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DOCTRINE OF CREATION AND THE PROBLEM OF GREEK DUALISM: TOWARDS AN AFRICAN ECOFEMINIST CRITIQUE OF THE CONCEPT OF A TRANSCENDENTAL GOD IN ECOLOGICAL DISCOURSE

ALICE WATHERI KIMANI

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR A MASTER IN THEOLOGY (SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY OPTION) FROM ST PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

NOVEMBER 2024

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my work and it is original, it has never been submitted to another university other than St. Paul's University, Limuru.

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The Rev. Prof. Kabirow a Gatumu

Second Supervisor

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Francis Njuru Wahome, and my mother, Sarah Awinja Njuru, who have supported me throughout my academic journey. To my dear husband, Rev. Geoffrey Kimani, and our three children, Beth, James, and Sarah, for their patience, understanding, and unwavering support during the time I was working to meet deadlines and complete my Master's degree. Your patience gave me the strength to persevere. I also dedicate this work to the P.C.E.A. Kahawa Farmers Parish, who generously financed my studies and showed great patience while I attended classes.

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To my family, I thank my parents for their constant encouragement and involvement throughout my educational journey. To my dear husband, the Rev. Geoffrey Kimani, and our children, Beth, James, and Sarah, thank you for encouraging me to persevere in my studies. I promise to continue to the next stage.

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ABSTRACT

The ecological crisis is emerging as one of the major global concerns. From a theological perspective, the destruction of creation in Africa can be attributed to the erosion of the African religious understanding of the living nature of creation as being in kinship with humanity. Greek dualism, embedded in missionary enlightenment thinking, has been cited as a key factor influencing the ecological crisis in Africa. This dualism, which portrays creation as inferior to human beings, is largely associated with the influence of Greek thinkers, particularly the Platonic philosophy that shaped the transmission of Greek thought into Christian theology. Plato asserted that the world of forms is divine and masculine, while the material world, representing universalities, is inferior and feminine. This worldview has left a religious and psychological imprint on African Christians, contributing to the exploitation of the environment. A theological reflection on this reality suggests an African ecofeminist theology as a possible approach. This methodology draws on Jürgen Moltmann's social Trinitarian model of God's relationship with humanity, while incorporating the African concept of animism to highlight the interconnectedness of all creation with the divine. It first critiques the idea of a transcendent, apathetic God in response to the ecological crisis, and then reaffirms the African religious view of animism as understood in the African worldview—contrasting this with the missionary interpretation of animism as mere fetishism. This offers a shift from a hierarchical understanding of relationships to one that embraces the sacred interconnectedness of all creation with the divine. The application of African ecofeminist theology provides a contextualized response that also recognizes the agency of African women in understanding how dualism affects both the degradation of creation and their lived experiences. This study will use the Agikuyu community as a prototype to illuminate their pre-missionary worldview and the impact of dualism. Additionally, it will explore the teachings of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa to illustrate how dualism is expressed within the African Christian Church.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The ecological crisis and climate change are among the top global issues being addressed, with countries worldwide striving to find long-term solutions. From November 6 to 18, 2022, the UN Climate Change Conference in Egypt (COP27) brought together many world leaders and over 40,000 participants, including more than 22,000 party delegates, 14,000 observers, and over 3,000 media representatives. The conference covered every aspect of climate change including its science, potential solutions, political will and visible signs of action (UNEP, 2000). Another UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) was held from November 30 to December 12, 2023, in Dubai, UAE, continuing global efforts to address the ecological crisis, with representatives from around the world working toward solutions.

Globally, there is a growing awareness of the effects of the ecological crisis. Chitando et al. (2022:2) observe that countries are urgently seeking solutions to the ecological crisis, particularly climate change, by holding global conferences, recognizing the need for immediate action. The crisis extends beyond climate change, encompassing issues like droughts, hunger, mass die-offs of domestic and wild animals, and the extinction of water bodies and species that once thrived on Earth. According to Carfore (2021:1) the world faces a multi-dimensional ecological crisis, combining challenges related to ecology, society, and religion. This crisis manifests in phenomena such as climate change, mass species extinction, ocean acidification, rising wildfires, superstorms, glacial melt, and pollution.

Africa is particularly affected by environmental degradation and the consequences of the ecological crisis. As noted by Chitando et al. (2022:1) and Oba (2014:1), the continent is vulnerable to increased temperatures, storms, hurricanes, floods, droughts, and wildfires due to its socio-economic and ecological conditions. This situation demands urgent mitigation efforts.

Kenya, like other African countries, has not been spared from the impact of the ecological crisis, with climate change inflicting severe consequences. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, Kenya has taken action, producing one of the youngest environmentalists, nine-year-

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old Karen Kimani, who participated as a delegate at COP27. In September 2023, Kenya also hosted the African Climate Change Summit, culminating in the Nairobi Declaration, where the President, Dr. William Ruto emphasized the increasing exposure to climate change and its associated costs for Africa and the world (Summit, 2023). The President has also encouraged citizens to plant trees to combat the devastating effects of environmental degradation.

The words of Professor Wangari Maathai, "Nature is very generous but very unforgiving," resonate profoundly today. Her statement urged people to recognize the consequences of environmental neglect and the urgent need for conservation. True to her words, Kenya has faced one of the worst droughts and widespread hunger in its history over the past decade. More recently, the country has experienced severe flooding, leading to loss of lives and physical and psychological trauma. These disasters are directly linked to environmental destruction and the global phenomenon of climate change, which is driven by human activities.

While the destructive impact of human activities affects creation globally, women in Africa, along with the ecosystem, experience these effects in deeply interconnected ways. Kenya, like much of Africa, continues to grapple with these challenges, as evidenced by the prolonged drought that has afflicted the country for nearly a decade. According to research by Reliefweb (2023), mapping Kenya's drought from 2014 to 2023, the number of people affected by drought has risen from 1.3 million in February 2014 to 4.1 million by the end of 2022. This stark reality highlights the urgent need for intervention.

A report from the United Nations News on October 23, 2022, stated that women and girls are disproportionately affected by the worst drought Kenya has experienced in 40 years, increasing their risk of sexual exploitation, violence, and abuse (Humanitarian Aid, 2022).

Kenya's forest cover has also been severely impacted by deforestation. Between 1990 and 2010, the country lost an average of 12,050 hectares of forest per year, amounting to a total loss of 241,000 hectares, or 6.5% of its forest cover. This deforestation threatens countless species, as Kenya's forests store 476 million metric tons of carbon in living biomass. Kenya is home to 1,847 known species of amphibians, birds, mammals, and reptiles, with 4% being endemic and 3.8% threatened. The country also hosts at least 6,506 species of vascular plants, 4.1% of which are endemic. Furthermore, 6% of Kenya's land is protected under IUCN categories I-V (Forestry, 2023).

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According to the Kenya Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Census (2021), some endemic species, including the black rhino, sable antelope, Hirola, Tana River Mangabey, and roan antelope, are critically endangered. The population of these species has drastically declined, with only 897 black rhinos, 51 sable antelopes, 497 Hirolas, 1,650 Tana River Mangabey, and 15 roan antelopes remaining. Despite a slight increase in some large herbivores, such as elephants and rhinos, between 2014 and 2021, these statistics highlight the alarming extent of environmental degradation.

The census, conducted professionally using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology, camera traps, helicopters, vehicles, and boats, also recorded decreases in other wildlife populations, including buffaloes, giraffes, zebras, and wildebeest. Among aquatic species, researchers counted sea turtles, whale sharks, humpback whales, blue whales, dolphins, and sharks. Numerous bird species, including flamingos, pelicans, and eagles, were also surveyed (KWS, 2021).

Habitat loss, land-use changes, and rapid population growth are major threats to wildlife, alongside illegal activities such as livestock incursions, logging, and charcoal burning near wildlife sanctuaries. Former President Uhuru Kenyatta emphasized that it is Kenya's sacred duty to protect wildlife for future generations, urging government and private sector stakeholders to prioritize conservation efforts.

Although some progress has been made in increasing the population of certain species, the broader environmental crisis continues to pose a serious threat to Kenya's ecosystems. The alarming statistics underscore the need for immediate action to address the root causes of environmental degradation, primarily human activities.

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1.2 Attitude of African Christians towards the Environment

Environmentalists have observed that the institutions of state, society, economy and other structures of power shape the implementation and application of participation conservation in significant ways. A theological reflection on this state of affairs shows a clear indication of the ignorance by Africans in understanding the principle of stewardship of creation which recurs as a divine instruction throughout the Biblical text. From Genesis 1:26-31, the Bible records the creation of human beings both male and female, and the instruction to rule over the earth and all

that was created in it. Further, this instruction has been misunderstood to imply

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subordination. This is despite the Psalmist clarifying in Psalms 24:1-2; 50:7-12; 89:11 that all that is on earth belongs to God the creator and that human beings are just stewards or custodians of creation. The parable in Matthew 25:14-30 has been largely used as the Biblical reference of stewardship of creation by human beings about the Kingdom of God. Genesis 2:15 is a very explicit indication of the instruction to stewardship and more so because it is found in the creation story where it is stated that, "Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it."

Despite the explicit Biblical evidence that humanity has been mandated to take care of creation, the situation in Kenya as an African country today is remote from this understanding. It is characterized by pervasion, massive destruction and degradation of creation. In an attempt to interrogate the phenomenon, an African theologian discovers two-fold realities which are juxtaposed and even intertwined. The first reality is the fact that Christianity which is the largest religion in the country has at its very nature a dualism from Greek philosophical influence (Ruether, 1992: 26). The dualism informs largely how a majority of Kenyans relate to the creation. The effect of this dualism promotes a worldview where human beings view themselves as superior to any other creation as will be presented in chapter two. The second discovery from an African woman's theological consciousness is a realization of the intertwined subjugation of women with natural creation. An African Eco-feminist theology illuminates this reality to also be informed by the Greek philosophy which is found within the historical transmission of Christianity to Africa. In the latter nature of the fold, Greek philosophy associated masculinity with reason and rationalism, while matter and the physical faculties of creation are viewed as inferior, subordinate and feminine.

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Ruether (1992:26) acknowledging the infusion of this dualism observes that Western religion and philosophical thought which is what Africa inherited from missionary theology is an infusion of Hebrew, Greek and Christian themes. These have at their core an ontological dualism of spirit and matter, mind and body with a good/evil dichotomy, male and female. The dualism she observes is also identified with gender and class hierarchy. The men in the ruling class are seen to be closer to mind and reason, while women and lower-class people are closer to the body. The latter are categorized as 'carnal' both in the sense irrational, prone to sensual impulses, and prone to evil. Ruether argues that this dualism developed from the thoughts of Greek philosophers, especially Plato and Aristotle. Christianity in its historical development

took over adopting the same (Ruether, 1992:26). Mwaniki (2018:1) confirms this view by

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observing that the Christianity that Africans inherited was informed by a notion of dichotomy where women were viewed as inferior and evil to men (Mwaniki 2018:1).

Having inherited this worldview, the picture that is depicted by the current state of creation in Kenya is evidence of the effect of the dualistic view. Human beings view themselves as superior to all others while ecology is subject and subordinate to humanity. This has led to degradation and ruin which reflects ignorance by Africans on the inherent value of creation and how to relate with the inanimate part of the created universe. In the same breath, it is observed that dualism similarly contributes to subjugating women. The earth has been referred to with feminine language. Cuomo (2002:4) observes that historically, the Earth is seen as a mother with the association of women and Earth as providers of life, sustenance, and creativity and this should ultimately give such nobility to both the earth and women. While showing the intersection, Norgaard (1999:202) wrote that there is a "connection between women's fertility and the fertility of the land". However, women are oriented toward relationships and interdependence whereas men approach problems with principles, reasoning, and judgments (Norgaard 1999:202).

This research seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate on a theological response to the problem. The researcher makes her entry into the conversation in her own right as an African Woman and a Theologian who is concerned with the ecological crisis and subordination of women in equal measure. The researcher observes that to address the perversion and destruction of creation and subordination of women, there is a need to analyze the African's perception of creation together with women or what Mbiti calls the African's religious philosophy concerning the ecology (Mbiti, 1969:1). This she argues can only be done by analyzing how the Greek dualism was transmitted to Africa through missionary theology and how it has continued to shape Africans and Kenyans thoughts concerning the ecology and women leading to their exploitation, degradation and subordination.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

The ecological crisis in Kenya, and by extension Africa, is largely influenced by the erosion of the traditional African religious belief in the interconnectedness of all creation with the divine. This shift is attributed to the integration of Greek dualism into African Christianity, which creates a dichotomy between the spiritual and material worlds. The dualistic worldview, which

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views the material world as inferior or separate from the spiritual, has significantly shaped how

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African Christians perceive and interact with the environment. As a result, this philosophical influence has led to the degradation of nature and a diminished sense of responsibility towards environmental care and sustainability. The problem lies in how this worldview undermines a holistic understanding of creation and contributes to the ecological crisis by detaching people from the value of the material world.

1.4. Aim of the Study

The major significance of this dissertation lies in its critical examination of how dualistic thinking, rooted in Greek philosophy and transmitted through Christianity, has shaped the African Christian worldview and contributed to the degradation of the environment. By highlighting the distortions in the relationship between humanity and the natural world caused by this worldview, the study emphasizes the need for a more holistic understanding of creation that acknowledges the interconnectedness of all life.

This dissertation addresses the implications of dualistic thought for ecological and social justice in Africa, making a strong case for a theological re-examination that promotes sustainability and environmental care. By identifying the harmful effects of dualism on the environment, the study points to the urgent need for a new approach to environmental ethics within African Christian communities.

By incorporating Jürgen Moltmann's Social Trinitarian model, the dissertation offers a deeper theological understanding of creation. It challenges the conventional dichotomy between the spiritual and material worlds that has influenced African Christian thought, encouraging a more integrated view of the sacredness of both realms. This theological insight adds depth to the argument for a more responsible relationship with the environment.

The study also introduces African ecofeminist theology, particularly through the lens of the Agikuyu community and African women, as a framework for fostering a more respectful and dignified relationship with creation. This contextual approach is significant in addressing both gender and environmental issues, showing how the experiences of African women can inform a more just and holistic ecological theology.

It further calls for a critical re-evaluation of African Christian beliefs, encouraging a shift

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toward a theology that aligns with principles of ecofeminism and ecological integrity. By

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challenging the existing dualistic perspectives, the dissertation advocates for a more sustainable and ethical interaction with the natural world.

In essence, the dissertation provides both a theological and practical framework for rethinking the African Christian approach to creation, with significant implications for promoting environmental sustainability and justice in Africa.

1.5. Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

1. To investigate the development of Greek dualism within Western philosophical thought, which has historically contributed to the separation of humanity from nature.
2. To explore how this dualistic perspective was transmitted to Christianity through the teachings of the Church Fathers, shaping religious beliefs that often prioritize human dominion over nature.
3. To examine the pre-missionary and pre-colonial worldview of African communities, with a specific focus on the Agikuyu community, in order to highlight their harmonious relationship with nature.

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1.6. Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the study is that the denial of dignity to creation in Africa is a result of inherited dualism, which influences contemporary Christian thought. This dualism promotes a hierarchical worldview that separates humans from nature, leading to environmental degradation and a disregard for non-human life. The study proposes that by adopting an African ecofeminist theology, the religious mindset of African Christians can be reconstructed to move away from this dualistic and hierarchical perspective, embracing the interconnectedness and equal dignity of all creation in relation to the divine.

1.7. Delimitations

While this study is focused on addressing the undignified state of creation in Africa, it uses data on the ecological crisis as experienced in Kenya to represent the continent. The study employed library research as the primary source of information and further explored media reports and

other contemporary sources, such as social media and virtual media.

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Acknowledging the diversity of African communities, the study used the Agikuyu community as a prototype to illustrate dualism as a foreign concept. It also examined the historical transmission of dualism in Africa through Christianity and how it has shaped perceptions of ecology.

By virtually adopting an African woman's perspective, the study demonstrates that women bear a significant burden of the ecological crisis in Africa. Additionally, the study draws insights from Moltmann's social Trinitarian model of God and the African concept of animism to construct an African ecofeminist theology. However, it is important to note that there exists a thin veil between Western feminist theology and African women's theologies. Therefore, the study incorporates the views of feminist environmentalists from around the world, with particular emphasis on perspectives from the Global South and, more specifically, voices from Africa.

1.8. Methodology

Ecofeminism serves as a powerful methodology that examines the intricate connections between the oppression of women and the exploitation of the environment. This approach challenges the political, social, and historical frameworks that contribute to both gender inequality and ecological degradation. By understanding these links, ecofeminism aims to create a more equitable and sustainable world, advocating for the rights of both women and nature.

The roots of ecofeminism can be traced back to influential thinkers such as Simone de Beauvoir, who, in her seminal text *The Second Sex*, published in 1952, highlighted how patriarchal logic positions both women and nature as "the other" (de Beauvoir, 1956). This perspective laid the groundwork for ecofeminist thought, emphasizing that the same societal structures that oppress women also facilitate the exploitation of the natural world. As a result, ecofeminism calls for a re-evaluation of these oppressive systems to foster a more just society.

In 1970, ecofeminism gained further traction in France with Françoise d'Eaubonne, who in 1974 made a connection between the exploitation of nature and the subjugation of women in her work *Feminism or Death*. It was in France that literature began to emerge, explicitly linking gender oppression with environmental issues. This period marked the evolution of

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ecofeminism into a broader movement that encompasses various social justice struggles, including feminism, environmentalism, and anti-colonialism.

By integrating these perspectives, ecofeminism seeks to address the root causes of both gender and ecological injustices, advocating for a holistic approach to social change. As a methodology, ecofeminism provides a critical lens through which to examine the interconnectedness of gender and environmental issues. This study employs ecofeminism as a methodology to construct an African ecofeminist theology that will help confront dualism in the African community, ensuring that creation is accorded dignity in unity with God.

1.9. Justification

The study of Greek dualism and its impact on African Christian thought is crucial for understanding the environmental degradation occurring in Africa. Dualism, which separates the spiritual from the physical, has influenced many Christians to prioritize human needs over environmental stewardship. This perspective has contributed to the exploitation of natural resources, leading to significant ecological damage.

Despite the majority of Kenyans identifying as Christians and possessing knowledge of biblical teachings, there is a disconnect between belief and practice regarding environmental conservation. Many Christians view themselves as the center of creation, which can lead to neglecting their responsibility to care for the environment. This study aims to encourage Christians to reassess their role as stewards of the Earth, promoting a more holistic understanding of their faith that includes environmental care.

By examining the environmental damage caused by this dualistic thought, the research seeks to raise awareness among Christians about the consequences of their beliefs and actions. The insights gained from this study will help shift perceptions, encouraging a view of the environment that respects and honors all of creation. This change in mindset will be essential for fostering a sense of responsibility towards the planet.

Ultimately, this research will contribute to the body of knowledge regarding the relationship between dualism and environmental conservation in Africa. By highlighting the effects of dualism on Christian thought, the study aims to inspire a movement towards greater

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environmental stewardship among Christians. This shift is vital for addressing the pressing

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environmental challenges faced by the continent and ensuring a sustainable future for all while striving to identify solutions to the ecological crisis in Africa.

1.10. Scope and Delineation

This study focuses on the subordination of creation within the context of African ecofeminist theology. It highlights the connection between the oppression of African women and the exploitation of the natural world, recognizing their shared experiences of subjugation. While the study acknowledges the intertwined nature of these oppressions, it primarily delves into the specific issue of creation's subordination, exploring the underlying themes of oppression and subjugation.

1.11. Structure of the Dissertation Chapter 1: Introductory Issues

In this chapter, the researcher provided the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the aim of the study, the hypothesis, the objectives of the study, the methodology, the research justification, the scope and delineation, and the structure of the dissertation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter presents the development of Greek dualism, its transmission to Christianity, and the perspective of African communities regarding the cosmos.

Chapter 3: The Doctrine of Creation

The chapter explores the doctrine of creation concerning the transcendence and immanence of God, emphasizing that while the two concepts may appear to oppose each other, they are actually complementary.

Chapter 4: African Ecofeminist Theology

This chapter presents the theology and offers solutions to the effects of dualism on the subordination of creation.

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Chapter 5: Summary and the General Conclusion

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In this chapter, the researcher summarizes the work, evaluates the achievement of the hypothesis, illustrates the pastoral practical implications, and the general conclusion of the study.

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CHAPTER TWO

DUALISM IN CHRISTIANITY AND THE SUBORDINATION OF NATURE

2.1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to understand how dualism, as a philosophical epistemology, was transmitted throughout history within Western philosophical thought and how it was passed on through Christianity to the present day. It explores how this philosophy has shaped the African Christian view of nature, inanimate objects, and marginalized groups, often seeing them as subordinate to the elite. Furthermore, by using the Agikuyu community as a representation of African communities, the study examines the pre-missionary worldview of African societies and their harmonious relationship with the environment.

2.2. Development of Greek Dualism

Greek philosophy, a system of thought that emerged in ancient Greece, was developed by thinkers such as Thales, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. Among the most influential philosophers in antiquity who shaped Western thought were Plato and Aristotle. This study will focus on Plato to trace the subordination of matter and reference Aristotle in a limited capacity, especially in relation to the subordination of women, which will be discussed in Chapter Four.

2.3. Plato's Epistemology

Before examining the influence of Platonic thought on Western philosophy and subsequently on Christian theology, it is essential to explore whether Plato himself was influenced by earlier Greek mythology, given his Greek heritage. It is widely argued that modern society has some of its earliest roots in Greek myths. In the Greek creation myth, Gaia (Earth) gave birth to Uranus (Sky) on her own, and their union resulted in the birth of all creation, including human beings. Like most ancient societies, there are no written records of these myths before the invention of the printing press (Abdelighani, 2015: 4). However, Abdelighani (2015: 2-39) argues that Plato's writings suggest his familiarity with these myths. He states that Greek mythology influenced almost everyone who encountered it. While pre-Platonic philosophers dismissed myths as lacking value, they claimed that hidden meanings within these myths could still be interpreted.

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Plato, however, revisited the myths, which still held power in his time, and criticized them as being unholy and filled with errors. He asserted that myths should be taught as dialectical truths. According to Plato, myths represented a "rustic" form of wisdom—tools for engaging with the "logos" (reason)—but not antithetical to reason itself. In his view, myths were mysteries to be revealed but lacked the higher knowledge that reason provided. Reason, according to Plato, was supreme, and myth subservient to it (Menzel, 2019: 8). Thus, although Plato responded negatively to the Greek creation myths, it can be argued that they still influenced his philosophical categories, even if indirectly.

Plato sought to explain the epistemological concepts of the universe (Pate, 2011: 30). In his famous work, *The Republic*, Plato provides the allegory of the cave as an illustration of the existence of two parallel worlds: the world of ideas/forms and the world of physical realities. As translated by Eyer (2016: 1-110), Plato portrays prisoners who have been chained in a cave for their entire lives. According to McAleer (2020), these prisoners are chained in such a way that they cannot move and can only see the shadows cast on the cave wall. They have no experience of the real world outside the cave and believe that the shadows they see are the true essence of things.

Plato argued that if these prisoners were freed, they would be able to see the real objects, which exist perfectly in the world of forms. This allegory was intended to show that what we see in the material world are merely shadows of a higher, immaterial reality (Eyer, 2016: 1). For Plato, the forms or ideas represent the perfect good, while the material things in the physical universe are only imperfect shadows of this true reality.

Marvin Pate, in his book *From Plato to Jesus: What Does Philosophy Have to Do with Theology?* (2011), provides a clear summary of Plato's epistemology. He labels Plato's worldview as dualistic, grounded in the distinction between the invisible world of forms or ideas and the visible world of shadows or copies. In the philosophical context of the "One-and-the-Many," Plato's philosophy asserts that the "One" (the forms) is superior to the "Many" (the material objects). The forms are eternal universals, while the physical things we see are merely copies. In Plato's understanding, the forms exist separately from their material manifestations. These forms are immaterial and eternal realities that exist in the mind of God, whom Plato referred to as the Demiurge.

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Human beings, according to Plato, are able to recognize the forms because their souls pre-existed their physical bodies. Through recollection, individuals can access knowledge of the forms. This process of recollection allows humans to reason and grasp the essence of things, enabling them to seek the ultimate good whether it be justice, love, or truth by contemplating the ideal form of the good (Pate, 2011: 25-26).

2.4. Transmission of Greek Dualism to Christian Theology

According to Pate (2011), philosophy has historically accompanied theology, with Platonic dualism being one of the most influential philosophies shaping Western thought and Christian theology. The most prominent Neoplatonic philosopher who linked philosophy and theology was Plotinus (AD 204-270). Pate (2011:11) credits Plotinus with building a natural bridge between Platonic philosophy and the mysticism of God. Plotinus emphasized the eternal, immaterial God, who is above the material world (the Many) and regarded as the ultimate reality. He affirmed Plato's theories of epistemological and anthropological dualism, expanding them to encompass the creation system and the mystical union with God as a way for the soul to be saved from the body.

During his travels, which took him from Alexandria in Egypt to his permanent home in Rome, Plotinus encountered various religious trends that thrived without philosophical challenges. Once in Rome, he systematically combined religion with reason. Plotinus argued that the material world (the Many) is not the true reality; rather, the One, which is the invisible and eternal God, is the true reality. In his view, the material world emanates from God in hierarchical gradations, reflecting God but not being God, much like light reflects the sun without being the sun itself (Pate, 2011:12).

Plotinus introduced the idea that the first emanation from the One is Nous, which he defined as the mind or universal intelligence, followed by the soul, which is the source of the human soul and exists in opposition to the world of matter. This concept supported Plato's notion of the pre-existence of the soul (Pate, 2011:29). Plotinus also addressed the problem of evil, arguing that evil arises when the soul becomes fused with the body. He believed that the human soul constantly strives to escape the body, desiring to reunite with the world's soul or mind, and ultimately with God. This struggle ends when the soul leaves the body at death and ascends back to the One, reuniting with God through the development of moral and intellectual virtues.

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According to Pate (2011), Plotinus was the philosopher who effectively combined reason with

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religion, and his Neoplatonic views had a profound influence on Christian figures like St. Augustine, as we will explore later.

Plotinus was the last major philosopher outside of Christianity who had a significant impact on the development of Christian thought. His influence on Christianity was transmitted through Philo of Alexandria, a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher from Egypt. While Philo is identified as a Platonic thinker, he also adopted elements of Aristotle's worldview, particularly in relation to gender, embracing a view of sexual polarity.

Regarding the dualism of matter and spirit, Louth (2009:84) argues that Philo saw Plato's forms as synonymous with the "logos" (the mind). In the context of Genesis 1:0, God, the architect, created through the logos, a concept that echoes Plato's Demiurge. The existing rabbinic tradition of knowledge known as Sophia (wisdom) or Rahma in Hebrew, was incorporated into this formulation. In this tradition, wisdom is equated with the Torah, which is seen as God's blueprint for creation. For Christians, John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word (logos), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God", represents the culmination of the transmission of Plato's dualism into Christian theology as we know it today.

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2.4.1. Historical Development of Dualism in the Church

The most significant convergence of Greek philosophy and Christian theology in Church history occurred during the medieval period. According to Pate (2011:35), while theologians of that time may not have been consciously aware of this confluence, it is evident in Augustine's theology, where he reinterpreted Platonic ideas into what is now known as Augustine's Neoplatonism. Though Aristotelian thought was also developing alongside Neoplatonism, this study will focus on the Neoplatonic influence on Christian theology concerning creation, which continues to impact contemporary thought.

St. Augustine is considered the most influential Church Father who incorporated Platonic philosophy into Christian theology. His work, embraced by Protestantism during the Reformation, significantly shaped Christian thought. Augustine adapted Platonic concepts, reconciling theology with Plato's epistemology (Waite, 2024). He believed that the One (God) is above or precedes the Many (creation). In Augustine's view, God is the absolute being or eternal truth, while the Many represents God's creation. However, Augustine differed from

Plato in significant ways. He believed that God created all things from nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*), whereas Plato posited that the Demiurge merely shaped pre-existing matter.

Augustine rejected the idea of matter as inherently evil, viewing it instead as inferior to the immaterial realm. His ontology also included a dual understanding of creation: God is both immanent and transcendent. According to Pate (2011), Augustine saw God's transcendence (the One) as preceding God's immanence (the Many). This view is summarized as follows: "God's transcendence (the One) is behind God's immanence in creation (the Many). To God's transcendence belongs the universal and absolute" (Pate, 2011:37-38).

2.4.2. From Augustine to Aquinas and the Reformation

From the medieval period to what became known as the modern age, there is a rich history of the Church that we will not delve into here. However, it is important to note that this era set the stage for the Protestant Reformation, which resulted in the split of the Church. Although several theologians laid the groundwork for these reforms, Martin Luther is considered the greatest Protestant reformer. One of the key issues being contested was the authority of Scripture over reason (Kleven, 2022:41). The Roman Catholic Church and the reformers disagreed on doctrinal matters, with the Church largely embracing Aquinas' Christianized Aristotelian philosophy. This theology contrasted with the Augustinian view. Aquinas employed a scholastic approach, which emphasized reason over faith. The Church often used a more philosophical approach that lacked direct scriptural justification, setting the stage for the Reformation (Pate, 2011:51).

Martin Luther, a Christian theologian and Augustinian monk, played a pivotal role in the Protestant Reformation and profoundly influenced Protestant doctrines and other Christian traditions. Luther's call for the Church to return to the teachings of Scripture led to the formation of new Christian traditions and the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation, which culminated in the Council of Trent (O'Malley, 2002). While there were many issues at play, the reformers revolted against the Church's increasing reliance on reason to empirically test faith. The followers of Aquinas had established the idea that "the One was in the Many," while Luther, drawing on Erasmus' work on human freedom through classical studies, led the Reformation with the belief that faith was above reason "the One over the Many" (Pate, 2011:57-58).

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For Luther, Scripture was the sole authority for the Church, rejecting Aquinas' use of reason in theology. He embraced Augustine's theology, which placed faith in opposition to reason (Pate, 2011:57). His concept of *sola scriptura* the belief that the Bible is the only true source of Christian doctrine, surpassing ecclesiastical authority became a driving force behind the Reformation.

It is important to recognize that while Luther and other key figures of the Reformation did not have a formal theology of "the One and the Many" in the traditional philosophical sense, their theological focus on Scripture and faith can be seen as a reflection of their Augustinian influences. Luther's influential work, *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520), presents the concepts of justification by faith and the dual nature of a Christian as both a free lord over all and a dutiful servant to all (Wengert, 2016:10). In terms of the philosophical debate over the One and the Many, the reformers' theological psychology clearly elevated faith in God and Scripture above the inferior reason of humans, indicating the position of the One over the Many.

2.4.3. John Calvin, John Knox, and the Presbyterian Church

The Reformation initiated by Martin Luther, further developed by John Calvin and others, led to the emergence of various Protestant denominations, including the Reformed tradition, which became central to the Presbyterian Church. This Church became particularly influential in Scotland and other regions, shaping the course of Protestantism across Europe and beyond. John Calvin, a French theologian, played a key role in shaping this tradition. His seminal work, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1509–1564), as translated by Beveridge (1845), provided a comprehensive systematic theology of Reformation thought. Calvin's contributions included teachings on predestination, God's sovereignty, and the visible Church as a community of believers. His ideas left a lasting mark on Reformed communities.

In Scotland, John Knox, a follower of Calvin, was instrumental in establishing the Presbyterian Church as a distinct ecclesiastical body. The Presbyterian Church adopted a system of governance involving elders and presbyteries, emphasizing the role of the congregation in decision-making (Calvin, 1530: Book IV:6).

One of the clearest ways to understand the theology of the "One over the Many" in the Reformed Church is through their view of the Eucharist. The Reformed tradition, including

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Calvin's perspective, holds to a view commonly referred to as "Real Presence with Spiritual

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Reception." This belief stands apart from the Roman Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation, derived from Aquinas' Aristotelian thought, and the Lutheran doctrine of Consubstantiation. In the Reformed view, the bread and wine of the Eucharist do not undergo a literal transformation into Christ's body and blood. Instead, they symbolize Christ's body and blood, while Christ is spiritually present, and believers partake of this presence through faith and the work of the Holy Spirit.

In *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book IV, Chapter 17, Section 10, Calvin argues that Christ's body is in heaven and cannot be physically present in the bread, avoiding a localized, physical understanding of Christ's presence. Instead, Christ's presence is "spiritual" and received by believers through faith. Calvin writes that, "the flesh of Christ is not otherwise given to us to eat, and his blood to drink, than by the intervening of faith." Therefore, the Eucharist elements remain bread and wine, but they are sacred symbols representing Christ's body and blood. The power of the sacrament lies in the spiritual union of believers with Christ by faith. This understanding has been foundational to shaping the practices and beliefs of Reformed and Presbyterian churches. The emphasis on spiritual reception aligns with the Reformed focus on God's sovereignty and the Holy Spirit's role in the believer's life (Calvin, 1530: Book IV:6).

From this reflective view of the Presbyterian understanding of the Eucharist, we can see traces of Platonic epistemology, where the spiritual reality (the One) is beyond the physical elements (the Many), symbolizing God's presence. This dualistic framework, in which the One is elevated above the Many, has shaped the theological foundations of the Reformed tradition and continues to be reflected in various Christian practices, including those in African Christianity, as we will explore further.

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2.4.4. Dualism in the Presbyterian Church of East Africa

The establishment of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) can be traced back to the missionary work of Scottish missionaries, particularly the Church of Scotland Missions, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These missionaries arrived in British East Africa and began their work among the Kamba and Maasai tribes, starting a Christian mission in Kibwezi. In 1898, they moved the mission to Kikuyu and built a community of believers among the Agikuyu people, with mission stations at Kikuyu, Tumutumu, and later among the Meru people

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(Presbyterian Church of East Africa, 1998:1). Missionaries like Rev. James Stewart, Rev.

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Thomas Watson, John Arthur, and Walter Ross sought to spread the Christian faith while providing education and medical services to local communities (Muita, 2003:4-6). It is through this missionary work that dualism became embedded in the theological inclinations of the Presbyterian Church.

Dualism finds expression in many Protestant African Christian hymn books and liturgies, particularly in the PCEA. Calvin's theology of the "Real Presence with a Spiritual Reception" is evident in the PCEA's Gikuyu liturgical prayer book. During communion, the minister calls the communicants by saying:

"Tondu uciori, kuhiriria imwinangoro ciiyuritie niwitikio mwamukire Thakara mendi ino no iguo mugoo cithie Ngai,"

Which is translated as:

"Therefore, come closer with hearts full of faith; receive this sacrament for the glory of God..."
(Mbuku ya Mahoya, 1984: 67-69).

The most common hymn book used in Agikuyu Protestant churches is *Nyimbo Cia Kuinirira Ngai*. It contains songs sung during services and ceremonies in the daily lives of Agikuyu Christians. One song, often sung at funerals, vividly expresses dualism with lyrics such as:

"Wihoke Mwathani rugendo-ini. Tigana na mwiri uthii rugendo, Na mwiri ugathikwa utuike tiri, Niguo tugakinya gwa Ithe witu."

This translates as:

"The body will be buried and decompose. Leave the body to take its path; our souls are on a journey to our Father" (Gikuyu Hymn Book, 2003, p. 103).

These lyrics reflect a dualistic view where the body is regarded as unworthy after death, returning to the soil ("Tiri"), while the soul embarks on a spiritual journey to God, separate from the physical universe. Another hymn, *Thi ino ti yakwa* (*This World is Not My Home*), carries a similar dualistic message, where Christians are encouraged to reject material wealth and earthly pleasures in favor of focusing on their heavenly home, where eternal happiness awaits (Gikuyu

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Hymn Book, 2003:137).

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The PCEA Gikuyu prayer book also includes pronouncements during funeral services that emphasize the dualistic separation of matter and soul. For example, the minister says:

"Kwihoneria ti Ngai nio igite ai yuke roho wa... acoke kuriwe, riu nitwathika mwiri wake tiri-ini, tiri ni ucoke tiri, rukungu ni ucoke rukungu, muhu ni ucoke muhu."

This translates to:

"Seeing that God has deemed it good to receive the soul of so and so, we therefore commit the body to the earth. Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust" (PCEA, 1984: 178).

Beyond liturgical and hymn books, the dualistic worldview in African Christianity is also found in many Protestant gospel songs. The well-known song *Sipati Picha* by Neema Mwaipopo from Tanzania envisions a life beyond this world, a new life to which Christians aspire. Another example is the song *Kimuonei Uria Watumire Ndimikane Thii* (*See the One Who Made Me Denounce the World*) by evangelist Anastasia Karanja, which envisions the eschaton, where Christians will be reunited with God in heavenly glory, away from the earth.

2.5. The Pre-Missionary Worldview of African Communities

This section explores the African worldview of the cosmos. It is important to acknowledge from the outset that Africa is not a homogeneous entity. Orobator (2018) highlights the misconception of viewing Africa as a uniform reality, stating that, "Africa is not a simple reality, but a complex one" (Orobator, 2018:6). Consequently, this study uses the Agikuyu community as a prototype to illuminate the African understanding of the cosmos. As established earlier, classical Christian philosophy views God as an absolute, pure spirit, detached from matter and elevated above the universe. This perspective contrasts with the African worldview, which does not operate on the dualism of spirit and matter—where the spirit is good and matter is evil or separate from God. Instead, the African worldview sees everything as a combination of spirit and matter, both of which are inherently good. Thus, God, as an existential reality, consists of both spirit and matter (Ogbonnaya, 2022:1). Africans do not wrestle with defining the nature of this existence because, in their worldview, the most important aspect is the close relationship between the divine and creation. The essence (*ousia*) of God is not a central question in African philosophy. As this study aims to examine the relationship between dualism and the subordination of creation, we will now explore how the

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Agikuyu community viewed matter (creation or "the many") versus God, who is spirit (the "One").

2.6. The *Agikuyu* view of the Cosmos

According to Githuku (2008:6), the depletion and destruction of the environment in Kenya can be attributed to the systematic promotion of Western culture as "superior" to the "uncivilized" African culture. He argues that, before colonization, everything in African societies existed in harmony. However, as Mwangi (2014:597) points out, colonialists undermined African knowledge systems by promoting the idea that European knowledge was superior, using scientific social Darwinism as justification. In pre-colonial Africa, religion permeated all aspects of life, making it impossible to separate one aspect from the other. Mwangi (2014:598) also notes that Africans had developed a diverse and sophisticated understanding of ecological sustainability, which was ignored by colonialists and dismissed as primitive or irrelevant.

Gathogo (2013) explains that the Agikuyu people preserved the environment due to their belief in the sacredness of nature, viewing environmental stewardship as a way of working alongside God. According to their creation story, Ngai, the divine being, resided on Mount Kenya and watched over the Agikuyu land from this elevated holy place. Similar to the biblical account where a snake could speak to humans, in Mukurwe-ini wa Nyagathanga, the Agikuyu Eden, animals could communicate and were used to deliver divine messages to the first humans. Agikuyu spirituality embraces a deep kinship between humans and animals, both wild and domestic. This is evident in the fact that many Agikuyu names are derived from animals, such as Mbogo, Wang'ombe, Wanguku, Njogu, and Wangari, which are names of both domestic and wild animals (Githuku, 2008:6). In her book *Unbowed*, Wangari Maathai (2006:37) notes that some wild animals were believed to house the spirits of deceased relatives and served as mediums to communicate with the living.

The Agikuyu people did not kill animals, especially wild ones, for sport. Animals were only killed in times of extreme hunger. Githuku (2008:9) criticizes the introduction of game hunting for leisure by colonizers, which was unheard of in the Agikuyu community. Like the biblical Jewish communities, the Agikuyu offered sacrifices to Ngai, selecting only certain animals deemed worthy for such rituals. Killing wild animals was considered ceremonially unclean (Githuku, 2008:9). The Agikuyu were organized into clans, each identified by an animal totem.

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These animals were not to be eaten, further reinforcing their sacredness. The Agikuyu

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economy, which included grazing, often saw domestic animals herded together with wild animals, under the watchful eyes of herders (Githuku, 2008:9-10).

As Gathogo (2013) notes, the Agikuyu people classified trees according to their uses, including building, medicinal, poisonous, and boundary-marking trees. Forests were considered sacred and used as hiding places during inter-ethnic conflicts. Women and children were often hidden in forests during such raids. When clearing land for homesteads or farming, trees were selectively cut with great care, as many trees were believed to possess spirits that could intervene in human affairs. The Mugumo tree (fig tree) was particularly sacred, and there was a prohibition against cutting it or using its wood for firewood (Maathai, 2006).

The Agikuyu land was surrounded by four mountains—Kirinyaga, Nyandarua, Kirima kia-Njahi, and Kirimbiruiru. These mountains were considered sacred monuments, with the peak of Mount Kirinyaga (Mount Kenya) regarded as the holiest place where Ngai resided. Before the arrival of Europeans, the peak had never been trampled, as noted by scholars. The land was also blessed with numerous rivers flowing from the mountains, providing clean water for the community. Forests were collectively managed by the community, and the Agikuyu had developed indigenous methods for preventing soil erosion, such as intercropping (Githuku, 2008:13). Kenyatta (1965) and Hinga (2017) both confirm that the Agikuyu people respected the environment and animals as sources of livelihood. Hinga further argues that, in Agikuyu creation theology, nature belonged to the creator, Ngai, who was seen as the ultimate owner and sustainer of life. In Kikuyu, the name Ngai implies one who generously divides and distributes resources to meet the needs of all living things.

The Agikuyu believed that only Ngai had absolute rights over the environment. When it came to land ownership, human beings had usufructuary rights legal rights that allowed them to benefit economically from the land. However, these rights never amounted to actual ownership, as the land ultimately belonged to Ngai, who granted it to humanity for responsible use. From an ecofeminist perspective, it is worth noting that women in Agikuyu society were custodians of the land and the environment. According to Kenyatta (1965:30), although tribal land was typically inherited by men, it was tilled and maintained by women, who acted as stewards on behalf of their families. This challenges the Greek association of women with materiality, as Agikuyu women had significant agency in land stewardship and environmental preservation

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(Kenyatta, 1965:30).

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From this theological perspective, the Agikuyu, like other African communities, viewed the environment both as a divine gift to be enjoyed and as a responsibility to care for, since "ultimately it belonged to the creator" (Hinga, 2017:186). Kenyatta (1965), Maathai (2006), and Githuku (2008) all agree on the theological view of the Agikuyu concerning the interconnectedness of the divine, the environment, animals, and humanity. However, they all critique how missionaries considered Christianity superior to African religions, disregarding the African methods of environmental preservation. While Gathogo acknowledges that missionaries viewed the Christian God as superior, he also notes that they recognized some aspects of African environmental conservation as beneficial, though not all. Githuku and Maathai emphasize the kinship and affinity between all elements of divinity, while Kenyatta and Gathogo emphasize the responsibility for preservation. Hinga sees this as an ontological understanding of harmony.

2.7. Conclusion

Chapter Two has traced the historical trajectory of Greek philosophy, highlighting its transmission from Plato through the ages to the Church Fathers, the Reformers, and into the present day. It has specifically utilized the hymn books and liturgy of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) to illustrate how elements of dualism embedded in Greek philosophy have persisted over time. The chapter aimed to show how this philosophy, when integrated into African Christian theology, fosters a religious perspective that subordinates creation to humanity and the spiritual realm, ultimately leading to a disregard for the environment.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the Agikuyu, as representatives of African communities, viewed the cosmos prior to the arrival of colonial powers and missionaries. It emphasizes their respect for the environment and the interconnectedness of all creation. The next chapter will explore the doctrine of creation within philosophical and theological frameworks.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the doctrine of creation within theological and philosophical frameworks. I will demonstrate both the transcendence and immanence of God in creation, highlighting the tensions in philosophical understandings of these concepts, such as the distinctions between pantheism and panentheism. The purpose of this chapter is to explain how traditional Christian orthodoxy understands the doctrine of creation. It will also help clarify what is at stake in Christian theology when creation is degraded.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." This simple and straightforward sentence, found in Genesis 1:1, opens the Bible in every translation and language. It introduces the Doctrine of Creation, a concept to which many systematic theology textbooks have devoted chapters, and numerous books have been written to explain. For instance, Karl Barth dedicates four parts of volume three in his *Church Dogmatics* to the Doctrine of Creation. Wayne Grudem summarizes it as: "God created the entire universe out of nothing, and it was originally very good. He created it to glorify Himself" (Grudem, 1994:262).

The Christian Doctrine of Creation must include the following elements: first, it begins with God, who existed before anything was created. Second, God's creation was made without the use of pre-existing material, and it was deemed very good. There is also a clear distinction between God (the One) and creation (the Many), with the understanding that creation is bound by time, while the Creator is not. The Latin phrase *ex nihilo* signifies that creation was formed out of nothing, meaning God did not reshape any pre-existing material. Finally, creation was wholly good—both material and spiritual aspects were very good. In simple terms, an eternal God created everything out of nothing, and it was very good (Garrett, 2000:340).

3.2 Philosophical Discussion of the Doctrine of Creation

The relationship between God, humanity, and the rest of creation forms the basis for the argument about stewardship of creation. Understanding the connection between God and creation is foundational to discussions of divine revelation and ethical responsibility toward creation. Philosophically, the doctrine of creation is tied to the ontological question of God's

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being in relation to creation—the One and the Many—and humanity's responsibility toward both one another and creation. Consequently, when we think about God's creation, we must

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consider God's transcendence and immanence: God as the One ultimate creator in relation to the Many, which is creation.

3.2.1 God's Transcendence and Immanence

The question of God's transcendence and immanence has been central to philosophical and theological debates about the nature of the divine and its relationship to the world. The debate of the One and the Many examines the tension between unity and diversity in existence, particularly regarding how God relates to the created world and its individual entities.

God's transcendence refers to the idea that the divine exists beyond and above the material world. It emphasizes God's otherness, superiority, and separation from creation. In this view, God is beyond human comprehension and exists in a realm qualitatively different from the physical universe. Transcendence upholds divine attributes such as omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. Advocates of God's transcendence argue that the Creator must be distinct from creation to maintain perfection and sovereignty. According to Gouw (2016), a transcendent understanding of God sees Him as beyond human experience, perception, or grasp.

In contrast, God's immanence highlights God's presence and involvement in the created world. It emphasizes that God is not distant from creation but actively sustains and interacts with it. Immanence suggests that God is intimately connected to every aspect of reality and that His presence can be experienced in the natural order and human existence. This view emphasizes God's love, care, and concern for creation, often stressing a personal relationship between God and individuals. According to Gouw et al. (2016), God exists within and alongside the universe, deeply connected to our existence.

The debate over the One and the Many centers on how God's transcendence and immanence coexist. Various theological and philosophical perspectives attempt to reconcile this apparent dichotomy. Historically, the Church has evolved toward harmonizing these two concepts. One philosophical-theological approach that seeks to balance them without leaning into pantheism is panentheism. Christians have been cautious to avoid pantheism, and panentheism has gained popularity in modern times. It suggests that while God is immanent within the world, He also transcends it. God is intimately connected to creation but is more than the sum of its parts.

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While this approach allows for a balance between God's immanence and transcendence, it

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raises questions about God's essence in relation to creation, as this study will further explore in light of Biblical theology.

3.2.2. The Paradox of God's Transcendence and Immanence in the Old Testament

According to Pate (2011:125), the theology of the One and the Many in the doctrine of creation is subdivided into its biblical presentation in both the Old and New Testaments. Pate (2011) argues that there is an imbalance between God's transcendence and immanence in the Old Testament, while the two are reconciled in the New Testament with the incarnation of Christ.

The two creation stories highlight this imbalance. In the first account, God is presented as creating the world not out of necessity but out of divine love. As recorded in Genesis 1, God creates the universe out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) through the power of His word. God spoke, and the universe came into existence effortlessly, with everything created being good and at peace. This account clearly depicts God's transcendence, showing Him as distinct from and sovereign over the rest of creation (Pate, 2011:126). Grudem (1994:262) explains that creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) means that before God began to create the universe, nothing else existed except God. This is further supported by Psalm 33, which states, "By the word of the Lord, the heavens were made, and their entire host by the breath of His mouth... For He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood forth" (Ps. 33:6, 9).

In the second account of creation, recorded in Genesis 2, the language is more anthropomorphic, especially in relation to the creation of humanity. Here, God is depicted as bending down to the dust, using His hands to form man and breathing into him the breath of life. God later takes Adam's rib to create a woman and brings her to the man. This account portrays God's immanence, highlighting His closeness and tenderness with His creation, particularly with human beings (Pate, 2011:126). Although there appears to be an imbalance between God's transcendence and immanence in the Old Testament, Job 12:10 bridges this gap by affirming both aspects, stating that all creation depends on God: "In His hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind." This signifies that while God is above creation, His presence sustains it.

Biblical scholars have sought to explain the differences between the two creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2 through a theory known as the JEDP theory. This theory attempts to understand the authorship of the Pentateuch, suggesting that it is not primarily the work of a single author,

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traditionally Moses, but rather a compilation of four distinct sources. According to this

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perspective, source criticism initially distinguished between authors by the terms "Yahweh" and "Elohim." The JEDP theory was later expanded to include two additional sources: P for Priestly and D for Deuteronomic. One of the most famous proponents of this theory is the German scholar Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918) (Hamilton 2005).

3.2.3 God's Transcendence and Immanence in the New Testament

The incarnation of Jesus Christ in the New Testament serves as the foundation for reconciling God's transcendence with His immanence. The Gospel of Matthew epitomizes this reconciliation in Matthew 1:23, where Jesus is declared "Immanuel," meaning "God (the transcendent) with us (humanity) immanently." Similarly, John 1:14 confirms the message in Matthew, stating that, "the Word (Deity) became flesh (Humanity)." These two gospels balance the concepts of transcendence and immanence, with the incarnation of Jesus explaining how God is both transcendent over the world and immanent within it, thereby reconciling the One with the Many in this discourse. According to Pate (2011:128), the trajectory of both the Old and New Testaments reflects God's desire to embrace humanity, and humanity's reciprocal longing to be embraced by God, which is fulfilled in the person of Christ.

Regarding the rest of creation, John 1:3 states that, "all things (the Many) were made through Him (the One), and without Him, nothing was made that was made." The term "immanent," as used here, means "remaining in." In the New Testament, God is not distant from His creation, as evidenced by scripture. In Acts 17:25, 28, Paul affirms that God "gives all men life and breath and everything… in Him, we live and move and have our being." Colossians 1:17 records that God "continually upholds the world by His power." In the spirit of biblical inerrancy, the reconciliation of God's transcendence and immanence can be seen as resolved by Ephesians 4:6, which speaks of "one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Grudem, 1994:267).

There have been theological debates about whether the concept of God being "above all and in all" raises issues with religions that hold to panentheism. The following section will provide a clear understanding of the Christian position on immanence in contrast to panentheism.

3.2.4 God's Immanence as Opposed to Panentheism

Theology, like all disciplines, is dynamic and has evolved over time, both historically and

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philosophically, as human beings have continued to explore ontological questions. This

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development is reflected in the theological discourse on God's transcendence and immanence, which has drawn on both scriptural and philosophical arguments. However, one of the greatest challenges a Christian scholar may face in this discussion is the risk of falling into panentheism. To remain faithful to the monotheistic view of God, Christian theologians throughout history have explored various theological and philosophical positions on God's transcendence and immanence. These efforts to reconcile the two concepts are summarized by Pate (2011:128-138).

One such position is *classical theism*, which traditionally emphasizes God's transcendence while acknowledging His immanence. In this view, God is seen as the absolute, unchanging, and perfect Creator who governs the universe from a position of sovereignty and authority. Another perspective is *process theology*, which emphasizes God's immanence and views the divine as evolving and growing alongside the world. This view sees God as continually involved in the ongoing process of creation. A third position is *theistic personalism***,** which highlights God's immanence through His personal relationship with individual beings, portraying Him as both Creator and a loving Father who interacts with His creation (Pate, 2011:140).

Despite numerous historical debates on the nature of God—both in terms of the One and the Many—Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, have continued to argue for a reconciliation of God's transcendence and immanence throughout the 20th and 21st centuries (Pate, 2011:140). These arguments often aim to find a balance between the two aspects of God. One such theological position is *panentheism*, which holds that the divine is both immanent within the universe and transcendent over it. Unlike pantheism, which equates God with the material universe, panentheism asserts that God is greater than the universe while also being intimately present within it. This view offers a nuanced understanding of the relationship between the One and the Many. While it may appeal to contemporary understandings of transcendence and immanence, it is not a traditional Christian doctrine and poses potential challenges to Christian theology.

The German philosopher and theologian Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781-1832) was a prominent proponent of panentheism. Krause introduced and developed the concept in his works, particularly in *Vorlesungen über das System der Philosophie* (Lectures on the System of

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Philosophy), translated by Gocke (2011) in *Panentheism of Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781-1832): From Transcendental Philosophy to Metaphysics*. Krause's concept of

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panentheism emphasizes that the universe exists within God, and God is within the universe. According to Krause, God is the unifying principle that encompasses all diversity, not as an abstract entity separate from the system, but as the highest living unity that embraces all diversity within Himself (Gocke, 2018:43).

Krause further argued that God is the whole of reality, logically prior to its parts, which are grounded in God. Therefore, each part of creation is what it is because of God's overarching nature. As the ultimate ground of reality, God is the "whole," and every finite entity exists within God's divine consciousness. In this way, panentheism suggests that the world is "in" God, while God is "in" the world. However, the world remains distinct from God in that He is the principal cause of creation (Gocke, 2018:33).

While this perspective has become popular in contemporary discussions of God's transcendence and immanence, it presents a theological danger for Christians, as it risks implying that the world is a part of God's being. To avoid this issue, Berkhof (1941:134), in his *Systematic Theology*, asserts two key elements in the doctrine of creation. First, creation has a distinct existence, separate from God. Second, the world is always dependent on God. Berkhof emphasizes that creation is distinct from God in both degree and essence. God is self- sufficient, infinite, and eternal, while the world is dependent, finite, and temporal. While God granted the world its existence, He did not withdraw from it but remains intimately connected to it. Furthermore, Berkhof cautions against understanding God as a boundless extension throughout the universe or as a partitive presence. Rather, God, as spirit, is wholly present everywhere (Berkhof, 1941:135). This biblical understanding is supported by passages such as Psalm 104:30, Psalm 50:11, and Jeremiah 23:24.

In the context of the One and the Many debate, Berkhof provides a framework that allows Christians to bridge the gap between God's transcendence and immanence. His view acknowledges the diversity and complexity of the created world while affirming that God is the unifying power behind everything. This holistic view presents God as transcendent yet connected to His creation, which in this case refers to the universe and all its constituents. By understanding God as both beyond creation and present within it, we are led to the concept of stewardship—a core principle derived from the doctrine of creation. Stewardship offers guidance on how Christians should relate to creation, informed by theological and

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philosophical reflections on God's nature.

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3.3 The Theology of Stewardship of Creation

As noted earlier, the doctrine of creation includes both philosophical and theological arguments that assert God's immanence within the world while also affirming His transcendence beyond it. From this understanding, we can explore humanity's privileged role in relation to the rest of God's creation. Christian theology holds that God's transcendence over creation is not separate from His immanence, meaning that God is not indifferent to what happens to creation.

Biblical theology informs us that humanity's origin stems from a divine act of creation, with human beings placed on Earth by a loving Creator. According to the second creation account in Genesis 2, man is formed from dust, and God breathes life into him through his nostrils, making him a living soul. By this act, humanity represents the pinnacle of creation. Humanity is also presented as having a unique, elevated position in relation to the rest of creation. Berkhof (1941:183) notes that humans are positioned to rule over creation, having dominion over all other creatures. This dominion is described 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 the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, and over all the Earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the Earth.' So, God created man in his own image; in the image of God, He created him; male and female, He created them." (NIV)

These verses have often been used to justify the idea that God commanded humans to subdue the planet. However, the English word *subdue* carries a negative connotation, suggesting bringing something under control, often by force (Oxford Learner's Dictionary). Similarly, *dominion* is commonly interpreted as authority to rule or control, especially in a manner that implies superiority over non-human life. Such interpretations have been linked to humanity's tendency to exploit and damage the environment.

In Hebrew, however, the word translated as *dominion* in Genesis 1:26-28 is "radah" (רָדָה), which has often been misinterpreted to justify human exploitation of creation. Canipe (2010) identifies key ways this misunderstanding has occurred. One common mistake is associating "radah" with the Latin word *dominium*, which implies ownership or lordship, reinforcing the idea that humans are free to use creation as they please. Reading "radah" as "to subdue" or "to rule over" has led some to believe that humans have total control over nature, justifying

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overconsumption.

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However, a closer reading of "radah" reveals a different meaning. According to early rabbis, "radah" can imply either a dominion that honors God's image or a descent into exploitation. Thus, humans are called to rule creation in a way that reflects God's image, not as exploiters but as caretakers (Lee, 2010).

3.4 Dominion and Stewardship Demystified

As noted earlier, dominion and stewardship of creation are two distinct perspectives within religious and environmental discourse. The concept of dominion is often associated with Abrahamic faiths, particularly Christianity, and has sometimes been interpreted as granting humans permission to exploit the environment (White, 1967:1206). In Genesis 1:26-28, God grants humanity authority over the natural world. The Hebrew term *radah*, meaning "to dominate" or "subdue," has often been misunderstood as a justification for environmental destruction, overlooking the responsibility to care for and preserve creation.

In contrast, the concept of stewardship emphasizes humanity's responsibility to care for and protect the natural world, entrusted to them by God. Instead of focusing solely on control and dominion, stewardship involves nurturing and preserving creation for future generations (Smith, 2005). This idea is supported by Genesis, where humans are made in the image of God, suggesting that they should emulate God's care and love for all of creation.

Cavadon (2013:1) argues that dominion, when interpreted in light of humanity being made in God's image, means that humans should exercise a dominion that fosters life and delights in the goodness of creation. God's dominion is characterized by care and immanence, and humanity's dominion over creation should reflect this.

Sallie McFague, an eco-theologian, explores stewardship through the lens of God's immanence in creation. In *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (1993), McFague argues that if God is intimately connected to creation, then humanity, as part of that creation, has a vital role in caring for and preserving the environment. She urges humans to view themselves as stewards of the Earth, responsible for its care as part of God's sacred creation. McFague's call for a holistic, interconnected view of humanity's relationship with nature recognizes the intrinsic value of all living things and the Earth itself.

Ecofeminist theology further challenges traditional interpretations of dominion. Theologians

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like Rosemary Radford Ruether (1992) and Sallie McFague (1993) argue for a reinterpretation

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of dominion, viewing creation as possessing intrinsic worth and interconnectedness. These theologians advocate for recognizing God's presence in all creation, not just in humanity, and emphasize the sacramental nature of creation.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the doctrine of creation from both philosophical and theological perspectives, clarifying potential misunderstandings, especially regarding panentheism. The goal was to demonstrate that, in Christianity, God is both transcendent and immanent, deeply involved in creation. Following the critique of dualistic approaches in the previous chapter, this chapter has highlighted the orthodox understanding of creation. Chapter 4 will construct an African eco-feminist theology that reconciles the impacts of Greek dualism on creation with the theological perspectives discussed here.

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CHAPTER FOUR

TOWARDS AN AFRICAN ECO-FEMINIST THEOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents an African eco-feminist theology as a solution to the problem we have been grappling with throughout. The foundation of this proposed solution lies in the recognition that creation has been oppressed through a philosophical ideology that considers creation, or matter, to be feminine and, therefore, inferior, leading to its subordination. From an African perspective, this research first explores eco-feminism in general as a potential solution. Given the etymological challenge posed by eco-feminism, the study explains why African eco-feminism is necessary rather than simply eco-feminism in general. The argument is that eco-feminism, in its broader form, poses contextual and positional challenges when addressing the problem. Thus, this chapter explains why the African context is emphasized in African eco-feminism, explores the social trinity as an inclusive understanding of the divine and humanity, and finally incorporates the African concept of animism as a means to reconcile creation with humanity and the social trinity. Using Jurgen Moltmann's Social-Trinitarian view of God and humanity, the chapter demonstrates the relationship between God, humanity, and the rest of creation.

4.1.1. Development of Eco-Feminism

Various approaches have been attempted to address the issue of environmental degradation in Africa. While efforts such as activism and government policies have yielded positive results, the tendency to exploit nature remains pervasive. As previously established, dualism in Christian theology is a significant factor, embedded in the mindset of African Christians through their socialization into a dichotomy between nature and spirit. It is important to note that the dualism that promotes the oppression of nature is closely tied to the subjugation of women. The same pattern of subordinating nature to humanity parallels the subordination of women. In the thought of early Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, women were equated with the material world, which was seen as inferior and corrupt, while men were associated with the spiritual world, regarded as superior and perfect.

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In Plato's view, as observed by Allen (1987:90), men were considered active agents in gender roles and procreation, while women were seen as passive, receptive vessels. He believed that men's souls initially enter male bodies, while the souls of immoral or cowardly men enter female bodies. In his ideal society, women's roles were primarily tied to childrearing and family life, while men, particularly philosophers and kings, would wield political power. Plato's dualism identified matter (feminine) as a source of ignorance and forms (masculine) as a source of wisdom.

Aristotle, while departing from Plato's view on matter and spirit concerning the cosmos, maintained an even stronger belief that women were inferior to men. He argued that women were less capable of reason and more prone to emotion and physicality, making them biologically and intellectually inferior to men. According to Aristotle, men were better suited for leadership and intellectual activities, while women's roles were confined to managing the household and bearing children. Aristotle also claimed that women lacked the qualifications to hold public office or engage in public life (Politics, Book I, Part XII).

These philosophical worldviews were transmitted through history into Christianity, reinforcing the oppression of both nature and women. When traditional Christian teachings intersected with some African ideologies of women's subordination, they formed a powerful alliance in this intertwined oppression. African eco-feminist theology, therefore, emerges as a crucial construction for the liberation of both inanimate creation and women. Kaunda (2016:179) notes that African eco-feminists fight against ecological crises, drawing connections between these crises and the exploitation of African women, a system historically embedded in colonial epistemic injustice. This system imposed categories of thought on Africans from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, rooted in Enlightenment thinking and framed within a patriarchal context (Kaunda 2016:179). African eco-feminism builds on a global form of eco-feminism, notably originating with Françoise d'Eaubonne's influential work "Le Féminisme ou la Mort" (Feminism or Death, 1974).

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4.1.2. Eco-Feminism in Theology

Eco-feminism finds its philosophical roots in the work of existentialist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir, who argued in *The Second Sex* (1956) that under patriarchy, both women and nature are viewed as "other." Eco-feminism challenges the political, social, historical, and

epistemological links between the domination of women and the exploitation of nature

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(Beauvoir, 1956). The term gained prominence in 1970 when it was coined by French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne in *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (1974). Feminists from various disciplines, including theology, have drawn on her work to address ecological issues.

Val Plumwood, an Australian eco-feminist philosopher, picked from here and developed a theology that emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living beings and advocates for a more sustainable and equitable relationship with the natural world (Plumwood, 2002:38). Plumwood's eco-feminist theology posits that the oppression of women and the exploitation of the natural world are intertwined, both rooted in a patriarchal worldview that prioritizes domination and control over relationships of care and stewardship (Plumwood, 1993). Her critique of anthropocentrism is central to her eco-feminist theology, defining it as the belief that humans are separate from and superior to the natural world (Plumwood, 2002). She argues that this worldview has led to widespread environmental destruction and species extinction, and calls for a shift from an anthropocentric to an eco-centric perspective that recognizes the interdependence of all living beings (Plumwood, 1995:3-20).

Plumwood also emphasizes the need to recognize the agency and subjectivity of non-human beings, arguing that they are not passive objects to be exploited by humans but are active agents with their own interests and needs. She advocates for a reorientation of human relationships with the natural world from one of domination to one of care and stewardship (Plumwood, 2006:465-485).

Carfore (2021) builds on Plumwood's work to construct a theological framework in response to the ecological crisis. She critiques the ideologies in Western thought that contribute to this crisis and proposes a "robust eco-feminist philosophy" to address the harmful dualism that underpins various forms of oppression, including those discussed in this dissertation. Her theological approach critiques transcendental monotheism for distancing God from the natural world, reinforcing a hierarchy that she argues justifies inaction in the face of ecological crises. Carfore's methodology emphasizes intersectionality, acknowledging that issues of ecological and racial justice are interconnected. She critiques the notion of an omnipotent, transcendent God as reinforcing apathy toward ecological issues and advocates for a "philosophical animism" that recognizes the agency of nature and fosters a dialogical relationship with the natural world. This approach, she argues, affirms the rights of marginalized peoples while

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encouraging a deeper, personal connection with the environment.

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4.1.3. A Critique of the Contextual Challenges of Eco-Feminist Theology

Eco-feminist theology, especially as presented by Carfore, is particularly appealing to those who are conscious of the intersection between axes of power, particularly concerning women and ecology. It also resonates with individuals who find hierarchical understandings of God to be alien and unrelatable, as well as those who experience nature as a living, spiritual force. However, when examined from an African perspective, challenges arise—not in the technical formulation of the methodology, but in its contextual relevance.

This issue primarily stems from the fact that feminist theories, from which eco-feminism emerges, are as diverse as their intended outcomes, and cannot be reduced to a single, unified understanding. Each theoretical framework carries contextual baggage as it attempts to address specific issues and realities. Jones and Budig (2008) summarize various feminist approaches in the *Encyclopedia of Social Problems*. They argue that gender inequality is analyzed differently by various feminist theories: liberal feminism focuses on unequal access to institutions, radical feminism critiques sexuality, Marxist and socialist feminisms focus on capitalism, while psychoanalytic feminism draws on Freudian theories. Women of color criticize mainstream feminist theories for ignoring intersecting forms of oppression, postcolonial feminism emphasizes intersectionality, and postmodern feminists focus on plurality and difference (Jones et al., 2008:1-3).

Ruether (1996:2) highlights that these divergences in feminist thought arise in response to the specific challenges women face within various power dynamics in their societies. In the context of African women, she observes, "there is no such thing as eco-feminism in a singular sense. What we have is a contextualization of the framework with an ideology on how women and nature have been exploited both by their own societies and by colonizing powers, and how women act as mediators of nature's benefits for their families and caretakers of nature."

The contextual challenge of eco-feminism in Africa, as a theological response, is not necessarily about contesting the existing frameworks, but rather about providing more contextual input. This paper acknowledges the many strengths of eco-feminist theology, particularly its ability to expose the intersection between the oppression of women and the degradation of nature. However, in the interest of context and positionality, it goes further by constructing an eco-feminist theology prefixed with "African."

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The argument for an African eco-feminist theology is informed by crucial questions such as: What can we do about dualism from an African Christian perspective? Can African cultural categories be used to construct a theology that deconstructs this dualism? How can we dismantle theologically rooted ideologies that undermine the dignity of nature through an African women's lens?

In response to these questions, addressing dualism in Africa requires a theology that resonates with the African religious philosophy of the sacred interconnectedness between the divine and all of creation.

4.2. Social-Communal Trinitarian View of God in Relation to Human Beings

As noted earlier, eco-feminist theory has gained significant popularity in recent decades, especially in developing theological frameworks like eco-feminist theology as a response to ecological crises. The theory is widely praised for addressing the intertwined oppression of women and nature. However, its theoretical foundation stems from Western thought. Feminism, as an ideology aimed at liberating women and marginalized people, has resurfaced in various contexts, each addressing unique contextual challenges.

Despite the progress made by eco-feminist theologians, a significant contextual theological challenge remains for African Christians due to the influence of Greek dualism. This dualism creates a disconnect with the African religious philosophy, which shapes the worldview of many Africans by embedding the divine within the cosmos, where everything is interconnected. Moreover, the hierarchical structures that place women and nature at the lowest levels of society are foreign to traditional African religious thought. As seen in the Agikuyu community, for example, their worldview is holistic and religiously oriented. However, when dualism begins to reshape this worldview psychologically, it leads to disorientation, with harmful consequences for how Africans relate to creation.

In a world where affinity with nature was once believed to be intrinsic, those privileged by the dualistic hierarchy have often silenced and objectified nature, exploiting it. This is particularly evident in many African communities today, where those in positions of power subordinate creation, women, and other marginalized groups.

It is easy to observe, as outlined in the research background, that the destruction of creation

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especially in Africa has caused untold suffering for humanity, animals, trees, and all parts of

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creation. The suffering brought about by the devastation of God's creation is a universal issue that affects all life on Earth. This raises the ever-present theological question: Where is God in the face of suffering? How can African Christians understand the mandate of stewardship over creation using African cultural categories in the face of dualism? Finally, how can we overcome the dualistic and hierarchical view of the universe in favor of a view of God who is immanent in earthly affairs, who is all-encompassing, and holistically interconnected with all of creation and humanity (both male and female)?

4.3. The Social Trinitarian Model and Humanity

Dualism poses a theological challenge, informed by the philosophical understanding of God, the universe, and how humanity relates to both. The solution is both theological and philosophical, as proposed by Jurgen Moltmann. From the outset, the doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most difficult Christian mysteries to explain. As Pate (2011:197) reminds readers with an old adage, "If you try to explain the Trinity, you lose your mind, but if you explain it away, you lose your soul."

Jurgen Moltmann is known for diverting from the traditional perspective of the Trinity. While reflecting on the nature of God during his imprisonment by the British government, Moltmann wrote *Theology of Hope* and *The Crucified God*—both of which emphasize God's presence in suffering. His argument is that theology begins with the suffering of the Godhead. At the Cross, not only did Christ suffer, but God the Father and the Spirit also suffered in union with Jesus. Moltmann goes beyond modern metaphysical transcendental subjectivity by portraying the suffering of the Trinity as something that unites God with humanity. This view is drawn from the Cappadocian concept of *perichoresis* (the mutual indwelling of the three Persons of the Trinity).

Several contemporary theologians have embraced the social Trinitarian understanding of God, seeing it as closely connected to the human condition. Among them is Grenz (2000), who in his book *Theology for the Community of God*, argues that the Trinity is not an abstract theological concept but a dynamic, living reality that shapes how Christians understand God, themselves, and others. In this model, the Christian community is not just a collection of individuals but a community of believers united by their shared participation in the life of God—not as a future hope, but as a present, ongoing reality in their cultural context.

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Furthermore, the church is not merely an institution but a living organism that embodies the presence of God in the world (Grenz, 2000:48).

Horrell (2024:402) echoes this perspective when discussing the image of God. The social Trinity challenges the traditional Western understanding of the image of God as an inherent quality within an individual or specific to "man." This traditional view, often reflecting domination, is one-sided and distorted. Instead, theologians argue that the likeness of God is fundamentally relational—first, God's relationship with humanity, and only then, humanity's relationship with God. This view counters the individualistic tendencies of classical theism, proposing that the entire human community mirrors God on Earth (Horrell, 2024:12-16). In this light, the image of God described in Genesis 1:27 is understood not as something borne by every individual soul, but rather as something shared collectively by both men and women.

The researcher finds the social Trinitarian understanding of God particularly resonant with African concepts of human communities, especially the interdependency of individuals, as reflected in John S. Mbiti's Ubuntu philosophy: "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti, 1975). This philosophy clearly dismantles hierarchical structures among human beings, including the subordination of one gender to another or the marginalization of those on the periphery.

4.4. Understanding African Ecofeminist Theology

To develop an African ecofeminist theology, it is important to begin by examining African women's theologies, from which an African ecofeminist theology would naturally arise. As discussed earlier, feminism is a complex term linked to various concepts and controversies. In some contexts, feminism has been perceived as a means of criticizing men or as promoting toxic femininity. This perception has led many African women to hold ambivalent views toward the term "feminism," partly because it is associated with Western notions of women's liberation. Consequently, some argue that Black African feminism and Western feminism are not synonymous. As Biana (2020:18) notes, Western feminism has often been viewed as incompatible with African values, accused of being anti-men, and of opposing the values of marriage and family preservation. Additionally, Western feminism has been criticized for failing to address critical issues like race, class, and gender, which uniquely affect the lives of Black women both in Africa and abroad. Despite these terminological challenges, African

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feminism has evolved under various labels.

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African women have been engaging in theology for as long as humanity has existed on the continent. Although oral literature dominated sub-Saharan Africa before the arrival of missionaries, some African theological expressions have been documented. One such example is the collection of Afia Kuma's songs and praises, translated as *Jesus of the Deep Forest* (Kuma & Kirby, 1980). Mercy Amba Oduyoye, often regarded as the mother of African women's theologies, in her article *The African Experience of God Through the Eyes of an Akan Woman,* traces the development of African women's theology. She highlights the experiences of African women, especially after the continent gained political and religious freedom from colonial powers. Oduyoye points out that while women fought alongside men during the independence movements, they were sidelined afterward, with political and religious power remaining in the hands of men. This reality, she argues, led women to "edit God's profile" to include their experiences of God, highlighting their struggles for freedom from both colonialism and patriarchal structures.

Furthermore, the politics of naming must be demystified. As Kasomo and Maseno (2011:155) explain, the term *African feminist theology* has been contested, especially from a postcolonial perspective. Dube (2012:10), for instance, critiques the term *Africa* as a colonial construct that overlooks the continent's diversity. However, Kasomo and Maseno use the term *Africa* with openness, intending to include all people of African descent. To minimize contention, they suggest that the term *African* should be understood as a category that facilitates discussions across the continent and fosters solidarity in the pursuit of liberation, a stance this research adopts.

As mentioned earlier, the term *feminism* carries negative connotations in some African circles, and many African women, particularly theologians, do not use it. Biana (2020:11) echoes earlier arguments by Kasomo and Maseno that feminism in Africa is sometimes viewed as a movement for women who cannot sustain marriages. Oduyoye (1994:167) also admitted to struggling with how the term sounded to African audiences. To address these biases, Kasomo and Maseno argue that *African women's theology* is a more acceptable term than *feminist theology*. They note that similar approaches in different global contexts have adopted different labels—African American women use the term *womanist*, Latin American women use *women's liberation theology*, while African women on the continent prefer *women's theology*. Kasomo and Maseno emphasize the importance of distinguishing feminist theology from

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women's theology based on context and time. They also support the use of *theologies* rather

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than *theology*, as advanced by Isabel Phiri (2004:152), to acknowledge the diverse experiences of women in different contexts involving race, culture, politics, economy, and religion.

With the evolution of feminist studies on the continent, Oduyoye (2001:124) later argued that if African women choose to call themselves feminists or womanists, it should not be seen as imitating any one group. Instead, it reflects the linguistic complexity of their contexts.

Notably, African women's theologies did not emerge solely after political independence. The first official convocation of African women theologians took place in Accra, Ghana, in 1989, marking the birth of African women's theologies. Women gathered to amplify their voices and those of grassroots women in academic and ecclesial spaces. One of the outcomes of this convocation was a commitment to research issues that were denying life to Africans across the continent, with a focus on challenging oppressive power structures. Theologically, African women began engaging in discourse using the lived realities of African people, particularly through a gendered lens. This is the background against which this study is positioned, born from the concern of an African woman alarmed by the devastating degradation of God's creation in Africa specifically in Kenya and the simultaneous subordination of women. African eco-theology arises from African women's theologies, addressing the intersection of women and the environment.

African women's theologies propose solutions to the subordination of both creation and women. At their core is a community-centered approach. Kasomo and Maseno argue that African women's theologies should not be seen as an attempt to elevate women above men, but to establish sincere cooperation and mutuality between the genders. Oduyoye similarly emphasizes that African women's theology is a theology of relations, aiming to replace hierarchies with mutuality. Thus, African women's theology is inherently *society-sensitive* (Oduyoye, 2001:17).

Kasomo and Maseno (2011:156) note the emphasis in African women's theologies on relationships. This is in line with African cultures, which are community-oriented. These theologies call for sensitivity to the needs of others and to the well-being of the community as a whole. Oduyoye (2001:17) also highlights interrelationships as a key characteristic of African women's theologies, emphasizing the interconnectedness of men and women as well as that of humans with the rest of creation. Since African women's theologies originate from diverse

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multicultural and multi-religious contexts, they present a culturally sensitive attitude with an

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intentional dialogical approach (Oduyoye, 2001:17). These elements of community, mutuality, and interrelationship led this study to adopt a social-communal Trinitarian approach to understanding God and human beings.

4.5. Infusion of Animism into the Social Trinity

From the above, it has been established that the Social Trinitarian model emphasizes the reconciliation of God with all of humanity. This section further explores how the rest of creation can be integrated into the Social Trinitarian framework as a means of reconciling all creation to God. This perspective necessitates reclaiming nature's active voice, as understood by African peoples, using the concept of animism in its positive context. This represents the essence of African primal spirituality.

To provide context, it is important to note that dualism did not exist in the African religious worldview concerning creation prior to the introduction of Western Christianity. This is supported by the earlier discussion of the Agikuyu community as a prototype. The study argues that while the Agikuyu community acknowledges a supreme God to whom they show reverence, they also experience God's divine presence as integral to their daily lives. Therefore, the dualism inherited from Greek philosophy is foreign to them. The relationship between God, creation, and humanity exists within a united sacred interconnectedness, which has been termed animism. This reflects the core of African primal spirituality, as will be discussed below.

4.6. Animism

It is crucial to recognize that animism, or African primal spirituality, existed long before colonialism, as Africans had their own religions and worldviews. However, when colonizers arrived in Africa, they criticized African religion, culture, and worldview as primitive and uncivilized. This critique arose when missionaries aligned with European Enlightenment thinking, which deemed European culture superior. Consequently, they dismissed African culture and religion as primitive, backward, and lacking a foundation for understanding Christianity (Gatumu, 2008:26-27). This viewpoint was further solidified during the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, which accepted the notion that African societies were at a lower stage of human development, influenced by E. B. Taylor's theory of animism, reinforcing the perception of African culture as primitive and uncivilized.

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This perspective ultimately hindered the understanding and appreciation of African cultural heritage and perpetuated the belief that African cultures needed to be eradicated before Christianity could take root. Africans resisted the missionaries' efforts, highlighting the resilience of indigenous cultures in the face of forced conversion. Even when Africans outwardly adopted Christianity, they often maintained connections to traditional beliefs and practices, demonstrating a complex and nuanced response to the imposition of a foreign religion. Thus, missionaries were unable to eradicate African spiritual traditions entirely (Gatumu, 2008:33-34).

Africans continue to rely on traditional frameworks to understand and address problems. The missionaries failed to recognize the value and authenticity of African religion and its potential contributions to humanity's spiritual journey. This suggests that a more nuanced approach, acknowledging the potential for integration and continuity between Christianity and African traditions, would have been more beneficial. From this perspective, the researcher reconsiders animism as an African belief system that emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living things. Animism offers valuable insights into environmental stewardship and could contribute to a more sustainable future.

According to Orobator (2018:16), animism has historically been used as a "pejorative and derogatory label." It has been employed by scholars in various social studies fields to signify and codify "the religion of the other," specifically African religion. The undertone of animism is often considered primitive and irrational. The researcher agrees with Orobator that such perceptions are simplistic and reductionist, particularly from those who have not participated in the African religious experience (Orobator, 2018:16).

Orobator (2018) defines animism as the "religious imagination, practice, and consciousness" present among adherents of most world religions, particularly in African Traditional Religions. The key to understanding animism within an African context lies in the "deep belief in the livingness of creation." This can be interpreted to mean that nothing in the natural world is lifeless; rather, everything possesses an inner, invisible power at any given moment. In alignment with Pope Francis's words, Orobator quotes him, stating, "Each creature, water, mountain: everything is, as it were, a caress of God" (Orobator, 2018:16). This clarifies that the term should be understood in contrast to pantheism; animism does not imply that things in the

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universe are God, but rather that they possess the touch of a sacred God. The researcher

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suggests that this "caress of God" be understood in the Biblical context of Genesis 1:1, where the Spirit, the wind, or the breath was hovering over the waters at the beginning of creation.

As presented in the Agikuyu community, African thought posits that all creation including animals, plants, and all inanimate entities on earth shares an inherent connection. Africans believe that human nature is not only about creating things to improve life but also about reconstructing how humanity responds to emerging situations that demand sensible responses. Such reconstruction is evident not only in technological advancement but also in the ways people interpret and reinterpret their beliefs. Recognizing the dynamic nature of religious beliefs, the researcher delves into what is termed the infusion of animism (African primal spirituality) into the Social Trinity. This infusion, the researcher argues, will complete an African eco-feminist theology that affirms the place of African Christians in communion with God, both male and female, and acknowledges that what God has entrusted to the people of Africa is part of divine providence in a sacred design.

From this position, the researcher asserts that a Social Trinitarian view of God, as explained above, is fulfilled when animism is reintegrated into the mystical union between God and humanity, forming a complete loving relationship where God is reconciled to creation within the African worldview. This represents the perfect perichoresis, characterized by an inseparable ultimate reconciliation. Furthermore, while it may not be entirely difficult for humanity to perceive themselves in loving fellowship with the Godhead, it requires individuals to renounce their privileged positions of superiority and acknowledge that nature, along with all non-human entities, shares equal importance in union with God. Only then will human beings be able to accord creation the dignity it deserves.

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4.7. Conclusion

By infusing animism into the Social Trinity, an African eco-feminist theology is successfully constructed. This has been achieved by deconstructing Greek dualism within the African religious psyche, where all humanity both men and women is seen as equal in divine creation. This framework also incorporates the rest of creation into the divine interconnectedness, affirming that it deserves equal inherent dignity alongside humanity. An African eco-feminist theology, as presented above, would transform the religious perspectives of African Christians, fostering a view that recognizes the inherent worth of all human beings and, more importantly,

acknowledges that creation deserves dignity, protection, stewardship, and preservation not just to sustain human life on earth but because it equally reflects the divine touch.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Introduction

In this study, we have examined the call from the Word of God to be good stewards of creation, as recorded in Genesis 1 and 2. However, the current situation portrays humanity as the center of the universe, leading to the destruction of the rest of creation. This degradation has been exacerbated by the psychological imprint of dualism in the minds of Christians, which subordinates the rest of creation and contributes to environmental degradation. God created everything and deemed it good; therefore, all creation is important in the eyes of God and deserves respect. African eco-feminist theology plays a critical role in addressing the ecological crisis by dismantling dualism and presenting God's creation as sacred, highlighted by God's sacred touch or caress that is present in it.

5.2. Summary

This dissertation was divided into five chapters. Chapter One provides the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the aim of the study, research objectives, hypotheses, delimitations, methodology, justification for the study, and the scope and delineation. Chapter Two discusses the development of dualism from the time of early philosophers, its transmission to Christianity through the Church Fathers, and the perspective of African communities regarding the cosmos and their relationship with nature.

Chapter Three explores the doctrine of creation, where the researcher examines the theological concepts of God's transcendence and immanence. Although these themes may sometimes appear opposing, they complement each other in the Christian understanding of the nature of God (the One) and God's relationship to creation (the Many). The research argues that God (the One) exists above creation (the Many) in essence, yet is also profoundly present within creation, making it sacred through God's sacred touch or caress.

Chapter Four presents the construction of an African eco-feminist theology that reconciles the impact of Greek dualism on creation in Africa, using the Social Trinitarian model to infuse African primal spirituality in reconciling all creation to God. Chapter Five concludes with a

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summary and the pastoral implications of the study.

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5.3. Pastoral Implication

African Ecofeminist theology recognizes the interconnected oppression of women and nature. This study explores the intersection of African eco-feminist theology, social Trinitarianism and African animism to address the degradation of creation. The study argues that African eco-feminist theology can offer a unique perspective on environmental issues drawing on the social Trinitarian understanding of God, which emphasizes God's active presence in human experiences and challenges. This approach resonates with African religious philosophy, which often views the divine as intimately involved in the natural world.

Furthermore, the study advocates for re-interpretation of African animism, moving away from its missionary definition as fetish and instead understanding the vital part of African primal spirituality. This redefinition aims to help African Christians to appreciate all aspects of creation as intentional acts of God fostering a deeper connection to the natural world and promoting environmental stewardship. By integrating these concepts, the study seeks to provide a framework for understanding and addressing the ecological crisis from an African perspective. This approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of God, humanity and the natural world, encouraging a more holistic and compassionate approach to environmental issues.

The study argues that dualism, a belief system that separates humans from the natural world, can be deconstructed by recognizing the sacred connection between humans and all creation. This perspective emphasizes the interconnectedness of all beings and their shared oneness with God. By viewing creation as intentional acts of God, the study asserts that everything contains the sacred touch of God and therefore everything holds inherent dignity. This understanding challenges the anthropocentric view that places humans at the center of creation and elevates them above other being.

The study concludes that for the dignity of creation to be realized, theology must be grounded in the conviction that the One (God) is with the Many (Creation). This means recognizing the interconnectedness shared sacredness of all beings, including humans, animals, plants and the environment. The church therefore should teach about the affinity of all creation and its oneness with God. This would involve promoting a deeper understanding of the sacredness of the natural world and the encouraging respect for all living beings.

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5.4. Conclusion

God loves creation and his desire is for harmony between all beings. He created everything and exclaimed that 'it is good.' After creating he entrusted the good creation to humanity with the responsibility of stewardship and he urged humanity to care for and enhance the world as written in (Genesis 1and 2). However, humanity has failed to uphold this responsibility and instead of respecting and nurturing creation, humanity has exploited it leading to environmental degradation and climate change.

Attempts have been made to address these issues through conferences and meetings by world leaders and stakeholders, but the true change requires a fundamental shift in human mindset. The indigenous Africans had a different perspective from the modern society. Their animistic beliefs fostered a deep respect for creation, leading to a harmonious co-existence between humans and the natural world. The arrival of colonial masters and missionaries disrupted this imbalance and dismissed the indigenous worldview as fetish and imposed a new, often incompatible worldview. This was through the Christian religion which they introduced to the Africans.

The environmental destruction in the Christian religion stems from a dualistic worldview inherited from Greek philosophy which contrasts with the teachings of the Bible. The solution is an African ecofeminist theology that integrates animism into a social Trinitarian model of God fostering a loving relationship between God and all creation. This dismantles the dualistic worldview leading to a greater respect for all creation.

The study advocates for a return to a more respectful and sustainable relationship with creation by embracing the wisdom of the indigenous culture and adopting a more holistic worldview. Humanity can begin to heal the wounds inflicted upon the earth and restore harmony envisioned by God. This study advocates for a more holistic and respectful relationship with nature, drawing on ecofeminist theology to connect the oppression of African women and the natural world.

While the study highlights the shared subjugation of Africa women and the natural world, it focuses primarily on the environmental aspect, leaving the oppression of women relatively unexplored. This calls for further research to address this imbalance and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the interconnectedness of these issues.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: RECOMMENDATION LETTER

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Website: www.spu.ac.ke

Tel Office: +254 (0) 20-2020505/10
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BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

15th November, 2023

National Commission for Science and Technology,
P.O. BOX 30623-00100,
Nairobi.

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RECOMMENDATION FOR ALICE WAITHERA KIMANI MTHLMR937718 –TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This letter confirms the above-named person is a student in the Master in Theology Program at St. Paul's University.

The second year consists of a major research work leading to a Thesis. The student's selected topic is:

"Creation and the Influence of Greek Dualism: Towards an African Ecofeminist Theology."

Kindly grant this student the required permit.

Yours Faithfully,

DIRECTOR POSTGRADUATE STUDIES ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY 15 NOV 2023 TEL 020505/2020510 P.O. BOX 00217 LIMURU

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PRIMARY SOURCES

1 www.downtoearth.org.in
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2 Brian Douglas. "A Companion to Anglican Eucharistic Theology", Brill, 2012
Publication

3 philpapers.org
Internet Source

4 Submitted to St Paul's University
Student Paper

5 www.calvarypandan.sg
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6 rainforests.mongabay.com
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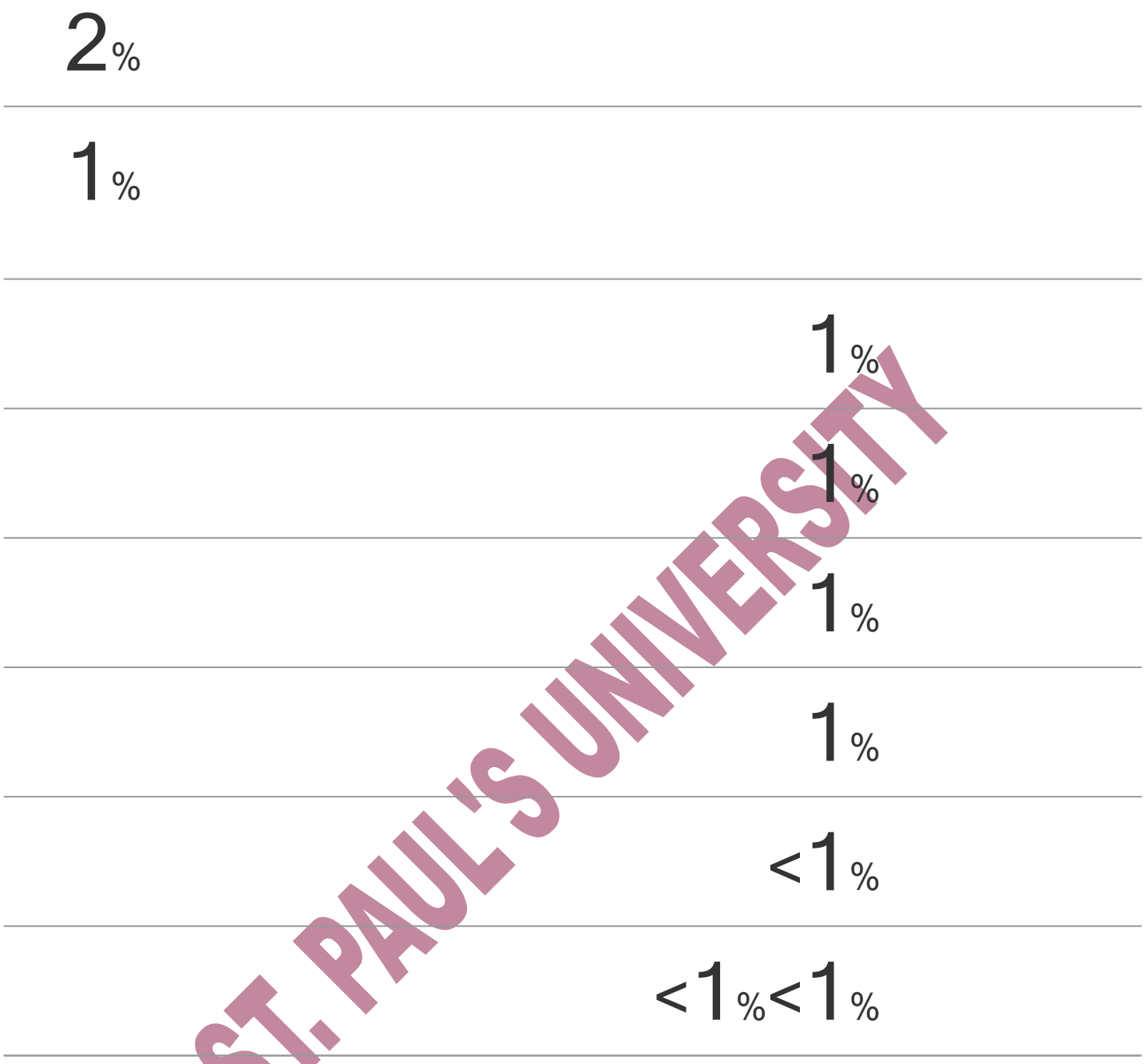
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32 R. R. Ruether. "Dualism and the Nature of Evil in Feminist Theology", Studies in Christian Ethics, 01/01/1992
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34 erepository.uonbi.ac.ke:8080
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39 Yonatan N. Gez, Yvan Droz. "The Sheep-Stealing Dilemma", Journal of Religion in Africa, 2017
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REF: SPU/97/2023 **Date: 14th November 2023**

TO: Alice Kimani
St. Paul's University

Dear Alice,

REF: Creation and the Influence of Greek Dualism: Towards an African Ecofeminist Theology

Greetings,

This is to inform you that SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee has reviewed the above-named research proposal. **Your ERB approval number is 106, for the period between 14th November 2023 – 14th November 2024.**

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments) will be used.
ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee.
iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee within 72 hours of notification

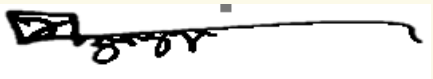
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iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to *SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee* within 72 hours
v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee.
viii. Please note that it is within the ISERC's mandate to monitor your research and to do random visits to the site.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Daniel Nzengya, PhD
Chairperson
SPU- Institutional Scientific & Ethics Review Committee



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Date of Issue: **03/January/2024**

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