

**‘SPIRITED BODIES’ AS A PREREQUISITE FOR AN EARTH-
KEEPING ETHOS: A JUXTAPOSITION OF THE FIRST
CREATION STORY OF GENESIS WITH UBUNTU
COSMOGONY**

BY

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To

Teza Kakungu Sibwamba

*You live on in our hearts – wit, wry sense of humour and waywardness - we miss you
'sore' much.*

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SUMMARY

Multidisciplinary contemporary discourse involving science, philosophy and theology has explored themes of creation and human identity. Contemporary critiques of anthropocentrism stem from such discourse. The understanding of human beings as ‘spirited bodies’ rather than embodied spirits, arises from a non-reductionist physicalist standpoint. This is the point of departure for this thesis. The study attempts to explore the understanding of human beings as ‘spirited bodies’ from a non-reductionist physicalist view and as a metaphor for ‘fresh’ perspectives and insights that could potentially inform and/or shape a theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos on a different premise from the traditional dualistic hierarchical viewpoint.

Methodologically, this study attempts to reflect a unitary approach to knowledge. The study views the subject through three prisms. Firstly it takes a retrospective look to account for perspectives that have shaped hierarchical views of creation based on a dualistic principle that in turn have shaped the human power-dominion relationship with the rest of creation that is deemed to have led to the devastating eco-crisis the world faces today. Secondly, it considers a non-reductionist physicalist viewpoint that has challenged dualistic anthropological views of being in favour of the conception of human beings as ‘spirited bodies’ and which places human beings in a continuum with the rest of creation. Thirdly, it picks up on Moltmann’s Trinitarian and pneumatological views of creation which orient the theological framework anchored on the community and communion within the triune relationship. Human solidarity with the rest of creation is then posited as the nexus that converges the strands of these different perspectives.

The juxtaposition of the Genesis 1 creation story with Zambian cosmogony constitutes ‘case studies’ that illustrate how the fresh perspectives on creation and human identity open up an ‘interpretive space’ that could locate human beings in a continuum with the rest of creation and offer insight for an alternative earth-keeping ethos. Human *solidarity* with the rest of creation thus critiques traditional western dualistic and hierarchical conceptions of creation on one hand, and serves as an orienting concept for the ‘fresh’ earth-keeping ethos this study proposes on the other.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|---|
| ATRs | African Traditional Religions |
| CWM | Council for World Mission |
| ECZ | Environmental Council of Zambia |
| IPCC | International Panel on Climate Change |
| JCTR | Jesuit Centre for Theological Research |
| NGOs | Non-Governmental Organisations |
| UCZ | United Church of Zambia |
| UCZTC | United Church of Zambia Theological College |
| UN | United Nations |

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The environmental crisis is a vitally important subject in Zambia, as it is elsewhere in the world. According to the Index Mundi Zambia's current most pressing and important environmental issues include: 'air pollution, and resulting acid rain in the mineral extraction and refining region; chemical runoff into watersheds; poaching (which) seriously threatens (wild life) populations; soil erosion; desertification; lack of adequate water (which) presents health risks.' (http://www.indexmundi.com/zambia/enviromt_current_issues.html, Accessed 21 June 2013). These environmental problems result from economic activity that does not take ecosystems into account. The Index Mundi defines ecosystems as 'ecological units made up of complex communities of organisms, their specific environments and their activities by which they support life-existence' (http://www.indexmundi.com/zambia/enviromt_current_issues.html, Accessed 21 June 2013), not just human life.

I live in Kitwe in the Copperbelt province. Kitwe is the hub of the Copperbelt, the mineral extraction and refining region of Zambia. I have existential experience of the air and water pollution documented by Index Mundi. The topic of this study is therefore close to heart from that very existential standpoint. But my environmental credentials go beyond my life on the Copperbelt. I grew up in rural parts of Zambia and throughout my primary and secondary education I was a member of the *Chongololo Club*¹, a nature conservation club that targeted children in the 1970s and 1980s. I learnt from the *Chongololo Club* that most animals were not out to get humans but in fact only became aggressive when threatened. That insight instilled into my young mind a sense that animals and other living things deserved to be 'given' their 'space'.

Admittedly, having been raised with values of nature conservation, my hermeneutic is shaped by that ethic. I however, come to this subject not as an activist advocating a particular ethic but as a learner who is a Christian, seeking a theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos. My

¹ Chongololo is the name of the millipede in at least three Zambian languages. Millipedes were (are they still?) very common place during rainy seasons in the country and they tended to be trampled without regard for their role in the ecosystem. The name Chongololo club was perhaps intentional in that regard and it made children stop and really look at the millipede and to appreciate its beauty and role in the rhythm of life around it.

quest is not for a pragmatic quick fix of human intentions and actions. Rather I seek theologically plausible alternatives that bring together insights from various perspectives that could set us humans on a new trajectory (shaped by on-going theological discourse) in our relationship with the rest of creation, beginning at the level of Christian theological discourse, however controversial or counter intuitive to the belief we have inhabited thus far.

It is generally accepted that human activity is at the heart of the causes of environmental degradation in Zambia as elsewhere in the world. The role that human beings have played in environmental degradation is also well documented. It is a case of human beings giving themselves more 'space' at the expense of other living things to a lesser or greater degree in different parts of the world.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a leading group of climate scientists, in its 2013 report blames human action for global warming. It estimates that 'a probability of at least 95 percent, up from 90 percent in the panel's last report in 2007 and 66 percent in 2001.' (<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/chi-climate-change-report-20130927,0,7096342.story>, Accessed 27 September 2013). The Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Christiana Figueres' response to the IPCC report noted that it 'underscored a need for urgent action to combat global warming.' (<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/chi-climate-change-report-20130927,0,7096342.story>, Accessed 27 September 2013).

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The important thing to note in the IPCC report is the emphasis on human action. What is true of global warming is true of other ecological issues that are responsible for the environmental degradation the world faces today. That human attitudes towards the rest of creation lie at the centre of the eco-crisis, is the emphatic verdict. Those attitudes have been conditioned by ways of perceiving that perpetuate human domination of the rest of creation.

The attitudes of human beings towards the rest of creation are generally believed to be shaped by what we as humans believe about creation and our place within it. Christian anthropology which has been shaped by a dualistic hierarchical mind-set about creation over many centuries is an important factor. The dualistic hierarchical mind-set is thus deemed to be responsible for the anthropocentric human self-understanding with the ensuing domination by humans of the rest of creation.

Insights emerging from different disciplines including indigenous wisdom provide fresh perspectives on the place of human beings within the earth community. They challenge traditional dualistic, hierarchical and mechanistic conceptions of creation that have hitherto shaped Christian views of creation and conditioned biblical anthropology. Insights that challenge the dualistic hierarchical mind-set point us to the possibility of a fresh theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos that could be based on the notion of human solidarity² with the whole earth that allows all of creation to flourish rather than a domination principle that looks to human interests alone and sees the rest of creation as existing solely for the benefit or service of humanity.

This study postulates some insights that shift from an anthropocentric focus to a focus on the totality of creation. A non-reductionist physicalist view that conceives of human beings as ‘spirited bodies’ recasts human identity in new terms with implications for our self-understanding, relationship with the rest of creation and the role of the creator. Such understanding would potentially have a bearing on how we (re)interpret themes in the creation account of Genesis 1.

Zambian and other African indigenous eco-wisdom/practices of earth-keeping are also considered in this study as an example of alternative cosmologies that could contribute to shaping a fresh theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos that this study attempts to propose. That in turn would have implications for the conception of biblical anthropology which is understood to be responsible for human attitudes and actions that are the cause of the eco-crisis we face today which is premised on human domination of creation. That is what this study attempts to do.

The nexus for the key insights derived from the perspectives that are advanced in this study is the notion of human solidarity with the rest of creation understood in the light of Christian tradition and theology; in particular a pneumatological and Trinitarian view of creation.

² Solidarity is used here in a decisional sense. If human actions are at the heart of the eco-crisis we face today, human intentional activity in the reverse are required to halt and/or temper the trend. But solidarity is also understood in the sense of humans being placed in a continuum with the rest of creation (at the risk of testing the elasticity of that concept to its limits!).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Human solidarity with the rest of creation critiques traditional dualistic and hierarchical conceptions of creation on the one hand, and serves as an orienting concept for a ‘fresh’ theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos on the other. To curve out such an ethos, Zambian Christianity needs to grapple with the tension between the western-inherited dualistic (biblical) worldview and the interconnectedness of life inherent within its indigenous cosmogony.

There is therefore a need, in Zambia, for theological reflection that builds on and critiques both Christian tradition, missionary Christianity and traditional indigenous wisdom not only in regard to ecological matters but to theology in general. We need a body of knowledge that has potential to deepen and inform environmental discourse at a fundamental level from an unapologetically Christian standpoint that brings tenets of faith into the dialogue. Zambian Christian views on earth-keeping have hitherto not benefitted from such insights. Therein lies the significance of this study, as a contribution to the discourse.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the understanding of human beings as ‘spirited bodies’³ and with reference to the Genesis 1’s creation story, Zambian cosmogony and pneumatological and Trinitarian conceptions of creation that open up an ‘interpretive space’ that could locate human beings in a web or matrix with the rest of creation for an earth-keeping ethos.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are to:

- 1 Investigate the non-reductive physicalist view of the human beings.
- 2 Attempt a re-interpretation of the creation story of Genesis 1 based on ‘fresh’ insights that critique the dualist hierarchical view.
- 3 Juxtapose insights from Zambian eco wisdom/practices with those from Genesis 1 for an earth-keeping ethos.

³ Other than being used in its non-reductionist physicalist view, ‘Spirited bodies’ in this study also serves as a metaphor for ‘fresh’ perspectives and insights that could inform and/or shape a theological anthropologically grounded earth-keeping ethos.

- 4 Propose a theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos that locates human beings in a continuum with the rest of creation.

1.5 Research Hypothesis

The view of human beings as ‘spirited bodies’ derived from a non-reductive physicalist standpoint that locates human beings within a ‘community of conscious solidarity’ (Welker 1994:282) with the rest of creation is a theologically plausible idea. That idea could inform a new ethic for earth-keeping and responsibility towards creation undergirded by new thinking and action derived upon belief that God’s creation has intrinsic worth and is ontologically interconnected.

1.6 Research Questions

- 1 How does the understanding of human beings as ‘Spirited bodies’ from a non-reductionist physicalist view critique the dualist hierarchical view?
- 2 Could a re-interpretation of the creation story of Genesis 1 in light of ‘fresh’ insights from a non-reductionist view yield a new view of humans’ relationship with the rest of creation?
- 3 What is the nexus between new insights from the creation story of Genesis 1 and **Zambian cosmogony for a theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos?**
- 4 What specific theological insights could inform an earth-keeping ethos?

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1.7 Significance of the Study

In his book titled *African Christianity: Its Public Role*, Paul Gifford observes that the Christian faith has a public role in Zambia. Gifford records that the Zambian Christian population is at 75%. That is a conservative figure compared to Operation World which puts it at 86.95% (<http://www.operationworld.org/zamb>, Accessed 9 October 2013). Such a high percentage of Christian presence in Zambia has led to Christianity having an undeniable public role. Despite the immense leverage that the Church has politically and economically (Gifford 1991) as a result of its public role, that has not translated into intentional and meaningful contribution to discourse (or even practical environmental concerns) in the country.

That absence of Christian perspectives regarding environmental concerns is borne out by the absence of the Church from the list of twenty-five government ministries and non-governmental organisations that were constituted to form the Environmental Council of Zambia (ECZ) in 1990. The ECZ was a statutory body created under an Act of Parliament: the Environmental Protection and Pollution Control Act of 1990, Cap 204 (<http://www.necz.org.zm/cap204/cap204part-II.html>, Accessed on 6 October 2013). The Church's absence⁴ on that council is a telling sign that the Church's contribution to and action in regard to environmental issues in Zambia had not registered enough on national radar to merit a seat on such a platform that has shaped national policy and the regulatory framework regarding the environment.

The Church in Zambia is involved to some degree in environmental issues. These efforts tend to be donor-sponsored and are theologically grounded/informed to varying degrees. Gifford (1991:219) discusses the high presence of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Zambia in his book and speaks from both a sympathetic and critical standpoint when he notes that 'it is acknowledged that entrepreneurs rush to establish them (NGOs) to fit with preferences of likely western donors...' This statement applies to some donor-funded Church-initiated environmental initiatives too.

The Catholic Church through the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection's (JCTR) Integrity of Creation Taskforce has published a booklet titled 'Caring for Our Environment'.

According to JCTR, '(t)his publication aims at inspiring individual and community responses to environmental challenges, guided by the Church Social Teaching and African Tradition' (JCTR 2008:5).

My own church, the United Church of Zambia (UCZ)'s most visible effort is through an environmentally-focussed annual service at St. Andrews' congregation in Lusaka which is held under the auspices of the Council for World Mission (CWM) Oikotree platform.⁵ The

⁴ This fact is so much surprising when the Zambian Constitution states that it is a 'Christian Nation'.

⁵ The author is aware of St. Andrew's congregation's annual service by virtue of personal participation as preacher at its inauguration on 22nd February 2009 (see bibliographical for reference under Audio/Visual Materials). 'Oikotree' comes about as the fruit of the vision of the Accra Confession (2004) and is a collaborative effort by Council for World Mission (CWM), World Council of Churches (WCC) and the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). It aims to create a movement for those seeking to live faithfully in the midst of economic injustice and ecological destruction. Oikotree advocates "Justice at the Heart of Faith", seeks to pursue alternatives in response to socio-economic issues in various contexts and engages in difference areas of social justice issues. The name "Oikotree" is taken with reference to Revelations 22:1-2, that refers to "the tree of life" and "the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." It is open to individuals,

UCZ also participates in a tree planting and eco-education initiative that has been carried out at one of its high schools – Chipembi Secondary School in the Chisamba area of Central Province which is sponsored by the Finnish Embassy in Zambia. The Embassy funds a number of environmental programmes in Zambia.⁶

The two examples illustrate the gap that exists in theological discourse in regard to eco-concerns in Zambia. It has been acknowledged that the people of Africa ‘have been influenced by a cosmology inherited from the West: the mechanistic perspective that views all things as lifeless commodities to be understood scientifically and to be used for human ends’ (Sindima, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2327>, Accessed 7 October 2013). Construction of theologies that would appropriate local cosmological insights and grapple with the dualistic domination-mechanistic model is therefore called for.

There is a dearth of alternative theological constructs for earth-keeping within Zambian Christianity. Theological integration of wisdom and resources from sources other than the Bible and Christian tradition is a highly controversial issue in Zambia. The fear of syncretism inherited from missionary attitudes prevails, so that the Church’s outlook theologically is tied too strongly to missionary Christianity and thus the prevalence of the dualistic mind-set.

If alternative perspectives and insights gained traction in theological discourse and praxis within the Zambian Church, they could incrementally displace the long-held mechanistic views of creation that have led to the understanding of creation in power-dominion terms. A new theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos that upholds human solidarity with and care for creation would grow up in their place. This study is both significant and relevant for making such reflection available to a Zambian Church – even if only within the limited scope of a master’s degree thesis which may only be on the library shelves of one or two theological institutions in Zambia.

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1.8 Limitation of the Study

This study does not seek to outline practical answers to the eco-crisis. It rather explores how ‘new’ insights in the sciences, philosophy, Christian theology and indigenous wisdom can aid

churches, people’s movements and all who share a concern for justice and the healing of the nations.’ (<http://www.cwmission.org/programmes/justice-witness/oikotree/>. Accessed, 6 October 2013).

⁶ The author served as chaplain at Chipembi Secondary School from May to December 2009 not long after the eco-education and tree planting exercise were launched at the school.

the reinterpretation of long-held Christian views of creation and human self-understanding with implications for an earth-keeping ethos. The study, thus aims to bring the various strands of the discussion mainly at the level of abstraction without necessarily drawing pragmatic answers to the eco-crisis. My conviction, however, is that if a theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos finds its outworking in the liturgical, pastoral and educational life of the church, who knows what changes that could yield?

The ecological crisis cannot be discussed without reference to biblical creation theology. Yet this study will not explore that vast subject within its limited scope. This study focuses on the Genesis 1 pericope because of all the creation accounts in the Bible, it is the most well-known and the one from which the ‘dominion’ doctrine has been derived. As a result it also one of the foci for views that seek to challenge the power-dominion model. An example of that is Buitendag’s (2012:8) view that discerns within the Genesis 1 creation pericope, ‘a particular classification from ecology: ecosphere→ atmosphere → hydrosphere→ troposphere→ biosphere.’ Further, Buitendag notes that theologically that ‘sphere’ ontologically links human beings in that ecological ‘participating niche!’ Thus the Genesis passage is re-interpreted from an ecological perspective that lends itself specifically relevant for the purposes of this study. Other than that this passage is being juxtaposed with Zambian cosmogony. The Genesis passage has a clear cosmogonic focus and can, like Zambian creation stories be read as folklore, though it is not limited to that. This is a further motivation for the use of Genesis 1 in this study.

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The study purports to draw upon Zambian cosmogony and highlights eco-wisdom/practices that could inform and enrich a theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos. The limitation of that claim in a study like this one is that there is very limited scope for field research. Much of the body of knowledge that inhabits such eco-wisdom remains unarticulated and unwritten. What is termed Zambian cosmogony that is presented in this study are creation myths derived from two ethnic groups, namely the Bemba of Northern Zambia, *Myth of the Creation Story of the Bemba of Zambia* (see Appendix I) and the Kaonde of the North-western, *Kaonde Myth of Creation* (see Appendix II). These are read in light of another indigenous tale, namely, *The Honey Bird and the Three Gourds* (see Appendix III) which supplements the two creation myths. The other source is a reflection on Bantu cosmogony titled *Earth in African Mythology* (see Appendix IV). These are considered within the broader view of secondary sources that discuss and/or characterise Ubuntu cosmogony or worldview.

The availability of the resources used for this study and the possibility of field research bode well for extending upon this research for a PhD project. Extended research has the potential to build upon this study through field research. For the purpose of this thesis, suffice it to say that an issue has been identified and reasonably substantiated, albeit within the defined confines. Zambian cosmogony thus contributes to this study by hinting at a fresh angle that the subject that could take given further research.

This study is consequently a literature study, based on qualitative research with an abdicative methodology.

1.9 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The conception of human beings as ‘spirited bodies’ is underpinned by *emergent* notions of being. The emergent view understands entities to be as real as the parts that make them up. This view is the philosophical basis for a non-reductionist physicalist view of human beings as ‘spirited bodies’ rather than embodied spirits. This view is non-reductionist in that it does not discount ‘higher’ human characteristics such as morality, rationality and the capacity for relationship. This study proposes this conception of human beings as a pre-requisite for a theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos.

Human beings are thus ‘freed’ from the traditional views of being that are based on a dualistic (body-soul dichotomy), deterministic-hierarchical principle. They are rather viewed from the standpoint of being ontologically interconnected with the larger whole or ecosystem of all of creation. Buitendag, (2012:1) argues for what he terms an *eco-sociological niche* ‘of the human being.’ In that conception life goes beyond body and soul and even spirit taking into account ‘the human being’s environment sociologically as well as ecologically.’ According to Buitendag then, ‘An eco-sociological understanding of *homo religiosus* is therefore to assume life as ontologically distributed.’

Such an insight makes it possible to conceive of human beings and creation outside the traditional western hierarchy of beings (Murphy in Brown & Murphy 1998: 127-28). The matter of human uniqueness and its accompanying notion of exercising dominion over the rest of creation in the name of difference or uniqueness is thereby critiqued.

That critique opens up for the reinterpretation of the biblical accounts of creation and appropriation of alternative cosmologies as resources for theological grounding of an earth-

keeping ethos. In that regard, this study has elected to consider the creation story of Genesis 1 and to attempt an appropriation of eco-wisdom derived from Zambian cosmogony. These resources conceived of within a conceptual frame that understands human beings as being interconnected with other creatures makes way for an alternative view of creation from the point of view of human solidarity with the rest of creation. Sindima, writing from African perspective speaks of one such alternative view that he terms, ‘the (African) traditional concept of *bondedness* (emphasis mine) of life’ that could be ‘an organized logic informing ... life and practice.’ (Sindima: <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2327>, Accessed 7 October 2013).

Moltmann (2012) in his book *Ethics of Hope* draws implications for ecological ethics from the Gaia theory that is based on the notion that ecology is not subjected to human existence. Rather, that, human beings are too be understood as part of the rest of creation. He urges the integration of natural sciences and humanities in seeking to understand the earth as an organism that is interconnected with humans. In the same way as creation, knowledge is also to be approached as a whole, not as disintegrated parts, hence the need for interdisciplinary discourse.

1.10 Definition of Terms

The term *spirited bodies* is used in this study to refer to the view that neither discounts the ‘higher’ human qualities nor defines the human person as merely a body. To the question ‘Are we purely our bodies and no more’; the ‘spirited bodies’ view gives a nuanced answer that is neither reductionist nor purely physicalist. And as earlier alluded to (footnote 3 on page 18) in this study also serves as a metaphor for ‘fresh’ perspectives and insights that could inform and/or shape a theological anthropology that undergirds the ensuing earth-keeping ethos. The sense in which the term is employed for this study will become evident in the discussion.

Solidarity (of humans) with the rest of creation, takes into account an understanding of human distinctiveness and uniqueness within various forms of hierarchies. Solidarity in that respect does not refer to absolute egalitarianism. ‘[A]n egalitarian approach may not do full justice to the complexities of ecosystems. There are multiple hierarchies in every ecosystem.’ (Conradie in Du Toit 2004:122) The term is thus used in a qualified way to accommodate nuances that are inevitable in a multi-layered discourse as this one.

Soul will be used in reference to traditional, biblically defined anthropology that speaks of the soul in terms of the spiritual dimension or quality inert to the human being which is also construed as the avenue through which God relates to humans. The soul features in discussions of the *imago Dei*. The traditional view speaks of the soul as the locus of the *imago Dei*.

The term *creation* is used in this study to refer generally to the universe or earth, its environment or ecosystems that include all living things that are part of the natural rather than man-made environment.

Imago Dei, or image of God denotes the reference in the Genesis 1 account of creation to humans as having been created ‘in the image of God’ (Genesis 1:27). In the context of this study that term is significant because Christian tradition has used it as a point of departure for arguing that the creation in God’s image is what set humans at the pinnacle of creation or that therein lies the uniqueness that sets humans apart from the rest of creation.

Pneuma is used to refer to the Stoic idea as wind or force which found its way into Christian tradition by way of Old Testament studies and pneumatology. Pneumatology is used as a derivative of that Stoic concept but used in this study to refer to the broader systematic study of the Holy Spirit and in particularly the way in which Welker’s (1994:296-97)

pneumatology presents the work of the Spirit of God as one who ‘reflects a domain ... not determined by self-relation exercising control, or even merely by intellectual self-relation’ but is other-directed and creates an ever-extending domain exuding a power that affects persons by enlisting ‘their services in order to protect, liberate, renew, and enliven other creatures.’ The term is significant for the study as it is applied to and is at the centre of the reinterpretation of hierarchical conception of God’s relationship with creation and in turn human beings’ solidarity with other creatures.

Determinism here is used in relation to the understanding of creation from the causal point of view; where God is viewed as the all-powerful creator who brought creation into being and that that act of creation cannot be repeated because all that ‘will be’ has been determined at creation. In this study, the reference to *emergence* is the antonym to determinism.

Emergence is used in the sense in which Gaiaism employs the term. It is built on the concept of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts, that ‘life on this planet is an emergent

property with each part, cell, creature (according to Gaiaism) playing a part in the whole’ (<http://www.stewdean.com/alife/emergence.html>, Accessed 30 September 2013).

Force-field is a concept derived from English chemist and physicist Michael Faraday’s field concept. Pannenberg’s (1991:46) application of the concept to theology is based on his appreciation of what he terms ‘the independence in the principle of field concept of force from the notion of body that makes its theological application possible so as to describe all actions of God in nature and history as field effects.’ According to Pannenberg, this view of creation can be sustained without any need to ‘physicalise the theological concept of the creative, sustaining and redeeming actions of God.’ He further notes the relationship between and rootedness of this concept within the pneuma theories of the classical period (Pannenberg’s (1991:47). Therein lies the link with this study in regard to the solidarity of creatures indicated above in the working definition of the term pneuma.

Reductionism is used in reference to the definition of the human being (and by implication creation) ‘in a non-reductionist physcalist way’ to denote explanations of human identity that as Murphy (in Murphy & Knight 2010:14) says are a ‘reduction of humans to nerves and cells and their associated molecules’.

Cosmogony is used alongside cosmologies to denote the myths, oral traditions and the accompanying study of the beginnings of and eventual end of the universe. The ‘gony’ in cosmogony is derived from Genesis and so the primary focus is on the origin of things. Cosmogony is thus the compound term that denotes the gamut of mythological conceptions of origins and their interpretations in the particular referent cultural tradition (in this case Zambian). The ‘logos’ in cosmologies denotes ‘the study of’ the cosmos for clues that explain the universe.

1.11 Chapters Summary

This first chapter is an introduction to the subject which gives a background, states and defines the problem that this thesis attempts to address. It outlines the aim and objectives of the study. It also gives a sketch of how the study will progress and offers a justification for the importance of the study.

Chapter two gives a critical account of the literature consulted for this study on the limitations of western conception hierarchical conception and fresh insights from the non-

reductive conceptions of human beings and a re-interpretation of the creation narrative of Genesis 1 and Zambian cosmologies. The literature review thus orients the study and provides its bearings within the context of existing research.

Chapter three discusses the methodology employed in the research of the topic. The study approaches the subject from four perspectives. (1) A retrospective account of the views that shaped hierarchical views of creation based on a dualistic principal that in turn shaped the human power-dominion relationship with the rest of creation; (2) The non-reductionist physicalist view of human beings and creation; (3) a re-reading of the creation narrative of Genesis 1 in light of 'fresh' insights; (4) an exploration of insights from Zambian cosmogony. The key is how each of these perspectives provides 'fresh' insights for human solidarity with creation which could undergird a theological imperative for earth-keeping.

Chapter four interprets and explains further the data presented in previous chapters. It synthesises the discussion and proposes the premise for a theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos.

Chapter five sums up the thesis, concludes, offers recommendations and draws implications for the proposed earth-keeping ethos.

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2. LITERATURE OVERVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter accounts for this study by locating it within the context of existing research in the field of eco-theology. The literature references key areas of the study, namely, the non-reductionist physicalist view of human beings (as ‘spirited bodies’) and creation; the limitations of the (western) hierarchical conception of creation; insights from re-interpretation of the creation narrative of Genesis 1 and Zambian creation myths. These are considered in view of the aim of the study, namely, their viability as sources of theological insights that could potentially inform and/or shape an earth-keeping ethos.

The literature review thus orients the study and provides its bearings within the broader subject of theology and eco-theology with reference to creation theology. It also presents literature that critically reviews the biblically derived notions that have conditioned the hierarchical relationship of human beings with the rest of creation. It also explores literature that points to insights that potentially validate an alternative view of human beings and creation based on human solidarity with the rest of creation which could shape a theologically grounded Christian earth-keeping ethos.

The critique of the western dualistic world view in reference to the ideas and philosophical conceptions that shaped it provided alternative ways of understanding. These views point to an alternative world view that locates human beings within an ontological interconnection with the rest of creation. They locate humans being in the cosmos as participants in a universe that is ‘not a collection of objects but a communion of subjects.’ (Hillary 2008:31). Such a view is based on solidarity or an interconnectedness between human beings and the rest of creation that is mutually beneficial.

Ultimately our relationship with creation as human beings should be based on an ethos of a deeper interconnectedness that is not mere utilitarian (beneficial to us!). That is, a theologically grounded view that replaces power dominion notions with a sense of reverence, awe, wonder and solidarity with the rest of creation and allows for mutual flourishing among all creatures.

2.2 In Search of a Doctrine of Creation

The communion of subjects engendered by alternative views of creation does not just pertain to creatures. The Creator is also participant within that communion. Moltmann (1985:1) in his book, *God in Creation* traces human domination to the conception of God as a transcendent ‘absolute subject’. He attributes the disconnection of God from creation to the understanding of God as absolute subject distanced from God's creation. According to this view the more transcendent God became, the more God ceased to be the immanent God who is present within and with God's own creation.

A consequence of conceiving of God as transcendent, *absolutised* and removed subject of creation is that human beings who were traditionally understood to be the pinnacle of God's creation then ‘fill the gap’ left by God and assume the role of ‘ruler’ of the earth. Human beings thus relate to the rest of creation in a power-dominion, hierarchical relationship. Moltmann (1985:1) argues that this was ‘the idea behind the centralistic theologies, and the foundation of the hierarchical doctrines of sovereignty.’

Michael Welker (1999:1) avers, in similar terms as Moltmann and further notes that there is a collapse of such ‘classical bourgeois theism’. He argues that some churches in Europe and in some parts of North America ‘are turning away from belief in a personal figure who exists over and above this world, who has brought forth both himself and all reality, and who controls and defines “everything” without distinction. They no longer believe in the omnipotence and ubiquity of God.’ He argues that among other reasons Christological, Trinitarian, pneumatological and metaphysical questions and insights have collaborated to bring about the collapse of long-held beliefs about God in theistic terms.

In the face of that, the question is, what creation theology will replace the theistic power-dominion model? Moltmann (1993: xii-xiii) asks, ‘Faced as we are with the progressive industrial exploitation of nature and its irreparable destruction, what does it mean to believe in God the Creator, and in this world as (God's) creation?’ He adds to this pertinent question that ‘[t]oday the problem of the doctrine of God is knowledge of creation’ and that ‘the theological adversary is the nihilism practised in our dealings with nature.’ In other words, according to Moltmann without a creation theology that is based on alternative beliefs to the traditional dualistic ones, we can only expect emptiness or nothingness - our own self-obliteration!

Moltmann (1993) makes this critical observation at the beginning of his book on the subject of the doctrine of creation. In that book, he develops an ecological doctrine of creation in which he makes the point that out of monotheism ensues the disjunction between the Creator God and creation. This understanding of the position of God vis-à-vis creation when combined with the belief that human beings are created in the image of God ensues the belief that humans have a God-given capacity for and mandate to dominate the rest of creation.

Fresh constructs for a creation theology thus need to not only offer a vision of solidarity of humans with the rest of creation but to locate God's 'place' vis-à-vis creation. Only then can we speak of a viable alternative that has potential to unseat monotheistic beliefs that have shaped a power-dominion relationship with devastating effects to creation.

Welker (1999:3) contends that the questions and insights that have collaborated to bring down theism do not by the same token render void biblical traditions as a basis and orientation for theology. To demonstrate that Welker (1999:3) outlines what he calls new biblical theologies which are not based on a single form or theme. He employs consciously pluralistic approaches that 'take seriously the diverse biblical traditions with their different situations in life, with the continuities and discontinuities in their experiences and expectations of God, since those experiences and expectations are sometimes compatible with each other and sometimes not directly so.' Without such pluralistic approaches he contends that the result would be as was before a reading of theistic themes (or indeed whatever ideas happen to be current and influential at the time) into biblical traditions.

Welker characterises these new approaches to biblical theology as having been developing since the 1980s in Germany and North America through interdisciplinary and inter-confessional collaboration. The intention of these approaches, according to him is to 'work out a tension-laden typology of inquiry and speech about God – a typology that gives rise to permanent self-criticism and creative reconstruction.' (Welker 1999:4).

Welker (1999:4) aptly adds that this kind of self-criticism is 'essential for theology's never ending task of distinguishing materially appropriate speech about God from religious projections and wishful fantasies.' He further argues that the new approaches to biblical theology do not to seek to dissolve the differences in biblical traditions but rather to create a basis and 'restore (the) importance and orienting power to complex theological concepts that

have had their cutting edge dulled by natural and so-called philosophical theologies in favour of reductionistic clarity’.

Put positively, Welker’s argument serves as a robust advocacy for non-reductionist clarity that holds differences in biblical traditions in a healthy tension; and rekindles the potency of the orienting powers of complex theological concepts. He proposes that that endeavour should be done in the context of interdisciplinary, inter-confessional and tension-laden *sphere of inquiry*.

The Zambian cosmogony included in this study is thus at home within the ‘interdisciplinary’ and tension-laden *sphere of inquiry*. How the indigenous ecological knowledge and wisdom from any culture could contribute to Christian theological insights is a tension-laden endeavour. There is much to sort out to ensure that the wisdom and insights of various traditions enrich the ‘on-going self-criticism and creative reconstruction’.

The key insight arising from Zambia cosmogony that would benefit the ‘on-going self-criticism and creative construction’ that Welker proposes is what Sindima (1990) terms the ‘bondedness of life’. He advances that notion as a possible foundational concept as a ‘viable alternative that could provide a foundation for a doctrine of creation and for the transformation of society’ (Sindima in Birch et. al. 1990:137-147)⁷ with potential to reorient the way of thinking and ~~looking at the world that has potential to re-orient the power-~~ domination dualistic view of creation. Creation myths and stories are therefore important as sources of such insights that could inform and transform mind-sets that have upheld the western mechanistic view of creation.

Sindima captures the task we are describing very aptly when he says,

How we think about the world affects the way we live in it. In particular, our understanding of nature – our cosmology – affects the way we understand ourselves, the way we relate to other people, and, of course, the way we relate to the earth and other forms of life, For some time the people of Africa have been influenced by a cosmology inherited from the West: the mechanistic perspective that views all things as lifeless commodities to be understood scientifically and to be used for human

⁷ The online article consulted does not have page numbers. The article references the book in which the essay first appeared. The page numbers in this citation refer to the chapter in the book rather than the online article.

ends. Yet these people have an alternative way of looking at the world, an alternative cosmology, which can better serve their cultural development and social justice in an ecological context. This alternative may be called a life-centred way, since it stresses the bondedness, the interconnectedness of all living being.

(Sindima in Birch et. al. 1990:137-147)

Van Dyk (2001:4) observes that creation by a creator-god is a basic belief in all religions and that ‘creation is the cornerstone of all beliefs in a supernatural being or in a spiritual world.’ And that ‘stories of creation are often the first stories told by an emerging culture and are widespread throughout the world.’ She goes on to underline how contemporary theologians have come to appreciate the once neglected foundational importance of creation theology ‘within the thought system of the Bible.’

The resurgence of the inquiry into creation theology imbues the juxtaposition of the Genesis 1 creation narrative with Zambian creation myths with the possibility of being used as sources of theological insights that could shape and/or inform a doctrine of creation that would in turn shape an earth-keeping ethos with a different orientation to the mechanistic one.

Van Dyk (2001:10) points out that Old Testament scholars long realised that parts of the Old Testament were to be read as folklore, not history. The creation story in Genesis 1 is one such narrative. This study picks up on Van Dyk's view and juxtaposes the Genesis 1 creation narrative with Zambian creation myths. The Bible belongs to a tradition that may be difficult to decipher because of its remoteness in terms of the historical distance. Its many oral compositional phases to when it became a written text within the Old Testament span a long period. On the other hand Zambian creation myths are more accessible and closer to their oral sources. Those myths could therefore shed interpretive light on the function of oral narrative in the biblical creation story (van Dyk 2001:6).

In his article *Philosophy, Mythology and an African Cosmological System*, Udefi Amaechi presents a compelling argument that in my estimation further validates the inclusion of insights from Zambian cosmologies in this discussion. With reference to history he notes that there is interplay between philosophy, mythology and cosmology. Udefi makes the following argument for the inclusion of African indigenous cosmological insights in philosophical and by extension, for the purposes of this study, theological discourse:

...philosophy began in wonder and like cosmology and mythology concerns the basic beliefs of the people about the world, man and existence in their totality. Granted that myths and cosmology may be said to characterise traditional or primitive society, but saying so does not imply that such society is impervious to some sort of rational or philosophic elements no matter how rudimentary. If philosophy, in its broadest sense, is defined as world-view and as certain basic beliefs and conceptions about the world, man and existence, then it makes sense to say that traditional society possesses some philosophy.

(Udefi 2012:61)

Udefi's pushes back against 'a tendency by some scholars, especially those professional African philosophers who belong to the analytic school of African philosophy, to deny any relationship between philosophy, myth and cosmology'. He makes a case for the creativity required for the on-going 'self-criticism and reconstruction' of a Christian creation theology.

Alternative theological constructs need to be allowed to gain traction in theological discourse before they can hold sway the Christian mind-set shaped by dualistic thinking. There should be no 'rush' towards conceptual clarity. A unitary approach to knowledge yields layer upon layer of meanings that need to be communicated from various dimensions to achieve truly multi-faceted, multidisciplinary discourse.

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Udefi disavows the 'characterisation of philosophy as a rational and critical inquiry, while myth and cosmology are taken as belonging to the realm of stories or folktales created by so-called primitive or traditional society to satisfy some emotional and instinctual need' (Udefi 2012:59). Such categorisation has been superseded. What can be gathered from traditional knowledge about conceptions of creation and the place of human beings in it can thus be justifiably admitted into critical theological reflection and study. The inclusion of Zambian cosmogony is not a rush to the conclusion that all religious traditions share a 'creation theology', it is simply taking seriously an alternative world-view as a resource.

Ojomo (2011:101) has bemoaned the grounding of environmental ethics in western perspectives. In his article *Environmental Ethics: And African Understanding* he notes Segun Ogungbemi and Godfrey Tagwa's pioneering work in 'philosophical discussion on environmental ethics from an African vantage point.' Ogungbemi and Tagwa defend and propose 'ethics of nature-relatedness' and 'eco-bio-communitarianism' respectively, which

they put forward as theories for an African oriented environmental ethic. The African orientation of these contributions are enlightening and inspiring. They provide a metaphysical outlook that though not yet definitive push eco-theological discourse forward.

The key insight advanced by Ogungbemi and Tangwa departs from the western anthropocentric and individualistic worldview to an African worldview undergirded by a communal ethos. This insight is acknowledged while assuming that it ‘does not necessarily have an automatic consequence on the environment’ (Ojomo 2011:109). That observation is instructive and should be taken seriously in the application of the African worldview to an earth-keeping ethos. It may be presumptuous to presume that eco-consciousness was intentionally imbedded in the communal ethos.

This study thus does not assume that what is read as eco-wisdom in relation to the notion of solidarity of human beings with the rest of creation in Zambian culture was necessarily intentionally oriented towards care for creation as such. In the same way we cannot say that the anthropocentric and individualistic worldview of necessity leads to environmental degradation. The discussion has to be more nuanced than that.

Conceptions of creation in African theological discourse that are relevant to ecology are premised on what has been written about the nature African Traditional Religions (ATR). In his article *Creation in African Thought*, Ritchie, outlines some of the key aspects of the conceptions of nature and presents a brief survey of current responses to them. He notes the diversity of the African context and cautions that ‘there is no single authoritative tradition to refer to as a guide. Each ethnic group has its own distinct language, culture and religion’ (<http://www.escape.ca/~irichie/ATS.Chapter3.htm>, Accessed 13 November 2013).

For that reason Ritchie takes a multifocal approach and synthesises works about ecological practices throughout Africa. He cites Mbiti at length, as can be expected, in describing the ATR backdrop to these beliefs. The strength of his method is that it avoids focussing on one ethnic group which could be erroneously read as being representative of the entire continent.

Taking a cue from Richie, this study will attempt a similar approach by casting the two cosmogonic myths from the Bemba and Kaonde people of Zambia against the broader backdrop of some aspects of Richie's synthesis of African views of creation. For the purpose of this study we pick out those aspects related to the relationship between God and creation

and human beings and the rest of creation. Ritchie outline the following attributes as being more or less overarching:

1. The ontological hierarchy of modes of being ranging from God-spirits-humans-animals-plants-phenomena and non-living objects.
2. The sacral quality of the material universe with a ‘force of energy’ that permeates the universe and which can be tapped ‘for the good and ill of their communities’ (Mbiti 2002:16).
3. African creation stories do not generally state human creation in God’s image nor do they expressly state human dominion over the rest of creation, although ontological superiority of human beings is assumed.
4. To many African communities, trees and forests have special significance; even though tree clearing as a farming method has been said to have detrimental effects on the environment.
5. Even though nature is used there is room in African thought to construe that humanity is part of nature and their solidarity with nature even if nature is used.
6. Taboos and ‘totemism’ are designed to ritually preserve nature thereby indicating the desire to remain in harmony with nature.

(<http://www.escape.ca/~irichie/ATS.Chapter3.htm>, accessed 13 November 2013)

While presenting a picture that seems to depict a desire for harmony with creation, Ritchie urges scepticism and warns against presuming intentionality for ecological harmony in the African worldview. He notes that when studied in depth, it is clear that African myths also served the purpose of sanctioning human mastery over creation for human survival.

Be that as it may, this study looks to cosmogonic myths as a source for theological resources regardless of the motive or utilitarian function that brought them into being. Part of the task before applying any such insights is critical theological reflection is to decipher what can and cannot be appropriated for a Christian earth-keeping ethos. On the whole it is understood that in the African worldview is based on a communal principal. We may not generalise about other aspects of African cosmogony.

The confession of God as creator lies at the heart of a Christian creation theology. Conradie (2013:4) notes that it is ‘a deeply counter-intuitive claim given the tension that we as humans experience between the grandeur and misery of our existence.’ We can add to that the notion that the creator should not necessarily be conceived of as the originator of creation. Neither should we just conclude in a hurry that creation is dependent upon God. The quest for a

theologically adequate creation theology that could undergird a Christian earth-keeping ethos should explore those questions afresh without rushing towards clarity.

2.3 A Trinitarian View of Creation

Moltmann (1985:12-13) argues that the transition required to correct theological conceptions of creation of the past will require more than theological adaptation. He argues that Christian ‘... traditions are faced to an even stronger degree with the need to rediscover their own original truth, which was distorted or suppressed in the age that is now drawing to a close, when the world was dominated by means of subjection of nature...’

Moltmann (1995) suggests that the corrective to the notion of domination is to no longer conceive of God in monotheistic terms as the absolute single subject, but rather, to perceive God as being Trinitarian relationship. That view opens up avenues that could lead to insights that if appropriated, embrace concepts of relationship that hitherto have not contributed to a theology of creation. According to Moltmann (1995:2) the view of God as God ‘in a relationship of community - many-layered, many faceted and at many levels’ would lie at the foundation of and provide orientation for a non-hierarchical view of creation.

Sindima’s comment on the communal view of life referred to above, in which he perceives creation (and by extension the community) as being built on relationships has something in common with Moltmann’s Trinitarian view of God, even though their starting points vary. Sindima notes that ‘community life emphasises being-together for the purpose of allowing life to flow and for the purpose of creating possibilities ... based on a sense of the bondedness and oneness of life.’ (Sindima 1990, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2327>, Accessed 12 November 2013) This notion of community extends rather than diminishes life. The rich relationships within the ‘bondedness of life’ cannot but be self-extending! Could that not be said about the Trinitarian relationship?

Moltmann notes the limitations of reductionist ways of thinking that objectify and reduce things and ideas and then reconstruct them from a primary core that is no longer divisible. He upholds the relational model above this kind of analytical thought. He conceives of life as ‘communication and communion’ (Moltmann 1985:3) in an ever extending relationship.

Thus according to Moltmann the communal model of life trumps the analytical model which isolates and dissolves even the primary particles. Knowledge of ‘what is real as real and what

is living as living' cannot be divorced from 'its own primal and individual community, in its relationships, interconnections and surroundings' (Moltmann 1985:3).

This kind of integral thinking regards humans and nature as being fundamentally connected. And by 'nature' Moltmann (1985:3) 'means both the natural world in which we share, and our bodily nature. As a network and interplay of relationships is built up, a symbiotic life comes into being.' And according to this view '(t)he body must no longer be seen as something we possess.' Green (2008:64) says something similar when he says 'Soul is a way of being, not something to have.' On that premise and for the purpose of this study we may argue for the conception of a 'spirited body' that derives upon the non-reductionist physicalist view of being. It is neither a materialistic nor is it a nebulous form of existence.

Moltmann's argument about the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of creation is sustained into his 2001 publication in which he asserts that humans beings be 'admitted' as participants 'into life of the geosystem as a whole' (Moltmann 2012:11). He made the same point in his earlier work when he suggested that human solidarity with the rest of creation was the only solution to the environmental crisis the world faces. He observed and advised the following:

The progressive destruction of nature ... and the progressive threat to humanity ... have brought the ~~age of subjectivity and mechanistic domination of the world up~~ against their definitive limits. Faced with these limits, we have only one realistic alternative to universal annihilation: the non-violent, peaceful ecological world-wide community in solidarity.

Moltmann (1985:12)

Based on a Trinitarian insight, humans are justifiably therefore to no longer be viewed as being at the pinnacle of creation separated from the rest of creation by way of a hierarchical conception of creation with its accompanying power dominion over the rest of creation. Nor should creation be perceived as separate from its triune creator.

The task of constructing a creation theology therefore entails

... that the Christian confession in the triune creator is best understood as a critical re-description and ascription of this world as we now experience it. The Christian faith offers a way of perceiving the world, a way of seeing by seeing as, a

cosmological and liturgical vision, an interpretative framework, a way of making sense of reality around us. In short it confesses that the world as we know it in all its grandeur and misery, its ironies and ambiguities, its delights and its distress, its panache and its pain, its inadequacies and injustices, the ecstatic dance of the creatures amidst death and destruction, belong to the triune God.

Conradie (2013:6)

These words encapsulate the tension-laden nature of the task of constructing a creation theology. It unflinchingly describes the nature of the world we attribute to a loving God. The interdisciplinary collaboration we have mentioned above is put in perspective. Clearly Christians cannot claim to have fathomed the mystery that is creation. Ultimate questions of life called for a multifaceted approach. The important thing to emphasise is that the Christian faith has something to offer. That is why the absence of the Christian perspective on environmental issues in Zambia concerns me. Having said that I hasten to add that for a credible Christian perspective to be meaningful, it must be borne out of deep reflection that keeps other perspectives in view.

2.4 A Sense of Direction: Possible Sign Posts

Within this uncharted landscape a sense of direction is possible and it is derived from Christian tradition. © 2013 University of Pretoria. All rights reserved. The copyright in this work vests in the University of Pretoria. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, without the prior written permission of the University of Pretoria. The old cosmology having been challenged and consigned to the past, a new path seeks articulation. In that regard, Moltmann arguing from what he terms a messianic doctrine of creation, sees how a doctrine of creation could embody Christian hope and make human beings:

at home in existence – that is the relationships between God, humans beings and nature lose their tension ... the creative God himself dwells in creation ... making it his home, “on earth as it is in heaven” ... Then at last the true community of created beings with one another also begins... The bond of love, participation, communication and the whole complex warp and weft of interrelationships determines the life of the one single creation, united in the cosmic Spirit. A many-faceted community of creation comes into being.

(Moltmann 1985:5)

Moltmann notes that within biblical tradition the Spirit (*pneuma*) is the one ‘who brings the activity of the Father and the Son to its goal.’ (Moltmann 1985:9). He defines God’s presence in creation in *pneumatic* terms in which ‘every created reality’ is understood in terms of energy, grasping it as the realized potentiality of the divine Spirit. Through the energies and potentialities, the Creator is himself present in his creation. He does not merely confront it in his transcendence; entering into it, he is also immanent in it.

The derivative assumption from this assertion is that the Spirit of God ‘is poured out in everything that exists, that the Spirit preserves it, makes it live and renews it’ (Moltmann 1985:10). This affirmation of the pervasive presence of God’s Spirit in creation, according to Moltmann, challenges the previous conception of life as consisting in the particle premised on a Newtonian principle. He goes beyond the dualistic conception of creation to a pneumatological one. Life in all its multi-layered and interconnected relationships is conceived of as subsisting ‘in the Spirit: “*In him* we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). ... (T)hat means the interrelations of the world cannot be traced back to components or universal foundations (or whatever name we may give to ‘elementary particles.’ (Moltmann 1985:20).

Pannenberg (1991:44-45) speaking from another point of view, alludes to the relational quality of life when he notes that '(t)here's no living being that could live without an ecological context. ... only by transcending themselves do the creatures participate in the spiritual dynamics.’ This self-transcendence is conceived of in terms of participation, which denotes relationship. That participation ‘in spiritual dynamics’ is not confined to humans alone but includes all other creatures. This becomes evident when Pannenberg (1991:45) argues that ‘...the Spirit is not given to all creatures but operates in all of them by arousing their self-transcendent response which is the movement of life itself.’

Pannenberg’s idea of God as the power of the future and the Spirit as force field are intriguing. These notions have to be understood within the context of his philosophically framed ideas of "future" and "eternity" as not being timeless but time-spanning, and eschatological. Pannenberg's significance for this study lies in his idea that the Spirit is the source of life, to whom all creatures owe movement and activity which entails relationship as well as solidarity and a flourishing derived from a shared source.

His views challenge the Aristotelian idea of ontology. Life is no longer 'contained' in the particle but is 'freed/released' into a 'force field'. Ontology thus, according to this view, could be conceived of in terms of being or becoming or relationship and not in 'material' terms as 'contained in' (as in a pantheistic view). Pannenberg's view opens up other possibilities for a hermeneutic of the creator-creature relationship which may not be reductionist in terms of a causal-dependence dialectic between the creator and the created. That relationship is understood in a nuanced (re)definition of the concepts of time and space. This is a useful 'handle' for exploring the idea of 'spirited bodies' (as opposed to 'embodied spirits') which is posited as a prerequisite for an earth-keeping ethos suggested by this study and which could be read into a pneumatological view of creation.

Welker (1994:279) argues that 'the western world has been shaped by a spirit that exhibits another constitution, other interests, other goals and other power structures than the Spirit of God.' He adds that '(t)his spirit has spread over to the rest of the world.' And that '(i)t has defined and accounts for the essence of the human person ...' The accepted notions of creation that are derived from a biblical anthropology have traditionally been shaped by this same 'spirit'.

According to Welker (1994:279-80) that spirit has been mixed up with the Spirit of God. He notes among other things, that this spirit that has been confused with the Spirit of God 'establishes forms of domination that must seek to suppress and to erode alternatives to itself.' But

[b]y contrast the Spirit of God places people in the community of conscious solidarity, the community of responsibility and love ... who can live with a clear consciousness of perishability to their relative world and reality because they know they are ordained to participate in the divine glory and its extension.

(Welker 1994:280)

And they 'spread out a force field; they, too, constitute a domain of power in the Spirit of shared participation.' Welker speaks of the Spirit of God as enabling human beings to go 'beyond ourselves inasmuch as we resituate other creatures into, or enable them to move into, structural patterns that are beneficial to them.'

This study deems the spreading out of a force field and the constitution of the domain of power in the Spirit as that shared participation in which human beings are conceived of as being in biological and ecological continuity while maintaining human distinctiveness. Conceived of as such, human being can go beyond themselves, thinking and acting in ways that regard the rest of creation with God-given dignity and a sense of responsibility towards other creatures.

Moltmann (1985:190) argues for what he terms *imago mundi*; that human beings ‘can only exist in community with all other created beings and can only understand (self) in that community ...’ where they play a dual role as priestly creatures standing ‘before God on behalf of creation, and before creation on behalf of God.’

2.5 A Non-Reductionist Physicalist View of Human Beings

According to Murphy (in Murphy & Knight 2010:79) ‘the debate over dualism *versus* physicalism is thought to have been settled by scholars in a variety of fields.’ She suggests that the pressing issue of our day has more to do with distinctions between reductionism and antireductionism in the conception of human identity. This study has isolated the non-reductionist physicalist view of human beings as a resource for an alternative to the dualistic view of human beings and creation. That view holds a hope for the thriving of human beings and the rest of creation, in a solidarity that allows for their interlocked flourishing.

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In another work on the same subject, Murphy (2006) responds to the question of the basic nature of human beings from the perspectives of Christian theology, science and philosophy. She raises the question of whether as human beings ‘we are our bodies’ without any metaphysical aspects to our being ‘such as a mind, or soul or spirit.’ While advancing what she calls a non-reductionist physicalist position she construes human beings to be ‘complex physical organisms’. Murphy explains that that complexity includes the fact that humans are also ‘intelligent, moral, and spiritual’. (Murphy 2006: ix).

Murphy speaks of human beings as carrying a legacy of the culture of the entire humankind’s existence. Moritz (2011) speaks, in the same vein, of genealogical lineages of species as the carriers of that human legacy. Murphy adds to that the biblical assertion that human beings are ‘blown by the Breath of God’s Spirit’ which makes human beings ‘*spirited bodies*.’ (Murphy 2006: ix).

One of the major problems posed by the understanding of human nature, according to Murphy is the difference in conceptual references of terms like ‘soul or spirit’ (Murphy 2006:3). She notes that different people mean different things when they use these concepts. She attributes that to the evolution of views in the disciplines of science, philosophy and theology while arguing that there is no explicit teaching from the Bible that could explain the existence of a soul, as such.

Murphy explores perspectives of human nature from the biblical and theological perspectives. She goes on to show that that Bible does not posit an anthropological position and that the dualism that seems apparent in the Hebrew Bible is more to do with poor translation than any biblical assertion that sets humans apart from the rest of creation based on uniqueness. She notes that there is no evidence that the writers of the Bible were preoccupied with the question of what the make-up of a person is. She concludes that, that interpretation is a later imposition that is a legacy of philosophies and worldviews of translators of the biblical story from Hebrew to Greek.

Like Murphy (2006), Green (2008) goes beyond dualistic notions of the human being. He argues that the capacities which were attributed to the immortal soul became the premise for setting human beings apart from the rest of creation. Those capacities have been accounted for in different terms by being identified more with neuronal processes. The need to construct an immaterial soul as an attribute that explains human uniqueness is thereby rendered void.

Even though he does not use Murphy’s term ‘spirited bodies’, Green’s conception is similar to hers in that he speaks of the body as a unit without another separate unit, the soul. He picks up this theme later when he discusses narrative in relation to memory and identity-formation. He highlights the epistemological and cognitive dimensions of narrative. And so according to Green, the gospel story is understood as a way of entering into the community of God’s people and as ‘an on-going process of socialization, needs particular emphasis...’ (Green, 2008:129) beyond any other attribute that may be understood to be inert in human beings and as the distinguishing characteristic that sets human beings apart from the rest of creation.

Green uses Genesis chapters one and two that refer to the *imago Dei* as his basis to show how neuroscience supports a biblical anthropology that goes against the traditionally held dualism of Christianity. He echoes Murphy’s point noted earlier that ‘the Bible knows nothing of a speculative or a philosophical interest in definitions of the human person’ (Green 2008:15).

Green's emphasis is on relationships and how they shape behaviour. The construction of personhood in his view is thus founded on social relationships and one's life experiences. He concludes therefore that a 'person is one's behaviour'. It is clear to see how that interpretation fits with an Christological interpretation of a new community knit together in relationship through Christ and how that derives its orientation from the Trinitarian model.

Green recounts the findings of neuroscience that have the linked moral decision-making to neural processes. This is significant to on-going further dialogue about whether and to what extend Christian anthropology should be grounded in scientific insights. Green comes to the subject as a biblical scholar who weaves together biblical and neuroscience sources and builds up an argument for that intersection that is both scholarly and compelling. What he concludes seems to sum up the argument about human identity as 'spirited bodies' understood from a nuance non-reductionist physicalist view. If that be the case, what with human uniqueness?

2.6 Human Distinctiveness: To what End?

Conradie argues 'that the integrity of the human person is a function of the integrity of creation which begs the question of the proper place of humanity within the world community' (Conradie in Du Toit 2004: xi). He distinguishes among and explores the following three affirmations in regard to the place of human beings in the world community: firstly the distinctive characteristics of the human species; secondly the inalienable dignity of human beings and thirdly, the presumed position of special status and responsibility of humans in the world community.

Insistence on uniqueness against other creatures becomes amenable to being used as a moral justification for human privileges and domination of the rest of creation. But hierarchical thinking does not need to be anthropocentric. We may thus speak of qualified hierarchies in nature that not only favour human beings but can be applied to other species. Some animal species are physically more powerful than others. Some swim faster than others. Some can live in water, some cannot. Some smell or hear better than others. Some have a larger capacity brain than others. Some can fly fast while others cannot fly at all. Some fly fast while others cannot fly at all. Some are agile; some are not. We can therefore affirm the uniqueness and difference of the human species from other creatures without at the same time justifying domination on those grounds (Conradie in Du Toit 2004: ix).

Those complex emergent properties in humans are dependent on biological conditions that ensure life. Human emergent properties are therefore premised on the well-being and survival of other species in the eco-system. So the question of possession of power needs to be separated from how that power is employed. That dependence among species on the food chain is a given in ecosystems renders the power-dominion option untenable for humans. The health and well-being of other species is critical to human survival as the survival of other species is indeed dependent on human action.

This argument of dependence within ecosystems extends beyond the biological condition and applies to social and cultural identity. Humans are differentiated from other human beings and non-humans by virtue of differentiation. This argument eloquently puts the issue of human domination of the rest of creation in the name of difference in perspective. Clarifying our categories of thought as humans is part of the task of re-constructing an adequate cosmology that could re-orient human actions in creation.

Relationships are central to the survival of the complex world ecosystem. Conradie, quoting McFaque (in du Toit 2004:127) notes that ‘a decentering and recentering of the place of human beings in the earth community is called for’. It is therefore important to engage with what lies at the foundation of human self-knowledge and understanding that shaped our view of ourselves as human beings in relation to the rest of creation.

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That traditionally human distinctiveness has been accounted for in the notion of *imago Dei* as the source of dignity for humans against other creatures is well established. The intrinsic value and dignity of all of creation cannot/should not be graded according to the different species. That argument highlights the moral imperative for human beings, to protect other forms of creation. The projective ability to let *all of life flourish* could therefore be a theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos because it derives from God’s desire for all of life, not just human beings.

Moritz offers a scientific, philosophical and theological critique of the view that human beings are unique. He speaks to the creation-evolution debate and the scientific discovery of human-animal continuity. He notes how these discount human uniqueness while showing how ‘(v)iewing the *imago Dei* as election incorporates the findings of contemporary biblical studies and takes seriously the scientific understanding of both evolutionary continuity and the psychosomatic unity of the human person.’ (Moritz 2011:308)

Apart from highlighting the above, Moritz also notes the ecological implications for Christian belief in the *imago Dei* which has subordinated the rest of creation to human beings. He notes that the ‘vast gulf’ between human beings and the rest of creation is a mythology that makes it possible for human beings to do whatever they like to the rest of creation. He further notes ‘that the individual who earnestly desires to save the world must “reverse the story of Genesis” and negate the logic of the worldview that is at work therein.’ (Moritz 2011:308).

In his critique of the scientific model he notes the pervasiveness of this ‘mythology’ which is also espoused by some atheists like Richard Dawkins who acknowledges a qualitative discontinuity between humans and animals based on what he terms ‘ability to change the course of evolution’ (Moritz 2011:309) Wilson in his discussion of human nature with reference to animal behaviour notes that humans have developed a ‘sociality’ to such a high level ‘as to constitute a distinct ... pinnacle of social evolution’.

In that regard he notes such things as ‘pack-hunting ... intensity and variety of sexual activity ... and ... their ethical codes and practice of religion’ (Moritz 2011:309). Moritz (2011:310) also refers to Francisco J. Ayala’s basis for *homo sapiens*’ uniqueness as their capacity for morality which make them capable of anticipating consequences of one’s behaviour, ‘the ability to make value judgments ...’ and ‘the ability to choose between alternative courses of action’.

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Moritz uses the term *Homo singularis* to denote uniqueness based on the understanding that humans have certain capacities and characteristics that set them apart. He construes this understanding of human uniqueness to be the reason why there have been attempts in science to locate the distinctiveness and to understand that as the content of the *imago Dei*. Evolutionary biology is used as a premise for the argument that humans stand out among other creatures in terms of their intellectual, social and spiritual nature. Such evolutionary difference is also relativized when we consider the complex symbiotic relationship within the world’s ecosystem.

Moritz gives examples of theologians Karl Rahner and Wolfhart Pannenberg as those who based their understanding of the *imago Dei* on *Homo Singularis*. Rahner’s position is that the *imago Dei* denotes self-transcendence of matter by way of consciousness and freedom (Moritz 2011:311). Pannenberg holds that the image of God is located in what he terms humans’ exocentricity i.e. the human being’s openness to the world through imagination and

reason. He also holds that the dissimilarity between animals and humans is scientific or behavioural but not ontological.

Thus according to Pannenberg the difference between the natures of humans and animals is qualitative and can be ‘empirically discerned’ (Moritz 2011:311). Thus according to Pannenberg both scientists and theologians uphold a baseless *homo singularis* in that their conclusions are based on ‘an unwarranted faith in human uniqueness where science has not yet demonstrated a clear evolutionary gradualism or a clear discontinuity’ (Moritz 2011:312). He recommends taking seriously the neo-Darwinian view of evolution that sees no gaps between creatures once ‘our limited temporal perspective on the history of life’ is removed (Moritz 2011 313-14).

From this perspective then there is no sharp discontinuity between species as they are connected through an on-going evolutionary process in their genealogical lineages which is determined by ancestry within the species rather than any hierarchy of being or ‘generic nature’. In that respect the species including *homo sapiens* cannot be typified and defined according to their essences (Moritz 2011:315).

Thus locating the *imago Dei* or the soul as a particular human trait that warrants a special place is untenable in this view because ‘[h]umans are not essentially rational beings or social animals or ethical agents even potentially’ (Moritz 2011:315-16). And if humans are without essential traits the discussion about the immortal soul or the *imago Dei* as a generic characteristic in human beings that set us apart in creation breaks down. Welz makes the same point when she characterises the limitation of the models of understanding of the *imago Dei* as typologies that easily yield to reductionism (Welz 2011:86-7). Conceiving of human beings as ‘spirited bodies’ in a physicalist non-reductionist way is therefore a plausible alternative view.

2.7 Genesis 1 in Juxtaposition with Zambian Cosmogony

The re-reading of the creation narrative of Genesis 1, attempted in this study highlights the limitations of previous conceptions and perspectives that conceive of creation as ‘produced ... by something superior and, on the basis of being produced is dependent’ (Welker 1990:7). This act of production and being produced has conditioned the understanding of the Genesis

1 creation narrative in dualistic and power dominion terms. In that view creation is firstly understood as creation out of nothing and creation as a single act not a continuous event.

Welker (1990:8) notes that this view of creation as causation and dependence ‘connects images of production and ... the exercise of power’. This study affirms that ‘human beings share a common history of life with all the other creatures of Earth ...’ and are thus ‘part of the evolutionary history of life on Earth’ and that ‘(t)his story forms a basis for a theological view of the human being.’ (Edwards 2006:13, 14)

Welker warns against taking the abstract concept of causality without critical reflection, arguing that the Genesis 1 creation account does not have causality (understood as production) as its central insight. If causality is not the central insight of the creation account of the Genesis 1 then we open up for a re-interpretation of that passage in a new light. Insights drawn from such a re-interpretation could potentially shape an alternative understanding of creation that could ‘decentre and re-centre’ human beings as being interrelated and dependent upon the rest of the earth community. I do not propose to exhaust the discussion of what that decentring and re-centring entails in this limited study.

According to Cas Labuschagne, in his article *Creation and the Status of Humanity in the Bible* (in Brummer 1991:124), the notion of humans as the ‘crown’ of God’s creation is presumed to be premised on the fact of human beings were created as ‘the last and supreme act of creation in Genesis 1.’ He contends to the contrary that the human being was in fact created on the sixth day - same day as all the other creatures. And according to him the main reason for situating the creation of creatures at the very end is for literary reasons ‘to obtain an open end to the creation story’ because the creatures would henceforth be the ‘main subjects’ in the creation story. And so he concludes that the special place alluded to in Genesis 1:26 onwards for human beings in relation to other creatures does not thus render them the pinnacle or ‘crown’ of creation.

Labuschagne’s comment frames the subject aptly and is worth quoting at length:

God planted a garden in Eden, and that He put in it the human being (the man) He had created, cannot be interpreted to mean that the garden was specially created for the benefit of humankind. On the contrary, the relationship between the man and the garden is rather one of mutual dependence. The garden is there for the man, and he is there for the garden: the man is put in the garden to ‘till and look after it’ (2:5). In

relation to his natural environment the human being is nothing but a humble servant, an agricultural labourer. What is more, the garden is not his property, since it belongs to God.

(Labuschagne in Brummer 1991:124)

Green (2008:3) further notes that ‘Were we to take Barth seriously, we might further entertain a further “humbling” – namely, the realization that the Bible is about God, first and foremost, and only derivatively about us.’ For that reason therefore ‘Study of the human person in the Bible – that is biblical-theological anthropology or, more simply, biblical anthropology – is thus a derivative inquiry’ He points out, however, that even though biblical anthropology may be secondary, it is crucial ‘insofar as it struggles with the character of humans in relation to God with respect to the vocation given humanity’ (Green 2008:3).

This study will bring the creation story of Genesis 1 into dialogue with stories from Zambian cosmogony⁸ in the next chapter as a reaffirmation of the reclaimed foundational importance of creation theology.

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⁸The use of ‘African’ as a predicate to the term cosmogony does not ignore the fact that there are many cultures in Africa. It is not intended to denote homogeneity of cultures; rather it highlights the fact that there are dominant generative themes in African cosmologies. Where the citation does not require faithfulness to the original text, I prefer the term Bantu as a more meaningful category.

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3. CREATION KNOWLEDGE: A UNITARY APPROACH

3.1 Introduction

This study attempts to reflect a holistic approach to knowledge. The study therefore views the subject through three prisms. Firstly it takes a retrospective look to account for views that have shaped hierarchical views of creation based on a dualistic principle that in turn have shaped the human power-dominion relationship with the rest of creation and that is deemed to have led to the devastating eco-crisis the world faces today. Secondly, a non-reductionist physicalist viewpoint that has challenged dualistic anthropological views of being, in favour of the conception of human beings as ‘spirited bodies’ and ontologically connected with the rest creation. Thirdly, Moltmann’s Trinitarian and pneumatological views of creation orient the theological framework anchored on community and communion within the triune relationship. Human solidarity with the rest of creation is posited as the nexus that converges the strands of the different perspectives to indicate what resources would potentially construct the proposed earth-keeping ethos.

A re-reading of the creation narrative of Genesis 1 in juxtaposition with insights from Zambian Bantu creation myths and worldview serve as a case study to illustrate how applying new insights challenges traditional views of creation on which the dualistic view of creation has been premised. © 2013 University of Pretoria. All rights reserved. The copyright in this work vests in the University of Pretoria. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the University of Pretoria. When alternative premises are employed to interpret creation narratives it follows that alternatives to traditional interpretations that could potentially shape a new anthropology are possible. If these notions that are premised on new insights from other disciplines and indigenous knowledge gain traction in our theological discourse they have potential to re-shape mind-sets. The result could be an earth-keeping ethos that orients human actions towards solidarity with the rest of creation, with the resulting consequence of the power-dominion relationship incrementally being superseded.

3.2 A Unitary Approach to Eco-Knowledge

The unitary approach to knowledge that Moltmann urges is instructive. It takes dominance out of the knowledge enterprise itself, thereby orienting it towards ‘solidarity’ among different disciplines. That orientation is the basis for bringing ‘fresh’ perspectives from different disciplines and standpoints that this study employs. When we speak of human

solidarity with the rest of creation we are talking about taking dominance out of human actions out of concern for what we share with the rest of the planet. The ecological threat the earth faces gives reason to be conscious of the earth as a shared global home for all living things, not just for humans.

While taking seriously the plea for a unitary approach to knowledge Brown (in Brown & Murphy 1998:148) cautions that even if we could arrive at alternatives grounded in other disciplines, they would be ‘incomplete without theology’ because of the ‘nonreducibility of theology to other disciplines’. His argument raises a pertinent concern without discounting the argument that Moltmann makes about an integrated approach to knowledge. This study takes heed that caution and seeks to discern a theological undergirding of the earth-keeping ethos proposed so that it is not just a collage of insights from different disciplines. One study cannot of course take care that there are no omissions in regard to the caution Brown sounds. Theological engagement with other disciplines has to be an on-going enterprise. At best what this study does is to make a proposal that is submitted for on-going discourse.

Moltmann critiques the anxiety that seeks to preserve theology’s identity and which as a result draw too sharp a line between theology and science and scientific theories. His advice is that:

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What we are seeking is a community of scientific and theological insights. It is only in our common recognition ... and only in our common search for a world capable of surviving, that we shall also be able to put forward the particular contribution of the Christian traditions and the hope of the Christian faith.

(Moltmann 1985:13)

Moltmann’s observation provides a basis and impetus for fresh theological conceptions to be brought on board from a specifically and unapologetically Christian viewpoint. Although his point refers to the collaboration of scientific and theological insights, the assertion can be extended to include other dimensions of knowledge such as indigenous wisdom from which can be derived some of the insights for a new theology of creation.

An exploration of the Kaonde and Bemba creation myths is offered as an example of eco-wisdom derived from Zambian cosmogony. It is explored in this study against the background of key themes from the African worldview, particularly African Traditional

Religions. That exploration is undertaken without presuming any intentional motives for environmental preservation within Zambian cosmogony. The eco-ethos discerned in the culture may well be incidental or so imbedded in the way of life and cultural fabric that motive cannot be isolated from intuitive communal instincts passed on over generations.

The significance of the indigenous wisdom presented in this study therefore does not so much lie in the intentions for conservation necessarily (there well may be such intentions) that are imbedded in the beliefs and practices but that such insights can be extracted from those cosmologies and appropriated within eco-theology. The sacral nature and connectedness of life is the key insight we derive from them. The ‘bondedness’ of life is a foundational value of the Zambian value system. It is akin to the proposed foundation for a new conception of creation theology based on a Trinitarian principle. It is also a hopeful sign and can be apprehended in what Welker terms pluralistic approaches to theology. The Hebrew, Patristic, (modern) Western and African cultures are in a conversation in what Welker (1999) sees as a way forward by way of self-criticism within tradition and taking seriously insights from without. In other words Christian faith should not be confined to one mode of thought or perception.

The Zambian core value of connectedness in this case coincides with a key notion within Christian tradition and points to an opportunity where the two perspectives can mutually enrich and critique each other. That could result in imaginative ways of the Christian faith making a contribution to a way of ‘seeing’ the world that would enhance earth-keeping values that are motivated by a theologically sound rationale.

The anxiety about keeping theology or Christian dogma pure that Moltmann refers to is widespread in Zambian Christianity. Openness to insights from different sources other than the Bible is held in suspicion. So tapping the wisdom of other sources may be a controversial undertaking. A study like this which affirms wisdom from creation myths and takes into account biological evolutionary concepts treads a very slippery path in my context!

Yet it is insights from contemporary cosmology, evolutionary biology and neurosciences that have ‘tempered’ the long held dualistic views that human beings are at the centre of creation that are deemed to be responsible for destructive human actions in creation. Green makes the following observation about how insights from physics and evolutionary biology were ahead

in coming to the humbling insight about the position of human beings in relation to the rest of creation and connection with other creatures:

first ... Copernicus, ... demonstrated that our planet and, thus we who inhabit the earth, are not the centre around which the universe turns; and second ... Darwin and evolutionary biology, ... located Homo sapiens within the animal kingdom with a genetic make-up that strongly resembles the creatures around us.

(Green 2008:3)

3.3 Views that Shaped Power-dominion Ethos: A Retrospective View

Welker (1994:281) postulates that the western conception of ‘self, reality and validity’ has been premised on the works of philosophers like Aristotle and Hegel. He argues that Aristotelian and Hegelian conceptions give rise to the ‘abstract, private person and of the stratified, monocentric institution, as well as at the cognitive or cognitively controllable domination of the world.’ In other words what we have read into biblical interpretation are really the views of philosophers that were influential at different turns in the history of ideas.

He further notes how these conceptions were unhinged from the biblical traditions, particularly the understanding of the Spirit of God. Welker (1994:284) notes that as a result, ‘[r]eligion and theology also were made to serve the development of a history – a history of culture, institutions, reason and consciousness – that many people have come to regard as fatal to the natural surroundings of human beings.’

According to Welker (1994:284-285), Aristotle’s metaphysics gave rise to the understanding of the spirit as living in the realm of thought and in relation to self and no other: ‘I am only insofar as I know myself’ (Welker 1994:290). The Aristotelian view thus gave rise to a complex dialectical understanding of being which is ‘reductionist’ (Welker 1994:291) and which may seem to be one-dimensional and self-interested. It is that understanding which is to have been read into biblical interpretation, consequently leading to detrimental human actions towards the rest of creation.

Welker (1994:294) presents Hegel’s view of the philosophy of the spirit as extending upon Aristotle’s view. Hegel conceived of the spirit in terms of community and as the principle which ‘mediates unity and community “love” and “God as present”.’ Welker (1994:295) sees this as virtually a return to the Aristotelian view while acknowledging that ‘Hegel corrects

formality, abstractness and a reflexive distance from reality of classical metaphysical pneumatology.’

Yet according to Welker, ‘Hegelian pneumatology also remains simplistic and barren’, largely upholding the hierarchical view of creation which he identified elsewhere as the causal view of creation that speaks of creation in terms of ‘production’. That view is held as being responsible for deistic views that present God as the transcendent prime causer who is removed from creation. That belief is also the premise on which power-dominion relationship between human beings and the rest of creation is grounded.

Welker (1999:7) notes that in the act of production (or creation) by a higher superior being, dependence is implied on the part of the created. Arguably that dependence on the creator is transferred through the hierarchy of beings. And in the traditional dualistic view of creation human beings are understood to be at the summit and so the rest of creation, according to this view are, dependent on (or more crudely at the mercy of) human beings.

Welker points out that the ‘how’ of the act of creation is unfolded in myths, sagas and cosmological theories. Western culture has reduced these myths, sagas and cosmological theories (including the biblical one) to abstracted conceptions ‘of an ultimate process of causing and being caused’ to the ultimate process of being produced by a transcendent reality resulting in absolute dependence. He construes that as having been conditioned by Aristotelian and Hegelian dualistic metaphysics. And this gives rise to a reductionistic view of creation. As noted above, the error of that conception is not the conception itself but the reduction of God’s creation to what can be conceived of conceptually to the exclusion of other ways of perceiving.

The limitations of the Aristotelian and Hegelian views that have shaped western views of creation as we have noted severally, have been transported to most Christian lands including Zambia. Their encounter with alternative cosmologies should open up for alternative views. For instance, evolution, understood in a general sense as something that occurs ‘cosmologically, inorganically, biologically, socially and culturally’ (Peacocke in Brümmer 1994:68) tempers the Newtonian conception of absolute space and time. That can be accommodated in a view of creation that goes beyond absolute causality.

That means we no longer need to deal with ‘purely spatial relationships, only spatiotemporal ones.’ When we speak of change therefore it is not only in terms of rearranging ‘particles that are themselves unchanging’ as Drees (in Brümmer 1994:68) puts it. This departure from the Newtonian view of absolute space and time has led ‘to a much more limited significance of processes, historicity and the like.’ This view may be construed to favour an absolute temporal cosmological outlook.

To temper that kind of outlook Drees (in Brümmer 1994:69) argues for a moderate position and that considerations be made for varying views that depend upon a considered discussion of determinism. In other words Drees urges a non-reductionist view, even if from a more nuanced view of determinism.

3.4 The Non-Reductionist Physicalist View as a Corrective

The notion of human beings as ‘spirited-bodies’ contentiously denies a reductionist physicalism based on a dualistic principle, which is based on a hierarchical understanding of being. Before pointing out what she terms the most basic issue in reductionist physicalism, Murphy (in Brown 1998:129) accounts for reductionistic views in three ways as follows:

Firstly, ‘*methodological reductionism* ... a research strategy’ Murphy (in Brown 1998:129) which seeks to break the thing or idea to be analysed into its parts; in other words the analytical method which does not see the whole as being greater than the sum of its parts. The understanding in this view is that there is a ‘core’ substance which is the essence of being. As a research strategy methodological reductionism therefore does not take into account spatiotemporal relations, only categorical fixed spatial relations.

When creation is understood in this way, there remains no scope for a relational mode of understanding. Ontology is understood in terms of being constituted in the indivisible core essential particle. When creation is conceived of in those terms we may not speak of any solidarity within creation and no perceived connectedness among creatures can be construed. So that the earth-keeping ethos being proposed would be baseless.

Secondly, Murphy outlines ‘*causal reductionism* ... (as) the view that ... all causation in the hierarchy is “bottom-up”’ Murphy (in Brown 1998:129). In other words higher properties are causally linked in a deterministic bottom up hierarchy. All the entities in a system according, to this model, are only related in a hierarchical causal fashion. The question to be addressed

here is one of ‘the emergence of new causal powers’ (Murphy in Murphy and Knight 2010:83). According to Murphy if we can speak of new causal powers, it opens up for a non-reductionist physicalist view, as an alternative to causal reductionism. That non-reductionist physicalist view recognises that there is activity at all levels in creation that could be causally related.

According to Murphy (quoting Barbour in Murphy & Knight 2010:83) that activity signals that there is mutual influence in the ‘patterns of activity at both higher and lower levels. ...there is mutual influence of activity of part and whole without implying that the whole is somehow an entity existing independently of its parts.’ The bottom-up hierarchy is thus revised. Murphy notes that the lack of an alternative means that causal reductionism remains a contested issue.

(Murphy in Murphy & Knight 2010:83)

Murphy hearteningly acknowledges that in the science-religion dialogue the alternative i.e. top-down or downward causation has gained traction. That may be true in America and Western Europe but it cannot be said to be true within Zambian Christianity. Be that as it may Murphy’s affirmation of this conception in contemporary Christian scholarship, holds out a hope that this ‘whole-part’ constraint can become well recognised as a phenomenon that could potentially offer a revision of the deterministic view (Murphy in Murphy & Knight 2010:84) which may eventually hold sway.

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Thirdly, Murphy defines ‘*reductive materialism*’ Murphy (in Brown 1998:129) or *ontological reductionism* (Murphy in Murphy & Knight 2010:82) which holds that only lower level entities are real, and thereby relegates higher level entities to being ‘nothing but the sum of their parts’ (Murphy in Brown 1998:129). In this view no immaterial metaphysical ‘ingredient’ or ‘vital force’ is required ‘to get living beings from a non-living materials’ and ‘no immaterial mind or soul is needed to get consciousness...’ (Murphy in Murphy & Knight 2010:82).

At another level this view holds that only the lowest level entities are real and the rest are considered to be without ontological priority. Only the core or atom really matters, they matter even above the entities they constitute. Murphy suggests that not all physicalist views need be reductionistic in this atomic sense. She refers to ‘two main classes of emergent

properties and causal powers or forces’ which can to lesser or greater degrees be distinguished as ‘those that pertain to prediction and those that pertain to understanding’ (Murphy in Murphy & Knight 2010:83).

Murphy names the four different kinds of reductionism noted above and goes on to identify causal reductionism as ‘the most basic issue’ needing to be addressed. She goes on to note that if casual reductionism is found to be false then what is required is ‘the emergence of new causal powers’ (in Murphy & Knight 2010:83).

Murphy goes on to identify ‘downward causation’ as a phenomenon that is well recognised but lacks a theory to account for it. She goes on to suggest that systems thinking can be plausibly presented as ‘a theory constitutive metaphor for reconceptualising the causes of action’ (Murphy in Murphy & Knight 2010:87-88) which can equally be plausibly applied to ecosystems within creation as this study attempts to do.

Understanding human beings as ‘spirited bodies’ rather than embodied spirits is the key insight applied to this study that is derived from the non-reductionist physicalist view. This view does not discount all traditional views of humanity. For instance it take into account *higher* capacities of morality, free will and religious awareness. Neurobiological complexity is considered to be what accounts for the higher capacities. Those capacities can be said, in that sense, to be properties that are emergent from neurobiological complexity. The non-reductionist view acknowledges that these *higher* human capacities are developed through relations with others and with God (Murphy 2006:5).

Murphy’s argument that higher human capacities develop through the relational/social dimension is an important link to the subject of this study. It augments the argument that is advanced that human solidarity with the rest of creation would yield a plausible theologically grounded ethos that arises from an interdisciplinary conversation.

If higher capacities can be accounted for as emergent properties that are not the result of deterministic causation, we open up an avenue that could accommodate alternative views and conceptions that challenge dualistic, hierarchical views. The view of creation as causation tends to conceive of *higher* level entities in a deterministic hierarchical way. As noted above that yields a form of reductionism. It tends to account for higher level entities as being ‘nothing but the sum of their parts’ (Murphy in Brown & Murphy 1998:129).

Within this view therefore, it is clear to see how creation in the *imago dei*, does not have to be based on creation with an immortal soul that links human beings to God. A biblical anthropology that has shaped a Christian creation theology that places humans at the pinnacle of creation is thereby challenged. The *soul* too may in fact be plausibly accounted for within the realm of relationship. For ontology, in this view, lies in *being* or *becoming* rather than in a fixed quality that humans were created with and/or is ‘contained’ within human beings.

Nancey Murphy suggests that there is in fact no unitary biblical view of the human being. She holds that the biblical authors were influenced by a variety of views. She notes that the New Testament seems to infer that the ‘first, ... humans are psychophysical unities; second, that Christian hope for eternal life is staked on bodily resurrection rather than an immortal soul; and third, that humans are to be understood in terms of their relationships – relationships to the community of believers and especially to God’ (Murphy 2006:22).

If relationship be at the centre of our understanding of creation and if such views would influence biblical interpretation, we would then have alternative ways of viewing creation and the relationships therein. That would allow room for *emergence* to be considered a new causal power that results from mutual influence within creation. Emergence, understood that way, leaves room for a non-hierarchical view of creation as ‘one great complex system, displaying levels of complexity which have emerged over time’ (Murphy in Murphy & Knight 2010:86). And within this system ... patterns are self-sustaining or self-reproducing’. In that way we perceive a ‘kinship’ between this way of understanding with evolutionary biology in the interrelationship presumed to be at play within those processes.

Mention of Darwin and evolutionary biology is problematic for many Zambian Christians. Many Christians who emphasise creation in the image of God as the basis for human uniqueness would find it problematic to think of creation in terms of emergence. The problem is that the place of God as creator understood in the tradition sense of production seems to be diminished if not eradicated all together. More immediate to the study is the fact that human dignity is also understood to be at stake in that human beings are seemingly located in a continuum with the rest of creation - a complex system of process that may suggest an egalitarian relationship between human beings and other creatures.

Conradie (in du Toit 2004:129-31) identifies two strategies for addressing this issue. One is derived upon an Christological motif and the other is based on the very claim of human dignity. He argues that the basis used to attribute dignity to humans (without discounting genetic continuity) is the same basis by which other creatures may be appreciated as having dignity albeit within a complex biological hierarchy – that hierarchy understood within the non-reductionist physicalist view, in terms of mutual influence does not suggest dominion. This will be clearly illustrated in the attempted re-reading of the creation account of Genesis 1 below.

This view represents a kind of paradigm shift as Murphy observes. It removes the focus from the mechanistic and concrete entities in favour of processes which are understood as being ‘complex wholes (that) can be more than aggregates’ (Murphy in Murphy & Knight 2010:88). Causation is thus reconceptualised. The processes within the complex systems are understood to be relatively autonomous players i.e. causing their own behaviour.

Within this understanding the creator–creature relationship and relationships among creatures would also have to be understood within processes that are nonlinear but remain sensitive to history. This conception does not solve all the theological problems that may arise in resolving the relationship between God and creation. Yet it holds out a hope for an alternative because it neither reduces the human being to a mere physical entity nor does it postulate an embodied spirit.

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This study applies the non-reductionist physicalist view for the reason that it recognises downward influences within systems. It challenges the top-down view of creation that has shaped destructive human attitudes towards the rest of creation. That view, albeit only applied cautiously, recommends itself as a prism that could inform a different view of creation that is based on the relational mode. Where there was a rigid mechanistic view we have a dynamic interconnected, mutually influencing system at play in creation.

3.5 A Trinitarian View of Creation

Moltmann advances an ecological doctrine of creation that this study employs as its theological prism through which to filter views presented above. Other than that it also provides a ‘control’ for some of the claims noted in the non-reductionist view of creation. Moltmann’s Trinitarian view of creation, as we have noted in chapter 2, challenges power-

dominion views that stem from a monotheistic view of God that conceives of God as absolute subject with little connection to the world, if any.

The corrective for the domination view, according to Moltmann, is locating God in a Trinitarian relationship. He therefore advances views that see creation as integrated rather than fragmented. There is a connectedness and mutuality that is reminiscent of the systems thinking advanced by the non-reductionist physicalist view. From that integral view of creation is derived the view that human beings and nature are necessarily connected ‘As a network and interplay of relationships is built up, symbiotic life comes into being.’ Moltmann qualifies that statement by adding that ‘This life has to be defined differently at different levels.’ (Moltmann 1985:3).

Those different levels of the symbiotic life seem akin to what Murphy presents as higher and lower level properties that are interrelated within processes according to systems thinking. In terms of human identity Moltmann speaks of ‘the psychosomatic totality’ that includes self-transcendence/extension. And so in his view even the human body ‘must no longer be seen as something which we “posses”’ (Moltmann 1985:3). That seems reminiscent of Murphy’s ‘spirited bodies’ rather than embodied spirits. The idea of being a fixed ‘contained’ entity that could be possessed in a fixed way is discounted.

Moltmann speaks of creation in the Spirit as a Trinitarian process’ (Moltmann 1985:9). He notes that theological understandings derived upon a hierarchical view have stressed the place of Father God as Creator in a ‘fixed’ monotheistic way. A pneumatological understanding places the Spirit at the centre of creation. What Moltmann says is worth citing in full to capture the essence of this view and its importance for this study:

According to the biblical traditions, all divine activity is pneumatic in its efficacy. It is always the Spirit who first brings activity of the Father and the Son as its goal. It follows that the triune God also unremittingly breathes the Spirit into his creation. Everything that is, exists and lives in the unceasing inflow of the energies and potentialities of the cosmic Spirit. This means that we have to understand every created reality in terms of energy, grasping it as the realized potentiality of the divine. Through the energies and potentialities of the Spirit, the Creator is himself present in his creation. He does not merely confront it in his transcendence; entering into it, he is also immanent within it.

(Moltmann 1985:9)

This view accounts for what the non-reductionist reductionist physicalist view speaks of as self-propagation within emergent properties as the cosmic Spirit at work. It upholds God's presence in creation without upholding the causation conception. God is understood as being *immanent* in creation and *entering* into it. (Moltmann 1985).

Thus Moltmann's pneumatological view of creation in going beyond the mechanistic view seems akin to the interrelationships within the complex systems Murphy speaks of. According to Moltmann (1985:11), 'The existence, the life, and the warp and weft of interrelationships subsist in the Spirit: "In *him* we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). But that means that the interrelations of the world cannot be traced back to any components, or universal foundations (or whatever name we give to the "elementary particle").' Moltmann (1985:11) here challenges the 'essentialists' who hold that physics or natural laws are at the foundation of *being* (or ontology) when he advances the view that in fact,

...relationships are just as primal as things themselves. "Things" and "relation" are complementary modes of appearance ... For the nothing in the world exists, lives and moves of *itself*. Everything exists, lives and moves *in others*, in one another, for one another, in the cosmic interrelations of the divine Spirit. So it is only the community of creation in the Spirit itself that can be called "fundamental".

Pannenberg (1991:43-44) puts it differently, yet he seems to come to a similar conclusion as Moltmann when he identifies the notion of a force field - a scientific concept that has been influential in the field of physics. Historically it is grounded in the Stoic idea of *pneuma*. That idea of Spirit in the Old Testament 'is more appropriately conceived of as a dynamic force, especially in terms of the creative wind that breathes the breath of life into animals and plants to the effect that, according to Psalm 104:30, they come.' The Spirit is thus understood to perform a creative function within the force field. The force field theories can thus be taken beyond the realm of physics and 'be considered as approximations to the metaphysical reality of the all-pervading spiritual field of God's creative presence in the universe' (Pannenberg 1991:47).

This study therefore appropriates that pneumatological insight within the context of Trinitarian relationship to apprehend the notion of force fields for the conceptions of creation

as an ‘ecological context’ constitutive of a community of solidarity among creatures. Humans are understood to be participants who are involved in a mutually beneficial existence, no longer understood in hierarchical terms but as being part of the essence ‘of creation in the Spirit is therefore the *co-activity*’ (Pannenberg 1991:47).

Thus a theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos that goes beyond recovering ‘a sense of being at home on earth’ and must incorporate ‘tenets of faith without being (simply) reduced to environmental ethics’ (Deane-Drummond 2008:xxi) is both plausible and tenable.

Welker (1994:282) speaks of a self-extending network of relationships that locates the human beings within the ‘force-field’. When causality is understood as *priori* to transcendence it led to a distinction between the creator and creation. That view has been superseded by the understanding that creator and creation itself are interconnected and in relationship. Mutuality or solidarity, rather than one-sided domination, provides a new frame of reference for creation and the relationships within it. In other words within this force-field or ‘eco-system’, humans understood as ‘spirited bodies’ can be in solidarity with the rest of creation, understood in Trinitarian and pneumatological terms. That could be posited as a starting point for a theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos.

3.6 Re-Reading the Creation Narrative of Genesis 1

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We now attempt a re-reading of the creation narrative of Genesis 1 with reference to the insights outlined above.

The biblical accounts of creation and those of many other indigenous peoples are based on a self-revealing creator. Deane-Drummond (2008:50) describes that kind of self-revelation as being, ‘in the context of creation, space and place’ with human beings (and by implication the creator) located within the extending circle of fellow humans and other creation, thus expressing a ‘theology of community’, that includes the participation of all of creation. That participation in the community of creation is a key insight for theological resources we seek to derive for fresh views of creation by examining the creator-creature relationship and relationship among creatures.

Current Old Testament scholarship accounts for the human person in terms that are closer to non-reductionist physicalist accounts than to the dualistic body-soul dichotomy. According to

Nancey Murphy (2006:17) the dualistic misconceptions that have existed for centuries in Christian tradition have affected the western mind-set as we have describe it above. They arise from translation rather than the substantive claims of the biblical text.

Murphy (2006:17) explains that the Hebrew scriptures which were translated into Greek as the Septuagint ‘translated Hebrew anthropological terminology into Greek, and it then contained terms that, in the minds of Christians influenced by Greek philosophy, referred to constituent parts of humans. Christians have since then have obligingly read them and translated them this way.’ She cites the example of the word *nephesh* which was translated *psyche* in Greek and then rendered *soul* in English. Rather than a holistic view, the human person was as a result of that *mistranslation* understood in dualistic terms, imported into Christian thinking via Greek and Roman philosophy.

The priestly writers of the creation account of Genesis 1 present a holistic view of creation without placing human beings at its pinnacle. In that account human beings are rather presented as being imbedded in an active participative process of creation (Welker 1999:11). There is no indication of any fear that an account of this nature would accord too much power to the creature at the expense of the creator. Welker points out that that kind of fear is more pronounced in the causation and dependence model of understanding creation. This has also been noted earlier as we sought to characterise Zambian Christianity in view of that.

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Welker (1999) claims that the priestly account uses the Hebrew word *kabash* which has been translated into English as ‘subdued’. Given the dualistic mind-set that coloured Western biblical interpretation, that interpretation acquired power-dominion connotations. But domination is now understood to be in crisis for bringing the entire life system into crisis (Moltmann 1985:23) and its basis has been put into question. The Judeo-Christian tradition that has been said to be responsible for human power over creation is under revision and so alternative ways of interpreting creation narratives are being employed.

The decree in Genesis 1 that commands human beings to *subdue* the earth is one such account that requires a new prism through which to view its meaning. The view that has been responsible for anthropocentric conception of creation predicated on a power-dominion paradigm that has defined human beings’ relationship with the rest of creation must be recast to reflect the holistic biblical view.

Moltmann (1985:27) construes that the outworking of ‘God’s image on earth, the human being (which in actual practice meant man) had to strive for power and dominion so that he might acquire *his* divinity. Power became the foremost predicate of the deity, not goodness and truth.’ Human hegemony towards the rest of creation is thus predicated on values, ideals and convictions that have led to the devastation of the earth because they are not consistent with the biblical vision. It is those values, ideals and convictions that have hitherto inspired human actions that need to be reversed from the Judeo-Christian tradition standpoint.

Can human rule and domination of creation be justifiably construed from only the two verses which speak of or imply the subduing of the earth by humans? Those verses say: ‘Be fruitful and multiply and subdue the earth’ (Genesis 1:27) and ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth’ (Genesis 1:28). The theological tradition that emerged out of that interpretation has been variously challenged as a case of misinterpretation of biblical accounts of creation. That point may be illustrated by the following quotes from Moltmann, Welker and Green respectively:

The specific biblical concept of subduing the earth has nothing to do with the charge to rule over the world which theological tradition taught for centuries as *dominium terrae*. The biblical charge is a dietary commandment: human beings and animals alike are to live from the fruits which the earth brings forth in the form of plants and trees. A seizure of power over nature is not intended. A charge to rule can be found in Genesis 1:26 ‘Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth.” But here ‘having dominion’ is linked with correspondence between human beings and God, the creator and preserver of the world – the correspondence which is meant when the human being is described as being in the image of God. Because the human beings and animals are to live from the fruits of the earth, the rule over the animals can only be a rule of peace, without any power over “life and death”. The role which human beings are meant to play is the role of a “justice of peace”.

(Moltmann 1985:29-30)

Neither Genesis 1 nor Genesis 2 describes God as a highest being who in pure self-sufficiency does nothing other than produce and cause creaturely being. Nor does either chapter describe creation as the totality, the world, or nature with the addition of an external ground, to which creation is related in mere dependence

(Welker: 1999:9)

Genesis does not define humanity in essentialist terms but in relational, as Yahweh's partner, and with emphasis on the communal intersexual character of personhood, the quality of care the human family is to exercise with regard to creation as God's representative, the importance of the human modelling of the personal character of God, and the unassailable vocation of humans to reflect among themselves God's own character.

(Green 2008:65)

Michael Welker's (1999:9) re-reading of Genesis 1 makes the observation that the account does not describe creation in terms of 'causation and production' but rather that:

- 1 'God *reacts* to what he has created'. God looks at his creation and evaluates it seven times, in verses 4a, 10b, 12b, 18b, 21b, 25b, 31a.
- 2 God engages in the activity of *naming* what he has created three times in verses 5a, 8a, and 10a.
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- 3 God also intervenes by *separating* what he has already created.

Welker's comment on the actions of God in this creation account links his interpretation to the non-reductionist physicalist view in that he links the creator and the creature when he notes, 'God's self-binding to external events, actions, and presuppositions; God's interested observation; even learning.' (Welker 1999:9)

The actions that God performed according to the priestly account of Genesis 1 are also attributed to creatures. Welker submits that 'we encounter *a rich description of the creature engaged in the activity of separating, ruling, producing, developing and reproducing itself*' (Welker 1999:11). The following examples that Welker gives make a compelling case for an interpretation of the Genesis 1 creation account void of power-dominion notions but as being based on a participative or relational model in which both the creator and creatures share in the actions of:

- 1 *Separating* in verses 6, 9, and 18 where the firmament, water and stars share in that action.
- 2 *Ruling* in verse 14ff. where the stars govern by ‘establishment of a rhythm, differentiation and the gift of measure and order.’
- 3 *Bringing forth* in verses 11, 12, 20 and 24 all the creatures (in particular reference to plants, animals and human beings) develop and reproduce themselves.

God, as it were, sets the creatures to do as God does in creative action (Welker 1999:11).

God is thus not removed from his creation as construed in a production-causation model. Verses 7, 14 and 16-18 indicate that God is present in creation. The productive ability of the earth is endorsed in verse 24. On the face of it, it would seem that one can argue from the same passage in favour of both the emergent model and production-causation model of creation. Or the view could be that God lets the creature participate in his actions and in comparison to God’s action the creatures’ actions pale by far and therefore that the creature is still dependent and under God’s control (Welker 199:12).

Welker proposes a third option to those two possible views. He is of the view that either of the two directions is a ‘false alternative into which the model of production and dependence has pressed us’ (Welker 1999:12). He argues that the classical creation narratives were not primarily concerned with © 2013 University of Pretoria. All rights reserved. The copyright in this work vests in the University of Pretoria. No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior written permission of the University of Pretoria. one-to-one hierarchical models as the religious and theological interpretations that are dominant today are. Welker makes two compelling conclusions about creation accounts in the Bible in general. If the production and dependence model is cast to the side we may need to engage with the views he advances. There is no scope to engage these views here. They are presented to indicate that there is a plausible alternative interpretation that takes serious the prisms that are described above. It is worth quoting him in his own word for clarity of what this position is:

- 1 On the one hand, those accounts describe God’s creative action so that it is comprehensible not only as actively producing and causing. They present it as equally reactive: in perception, evaluation, naming; in coming back and changing that which is already created; indeed, in learning by experience.
- 2 On the other hand, in a highly differentiated way they connect God’s creative of production with the creature’s own varied activity. The creature for its own part

separates, rules, brings forth, and reproduces itself. The creature's own activity is not only the result and consequence of God's action. It goes along with God's action. At times it even seems to be interchangeable with God's action. It goes along with God's action. The creature's own activity is constitutively bound up in the process of creation.

(Welker 1999:12-14)

This approach to the creation narrative is not a one-sided view that attributes absolute power to the creator. The emphasis is on 'connectedness and cooperation' between creator and creature. There is a sense of solidarity in the Genesis account as Welker understands it – the creature's action is integral into the creative activity of God.

This view might be faulted for not distinguishing creature from creator. On the face of it, it seems to promote a pantheistic view of God by so closely identifying God with creation, which is problematic for Christian theology. That is a valid objection and one that requires theological clarification. That would be a subject for another time and another project!

Welker responds to that problem compellingly with what he terms 'minimal determination: *creation is the construction and maintenance of association of different, interdependent creaturely realms*'. (Welker 1999:13) This statement is reminiscent of Pannenberg's assertion that no creature can exist outside eco-systems. So that each creature therefore lives relative to other creatures and each creature's survival is dependent on other creatures. It is quite evident what insights may be gathered from this view about the solidarity of human beings with other creatures whose survival depends on us and on whom we rely for our survival. It does not however fully engage with the question of God seemingly being enmeshed with creation. Minimal determination may be understood as distancing God from creation. It is clear that there is interdependence among creaturely realms but God's realm remains unaccounted for as it were. The word minimal is the only clue we have. We could conjecture that if creaturely realms are minimal (marginal) there ought to be a more significant (central) realm that is not creaturely.

To that extent distinguishing God from creatures also distinguishes creatures from one another. The point made by Conradie that within creaturely differentiation there will be distinction and difference that may even be hierarchical in terms of each creature's abilities,

but without domination being implied is important to note here. The community of creation is thus an interdependence of *creaturely realms* that allow for mutual flourishing.

This re-interpretation of the creation narrative of Genesis 1 is analogous to ecological forms (Welker 1999:17). On that basis more could be done to consolidate and systematically apprehend that knowledge. Such views, as earlier stated, if appropriated could shape theological abstractions of the future that may be relevant to eco-theology without necessarily settling the argument of how, what and why God created. There is clearly, in this view, a pivot towards that which *connects* within creation rather than that which *dominates* in a hierarchy.

As Welker (1999:18) notes, this view ‘renders us sensitive to the exciting connection in the classical creation texts between absolute and relative totalisations, between monistic and pluralistic thought’. This conception ties in with Faraday’s force field as appropriated by Pannenberg. The connection between (or among) particles in a complex field or relative systems is conventional wisdom in the sciences – in both quantum physics and theory of relativity (Welker 1999:88) that is yet to be appropriated for theology.

As a model of abstraction this proposed way of understanding creation is plausible. Yet by Welker’s own admission critique of abstraction is a work in progress which for a long time has been left to philosophy and systematic theology alone. What Welker seeks to offer in extending the dialogue beyond those disciplines is to look into the biblical text and in particular Genesis 1 for guiding principles for abstraction.

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For the purpose of the question under discussion, Welker aids the study by pointing to an alternative way of understanding creation that clearly illustrates the possibilities that lie in biblical texts as sources for guiding abstractions for a new approach to theology which has been necessitated by the eco-crisis the world faces.

Welker recommends re-visiting abstractions that guide our thinking. He urges that we go beyond philosophy and systematic theology to undertake that task using an interdisciplinary approach. He favours this approach because as he notes ‘the abstractions we are confronted with are located and operate in several contexts: namely, in texts, in dogmatics, in the

communication of religious communities, in common sense external perspectives on religion etc.’ (Welker 1999:18).

This affirmation is an appropriate transition for us to shift the focus to views and insights derived from Zambian cosmogony that are juxtaposed with those from the creation myth of Genesis 1.

3.7 Eco-Wisdom from Zambian Cosmogony

The term cosmogony is preferred to cosmologies even though only three myths are considered. These are not considered in isolation but are considered against the background of the Bantu world-view which makes the broader cultural category to which Zambian ethnic groups may be associated.

The term cosmology when used in this study refers to myths and oral traditions that account for the beginnings of and the eventual end of the universe. Cosmogony is therefore the compound term that denotes the gamut of mythological conceptions and their interpretations in the particular cultural tradition, the Zambian culture in this case.

Zambian anthropology is built upon the *bondedness*, communal nature and reciprocity of life which includes values of care and hospitality. This concept has been especially captured in the South African notion of *Ubuntu*. According to Mudimbe, the core of this concept

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Ntu (which) is both a uniting and a differentiating vital norm which explains the powers of vital inequality in terms of difference between beings. It is a sign that God, father of all beings ... has put a stamp on the universe, thus making it transparent in a hierarchy of sympathy. Upwards one would read the vitality which, from minerals through vegetable, animals and humans, links stones to the departed and God himself. Downwards, it is a genealogical filiation of forms of beings, engendering or relating to one another, all them witnessing to the original source that made them possible.

(Mudimbe, quoted by Balcomb in du Toit 2004:71)

Balcomb (in du Toit 2004:71) avers that ‘The interconnectedness of the universe, beginning with the creator and going all the way down to rocks, can surely not be more strongly stated. Here is a system that is indeed a Cartesian nightmare ...’ He goes on to note how within the

African (which for the purposes of this study is termed Zambian) worldview what is transcendent is pervasive and common place. In Bediako's words,

...vital participation ... opens a way for participation equally in the resources and powers of those who are also brought within the community... The divine presence in the community ... in which the human components experience and share in divine life and nature.

(Bediako 1995:103)

In such a worldview the emphasis on this world rather than a duality of being or spheres is evident. *Ubuntu* thus keeps in view the community of beings (divine and mortal) and a 'sense of wonder for the fecundity of life, for land and all the creatures that live from it and for the cycles of the seasons.' (Conradie 2004:108). Thus the cycle of life remains unbroken and nothing is left outside of it. And that cycle is the basis of all of life.

The Zambian worldview can be understood against that background. It is built on interconnectedness or more accurately interrelatedness of life as a foundational value for understanding the world. That interrelatedness is a network of life built upon a complicated and equal balance of the various parts as an interdependent system (Sindima in Birch et. al. 1990). This conception pervades the Zambian worldview. We can derive from it the metaphysical common ground with the scriptural interpretations. That common ground could be mutually enriching and could contribute towards shaping a theologically based earth-keeping ethos. The concept of solidarity (as we have defined it in this study) is the nexus that binds the two.

The Bemba creation (see Appendix 6.1) myth is told with some historicity to it and it does not really start with a void world and a creator. It begins with people already living but there is the introduction of a mythical woman Mumbi Mukoto⁹ who had the ears of an elephant. That 'animal' quality is part of her mystic which gives her powers. Those powers were

⁹ Other versions of this Bemba tale name the mythical figure as Mumbi Mukasa. The meaning of her name is consistent in reference but varies in that some accounts use the simile 'ears like an elephant' where other accounts say simply that she had elephant ears.

transmitted to the entire ethnic group, namely, their prowess in war, for which the Bembas came to known.

For the purpose of this study, the attribution of animal qualities to a human being with a sense of exultation of those qualities rather than qualms communicates a sense that ‘human-kind’ is understood to be linked to ‘animal-kind’ beyond the necessity of keeping the necessary eco-balance required by a symbiotic relationship. The Mumbi Mukasa¹⁰ account links humans’ and animals’ *being* as such. That insight could be appropriated for the solidarity we are purporting to ground the earth-keeping ethos proposed here.

The Kaonde creation myth is anthropocentric. It makes no reference to the rest of creation other than the fecundity of human kind. The reference to the act of differentiation of the male, Mulonga and the female, Mwinabuzhi is an act in which God and human beings participate. This could be said to be akin to the participatory understanding of creation as discussed above in the reinterpretation of the Genesis 1 account. Mulonga is entrusted with the gift of genitalia intended for himself and Mwinambuzi. He fails to faithfully deliver it.

Mwinambuzhi visits God and God ‘reacts’ to the man’s error by giving her another set of genitals. The non-mention of the rest of creation is problematic only on the face of it. The continuation of the creation story is told in two separate myths (see Appendix 6.3). The second story includes © 2013 University of Pretoria. All rights reserved. The copyright in this work vests in the University of Pretoria. No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior written permission of the University of Pretoria. the creatures. Kaondes believe that each animal (and indeed every living thing) has its own myth of how it came to be.¹¹ So there are multiple creation myths, each devoted to a particular aspect of creation.

The two Kaonde stories of creation in Appendices 6.2 and 6.3 highlight a number of characteristics of creation that echo what we have discussed in the re-interpretation of Genesis 1, namely:

- 1 *Creation is a dynamic process* (not simply causation and dependence) in which creatures participate not only to self-reproduce but to also as agents of creation including their own on-going creation.

¹⁰ That is my preferred name because it is more commonly used than this rendering here. The basis of my preference is the oral version I have heard and stories I read as a child that are not readily available for this study.

¹¹ In many cases the ‘how’ of creation is not told rather what is responsible for the unique traits of each creature is explained. In the case of the honey bird (Kaonde land is the home of Zambian natural honey) it explains how it got its ‘vocation’ which is important to the Kaonde people. Honey is an important part of the diet and therapeutic remedies for the Kaonde people.

- 2 *Creaturely agency in creation:* In the same way that the man participates in creation and is given agency, the honey bird equally participates. The man commits an error which somewhat derails God's intention for creation as the honey bird does.
- 3 *God reacts to his/her own creative act:* By correcting the man's error by giving another set of genitals to the woman and by teaching the man and woman to sew clothes and build houses. Human culture seems to arise from God's reaction to the state of his/her creatures' situation.

The Bemba and Kaonde myths are drawn into this discussion to illustrate that theological discourse in Zambia could draw inspiration from our own traditions to enrich and augment resources that are drawn from other sources such as the prisms we have considered in this chapter. As we have noted above, cosmology affects our self-understanding and the ways in which we relate to creation and other forms of life. What we have inherited as the biblical view was influenced by a particular cosmology. Our cosmology with its emphasis on the interconnectedness of life can shape a new ethos of keeping the earth.

Biblical material, Christian traditional theology and science could be brought into conversation with Zambian wisdom, tradition and cosmogonic conception. There are common metaphysical grounds which could potentially be a basis for a theology of creation and could challenge hierarchical dualistic conceptions of the past and replace them with a creation theology that is integrated. The notion of solidarity as it is presented in this study is understood as a volitional act on the part of human beings. But that notion also denotes that human beings can be said to be in solidarity as a creational ontological given that connects us with the rest of creation.

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4. A THEOLOGICALLY GROUNDED EARTH-KEEPING ETHOS: A PROPOSAL

4.1 Introduction

In chapter one we began by setting the background that gives impetus to this study, namely, the documented reality of the extent of environmental degradation in Zambia and the dearth of theologically guided engagement within our national structures of national dialogue regarding the environment. Zambia like the rest of the world faces a serious eco-crisis that is largely due to human actions that disregard eco-systems that sustain all life including human life. We have noted that though Christianity has a public role in Zambia there is little or no leverage that accrues from that for Christian ideals to influence national life. The formation of the Environmental Council of Zambia to which no church organisation was nominated is a case in point of the specific absence of a Christian perspective in shaping national policy regarding the environment.

That absence of the Christian ‘voice’ in regard to the eco-crisis the nation faces can be attributed to the fact that Zambian Christianity still espouses a biblical anthropology that regards human beings to be at the pinnacle of creation. We have characterised that view as the western worldview, which was passed on through missionary Christianity. That view remains pervasive and continues to hold sway among many Christian traditions in Zambia. So detrimental human actions regarding the environment, serious as they are not challenged prophetically from a firm Christian standpoint. My own conclusion is that the Church in Zambia needs to re-consider the mechanistic worldview that we have inherited which is imbedded in our Christian faith tradition. Apart from that the church in Zambia needs to look at alternative views that could be derived from interdisciplinary conversations and from local indigenous cosmogony as a corrective to the dualistic model which stands challenged already within the western tradition itself as we have established.

This scenario begs the question: What spheres of knowledge are available for the Christian tradition to curve out a theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos? While clearly acknowledging the role that human action has played in the degradation of the environment, this study does not set out to propose a pragmatic quick fix. Rather it takes a retrospective

look to account for what has conditioned the destructive power-dominion relationship that human beings have with the rest of creation with the resulting eco-crisis we face today.

Christianity is deemed to be complicit to the eco-crisis the world faces today. It follows then that Christianity must exert itself to rid its tradition of the dualistic and hierarchical conception of creation that lies at the heart of the western world-view which has traditionally been subsumed into biblical interpretation.

Hitherto this study has attempted to grapple with that situation by proposing that a different cosmology based on the re-conception of human identity and creation in non-dualistic terms is called for. We have proposed the understanding of human beings as ‘spirited bodies’ as a concept that is philosophically derived from neuroscience which accounts for dimensions of the human being that previously were attributed to an immortal soul in biological terms. That understanding, in my view, ‘frees’ the human *being* to be understood as a biological and evolutionary whole and as connected with the rest of creation. We have also used 'spirited bodies' metaphorically to refer to alternative views that challenge dualistic thinking and that postulate alternative conceptions of human identity and creation and by extension the creator. By way of synthesis this chapter looks back to the objectives of the study to reaffirm, augment and supplement key arguments advanced in regard to the following themes:

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- a. The investigation of the non-reductionist physicalist view of creation and its implication for a new understanding of human beings’ relationship with creation.
 - b. A re-interpretation of the creation story of Genesis 1 with reference to ‘fresh’ insights from the non-reductionist physicalist view of creation that critique the dualist hierarchical view.
 - c. Insights from *Zambian* creation myths and eco wisdom/practices that could potentially be a resource for a theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos.
 - d. A theologically grounded basis for an earth-keeping ethos that locates human beings in a connected realm with the rest of creation that allows for an earth-keeping ethos that promotes the flourishing of all creation and is undergirded by a Trinitarian theological rationale.

4.2 The Non-reductionist Physicalist View of Creation: Implications for Understanding Humans' Relationship with Creation

The understanding of human beings as 'Spirited bodies' from a non-reductionist physicalist view critiques the dualist hierarchical view of creation and it also offers insights for an alternative view on which human solidarity with creation could be premised. This understanding of humans refers to the understanding of humans as a gradually emergent species characterised by ever-increasing higher capacities like free will, self-awareness and moral responsibility.

The view of human beings as 'spirited bodies' discounts the notion of the immortal soul which has been construed as the quality that sets humans apart from the rest of creation and also as the quality that connects human beings to divinity. The immortal soul has been rejected on the basis that it represents remnants of Hellenistic philosophy that shaped aspects of the Christian doctrine of creation.

The immortal soul as the locus of the *imago Dei* and connector to divinity was a Hellenistic attempt to read immortality into human *being* as a way of connecting humanity to divinity. It is also deemed to be a quality that sets humans above other creatures. Insights derived from scientific reconstructions of the biological evolution of the earth however locate humans within the continuity of creation as do insights from process thinking. Whether human beings were created immortal or with potential for immortality remain inconclusive in Christian dialogue.

Conradie (2005:52) claims that 'To say that mortality is an integral function of creation is therefore not so much a theological truth claim, but a theological acknowledgement of insights derived from science'. Within this view the soul-body dualism is thus challenged while at the same time accepting human finitude. According to this view, biological death is understood as a function of human finitude. The continuation of life requires death as part of creation and even for creation itself to flourish.

This view acknowledges that death is not always natural, even though sin is not also understood as the decisive cause of death. Arguing from the standpoint of the vastness of evolutionary history 'natural evil' cannot be premised on human sin because human beings

emerged only a few million years compared to other creatures that preceded human beings and have been subject to suffering and natural evil for billions of years.¹²

Placed within the long history of evolution, the human species are not the oldest among creatures. The history of the universe therefore does not revolve around the human story according to scientific and process thinking insights. The billions of years that span the slow evolution process of the universe is much older than the human species. So purely from that historically comparative standpoint there is a sense of humans being ‘put in their place’ in relation to other creatures. Could that be a point of humility for human beings that would make us see ourselves as interrelated with the rest of creation?

Within the evolutionary process, human beings are seen as being ontologically connected and as having a common origin with all of creation by virtue of being ontologically imbedded within the rest of creation. Conradie explains this relationship between human being and the cosmos in this way:

Life on earth, in fact, the earth itself only became possible after an earlier generation of stars burnt themselves out so that heavier metals were formed. Indeed, as many ecological theologians have commented, we are made from the ashes of dead stars. All the elements in the human brain, in our hands and in our hearts, were forged in the furnaces of stars. ~~Everything in the cosmos is related to everything else through their common origin. This observation was dramatically illustrated by the pictures of the earth taken from space. This illustrated that human beings form part of a thin envelope of life, namely the earth’s biosphere. If human beings form part of a larger organism, one may be tempted to ask what the function human beings fulfil within this organism.~~

(Conradie 2011:133)

If our self-understanding as human beings includes the insights that indicate our connectedness to the organism that the earth is, and if that knowledge serves to increase our capacity to intentionally ‘register and respond to any pain impulses that threaten the

¹² Conradie (2005:54-55) extends this argument by referencing Barth’s view of the relationship between death and God’s judgement. In light of Barth’s views understanding human beings as ‘spirited bodies’ therefore means we have to come to terms with the fact that ‘death, pain, fragility and vulnerability seem to be inescapable aspects of the material world. New life on earth can only arise through death. It should be specifically noted that natural suffering affects not only human beings but also the other animals and living organism.’

organism' (Conradie 2011:133) we would be on our way to conscientious earth-keeping based on our sense of solidarity with the rest of creation. If the realisation that we are 'one' with the rest of creation helps us to 'decide' to act differently towards creation we are well on our way toward an earth-keeping ethos. That ethos, though, would be limited for having as its basis a self-interested need for our own survival.

On the question of immortality, what we have established so far is that a nebulous soul is not required to connect humanity to God and the rest of creation. The view that human beings are connected to the God of creation without necessarily being understood as possessing a soul can be theologically substantiated.

Moltmann's view that in Christian theology connection is based on the Trinitarian relationship presents a compelling argument in that regard. This study lacks the scope to pursue the complex arguments within this Trinitarian model¹³ which provides a basic theological orientation for community. Suffice it to say that the overriding insight of the Trinitarian approach is that because to be God is to be in community, God's creation is connected to the community of the Godhead as an extension of that same divine community, not in a pantheistic sense but within an eco-system (Moltmann 1985). It helps here to capture Moltmann's own words he argues that:

... all relationships which are analogous to God reflect the primal, reciprocal indwelling and mutual interpenetration of the Trinitarian perichoresis: God *in* the world and the world *in* God; heaven and earth in the kingdom of God, paraded by his glory; souls and body united *in* the life-giving Spirit to a human whole; woman and man in the kingdom of unconditional and unconditioned love, freed to be true and complete human beings. There is no such thing as solitary life ... All living things – each in its own specific way – live in one another and with one another, from one another and to one another ... It is this Trinitarian concept of life as interpenetration or perichoresis which will therefore determine ... (the) ecological doctrine of creation.

(Moltmann 1995:17)

¹³ Moltmann (1985) seems to suggest that this theological model is not yet epistemologically grounded within Christian theological discourse for reason of complexity of the multidimensional nature of the Trinitarian economy.

Understanding the Trinitarian model as the orientation for understanding connectedness between the creator and created, elevates humanity. We no longer have to think in dualistic ways to reckon with connection between God and human beings, nor to split human *being* into body and soul. We may speak of ‘spirited bodies’ because there is goodness in the material world and our being ‘spirited bodies’ does not contradict our connectedness to the divine. Our Christian task is not to escape our material, earthly, embodied *being* (vulnerability, suffering and death included). Trinitarian theology could anchor an adequate creation theology that does not require us to look down on the material nor apprehend human *being* in dualistic terms.

Thus our being ontologically imbedded with the rest of creation as human beings suggests an “ontology of communion” where relationships define the very nature of being.’ And so the solidarity of human beings with creation is based on the mutual indwelling of the three persons of the Trinity that is extended to the whole of creation. Ecological relatedness/community finds its orientation from the notion of Trinitarian communion.

Conradie tempers the above assertion by a warning against the extremes of what he calls ‘inner-trinity speculation and mystification’. He goes on to caution that,

We may be tempted to make deductions about the immanent trinity on the basis of salvation history. However, theological speculations and too many quasi-logical deductions should be avoided in order to respect divine mystery. The doctrine of the trinity emerges, at best, as a *doxological conclusion* of theological reflection on the work of the triune God and as a pre-historical *conceptual foundation* upon which the entire edifice of systematic theology may logically be built up. That can all too easily lead to theological constructions that are done as it were from God’s point of view and not from our human point of view in the midst of history. Then we may pretend that we can see from God’s perspective, from all eternity, and that we can trace the history of the universe from the outside, not the inside. Such a theology becomes harsh and deterministic.

(Conradie 2005:144)

And yet we can still deduce from the Trinitarian model the human relatedness to and solidarity with creation on the basis of the Christian Trinitarian tradition. Because Trinitarian theology lies at the core of the Christian faith, it credibly anchors the quest for a theologically grounded ethos for earth-keeping.

These ideas are complex and have not even begun to gain currency within Zambian Christianity. So the quest for ‘handles’ for discourse that is theologically grounded will include a retrospective look as we saw in chapter three to account for what has shaped biblical anthropology thus far. Other than that the subsequent task is to look to fresh insights inspired by the sciences that present alternative ways of understanding creation and human identity yet which approximate Christian tradition. The quest therefore requires multi-layered interaction among academic disciplines, faith traditions and other forms of knowledge.

In the next section we turn to the creation story of Genesis 1 as presented in chapter three, in terms that challenge the hierarchical view of creation.

4.3 Genesis 1: A Critique of the Dualist Hierarchical View of Creation

Theological acknowledgement of scientific insights should lead to theologians applying them to the interpretation of Scripture. The understanding of human beings as ‘spirited bodies’ from a non-reductionist physicalist view which critiques the dualist hierarchical views of human beings and creation as portrayed in the discussion above thus could be applied as an insight that sheds light on the story of creation, as we attempted to do in chapter three.

The argument presented in chapter three may give the impression that the interpretation offered by Welker settles the question of *who* created, *what* was created and to some extent *how* that creation happened. © 2013 University of Pretoria. All rights reserved. The copyright in this work vests in the University of Pretoria. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the University of Pretoria. If that were the case a creation theology would be born upon which an earth-keeping ethos would be premised. But the issue is more complex than that.

Reference to the creation story of Genesis 1 itself, even in a re-interpreted version does not conclusively speak to the act of creation or the identity of the creator. These are questions that theologians will continue to debate, refine and re-define.

This dilemma can be checked by reference to the original context and the supposed intention of the priestly authors of the Genesis 1 creation story. In his 1984 work, *Creation in the Old Testament* Anderson raises a number of important questions that may form part of the on-going theological task of formulating an adequate creation theology that could shape a Christian earth-keeping ethos.

Anderson (1984:14) argues firstly that the Genesis 1 creation passage ‘must be studied as a discrete literary composition with its own structure, style and dynamic.’ He describes it as a pericope that could be teased apart from its literary context while maintaining the story’s internal ‘coherence and integrity’. Despite that Anderson urges that the story ‘must be interpreted contextually’, that is, in terms of the function to which it was employed in its original context in primeval history and in reference to the Torah.

Anderson further suggests that the story served a cultic function. He highlights ‘the radical dependence of the cosmic order upon a transcendent Creator’ in that narrative. Anderson reads the contingent nature of creation in the language of the story of Genesis 1. Though his work is dated (written in 1984), his view indicates the lack of consensus in terms of the role of scientific enquiry shedding light on biblical interpretation. He concludes that what he terms *mythopoetic* language of the Bible leads to the conclusion that the origin of the cosmos is a mystery (Anderson 1984:16).

Using a different entry points Moltmann and Welker seem to arrive at the some kind of open-ended ambivalence in regard to what we Christians should make of creation particularly in interdisciplinary conversation. That signals that there are as many convergences of views as there are divergences. The re-construction of a Christian creation theology is thus very much a work in progress that would benefit from a range of ‘voices’ from the Christian standpoint as well as critical engagement with other disciplines.

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Moltmann (1985:19) argues that the conception of ‘God in Creation’ brings evolution and creation together, not as opposing but as complementary ideas. He concludes that ‘the creation of the world has been so designed that it points in the direction of the kingdom of glory...’ and Moltmann (1985:19) concludes that thought with a quotation of a doxological passage from the book of Wisdom 11:24-12:1 which begins with the words, ‘For thou lovest all things that exist’ and ends with, ‘Thou sparest all things, for they are thine, O Lord who loves the living, and thy immortal spirit is in all things.’

Welker (1999:19-20) argues for a change in ‘our guiding theological conceptions (that) lie in the biblical texts’. He sees a wealth of possibilities ‘for the critique and transformation of guiding abstractions (that) show themselves even in a very limited look at a very short passage (primarily Genesis 1).’ He bemoans the limiting effects of his cultural lens upon his ‘capacity for theological perception and imagination’. He also notes how an exclusive focus

on the ‘literary approach’ to the creation story made him bracket ‘out the complex anthropology of the doctrine of creation, as well as the thematic cluster centred upon the Sabbath, with all the consequences of the thematic cluster’ (Welker 1999:20).

While acknowledging limitations and thematic reductionism that characterise interpretation of the creation story, Welker (1999:20) acclaims the innovative power of what he already sees as being operative, namely, the ‘clear and powerful alternatives to well honed, false abstractions with regard to creation, the project of a biblically oriented interdisciplinary revision of our dominant abstractions seems to (Welker and to me!) to be enticing and encouraging.’ He bemoans the presence of hardened abstractions of the past through which the innovative theological endeavour of the present must break but he also hails the wisdom and treasure therein which must be employed for the purpose of,

...critique and transformation of theological, religious and secularised abstractions that continue to guide us even today. In the light of *transformed abstractions* the apparent rubble heaps and museum pieces present themselves very differently. They present themselves as developed forms and witnesses of a life that is permeated by knowledge. They radiate and provide orientation even into our future, full of innovative power and full of wisdom.

(Welker 1999:20)

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Although the interpretation of Genesis 1 that Welker offers may be quite novel, he is careful to urge that the past and new insights be held in a healthy tension. He cautions against the proverbial throwing the baby with the bath water! He urges against, and problematises a reductionist view of creation that uncritically equates creation to reality in which ‘belief in creation and the reality of experience’ are enmeshed. At the same time he illustrates how ‘creation and revelation are bound together and the way in which God’s revelation in creation calls natural religious sentiment into question’ (Welker 1999:21).

Welker understands critique of abstraction as part of the theological task to be undertaken in view of the search for an adequate creation theology. That view takes care of the need for any view to seek to ‘bull doze’ but rather than all come to the table ready to learn. And so far the Christian faith has gained insight from neurosciences that have cast new light on the interpretation of creation narratives, one of which has been illustrated in this study. But rather

than present it as normative, it is presented as plausible, and certainly as an alternative to dualistic notions.

Genesis 1 understood as a non-scientific descriptive story that carried a ‘moral vision’ should help us to make a difference in the world today by putting it to the same use but in a different context and with different demands. Reading Genesis 1 in our generation should thus be done in the light of ecological devastation, as the current demand which requires us

... to tell the story of the universe in such a way that we can again live by this story. The plausibility of the claim that the world is God’s own creation depends on the use of the best available knowledge (scientific and otherwise) of our day. However, the message cannot be derived from that. It is a message that should, in our context, inspire resistance against capitalist exploitation, consumerist greed, cultural alienation and domination in the name of differences of gender, race, class, species and kind.

(Conradie 2013:12)

The Genesis 1 creation story serves the same purpose as other cosmological myths of all cultures everywhere. A cosmogoni myth provides orientation for people and gives them an identity. That function of cosmogonic myths captures the essence of what this study attempted to do with the creation story of Genesis 1. In chapter three, namely to posit it as an orienting narrative for Christian views of creation. The difference between Genesis 1 and other cosmogonic myths is that it also performed a doxological function for Israel which other myths do not.

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Told by priestly authors, Genesis 1 is believed by Christian scholars to have served a dual function as (1) doxological with pastoral/liturgical implications for exiled Israel and (2) polemical/witness to reaffirm the faith of exiled Israel in Elohim as creator and ‘owner’ of creation against Marduk, the God of Israel’s captors.

Human beings living in a reciprocal relationship and respect for all of creation is an affirmation that the whole of creation belongs to God. That affirmation is one that the Zambian church needs to reclaim through reconstructed cosmological insights that could shape an earth-keeping ethos that is theologically grounded and is at once doxological (i.e. inspires faith and worship of God in light of the glory of God displayed in creation) and

polemical (i.e. bears witness by being in itself a challenge to prevailing mind-sets that exploit creation and other living things).

Dean-Drummond (1996) argues eloquently as she seeks to reconcile the diverse views about the Genesis 1 creation account. She proposes that creation by divine agency (whatever that means) does not contradict views that attribute creation to a purely physical origin. And so in this view a biological evolutionary origin of creation including human beings is plausible and does not have to exclude a divine origin.

Dean Drummond appeals for a critical look at the purpose of the creation narrative of Genesis. Rather than taking it as being in opposition to the scientific account, for Christians to feel threatened that the scientific account would replace the biblical account, they should rather be seen as two different lenses of perceiving that could find common ground as has been illustrated in the case of neuro-scientific enquiry that has validated the notion of ‘spirited bodies’. We are also not obliged as Christians to give religious/theological significance to every scientific point of view. We are liberty to pick and choose. Science does not have to have the last word, nor should Christians take the Genesis account of creation literally.

That the creation story of Genesis 1 creation was written, as Deane-Drummond (1996:17) puts it, ‘to bring a sense of meaning to the lives of the Israelites in the context of their faith in a Creator God.’ The question then is whether this story can address ecological concerns of today. For instance can this creation story bear out creation of human beings as ‘spirited bodies’? What about human beings as co-creators with God? What about the cause of the break in the relationship between human beings and the rest of creation? What is the relationship of the ecological crisis to human sin? What are the differences and similarities between biblical and Zambian cosmogony? These and other questions may be questions we raise to remain true to the purpose of the orienting purpose of biblical creation stories.

4.4 Zambian Creation Myths: A Cosmological Resource for a Theologically Grounded Earth-keeping Ethos?

Under this heading we ask again the question about what insights about the place of human beings in creation are found in Zambian cosmogonic myths. How would they inspire a

theology for the care of the earth in ways that are consistent with Christian tradition? We established from the three myths and the Ubuntu world-view in chapter three that there are such insights that could be harnessed.

P Giddy's article titled *Making Sense of the World in Scientific and Pre-Scientific Cultures* makes a similar point when he notes that upholding scientific thought and

scientifically verified beliefs ... does not necessarily entail a complete overriding of the claims of religion ... In anthropology (and other social sciences), beliefs and actions are seen in terms of framing influence from the social environment, not simply in terms of a subject trying to categorise an external world. Their activities are seen as ways of 'making sense' of the world and its demands, in their particular circumstances.

(Giddy in du Toit 2004:85-102)

The connectedness of life is an element that resonates with the Trinitarian view as we have outlined above. But the task of appropriation requires more than a sentimental lifting of ideas and slapping them with a Christian tag. The theological task of appropriating such indigenous knowledge using the particular way of seeing that characterises the *Zambian* worldview must acknowledge that it is one standpoint, among many, from *within* which the particular people concerned view creation. We affirmed in the literature review in chapter two the validity of this perspective and that it makes a significant contribution. For the purpose of this study we take note of the key insight of the sacredness and *bondedness* of 'community life' as a theologically significant contribution from that perspective.

In regard to that, the question then is: What methodologies and conceptual frameworks are available to adequately appropriate these insights. Eco-theologian, Delia Deane-Drummond has sounded a caution worth noting for the theological project of appropriating insights from indigenous peoples (mainly from the southern hemisphere). She says:

It is also possible to learn from ... historical work that there are resources buried in the Western tradition that are more than the caricature of exploitation, capitalism and aggression implied by all liberation theologies. An idolisation of nature in its native wildness is also dangerous in as much as it fosters the belief that human beings have little or no hope of creating solutions to environmental problems. In addition, a simple appropriation of, for example, spiritual traditions from indigenous cultures in

a piecemeal way may have good intentions, but it can also lead to further marginalisation by exclusion from an equal place in socio-economic sphere. This is the mirror image of the problems with much of liberation theology, where inclusion in of one group or ‘class’ in socio-economic processes undermined other aspects of indigenous culture.

(Deane-Drummond 2008:53)

If the insights that are derived from indigenous knowledge are to credibly contribute to a theology that is derived from various dimensions of knowledge, there can be no place for caricatures of cultures – a reductionist understanding of any cultural attributes distorts and misrepresents. Achieving an articulate theology does not make the work of appropriating insights merely a syncretic task of assimilating African Traditional Religions¹⁴.

Christian anthropology that just admits insights from other disciplines as well as indigenous knowledge may not be adequate for the theological task at hand of curving out an earth-keeping ethos.

The call then is to have a theological rationale (or rationales for there may not be only one) for the retrieval of ecological wisdom from the world’s cultural and religious traditions that is undergirded by deep Christian convictions and that invoke Christian symbols. That would be the trajectory if the theological task being proposed is to be justifiably Christian.

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The theological task thus should go beyond observing acts of environmental practice in indigenous communities to a search for cosmic themes that would theological enlarge the insights beyond the confines of the particular community, so that what is local could be for the benefit of the global church. In other words, the marginalisation of cultural sources of ecological wisdom that Deane-Drummond speaks of can only be overcome if the theological task is born out of an encounter with the gospel.

¹⁴ That would easily be the case because the sacredness of life that pervades the African world view entails that every aspect of life is imbued with religious significance and so instead of critique from a Christian standpoint we might uncritically admit notions that could be purported to be the common ground for a creation theology among different traditions/religions. This critique has been variously advanced in the context of interfaith dialogue.

This study focuses particularly on human beings' place in creation and their relationship with other creatures with reference to the hierarchical view of creation and power dominion relationships that have shaped traditional biblical anthropology.

As human action is deemed to be responsible for the eco-crisis the earth faces today, human action is targeted for redress. The study focuses on human relationship to the rest of creation and care for the earth out of that concern. The well-being of the earth community is dependent on the role and agency of human beings as responsible earth-keepers. Because human power and activity has had devastating consequences for the earth, it follows that the onus is on us human beings to act to reverse the degradation. But if the rationale for such human action is not theologically grounded as pointed out above, there can be no grounds for Christians to claim to bring a contribution that could shape an earth-keeping ethos grounded in a specifically Christian theological rationale.

4.5 A Nexus with the Rest of Creation for the Flourishing of all Creation: Grounds for an Earth-keeping Ethos

The argument throughout this study is that we need a theological justification for human beings to be interconnected with the rest of creation in order to have an adequate theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos. Hierarchical relationships in nature based on a power-dominion model of human versus the rest of creation have been found wanting. We propose the Trinitarian relationship as the orienting model as well as the 'source' of all of life – the convergence from which all life draws its being. Through a pneumatological understanding the infinite and finite are connected in a life-ecosystem that is inhabited by the Spirit.

We have also addressed this question through the biblical text. The power of scriptural passages to inspire a different way of seeing and a different ethos is thus upheld. According to Christian confession, the earth has a divine origin. That is our starting point. The creation narrative of Genesis 1 that we considered in this study is not a treatise on whether or not God is creator. Neither is it an explanation of how God created. So when the scientific prism is used to interpret aspects of this narrative it is not to supplant its significance as an orienting myth that sustains faith in a creator God. It is a category mistake to confuse the purpose of the biblical story with that of scientific insights.

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5. PREREQUISITE FOR AN EARTH-KEEPING ETHOS: SUMMING UP

This last chapter entails a brief summary of the whole study with particular reference to the stated research problem, methodology and main findings of the study.

5.1 The Research Problem

Understanding human beings as being in solidarity¹⁵ with the rest of creation critiques traditional dualistic and hierarchical conceptions of creation on one hand, and serves as an orienting concept for a ‘fresh’ theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos on the other. This study has cast its discussion within that frame.

We have accounted for the dualistic western model or worldview and the ways in which it has been linked to the eco-crisis the world faces. The critique, in reference to the creation account of Genesis 1 has shown that that model of thought is inadequate to account for creation in terms that are compatible with Christian tradition. We have further explored contemporary theological scholarship and found therein compelling views that eloquently show that the western model is indeed inadequate for the kind of eco-theology we need to speak to the devastation caused by human beings to the earth.

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The overriding insight from that critique is ontological. The way of being conceived of in terms of the analytical model that accounts for being as consisting in the particle (or atom) – a view that seeks to conceive of being by stripping down to the essential core has been superseded. We used three prisms as lenses for this study, namely, (1) a retrospective look at the critique of the dualistic hierarchical view, (2) a non-reductionist physicalist view that favours the conception of human beings as ‘spirited bodies’ not embodied spirits (3) Trinitarian and pneumatological views of creation that orient the theological framework and is anchored in the community and communion within the triune relationship. These are the bases on which the non-dualistic view of human identity and the creation is premised in this study. In those views ontology is conceived of in terms of being and/or relationship and no longer in dualistic terms.

¹⁵ Solidarity is understood within a correctional notion in reference to destructive human actions that are responsible for eco-crisis the world faces today.

5.2 Methodology

The study then illustrated the application of insights gathered through the three prisms through two case studies, namely, the re-interpretation of the Genesis 1 creation myth using Welker's method that derives upon systems thinking and the *interconnedness* that links all of creation (including the creator) in an ever expanding interrelated, mutually affecting 'emerging' eco-system.

The second case study was based on Zambian cosmogony whose basic insight is the *bondedness* of all of life against the backdrop of the pervasive interaction of the transcendent and immanent in everyday life. In other words, the integrated view of life that is not dualistic. All of life is connected and mutually influencing.

Based on the strands from the three prism and the two case studies the conceptual elasticity of the term solidarity has been tested. It is used to signal that the orientation towards creation by human beings is at once a volitional act as well as an ontological reality (i.e. a *being* together by virtue of the nature of being in relationship as an ontological imperative). Understood that way solidarity of human beings with the rest of creation is therefore posited to be the nexus that converges the various strands of the insights of the study.

Even as I make that conclusion, this study has made me keenly aware that Christian perspectives are still in search of a metaphysical language for appropriating insights from various strands of knowledge. My recommendation in that regard is that research on the various ecological themes be done from a multidisciplinary perspective. The value of understanding what it means to be human cannot be over-emphasised (Buitendag 2012:9). That subject alone requires much appreciation of insights from different disciplines to cross-pollinate.

Among the resources I have used for this study are American and South African publications that bring together theologians from different areas of study as well as inter-disciplinary research between theology and science (and in one case including philosophy). That model is worth emulating in the Zambian context. The only caveat would be that Christians need to do their homework and be sufficiently steeped in their own tradition to engage with other disciplines. Science has been so elevated in academia that Christian views may be considered to be on the fringes, even in a Christian nation like Zambia.

The environmental crisis, as we have established, stems from humans actions. Faith is important to Zambian people, and the Christian faith in particular. So a well-founded theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos could begin to inspire human actions towards constructive actions in nature.

To re-imagine an adequate creation theology that reorients human actions differently is something that cannot be accomplished with a re-oriented theology alone. In fact we have noted above that there may not be ‘a settled theology’ but rather on-going assessment and re-assessment. Even while a theological premise is sought, what follows below outlines some of the ways in which the Christian community may appropriate theological insights for earth-keeping.

5.3 Findings of the Study

What has been established by this study can be summed up in the words of Moltmann quoted in the second chapter. What he observes, to my mind, defines the theological task of the future if we are going to address the ecological crisis meaningfully. He puts it this way:

What we are seeking is a community of scientific and theological insights. It is only in our common recognition ... and only in our common search for a world capable of surviving, that we shall also be able to put forward the particular contribution of the Christian traditions and the hope of the Christian faith.

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(Moltmann 1985:13)

In the same vein, Welker recommends taking pluralistic approaches seriously in the task of mooting an adequate creation theology. While advocating for pluralistic views, Welker emphasises that biblical traditions have not been brought down together with deism and the dualistic worldview that ensued from it. What he advocates is that biblical theologies not be based on a single view. In that regard, Buitendag, arguing for continuity in confessions of faith suggests that respect for continuing tradition and the global frame of reference, aptly advises that ‘The message should always be present, so that contemporary people with all their knowledge (including scientific knowledge) can address judgements and prejudices.’ (Buitendag 2009:391).

In this study we have traced the dualistic hierarchical view that has shaped biblical interpretation of God’s creation back to the Enlightenment period. The understanding of the

relationship between human beings and the rest of creation based on a power-dominion principle is also understood to arise from that. The literature surveyed indicates a shift from the dualistic view towards alternative modes of thought that have yielded new insights. This study highlights some of those alternatives by observing:

Firstly that the body-soul and spirit-matter dichotomies have been superseded and have been replaced by new thinking that is more holistic view of creation and life which leads to a view of creation as having intrinsic worth and being interconnected.

Secondly that transcendence is not the only way to account for God's work in creation opens up a place for human intentional human action, we can therefore speak of an earth-keeping ethos that require a change in thinking and action on the part of human beings.

Thirdly that science could be a prism for theological apprehension of creation and rather than replace theology the two disciplines could be mutually enriching.

Despite the critique the western model of thinking there is need to heed its emphasis on content. The Christian faith has content which must be apprehended for the purpose of the interdisciplinary discourse. The particular contribution of the Christian tradition and the hope therein needs to be part of the common search. Moltmann's guiding concept of *imago mundi* which we have noted earlier presents human beings as having a dual role as priestly creatures who stand before God on behalf of all of creation. We have also appreciated the role that human action has played in bringing about the eco-crisis the world faces today. The two situations (i.e. *imago mundi* and the responsibility for the eco-crisis) underline the importance of human actions for a possible reversal and/or halting of the crisis. The recommendations outlined below are therefore premised on these assertions from the study.

5.4 Recommendations

A multi-layered approach to make the re-oriented theological perspectives that shape a new earth-keeping ethos gain traction may be undertaken in the following ways:

The rigorous theological task of constructing an adequate Christian anthropology and a doctrine of creation needs to be on-going.

Working with the pointers that we already have towards a new way of conceiving of creation and human beings' part in it, the church needs to filter those reoriented theological perspectives in various ways as outlined below:

Firstly, through proclamation. The tradition that we have critiqued as inhabiting dualistic thinking was passed on to various parts of the world through the Word proclaimed because of that tradition's emphasis on the verbal. Theologically, therefore our ecological concerns need to hold together Word and Spirit. Meaning the Christian traditions that uphold content needs to integrate insights from those traditions that embrace mystery, a sacramental emphasis and those that focus on praxis. If our understanding of ways of speaking about creation from a biblical stance is that creation-talk serves a polemical and doxological purpose, these elements need to be brought together.

Secondly we need to ask: what is the role of prophetic ministries around ecological issues? The example given at the beginning of the absence of a Christian 'voice' from the Environmental Council of Zambia may serve as a negative example of missing prophetic witness in regard to the ecological debate in my country. Mining is big business in Zambia and the welfare of the large corporations that run mines can be prioritised at the expense of local people and the environment.

What mode of prophesy would be called for in this situation? Quite often the injustice pointed out is against human beings and not against nature itself. If our theology is consistent with the theology of human beings being inalienably connected to nature, this prophetic stance would necessarily have to be holistic to include the well-being and flourishing of all life. That prophetic stance can only arise from Christian content that takes into account a faith imperative to understand creation as profoundly interconnected. We could make a similar claim in regard to ecological debt which is a reality in many African countries.

Thirdly, we cannot underestimate the power of sermons. The cumulative impact of many Christian churches in Zambia preaching ecologically sensitive sermons for a span of years could make a difference and shape an ethos for earth-keeping. Listening to such sermons may shape one's priorities, character and actions. That is presupposing prior work on a foundational theology built on a sound theological premise undergirds such preaching. Bad sermons could have the reverse effect of what we are recommending!

Fourthly, the power of studying biblical texts should never be underestimated. We have seen from this study that texts from the bible can inspire the intended ethos. The constituent portrayal of God's identity and character as a God of mercy and justice could incrementally shape a deep sense of justice for all of creation.

Fifthly, the power of teaching, learning, research and publications cannot be over or underestimated. The impact of many years of doing research in, learning and publishing theologically informed works that embrace the tenets that we have identified would go a long way in shaping, orienting and curving out a theologically grounded earth-keeping ethos.

5.5 Conclusion

So what we mean by 'Spirited bodies' bodies as a pre-requisite for an earth-keeping ethos is that 'fresh' insights need to be applied to the understanding of creation as being ontologically connected. Humans beings are thus in solidarity with the rest of creation by virtue of being in a biological and evolutionary interrelationship with the rest of creation. We should also act out of our volition to live in solidarity with other creatures for mutual flourishing. This is proposed as the prior work to be translated into a life-task of re-orienting theology. If this task would become part of the Christian enterprise in the terms proposed above, that would profoundly affect human actions towards creation while incrementally changing attitudes and thus shaping an earth-keeping ethos.

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6. APPENDICES

6.1 Myth of the Creation Story of the Bemba of Zambia¹⁶

IN THE BEGINNING

The Bemba came from the two groupings the Luba and the Lunda (from the Lunda country of Angola and Congo) near or around the Congo River. They were led from the Lunda Kingdom by a very fierce King, who ruled with an iron fist and is said to have powers which everyone feared his powers.

One day the hunters went hunting and came across some very beautiful woman and who had very big ears. They were surprised to find her in the middle of nowhere and they asked her where she was from and she said that she was from the heavens. They took her to the King who interrogated her and insisted that he must marry her if she is from the heavens. A special name Mumbi Mukoto had been given to her. The name was derived from her most outstanding feature - her ears. It described the way her ears resembled an Elephant's.

The King lived with her and she soon got pregnant and bore three sons and a daughter. One day some of the King's advisors who were jealous of the sons, called a meeting in the kingdom at a time when they knew the sons could not attend. They told the king that his sons' absence was a sign that they were planning to overthrow him. The king believed them and ordered the sons captured and severely punished. The two elder sons ran away and their little brother was captured and his eyes were removed, blinding him.

The only way of capturing the elder two was by sending out word to them that the king had pardoned them, and that it was safe to return. Traps had been dug and their bottoms and sides lined with spears, sharp sticks and stones. The plan was to get the sons to fall into the traps and die. But the blind brother had heard what the plan was. He was a very good player of the traditional harp. So as the two elder sons came down the path on their return, he sang to them that the path had traps and that they should come in dancing from one side to another in order to avoid them. Neither the king nor anyone else (other than his brothers) could understand the

¹⁶ <http://www.africashowcase.com/awinner.asp?pcat=culture&cat=mizizi&sid=183> (Accessed 8 July 2013).

code in which he sang. They followed his instructions and managed to get to the home without falling into the deadly traps.

When the king came out from his quarters, he was he was very surprised to find the sons in the court yard. They managed to explain everything to him and he pardoned them, and apologised profusely to the blind one.

LEAVING HOME FOR GOOD

Sometime later there was another confrontation and the sons decided to leave permanently, taking a handful of other people also fed up with their father's rule. They trekked across great lands, then they crossed Congo River and came to Luapula River in the northern part of modern day Zambia, where they found the Lunda tribe. There was fierce fighting after which they managed to conquer the kingdom there. With time, they inter-married and conquered a number of other tribes as they moved from the northern parts and into the central parts of Zambia, all the way to and around the Serenje hills where they conquered the Lambas, Lala and the Nsengas.

THE BEMBA ASSERT AUTHORITY

The Bemba became a fierce and mighty force and even today some tribes are ruled by Bemba Chiefs or Kings. They continued to migrate they met people from the Ngoni tribe of South Africa running away from Shaka the Zulu king. There was a fierce war in which the Bemba overwhelmed the Ngonis who run into the modern-day Malawi where they are to this day.

6.2 Kaonde Myth of the Creation¹⁷

God created two people, Mulonga and Mwinambuzhi, who were to become the first man and woman. When God created them, they had not yet been differentiated into male and female. In fact, they were lacking in the things that would enable them to relieve themselves. This made them very uncomfortable. Mulonga went to God to seek help. When God heard their problems, he realized that he had left out some important things. So he gave Mulonga two small packets and said, "One is yours and one is for Mwinambuzhi. Take them home, and

¹⁷ From: Once Upon a Time in Africa Stories of Wisdom and Joy) Compiled by Joseph G. Healey. <http://www.orbisbooks.com/chapters/1-57075-527-2.pdf> (accessed 8 July 2013).

before you go to bed, put one packet in your crotch and tell your companion to place the other packet in her crotch.

Mulonga took the packets and began his journey home immediately. However, the journey was a long one and he became very weary. He lay down and went to sleep, but, before he slept, he put his packet in his crotch. When he got up, in the morning, he was surprised. He had been changed into a male and the other things that he had lacked had also been provided. He picked up the packet that he had been ordered to give to Mwinambuzhi, but he noticed that it had a bad odour and he threw it away, saying, “It’s rotten—and besides, it’s heavy.” He continued on his journey and, when he arrived home, Mwinambuzhi noticed that he had been changed. So she asked him, “What happened to you?” Mulonga told her what God had instructed him to do, but did not tell her about the packet that God had sent to her.

Mwinambuzhi decided to go to God and get some medicine too. When she found God, she told him of her problem. God said in surprise, “Didn’t Mulonga give you the packet I sent along for you?” Mwinambuzhi replied, “No, he didn’t. He told me only about his packet.” So God gave Mwinambuzhi another packet along with instructions. She followed the instructions and when she awoke in the morning she found her all missing parts. Then something new happened to them. They desired each other and they had intercourse. However, afterwards they felt strange and afraid of this new thing of knowing one another. They decided to go to God and tell him about it because they had their doubts. God heard what they said and told them not to fear knowing one another, because this was the way in which they would conceive and bear children.

After that, Mulonga and Mwinambuzhi bore many children. They cared for them and their family grew. Their children were the parents of many clans. One day God said to Mulonga, “Why did you not carry out the orders I gave you regarding the packet for your companion? Why did you throw hers away?” Then God said, “You did a bad thing when you did that. Therefore, as punishment from now on, when a man marries a woman, he will have to pay a dowry.”

6.3 The Honey Bird and the Three Gourds¹⁸

Time passed. One day God called Mayimba, the Honey Bird, who was a friend of our ancestors. God gave Mayimba three gourds that were plugged up. He said, “Go to the man and woman I created and give them these three gourds. But you are not to open them on the way. When you get to their village, you are to tell them, ‘Open this first gourd with the seeds of all things and plant them for food, but do not open these other gourds until I come. When I come I will tell you what to do with the other two.’”

Mayimba began the long journey. He grew overwhelmed with curiosity about the contents of the gourds, so he stopped and opened the first gourd with the seeds. When he verified that such was the content, he put them back in the gourd and plugged it up again.

Then he opened the second gourd. It contained medicine for curing death, illness, and tiredness and for calming wild and dangerous animals. But no one had ever experienced these things, so Mayimba did not know what they were. He put the medicine back into the gourd and replugged it.

When he got to the third gourd, he found that it was filled with death, disease, and dangerous animals. When he opened it, they all escaped and dispersed throughout the world. Mayimba tried in vain to recapture them and return them to the gourd.

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Eventually, God came as he had promised, and when God saw what Mayimba had done, he became exceedingly angry. Together they tried to recapture the bad things Mayimba had let loose, but they were unable to do so.

God was furious with Mayimba, and said to him, “You did very, very badly. It is your fault.” When Mayimba heard this, he was very frightened and escaped into the wilderness. From that time on, he ceased to live in the village of his friends.

Then God called the first man, Mulonga, and his wife Mwinambuzhi, and said, “Your friend Mayimba has done a great evil in failing to follow my instructions about waiting to open the gourds until I told him. He has caused you great trouble. I am unable to repair what he has done. However I will teach you how to sew clothes and build houses wherein you may

¹⁸ Myth, Kaonde ethnic group, Zambia, collected by Father John Ganly, M.M. <http://www.orbisbooks.com/chapters/1-57075-527-2.pdf> (accessed 8 July 2013).

protect yourselves.”

He taught them to kill wild animals and to use their skins. He taught them to smelt copper. He taught them to make fire with two dry sticks. He taught them to make axes and spears and pots for cooking and collecting water. He taught them all things.

6.4 Earth in Africa Mythology¹⁹

Many African peoples regard the earth as a female deity, a mother-goddess who rules all people and is the mother of all creatures. The earth lives and gives birth to ever new generations of beings. She will make the grass grow when heaven gives her rain and if there is no rain, she withdraws into her own depths, waiting for better times to come. Many regions of Africa have to endure a dry season when nothing grows and death reigns. As soon as the new rains, life begins miraculously. Grass sprouts, flowers open and the frogs croak, creeping out of the earth who hid them. Thus the earth conceals life, protects it against desiccation and revives it as soon as better times arrive. Without the gifts of the earth no one lives. Many African peoples believe that the ancestors live in the earth, in houses very similar to the ones they had here, on the surface of the earth. They also own cattle and goats there. Indeed there is a Zulu myth in which people go in search of the milk-lake under the earth, from where the milk is absorbed by the grassroots so that the cows and goats have milk from the earth.

Where else could the milk come from? Our own flesh is earth, even the name Adam means 'earth'. All creatures are earth. Fire too, lives in the earth, which sometimes spits it out when in anger. Fire comes out of wood, so it, too, must come from the earth. Wind too, it is believed, comes out of caves in the earth. Thus all four elements come out of the earth. Yet, the earth is seldom worshipped; the libations which are poured down during numerous ceremonies are more addressed to the ancestors than to the earth as a whole. Nevertheless, the earth has a very powerful spirit which rules over our life and death. Sometimes, when she is perturbed, she moves, forests and mountains and all. Unlike man, the animals understand their mother and obey her, although sometimes she will have to punish a disobedient creature.

¹⁹ <http://www.a-gallery.de/docs/mythology.htm> (accessed 8 July 2013)

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