pore, I'm black, I may be ugly and can't cook[. . .]. But I'm here" (187). With bravery Celie leaves her husband and risks an unknown future. Now she is determined to regain self-worth and freedom and moves to the Memphis with Shug where she starts a completely different life.

In the beginning of the novel, Celie maintains connection with the divine through a monologue. There is no possibility for dialogue with divine that she could not personally identify herself with. She is separated from the God – the powerful, superior and

unapproachable deity. Later in the novel Celie redefines her spiritual belief. She refuses to worship the traditional Christian male-like-idol, however she does not do it: “by attacking ‘him’ [but] by leaving ‘him’ behind” (Daly 18). Chambers specifies that Celie’s new God is “a God best described by the words of an old spiritual: ‘He may not come when you want Him, but He’s right on time’” (55). Celie finds her own expression of spirituality following Shug’s animistic philosophy. In fact Walker’s concept of spirituality is pantheism, the idea that God is in all living things within nature including people which she ascribes to Shug’s philosophy of spirituality. Celie learns from Shug and through her own development that God is within her and she benefits far more from her own spirituality than from the structured religion within the community. The deep spiritual connection allows Celie to heal the wounds from her past and achieve an inner peace in the present.

If one talks about Nettie’s (Celie’s sister) spiritual road it is poles apart from that of Celie. Nettie is considered the pretty girl in the family and therefore develops strong self-esteem. Besides she is able to finish her education. Nettie is determined to study. She sees education as a way out of poverty and dependence. She is a determined person. Unable to endure abuse, she runs away from home and is forced to leave her beloved sister. Unlike Celie, Nettie fights against Mr. \_ : “I started to fight him, and with God’s help, I hurt him bad enough to make him let me alone” (114). Directed by Celie, Nettie finds refuge in the house of Reverend Samuel and his wife Corrine. Under the pious supervision of her new bread-givers, Nettie continues her education. Nettie’s new family is missionaries of the American and African Missionary Society. They are kind and virtuous people. The couple treats the girl as if she were their daughter. And as a result, Nettie flourishes “in her new home” (123).

Nettie’s persistence in learning, together with her ability to keep an open mind and her curiosity, lead her to a deeper understanding of the world. However, even though she studies religious teachings, she is having pragmatic spirituality. Throughout her studies and reading, Nettie learns with surprise that her own image of God has been distorted through the church education she had acquired so far: “All the Ethiopians in the bible were colored. It had never occurred to me, though when you read the bible it is perfectly plain if you pay attention only to the words. It is the pictures in the bible that fool you . . . All of the people are white and so you just think all the people from the bible were white too”(120).Furthermore, Nettie learns the history of her ancestors, not only how they were forced to come to America, but also the history of African civilizations which she then compares to what the white people

teach. The journey to Africa is a stepping-stone for Nettie in her understanding of a sense of reverence, but the expedition also confronts the prejudice that holds her confined in her acquired spirituality. When, after a long preparation time Nettie gets the chance to set her foot on African soil, she experiences an ephemeral shift in consciousness. The first look at the “African coast” leaves her ecstatic (128). It is the first time that Nettie experiences something beyond rational understanding of the divine. In Africa, Nettie is mesmerized by the different culture: “the clothes, the people, the language” (168), yet she is constantly reminded of all of her own prejudice. People in Africa were not “downtrodden people from whom they [Afro-Americans] sprang. People who need Christ and good medical advice” (118). Nettie realizes that what she had learned from the white missionary training about African people may be actually unfair and deceitful. Later, living in a jungle among Olinka people – a native tribe – she experiences the clash of the native way of life and the globalization process of the superior westerners. She recognizes the needlessness of the missionary theological work among the deeply spiritual tribes in Africa. Even more, the intrusion of the western industrial expansion on the native land seems so dangerous for the health and core existence of the native society.

It was during the time that living among Olinka people that Nettie experienced the most profound spiritual development. At the welcoming ceremony, the Olinka people served food and wine to the missionaries and through their dance and songs they told the story of their God – the roof leaf. Their belief in a leaf, however, was not a simple-minded worshiping of a false God. The Natives exhibited a nature-based conception of the divine, acknowledging a balance and harmony in nature. Nettie is exposed to a different dimension of the divine worshiping and unconsciously she accepts the possibility of it being “valid” (213). She respects the native people’s wisdom and awareness.

In Africa, Nettie realizes that not everybody believes in Christianity and yet, like the Olinka people, they are deeply spiritual in their own way: “The women spend all their time in the fields, tending their crops and praying. They sing to the earth and to the sky and to their cassava and groundnuts. Songs of love and farewell”(156). In the jungle Nettie becomes conscious of the fact that “the pictures of holy people of the Christian religion” that she brought from England “do not fit in her little hut” (143). In her spiritual journey, Nettie faces the fact that there is a difference between spirituality and religion. Having to deal with religious institutions for the missionary work she notices the pretentious attitude of those in

power there. When she travels to England with Samuel in a desperate attempt to get help for the Olinka people she witnesses the bigotry of the religious establishment. The bishop whom they were pleading to for aid was more concerned with the marital status of the couple than the unjust treatment of the tribe or their suffering. She unconsciously chooses to diminish the importance of symbol worshiping. It is as if she had realized that such symbols “obstruct the becoming of God” (Daly 29) and therefore are obstacles in the actual understanding of the divine.

Finally, Nettie embraces the indigenous philosophy that everything is inhabited by spirit. She describes her final interpretation of God in one of her letters to Celie, where she explains that having spent many years in Africa and therefore being influenced by the natives, she perceives God more as a feeling of reverence within, more a spirit than a persona – a source without form or gender. The fact that she has no image attached to God is liberating for her. She concludes with an idea of establishing a new religious movement which would base its mission on seeking God within, completely disengaged from symbolic and idol worshiping practices. Although Nettie was not consciously searching for the connection with the divine, her studies and voyage lead her to it. To comprehend the world intellectually, she ended up discovering a deeper understanding of spirituality in general.

Shug Avery appears to be the most controversial character in the story. She is a longtime mistress of Albert, Celie’s husband. They have children out of wedlock who are being raised by Shug’s mother, while Shug travels around the country singing in clubs. She is a strong and independent person, not trapped by society’s view of women and therefore lives her life in her own way. Gradually in the novel Shug finds herself living in Albert’s home, being nursed by Albert’s wife Celie. The two women become friends and then lovers. The distinctive trait about Shug Avery in the novel is the fact that she seems to have a ready notion of a divine in her life. She is spiritually awakened in that sense: “God is inside you and inside everybody else. You come into the world with God. But only them that search for it inside find it. And sometimes it just manifest itself even if you not looking, or don't know what you looking for” (176). Being spiritually evolved she acts, according to literary critic Eva Lennox Birch, as an “agent for [...] miraculous changes” (226) that other characters undergo. Therefore the change that she undergoes is a little different. The change that Shug undergoes is “not in herself so much as in how she is perceived by others” (Lennox Birch 227).

The character of Shug is introduced in the novel not as an actual person but as a photograph and an object of gossip. The fact that Shug is introduced as an image and not as a person provides a feeling of mystery to her. Celie is mesmerized by that image and later becomes almost obsessed with the singer, Shug Avery. Celie is fascinated by the stories about Shug and she idealizes the singer, seeing her as a majestic person, imagining her as a queen who is wearing beautiful red and purple gowns – beautiful yet unapproachable. From the very beginning of the story there is an ambivalent image of Shug. She is adored by her fans and is popular, however she is not welcomed when in need. People in town who are not her fans have a lot of preconceived ideas about Shug. Being an object of desire and therefore perceived as a threat, she is stigmatized by the religious institution. She is judged by the religious establishment also because she does not conform to the expectations of society. Disillusioned by the lack of spirituality in church, Shug does not attend services. Although Shug abandoned the church that she was born into, she found a different way towards spirituality. Having had a spiritual experience, Shug embraces a belief that everything is interconnected, coming from and embraced by divine power.

As the novel progresses Shug becomes a guest in Albert and Celie's home, her image slowly changes. She is no longer just an idol to worship nor a person to condemn. A vulnerable side of Shug surfaces as she behaves almost like a wounded animal: "She weak as a kitten. But her mouth just pack with claws"(47). Furthermore in Albert and Celie's home the reality of cruel and false gossip clashes with the affectionate perception of her by Celie. As the two women become close and share their secrets, one learns about Shug's past. As a young woman, Shug felt unloved by her mother. On the other hand, after meeting Albert she falls passionately in love with him. Shug turns out to be a woman hurt in her past who learned how to foster her independence but who is simply objectified by the public. With the passage of time and with the accepting, loving and nurturing care of Celie, the true nature of Shug emerges. She is a compassionate friend, and a wise and spiritual companion. She is mature enough to recognize and acknowledge her own selfish behavior from the past, which had wounded others. She regrets that the way she treated Celie when they met but also is ashamed by the way she treated Albert's first wife many years ago. Coming into line with Hall underscores: "*The Color Purple* reveals in explicit and implicit ways the myriad of connections between the erotic desires that individuals may feel and the ways those desires are classified, categorized, and valued socially" (160).

Shug seems to be unconcerned about material things. Even though she is rich and famous, she is neither arrogant nor selfish. She is actually a very generous friend, quick to shower her closest with gifts: “She buy Grady anything he think he want” (101). Shug is an interesting person, evolved, an original thinker and having a valuable insight on life. Independent and capable of standing up for herself, Shug also helps Celie to start an independent life and to find a new dimension in her spiritual development. Christian avers: “Shug becomes the mother Celie never had, protecting her from Albert and giving her knowledge about her body and the essential spirituality of the world” (69).

In the course of the novel the perception of Shug changes gradually as from unseen, unheard and unwanted to as lovable, wise and worthy of care. In the end Shug is not just seen as a sweet flirt but recognized as an individual, with individual strengths and weaknesses: “Shug act[s] more manly than most men. I mean she upright, honest. Speak her mind and the devil take the hindmost [...] Shug will fight [...] she bound to live her life and be herself no matter what” (244). The character of Shug is exactly the person who in the view of philosopher Mary Daly, could have “the power to transform the patriarchal belief system of today” (231).

Spiritual transformation continues with the dramatic change that the character of Albert undergoes in the novel such that from lazy, self-centered, abusive and violent into a sensitive, quiet and deeply spiritual man. Albert, whom Celie calls Mr. \_\_, is a widower with four children who makes advances to marry Nettie. After a long time of hesitation, he settles for the “uglier Celie” (10). However the process of asking for Celie’s hand reveals later in the novel that all Albert wanted was a housekeeper and a nursemaid as he himself is not interested in working or child raising. He exploits and physically abuses Celie, rationalizing this behavior with the idea of superiority of males over their female partners. Albert, being the husband, the man and therefore unquestionably the superior one expects that the woman in his household is inferior and should be submissive. His chauvinist distinction of gender roles is portrayed also by the ideas that his son Harpo inherits from him: “Women work, he say [...] I’m a man” (22). Even though Albert embodies the image of the oppressive God, he does not seem to have much interest in religion. Occasionally he attends a church service, but he goes there either because of his superstitious nature or because it is socially expected. He seems not to question the religious institution or lack of spirituality in there, even when the preacher officially condemns his beloved one in church.

As the novel progresses, one gets a little more insight as to why Albert is so mean. His heartlessness seems to be a result of an unfulfilled love and life. Albert is simply an unhappy man. Raised and restricted by an authoritative father who “gave [Albert] the wife he wanted [him] to have” (245), even though he was deeply in love with Shug. Trapped in a world of unhappiness he becomes violent and mean. Suppressed by his controlling and dominating father, Albert conforms to a person who does not question what he is taught and does not wonder where that leads him. As a result he becomes inflexible, dogmatic and overbearing. His world is chaotic and out of control. When Shug reappears in his life once again, two different sides to Albert are revealed in that the inconsiderate husband is contrasted with the romantic lover. This ambivalence in his behavior reflects the possibility that he is not a completely aggressive and dominating male. With Shug around, a more romantic and sensitive side of Albert emerges. Surprisingly, the previously indifferent man turns out to be loving, gentle and caring. After all, trying to tend to his sick lover, he sits at “her bedside all night” (110).

Unfortunately, Albert is not able to stand up for himself and decide what he really wants from life, and falls back to his old ways from time to time. The beginning of Albert’s transformation starts when Celie leaves him. Suddenly the world as he knew it, the world he thought was secure and in order – changes in just one day. He is left puzzled, almost like a little boy, asking what people would say about Celie leaving him and going to live on her own in the city. Caught up in social restrictions, he actually believes that this notion could stop Celie from going away. His wife left him by saying: “You a lowdown dog is what’s wrong . . . It’s time to leave you and enter into the Creation. And your dead body just the welcome mat I need” (180). His lover left him, and the only thing that he is left with is the curse that his wife casted upon him. The drastic change in his life leads Albert to an emotional breakdown. Not being able to cope with the new reality, he withdraws from the outside world and goes into a sort of state of hibernation. During that time, he does not take care of himself or the house. He experiences problems with insomnia, having nightmares and panic attacks. In short, he exhibits the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. He has realized that unlike God, he is not omnipotent and that his life is just a human structure that is prone to change. Such a drastic change of one’s circumstances can, according do Daly, trigger a breakthrough that can “drive consciousness beyond fixation upon ‘things as they are’” (24).

Eventually, Harpo, Mr. Albert's son convinces him to send Celie the rest of Nettie's letters, and after that Albert begins to recuperate. While he seems to discover a deeper meaning to life, the change in him is quite visible:

the first thing I notice bout Mr. \_\_\_ is how clean he is [...] Mr. \_\_\_ acts like he trying to git religion [...] He don't go to church or nothing, but he not so quick to judge. He work real hard too [...] He sure do. He out there in the field from sunup to sundown. And clean that house just like a woman. Even cook [...] wash the dishes when he finish [...] But he don't talk much or be round people. (*The Color* 201)

Albert is finally a changed man, a man not confined by restrictions. Just as for Celie, for whom the turning point came when she freed herself from the restraints of her life, freedom came to Albert when he freed himself from social restraints and redefined his divine. Through the process he learned to take responsibility for his life and his actions. The idea that his past does not need to define his future is the stepping-stone in his recovery. He admits that the change in him was a process and it started with a realization: "experience. You know, everybody bound to git some of that sooner or later. All they have to do is stay alive. And I start to git mine real heavy long about the time I told Shug it was true that I beat you cause you was you and not her" (245). By replacing a socially accepted image of male superiority and reconnecting with his more feminine side. In fact, this is spirituality which releases the feminine dimension in him and due to it Albert finds peace within himself and with people around him. After that, Celie and Albert reconcile and recognize a new dimension in their relationship that is as friends who share a love for Shug. This reconciliation, after redefining the divine in their lives goes along with what Daly observes: "God who is power of being acts as a moral power summoning women and men to act out of our deepest hope and to become who we can be [...] authentic hope will be active and creative" (32). Albert's new notion of God is similar to the one that Shug holds that they both find beauty in nature and the presence of the divine in all that surrounds them. This spiritual evolution allows him to be happy and true to himself as a person which looks like he is trying to make something out of himself as he says to Celie, "I'am satisfied this the first time I ever lived on Earth as a natural man. It feel like a new experience" (236). Albert learns that "it is possible to heal from the hurts and humiliation of the past" (White 338). It is a testimony to the need for a spiritual revolution. And when men thrive in the new spiritual dimension, the whole society evolves – and there is a better relationship between the genders. Albert's dramatic transformation also

bears a testimony to the universal truth that taking control of one's life allows one to create a better future.

### Works Cited

- Chambers, Kimberly R. "Right on Time: History and Religion in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*." *College Language Association Journal*, vol.31,no.1, 1987, pp,44-62.
- Christian, Barbara. "Alice Walker: The Black Woman Artist as Wayward." *Black Woman Writers(1950-1980): A Critical Evaluation*. Edited by Mari Evans, Pergamon Press,1985, pp. 90-100.
- Crawford, Robert. "Can religion be defined?" *What is Religion?* Routledge-Taylor and Francis, 2002, pp. 1-15.
- Daly, Mary. *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*. Beacon P, 1985.
- Giovanni. "Spirituality VS Religion: The Future of Truth and Meaning." *Love and Dare: Master Your Mind, Master Your Life*. pp.1-5. [www.liveanddare.com/spirituality-vs-religion](http://www.liveanddare.com/spirituality-vs-religion). Accessed 10 May 2017.
- Hall, D.E. *Queer Theories*. Palgrave Macmillian, 2003.
- Hoogland, Renee C. *Lesbian Configurations*. Polity,1997.
- Lennox Birch, Eva. *Black American Women's Writing: A Quilt of many Colours*. Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994.
- Reed, P.G. "Spirituality and Well-being in terminally ill hospitalized adults." *Research in nursing and Health* vol.10, no.5, 1987, pp.335-44.
- Tate, Claudia,ed. *Black Women Writers at Work*. Oldcastle,1985.
- Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. Phoenix, 1983.
- (*The Color Purple* has been shortened to *The Color*. All subsequent quotations in this chapter refer to this edition and the relevant page numbers are shown in parentheses.)
- White, Evelyn C. *Alice Walker: A Life*. W.W. Norton, 2004.