

**A critical analysis of Sallie McFague's body of God
model as a resource for a Christian ecological
theology**

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not Sallie McFague's body of God model is an adequate resource for a Christian ecological theology. The study endeavours to evaluate, test and revise this particular theological model. It is located on the abstract and hypothetical level and is thus a non-empirical analysis of McFague's thought. The researcher analysed the body of God model by using theological and philosophical resources. Current literature on ecological theology was studied in order to formulate thirteen criteria for an adequate Christian theology. These criteria were used throughout the study to test the theology that accompanies McFague's model. The study analysed three key areas of McFague's thought: cosmology, anthropology and theology. It was found the body of God model tends towards reductionism, because it does not appear to endorse a coherent complexity hierarchy. This reductionism was apparent in the three key areas of McFague's thought. However, it was found the body of God model functions as a transformative metaphor that takes into account the social reality that affects the health of planet earth. Its strength is a clear orientation towards ethics that takes Jesus' praxis as its departure point. The researcher provides suggestions on how the body of God model may overcome reductionism. After consideration of the three key areas of McFague's thought, the researcher concluded that the body of God model is an adequate resource for a Christian ecological theology. It is suggested that this theological model is applicable to the South African context in three areas: the socio-economic reality and its impact on the natural environment, the land ownership and the issue of racism.

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Dedication

This research dissertation is dedicated to Karen Monika Brunke, the love and light of my life. Her love and care carried us both through many a trial and test of our life vocations.

To God, the mysterious and immanent Creator of the universe. Always present in the complexity of life. To Her be the glory.

Declaration

I, William John Frost hereby declare that this dissertation, unless specified otherwise in the text, is my original work. This work has not been submitted for any other purpose at any other university or institution.

William John Frost

Date

As supervisor, I agree to the submission of this dissertation for examination.

Prof. Anthony Balcomb

Date

This research dissertation has been edited by:

Editor

Date

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Outline of research topic

The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not Sallie McFague's body of God metaphor is an adequate resource for a Christian ecological theology. The value of this metaphor is that it favours holism over dualism and thus offers an integrated view of life. This approach reflects postmodern ideas of diversity, relationship and reverence for nature.

1.2 Reasons for choosing topic

This study is a focus on ecological theology. It is done from a Christian perspective in the area of systematic theology. A systematic theology interfaces biblical studies and Christian doctrine (classic and contemporary) with the natural, life and human sciences. The state of the natural environment is a central concern for humanity today, particularly in a context of capitalism, globalisation, urbanisation and industrialisation. The question that arises for the theologian is what sort of theology is needed in order to construct an adequate ecological theology? The study provides a critical analysis of the body of God metaphor by addressing the doctrines that accompany it.

1.3 Research problems and objectives

Is Sallie McFague's body of God metaphor an adequate resource for a Christian ecological theology? This is the *primary* question in this paper. There are three areas that need to be conceptualised in this regard: God (theology), human beings (anthropology) and nature (cosmology). These influence how human beings perceive the natural environment. In other words these three factors need to be understood as being in relationship with each other. In order to critique McFague's body of God metaphor it needs to be established what an adequate ecological theology is.

Three *secondary* questions need to be asked in this regard:

1. What are the requirements for a Christian ecological cosmology?

2. How does a Christian ecological theology understand humankind and its role in creation?
3. How does a Christian ecological theology address God's role in creation and how nature relates to Him or Her?

The answers to secondary questions (1)-(3) will be provided by using insights from contemporary science and several ecological theologians. These criteria will then be used to test the body of God metaphor. The strengths and weaknesses of this metaphor will be presented. Where necessary and if possible modifications will be made to it in order to strengthen its case as an adequate ecological theology.

1.4 Theoretical framework

This study may be termed a *theological* response to Sallie McFague's body of God metaphor.

It is located under the rubric of systematic theology. There are various other sub-disciplines in theology and these include biblical studies, practical theology, history of Christianity, Missiology, science of religion and various others. Systematic theology is primarily concerned with articulating the Christian faith in a coherent and cohesive manner (Macquarrie 1977: 39). The emphasis is thus on doctrine and in this case the God-world (G-W) relationship. This means that Christian doctrines relating to cosmology, anthropology and theology will be critically analysed in reference to a particular life concern, in this case ecology and how humanity is to respond to creation. A systematic theologian has the important task of bridging insights from the natural, human and life sciences with Christian theological reflection. The systematician is a lateral thinker whose objective is to gain as broad a perspective as possible concerning views and opinions about reality. *Reality* in the context of this study may be referred to as *natural reality*.

The purpose of this investigation is to provide a critical theological response to the theology of Sallie McFague. Because systematic theology is philosophically inclined there is always the danger that it may become abstract and disconnected from life. This could result in an irrelevant and impractical theology. It is for this reason that a systematic theology needs to address a particular situation in life (*Sitz im leben*). In this manner it will be *informed* and *informing* vis-a-vis a particular context. Addressing ecological issues thus makes a systematic theology contextual.

The study is concerned with ecological theology, a form of *contextual theology*. Other varieties of contextual theologies include liberation, black, feminist and African theologies. John De Gruchy maintains that all theology is contextual (1994: 9). A theological system develops within a particular historical context. Context is thus contagious to theological reflection. In order to understand a theology, its social, political, economic, religious and environmental atmosphere requires articulation. Contexts are diverse and so are their corresponding theologies. Sallie McFague affirms De Gruchy's idea when she writes,

Theology is, then, contextual-always and inevitably. These contexts are of many different kinds and levels... Theology, then, is always *theologies*, many different understandings of God's relation to the world from varying contexts (2001: 66).

What this means is that there is a multiplicity of theologies. We may thus refer to *a* theology, but not *the* theology. Sallie McFague's theology is one particular theological response to ecological issues.

A central characteristic of contextual theologies is that they consider practical, real life issues and the implications of these for Christian theology. In other words a contextual theology is *inserted* into a particular life situation (Ruether 1991: 362). This situation acts as a screen or filter through which the theologian's theorising is passed. The focus of this paper is the natural environment¹ and the threats and injustices that concern it. A contextual theology such as liberation theology identifies who the oppressed are in a particular context.

Another characteristic of a contextual theology is that it attempts to retrieve elements in Christian thinking that assist the theologian to respond to a life issue. On the other hand it critiques those aspects in Christian theology that contribute to the life issue under query.

An ecological theology therefore looks at those elements in the Christian tradition that may assist in alleviating the environmental crisis, as well as those areas in its theology that augment a negative attitude towards creation (Conradie 2005a: 282). This particular study attempts to

¹ The Oxford Dictionary (1998) defines environment as, "surroundings, circumstances affecting person's life". The former definition thus relates to the physical surroundings of a being such as a city environment or natural environment. The latter concerns human beings such as the political or financial environment. This study makes extensive uses of the term natural environment. Human and non-human beings are located in the earth environment and this signifies that the natural order affects both.

establish whether McFague's theology does this. Contextual theologies are concerned with worldviews.

Worldviews are pictures of reality that human beings have (McFague 2001: 42). They are the assumptions that one has of life and thus act as an interpretive framework. Language has an important role in this regard. McFague maintains that, "worldviews are anchored by models or root-metaphors" (2001: 42)

The models McFague refers to here are also known as "dominant metaphors", while root-metaphors are similar, but wider in range (1983: 23). Metaphors therefore function at a deep level within the human psyche. They determine how people relate to one another and the rest of creation. One important metaphor is an individual or community's image or concept of God. Gordon Kaufman affirms this idea, because he believes our God-metaphor functions as an "ultimate point of reference" that assists human beings to interpret the totality of life (1996: 45). Metaphor is thus crucial in constructing an ecological theology. This study analyses the theology that is derived from McFague's body of God metaphor.

1.5 Method

Gordon Kaufman asserts that a God image/concept concerns not only existential issues, but also needs to consider cosmological queries and interpretations (1993a: 12). He insists that a theology that does not take seriously the insights presented by contemporary science regarding the universe and the entire created order is irrelevant for the intellectual world and even becomes a form of idolatry that has contributed to the ecological crisis. Kaufman asserts that it is too simplistic to start with cosmology and then progress in a linear fashion towards anthropology and theology (: 13f). Anthropology and cosmology need to be developed interrelatedly with theological concerns in mind. In other words cosmology, anthropology and theology cannot be treated in isolation. They are intertwined. McFague's views on cosmology, anthropology and theology will thus be analysed and tested to determine if they are viable for an ecological theology.

The research is non-empirical and uses theological and philosophical analyses, although focusing on the former. Current literature on ecological theology will be studied. By using the analyses mentioned and the current literature, the study endeavours to evaluate, test, revise and

build on McFague's body of God hypothesis. The approach here is therefore on the abstract and hypothetical level and will thus not be a qualitative or quantitative study of the body of God metaphor.

The study will thus attempt to establish if the body of God metaphor can be used as a resource for an ecological theology. In order to test McFague's theory, the study will endeavour to develop criteria for a sound ecological theology. Insights from contemporary science and various ecological theologians will be used in this regard. The body of God is a metaphor concerned with the G-W relationship. It is for this reason that the study will focus on three areas of McFague's thought: theology, anthropology and cosmology. Each of these will be tested according to criteria for an adequate ecological theology.

1.6 Limitations

1. The study is non-empirical by nature and therefore remains at the theoretical/abstract level. The efficacy of the body of God model in transforming worldviews would need to be tested theologically at the church level or psychologically at the phenomenological level.
2. The second limitation is related to the first. This is a theological response to the body of God model. There could be a philosophical or psychological evaluation of it as well.
3. The researcher is trained in the area of systematic theology and is thus biased towards that particular field. A researcher in the field of biblical studies, practical theology or missiology may provide a different response to the body of God model.
4. The study covers three broad areas of Sallie McFague's thought, namely cosmology, anthropology and theology. It would be possible, for example, to do a study only on her understanding of ecojustice. The study provides an overall analysis of McFague's body of God model.
5. McFague's ecofeminism is not fully treated. Although this is an important aspect of her theology, it is not in the scope of this research to address this issue completely.
6. The researcher is new to the field of ecological theology.
7. The study is located in a Christian context. Insights from other religions are as important in addressing issues relating to the natural environment.

1.7 Outline of chapters

Chapter two addresses the issue of religious language and how theological discourse is related to this. Sallie McFague's theological method and epistemological framework is determined by what is known as *metaphorical theology*. The study will formulate two criteria for theological language and then apply these to three dominant approaches to discourse about God: Aquinas' doctrine of analogy, Tillich's religious language as symbolical and finally, metaphorical theology. The study will investigate McFague's version of metaphorical theology and its relationship to realism and antirealism.

Chapter three is the most important chapter of this study, because it attempts to develop criteria for an adequate Christian ecological theology. Three related areas of study are addressed: cosmology, anthropology and theology. The study investigates what is unique for an ecological cosmology by using insights from scientific cosmology. It will be argued a theocentric cosmology is necessary for an ecological theology. The study addresses the doctrine of anthropology by using insights from various scientific and ecological perspectives. This is necessary to understand the locality and particularity of humankind in creation. It is argued that a holistic anthropology is needed for an ecological theology. Moreover, the notion of human beings in God's image is addressed. The issue of ecojustice is presented as a central concern for any ecological theology. The study then addresses the relationship between nature and history. Chapter three progresses to requirements for an ecological theology. It addresses the God-world relationship by arguing that panentheism appears to be an adequate understanding of how God interacts with the world for an ecological theology. Chapter three then explains the role of the Spirit in the cosmos. Moreover, the study discusses Christ's cosmic scope and the significance of a Trinitarian approach for an ecological theology. This chapter closes with thirteen tentative theses for a Christian ecological theology.

Chapter four addresses Sallie McFague's cosmology. McFague's use of scientific insight is addressed first. She argues against the machine model as an image for the universe. The researcher believes McFague's concerns vis-a-vis this model are appropriate. The body of God cosmology is based on the organic model and offers a relational view of life. McFague qualifies her version of the organic model with what is termed the *common creation story*. The researcher argues McFague's relational cosmology and embodiment metaphysic are prone to reductionism and proposes modifications to these two aspects of the body of God model by

using K. Wilber's holarchy notion and the panpsychism concept of process thought. The chapter attempts to establish if McFague's cosmology is theocentric and then closes with a reflection on the adequacy of the body of God cosmology from an ecological perspective.

Chapter five concerns McFague's relational anthropology, which is qualified by the common creation story. The researcher contends that McFague's relational anthropology and her argument for human particularity seems to have reductionistic tendencies. This becomes apparent in terms of the mind-body issue. The researcher suggests that insights from supervenience theory, transpersonal psychology and biblical anthropology need integration into the body of God model anthropology to counter the charge of reductionism and strengthen its case for a holistic view of the human being. McFague's view on sin and the Pelagian influence on this are addressed. The study then analyses her understanding of ecojustice, eschatology and the relationship between nature and history. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the applicability of the body of God anthropology for an ecological theology.

Chapter six concerns McFague's theology. The study provides support for her critique of various models for the G-W relationship. The body of God theology is based on the notion of internal relations. According to this view God is internally related to the universe. McFague argues her theology is panentheistic and uses agential metaphors to support this claim. Mother, lover, friend and embodied spirit are used to describe the G-W relationship. McFague believes these provide indications for divine immanence and transcendence. She argues for a procreation-emanation view of creation. The researcher argues that the metaphors of mother, lover and friend lack conceptual purchase, while the metaphor of God as the embodied spirit of the world does not appear to provide a strong argument for divine agency and transcendence. The study then addresses McFague's view of creation. By analysing these areas of McFague's thought, the researcher will attempt to ascertain whether the body of God model is pantheistic or panentheistic. The study progresses to McFague's pneumatology and Christology in order to determine the cosmic scope of these doctrines. The researcher will analyse the Trinitarian reflection in the body of God model. Chapter six concludes with a reflection on the adequacy of the body of God theology for an ecological theology

Chapter seven provides a summary and conclusion of the previous chapters. The researcher attempts to provide an answer to the primary question of this study in this chapter. It concludes with a section on the South African context.

Chapter 2: The issue of religious and theological language

Introduction

Before investigating the theology that accompanies McFague's body of God metaphor, it needs to be established whether or not McFague uses an adequate form of religious language. To do this, the study will formulate two tentative requirements for religious language. Language is a central concern for postmodern thought. Human beings use language to understand and interpret their world. The issue that arises for Christianity, a theistic religion, is how discourse about God is possible. The etymology of the word *theology* implies that Christians talk about God. But what is the connection between theological and religious language? Moreover, the study will test Aquinas' doctrine of analogy and Tillich's use of symbolic language in order to strengthen an argument for a metaphorical theology. The chapter closes with a reflection on the issue of realism and McFague's metaphorical theology.

2.1 The relationship between theological and religious language

John Macquarrie notes that theological language is located under the rubric of religious language and is thus part of a particular "form of life" (1975: 7). The concept *form of life* is borrowed from the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein. It is a general activity with which the language is associated or a part of. This appears to bear close resemblance to the German idea of *Sitz Im Leben*. Language therefore occurs within a particular life activity. In reference to theological talk, the form of life is faith or religion. Theology in this sense is extra-linguistic and articulates the life of religion and faith. Religious language is broader than theological language, but to understand the specific logic of theological discourse requires that its relationship to religious language be understood. Macquarrie puts it well,

Religious language includes prayer, confession, recital... Theology is a reflective and sophisticated kind of religious language, yet any attempt to explain its logic must have regard to its connection with religious language (: 7).

Theology presents religious imagery in an ordered and systematic manner and is therefore the intellectual aspect of religious language. This makes theology scientific, although it is different in this regard from the natural, life and human sciences (: 8). It is similar to other intellectual

disciplines: it explains, interprets, attempts to establish credibility and strives for intelligibility. Theology differs from other disciplines, because its subject matter (i.e. God) is mysterious and largely beyond reason.

It is for this reason that religious language uses resources such as image, symbol, metaphor, myth and story (1984: 26). Theological language takes these resources and interprets them in an ordered, coherent manner. In other words religious language is the primary data that theological language uses for its conceptualisation. It is important that religious and theological language is kept in a dialectical relationship. This means remaining critical of the images- more specifically the metaphors in this case-, which are presented for reflection. So, not all of religious language can be taken literally. To do so would result in over-familiarity with God and thus idolatry. There therefore needs to be a dialectical relationship between metaphors/images and concepts. In other words, there needs to be a balance between primary-religious and secondary-theological language. Macquarrie views this as a balance between existential and ontological terms for God where the former refers to the reality of God within “religious consciousness” and the latter to God’s reality described by intellectual means (: 26-7). Existential terms relate to a subjective experience of God, while ontological terms consider the objective reality of God.

This is the first requirement for theological language: there should be a dialectical relationship between primary-religious and secondary-theological language.

Macquarrie therefore insists that theological language affirms and denies what is said in religious language, it therefore has a “paradoxical nature” (1975: 13). This idea of paradox runs through many religious traditions.

Within the Christian tradition there is the notion that God is both incomprehensible and known. John Hick rightly observes that the various religious traditions all understand the Real², the Divine, God or the Ultimate as being unknown and known (1989: 236-237). In all these traditions the Ultimate is either characterless or assigned with various attributes.

² “Real” is a term used by Hick to relate humanity with the ultimate.

The Christian tradition affirms this conjecture (Berkhof 1986: 29f). The church fathers appropriated the Greek concept of a perfect Divine Being that is beyond attributes, while also confessing that God is revealed in the Logos and is thus known in both creation and the salvation process. Scholastic thinkers differentiated God's *quid* and *quails*, where the former stipulated that God's essential being is unknown and the latter the concept that God's nature can be known when God reveals Godself through the Divine attributes. The Scholastics believed knowledge of God came through General revelation (i.e. unaided reason).

In the Christian tradition there are the doctrines of "God *a se*" and God "*pro nobis*" (: 237). The former is the self-sustaining, infinite and pre-creation God that completely transcends the capacity of the human mind and is independent of all creation, while the latter is the known God who is revealed to humanity as a creator, redeemer and sustainer (Badham 1990: 172).

The doctrine of God *a se* and God *pro nobis*, as understood from Calvin's perspective, means that we cannot comprehend God's essence and thus rely on divine revelation to know God at all (Berkhof 1986: 29,43f). Luther affirmed Calvin's position and distinguished between the *Deus absconditus* (the God hidden from humanity) and *Deus revelatus* (God revealed to humanity), where the former highlights the inability of humanity to know God's essence and the latter signifies the notion that we only know God in God's hiddenness.

The difficulty with discourse about God is that it needs to take into consideration both the unknowability and knowability of God. In other words a form of religious language is needed that takes into account what can and cannot be said about God, or, rather a form of discourse that highlights God's transcendence and immanence.

The type of religious language this study is searching for is one that signifies the dissimilarity and similarity between God and creation. This of course is a paradox. If theological language is of such a nature then is it irrelevant? It is if one type of logic assumes authority over other ways of reasoning. This was the position of the logical positivists (Macquarrie 1975: 4). This of course is a most unpostmodern view, because it would mean judging truth claims according to another form of life. In a postmodern world, each language is invited to present its unique type of logic. The logic of theology, as Macquarrie asserted in the above reference to the relationship between religious and theological language, can only be understood in context of its particular form of life.

The study's second requirement for theological language is that it should take into account the paradox of God.

What is needed is a theological discourse that is concerned with both the “is” and “is not” of God. In other words this type of language needs to speak of God’s presence *in* and *distance to* the world. This implies that theological language may encourage a panentheistic view of the G-W relationship. It will be shown that panentheism could be a useful approach to an ecological theology.

The two criteria for theological language mentioned before affirms Kaufman’s understanding of the task of theology which is:

to assess and criticize received ideas of God in terms of their adequacy in expressing God’s *absoluteness* and God’s *humaneness*, and to reconstruct the image/concept of God so that it will present these motifs as clearly and meaningfully as possible ... so that God’s *presence* in contemporary life becomes intelligible (1996:49) *Italic's Kaufman's.*

We now evaluate various approaches to theological language according to the above two criteria and these include: Aquinas’ doctrine of analogy, religious language as symbolic and finally, the role of metaphor in religious language.

2.2 Aquinas’ doctrine of analogy

Hick notes that words occur in both secular and theological contexts (1963: 79). Words are defined primarily in their secular setting and thus do not present much difficulty when used in that context. However, when these ordinary words are applied to God, problems arise. Does God “speak” or “forgive” in the same manner that human beings do?

The Scholastics addressed this issue in their doctrine of analogy and Thomas Aquinas deserves special attention in this regard. B. Davis notes that Thomas’ doctrine of analogy was developed in light of his doctrine of God, where God is understood to be, “infinite, incomprehensible, and entirely simple” (2004: 148)

Thomas indicated two primary ways of applying words to God and creatures (: 148ff). He believed that a word is not used *univocally* when applied to both God and a created being. The

word univocally means that a word is being used with precisely the same meaning when applied to two subject matters. For example God is not “faithful” or “love” in the same manner that humankind is. Neither is a word used *equivocally* in its application to God and human beings. Equivocally means a word is being used with completely different meanings when referring to two objects. Thomas found univocal and equivocal language to be inadequate.

He thus had to find a third way of relating words to God that would be located between univocal and equivocal language. Words can thence be applied to God and creatures in an *analogical* manner (Hick 1963: 80ff). With analogical language there is a strong sense of *correspondence* between two terms or qualities when applied to God and human beings. Qualities such as love, courage, compassion, wisdom or goodness are, from a human perspective, weak distortions of the Divine qualities. If God is perfect then it means God has actualised these qualities. For human beings the qualities are in a state of potential, but the qualities that God possesses *corresponds* to the qualities that humankind possesses. In other words these qualities differ only in degree. When a word is applied to both God and humankind it differs in degree, but not in definition. Why can words and terms be applied to God and creatures? What is the relationship between God and creatures?

Davis indicates that Thomas believed the relationship between God and creatures was of a *causal* nature (2004: 149). Creatures and their properties are derived from God. God causes them into existence. This means that the properties they possess are as a result of the first cause, which is God. There are therefore similarities between God and creatures. We are thus able to sometimes apply words to God and humankind.

Alister McGrath elucidates the idea of similarity and correspondence in analogy (1994: 253-55). Fundamental to the doctrine of analogy is the notion that God created the world and there is thus an *analogia entis* (i.e. “analogy of being”) between God and world; it is thus appropriate to use “entities” within creation as analogies for God (: 253). An analogy therefore functions as a pointer to God; it does not attempt to reduce God to the level of the entity, as the entity is not identical to God. It is apparent that analogy attempts to find similarity and correspondence between God and creatures. Words, terms and qualities can be applied to both God and creatures in an analogical way. McFague observes that the doctrine of *analogia entis*, although a medieval doctrine, has led to a “symbolic sacramentalism” that still pervades contemporary Catholic thinking, which at a surface level signifies the distinctive nature of reality, but at a

deeper level understands all reality to be connected to the extent that everything can become “a symbol of everything else” (1983: 12). The focus of this symbolic sacramentalism is a God who created all that is. Everything is thus a reflection of the divine. Analogical language is thus built on an edifice of the similarity of God and creation.

How does Aquinas’ doctrine of analogy meet the two criteria for theological language? In relation to the first criteria this doctrine appears to be a highly conceptual form of discourse. Thomas’ three main predications for God as infinite, incomprehensible and simple indicate that his system is primarily concerned with the objective reality of God. The difficulty for Thomas was how to move closer to the existential pole of the dialectic. He attempted to do this, but seems to remain closer to the conceptual-theological pole. This seems to be due to an overemphasis on the transcendence of God. In terms of the second criteria, Thomas’ position attempts to resolve the distance he encounters between God and the world. The doctrine of analogy tries to overcome this imbalance by over emphasising the similarity between God and creatures. Analogical language therefore does not appear to adequately address the dissimilarity between God and humankind. It therefore does not address the issue of paradox in theological language.

2.3 Religious language as symbolic

An important advocate of the symbolic nature of religious language is Paul Tillich. He developed this aspect of his thought according to his theological method known as the “method of correlation” in volume one of his *Systematic Theology* (1968: 67). Tillich makes an existential analysis and then shows that various Christian symbols provide answers to these existential concerns. The method of correlation thus permits Tillich to use theological language in his system, as it attempts to find a balance between the existential and the essential (i.e. the ontological).

How symbols function in Tillich’s system is significant. He makes a distinction between sign and symbol (: 265). While both point to something beyond them, a sign has an external connection to that which it points. An example would be a stop sign that signifies drivers are meant to stop. A symbol has a participatory connection with that to which it points. It therefore participates with its reference point.

Where do these symbols come from? They develop out of the collective unconscious (: 190)³. Tillich appears to be using Jungian analytical psychology in his analysis of symbol. A symbol in this way is able to expose depths of reality and elements of the soul that are usually closed off from human beings.

For Tillich the focus of religious faith is the “ultimate concern” (: 14). This faith expresses itself in symbolic language. He maintained that there is only one literal statement for God: God is being-itself (: 261). All other statements are symbolic.

A symbol is something that occurs in finite reality and is a sector of this reality (: 265). It appears to address the issue of similarity and dissimilarity and Tillich writes,

a symbolic expression is one whose proper meaning is negated by that to which it points. And yet it is also affirmed by it, and this affirmation gives the symbolic expression an adequate basis for pointing beyond itself (: 265).

Hick presents a comparison between Aquinas’ doctrine of analogy and Tillich’s use of the symbolic nature of religious language (1963: 83). Both approaches have a negative aspect: when human beings speak of God they do not use literal or univocal language. Terms and words are formed from an experience of finitude and can thus not be adequately applied to God. Both Aquinas and Tillich’s approaches safeguard theological language from turning God into a human being and thus retard idolatry.

How does Tillich’s theory about the nature of discourse about God face up to the two criteria for theological language? Tillich’s method of correlation clearly signifies a strong conceptual framework for theological language. It forms a dialectical relationship between existential issues and God’s essential nature. It highlights the notion that the human subject’s existential concerns are overcome by certain symbols pointing to the divine reality. There appears to be a problem with Tillich’s use of symbolic language and the issue of paradox. It seems as though his insight on this matter depends on the concept of a symbol participating in the reality to which it points (i.e. Being-itself). For a symbol to be negated and affirmed by the reality to which it points, it needs to participate in that reality. In other words if Tillich could

³ This is taken from volume two of Tillich’s *Systematic Theology*. Subsequent references to Tillich are from volume one.

demonstrate how exactly this process occurs then his approach to theological language would be able to accommodate the concept of paradox.

However, Hick notes that Tillich does not “define or clarify this central notion of participation” (1963: 83). Tillich does not illustrate how different symbols participate in Being-itself. For example does “God is good” participate in Being-itself in the same manner as another religious symbol? Or do non-religious symbols participate in their ultimate concern in the same way that a religious symbol does? Tillich believed that everything that *exists* participates in being-itself, so what is the difference between the way a symbol does this and the manner in which other things do so? Tillich is not clear about this. His approach should thus be used with caution.

2.4 Metaphor in religious language

The word metaphor is composed of two Greek words: *Meta* (“trans”) and *pherein* (“to carry”) (Soskice 1985: 1). The word was originally used to explain how a word could be extended, so that it could be transferred from a primary to a secondary application.

The exact difference between metaphor and analogy is disputable (McGrath 1994: 255). A definition for metaphor is thus important.

Janet Soskice defines a metaphor as,

that figure of speech whereby we speak about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another (1985: 15).

Max Black defines a metaphor as that which,

has the power to bring two separate domains into cognitive and emotional relation by using language directly appropriate to the one as a lens for seeing the other (in Fretheim 1984: 5).

Sallie McFague writes,

a metaphor is seeing one thing *as* something else, pretending 'this' is 'that' because we do not know how to think or talk about 'this', so we use 'that' as a way of saying something about it (1983: 15) Emphasis McFague's.

It was noted in chapter one that a worldview is deeply influenced by language. A consideration of culture/religion and the language specific to this takes seriously the role that metaphors, images, symbols, myths, signs and analogies play in a construction of reality. These are thus all important for a worldview. In other words this study takes seriously the role religious language plays in relation to how creation is perceived. Metaphors thus influence perception. In other words the cognitive or *extra-linguistic* function of metaphor is important and this will thence influence a definition of metaphor. Terence Fretheim writes, "the power such metaphors have in the shaping of thought and life is not always recognised" (1984: 9)

Soskice asserts that a metaphor is not a "mental event" and that any psychological terms in its definition lead to misunderstanding (1985: 16). She believes that a study of metaphor must begin in the linguistic context. However, if metaphor is viewed only in this manner, its transformative function is reduced. A metaphor is something that changes someone's perspective and thus results in "transformation and revolution" (McFague 1983: 18). In other words metaphors are powerful enough to change a worldview. The reason for this is that metaphors are embedded in the mind. They act as datum checks.

Black's definition states that metaphor is a "lens for seeing the other". In other words this definition takes seriously the role metaphor has in worldview construction. A metaphor's extra-linguistic significance is thus presented. Perception is taken into account. In addition to this Black's definition refers to both the cognitive and emotional aspects of metaphor. There is thus a concern for conceptual and emotional parts of language. This is important for theological-conceptual and religious-existential language.

McFague's definition also considers the significance of perception, as she refers to *seeing one thing as*. This means that the relationship between worldview and metaphor is a close one. Soskice's understanding of metaphor is that it is possible to "speak" about one thing in terms of another, whereas McFague believes "seeing" one thing in terms of another is important. In other words a metaphor influences a human being's outlook on life. A familiar way of understanding one object is used as a vehicle to perceive another object.

Black and McFague's definitions for metaphor are significant for this study, because they relate to the hermeneutical aspect of human life. How does a metaphorical approach relate to the two criteria for theological language?

The use of metaphor in theology means that it is appropriate to use the term "metaphorical theology" (McFague 1983: 14). These terms imply that there is both a primary-religious and a secondary-theological tendency in this particular theological method. This needs explanation.

McFague maintains that there is a multiplicity of metaphors in the Christian tradition and that to get a broad view of the God-human relationship; a "piling up" of these is necessary (: 20). This also should prevent the over emphasis on the similarity between God and world of certain metaphors which may result in idolatry. In other words a metaphorical theology should prevent over-literalisation of metaphors. Fretheim affirms McFague's view on this and warns theology cannot be satisfied with a "limited fund of metaphors" (1984: 8).

McFague suggests that theology must "move beyond" the metaphors of religious language and interpret them for the current context (: 23)⁴. In other words McFague is indicating that the theologian must start with the metaphors provided by religious language and then progress to the conceptual pole of theological language.

McFague suggests that the term *model* denotes the move from religious language to theological language (: 23). A model combines metaphorical language with conceptual language and thus represents characteristics from both. It is thus a step towards conceptual language. It combines the existential and ontological realities that Macquarrie mentioned previously. For McFague a model is a "dominant metaphor" that endures and lasts; one such model being "God our father"(: 23). This is a metaphor that has developed into a model. This model is open to interpretation and has a variety of supporting metaphors, so that an entire theological system can be constructed from it. It has personal, relational imagery and the potential of being developed into an ordered theology.

⁴ Gordon Kaufman maintains theology's purpose is to find an adequate image or concept of God that is commendable to the current context and its issues (1996: 44). In order to do this the theologian needs to critically analyse previous biblical interpretations, doctrines and dogmas so that these do not become "ultimate authority" (: 44).

Soskice's understanding of model is the converse of McFague's. She asserts that model and metaphor are different (1985: 55). The latter is derived from the former. In other words metaphorical discourse is based on models. A model is not necessarily linguistically orientated. For example the *fatherhood* in God's fatherhood is the model. If it is said that God loves his children then this is metaphorical language based on the model of fatherhood. However, the difficulty with this approach is that it considers metaphor to be only a figure of speech, as was noted previously. Soskice's approach implies that metaphor cannot become theological, as it is not able to move towards the theological conceptual pole.

Ian Barbour also argues that models have a dialectical relationship between metaphor and conceptual language (1990: 45-6)⁵. Concepts are abstract, whereas metaphors emphasise experience and occur in the form of a symbol in the context of worship. Models are more developed than metaphors and not as abstract as concepts. Barbour sees continuity between religious and scientific models. Both use *analogies*⁶ in the form of metaphors or symbols and develop these into models. Religious and scientific models can be *extended* so that they include theories, they can thus be adapted and modified in light of new phenomenon and experiences. This gives models an open-ended characteristic. Both models give a *unified* view of diverse theories. In other words models summarise and present a broad view of "complex relationships" (: 42). These insights from Barbour indicate that science and theology are able to converse. This reinforces McFague's contention that models form a dialectical relationship between metaphors and concepts.

Another important characteristic of metaphor is its emphasis on similarity and dissimilarity; a metaphor can be understood if these two factors are taken into consideration (Fretheim 1984: 5; Brown 1982: 39-56). McFague writes,

thinking metaphorically means spotting a thread of similarity between two dissimilar objects, events, or whatever, one of which is better known than the other, and using the better-known one as a way of speaking about the lesser known (1983: 15).

Metaphor is thus different from analogy. The latter endeavours to find continuity between two terms or objects, while the former acknowledges continuity and discontinuity between them. Metaphor thus uses analogy, but is not the same as it. In regard to theology, a metaphorical

⁵ Clayton also affirms McFague's use of models (2000: 14-18).

⁶ It must be noted here that metaphor *uses* analogy, however the two are not identical.

approach stresses God transcendence and creation's finite nature, as well as God's continuity with creation (: 13). Fretheim maintains that metaphors cannot fully capture the full reality of God, as there is a distinct distance between God and the images/concepts for Him or Her. However, metaphors do contain information about God (1984: 7-8).

Fretheim observes that there is a relationship between metaphor and essentialist construction (: 7). A metaphor should not be understood literally, but there is a degree of literal understanding in it. Fretheim believes that a metaphor may be considered literal when it implies that God is related to the world. In other words metaphors that highlight God's love and goodness should be taken literally. However, metaphors do not fully describe God. They indicate that there are discontinuity between God and creation. This type of thinking speaks of the "is" and "is not" of God and creation or of the "yes" and "no".

McFague believes symbolic-sacramentalism in Catholic thought is different from a metaphorical theology. Symbol here is simply a "solidification of metaphor" where the tension in metaphor has been reduced so that similarity is emphasised (: 16). Metaphor is for this reason able to bring about surprise, as it is unconventional. It therefore invokes a response or judgement in the hearer of the metaphor. This is often not the case with analogy or symbol. A good metaphor is thus thought provoking. It evokes a certain attitude towards that to which it is referring.

This signifies the objective of a metaphor. It is meant to change a current point of view about something and thus induce judgment. A metaphor is thus characterised by,

ordinariness, incongruity, indirection, skepticism, judgement, unconventionality, surprise, and transformation or revolution (McFague 1983: 18).

In other words a metaphor is meant to change a worldview. This means that an analysis of metaphor should not merely be governed by the rules of formal logic. A metaphor may well be tested according to such criteria. In addition to this a metaphor needs to be understood according to its particular type of logic. It uses paradox to bring about a sense of surprise or conflict. There is a sense of tension about it.

This tension is what intrigues Paul Ricoeur. For him metaphors are significant, because they are able to generate new meanings about their reference points (Fodor 1995: 157). Ricoeur makes use of Monroe Beardsley's controversion theory to show that what appears to be contradictory in a metaphor is used to generate meaning. A metaphor has a place for logical absurdity. Metaphor is therefore a type of "category mistake" or "calculated error" (: 157). The reader or hearer notes that the metaphor is absurd and therefore must choose either a literal understanding, and believe that the metaphor is absurd, or discover a new meaning for it so that it makes sense. It was noted before that certain metaphors may be taken literally, such as God is living, loving and good. However, some cannot. Consider the metaphor, God is a mighty mountain. To refer to God as a mountain is absurd. This metaphor causes a sense of surprise. It therefore shows that there is more to this than a literal rendition. What appears to be implied here is that God is majestic, strong and stands above everything. There is thus similarity and dissimilarity in this particular metaphor.

It is for this reason that a metaphor may be considered open-ended and contextual (Brown 1982: 39-56). They cannot be fully conceptualised and reduced to propositional statements. A metaphor is therefore dynamic. Its meaning will be influenced by the context that interrogates it. A. McGrath summarises this idea well when he says a metaphor,

cannot be reduced to a set of precise statements about God, valid for every place and every time. It is meant to be suggestive, allowing future readers and interpreters to find new meanings within it (1994: 256).

Metaphorical theology is a form of discourse that finds a balance between religious language and theological language. A model is both metaphoric and conceptual. It allows the theologian to construct concepts about God, while taking the issue of paradox into consideration. A metaphor considers both the "is" and "is not" of God. This manner of discourse appears to be appropriate, as it meets the requirements of the two criteria.

McFague's use of metaphor is thus justified, because she makes use of models that demonstrate the paradox of God⁷.

⁷ McFague appears to be a postmodern thinker. In order to articulate why there is such diversity in terms of life views, postmodern thought highlights the role that *language, culture and religion* play in any construction of reality. Truth is determined by language/culture and because these vary so do truth claims (Greer 2003: 225). Modernism is contrary to postmodernism in this regard. For Immanuel Kant the four categories of quantity, quality, relation and modality fulfilled this function (Thilly 1955: 424). According to Kant the categories are *a priori* and thus universal and invariable.

H. Paul Santmire insists that it is important to discover a "root-metaphor" that addresses ecological and political concerns (1995: 60)⁸. This study will endeavour to establish if McFague's metaphor does this.

2.5 Realism and McFague's metaphorical theology

McFague's metaphorical approach to theology raises the issue of realism. A convincing argument for a metaphorical theology is that it takes worldviews into consideration.

McFague's body of God model may change the way human beings view the natural order. This is its great strength. But does this mean that reality is only a construct of the mind, or is there really something out there?

Realism is the view that objects that exist and are under investigation are independent of the mind (Craig 2000: 744). Realism therefore relates particularly well to physical facts. For example, the amount of people living in a country is a fact. Atoms and molecules do exist. There are a certain number of planets in the solar system.

Realists believe, metaphysically speaking, there are fixed ontological realities to which human beings may refer and the manners in which humans construct reality *bridge* them with the world. As the researcher understands it, this means realists attempt to connect Kant's noumenal and phenomenal realities. The realist position affirms that different paradigms must be compatible, because they are orientated towards the same ontological reference points (Greer 2003: 242).

Critical realism is a realist position (Barrett 2000: 135). According to this approach the subject matter or object under investigation is not merely a construct of the mind, but exists externally to it. This type of realism is *critical*, because it affirms the notion that the mind provides "conceptual filters" in order to acquire knowledge of the subject matter or object (: 10). Critical realism is contrary to *naïve realism*, which proposes that the mind's models and the reality, to which they refer, correspond precisely. Critical realism therefore acknowledges that knowledge is provisional.

⁸ Kaufman acknowledges the importance of metaphors in theological discourse, but stresses the need to de-reify those that may lead to oppressive situations (1993b: 95-115).

Antirealism denies the realist position (Craig 2000: 744). It maintains that there are no ontological reference points and reality is simply a construct of the mind. There is therefore no reality outside of the mind. As the researcher understands this position, antirealists remain in Kant's phenomenal reality⁹. Antirealism is an appropriate epistemological position for postmodern thought, because it does not assume an absolute, external reality.

How do these insights relate to McFague's theological method? She insists her metaphorical theology uses metaphors and models that do not describe reality or God. Moreover, a metaphor or model's purpose is not to achieve logical accuracy, but to alter how human beings view reality. The advantage to such an approach is it offers the theologian a wide scope for imagining the G-W relationship, but what are the limits to this? More specifically, does a metaphor alter a human being's worldview or is it God's grace that achieves this? This concern relates to the issue of conversion. Does a gracious God initiate a conversion process in the self's life or is it a metaphor that does this? In other words, does God have a role in influencing how human beings view the natural order? McFague does not appear to be clear on these issues. She insists it is metaphors that determine how human beings relate to the natural environment. From this perspective the body of God model appears to be a form of antirealism.

McFague, as will be shown, believes God is permanently incarnated and that incarnation is a part of God's very nature. She appears to endorse a form of general revelation in this regard. This would imply that McFague does acknowledge the notion of God beyond the mind. The idea of God revealing Him or Herself needs to be integrated into McFague's theological method in order to respond to projectionist theorists who claim God is simply a projection¹⁰ of the human mind with all its longings, desires and intentions¹¹. By stressing divine revelation and the role of metaphor, McFague's epistemology may then be adapted to a critical realist position. If this adaptation is not made to McFague's metaphorical theology it will remain on the phenomenal side of reality. J. Bracken highlights the danger to such an approach,

⁹ Antirealism thus appears to be a close cousin of idealism. The idealist would assert that mind is the fundamental reality and that physical reality is dependent on it even if a reality beyond the mind is proposed (Sprigge 2000: 379).

¹⁰ C. Gunton defines projection as, "the function of descriptive language as not so much describing the world as projecting upon it patterns of interpretation" (1992: 66). He argues there is a large degree of this in McFague's metaphorical theology.

¹¹ D. Bromell believes a metaphorical theology does not prove, "that there is, independent of our projection of possibilities, 'a personal, gracious power who is on the side of life'" (1993: 499).

For, taken literally, this metaphorical approach to theology effectively confines the discipline to a phenomenology of religious experience which says nothing about God as the reality to which religious experience ultimately refers (2002: 365).

These reflections merely signify the danger for any metaphorical theology. There appears to be sufficient resources in McFague's theology to modify the body of God model so that it becomes a critical realist position, for example her use of incarnational theology¹². This will be addressed in the study's theological reflection. It is not within the scope of the study to modify McFague's metaphorical theology. The researcher has merely indicated one of the dangers to her theological method: the body of God model's bias towards antirealism.

Conclusion

Two criteria were formulated to address the validity of McFague's metaphorical theology. It was argued that theological language should balance primary-religious and secondary-theological language. This is necessary so as to emphasise the conceptual aspect of theological discourse. Moreover, theological language should be of such a nature that it addresses the paradox of God. Aquinas's doctrine of analogy and Tillich's notion of religious language as symbolic are problematic vis-a-vis the two criteria for theological language. McFague's metaphorical meets these two criteria, but the researcher argued that it may be a form of antirealism. It was suggested that the notion of divine revelation needs to be stressed in McFague's theological method if it is to counter this charge.

¹² M. Taylor insists a metaphor takes similarity seriously and affirms the notion that there *is* a disclosure of the unknown even though language is often inadequate to understand this. He maintains a metaphorical theology should be both sacramental and prophetic (1984: 470). McFague appears to achieve this as will be shown in the section on cosmic Christology.

Chapter 3: An adequate Christian ecological theology

Introduction

This chapter is the most important section of this study, because it endeavours to formulate criteria for a Christian ecological theology. These will be used through the study to test McFague's body of God model. The body of God model has significant claims about cosmology, anthropology and theology. The chapter begins with a reflection on cosmology and what is specific about an ecological cosmology. Ecological theologians make extensive use of scientific cosmology. The study therefore discusses insights on the nature of the universe from various scientist-theologians. It will attempt to establish what is unique for a Christian ecological cosmology. The study then addresses what should constitute a Christian ecological anthropology. Ecological anthropologies study humankind's position, particularity and role in the cosmic community. Moreover, they endorse a holistic view of the human being. The study indicates what the term *imago Dei* means from an ecological perspective. The term *ecojustice* is then introduced to highlight humankind's unique responsibility vis-a-vis the natural order. The study explores the relationship between nature and history. The chapter proceeds to a reflection on ecological theology. The study will argue that panentheism should be the basis for an understanding of the G-W relationship. This is necessary to preserve divine transcendence and immanence. The study discusses the role of the Spirit and then Christ in cosmic processes. There is then a discussion on a Trinitarian ecological theology.

The chapter concludes with a layout of thirteen propositions. Insights from the cosmological reflection are used to formulate *three* requirements for a Christian ecological cosmology. *Six* criteria for a Christian ecological anthropology are then presented, while insights from the theological reflection are used to formulate *four* requirements for an adequate Christian ecological theology.

3.1 Ecological cosmology

Before attempting to develop a framework for an ecological cosmology, an understanding of the words *ecology* and *cosmology* is needed. The term *ecology* was first used by the German biologist Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919) and is constituted by two Greek words: *oikos* ("house")

and logos ("word", "study" or "reflection") (Boff 1995: 9). The oikos in this regard is the habitat in which human beings, other organisms and inanimate beings are located. Ecology is a study of the relationships that occur between these three. It is therefore about relationships and attempts to view creation in a synthetic, rather than in an isolationistic/analytical manner. Ecology therefore poses a challenge to modernity, which is primarily analytical. It is most concerned with the connectedness of life and is thus holistic (1997: 41f).

Holism is a term coined by the South African statesman and philosopher, JC Smuts (1870-1950) (Merchant 1995: 83). It was in the book *Holism and Evolution* (1926) that Smuts described the characteristics of holism in order to differentiate it from a mechanistic worldview. Holism promulgates the idea that parts affect the whole.

It views reality as dynamic, creative and synthetic (Le Roux 1987: 104). This ability to synthesise is, however, not completely controlling by nature. Smuts still wanted to include the concept of diversity into his idea of holism. Entities are related to one another in many ways, but they still retain their unique character. Moreover, these entities influence the whole. They have their own reality and also influence and are influenced by broader reality.

This means, from a holistic perspective, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Boff 1995: 11). Natural reality is able to synthesise and complete the components in a whole. Moreover, it can relate a whole to an even broader whole. Holism therefore views the whole, which is derived from the "organic interdependence" of the elements in it (1997: 41). The whole is therefore constituted by the relationships between the entities (with their own individuation) in its particular system.

It becomes apparent at this stage that a holistic ecological view of life is one that takes change, unity, diversity and relationship into consideration. The advantage to such an approach is that it still remains faithful to postmodern thought. Moreover, such an approach takes systems seriously. In other words, a holistic ecological view of life encompasses what is termed an "ecosystemic" worldview (Jordaan, J and Jordaan, W 1998: 31). Such an approach attempts to avoid reductionism. It highlights the impression that entities cannot be studied in isolation, but only interdependently.

What is cosmology? H. Eaton maintains that *cosmology* is synonymous with *worldview* (2000: 119). It receives input from the natural sciences, philosophy and religion. It is derived from culture and is concerned with the world's nature, or rather how the universe/cosmos is structured. So, cosmology is the picture of the cosmos a religion or culture may have and consider normative. Cosmologies contribute to how society is structured and impact the manner in which humanity responds to the earth. The sociology of knowledge shows this.

E. Conradie believes that cosmology should be used rather than worldview, as the latter is anthropocentric and thus limited in scope (1997: 213). Cosmology on the other hand is broader and attempts to present a complete image of the world or universe. It thus specifies how the universe came to be and where or to what it is destined. Moreover, cosmologies highlight where humankind is situated in the cosmos.

AO Balcomb believes metanarratives describe the origin and destiny of the universe and these stories provide meaning for human beings, as they are able to understand life better (2000:50). It is only when human beings understand where they came from and where they are going that they can make sense of what comes in between - life.

L. Boff summarises what has been discussed thus far as follows,

We understand *cosmology* to mean the *image of the world* that a society fashions for itself by artfully combining widely varying types of knowledge, traditions, and intuitions... by means of the great *cosmological narratives* (1997: 35) Emphasis the researcher's.

Theology and science are often in conflict, particularly vis-a-vis the doctrine of creation, however they were not always opponents. The medieval period was characterised by a quest for what NM Wildiers refers to as, "order, balance and synthesis" (1982: 61). Theology was no different. By making use of Greek philosophy and science, theologians integrated cosmology, anthropology and theology into what is known as the "medieval synthesis" (Johnson 2000: 9).

This synthesis resulted in a view of life that was exemplified as ordered, unchanging, perfect, hierarchical and anthropocentric (Wildiers 1982: 57-8). It was believed that God brought about the order and hierarchy in the universe. The theologians of this period synthesised the contemporary scientific cosmology with their religious cosmology.

However scientific cosmological reflection gradually became of secondary importance in theology. There are several reasons for this, but the Copernican revolution was the most important of these (Conradie 1997: 215). Copernicus challenged the church's view that the earth was the centre of the universe, positing instead a heliocentric position. The church thence became suspicious of scientific cosmology.

However it is important for an ecological cosmology to garner insights from scientific cosmology. Science provides concepts of reality that should be taken into consideration when theologising. Hessel and Ruether believe ecological theologies should reconstruct previous Christian views on cosmology, the G-W dynamic and humanity's purpose in light of ecological concerns. Those cosmologies that have incorporated Greek philosophy and its dualism must be reshaped according to contemporary views on cosmology. (2000: xxxv).

The type of cosmology required in this study is one that takes ecological issues seriously. So when the term ecological cosmology is used, the word *ecological* functions as an adjective. In other words a cosmology is needed that emphasises the mutability, unity, diversity and relational character of creation. A holistic cosmology is required for an ecological theology instead of a dualistic type. Insights from both contemporary science and theology can assist in demonstrating these characteristics.

3.1.1 Scientific cosmology

It should be noted at the outset that contemporary scientists do acknowledge that there is a large degree of regularity in nature, but that it is also characterised by novelty and chance. P. Davies believes there are immutable natural laws of such a nature that when they are applied to matter result in openness and change in the created order (2004: 104).

Insights from science inform us about the origin/s of the universe. Boff writes,

Once we were all together in the form of energy and the original particles. We are all made of the same elements (1997: 45).

According to Ian Barbour, quantum theory has seriously challenged Newtonian physics (1990: 96-108). Quantum theory articulates the interconnectedness, interrelatedness and

interdependence of life. Newton's understanding of the universe as deterministic and reductionistic is questionable. It was believed that the future condition of the matter in a system in motion could be predicted by acquiring knowledge of its current state. Moreover, universal laws controlled everything from a tiny particle to a planet in space. Newtonian thinking also held that parts affect the whole. In other words this was bottom-up causation, where the smallest particles determine the reaction of the whole. Change occurs when the parts are rearranged; however the parts themselves never change. The result of this was that nature came to be viewed as a machine (: 96). The world is sub-ordinate to natural laws and does not need divine agency. This removes any potential for novelty or freedom in creation. In other words according to a mechanistic worldview, creation is not a living entity. It is simply composed of lifeless atoms.

However, Barbour indicates that the "Heisenberg Uncertainty" principle demonstrates that there is a large degree of "indeterminacy in nature" (: 101). There is novelty in nature, because entities have possibilities for *becoming* available to them and thence the potential to change. The future is indeterminate and entities have a range of alternatives, which they can pursue and actualise. Time does not repeat itself, as the "world would not repeat its course if it were restored to a former state" (: 103).

Quantum theory also challenges Newtonian reductionism. Previously, matter was believed to be constituted by indivisible protons, neutrons and electrons, but is now shown that these particles are composed of smaller parts known as "quarks" (: 104). Quarks cannot exist alone, as they require the larger whole. Large amounts of energy fail to separate quarks and merely generate new ones, which then combine with the ones already there. This results in the genesis of new particles. At the atomic and sub-atomic level there are complex systems, which build themselves up, and these have characteristics that were not seen in only the components. In other words, it is important to look at the larger whole and not just the components. Barbour writes,

Interpenetrating fields and integrated totalities replace self-contained, externally related particles as fundamental images of nature. The being of any entity is constituted by its *relationships* and its participation in more inclusive patterns (1990: 105) Emphasis the researcher's.

John Polkinghorne also addresses the issue of indeterminacy in nature (1995: 147-155). He makes use of "chaos theory" to explain the dynamic nature of systems that do not have thermodynamic equilibrium. This theory states that even minute and undetectable changes in a system's initial conditions can result in an unpredictable future. For example future conditions of the universe cannot be easily predicted by merely understanding its present state. The most important insight that Polkinghorne is offering here is that openness or "intrinsic indefiniteness" occurs not only at the quantum level, but also at the macrophysical level (: 155).

One of the values of relativity theory is that it synthesises energy, matter, space and time and thus further strengthens the case for a dynamic universe (Barbour 1990: 124). Space and time are connected into what is known as a "spacetime continuum"; in addition to this mass is a form of energy, while it is difficult to distinguish between acceleration and gravity (: 109, 111). Matter and space interact with each other, while there is a dialectical relationship between processes of time and the geometry of space. Matter distorts and changes spacetime. This presents a picture of the universe where events interact with each other. It must be noted, however, the connections between events take time. There are thus moments of isolation.

In a dynamic universe there needs to be some manner of limitation. If not, systems would be completely chaotic. Barbour insists that even within physics there is the notion of evolutionary thought (: 113). He draws on insights from Nobel Prize winner Ilya Prigogine's work on thermodynamics. Inanimate beings are believed to be able to self-organise where random behaviour at one level leads to order at another. This results in an increase in complexity with new rules controlling the new state. What Prigogine appears to be implying here is that the more complex something is, the higher its capacity for self-organisation. This could be the limitation principle required for an orderly system. This type of thinking can be applied to "living systems" (: 113).

When considering complexity in living systems, the concern is with evolutionary theory. This approach signifies not only the mutability of creation, but also its unity and diversity. These two concepts should be kept in balance. The former tends towards a reductionistic and monistic¹³ view of life. This contributes to essentialist constructions of reality. If the latter is

¹³ Monism is the view that everything may be traced back to one substance or reality. Its opposite is dualism (Klein 1999: 636).

emphasised then the connectedness of life is lost. The idea of *hierarchies of complexity* appears to provide a solution. Arthur Peacocke uses the theory of "emergentist monism" to account for hierarchies that include a gradation of complexity or degree of self-organisation (2001: 50). Entities in the world, both animate and inanimate, are composed of "fundamental physical entities" (: 49). Complexity does not occur due to the insertion of additional entities at higher levels. It is derived from below.

However this bottom-up causation principle is balanced by a form of top-down causation¹⁴ referred to by Peacocke as "whole-part influence" and he defines it as,

the net effect of all those ways in which a system-as-a-whole, operating from its higher level, is a causal factor in what happens to its constituent parts, the lower level (: 52).

Peacocke goes on to describe how there is information flow from higher level entities to lower ones (: 53). A higher level in this regard changes events that take place among its lower level constituents. Information in this regard is distinct from energy and matter, but when information is transferred a degree of energy or matter is exchanged. Peacocke uses the mind-brain-body interaction to support his claims and also illustrates that this idea of information transference concurs with evolutionary thinking. For example information flow from the environment over a long period of time may influence an organism's DNA and this DNA will then influence the organism's functioning in such a manner that it will produce adequate progeny. For Peacocke the world is comprised of a diverse set of systems that interact with each other (: 55). Events in one system affect events in other systems. There is thus information flow between systems. For example, on earth systems of life forms are influenced by the atmosphere and geological systems. Peacocke writes,

the world-as-a-whole suggests that it is metaphysically plausible to perceive it as an *interconnected and interdependent System-of-systems*, the 'systems' being now of different types (: 55) Emphasis Peacocke's.

The researcher believes that a cosmology that includes both bottom-up and top-down causation does possibly provide room for divine agency, otherwise God may merely become the output of an evolutionary process and thus reducible to cosmic reality. Such a monistic or pantheistic

¹⁴ This is a term used by Ellis and Murphy (1996:16).

approach is at odds with the Christian tradition that affirms the distinction between God and creation. It is therefore necessary to oppose a naturalistic or pantheistic approach to cosmology.

The views presented by the scientists above are indicative of a holistic cosmology that concurs with ecological insights. The universe is viewed as dynamic, unified, diverse and relational. The dynamic nature of the universe means it is characterised by emergence and evolution. Creation in this sense becomes historical. It is both open and closed. Entities are interconnected, interdependent and interrelated. Reality is composed not of separate substances, but of relationships and events. This is a holistic view of the world where mutuality and reciprocity are of primary concern. Such a view of the world emphasises the notion of *community*.

H. Rolston denotes such a community a "biotic community" (1994: 78). In this thought, reality is viewed as a dynamic, living interaction between parts. The various members of such a community are integrated and able to flourish. Moreover, there is both a degree of stability and development within this community. Boff maintains that humanity is part of a "cosmic community" which has a common origin and destiny (1997: 45)

Moreover, Barbour views entities in the universe as being part of a community and writes,

Cosmology joins evolutionary biology, molecular biology, and ecology in showing the interdependence of all things. We are part of an *ongoing community of being*; we are kin to all creatures, past and present. (1997: 215) Emphasis the researcher's.

Another way to describe such a worldview is the universe as an *organism* (Barbour 1990: 168, 222). Such a view is social by nature. In such a society the members have a marked sense of individuality and yet there is unity and contact. With such a view there is no dichotomy between the living and the non-living. However, the diversity of entities is still emphasised. Living and non-living beings are part of an organism that is held in a dynamic balance. The earth has been viewed as a super-organism known as Gaia (Lovelock 1979, 1988). This metaphor therefore has scientific support. In addition to this, it is an applicable form of religious language, as it is a model and thus takes unity (similarity) and diversity (dissimilarity) into account.

3.1.2 A theocentric cosmology

The perspectives garnered from the above scientific insights have naturalistic tendencies and it is therefore important to propound the place of God in such thinking. One of the perennial tasks of the science-theology debate is to describe the relation between natural and divine causation. This will be addressed later. It is important to maintain a theocentric position in regard to cosmological reflection. S. Bouma-Prediger insists such a perspective is crucial, because it avoids the naturalistic tendency to declare creation as autonomous or the romanticised view that creation is the divine (1995: 278). Only by acknowledging that God gives everything existence, will human distinctiveness and creation's interdependence be affirmed.

Moltmann addresses the unity and diversity of creation. In the book, *God in Creation*, he makes his intentions clear: an ecologically inclined doctrine of creation should result in the idea of an "ecological world-community" (1985: 12). He also rejects mechanism and atomism as worldviews and instead argues for an organismic approach where unity and interdependence are demonstrated (1989: 57f, 79-80). Moltmann believes the earth is an organism that is alive. It is thus an open system that is self-regulatory. Humankind relies on this organism for its well being. What is atomism? I. Paul defines it as, "the reduction of complex entities to unchanging constituent parts" (1987: 133). It is therefore a form of reductionism.

3.2 Anthropology

3.2.1 Humankind as part of the cosmic community

The study's cosmological reflection presented scientific support for using metaphors such as *cosmic community* and *organism*. These metaphors explain humanity's interconnectedness and interrelatedness with creation. They highlight unity *and* diversity in creation. But what is humanity's position in creation? W. Granberg- Michaelson believes this is a central issue for an ecological theology (1994: 103). Insights from Peacocke, Ruether and Conradie provide input in this regard.

Peacocke maintains that the world is comprised of a diversity of interdependent and interconnected systems. Emergent monism and whole-part influence demonstrate bottom-up and top-down causation within systems. Systems have uniqueness and individuality. The human being is one particularly complex system located high in the hierarchy of complexity (2004: 138-9). Humanity is related to creation, but distinct by virtue of its complexity. The human brain is for example the most complex organism known.

Ruether asserts humanity is part of an evolutionary process that is continuous (1993: 31). It was noted before that the universe is dynamic, developing and evolving and thus has a history. Humankind is therefore not the glory of creation, but one particular aspect of it. Human beings evolved late in the evolutionary process, while nonhuman creatures were on the earth billions of years before them (2000: 103-4). The earth was self-sustaining and autonomous before the arrival of humankind. Human beings are thence a part of creation and not superior to it. The human story is but one particular story in cosmic history. We are one part of the cosmic community. This means that humankind is to humbly accept its place in this community. If humanity is a part of creation then reductionism becomes an issue.

Conradie insists an ecological theology needs to articulate an anthropology that avoids reductionism and believes the concept of emergent complexity, which is,

characterised by organisational patterns that give rise to novel forms of behaviour that are not predictable... from a reductive analysis of the pre-emergent properties of a system (2005a: 298).

Significant in this regard is that human beings and creation are in genetic continuity and share an evolutionary history and lineage (2005c: 98). Moreover, humanity is dependent on other life forms in terms of food chains. There is thus interdependence between species. Human uniqueness should therefore be understood in the context of its place in the cosmic community. Humankind differs *in degree* from creation. While human beings have genetic continuity with creation they have biological traits that contribute to unique human behavioural characteristics such as, "emotions, abstract reasoning, symbolic language, imagination, self-awareness... literature, myth...ethics" (: 101).

While nonhuman beings have mental capacity, the human species has a complex mental infrastructure. This is highlighted by its capacity for language and symbolic referencing (: 103,

113). 98% of the genes in a chimpanzee are the same as a human's, but these primates do not have the ability for complex reasoning or creativity.

Conradie believes that a complexity hierarchy is necessary to avoid scientific reductionism (: 107). If a hierarchy of complexity is not appropriated by an anthropology, then the mental aspect of human existence is reduced to the physiological: free will, emotions, awareness of one's self and aspirations are merely the interactions of neurons.

Conradie insists that the mind is a,

dynamic emergent property of brain activity which is neither identical nor reducible to the neural events in which it is rooted. Mental activity is therefore embodied in brain activity, but is not identical with brain activity (: 108).

Hierarchies of oppression and domination are to be opposed and hierarchies of diversity affirmed. Moreover, a particular hierarchy is not to be considered more relevant or significant than others.

Besides challenging reductionism, emergence theories necessitate the need for top-down causation (: 109). A system's overall functioning influences the behaviour of its components. While the whole relies on the existence of the lower components, it is different by nature to its components and is not reducible to them. Moreover, emergence theories demonstrate how human knowledge, language, culture, ethical behaviour and religion developed over time and in context (: 112-6).

Conradie rightly observes that human beings have a highly developed mental infrastructure that endows them with substantial power. It is therefore important to acknowledge that there is such a power dynamic and then indicate how this power is to be used (: 116f). However, in a hierarchy there is a strong degree of dependency as well. The higher the degree of complexity in a system, the more dependent it is on the systems below it. This makes extremely complex life forms vulnerable, as they depend on the well being of the less complex systems beneath them. Human beings are highly complex life forms and thus depend on the health of the ecosystems below them. The fact that everything has value is important for ecojustice, as will be shall discussed later.

3.2.2 A holistic anthropology

Many ecological theologians oppose dualistic anthropologies. Ruether believes a dualistic anthropology in Western thought distorts human being's relationships not only with themselves, but also with nonhuman creatures and the entire cosmos. She thus rejects the Platonic soul-body dichotomy (2000: 103). She also indicates that human consciousness (i.e. subjectivity) is not ontologically external to the self, but is "an experience of our own interiority" (: 104). Ruether thus parts company with dualistic Greek philosophy, as well as Descartes¹⁵, Kant¹⁶ and their disciples.

Moltmann notes that the biblical view of the person is a holistic one, which is foreign to Platonic anthropological dualism (1985: 250, 256). He points out that an integrated view of the person is necessary, because how we perceive ourselves determines our view of broader reality. Moltmann asserts that the feeling of alienation the modern human being experiences from his or her body has contributed to the ecological crisis (: 48). Human beings see their bodies as objects that need to be subdued and it is not surprising then that the natural world is viewed as a thing that needs to be controlled. If human beings are to rediscover their connectedness to creation they need to understand that the soul is in the body.

Conradie takes issue with dualistic anthropologies (2005a: 297). He maintains that ecofeminism in particular has highlighted the dualisms that result from Western thought. Dichotomies between male and female, mind and body, culture and nature, as well as human beings and animals result from such thought. Other dualisms include the Platonic form/matter split, Cartesian mind/matter separation and the Kantian subject/object dichotomy. Ecofeminists in particular have noted the link between patriarchy and the exploitation of creation. Moreover, dualistic thinking results in oppressive hierarchies where those beings higher up in the hierarchy control those lower down: God is ruler over the world, men control woman, the mind subordinates the body and humankind dominates nature. S. Rakosky maintains ecofeminism

¹⁵ Descartes taught that the body is *res extensa* and relates to motion, time and space, while the mind is *res cogitans* (i.e. "thinking thing" and has no spatial or temporal references (Reese 1999: 168-9). The concept of extension thus relates to the body and thought to the mind. Mind and body are two separate ontological substances that God has created. And, they are able to continue independently and thus do not influence each other.

¹⁶ Kant believed the only true source of knowledge is the mind. He postulated a reality beyond the mind, which the mind receives impressions of, but it can never really know this reality. There is thus a dualism between the mind and the "thing-in-itself" (Frost 1956: 272).

amalgamates, “feminism and ecology into the matrix which exposes the domination of women by men and the domination of the natural world by human beings” (2004: 300).

In addition to this, dualistic views of the human being have resulted in many theologians to abandon any reflection on the soul (Conradie 2005c: 110). It appears to the researcher that the issue here is how to describe the interaction between the soul-mind-body. The religious understanding of the person is understood in terms of the soul and body, while the scientific view of the self is a study of how mind and body interact. A consideration of these insights indicates that an ecological theology should include a holistic anthropology where the soul, mind and body are in continuum.

3.2.3 In the image of God

Most Christian anthropologies have their departure point from the notion *in the image of God* (i.e. the *imago Dei*). This idea is recovered from the first creation narrative in the bible (Gen. 1:26-7). One of the main interpretations of this phrase is that human beings have the ability to reason (Migliore 1998: 121). In classical theology there was the view that the world was created by divine logos (i.e. reason) and human beings are able to participate in this divine reason, by virtue of their rationality. This consequence of this was an over intellectualising of Christian theology that did not accommodate the physical and emotional aspects of human beings.

There is another interpretation of the *imago Dei*. To be in the image of God implies that human beings are distinct from other creatures and creation's "head and crown" (Berkhof 1986: 205). This is problematic, as it separates human beings from other creatures

These interpretations of the *imago Dei* do not correlate with an anthropology that articulates both humankind's interrelatedness with and distinctiveness from creation. D. Hessel takes issue with interpretations of the *imago Dei* where humankind is separated from nature and then given dominion over it (in Hessel and Rasmussen 2001: 188). This manner of thought encourages a negative attitude towards nature and doesn't understand environmental degradation as impoverishing human beings in any manner.

T. Berry notes that when humanity loses its intimacy with creation, the earth is no longer a subject, but an object (1995: 68). Moreover, the earth is no longer sacred or viewed as a source of healing. It is instead viewed as a collection of resources that need to be used by humankind.

A revised interpretation of the imago Dei that supports a relational, ecological sensibility is thus required. A. König observes vis-a-vis the imago Dei that in the first creation narrative, human beings are created according to the same process that brought the rest of creation into being; and they are created on the day that land animals are made (1994: 106). In Gen. 2:7, human beings are made from dust, something that is from the earth. These insights clearly illustrate humanity's connection with creation.

And, König notes that in the image of God applies to the whole person and not just a part of them (: 106-7). Christian theology has taught that the immortal soul (i.e. the mind) is the only part of the person that is in the image of God. The physical part, or the body, is inferior and thus not the image of God. This Platonic and Neoplatonic dualism is contrary to the biblical view of the person, which is holistic. This view includes the whole person and not one part or component of him or her. There is thus a strong sense of relatedness between humanity and creation, if the image Dei is interpreted in the manner König does.

If human beings are communal by nature, it means that they are orientated towards relationship. If we are to understand created in the imago Dei in relational terms, then a more positive view of the relationship between humanity and creation can be presented. A. König insists that the notions of "covenant partner" and in the image of God show human beings to be relational by nature; they are meant to be in relationship with God, each other and nature (: 102). This relationship is of a covenantal nature. A covenant relationship specifies that relationships constitute human beings. It describes a relationship between two unequal partners, where human beings respond to God's initiative. The covenant is thus God's and not humankind's. To be in a relationship with God, human beings are meant to live according to God's covenant. In other words human beings are required to do what God requires.

These insights from König understood from the perspective of the New Covenant are important for human relationships. Jesus of Nazareth (i.e. Christ is viewed as *the* image of God in Col. 1:15, Heb. 1:3) is recorded as saying, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Mt. 12:7).

This covenant requirement is that human beings treat each other and nonhuman creatures with mercy. This influences how the imago Dei is to be understood.

König notes that one aspect of the imago Dei is that human beings have dominion over the earth, however the Hebrew words for dominion are gentle words that relate to animal domestication (: 106). This implies that, like God, human beings are to rule with a gentle hand. The notions of mercy and gentleness should thus be central to an understanding of the imago Dei.

Fretheim notes that any "relationship of integrity" involves the limitation of some freedom and the distributing of power (1984: 36). When a promise or agreement is made within a relationship it means that complete freedom is limited. This is a valuable insight, particularly when König's discussion on covenant relationship is considered. If human beings are to have a covenant relationship with creation, they are to make a promise to it: to accept their position and to rule with a gentle hand. In this manner human beings should not have a relationship of domination over creation. Even though they have a large degree of power, they are to exercise this with responsibility.

In light of what has been discussed it becomes apparent that an ecological theology is suspicious of anthropocentrism that emphasise the domination of humanity over creation. Anthropocentrism is the idea that human beings are the centre of the cosmos and thus superior to the rest of creation (Gnanakan 1999: 122). All that is in the universe serves human interests and values. Anthropocentrism therefore appears to be a form of humanism¹⁷.

K. Tanner maintains that a non-anthropocentric view of life is needed in order to address the environmental crisis (1994: 103). With anthropocentrism, nonhuman beings have God-endowed attributes that are meant to enhance human existence. Moreover, nonhuman beings are simply there to feed and clothe human beings (: 107). This thinking therefore promotes a utilitarian understanding of creation.

¹⁷ This was an intellectual movement in renaissance Europe that influenced the culture of that period. In relation to the 20th century it is a school of thought that rejects most religious belief and insists human beings should be concerned primarily with human well being. In other words the human project gains precedence over everything (Flew and Priest 2002: 175).

A non-anthropocentric approach on the other hand extends the notion of value to include nonhuman beings. It is believed, according to this view, that all of creation to some degree is in the imago Dei (Deane-Drummond 1996: 74). God loves all of creation. In this way creation is understood as worthy to God and thus has rights. This encourages what the researcher understands as a cosmocentric view of the world. A non-anthropocentric approach does not imply that human rights do not exist. It simply specifies that nonhuman reality has rights as well.

The researcher believes that anthropocentrism has been interpreted incorrectly. It has often been understood in light of the Gen. 1:26 command for human beings to have dominion over the earth. Lynn White believed such an understanding of the relationship between creation and humanity has led to an exploitation of the environment, because, "Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen" (1996: 189). However, this is a misunderstanding of *dominion*. Using König's interpretation of dominion, human beings may rather be viewed as stewards. Humankind in the imago Dei means human beings have a "responsibility" of stewardship (Deane-Drummond 1996: 73). This metaphor of human beings as stewards signifies that human beings have a responsibility for ensuring that nonhuman beings have rights and values of their own.

The metaphor of stewardship appears to require revision. What is needed is the notion that human beings are responsible for the welfare of creation, but that they do so because they are dependent on it. Moreover, human beings are to realise that the earth has its own healing and management infrastructure. They are thus required to understand these processes and allow the earth to heal itself. This means being in dialogue with the created order. This appears to be a more tenable understanding of responsibility in regard to the metaphor of stewardship. The researcher believes that it is possible to refer to this as an *anthropocentrism of responsibility* where humanity acknowledges that it is dependent on creation.

An important concern arises. What role is there for God in such anthropology?

König's insights, in regard to the notion of covenant relationship, show that human beings are open to both God and the world. What makes a Christian anthropology unique, is the notion that human beings are meant to be in a relationship with the triune God; this means that anthropology is primarily a *theological* issue

This demonstrates the need for an anthropology where human beings are open to and orientated towards the triune God. The researcher believes one of the values in Barth's dialectical theology is that it emphasises the depravity of human beings and their need for God. Synthesising this with the concept of humanity's dependence on creation means that human beings are to exercise humility before God and creation. This does not mean that they are to worship creation, only to care for it.

For Barth, it is only when human beings are open to God (through Christ) that they realise they are sinners and that sin is destructive to both themselves and the world. Knowing God thus leads to knowledge of humanity, sin and grace (1961: 359ff). This highlights the necessity for human beings to be aware of sin and their need for grace. But how are we to understand sin from an ecological perspective?

Conradie notes that one of the central tasks for an ecological theology is to clarify the nature of sin (2005b: 4-22). Ecological theology responds to the result of human sin (i.e. the ecological crisis) and challenges, "alienation, anthropocentrism and human domination", but, ecological theology needs to move beyond this and rearticulate what the nature of sin is (: 5, 16). The estrangement of humanity from creation has been viewed as one possible interpretation: humanity is alienated due to its belief that it is superior to creation. There is a multiplicity of interpretations for sin in ecological theologies. However, the issue here is whether or not an ecological theology takes sin and its impact on creation seriously.

3.2.4 Ecojustice

It was noted before that humanity has a large degree of responsibility for creation and this leads logically to the issue of *ecojustice*. It was noted before that one of the consequences of human sin is environmental exploitation. Human beings are thus accountable for the condition of the earth. Ecojustice explores the link between ecological wholeness and social justice (Hessel and Ruether 2000: xxxvi). The result of such reflection is what is known as *oikothology*. This theology intimates the notion that the beings on earth are a part of a household (*oikos*). They are all meant to benefit from an economy (*oikonomia*) that is serious about "ecological and social stewardship (*oikonomos*)" (: xxxvi).

This demonstrates that ecojustice is concerned with the welfare of both human and nonhuman beings. There is thus a concern for what D. Hessel calls "ecological health" and "economic justice" (1992: 9). When ecojustice happens, human being's basic needs are met so that community is built. In this way people can live in harmony with God, one another and all of creation. In addition to this, ecojustice maintains that people are to appreciate creation and view it in a non-utilitarian manner.

J. Cobb, like Hessel, affirms the idea of an economics that is directed towards community. He refers to this an "economics of community" (: 37). He writes,

the economy should be ordered for the well-being of human communities understood to be immersed in larger natural communities whose well-being is also important (: 37).

Hessel and Cobb indicate that there needs to be harmony between God, humanity and the entire creation. However, harmony and peace break down when there is violence.

Moltmann notes that humanity has a violent relationship with creation and that peace will only occur when human beings realise that "other living things" have values and rights (1990: 255). This means not viewing nature from a utilitarian perspective, but from a justice perspective. Justice brings about peace: human beings are to strive for the rights of nonhuman creation.

Moreover, Moltmann believes that the term *imago Dei* points to the idea that human beings have a responsibility for nonhuman beings (1984: 28-9). He insists that every human being has the right to be responsible and self-determining. Human beings are working towards a future that includes fellowship with God, human beings and the entire creation. Being responsible and self-determining means that, "people live personally, collectively, economically, and ecologically in time and history" (: 29).

In other words, if human beings are to struggle for justice in the world, they are to include not only human rights, but the rights of the entire creation as well. This means that an ecological theology should be a form of liberation theology that links social domination with the abuse of nature (Bouma-Prediger 1995: 270).

Ruether notes that there is continuity between the ecological crisis and issues of social domination. Where there is social domination, nature is dominated as well (1981: 59). Ruether critiques any social system that facilitates high profits for a select few by giving low wages to many people, encouraging high prices and allowing poor working conditions. These individuals also do nothing about pollutants from industrial processes. As was the case with scholars mentioned before, Ruether insists social justice is required for ecological integrity (: 60).

If the right of all life is to be affirmed how does the issue of value relate to a complexity hierarchy? Humanity's uniqueness does not afford it more dignity than the rest of creation (Conradie 2005c: 120f). If the dignity of human beings is to be affirmed so is that of nonhuman beings. The entire creation has dignity, because of God's love for it. It appears to be a complex issue on whether or not human and nonhuman beings have the same dignity, worth and value. While all life forms have *intrinsic value*, they do not necessarily have *equal value*.

According to D. Griffin, "intrinsic value" is the value anything "has in and for itself"; "extrinsic value" is the value things have for "anything else" (1994: 192). "Instrumental value" is a form of external value and at the anthropological level is a form of utilitarianism, because it understands non-human beings in terms of their usefulness for human beings. At an extreme level this turns creation into an object.

Intrinsic value on the other hand makes something a subject (Birch 1990: 59). A subject is able to experience its environment. Everything in the created order experiences the need to live, survive and endure. This is a fundamental way of understanding life. Everything thus has intrinsic value.

However instrumental value also means the value something has for another in terms of survival. At the human level this means that human beings need to use the natural environment for their basic needs. J. McDaniel therefore maintains that both intrinsic and instrumental value is needed for creation's integrity (1990: 230-1). Humankind should use the latter responsibly.

Griffin also speaks of "ecological value" (1994: 192). This is a form of extrinsic value where something has value in terms of its capacity to support the processes of life. Examples would

be food, water and air. It will also include the role that various non-human and human beings have in sustaining an ecosystem.

It is with this in mind that Conradie writes, “The health of the ecosystem has priority over the health of individual specimens” (2005c: 127). These insights imply that although not all beings in creation have *equal value*, they do never the less *have intrinsic value*. For example, it would be poor advice to imply that viruses and bacteria have more value than human beings. A human being should have the freedom to kill a fly or malaria mosquito.

3.2.5 The divorce of history and nature

An anthropocentric worldview that does not consider the fact that human beings are dependent on systems of lower complexity allows human history take precedence over nature. In other words, human history is prioritised over cosmic history. Culture and human civilisation are viewed as more relevant than creation.

According to A. Primavesi, Western ideas of a split between nature and culture derive from Greek philosophy (1991: 46-7). In Greek thought there was the notion that order had to overcome disorder. A hierarchical view of life emerged where nature had to be controlled by reason. The result of this was that,

Nature, woman and body are material, irrational, passive, dependent and immanent, as opposed to culture, man and spirit which are immaterial, rational, active, independent and transcendent (: 47).

These views affected western thinking through modernity to the present. Nature is viewed as inferior to culture. In this manner nature does not have intrinsic value and needs to be controlled. Primal worldviews are not immune to this either. S. Ortner maintains that the purpose of ritual is to maintain harmony in the natural order (1995: 41). The idea here is culture has the power to govern natural processes. This has led to a transcendent view of culture in general. Such an elevated view of culture may lead to an anthropocentrism of power, control and domination over creation.

Christianity is a historical religion. It is derived from the Judeo-Christian tradition and therefore has its roots in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. It is thus a religion based

on covenant. This means that Christianity appears to be most concerned with right relationships between God and human beings. Jesus of Nazareth summarises this idea in his injunction to love God and each other (Mk. 12:29-31). Paul takes this further and states in 2 Cor. 5:17-9 that Christ reconciles humanity to God. Christianity is thus a religion that concerns itself with soteriology. This approach places more of an emphasis on the doctrine of human salvation than the doctrine of creation.

This problem may be traced to ancient Israel in its ideological conflict during the 13th century BCE with Canaanite fertility religions (Anderson 1988: 181-191). The latter believed that it was possible to control the gods through sexual rites so that the harmony of nature could be maintained. This ultimately served human interests, but for Israel, Yahweh's power was demonstrated through historical events (e.g. the Exodus) where He liberated them from bondage and established a covenant with them (: 191).

Israel's objection to Canaanite religion was thus based on historical terms, in other words on Israel's salvific history. It did not contest that religion from the perspective of creation or nature, because the Yahwism of the OT was most concerned with redemption (Von Rad 1984: 53-4). The doctrine of creation was simply absorbed into the doctrine of salvation. Israel came to believe that Yahweh was creator, because He was saviour. G. Von Rad notes that the priestly writer of the first creation narrative was motivated to write Gen. 1, because of his understanding of redemption (: 60). The doctrine of creation was thus subordinate to the doctrine of salvation. The main concern for the OT is therefore the salvation of humankind and the climax of this was seen by the NT writers in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5).

It was highlighted earlier in the study that even though cosmological reflection was used extensively in medieval theology, it was gradually lost. According to Santmire the primary focus of reformation theology was human salvation (1985:122ff). The doctrine of justification by faith was central to Luther's thought, while Calvin believed human knowledge of God is foundational for any theology. Neither developed a systematised doctrine of creation, but they did not entirely neglect it either. Creation was a peripheral issue for the reformers (: 127). Santmire observes that the Reformers were preoccupied with, "celebrating the gracious condescension of God to the sinful human creature" (: 127).

Modern theology also focused on the human individual's personal experience of God. Schleiermacher believed the Christian faith is based on a central proposition: the human being's, "feeling of absolute dependence" ¹⁸ (Küng 1994: 167). This makes faith dependent on religious experience. Schleiermacher does not start with the historical story of the bible, but with the consciousness of Christ's redemption (: 175).

Karl Barth continued in the same vain as the reformers, by asserting that theology should rather be defined as "theanthropology" (Hendry 1980: 18). Barth parts company with Schleiermacher, because he believes God interacts with the world within human history and not only in the field of human subjectivity. For Barth the bible attests to this.

These insights show that history and nature have been divorced in Christian theology. A challenge for an ecological theology is therefore to show how these two concepts may be integrated.

3.3 Theology

3.3.1 The God-world relationship

There are four views on the G-W relationship: theism, deism, pantheism and panentheism.

N. Gregerson uses the following formulae to articulate these:

Panentheism: $G > W$

Acosmic theism and deism: G/W

Pantheism: $G = W$ (2004: 19).

The researcher suggests the following:

Panentheism: $G _ > W$

Theism: $G > W$

Deism: G/W

Pantheism: $G = W$

¹⁸ Interestingly, Tillich maintains that "feeling" in this phrase should not be understood in a psychological sense, but as an awareness of that which transcends (1968: 47).

Theism, sometimes referred to as monotheism, is the view that God created the world out of nothing, remains in it, but governs it through His sovereignty (Peters 1992: 123). While God is personal, He is distinct from creation. Theism affirms God's immanence and transcendence. This view functions in a monarchical model of the G-W dynamic.

With *deism*, God created the world and gave it natural laws so that it can function independently from Him. The universe and God are ontologically distinct. God leaves the world and does not intervene in its affairs. Deism functions with a mechanistic model of the world (Tilby 1992: 44). Both theism and deism emphasise God's transcendence.

Pantheism is the view that creation emanates from God. God and the universe are the same. There is no ontological difference between God and the world; he or she is literally identified with the universe and all its parts. This understanding of the G-W relationship may be partnered with polytheism and monism (Peters 1992: 123).

Several ecological theologians endorse *panentheism*¹⁹. Panentheism is a term coined by K.C.F Krause in the early nineteenth-century (Pailin 1989: 76). Krause believed finite entities are included in God, but they do not entirely constitute God. They have a degree of independence from God, but exist in Him or Her as "one universal life" (: 76). God is independent from finite reality, but also contributes to it. Finite beings influence God and God affects the world. Panentheism is therefore the view that God is in the world and the world is in God.

It may be described as a middle position between theism and pantheism (Macquarrie 1984: 15). In this manner panentheism attempts to maintain God's transcendence and immanence. Macquarrie prefers the use of the term "dialectical theism", as this makes use of the word *dialectic*, which is a movement between two opposites (: 14). Moreover, dialectical theism is preferable, because panentheism is often confused with pantheism.

Macquarrie insists that both pantheism and theism are guilty of overemphasis. Theism emphasises attributes that relate to God's transcendence and these include, "externality,

¹⁹ (Boff 1995, 1997; Moltmann 1981, 1985, 1989; McDaniel 1989; Edwards 1999, Deane-Drummond 1996, Gebara 1999).

immutability, impassibility, eternity” (: 53). Theism does consider divine immanence and God's involvement in history and creation, but these are underplayed. Pantheism overvalues divine immanence to the point that God is completely identified with creation. Panentheism views God as being fully transcendent and immanent. Macquarrie does not see a logical problem with it, because God's logic differs from the logic of the finite.

For Moltmann God is part of the evolutionary process in terms of immanence, but He (sic) also transcends it (1985: 206). It is possible to reflect on God beyond the world if God can be perceived as immanent. In this manner God does not become a product of the evolutionary process, as God transcends this, but She or He is a part of it through divine immanence.

Bouma-Prediger insists ecological theologies must emphasise the notion that God's immanence depends on God's transcendence (1995: 287). This means immanence and transcendence are not contradictory terms. God may only be intimate with creation, if She or He transcends it. This is reasonable, because God can experience the totality of the world, but is not overcome or exhausted by it.

For Edwards transcendence and immanence are not “polar opposites”, but presuppose one another (2004: 200). For God to be present in creation in the manner that God is, She or He needs to be transcendent to it. There is thus an ontological distinction between God and creation. It is this distinction that allows God to be intimate with creation.

Conradie maintains numerous ecological theologies over emphasise God's immanence in creation. (2005a: 295). This prevents deism, but a distinction between God and creation does not imply that creation is alienated from God. A transcendent God is not a God who is uninvolved or unconcerned with creation. God's transcendence is necessary for the integrity and freedom of creation. While the earth and cosmos are derived from God's being they remain distinct from Him or Her. The distinction between God and creation should thus be acknowledged and not denied.

Boff affirms these insights when he writes,

God is not identified *with* the cosmic process..., but God is identified *in* the cosmic process..., the universe is not identified *with* God..., but is identified *in* God (1997: 147) Italic's Boff's.

An important characteristic of panentheism is the notion that God is the cosmos, but is also greater than it (Peterson 2001: 399). God is the cosmos and yet is not the cosmos. God is connected to the world and is distinct from it. G. Peterson differentiates between "weak" and "strong" panentheism (: 399). The former relates to God's presence *with* the world²⁰, while the latter identifies the world in God. Weak panentheism thus focuses on God in the world, while strong panentheism stresses the world in God. The main issue for panentheism is how to articulate the preposition *en* in panentheism. Panentheists use three metaphors to describe the *en*²¹.

The *locative metaphor* emphasises that God and the world have different areas of space (: 399-400). The world is seen as in God and vice versa, although those who endorse this metaphor focus on the world in God. According to this approach the world is like a small circle surrounded by a larger one which is God. God is considered to be the whole and the world the part. The whole part relationship is also understood in terms of a hierarchy of complexity. Divine agency is therefore understood in terms of top-down causation. This metaphor is a form of strong panentheism.

The *mind-body analogy* suggests, "God is to world as mind is to body" (: 400-2). The analogy uses a holistic anthropology to understand divine agency. It was shown in the previous section on anthropology that the soul-mind-body interaction is described in terms of bottom-up and top-down causation. This analogy is a type of weak panentheism.

Peterson argues with the *substance metaphor* that the locative metaphor and mind-body analogy view God and the world as separate and thus describe "a kind of substantial relationship" between the two (: 403). Peterson appears to be arguing that both approaches have ontological implications, except that they don't use the language of Greek metaphysics²².

²⁰ R. Page uses the term "pansyntheism" to describe the notion of the copresence of God and the world (2004: 222).

²¹ It should be noted that panentheism functions well with metaphorical language. A metaphor that describes God, invariably speaks of God's transcendence (the *is not* of God) and His or Her immanence (the *is* of God).

²² Clayton argues that while Classical Philosophical Theism and panentheism have ontologies, the former is based on substantive metaphysics and the latter on relational ontology (2004b).

Is panentheism viable for an ecological theology? Panentheism attempts to make the relationship between God and the world a closer, more intimate one. Theism and deism over emphasise God's transcendence. The consequence of this a worldview characterised by "acosmism" (Macquarrie 1984: 40).

Hessel believes such thinking separates God from nature with the result that God's "living presence in creation" is underplayed (2001: 187). This means that creation is devalued and loses its sacred nature. For Granberg-Michaelson it is important for an ecological theology to stress the holiness of creation (1994: 103). The immanence of the Spirit may prove fruitful in this regard, as this elevates the sacredness of creation²³. Panentheism may prove to be useful in this manner.

An advantage in using panentheism in an ecological theology is it implies that if the world is in God then it must share the same value that God has (Peterson 2001: 397; Brierley 2004: 11). In regard to evil, many panentheists would affirm Augustine's privative understanding of evil. This means that evil is the absence of good and is something that is infectious to the world. God operates through the good in the cosmos to bring it to its full glory.

For Moltmann panentheism encourages an ecological approach to "God, man and the world in their relationships and indwellings" (1981: 19). He insists the reason for the exploitation of nature is due to an overemphasis on divine transcendence where there is a clear distinction between God and the world. To overcome this distinction, Moltmann believes the notion of the presence of God in the world and the world's presence in God needs to be appropriated (1985: 13). Like Macquarrie, Moltmann maintains there should be a dialectical relationship between God's transcendence and immanence and that after having created the world God remains in it and it in Him (sic) (: 182, 98).

Macquarrie provides two guidelines for any doctrine of God and as we will see later in the study these two insights have important implications for the doctrine of creation and divine agency (: 55). The first is that God must be spiritual. Physical reality orientates itself to that which is beyond it. The second is that God is creator of the universe and also its goal. This

²³ This implies that the Spirit is involved in the *sanctification* of the universe and not just human beings. Sanctification literally means, "making holy" (Gaybba 2004: 222).

means that God is not an emergent process. God meets the process in this regard. In other words God is the Spirit who through divine immanence is a part of the evolutionary process, but through divine transcendence *confronts* and *meets* it. The issue now is divine agency. Having created the cosmos, how does God continue to relate to it (i.e. providence) from a panentheistic perspective²⁴?

P. Davis believes panentheism best assists us to understand God's relationship with the physical universe and rejects divine intervention or non-intervention (2004: 96-9). The notion of creation being open-ended provides place for divine agency. According to Davies, God selected a range of laws that allow matter to be complex and self-governing. God continues creating the universe without violating these laws and thus allows creation a measure of creative freedom.

According to Peacocke, God assists creation (animate and otherwise) to actualise its possibilities for becoming something more complex. God has thus "gifted" creation with laws that allow it to evolve and grow, however God has imposed "boundary conditions that limit how complex something can become (2004: 143-4). In order to do this God needs to be *in* creation.

According to Polkinghorne, systems in the cosmos are influenced by "energy transactions" (i.e. physical processes) and by "active information" (in Clayton 1997: 204). God influences the world in the latter manner. This preserves the spiritual nature of God. In other words it is in the Spirit that God provides creation with the data it needs for becoming. God thus acts on the evolutionary process as Spirit.

3.3.2 The Spirit's role in the cosmos

Boff, Edwards and Moltmann signify the cosmic presence of the Spirit.

Boff believes the Spirit guides creation towards, more convergent and interrelated diversities" (1997: 153). The Spirit is thus involved in the evolutionary process and is God's immanence in

²⁴ The study uses insights from theologians working in the area of science.

the world. The Spirit brings balance and order to the cosmos. This makes creation coherent. Creation is able to move to “self-transcendence” when the Spirit communicates with it (: 163).

Edwards speaks of the “Life-Giving Spirit as the Power of Becoming” (2001: 47). He garners support from scripture for the idea that the Spirit gives life and uses Rahner’s notion of “active self-transcendence” to describe how the Spirit is involved in the evolutionary process (: 50). Self-transcendence occurs within creation itself, but it is God who activates or energises this capacity to move beyond what an entity is. God is thus continually present in creation. Edwards views this empowering of self-transcendence as the work of the Spirit. He maintains that the Trinity is immanent in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is present in all creatures and brings them into relationship with others (: 53). It has a unique relationship with each of them. For example the presence of the Spirit in a rock is different from its presence in a human being. While the Spirit brings everything into communion, it allows creatures to maintain their identity and distinctiveness. The Spirit therefore empowers the evolutionary process and unifies diverse beings. It is because God is transcendent that God could be present in creation in such a manner.

Moltmann views the cosmic Spirit as operative in the created order. The Spirit is evolution’s principle and thus provides the creative capacity inherent in creation (1985: 100). While the Spirit produces new types of interaction during the evolutionary process, it harmonises these and therefore allows entities to co-operate. The Spirit therefore unifies reality, as everything has the one Spirit. While it brings coherence, unity and order to creation, the Spirit allows the various beings in created reality to maintain their uniqueness. Moltmann writes,

Self-assertion and integration, self-preservation and self-transcendence are the two sides of the process in which life evolves (: 100).

The Spirit allows this self-transcendence and capacity for change. The Spirit “penetrates” the world and thus provides it with the potential to change and evolve (: 12).

3.3.3 The cosmic scope of Christ

Sittler, Edwards and Moltmann endorse a cosmic Christology.

J. Sittler elucidates a cosmic Christology that focuses on a functional, as opposed to an ontological Christology (Bouma-Prediger 1995: 95). He believes that the synoptic gospels endorsed the former and John's gospel, the latter. In other words Sittler focuses more on what Christ does than what he is, because what he does provides a clue to his identity. Sittler uses Col. 1, Eph. 1 and Rom. 8 to support his cosmic Christology. He believes everything is open to Christ's redemption, because they live in him. While grace occurs in creation, Christ is the concentration thereof (: 98). Grace is incarnated in Christ in a special manner. In other words, Sittler is including the notion of cosmic redemption with the uniqueness of Jesus into his theology. This an attempt to negate the redemption-creation dichotomy mentioned previously.

Edwards draws on Wisdom Christology as a framework for his cosmic Christology (1995: 69). The Wisdom tradition affirms that creation occurred in and through Christ (I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Jn. 1:3) and that things will be transformed through him as well (Col. 1:20). A Wisdom Christology views creation and incarnation as part of God's single divine plan (: 71). Sin did not make the incarnation necessary. The incarnation was always a part of the divine plan. In this manner creation and redemption cannot be separated. Wisdom Christologies do not undermine the role of sin in the world. They emphasise that grace and creation are connected.

Edwards draws on the hymn in Col. 1:15-20 to further his argument (: 80-3). The first stanza in this hymn (vv 15-18a) understands creation as in Christ, while the second stanza relates to Christ's resurrection and the reconciliation of the cosmos. This clearly gives Christ universal meaning. Not only are all things in Christ, they are also "for him" (Col. 1:16). This means all creation is orientated towards Christ. Edwards views wisdom as, "Divine Art at work in creation 'luring all things to be, and to become'" (: 85)

Jesus as the divine Wisdom therefore reveals God's purposes and work. It is through the resurrection that Christ is recognised as Wisdom's works of cosmic reconciliation and incessant creation (: 85). Christ is thus at work transforming the cosmos through its evolutionary procedures and is also imparting grace to it. This means that creation is yet to reach its goal. It is not just human reality, but the entire universe that will be transformed by Christ.

Moltmann endorses a cosmic Christology and like Edwards and Sittler attempts to reconcile creation and redemption. He interprets Christ in three ways. Christ is "the ground of the

creation of all things” (creation from the beginning), Christ is “the driving power in the evolution of creation” (creation that is incessant) and finally, Christ is “the redeemer of the whole creation process” (novel creation) (1994: 94).

In regard to creation in the beginning, Moltmann makes it clear that the triune God is involved in creation, because “the Father creates through the Son in the Holy Spirit” (1985: 98). We have already elaborated on the cosmic Spirit in creation. The focus is now on the Son’s role in creation. For Moltmann creation occurs through the Word and the Spirit (1994: 96). He is clearly using Jn. 1 and Gen.1 here. God generates the diversity in creation through the Word and binds them together in the Spirit.

Moltmann uses the thought of Teilhard de Chardin to elucidate the notion of Christ as the driving force of evolution. Teilhard views Christ as “the evolver Christ” (: 99). He understood redemption as creation’s completion and the incarnation as God locating Godself into the evolutionary process. The incarnation was the start of something radically new, the beginning of the “Christification” of the cosmos (: 101). It was God *ahead* of the process of evolution and not God falling from heaven. In other words, as the researcher understands it, through Christ God moves from the future towards creation and draws it towards Godself. Creation finds its fulfilment in the Omega Point. Christ is this Omega Point. The cosmic Christ is thus orientating creation towards himself. Moltmann rightly observes that Teilhard was overly optimistic about evolution. For evolution to occur there has to be selection (: 103). In other words within the evolutionary process there will be its victims, those who are not strong enough to survive. It is for this reason that Moltmann views the creation process as eschatological. Creation will only be perfected in the future. This means all things from the past will be brought into the glorious kingdom of God. In this way all things will be restored. Christ is the redeemer of evolution, because according to Col. 1:20, he reconciles all the things of the earth. Creation will be fully redeemed when Christ comes in glory. He will gather up all that has demised and bring them into God’s kingdom.

3.3.4 The Trinity

Up to this point, the study has focused on what is specific about the Spirit and Christ. A concern with such an approach is that it is the Trinity that creates and works in creation. The triune God initiates creation’s processes and then continues to work in these so as to bring creation to fulfilment and glory. Conradie insists it is important for ecological theologies to

articulate the relationship between the Spirit's work and Christ's work (2005a: 302). In other words an ecological theology should be Trinitarian by nature.

For Edwards the Trinitarian Persons are all involved in creation and redemption in a co-ordinated, unified manner and each has its proper role (2001: 57). Edwards draws on the theology of appropriation to support this view. This theology indicates that any work of the Trinity is not exclusive to any one of the persons, however Edwards believes this theology still needs to signify what proper roles the three Persons have. For instance in regard to creation, the proper role of the Spirit differs from those of the Father and Son. The approach of this study with its focus on the roles of the cosmic Spirit and Christ appears to be viable.

The Spirit is the immanence in creation of the triune God. It guides creation towards diversity by activating its inherent evolutionary processes. The Spirit brings things into communion and thus allows order and harmony, without nullifying diversity. It is the cosmic Christ who is the source of diversity and grace. The Spirit therefore guides creation towards Christ. Christ is the focal point of creation. He is its reconciler. In this manner creation and redemption are reintegrated. The Father creates through the Son and in the Spirit. The three Persons therefore have a co-ordinated relationship in regard to creation and redemption.

This relationship between the three Persons can be understood in terms of the immanent Trinity. The doctrine of *perichoresis* or *mutual interpenetration* elucidates the social doctrine of the Trinity (Moltmann 1985: 16ff). This doctrine intimates that there is mutual indwelling between the three Persons of the Trinity. This results in a communal Godhead. The biblical basis for this is from John where it says, "I am in the Father and the Father is in me (14:11) and "I and the father are one" (10:30). Perichoresis shows that there is an intensity of life in the Godhead where the transfer of love is at its greatest. There are no relationships of subordination in the Trinity. Perichoresis shows how the three Persons relate to each other and share in the divine life while keeping their individuality.

God's being is thus constituted by relationship. This has an important inference for understanding created reality and Edwards writes, "If God's being is radically relational, then this suggests that reality is *ontologically* relational" (2004: 204) (emphasis Edwards's). This means that creation as a whole is based on relationships. This indicates a view of life where all things are interrelated and diverse.

Conclusion

The conclusion to this chapter is in the form of thirteen theses. The researcher has placed them in point form for ease of reading.

The following tentative metaphysical assertions can be made based on the above insights vis-a-vis cosmology.

- 1. An ecological cosmology should be able to demonstrate the unity and diversity in the universe, by using a hierarchy of complexity to avoid reductionism. An ecological theology should explain how bottom up and top down causation works in its cosmology.*
- 2. An ecological cosmology should highlight the dynamic and relational nature of reality.*
- 3. An ecological cosmology should be theocentric in order to overcome an overtly naturalistic or monistic cosmology.*

The following are tentative requirements for a Christian ecological anthropology.

- 1. An ecological anthropology should emphasise the relational aspect of human life.*
- 2. It should also be holistic and indicate how human beings are unified with the natural order and yet different from it. In this regard a complexity hierarchy should be presented that avoids reductionism.*
- 3. An ecological anthropology should incorporate a theocentric anthropology.*
- 4. It should provide a definition of sin that takes natural reality seriously.*
- 5. These insights indicate that a Christian ecological anthropology should take ecojustice seriously where the rights and values of both the human community and the created community, of which it is a part, are affirmed.*
- 6. An ecological anthropology should focus on nature rather than history. This means that creation is included in a salvation process.*

The following tentative requirements can be made for an adequate Christian ecological theology.

1. *An ecological theology should endorse a form of panentheism where divine transcendence and immanence are articulated in the evolutionary process, however it should be noted that God's presence is as a result of God's otherness. In addition to this divine agency should be clearly presented.*
2. *An ecological theology should give attention to the role of the cosmic Spirit in the evolutionary processes of creation*
3. *An ecological theology should articulate Christ's relationship with the entire cosmos, where salvation and creation are integrated*
4. *An ecological theology should include a Trinitarian reflection where the proper roles for each Person in regard to the God-world dynamic are expressed.*

Chapter 4: An evaluation of Sallie McFague's body of God cosmology

Introduction

This chapter provides a critical analysis of Sallie McFague's cosmology. It will explore her use of the term postmodern science in order to determine whether or not such a term is necessary considering the tension between the sciences and postmodernism. McFague makes use of scientific accounts of reality. It is important to understand her position on the science-theology relationship. She maintains that there are two dominant metaphors for understanding the universe: the machine and organic models. She argues for organism over mechanism by means of the common creation story. The study analyses her arguments vis-a-vis mechanism and organism by using the cosmological criteria already formulated. The study will attempt to establish the faults in McFague's cosmology and embodiment metaphysic. The researcher will then attempt to modify the body of God cosmology and metaphysic. In closing, this chapter ascertains whether or not McFague's cosmology is theocentric.

4.1 The term *postmodern science*

Sallie McFague's body of God cosmology is informed by insights from contemporary science (1993a: ix). She insists her cosmology is theological and not primarily scientific. This is iterated throughout her work on cosmology. McFague makes extensive use of the term *postmodern science*.

According to the researcher's understanding, postmodernists are not preoccupied with scientific accuracy²⁵. The purpose of science is to explain, predict and control. The scientist proceeds inductively by starting with the world of sense in the form of experiments and then acquires data concerning the object under investigation. All judgement is reserved so that the scientist can generate a blank state in the mind (i.e. the cogito) and thus remain impartial

²⁵ This information was gathered from Professor A. O Balcomb (UKZN) in an email correspondence on the 2006/09/04, 09:32 AM.

(Greer 2003:222). He or she then forms a theory or explanation from the data. This theory is tested, analysed and integrated with other theories relating to the object under investigation. It is then brought back into the world of experiment and its predictability tested.

Postmodernists focus on the use of language. It was noted before that postmodernism is characterised by what Greer calls, “a turn to language” (2003: 226). Different communities have different languages and linguistic referencing. Truth is therefore derived from culture and religion. Language assists human beings to identify and organise their thoughts. It includes the use of symbolism, which creates meaning for diverse communities. Because of the multiplicity of religious and cultural groups, languages differ. In other words, communities think differently. A symbol may thus mean different things in different groups. This signifies the idea that there are multiple understandings of truth in the world. The postmodernist is thus concerned with articulating how languages differ and why there are such diverse truth claims. Postmodernism is thus focused on perception and what makes human beings interpret the world in the way that they do (: 227).

To use the term *postmodern science* therefore seems to be ambiguous, granted the tension between scientific and postmodern approaches to understanding reality. The former is acultural and relies on the clearing of the mind when explaining reality. The latter takes culture seriously and shows how language determines the human being’s interpretation of reality. To assert that science is postmodern implies that it should take culture into account when explaining reality, but this is not congruent with scientific method. The researcher suggests *contemporary science* to be more suitable. This term appears to avoid the problems relating to postmodern science. It implies that the theologian may use the latest views from science with which to theologise.

4.2 The role of science in the body of God model

McFague believes that science cannot be the foundation of theology (1991a: 26). Scientific understandings of reality are partial and continuously evolving. Scientific accounts of reality are therefore not absolute or permanent. New images of reality as presented by science are the best current ones available. McFague therefore gives science as a resource for theology a modest position. By stressing this McFague does not privilege science above theology. Science provides one particular account of how the universe functions. These are important

observations from McFague, because understanding science and theology in this manner may prevent foundationalism and essentialism.

McFague iterates that science cannot “dictate” to theology, but the relationship is rather one of “eavesdropping”(: 29). This means that the theologian needs to listen to public scientific discourse. In this manner the theologian will remain scientifically lucid in order to choose insights from science that are able to enlighten elements of the Christian tradition. McFague’s reflection is reasonable, because the contemporary theologian is located in a scientific context. Theology is contextual and therefore needs to take scientific reflection seriously.

McFague applies a dialectical approach to the science-theology relationship (1993a: 83). This means that there is a movement between the two poles of reason-science and faith-revelation. McFague thus attempts to keep a balance between science and faith. Two circles may be drawn to understand McFague’s approach. One is the theological circle and the other, the scientific circle. The theologian operates in the theological circle and the scientist in the scientific circle. McFague attempts to keep the two circles separate without allowing those in them to ignore each other. She attempts to integrate scientific insights into theological reflection and argues for a theology of nature as opposed to a natural theology (: 73-8).

Barbour believes that integrating the content of science and theology is possible (1990: 23-9). He shows that a natural theology operates exclusively from reason and science, being less emphatic about revelation or religious experiences. A theology of nature on the other hand is not premised on science and begins its reflection from revelation and experience. However, a theology of nature does acknowledge that some Christian teaching such as, “the doctrines of creation, providence and human nature” may be changed after considering the “broad features of science” (: 26). Barbour thus affirms McFague’s approach to the science-theology relationship.

However, McFague critiques Barbour in this regard (1996a: 24). She makes the important point that the doctrines of creation, providence and anthropology are central to Christian theology. It would require a large degree of revision to modify these important doctrines if Barbour’s approach is taken too far. McFague is thus indicating that a much more balanced and careful approach is needed when scientific and theological content is integrated. Too much revision to these doctrines may result in the theologian standing outside the theological circle.

Other theologians assert that scientific insights are essential for ecological theology and thus affirm McFague's position on the need for scientific input in theology. Cosmology is informed by science, philosophy and religion. In other words to construct an adequate and broad cosmology insight from many areas of reflection is required.

Conradie asserts that it is possible to speak of scientific cosmology and religious cosmology (1997: 214). Both produce descriptions of the universe, but the latter includes a strong emphasis on morality. It is for this reason that there needs to be dialogue between the two. Conradie writes,

The environmental crisis is functioning as a global antenna indicating that the strict demarcation between science and religion is defective (: 220).

Moltmann asserts that insights from the sciences are needed in order to address ecological issues. He therefore insists that a community needs to be forged that is composed of scientists and theologians each bringing their own insights vis-a-vis cosmology (1985: 13).

4.3 McFague's counter to a mechanistic understanding of the universe

McFague believes there are two predominant cosmological models: machine and organism (1993a: 15). The mechanistic model utilises atomism and reductionism to articulate the universe. With this model the parts of something are considered to be primary. It is shown how these parts influence the whole. In other words mechanism takes bottom-up causation seriously. Things are understood at the most fundamental level with the consequence that they become nothing more than their most basic parts.

McFague provides a polemic of the machine model (: 33-4). She believes it enforces the notion that nature is simply composed of non-living things. Such a view justifies the manipulation of nature. This metaphor has thus led to a distorted anthropology. It encourages the view of a self objectified from nature and thus permitted to dominate it. The consequence of this is a loss of any sense of connectedness to nature.

Moreover, McFague maintains the machine model is highly individualistic (1987: 7). The objects, things or entities that are located in the universe are viewed in a substantive manner.

This means that they are seen as separated from each other and relate only in an external manner. Mechanism stresses the immutability of the natural world. Entities do not have an inherent capacity for novelty and change. McFague therefore indicates that central to the machine model is the idea of predictability. She takes issue with this model, as it does not accept what is central to postmodern science: the notion that the universe is dynamic and relational. Moreover, a mechanistic view of reality does not iterate that notion that things or entities are constituted by internally based relations. It is apparent that McFague stands in opposition to much of the Western views in classical or modern science and philosophy. She opposes static, atomistic and reductionistic views on reality.

Is McFague's critique of mechanism justified? She makes the important point that the machine model is reductionistic. At the ontological level this means all things can be reduced to the most basic parts of nature. This model therefore assumes a kind of essentialism or universalism. It was shown previously that an ecological theology takes both unity and diversity seriously. Metaphors of nature that demonstrate commonality and individuality are thus applicable for ecological theologies. The machine model emphasises simplicity at the expense of complexity. In this manner the rich diversity that is observable in the natural world is negated.

The machine model is reductionistic at the epistemological level as well. Reductionists are continually seeking a theory that will be able to explain everything in the universe, whether it is a "Grand Unified Theory" or "Theory Of Everything" (1993a: 91). This epistemological approach is therefore thoroughly unpostmodern, because it does not appear to take various cultural and religious interpretations of reality seriously. It believes the scientific approach is the only hermeneutic.

In addition to this, mechanism only describes upward causation. In this manner higher levels are simply the output from lower levels. While this may be constructive in regard to describing how higher levels come about, it is inadequate when considering how higher levels interact with lower levels. No consideration is made as to how the whole interacts with and may influence its parts. The machine model can therefore not be used as a root metaphor for an ecological cosmology, as it does not take downward causation seriously enough. The machine model is incompatible with *point one* of the cosmology criteria.

The machine model also views reality in a very static manner. The universe is understood as entirely predictable, because the natural laws that govern it can be understood and explained. It was noted before that natural laws do exist within the natural order and these can be explained. However, it was also indicated that there is a strong degree of openness and chance in nature. This indeterminism²⁶ occurs in conjunction with these natural laws. Natural laws are of such a nature that they allow for a dynamic universe. Mechanism does not facilitate the notion of a dynamic universe.

And, the machine model only takes external relations into consideration, while ignoring the idea that the entities in the universe are internally related. Such an approach does not appropriate the idea of things being constituted by their relationships. Entities are separated from each other and are unable to generate change within themselves. McFague believes this dualistic, hierarchical manner of viewing reality is inadequate (1987: 11). Dualism promotes individualism and not relationship. The machine model is highly individualistic and thus nullifies the notion of a cosmic community. It was noted before that a relational view of the universe sees things as part of a community. This cosmic community metaphor is thus in consonance with an ecological cosmology. The machine model views the universe in a static manner and does not underscore the notion of a cosmic community. It is therefore opposed to *point two* of an ecological cosmology.

Another problem with the machine model is that it views nature as entirely self-sufficient with natural laws controlling and regulating it. This makes the need for divine agency minimal and even unnecessary. According to such a view the only adequate understanding for the G-W relationship is deism and if no God-concept is assumed then an atheistic outlook is appropriated. When mechanism is taken to its logical conclusion, a naturalistic view of reality transpires. God then becomes the product of the evolutionary process or does not exist at all. The machine model therefore does not appear to be theocentric. It may tend towards an anthropocentrism that enforces a form of naturalistic humanism. If nature is predictable, then a utilitarian understanding of the natural order assumes supremacy. The machine model may also become cosmocentric where things are nothing but atoms and molecules. In this manner everything is understood only according to physical and biological processes.

²⁶ Determinism is the view that an event could only have happened in the manner that it did, in other words it is "determined" (Reese 1999: 170). This position compromises free will. Indeterminism is the opposite of determinism.

The researcher is therefore in agreement with Sallie McFague in regard to the mechanistic model. Mechanism does not conform to the study's cosmological requirement and can thus be deemed insufficient as a root metaphor for a Christian ecological cosmology.

4.4 The relational cosmology of the body of God model: the universe as organism

McFague believes that postmodern science presents a view of the universe that is contrary to the mechanistic model (1991a: 25, 1993a: 31). According to postmodern science, reality is both diverse and unified. In addition to this reality is understood in a dynamic manner where internally based relations are stressed in opposition to individualism. Everything that is found on the earth has a common history and is related in some manner. Postmodern science therefore offers McFague the holistic cosmology that is required for the body of God metaphor. Such a cosmology views things as radically interrelated and the researcher believes such a cosmology may be referred to as a relational cosmology.

McFague uses the organism metaphor to elucidate this holistic, relational cosmology (1987: 10). An organic model begins with the whole and studies the interrelatedness and interdependence of the parts. It draws on holism and should demonstrate both upward and downward causation (1993a: 15). The organic model therefore appears to be an antithesis of the machine model. McFague therefore favours the organic model for the body of God model. The body of God model is thus informed by another metaphor: the organic model for the universe. It is thus important to understand and critique McFague's use of this model, because it informs her anthropology and theology as will be shown.

According to McFague the organic model is not a novel idea having been in existence for centuries and denotes it as "the classical organic model" (1993a: 30). McFague identifies problems with this understanding of the organic model. She believes that it is overly spiritualised and hierarchical. In other words the issue that McFague has with this model is that it promotes dualistic hierarchicalism. In the Christian tradition matter was viewed as inferior to spirit. The result of this was a negative attitude to the physical sphere of life and thus a low view of creation (: 35).

It is because of the classical organic model's hierarchical nature that McFague has opted for a revised version of it. E. Johnson also takes issue with the notion of hierarchy. She relates

hierarchy to dualism (1993: 10-1). Dualism dichotomises reality into two spheres and hierarchy then ranks them in order of value. Such a dualistic hierarchy culminates in the subordination of the lower sphere to the higher. This becomes a relationship of control and not coordination. Johnson asserts that dualistic hierarchies understand human beings to be disconnected from nature and superior to it, men are more important than women and God completely transcends the world. Hierarchies of dualism allow human beings to dominate nature and should thus be opposed.

The organic model that McFague uses stresses not harmony and hierarchical structure, but change and relationship. She is eager to iterate a relational cosmology and writes,

The model is most appropriate to life, and hence the qualities of life – openness, relationship, interdependence, change, novelty, and even mystery – become the basic ones for interpreting all reality (1987: 10).

The concepts of change and relationship are thus central to the body of God cosmology and stand at its core. Such a holistic-evolutionary receptivity implies that entities in the universe are formed by their relationships (: 8). No longer are they separate, substantive individuals, but are located in a system where they interact with each other in dynamic relationships. McFague's holistic-relational cosmology stresses relationship and change and therefore does not dichotomise animated and inanimate beings. It attempts to avoid dualisms of any kind. According to this holistic view of reality, everything is inherently relational. If entities are characterised by their relationships, they are not static. In the organic model these relationships allow entities in the universe to undergo change. Relationship and change are thus two sides of the same coin. One cannot exist without the other. In order to change something needs to be in relationship. McFague maintains that postmodern science has shown reality to be indeterministic (: 10).

The organic model, which draws on postmodern science, demonstrates a strong sense of change in the universe. Things are incomplete and relative (1993a: 105). They have the capacity for relationship within themselves and thus openness to other things. Reality is characterised by process and development, and is thus viewed as complex. This is in opposition to the machine model, which understands reality as simple and predictable. With the organic model reality is less predictable. Relationship and change are indicative of the least complex to the most. A dynamic and relational view of life is thence apparent from

the subatomic through to the entire universe. With the organic model things are closely bonded. McFague writes,

the organic or evolutionary, ecological model is one that unites entities... by symbiotic, mutual interdependencies, creating a pattern of internal relations (1987: 11).

The organic model stresses that relationship is the basis of existence. According to these views, entities do not choose to enter relationships, as they are in them already. Thus relationship is reciprocal. It is about give and take. In other words entities are acted upon and then respond by acting in return. The entities in the universe are thus understood as subjects, as well as objects.

McFague uses Brian Swimme's notion of "cosmic genetic relatedness" to further her case for a relational-organismic cosmology (1993a: 106). Swimme makes use of the ancient wisdom of tribal societies to describe the relationship that exists between all things. While he has a high regard for this wisdom, he notes that not even the cosmological myths of these tribes are able to articulate the internal relatedness of all things that have existed since the beginning of time. He believes that in addition to these myths the scientific idea of cosmic genetic relatedness is crucial to show the degree of relatedness between everything. McFague maintains that Swimme's concept needs to permeate current thinking on cosmology, as this will culminate in a holistic awareness of the universe.

Moltmann endorses a relational and dynamic view of the universe and thus supports McFague's sentiments. He refers to the universe as an "open system" (1985: 199; 1979: 190). In such a system there is an opportunity for change and future actions are not entirely determined by past ones. An open system also has the potential to communicate with a multitude of other systems. Finally, the system in its final condition differs from what it was in its initial state.

Moltmann integrates his theory of open systems into his doctrine of creation (1985: 193-208). According to Moltmann the doctrine of "creatio originalis" or "creation in the beginning" should be viewed as "creatio mutabilis" (: 207). In this manner creation is understood to be an open system that is future and goal orientated. Such a system is not closed off from its context. The members of a system are aligned towards each other and the future. Moltmann's doctrine

of creation clearly shows a dynamic and relational view of the natural world and affirms McFague's understanding of it.

McFague's stress on relationship is apparently due to her ecofeminist bias. S. Rakoczy notes that ecofeminism develops images that articulate the relationship that exists between humanity and all of nature. One such image is the "web of life" (2004: 313). This image describes reality in terms of relationship. Everything in nature, including humanity, is in relationship. The web of life image indicates that nature in its entirety is characterised by interconnectedness, interdependency and diversity.

The body of God cosmology is thus in agreement with *point two* of the study's cosmology requirements, as it stresses and describes how the universe is both relational and dynamic. The challenge for McFague's body of God cosmology is whether or not it can incorporate the notions of change and relationship into a hierarchy of complexity that demonstrates upward and downward causation.

4.4.1 The Organic Model qualified by the Common Creation Story

Another concern for McFague vis-a-vis the classical organic model is that it appears to support essentialist thinking. To avoid this she believes this model needs qualification by what she terms, the "common creation story" (1991a: 31). McFague is optimistic about this narrative and asserts,

For the first time in several hundred years we have the possibility of thinking holistically... and this possibility is being given to us by the 'common creation story', coming from the sciences (1991a: 23).

McFague claims that if the classic organic model is understood in light of the common creation story, the unity and diversity in the natural order may be affirmed. As will be shown, a positive aspect of the common creation story is that in addition to stressing the categories of unity and diversity, it also presents a further argument for the notions of relationship and change. There are several characteristics of the common creation story.

First, the magnitude of space and time in the common creation story are so enormous they are difficult to comprehend. There are billions of galaxies in the universe which itself is about

fifteen billion years old (: 32). Human beings arrived late on the evolutionary scale. If the time of the universe were viewed as the metaphor of a cosmic clock, then human beings appeared a few seconds before midnight.

Second, the common creation story is historical (1993a: 105). In other words it is a narrative with a beginning, middle and end. The historical nature of the universe makes it dynamic, changing and indeterministic. The common creation story thus supports the organic model, because it highlights a dynamic, evolutionary view of reality. The open-ended nature of the universe is thus important, where novelty is generated through the interaction between chance and law. Time cannot be reversed. Creation is incomplete and continuous.

A third feature of the common creation story is the notion that things in the universe are interrelated and interdependent (1992a: 51). Because this story is common, all things have a single ancestry. However, McFague adds a qualifier here. While all things are interrelated, the degree of this relatedness is affected by proximity. Space and time are thus factors that influence interrelatedness. The sense of relatedness between things on earth will thus be higher than that between entities on earth and the planets. While the common creation story emphasises unity, it also presents individuality as a central cosmological characteristic. The evolutionary process is orientated towards diversity and thus has direction. McFague asserts,

what characterises the common creation story above all else is the history of change from a simple beginning to its complex present diversity (1993a: 46).

This unity and diversity comes about through relationship and interdependence. By being in relationship, entities become diverse and complex individuals. The common creation story is thus emphatic about increasing complexity in relation to the entities and things of the universe. Variety and simplicity are thus crucial for the common creation story. These two concepts are cosmic phenomena.

H. Schwarz affirms the third feature of the common creation story. He maintains that life at its most fundamental level is coherent and unified. Living things are intimately interrelated, because the “building blocks of life are widely uniform” (1977: 81). Life is a general term that includes animate and inanimate beings. While there is a strong sense of unity within nature,

there is also a sense of peculiarity and individuality. Even at the anthropological level, each human being has a unique personality and visible uniqueness.

A fourth characteristic of the common creation story is the idea that there are multiple levels of complexity in the universe (1993a: 106). There is thus an increase in complexity from their lowest level to the highest. With this augmentation of complexity comes an increase in subjectivity. McFague contests that while not much can be said about subjectivity at very low levels of complexity, it certainly increases in animals and human beings. For McFague life is characterised by levels of organisation. Higher levels cannot be reduced to lower ones. While there is continuity between the simple and the complex, higher levels are dependent on lower levels. The more complex something is, the more vulnerable and dependent it is on the levels below it.

The common creation story's final feature is that it has a "public character" (1992a: 52). Creation stories from the world religions can only be appropriated when one is an adherent of that particular religion. It is not necessary to be a follower of any religion in order to accept the common creation story. Any individual can use it as a resource. The primary reference points of the common creation story are a Creator and the earth (: 52). The focus of the story is therefore not on any culture and religion. This is a helpful observation from McFague particularly if the issue of religious pluralism is taken into account. Much study needs to be done in regard to the relationship between religious pluralism and the natural environment.

The common creation story is in agreement with *point two* of an adequate ecological cosmology. It shows reality to be characterised by change and relationship. This is particularly true of the first three features. The first characteristic signifies the time factor involved in creation. The universe is incredibly old. It differs from it was at its genesis due to its capacity for novelty. Johnson affirms this idea,

About 15 Billion years ago a single numinous speck exploded in an outpouring of matter and energy, shaping a universe that is still expanding (2000: 13).

The expanding nature of the universe shows that it is dynamic. In relation to the second characteristic, the picture of reality presented by the common creation story is contrary to the deterministic-mechanistic-static view of the universe presented by Newton and his disciples. It

also differs from many creation narratives, such as those in Genesis, which show creation to be final and complete (McFague 1991a: 32). The third feature highlights the relational, dynamic nature of the universe. There is a profound relationship between all entities in the universe and on the earth. Entities are interrelated and interdependent, having been internally related from the beginning of time. This means there is interrelatedness between members of the same species, as well as across species. All the members of an ecosystem are thus involved in dynamic interactions and are formed by these interactions.

How does the common creation story relate to *point one* of the cosmological criteria? It does highlight the unity and diversity in the universe. The organic model qualified by the common creation story stresses radical sameness and difference. McFague thence refers to “ecological unity” (1993a: 55). Ecological unity means there is a sense of kinship²⁷ among the things of the universe and on earth due to their common ancestry from the beginning of time. Ecological sensibilities show reality to be both complex and diverse. The organic model qualified by the common creation story is thus organic, because it highlights internal relations and ecological, as it demonstrates difference. The common creation story therefore makes the organic model ecological. It thus appears reasonable to denote McFague’s cosmology as an ecological-organic cosmology. The third characteristic of the common creation story in particular emphasises unity and diversity. While entities in the universe and on the earth have a common origin, they exhibit particularity due to a growth in complexity. Stars and tree leaves are related through their common origin, but neither two exploding stars nor two tree leaves are identical (1991a: 32). Entities in the natural order cannot be conceived as separate. Moreover, one particular individuality cannot be considered as the only or normative individuality. It was shown before that there is interrelatedness at the micro and macro levels of various species. In other words any form of specieism is not possible according to this feature of the common creation story. Unity and diversity are thus characteristics of entire ecosystems. McFague is thus dealing with the perennial ontological question of the one and the many.

Thinkers who favour the former tend towards a monistic perception of reality; those who align themselves with the latter believe ontological pluralism is a sound description of reality. By using insights from contemporary science, McFague is attempting to avoid monism, which

²⁷ The metaphor of kinship supports ideas of relationship and mutuality. In this sense mutuality becomes the paradigm for understanding reality (Johnson 1993: 30).

appears to negate the freedom (however small that may be) of the entities in the universe. On the other hand, she does not appear to endorse ontological pluralism, which seems to lose the connectedness amongst things.

In addition to this the common creation story is in opposition to the static cosmologies of both Greek philosophy and modern science. McFague's system of thought takes individuality and freedom seriously, while highlighting a sense of cosmic community. The evolutionary process, which allows a transition from the simple to the complex, is a process that affects all the entities and systems in the universe (1993a: 43). There is therefore not a multiplicity of creative processes functioning in the universe. Each system does not have its own unique process of development and change. There is only one evolutionary process that affects both animate and inanimate beings.

These insights from McFague appear to be in agreement with *point one* of the cosmological reflection, as they stress unity and diversity. However, there is a concern here. It was articulated before that in order for a cosmology to demonstrate unity and diversity, there needs to be a clear hierarchy of complexity in it. This is needed to avoid ontological reductionism. Such a hierarchy of complexity should then express how downward and upward causation function in a dynamic universe. Not only are systems influenced by their parts, they in turn are able to act on their constitutive parts. The scientific basis for this came from Peacocke's monistic emergence and whole part influence hypotheses.

It was signified before that McFague is deeply suspicious of the concept of hierarchy. Her concerns are noteworthy in this regard, particularly when *dualistic* hierarchies are considered. Such hierarchies are oppressive, as they legitimate the oppression of women and nature. McFague's ecofeminism is therefore necessary to expose these types of hierarchies. The researcher is thus fully in agreement with McFague and other ecofeminists in relation to identifying hierarchies of domination, control and power²⁸.

²⁸ Berger and Luckmann with their contribution to the sociology of knowledge show how cosmologies ("symbolic universes") are used to structure society (1966: 97).

But is there a clear presentation of a hierarchy of complexity in Sallie McFague's cosmology? By stressing the holistic, dynamic, relational aspect of reality McFague makes a concerted effort to overcome dualistic hierarchies. She believes this view of the universe has justified the superiority of the one over the other (1992a: 48). According to such a view one species gains prominence over another. At the anthropological level this means human beings are superior to other species and are thus allowed to dominate creation. McFague notes that dualistic hierarchies allow ontological, epistemological, gender and psychological dualisms (1987: 4). The result of this is that matter does not have spirit, things are viewed as objects instead of subjects, men are superior to women and the mind is no longer a part of the body. For McFague several metaphors in the Christian tradition have become central in its doctrine. These metaphors stress hierarchicalism, imperialism and dualism (: 19). McFague's treatment of dualistic hierarchies is praiseworthy, because these are contrary to a holistic sensibility and thus not favourable for an ecological theology.

Elsewhere McFague is more positive about hierarchy. She signifies the complexity that characterises reality. An evolutionary perspective shows there to be a hierarchy of complexity and organisation. McFague affirms this sentiment and thence refers to a "hierarchy of levels of organisation" (: 10). All these levels exhibit the capacity for both relationship and change. McFague goes further and makes reference to relationships that occur in *structures*. McFague is thus alluding to the notion that there is a hierarchy of complexity in the natural order. Moreover, she implies that there may be a holistic hierarchy functioning in the universe, but does not pursue this idea any further. McFague argues instead for a cosmology that is characterised more by relationship and change than a holistic hierarchy. Her emphasis on a relational cosmology is fuelled by the desire for a holistic life-view that, "overcomes oppressive dualisms and *hierarchies*" (: 27) (emphasis the researcher's). The problem with McFague's cosmology at this point is that it has not explored the notion that a hierarchy may be holistic. McFague focuses only on dualistic hierarchies.

In relation to the fourth feature of the common creation story, McFague once again acknowledges there is the possibility for a hierarchy in the natural order. She refers to this as the "multilevelled character of the universe" (1993a: 106). This feature iterates the complexity of nature and also assists McFague to lessen any forms of reductionism in her cosmology. For McFague life in general is characterised by organisation thus making any distinction between animate and inanimate beings negligible. A significant point in the fourth characteristic of the

common creation story is the idea that higher levels are dependent on lower levels. While there is continuity between the two, the more complex something is the more dependent it is on the levels beneath it. She refers to this as, “inverse hierarchicalism” (: 46). Even though this form of hierarchy seems to promote a more democratic understanding of life it still does not endorse a hierarchy of complexity. These thoughts from McFague seem to imply that while she does take levels of complexity and organisation into consideration, she appears to downplay the notion of hierarchy in her cosmology. There is a tension in McFague's cosmology here. While this cosmology does acknowledge levels of complexity in the natural order, it is also suspicious of the notion of hierarchy. While McFague does allude to the role that a hierarchy may have in a cosmology she is not emphatic about this. A hierarchy of complexity is therefore a peripheral issue in McFague's body of God model. The central concern for the researcher vis-a-vis McFague's cosmology is it does not stress the function of a complexity hierarchy. It was shown previously that if such a hierarchy is non-existent in a cosmology then there is the danger of reductionism.

McFague does note that a holistic cosmology such as the organic model should illustrate upward and downward causation. The machine model is only able to explain upward causation. Even though McFague favours the organic model qualified by the common creation story, she does not present a coherent description of causation in her cosmology. This may be due to an over emphasis on the concept of relationship. McFague does, in fact, argue against reductionism.

She maintains that a reductionistic sensibility is unable to appropriate the mysteriousness and complexity of the universe. It is viewed as simple and thus predictable. Reductionists are of the opinion that there is one ultimate theory to explain the universe and their project is to discover this particular theory. The metaphysical aspect of this epistemological approach is denoted as, “scientific materialism” (: 92). This metaphysic argues that objects in the universe are nothing but molecules and atoms. Scientific materialism thus understands and explains objects only according to their constituent parts. McFague rightly takes issue with such an approach. She believes it makes the false assumption that it is the only way reality may be constructed. Scientific materialism therefore does not take into account the notion that constructions of reality are partial and is therefore contrary to postmodern sensibilities. McFague argues that such an explanation of reality does not take diversity seriously and attempts instead to unify things. A metaphysic based on holism is able to appropriate insights offered by reductionism,

however a reductionistic approach cannot take the holistic notion of a complex universe seriously. McFague appears to be implying that a holistic cosmology such as the organic model can in fact demonstrate upward and downward causation, whereas an atomistic cosmology cannot. She thus rejects atomism, however the very same charge may be brought against McFague's cosmology.

The credibility of McFague's cosmology seems to hinge on the issue of a complexity hierarchy. The error in this particular cosmology is that it does not demonstrate how a holistic cosmology such as the organic model may be hierarchical by nature. McFague's cosmology may thus be accused of reductionism. It appears to the researcher that unless a cosmology is based on a complexity hierarchy, it will invariably reduce the systems in it to a select few parts. McFague does not appear to demonstrate clearly enough how top-down and bottom-up causation functions in her cosmology. Reductionism becomes more of an issue when addressing McFague's embodiment metaphysic.

4.4.2 The body of God model's embodiment metaphysic

Sallie McFague takes issue with much of Western philosophy's views on metaphysics and ontology. This tradition tended to view reality in terms of static substances. McFague rightly argues that the ecological perspective on reality does not view things in the universe as, "separate, static, substantial individuals" (1987: 7). Things are not in external causal relationships as the substantive philosophies imply, but are internally related and relationship constituted. The evidence against such substantive ontology comes from postmodern science and this was described before.

McFague critiques the classical organic model for being spiritualistic (1993a: 35). The Christian version of this was that the church is the body of Christ. However the result of this spiritualised thinking was the exclusion of nature and physical reality. Sex was thus viewed with suspicion and because women were associated with nature, they too were marginalised. This attitude towards physical reality resulted in a disdain towards the body. Christians are called to be members of Christ's resurrected body. The problem with this is that Christ's body is understood in only a spiritual sense. Such a view of the body goes hand in hand with a

derogatory understanding of creation. McFague writes of the Christian version of the organic model,

What it neglects is the rich, diverse, physical plenitude of creation- in other words, it neglects just about everything (1993a: 36).

It is for this reason that McFague decides to pursue a body model (: 13-25). This is therefore another metaphor that accompanies the world as God's body. The idea of embodiment is at the heart of McFague's understanding of reality. It seems reasonable to denote this as an *embodiment metaphysic*. McFague's project is praiseworthy. The body and nature have been closely associated in the Christian tradition, because they both relate to physical reality. In order to change how human beings view creation a more positive understanding of the term *body* is thus required. McFague argues that an ecological theology requires human beings to acknowledge embodiment and then change the way embodiment is understood. She suggests that the body functions as a lens through which reality is viewed and as such is used to construct society (: 24).

McFague believes it is important to affirm that human beings do not *have* bodies, but *are* bodies. She maintains that there is continuity between body, soul and mind (: 16). This is an anthropological issue and will be dealt with more fully later. The point that McFague wants to stress is that not only human beings are embodied, but the entire creation as well. The problem as McFague understands it is that embodiment has only been made applicable to human beings and animals. She maintains that the notion of embodiment needs to be extended to the entire universe. The body model therefore affirms the notion of universal embodiment.

For McFague anything that is matter and occupies space can be considered a body (: 17). It is thus possible to refer to the body of a bird, the body of a sand dune and the universe's body. Atoms and rocks are also bodies. McFague acknowledges that the model of the body uses the bodies of animate things as a reference point. Human beings are able to understand other bodies, because of their own embodiment. However, this does not mean that the term body is only relevant to animate beings. McFague's logic here is that the organic model as qualified by the common creation story shows reality to be interconnected. This means that things share something in common. If human beings have bodies, then other things will also. The value of the body model is that it unites bodies (: 18). This makes the body model ecological, because it

emphasises relationships between bodies. Moreover, McFague argues that this model finds alliance with liberation theology, because bodies are prioritised (: 23). She insists,

salvation for our planet means, first of all, the health and well-being of the body of the world and the many bodies that constitute that larger organism (1993a: 23).

McFague's embodiment metaphysic appears to be a valuable resource, as it values physical reality. This promotes a sense of value for creation and thus care and justice for it. However, the issue of reductionism again becomes an issue. A central concern with McFague's embodiment metaphysic is how it relates to her evolutionary, ecological cosmology. According to the body of God cosmology reality is characterised by relationship, change, unity and diversity.

The body model emphasises relationship and unity. Bodies are located in physical reality and thus function as interfaces between entities in the universe. This implies that entities are able to be in relationship. Embodiment therefore connects subjects together and allows intimacy. This connectedness presents "all life-forms in networks of *shared* suffering and joy" (: 18) (Emphasis the researcher's). It was highlighted previously that the body model unifies bodies.

How does this relate to change and diversity? Are bodies able to change and how do they express individuality? McFague does not appear to be clear on these issues. This lack of clarity may be due to her under emphasis on a complexity hierarchy in the body of God cosmology. If the body of God cosmology did incorporate a hierarchy that demonstrates increasing complexity and organisation then the body model may be able to indicate how bodies change and what makes them particular.

McFague attempts to overcome this problem with the fourth feature of the common creation story. She asserts that substance is an inadequate manner of describing reality and thence proposes that, "life is a type of organisation" (: 106). Moreover, she affirms the notion of subjectivity in all things. McFague acknowledges the postmodern scientific insight of the continuity between matter and energy, which negates a dualism between spirit and flesh and thence mind and body (: 16). These insights are not pursued any further. If McFague were to argue for the notion of universal subjectivity then she may be able to show how bodies differ from each other and how they have an increasing capacity for change. Human beings for

example are bodies with a complex mental infrastructure that allows for an extremely high degree of subjectivity. They are therefore able to make decisions and form opinions about reality. Human beings have a high capacity for novelty, because they can make decisions that allow them to change. They are in continuity with creation by virtue of their embodiment, but different from it due to their high level of subjectivity. McFague believes matter is the source of mind and thus privileges the former over the latter (: 46). The problem with McFague's embodiment metaphysic is that it fails to show how bodies change and how they differ from each other. The result of this is that everything in the universe is reduced to body. McFague herself suggests that an over emphasis on body may result in reductionism when she asserts,

in the organic model (or 'mutualistic' model-a term that avoids the suggestion of *reducing life to bodies* which is implied in 'organic') all entities are subjects as well as objects (1987: 11) (Emphasis the researcher's)

McFague may argue that the body model is a metaphor and thus not a description of reality. A metaphor uses what is familiar to human beings so that they may understand what they cannot experience. But what is familiar to human beings is that they consist of body *and* mind in continuum. It thus appears reasonable to assert that if human beings are body-mind and are interconnected with nature, then everything in the universe is body-mind.

4.4.3 A modification of McFague's cosmology and metaphysic

4.4.3.1 K. Wilber's notion of *holoarchy*

The researcher will now attempt to modify McFague's cosmology by applying the notion of a holistic hierarchy to it. By doing this it may be possible to counter the charge of reductionism levelled at McFague's cosmology and still remain faithful to holism. Key insights from Ken Wilber will be used in this regard.

Wilber notes that various ecologists²⁹ and ecofeminists have a derogatory understanding of hierarchy, because it ranks reality and this legitimises notions of supremacy. These theorists respond to this by proposing a view of reality that does not rank things and thus promotes pluralism and egalitarianism. This view is termed "heterarchy" (Wilber 1995: 16). While

²⁹ Wilber is using *ecologist* broadly. This means that ecological theologians such as Sallie McFague are included here.

McFague does not use the term heterarchy, her cosmology seems to imply it, because of its focus on relationship. An egalitarian view of the universe sounds promising, as it stresses the equality and intrinsic value of all creatures. Those who follow such a train of thought may oppose hierarchy, but the problem with this is that the sciences signify the notion of a natural hierarchy within the natural order. Egalitarian thinkers are correct to oppose social hierarchies that lead to domination, but face opposition when denying a natural hierarchy. This is a problem in McFague's body of God cosmology. While McFague stresses the need to take insights from contemporary science seriously, she is not emphatic about a central conjecture from the sciences: there exists a natural hierarchy of complexity.

Wilber raises this issue as well. He maintains science connects wholeness and hierarchy (: 16). Wholeness and hierarchy cannot exist independently from each other, as the latter organises the former. While a whole may be constituted by the interactions of its parts, it is not on their level. Wilber believes that hierarchies as understood from the perspective of the natural sciences; demonstrate an increasing capacity for wholeness (1998: 67). A hierarchy is not reversible. Holism increments as the hierarchy is ascended. For instance human beings contain cells, but cells don't contain human beings. A whole is able to transcend and include its parts. Wilber describes this agency as *enfolding*. A senior unit is thus able to enfold its constituents and then add something novel. When this occurs the unit emerges into something particular that differentiates it from its lower levels. In this manner higher levels are unique in comparison to their lower levels, because they have something not found in their predecessors.

Such an approach remains faithful to an ecological sensibility, because the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. For Wilber the term *greater* is synonymous with hierarchy. Hierarchy is fundamentally a principle that structures reality (1995: 18). Hierarchies do not have a linear design, but may be better described as *nested*. In other words hierarchies may be understood as a series of concentric circles. This means that they run in multiple directions. These insights show reality to be dynamic.

This raises the issue of causation. A whole is able to influence how its parts function. It provides principles of integration and structure that connect the parts together. Without these principles the parts become fragmented. The whole therefore allows its parts to have commonality with each other. In this manner a whole may be understood as a unifier of the parts. The interaction between a whole and its parts that has been described thus far is a form

of top-down causation (: 20). An example of this would be when a human being decides to wave his or her hand at someone. The mind tells the hand to move by means impulse conduction pulses that run to atoms and molecules in it. The mind in this instance is a whole and the atoms and molecules are parts. The former is a higher level organisation and the latter a lower level unit.

There is also upward causation in hierarchies. It was noted before that a whole also includes its parts. In other words the whole is constituted by its parts and includes their function. For example an organism embraces cells that embrace molecules that embrace atoms (: 21). The process cannot be reversed so that an atom cannot embrace a molecule, and so forth.

Causation within a hierarchy can be further described in relation to Wilber's understanding of "holons" (1998: 67). Wilber maintains that it is best not to refer to wholes and parts, but rather whole/parts. He uses Arthur Koestler's word *holon* to denote whole/part and thence uses the term "holoarchy" as a synonym for hierarchy (: 67). Holoarchies demonstrate increasing wholeness, unity and integration. They change by means of integration and differentiation. Holons exist by maintaining their own identity and fitting in with the holons in their environment. When it is a whole a holon has its own unique agency and as a part it is in communion.

A holon's *agency* is its capacity to assert, preserve and assimilate (1995: 41). In other words a holon's agency relates to its wholeness or its individuality. A holon's *communion* is its ability to participate, bond and join. Communion is thus a holon's relationship to its senior unit. A holon requires a balance between agency and communion. Any imbalances between the two occur could result in the death of the holon or a "structural deformity" (: 41).

Holons emerge within holoarchies and in this process are able to transcend and include their lower level (: 46-56). In this manner a holon is beyond the system beneath it and within the one above. In its transcendent mode a holon limits the freedom of the level beneath it. In other words a holon can restrict its lower levels indeterminacy. A lower level holon can also set possibilities for the higher levels. This means that while a higher level holon can generate novelty and thus differentiate itself, it cannot defy the rules set by lower levels. This demonstrates causation in holons.

Wilber maintains that there is a heterarchy within a hierarchy (: 20). Elements within a particular level function according to a heterarchy. This means that the elements that are part of a particular level operate in an egalitarian manner. None of the parts in this society are supreme or dominant. There is thus a network of lateral relationships within levels. Relational exchanges thus occur in regard to same level relationships. The parts in this sense exercise their communion. There is therefore a heterarchy *within* a level and a hierarchy *between* levels. Holons are therefore in egalitarian relationships with other holons on the same level. Wilber writes,

each level of these holons (i.e. *every* holon) maintains its existence through relational exchanges with same-depth holons in the social (or macro-) environment (1995: 67).

These insights from Wilber provide a necessary description of holistic hierarchy. McFague's body of God cosmology can be adapted with Wilber's views on hierarchy. In this manner the body of God cosmology can maintain its stress on relationship and then introduce the notion of a complexity hierarchy.

The researcher suggests that the concept of holons be applied to the body model. Body then becomes synonymous with holon. This would then articulate how bodies change and how they are diverse. A body thus transcends and includes its lower level bodies. It therefore has the ability to limit its lower-level bodies (i.e. agency) and also be incorporated into its higher-level bodies (i.e. communion). A higher level body is able to add something novel to itself that differentiates it from the bodies, which constitute it. It was noted before that bodies might have subjectivity. The degree of subjectivity will therefore determine the degree of novelty that a body has. A stone body has low subjectivity and thus simply reproduces its stone data. A dolphin body can make decisions about how to catch its prey. A human body can choose to enhance its personal relationships in order to grow as a person or fight poverty to improve the living conditions of other beings.

Moreover, a body at any particular level in a hierarchy limits the bodies below it and constitutes the bodies above it. As a whole a body is an agent and as a part it is in communion. This highlights downward and upward causation. This reflection therefore demonstrates how bodies may change in McFague's embodiment metaphysic and how causation could function

in her relational cosmology. In this manner the body of God cosmology can be both holistic and hierarchical.

McFague's concern for relationship is also signified. A body that is at the same level as other bodies is equal to and in a relationship with them. These same level bodies are thus in a heterarchy. McFague concern for relationship is thus interpreted into the notion of heterarchy within hierarchy. The egalitarianism that she stresses may thus be located within a complexity hierarchy.

4.4.3.2 The *panpsychism* of process philosophy

A modification of McFague's embodiment metaphysic is also possible by using insights from process philosophy in order to lessen or prevent reductionism. She appreciates process perspectives, so it seems reasonable to use views from this particular school of philosophy (: 74).

For Whitehead the universe is composed of events. These events are not static or immutable, but in a process of change. Whitehead denotes these events as "actual entities", "actual occasions" or "moments of experience" (1978: 18). Actual occasions are the building blocks of reality and are thus indivisible.

Actual entities are dipolar by nature (Cobb 1965: 42). They have a physical pole for prehending³⁰ other actual entities and a mental pole for prehending eternal objects³¹. It is with the prehension of eternal objects that novelty is facilitated. The more complex an actual entity the greater its database of eternal objects. A piece of wood for example has far less possibilities for becoming than a human being. It therefore simply reproduces its wood data.

Because every actual entity in the universe has a mental pole process thinkers endorse "panpsychism" (Ford and Kline 1983: 184). Ford and Kline make the significant observation

³⁰ Prehension describes the manner through which actual occasions influence one another and how they proceed through change (Massey 1982: 4). At its most basic level, prehension is the absorption of data by an actual occasion.

³¹ Eternal objects are what J. B Cobb calls, "forms, relations, or qualities in abstraction from any particular embodiment" (1965: 34). In other words eternal objects are those phenomena that remain constant. They are the possibilities available for becoming. Examples of eternal objects are colours, sounds, scents and geometric shapes (Mellert 1975: 23). Eternal objects are thus similar to Plato's forms.

that mentality must be distinguished from subjectivity and rather be understood as the level of innate novelty in an actual occasion.

These insights from process philosophy are applicable for McFague's embodiment metaphysic. A body may be understood as an actual entity. The advantage to this is that there are varying degrees of mentality in the bodies that make up the universe. Such an approach also seems to give a description of how bodies are dynamic and relational. Moreover, a process modification of McFague's embodiment metaphysic is able to demonstrate the uniqueness and complexity of the bodies in the universe. Bodies with a high mentality are able to make more decisions vis-a-vis their becoming. Human beings are highly complex beings with a large mental infrastructure. However, they differ from other bodies, because of their ability for self-consciousness. The value of this modification is that it does not reduce everything to the level of embodiment. Entities are more than their bodies.

4.5 Is McFague's cosmology theocentric?

Is it possible to use scientific insights and remain theocentric? J. Moltmann incorporates scientific cosmology into his theology, while still maintaining a theocentric perspective. By drawing on evolutionary theory, he refers to the "history of nature", where the universe is not a "closed system", but one that is open (1985: 199). Moltmann's integration of the concept of open system into his doctrine of creation has already been described. What is important at this point is Moltmann's assertion that the goal of creation is towards God's glory. Moltmann insists that the world as an open system is "open to God" (1985: 205). God thus offers possibilities to open systems so that they may change. This specifies that in terms of bottom-up causation, Moltmann can assume a naturalistic position, but in regard to top-down causation he maintains a theocentric position.

The researcher believes a theocentric position should be prioritised as opposed to a cosmocentric or anthropocentric one. A cosmocentric perspective may result in a romanticised, naturalistic view of creation where it is glorified. The anthropocentric alternative may promote utilitarianism. Either approach simply means that theological reflection is unnecessary.

It was shown previously that McFague uses insights from contemporary science for her body of God cosmology. She believes science cannot be the foundation of theological reflection and

functions as a resource for theology. Theologians should listen to scientific discourse and use these insights to modify Christian doctrine. In this manner doctrines such as creation, the G-W relationship, divine providence and so forth may be elucidated. However, the danger with this is that a theology may become overly dependent on a particular scientific or philosophical system. This is apparent in various forms of natural theology, where reason is given higher priority over revelation. In this manner theology is reduced to the scientific or philosophical system on which it is based. McFague thus avoids this tendency and uses science as a resource rather than as the foundation for her theology. In this regard she appears to maintain a theocentric position.

McFague believes that the science-theology relationship needs to articulate the conception of “divine purpose” in the universe’s processes (1993a: 74). To do so would mean understanding the universe’s history meaningfully. McFague’s approach seems encouraging. Scientists may be able to show *how* the universe came into being and *how* it functions. It is the theologian’s task to show *why* the universe was created.

The world as God’s body is influenced by what McFague calls, “an earthly theological agenda” (1991b: 12)³². The common creation story encourages human beings to think from a holistic perspective. Theologically this means that human beings are not alien to the earth, but part of it. Moreover, God is immanent in the universe’s processes. McFague believes that theologies based on these insights emphasise a cosmocentric rather than an anthropocentric perspective, however this does not mean that theology is not to be theocentric. What this statement implies is that God is concerned not just for humanity, but “*all* of creation” (: 14) (Emphasis McFague’s). This means that redemption encompasses the totality of creation. By stressing God’s immanence in the processes of the created order, McFague preserves a theocentric position in her cosmology.

McFague maintains that thinking holistically means that both human and all of creation’s well being are important. She encourages “biocracy” instead of democracy in this regard (1991a: 36). This appears to be a form of cosmocentrism, however the issue here for McFague is

³² This article may also be found in: MacKinnon, M. H and McIntyre, M (eds). 1995b. *Readings in Ecology and Feminist Theology*. pp 327-333.

governance. She is implying that concern for non-human beings needs to be central in the legislative process and is thus not arguing against theocentrism.

McFague believes theological reflection on cosmology is concerned with detailing how creation is God's work (1990: 202)³³. The task of theology is to experiment with models and metaphors that deal with the G-W dynamic. The purpose of this project is to bring about a theocentric perspective that includes a concern for life in its totality. McFague believes an analysis of the world as God's body is necessary to maintain a theocentric sensibility. She writes,

This exercise would take place at the juncture between a theology of nature and a *theocentric* or life-centred ethic (1990:2003) (Emphasis the researcher's).

Conclusion

McFague's use of the term *postmodern science* is ambiguous. Science assumes an acultural position when observing reality, while postmodernism stresses that culture and religion assist human beings to construct reality. The researcher suggested the term *contemporary science* rather than postmodern science. McFague use of scientific insight is acceptable, because she does not believe science can be theology's foundation. Scientific insights may be integrated into Christian doctrine so these teachings are elucidated. McFague's polemic of the mechanism model is warranted, as such a worldview does not comply with an ecological cosmology. It was found that her use of the organic model as qualified by the common creation story encourages a relational and dynamic view of the natural order and is in agreement with *point two* of the cosmological criteria, however the central concern for the study is that McFague's cosmology does not stress a complexity hierarchy and is thus prone to reductionism. McFague's embodiment metaphysic also appears to be reductionistic and fails to demonstrate how bodies are diverse and dynamic. These two observations make the body of God model incompatible with *point one* of the study's ecological cosmology, however it was recommended that the reductionism in the body of God cosmology might be nullified by applying Wilber's holoarchy concept to it. The researcher also suggested that process philosophy's notion of panpsychism may be integrated into McFague's embodiment

³³ This is also found in: McFague, 1992b. *Liberation Theology. An Introductory Reader*. Dadorette, C (Ed). pp 269-289.

metaphysic in order to overcome ontological reductionism and to show how bodies are dynamic and diverse. It was argued the body of God model is theocentric and thus in agreement with *point three* of the studies cosmological criteria.

Dei perspective, but from that of postmodern science. McFague believes this approach articulates humanity's position in creation.

In her explanation of the common creation story, McFague requests a, "decentering and recentering of human beings" (: 108). According to this story, interrelatedness and dependency characterise humanity's relationship with creation. By decentering human beings McFague rejects the anthropocentrism of the Christian tradition. Human beings are located in a community where other life-forms exist. In this community all life-forms are related to each other in complex ways. Earth is a "common home" to millions of species of which human beings are one (: 109). While human beings are interrelated and interdependent with animate and inanimate beings, they are also dependent on the forms of life below them. McFague thus believes that humanity needs to accept its unique position vis-a-vis the entire natural order. The notion of dependency thus provokes human beings to see the natural order differently: they are not the centre of it, they cannot use it for their benefit and they are not superior to it (: 111). McFague writes,

we are part and parcel of the web of life and exist in interdependence with other beings, both human and non-human... We both depend on the web of life for our own continued existence and in a special way we are responsible for it (1988a: 671).

The notion of human responsibility for the well being of creation is a thought that permeates McFague's body of God anthropology. She argues that human beings alone know the common creation story and therefore possess the ability to destroy creation. Part of this responsibility is learning to adopt a "loving eye" for the natural order (1993a: 127). The loving eye metaphor provides a good description of McFague's body of God anthropology. This metaphor intimates the notion of acknowledging and accepting the other's difference.

The loving eye stands in opposition to another metaphor, the "arrogant eye" (1997a: 187). The latter is the formal, Western manner of viewing creation where there is a strict subject-object dualism. McFague believes this view is arrogant, as it understands and arranges everything from an egocentric perspective. The arrogant eye rejects the notion that the other is different and independent to it. It attempts to simplify nature so that it can be controlled. Nature is thus objectified and loses its particularity.

The loving eye stresses that the other is a subject and thus accepts complexity and diversity

(: 188). In other words such a view is based on a subject-subject relationship. It accepts that there are boundaries between two subjects and in this manner allows them to retain their uniqueness.

According to McFague the loving eye metaphor has much in common with Martin Buber's existential philosophy (1997b: 100ff). Buber's subject-subject approach is articulated by his notion of the I-Thou. The I-Thou involves developing a relationship with God, other humans and nature. When an individual approaches nature or another person in an I-Thou relationship, a mystical experience of the divine occurs. While McFague commends Buber for negating a subject-object dualism, including nature as a principal relationship and bringing spirituality to humanity's understanding of nature, she nevertheless takes issue with his approach. Buber appears to bypass the sensory world to a supernatural reality and is also preoccupied with the individual's experience of the divine in nature. The researcher believes the point McFague is making is that an experience of nature should not only result in a mystical experience of the divine; it should also involve experiencing the creation on the sensory level in order to appreciate its uniqueness. This means being attentive towards nature.

The loving eye acknowledges that understanding the other takes time and requires the self to be attentive. This is interpreted into what McFague terms an "attention epistemology" (1993a: 49). This epistemology involves observing the other attentively in order to appreciate it for what it is, in other words to validate the other's intrinsic value³⁴. Such an approach opposes utilitarianism. Knowledge of the other can only be gained when the other's independence and individuality is appraised. In other words an attention epistemology functions when the other's unique existence is affirmed. This approach takes the notion of "embodied differences" seriously (: 52). McFague asserts that to love the natural order, human beings need to be attentive towards it (1995a: 179).

There is support for McFague's relational anthropology. I. Gebara considers "relatedness" to be the principal reality of everything (1999: 83). All beings are constituted by it. Gebara speaks of the, "connection, the correlatedness, the interdependence that exists between and among all things" (2002: 133). This means that human beings are more than their subjective

³⁴ N. Habel asserts that the earth has intrinsic worth, because God created it and has chosen it to "mask God's presence" (1998: 117).

consciousness. They *are* relatedness. Human beings are formed by their relationships with each other and the cosmos. They realise who they are, because of their connection with the cosmos. Being a part of the cosmos means viewing it as a subject and not as an object (1999: 92). Gebara believes it is crucial for human beings to understand themselves as citizens of the earth and as creatures with an affinity with its soil (: 90).

Earthly citizenship relates to the notion of community. Moltmann's notion of the "*imago mundi*" is important in this regard (1985: 186). He believes an interpretation of the human being as *imago mundi* needs to precede the notion of *imago Dei*. The former stipulates that people are communal by nature. They can only exist when in relationship with other creatures. Moreover, human beings are able to understand themselves only when in community. Moltmann insists the importance for human beings to understand themselves not in terms of their superior position in the cosmos, but in relation to their common genesis with and evolution in it. Human beings are to fellowship with the creation community.

H. Sindima, writing from an African perspective, provides a lucid description of community (1990: 146). For him community as an awareness that all of creation is coherent. The multitude of creatures on the earth are part of each other. Human beings are a part of this community and thus share its destiny. The vision of such a community of nature is life in its entirety for human and non-human beings.

The body of God anthropology is thus compatible with *point one* of the study's ecological anthropology, as it stresses a relational view of personhood. The issue now is whether or not it provides strong enough arguments against a dualistic-reductionistic understanding of personhood and thus an articulation of human particularity.

5.2 The particularity of the human being

5.2.1 The soul-mind-body interaction

How does McFague address the uniqueness of the human species? The common creation story argues for unity and diversity in nature. Human beings are therefore a part of creation, but also unique in comparison to it. McFague believes human uniqueness is due to two factors: self-consciousness and responsibility.

McFague argues it is self-consciousness and not rationality, which differentiates human beings from other beings (1993a: 122). She takes issue with the argument that intellect differentiates human beings from animals. Humans have developed the ability to reason logically and have a complex linguistic capacity, but the common creation story places them on a continuum with animals. However, rationality may be identified in higher animals as well (: 120). Rationality in this regard is understood as the ability to prioritise a set of preferences into a structure. Higher animals have preferences and this indicates that they have the ability to reason. Self-consciousness, on the other hand, involves free will and therefore the ability to change a context. It is the capacity for the self to meditate on the notion that it knows and on what it knows (: 122). Self-consciousness provides human beings with knowledge and thus power.

McFague correctly observes that human beings are responsible agents, because they possess knowledge of nature and thus have power. This power can be used to destroy humanity and other species of life or it may be used to facilitate the creative processes that nature possesses (: 108). Human beings are dependent on nature. McFague thence uses the metaphors of “guardians” and “caretakers” to articulate how humanity is to exercise its power and knowledge (: 109). Human beings are to be responsible agents and care for the well-being of all creation. McFague writes,

we are-basically, intrinsically, and always-interrelational, interdependent beings who live in *total dependence* on the others who compose the body, while at the same time being *responsible* for the well-being of one tiny part of the body, planet earth (2002a: 53) (Emphasis the researcher's).

While McFague argues for the particularity of the human being, she does not do so on the basis of a complexity hierarchy. It was concluded previously that the body of God cosmology is in danger of reductionism unless a complexity hierarchy is introduced. The charge of reductionism may again be levelled against the body of God anthropology.

McFague argues that self-consciousness distinguishes human beings from other beings. It is this mental activity that allows them to reflect consciously and self-consciously on the world around them. However, McFague does not describe how mental activity in human beings includes the functioning of the brain and thus the body. It seems as though the credibility of her argument hinges on how the body and mind interact, but McFague fails to do so. The reason for this is that although McFague does accept the multilevelled nature of reality in

general, she does not stress a complexity hierarchy at the anthropological level. It was noted before that the danger with this is that mental properties become nothing but physiological interactions within the body. McFague asserts,

This picture is a profoundly organic one, but it scarcely supports dualism or conservatism ...it privileges matter rather than mind, inasmuch as matter is the source of everything, including mind (1993a: 46).

It was indicated before that downward and upward causation are characteristic of a complexity hierarchy. At the human level this means that mind and body interact in terms of these two types of causation. McFague does not indicate how this may be so.

What has been discussed thus far relates to the soul as well. If the notion of emergent complexity is utilised in understanding the soul-mind-body interaction then a holistic view of personhood may be possible. Conradie maintains it is important to view the soul not as split from the body or immortal, but as a part of it. The soul describes the nature of the psyche and its capacity for, "interpersonal relationships, language, culture, ethos, worldviews and religion" (2005c: 110)

While these capacities are based on neurological functions, they cannot be reduced to them. A soul requires a functioning brain, but this is insufficient. There is more to the dynamics of the soul than mere neurological impulses. According to this approach the human is understood as a complex, psychosomatic being. A person may thus be understood as a living organism with biological process, as well as an individual who is responsible and can make decisions (: 111). The soul is therefore not understood as something alien to or incarnated in the body. McFague does not appear to address the soul-mind-body interaction adequately. She makes reference to the human being as an, "inspired body among other living bodies", but does not take this any further (1993a: 113). To prevent the spirit/soul from being reduced to neurological functioning, McFague needs to introduce a complexity hierarchy into her anthropology. The difficulty with the body of God anthropology is that while it does oppose a dualistic anthropology, it does not describe how soul and body interact. If it did then its case against dualistic anthropologies may be stronger. As it stands McFague's anthropology struggles to achieve a holistic view of the human being.

In addition to these reflections on the soul-mind-body interaction, the issue of human responsibility is also relevant. The body of God anthropology does intimate that human beings have knowledge and power and are to use this responsibly vis-a-vis their relationship with creation. This is a valid and crucial point. But again this is not argued on the basis of a complexity hierarchy. It was indicated before that human beings have a highly developed mental infrastructure and this gives them power. A complexity hierarchy is thus necessary to show why human beings have such power. If such a hierarchy is not stressed the body of God may be overly egalitarian.

According to Conradie, several ecological theologies do demonstrate the distinctiveness of human beings without including a hierarchy in their system, however he insists that such an approach is overly egalitarian and therefore does not take into account the varieties of hierarchies present in ecosystems (2005c: 104).

McFague takes issue with egalitarianism, because such a view does not acknowledge differences (1993a: 121). Even though the body of God anthropology takes unity and diversity seriously it does not indicate how this may be so. Hierarchies are necessary for diversity, because as T. Berry notes, "Fish are the best at swimming, birds at flying, trees at creating oxygen and humans at reflective thinking" (in Conradie 2005c: 104). McFague therefore does not appear to negate an egalitarian worldview and in the process weakens an argument for human particularity. This may be due to her emphasis on relationship at the expense of hierarchy.

A consideration of the above critique shows the body of God anthropology not to be in agreement with *point two* of the requirements for an ecological anthropology. It is unable to describe the interaction between mind and body and thus does not present a strong argument for a holistic anthropology. In addition to this it may be reductionistic and thus provides a weakened argument for human distinctiveness. However, McFague's argument for human distinctiveness and a holistic anthropology may be strengthened using insights from supervenience theory, transpersonal psychology and biblical anthropology.

5.2.2 A modification of the body of God anthropology's approach to the soul-mind-body issue

5.2.2.1 Supervenience

The body of God anthropology's case for a holistic anthropology may be augmented if it is raised one level in order to include the notion of mind. This may also assist in reducing or negating the reductionism that the body of God anthropology could fall into. It should be noted that the approach described in this study falls under the rubric of "interactionist theories" that describe the mind-body problem (Gregory 2004:604). These theories stipulate that the mind can act on the body and vice-versa. Process philosophy may also be applied to the body of God embodiment metaphysic, but the researcher will pursue supervenience theory, as this seems to give a clearer analysis of the interaction between body and mind than process thought.

P. Clayton believes that while emergence theories are helpful in describing the interaction between mind and body, they are not thorough enough and he thence proposes supervenience theory to build on their insights (1997: 249). Supervenience theory asserts that mental states rely on biological properties, but are irreducible to them. The mind is thus different from the brain.

Supervenience theory insists that mental properties "supervene" on physical properties (: 252). Mental states come to pass from physical states and are not reduced to them. This means that the mind cannot be completely described in physical terms. Thoughts are thus not just the result of neurological occurrences. In this manner mental experiences are considered to be real and not simply the product of the brain. This implies that thoughts and mental events are both physical and non-physical. Thoughts are not contained in a mental reality divorced from the brain. There is a causal relationship between the brain and mind. Thoughts and mental processes emerge from the brain, but are not reduced to them. Moreover, thoughts and other mental processes are able to influence the brain's processes (: 254).

Clayton provides a lucid description of how this process functions (: 255-6). The purpose of supervenience theory is to determine how mental states are caused. On the one hand a mental state or thought is caused by a physical state in the brain, but it is possible for a mental state to

cause another mental state. Some theorists would insist that for a new mental property to emerge a new physical state is required, but Clayton argues to the contrary. He believes that a mental property can cause a novel mental state (: 256). This newly generated mental property is then able to act on physical properties. The result of this is a novel physical state. Clayton has thus provided a valuable analysis of upward and downward causation between the mind and brain.

Supervenience theory can then be applied to McFague's embodiment metaphysic. In this manner the body of God's case for a holistic anthropology will be stronger, while avoiding reductionism. This allows the body of God to endorse a metaphysic that takes bodies and physical reality seriously without reducing this reality to nothing but bodies. Moreover, supervenience theory provides a framework for human uniqueness, as it highlights the complex thought processing that is typical of the human being.

5.2.2.2 Transpersonal psychology

The objective of this aspect of the study's anthropological reflection is to demonstrate the capacity that human beings have for self-transcendence, in other words the ability to be more than just their bodies. This means human beings cannot be understood only in terms of their bodies. Transpersonal psychology offers valuable insights in this regard.

Transpersonal literally means being beyond the personal (Vaughan, Wittine and Walsh, 1997: 484). Transpersonal Psychology integrates all fields of knowledge and allows for the inclusion of the wider context, including spiritual experience. K. Wilber endorses transpersonal psychology.

The main component of Wilber's theory is the "spectrum of consciousness" (1997: 50)³⁵. There are seventeen stages in this spectrum of consciousness, each level making it possible for the individual to view aspects of reality differently (Adams 2002: 165-179). The levels of consciousness are essentially in a hierarchy, with higher levels offering a more comprehensive view of reality, but this does not undermine the validity of the lower levels, because what they reveal about the world is accurate. Each new level of consciousness includes the one that

³⁵ This is underpinned by what he calls the "perennial philosophy", which is characterised by the *great chain of being* approach to reality. (Wilber 1996: 124).

precedes it. Moreover, each level transcends and includes its immediately lower level. It is not necessary to describe each of these levels fully, but what is significant is at the higher levels, the human being is able to reach a sense of connectedness with everything, both physical and spiritual. An individual no longer has a sense of being a member of a certain species, but *transcends* this and becomes aware of his or her connectedness and relatedness to the whole of creation.

This inherent capacity for self-transcendence is given theological expression by K. Rahner (1978: 31-5). He maintains that while human beings are embodied, they are able to move beyond their bodies. Rahner interprets this human transcendence as the ability to be open to emotion, reason and the, “mysterious infinity” (: 32). This openness occurs within space and time, however it cannot be reduced to them. Rahner does not view human transcendence as merely an aspect of the soul, which is unrelated to physical reality. While it occurs within physical reality, it is not reduced to biological processes. This notion of human self-transcendence is significant, particularly if personhood is used as an analogue for the G-W relationship. The researcher believes insights from transpersonal psychology may be integrated into McFague’s anthropology in order to avoid reductionism.

5.2.2.3 In the image of God

The body of God anthropology does not begin its reflection on what it means to human in light of the *imago Dei*. Human beings are to be understood in terms of the common creation story, “rather than as a reflection of divine reality” (1993a: 110). By doing this McFague has bypassed a central resource for theological reflection: the bible³⁶. It is understandable why this has been done and McFague’s attempt to overcome anthropocentrism is praiseworthy. A text such as Gen. 1: 26-9 appears to support anthropocentrism, because it seems as though God created the universe for humankind’s glory. The Genesis reading may thus be used to justify the domination of creation by humankind.

³⁶ Prior to the publication of *The Body of God*, McFague does use the *imago Dei* concept in her reflection on the body of God model (1990: 216f). She argues that if God is conscious of God’s embodiment then human beings are conscious of their own. This means humankind has the potential to care for the universe’s body and thus has a “special status and responsibility” for it (: 217). McFague appears to have changed her views and links human responsibility not to the *imago Dei*, but to the common creation story.

However, it was signified previously in the study that the *imago Dei* might be interpreted in a relational manner. Humankind comes from the earth's dust and is thus an intimate part of it. Human beings have the responsibility to care for creation with a gentle and merciful hand. Being created in the *imago Dei* means that human beings are relational beings. They thus have the capacity for relationship with each other and all of creation. However, what makes humanity unique vis-a-vis the *imago Dei* is its openness to God. In this manner a Christian ecological theology should be theocentric. In addition to the views of human particularity that a complexity hierarchy from the sciences may present, an anthropology based on the *imago Dei* highlights human uniqueness in terms of its relationship with the Triune God. McFague's attempt to avoid the apparent anthropocentrism of *imago Dei* theology thus seems to lose this notion of human uniqueness. Pannenberg and Conradie both argue for a theocentric anthropology that signifies humankind's continuity with creation.

W. Pannenberg explains the notion of humanity's openness to the world and God. He understands the term *open* to mean humankind's constant search for something beyond the world (1970: 8). This search differentiates human beings from animals. Like animals they have drives such as the need for food and conditions that bring about a healthy body. In this manner humankind relies on its environment. Pannenberg notes that while animals are in bondage to their environment, human beings are dependent on God and he writes, "openness to the world presupposes a relation to God" (: 12)³⁷. This approach appears to maintain humankind's continuity with creation and also stresses its particularity.

E. Conradie asserts that the idea of *created* in the image of God has been under emphasised in Christian anthropology (2005c: 23). Human beings emerge in the creation narratives of the bible and therefore are connected to creation. In other words anthropology needs to be understood in relation to the doctrine of creation. To be created means that one is a creature and thus part of creation. The fact that God sees and then declares creation to be good means that God values physical reality highly. This is in contrast to Platonic, Neoplatonic and Gnostic systems of thought, which devalue the physical world. These thought forms support the idea that humanity is alienated from the created order (: 24).

³⁷ Conradie describes the human situation as a search for the boundaries of existence (2005c: 149). This is done when the self is able to transcend his or her environment.

Conradie stresses that a Christian anthropology should not have the sciences as its foundation, as this could result in a “shallow form” of natural theology (: 10, 14). McFague argues that the world as God’s body is an attempt to construct a theology of nature and is therefore not another form of natural theology (1993a: 75). However, the body of God anthropology understands humanity from the perspective of the common creation story and not the *imago Dei*. In other words it does endorse a form of natural theology. For Conradie a Christian anthropology must include the doctrine of creation *and* the doctrine of God (2005c: 10). This appears to be reasonable; as such an approach will result in a theocentric anthropology.

Conradie is particularly concerned with a theology that romanticises or over extends human responsibility and writes, “a denial of that which transcends this life does not necessarily encourage responsibility for this earth” (2005a: 300). While the body of God anthropology does stress human responsibility this is not understood from a theocentric perspective. It is for this reason that this particular anthropology is in disagreement with *point three* of the study’s requirements for an adequate ecological anthropology. McFague’s anthropology therefore needs revision in this regard³⁸.

By under emphasising biblical anthropology, the body of God model loses valuable insights vis-a-vis a holistic anthropology. The human being is understood holistically in the Old Testament (McKim 1988: 62). The body and soul are fully integrated and the person is viewed in a social, corporate manner. The soul, flesh, spirit and heart are viewed as fully integrated into the human being. None of these are to be considered the essence of the human being. They are viewed as dimensions or perspectives on human existence.

The soul (*nephesh*-Hebrew) is used to denote parts of the body such as the throat (Ps. 107:5), stomach (Num. 21:5) and neck (Ps. 105: 18) (Maimela 1982: 47). This was done by the biblical writers to emphasis the integrity of the human being. Soul and body were not dichotomised, because the OT writers were unfamiliar with the Greek notion of the soul’s immortality. For the Hebrews a soul may be dead or poured out into death (Num. 6:6, Is 53-12). This is probably why such an emphasis was placed on the General Resurrection of the dead at the end of time. In this way the dead soul and body are simply waiting to be given life

³⁸ It is not within the scope of the study to do this, as this may require substantial theological revision to the body of God anthropology. This point merely indicates a weakness in McFague’s anthropology.

again. In the NT, the wholeness of the person is carried over. The soul (psuchè-Greek) is associated with bodily aspects such clothing, eating and drinking (Lk. 12: 20).

Flesh (bāsār-Hebrew, sarx-Greek) refers to the earthly, creaturely dimension of humanity's existence, in other words corporeality (Gen. 2:21, Jn 1:14, Phil. 1:24) (: 48). The body is thus viewed as indispensable for human existence, as it is the interface with earthly reality. The body is not viewed as inferior to the body and Paul encourages Christians to consecrate their bodies for God (Rom. 12:).

Spirit (ruach-Hebrew, pneuma- Greek) is synonymous with soul (: 49). It is viewed as a gift from God that enables humankind to relate to Him or Her (Gen. 2:7, Jn 4:2). The spirit therefore assists human beings to relate to that which is extraordinary, but is not the most significant aspect of life. Ruach means breath and this again highlights the integrity of spirit and body for the OT writers (Gen 2).

Heart (lēb-Hebrew, kardia-Greek) often relates to emotions and feelings (Prov. 14:30, 17:22, Ps 27: 7) (: 50). These emotions may lead human beings astray (Jer. 49: 16, Rom. 1:24). The heart therefore influences all aspects of human life: emotions, choices, actions, desires, beliefs, opinions and sin. God knows people's hearts (Lk. 16:15, Acts 1: 24, Rom. 8: 27).

Moreover, D. Kinsley argues that the bible does not advocate the idea of human beings tyrannising creation (1996: 118). The bible understands the heavens as beyond humankind and the Mosaic Law restricts how human beings are to treat the natural order. Restrictions are placed on the felling of trees (Deut. 20: 19-20), the land must fallow every seven years (Lev. 25: 1-7) and human beings are called to treat animals in a humane manner (Deut. 25:4). These non-anthropocentric renderings of the bible highlight the need for an ecological anthropology to take the bible seriously.

McFague asserts that it is important for the theologian to image the G-W relationship in a manner analogous with human beings (1987: 62). To do this may require a holistic anthropology. It was shown before that the body of God anthropology does not seem to provide a strong argument against mind/body dualism due to its reductionistic tendencies. This is due to an under emphasis on the notion of mind, as well as little stress on a biblical anthropology. By introducing the notion of supervenience and transpersonal psychology to

McFague's embodiment metaphysic, an attempt was made to strengthen the body of God anthropology's case against dualism. It was also argued that the body of God model needs more input from biblical anthropology in this regard.

G. Jantzen argues that a dualism, which disparages physical reality, is not adequate for understanding the G-W dynamic (1984: 9). She believes a holistic anthropology is necessary for this, but stresses that the interaction between the mind and body needs to be clarified in order to be an analogy for the G-W relationship. A holistic anthropology as an analogy may highlight a more intimate view of God's interaction with the world. In this manner divine agency will be understood as internal and not external.

These insights have consequences for the body of God anthropology. In its unrevised version it over emphasises the body at expense of the mind and therefore becomes an inadequate analogy for the G-W relationship. However, in its revised form with the insights from supervenience theory, transpersonal psychology and biblical anthropology, the body of God appears to be better equipped to provide an analogy for the G-W dynamic.

5.3 McFague's views on sin and responsibility.

The value of the common creation story is that it provides a cosmological image of humankind's locality vis-a-vis creation. According to this narrative human beings are not at the centre of the universe, but are one aspect of it. This provides a non-anthropocentric view of the relationship between humanity and creation. Humans are dependent on lower levels of life for their existence. This means that humankind has a responsibility for the well being of the natural order. This notion of human responsibility prompts McFague to find a concrete understanding of sin (1993a: 113). She insists this is necessary to prevent an over spiritualised view of sin that does not take the earth into consideration.

McFague therefore believes that it is important to articulate an ecological view of sin and thence defines it not as a rebellion against God, but as, "the refusal to accept our place" in the natural order (1993a: 112). In other words in the body of God paradigm anthropocentrism is sin. A refusal to acknowledge their position in relation to the natural order means that human beings are permitted to dominate and control creation. In this manner the relationship between creation and humankind is destroyed. In the body of God model sin is refusing to take

responsibility for the care of the earth (1990: 217). It was noted before that part of being responsible means viewing creation with a loving eye. This suggests that arrogance is another form of sin. For McFague sin, “is the desire to set oneself apart from all others as not needing them or being needed by them” (: 217).

It may be understood according to one word: “selfishness” (1993a: 115). Selfishness is the result of anthropocentrism, because it views human beings at the centre of the universe. In this manner sin is understood as the living out of a lie. The consequence of this is the negation of relationships. The body of God anthropology understands these relationships to be in three forms: human-human, human-animals and human-nature (: 116-129)³⁹.

In terms of the *human-human* relationship McFague stresses that injustices among human beings need to be resolved before addressing humankind’s relationship with the natural order. Justice is understood by McFague as, “sharing the limited resources of our common space” (: 116). The body of God anthropology therefore encourages research into the link between issues such as economics, culture, gender, religion and politics and the destruction of natural reality. Sin in this context is refusing to share land and space with those in poverty.

As regards the *human-animal* relationship, McFague insists that the common creation story shows humankind to be alike and unlike other animals. Sin in this context is the alienation of human beings from animals. This occurs when human beings believe animals have no commonality with them and are thus inferior (: 122)

Finally, sin in the context of the *human-nature* dynamic is when human beings lose a sense of belonging to the natural order and then objectify it (: 124). In this manner nature is understood as an *it*, devoid of feeling. Sin is thus adopting an arrogant eye towards creation.

5.3.1 The Pelagian influence on McFague’s anthropology

These insights seem to be characteristic of a Pelagian understanding of sin, free will and responsibility. Pelagius maintained that human beings are completely free and thus responsible

³⁹ McFague argues that the universe as God’s body model stresses the notion that sin against all parts of the body implies sin against God. (1993:114). The body of God model therefore encourages human beings to view nature as sacred. Abuse against nature therefore means revolt against God. The mental imagery the body of God invokes here is vivid.

for their actions (McKim 1988: 71). He believed that this free will is bestowed on humankind through God's grace at birth. This freedom together with God's grace assists human beings to resist sin. Pelagius thus rejected the notion of original sin arguing instead for the individual's responsibility to choose good instead of evil.

The body of God anthropology seems to have much in common with Pelagian anthropology. It does not refer to the notion of original sin, focusing on human responsibility and freedom. From an ecological perspective this means humankind is responsible for the well being of creation⁴⁰.

While McFague does not explicitly refer to God's grace as the cause of freedom, she does seem to imply this when she writes,

we alone can choose to become partners with God in care of the world... the body, that God has made available to us as both the *divine presence* and our home (1990: 217)
(Emphasis the researcher's).

This statement implies that the body of God anthropology is Pelagian, as it demonstrates how human responsibility and freedom interact with God's presence (i.e. grace) to care for the world and thus overcome sin. The value to such an approach is that it opposes fatalism. Human beings thus have the knowledge and power to care for creation. The body of God anthropology therefore has a positive view of the human being. McFague is therefore focused on ethics (1993a: 111). She uses the metaphors of "guardians and caretakers" to articulate the relationship between humankind and creation (: 109). These metaphors appear to be a form of stewardship. M. Hilker challenges the stewardship metaphor and questions whether it moves beyond anthropocentrism (1995: 164). Moreover, A. Peterson claims a stewardship ethic does not remove the power human beings have over the environment and continues to view the natural order in a utilitarian manner (2003: 330).

Conradie issues words of caution in relation to the stewardship metaphor (2000: 153-174). It still presumes that human beings are supreme among the species of the earth and that they know what is best for creation; in addition to this the metaphor falsely assumes that humanity has the skills to manage "ecological systems" (: 158). Moreover, the stewardship metaphor,

⁴⁰ Part of this responsibility is acknowledging that the earth has a limited supply of energy (1993: 58). McFague draws on insights from the laws of thermodynamics to substantiate this view.

"assumes a *relationship between humanity and nature*" (: 158). Conradie correctly observes that the sciences demonstrate that human beings are a *part* of the earth. In other words, this metaphor does not heighten the notion that humanity needs the earth and is thoroughly dependent on it.

There are also crucial differences between McFague and Pelagius. The former has a more concrete view of sin. The danger with a spiritualised view of sin is that it only concerns one aspect of the human being (i.e. the spiritual) and fails to consider the importance of sin in the physical sense. Moreover, McFague has a more communal understanding of sin, whereas Pelagius focuses on the individual human being. In an ecological context a communal understanding of sin is more relevant, because ecology is a study of relationships and what impacts these.

5.3.2 The scope of McFague's definition of sin

Is McFague's definition of sin broad enough? A central concern for the researcher is her conjecture that human beings are not sinners if they rebel against God. Her argument is that if the universe is thought of as God's body then by sinning against the universe human beings are rebelling against God. But what if the universe was not be perceived as God's body? What if a metaphor were chosen that stresses the goodness of creation, but does not think of the universe as God's body. How would rebellion against God then be conceived? L. Van Dyk also takes issue with the body of God model in this regard. She maintains that an incorrect dichotomy is established in McFague understanding of sin (1994: 179). McFague implies that rebelling against God is different from the refusal to accept one's place. Van Dyk notes that rebelling against God includes being unwilling to remain in one's place. This critique is reasonable, because the NT commandment means loving God and neighbour⁴¹. Failing to love one's neighbour, or, according to McFague's understanding, failing to stay in our place, means rebelling against God.

⁴¹ By *neighbour* the researcher means all of creation. This affirms W. Persaud's view that the notion of neighbour needs to be extended to the natural order as well (1992: 296f).

On the other hand the notion of original sin also needs consideration. Like Pelagius, McFague does not stress the impact of original sin or the fall on humanity⁴² and the created order.

McFague, although suspicious of how human beings have treated creation, has a positive anthropology. She believes human beings are responsible agents⁴³. She writes, “Human responsibility for the fate of the earth is a recent and terrible knowledge” (1991b: 15).

However, there are difficulties by not stressing the fallen nature of creation.

A. Linzey believes there are four consequences to this (1998: 23-6)⁴⁴. First, the natural world has no evil. This means that morality has no reference to nature. In this manner human beings view the cruelty demonstrated in nature as normal occurrences. The danger with this is that human beings themselves may be tempted to emulate such cruelty or may become morally neutral to nature. Second, it is impossible for nature to be redeemed. Instead God uses nature’s cruelty as an agent instead of saving it through the Holy Spirit. Nature cannot be saved, as “there is nothing to be improved upon” (: 24). Third, human beings are not obligated to collaborate with God to redeem nature, because the cruelty of nature is a morally neutral issue. In this manner morality is merely a human concern. Finally, if nature cannot be redeemed than God’s moral goodness is questionable. If God has deliberately created a morally flawed universe than God is immoral.

McFague argues for a strong ethical approach in regard to humankind’s relationship with the natural order. The body of God anthropology encourages human beings to adopt a loving eye towards creation. This appears to be a vital and necessary insight and provides a significant argument for human responsibility. However, a danger with this approach is that it does not require human beings to acknowledge the cruelty of nature. The loving eye does not appear to take natural evil seriously. In this manner God’s goodness is questioned particularly in regard to natural disasters and the victims of evolution. The body of God anthropology is thus in tension with points one and four of Linzey’s analysis. However, the strength of McFague’s approach is that it insists that there is an ecological crisis and that nature needs to be saved and human beings need to exercise their responsibility in partnership with God to care for the

⁴² Augustine focused on original sin and its impact on humanity. He does not appear to address the relationship between original sin and creation. M. Fox notes this human-centred view of salvation has lost the beauty and goodness of creation (1983: 46-51).

⁴³ McFague seems to be in agreement with K. Rahner here. He maintains that when a subject experiences himself (sic) he realises himself to be responsible and free to the depth of his existence (1978: 37f).

⁴⁴ For another treatment of the fall and ecological theology see J. Clatworthy’s article, “Let the Fall Down: The Environmental Implications of the doctrine of the Fall” (1998: 27-34).

creation. However, Linzey's warnings need to be taken seriously in any anthropology that does not stress the fallen nature of creation and the impact of original sin on it.

In addition to this a Christian ecological anthropology that does not consider the impact of original sin by focusing instead on an evolutionary view of life may not be theocentric. An example of this is J. Hick's mythological approach to original sin (1993: 115-7). He does not view original sin literally, opting instead for a mythological interpretation of it as, "the fact of universal human imperfection" (: 115). Hick contends that according to evolutionary anthropology human beings didn't descend from a single created pair, but evolved from lower life forms over an incredibly long period of time. The earliest humans had an animistic worldview, but were never in complete communion with God. In addition to this humankind was never in a harmonious relationship with each other and nature, but were involved in a battle for survival. Human beings were fallen in the sense that they were morally and spiritually deprived. They were never in an ideal state. For Hick the idea of the fall should be abandoned. This is a clear example of how far from theocentrism anthropology may traverse. The danger for the body of God model anthropology is that by avoiding the doctrine of original sin and the consequence of the fall on all creation, it may become naturalistic and not theocentric.

This tendency towards cosmocentrism or creation-centredness is also a danger for those varieties of ecological theologies that emphasise creation spirituality. McFague argues against such an approach. She maintains that replacing "redemption spirituality" with "creation spirituality" is insufficient (1991b: 15). While the emphasis on redemption to the neglect of creation needs to be addressed and the notion that the common creation story invokes an appreciation for creation, these approaches do not focus on sin as the cause of the earth's predicament. Theology acts as a frame of reference for establishing humanity's compliance in creation's degradation. It is for this reason that there needs to be a radicalising of, "the Christian understanding of sin and evil" (: 15). McFague believes creation spirituality is utopian, because it does not describe how reality is, but how it ought to be. There is thus an element of the prophetic in creation spirituality, however it tends to romanticise reality by not taking sin seriously. McFague thus attempts to find a balance between creation and redemption spiritualities. On the one hand the body of God anthropology stresses the beauty of creation and on the other hand it takes sin seriously.

To summarise. There are a limited number of difficulties with this anthropology. McFague's understanding of sin seems to need more reflection on original sin and the fall. The neglect of this doctrine seems to be due to a Pelagian understanding of human freedom. Moreover, her understanding of rebellion against God did not seem clear to the researcher. However, the body of God anthropology provides valuable insights into the nature and consequences of sin. It takes human responsibility seriously vis-a-vis the degradation of nature. The value to this approach is that it opposes anthropocentrism by stressing the dependency of humankind on creation. Moreover, a strength of McFague's anthropology is that it does not endorse a privatised, individualistic view on sin. Sin is not only an issue between the self and God, it includes sin against all creation. The body of God anthropology also intimates the notion that sin is a breakdown of relationships. McFague's definition of sin seems to be broad enough for a Christian ecological theology and is thus in agreement with *point four* of the anthropology reflection.

5.4 The body of God model and ecojustice

The fact that the body of God anthropology stresses a concrete, earthy view of sin means that it endorses a form of salvation that takes the well being of all creation seriously. McFague critiques the Christian tradition, and in particular the Protestant strand, for encouraging an individualistic, "otherworldly salvation" (1993a: 111). McFague's views need to be taken seriously in this regard.

R. Langmead observes the tendency in Evangelical theology to focus on the personal salvation of human beings (1998: 164). Such an anthropocentric view does not include the universe and earth in any process of salvation. However, Rom. 8 asserts that creation *anticipates* its full redemption. A spiritualised form of salvation is therefore unable to engage in ecojustice, because justice is less important than personal salvation and creation is understood as a peripheral issue (: 165). Langmead also takes issue with an apocalyptic, otherworldly view of salvation. The view here is that the earth is not part of the heaven. Salvation means being in communion with God who is in a heavenly kingdom. This means that the earth cannot be part of a salvation process. It is believed that events on earth will worsen before they get better.

Such an understanding of salvation may prevent Christians from involvement with ecojustice issues⁴⁵.

The researcher is thus in agreement with McFague on the need for a more concrete understanding of salvation. Her view on salvation is largely determined by an emphasis on the importance of bodies. In this manner salvation is primarily concerned with the well being of the world's body and the many bodies located in it (1993a: 23). The body of God anthropology is primarily concerned with the liberation of the oppressed. McFague supports the idea of human accountability for the care of the oppressed earth (1988a: 673). McFague asserts that the oppressed need to be understood as human beings in a state of oppression, as well as, "the oppressed earth and all its life-forms" (1993a: 31). The body of God model thus appears to be a form of liberation theology.

A liberation theology identifies a situation of oppression and then analyses why such a situation exists. It specifies whom the oppressor and oppressed are. Moreover, liberation theology demonstrates how the oppressed may be emancipated. Salvation is identified and understood in terms of *liberation* (Livingston 2000: 294). J. Sobrino interprets oppression in the light of injustice: the oppressor and oppressed dynamic is the most definitive form of sin and the direct consequence of this sin is death (in Moila 2002: 95).

Liberation theology attempts to identify those sinful structures that lead to oppression, focusing less on personal sin and more on what is termed "structural sin" (: 83). It considers the broader sociological reasons for oppression. Issues of justice are thus central to a liberation theology. Liberation theologians thus take political, social, economic, religious, cultural and gender realities into account in their reflection. In a liberation theology the oppressed may be understood in a variety of ways: women, the poor, a racial group and nature. The segregation of the oppressed is approached from the perspective of justice, equality and rights. In other words a liberation theology struggles to gain justice for the oppressed. It attempts to establish the reason for the injustice and how this sin may be overcome. In this manner prophecy and advocacy become critical. A liberation theology therefore shows the way social reality *is* and how it *should be* by being a voice for the oppressed.

⁴⁵ Ruether also critiques an apocalyptic view of salvation as the reason for the alienation between human beings and the physical world (1972: 115f).

A liberation theology that is ecologically sensitive should address how nonhuman reality is affected by: the manner in which society is structured, how society is regulated, how growth and development are understood in the society and the spiritual values of a community (Boff 1995: 19-26). It thus seems tenable to refer to the oppressed in this regard as the created order. These insights highlight the need for ecojustice where politics, economics and religion are taken seriously.

While the body of God model may side with liberation theology, McFague believes a difficulty with many forms of liberation theology is that they remain anthropocentric (1992a: 44). The problem with this is that issues concerning justice and ecology have been held in tension. McFague maintains that the two need to be in continuity so that liberation can include the earth. Liberation theologies emphasise advocacy and McFague supports this idea, however she believes an “advocational theology” must include the ecological context as well (1991a: 21). Advocacy appears to be at the forefront of the body of God model (1993a: 72).

This notion may be seen in McFague’s theology in general. She argues that the current condition of the planet is such that theology needs to adopt a position of advocacy as a way to overcome the destruction of ecosystems (1993a: 68; 1993b: 144). McFague insists that the consequence of such an approach for theology would be an agenda that keeps the, “liberation of the oppressed, including the earth and all its creatures, in central focus” (1991b: 14).

McFague’s approach affirms the intrinsic and instrumental value of all creation (: 165ff). Creation’s integrity is maintained when these two types of value are equally affirmed. The common creation story rejects a utilitarian understanding of the human-nature relationship, as this compromises the integrity of creation. It is only when the intrinsic value of creation is avowed that it may be used with, “humility, respect, and thanksgiving” (: 166).

An advocational theology such as McFague’s takes issues of justice seriously, because it seeks to confirm the value of all life. She stresses the importance of addressing justice issues in the human community before the natural community. The reason for such an approach is that social justice has a direct impact on environmental justice (: 117). Humankind can therefore only benefit the natural order when its own affairs are in order.

H. Hadsell affirms McFague's approach. She notes that justice for a liberation theology occurs in social reality and,

These patterns of social interaction mediate our social relationships and our relationships with nature and must be carefully scrutinized (1992: 81).

Beginning with justice at the human level prevents the naturalisation of justice issues. This means that nature is not to be viewed as more significantly than social reality (: 82). When nature gains prominence over the social world, human beings become the object and nature a subject. In this manner nature determines the value of human life as opposed to human beings valuing nature. Such an approach prevents justice, as human responsibility is reduced. The body of God approach is thus justifiable.

McFague defines justice as, "sharing the limited resources of our common space" (1993a: 116). She believes that it is an ecological sin for those who have land and space to not share these with those who don't. McFague thus sees a link between human poverty and environmental degradation. In addition to this the body of God model views nature as the "new poor", but McFague stresses that this does not mean the "old poor" (i.e. human beings) are simply being replaced (: 165). Nature is rather to be viewed as part of the poor community and it is humankind that has made it poor.

The fact that the body of God anthropology takes poverty seriously means it is concerned with the economic reasons for the destruction of the natural environment. J. De Gruchy and D. Field maintain it is critical to approach economics from an ecological perspective (1994: 207). Such a view means that natural resources are not to be understood purely in financial terms. Use of resources and development needs to be measured against the impact on ecosystems. Moreover, a critique of consumerism is required, because the planet is unable to prolong societies driven by a consumer culture. Consumerism allows a select few access to the earth's resources. An ecological understanding of economics thus seems tenable.

McFague's extends her stress on the link between justice and ecology in an economic analysis found in the book, *Life Abundant*. She maintains how economics may be understood and applied is determined by two optional worldviews: mechanism and organism (2001: 72). The former understands the earth as a corporation composed of single human beings who benefit

by optimising the use of resources. Human beings are externally related to each other and the environment. The latter understands the earth as a community that thrives through the interrelatedness and interdependence of its human and non-human members. McFague has thus extended the body of God cosmology to her anthropology.

Neo-classic economics is derived from a mechanistic view of the world and emphasises individualism and growth (: 81). This approach endorses the notion that the wants and desires of the individual are fulfilled through continuous rates of growth. Human beings are in external relationships with each other and the earth. There is constant competition for natural resources. These resources are judged in monetary terms with the result that human beings enter into contracts with each other in order to benefit financially. Such an approach propounds that growth and the earth's resources are unlimited. Such neo-classical economics results in a consumer society.

An ideal of a consumer society is personal happiness (2001: 84). Happiness is achieved through the ownership of material goods. In other words a consumer society is dictated by materialism. McFague's analysis seems reasonable. The researcher observes that in the contemporary context personhood is defined by what one owns. Such a view means that human beings are not valued according to virtues such as tenderness, humility and kindness (Col. 3:12), but through ownership of property and material goods. McFague notes that in a consumer society only those who own anything are happy, while the poor are not (: 86). This means that those who consume the most need to consume far less, and vice-versa. The poor therefore need far more food, shelter, medical care and education. In addition to this consumerism does not benefit the entire planet and McFague writes

the big problems are the loss of water, trees, fertile soil, clean air, fisheries, and biodiversity *and* the ways the degradation of each of these renewables contributes to the deterioration of the others (: 89) (Emphasis McFague's).

McFague's polemic of the consumer society is thus also a critique of capitalism. Capitalism encourages the accumulation of wealth. In this manner the world is understood in terms of a "trade market" metaphor (: 85). The purpose of such a market is to generate consumers for various commodities. The commodities are produced and advertised. Governments give financial support for this through taxes and transnational corporations distribute these

commodities by means of trade agreements. In other words by critiquing the consumer society, McFague also seems to take issue with capitalism and globalisation⁴⁶.

The body of God model favours the organism model for the universe. The economic metaphor for the body of God anthropology is what McFague terms, the “ecological economic model” (: 99). She starts her argument for this model by referring to the root of the words ecology and economics as *oikos* (house-Greek) (: 72). This indicates the close relationship between economics and ecological issues. The earth is a household with strict ecological and economic rules. These rules need to be obeyed so that all the members of the earth household have access to its resources. McFague therefore adopts a *house economics*.

Ecological economics operates on the premise that the planet’s resources are scarce and need to be assigned proportionately so that a community continuously functions (: 99). In contrast to the neo-classical model this approach is not anthropocentric or utilitarian. It stresses the interdependency of all the members of a community. The focus here is not greed, but on need. It is stressed that the members of the whole only benefit when the whole is healthy (: 105). In other words human and non-human beings only flourish when the earth is cared for.

The ecological economic model stresses sustainability⁴⁷. For McFague sustainability is a community issue (: 107). It is the community that decides on what its goal should be and how to use its capital and resources so that the entire community and not just individuals benefit. Capital in this sense is to be understood as both human and natural capital. There are thus physical constraints on a community’s social vision, as natural resources are limited. Sustainability is therefore the maintenance of “the integrity of ecological systems upon which all life and production depends” (: 108). It occurs when distributive justice is a reality. In other words sustainability relies on the sharing of natural resources. An ecological economic model attempts to ensure that all members of a community, both human and non-human beings, have the basic means to prosper and survive. Such an approach is located between a “communist anthropology” and an “individualistic anthropology” (: 109). It therefore does not seem to promote egalitarianism, but stresses equality in terms of access to natural resources. Distributive justice from an ecological perspective means that the requirements needed to

⁴⁶ Globalisation is, “the rapid and pervasive diffusion around the world of production, consumption and investment and trade in goods, services, capital and technology” (AACC 1997: 3).

⁴⁷ McFague argues the neo-classic model does not take sustainability into consideration (2002c: 129).

flourish for human beings and the planet must be met. In other words the ecological economics that the body of God anthropology makes use of is life-centred. This provides input for an ethic centred on life.

Rasmussen is in agreement with McFague this regard and maintains that economics must promote life⁴⁸ and thence advocates an “oikos economics” (1996: 91). This is therefore congruent with McFague’s notion of house economics. Rasmussen believes that an oikos economics results in the flourishing of life. Contemporary economics is contrary to oikos economics. The former views the world as a machine with parts that can be replaced, endorses a globalised economy that seeks to increase wealth and understands economics in terms of the corporation and not the household. In other words Rasmussen, like McFague, argues for an ecological economics based on community that enriches quality of life as opposed to neo-capitalist economics, which promotes wealth instead of life.

Santmire believes McFague’s argument for the economic ecological model is valid, because, “we must be liberated from both our economic and theological assumptions if we are truly to love nature and care for the poor” (2001: 33). He maintains the ecological economic model is a necessary replacement for the neo-capitalist approach to economics. McFague has thus provided a strong argument against the neo-classical economic model by opting for ecological economics.

Several theologians also take issue with the principles of the neo-classic economic model. De Gruchy and Field critique the consumer society (1994: 207-8). They endorse an approach that uses the insights of liberation theology and ecological ethics. In this manner an analysis of economics involves a bias towards the poor and the notion that a society based on consumerism will deplete the earth’s resources. Nations that are developed seem to be the main proponents of consumerism. Moreover, consumerism is unable to be extended so as to include all the earth’s population. It simply becomes the lifestyle for a select few nations and an even fewer group of individuals within these nations. De Gruchy and Field argue, from a theological perspective, that an *imago Dei* anthropology means equality for all. Every human being has the right to use the earth’s resources and to live a “sustainable lifestyle” (: 207). Moreover, the *imago Dei* implies that all human beings are responsible for the earth.

⁴⁸ Rasmussen argues elsewhere for a “life-centred ethics” (1994: 122ff).

Hadsell also takes issue with the growth model and capitalism. It is believed that growth in market economies will generate enough for all to have a respectable life and to allow for “distributive justice” (1992: 83). Growth has become a product in itself that has been sold worldwide. However, Hadsell observes that the growth model has not benefited the natural environment. Growth needs the mechanisms of production and consumption. Both these processes are damaging to nature. There is thus a tension here. Justice may be in the form of economic growth or limiting growth to benefit the natural order. However, Hadsell believes that economies that are located on the periphery to major economies invariably are placed in a state of dependency. There is therefore a capitalism hierarchy with the major economies at the top and minor economies at the bottom (: 84). All these economies are forced to compete at the global level. The result of this is that as growth increases so does the inequality of distribution. The tendency of major economies is to accumulate wealth by exploiting labour and natural resources in minor economies. This signifies that the growth model does not benefit economies or the natural environment.

And, K. Abraham maintains that the ecological crisis has come about due to a focus on the growth of industry and technology that support numerous individual’s contemporary life-style (1994: 66). The West’s emphasis on industrial growth is considered a paradigm for development. This growth model requires high amounts of capital and natural resources and the result of this is exploitation of human beings and the natural order. It is economies driven by consumerism that make decisions about which goods are to be produced and the manner of technology used.

J. Rieger believes McFague provides a relevant critique of consumerism, but she does not go far in enough in her analysis of the world’s economics (2002: 215). In particular she does not indicate where economic power is situated. McFague identifies the market as a problem vis-a-vis the world’s economic system, but does not pursue this in depth. Rieger has a valid argument here. McFague does allude to the impact of globalisation on the natural environment, but does not continue with an analysis of this.

A. Warmback emphasises the impact of globalisation on the poor (2005: 195). He maintains that economic globalisation has increased the margin between the rich and poor, and has this resulted in the fragmentation of community. Botman writes, “Globalisation... prescribes a

certain autonomy to the market that increases inequality and fragments political life and communities” (in Warmback: 195).

It was indicated before that with its focus on ecojustice, the body of God anthropology seems to be a form of liberation theology, because it has a concrete understanding of sin and salvation. This is a positive approach, as sin and salvation do not become the concerns of another place or time, but are based in current reality.

5.5 Eschatology

McFague’s eschatology appears to be a “realised eschatology”. This idea was pioneered by CH Dodd. He maintains that the Kingdom of God is in some sense present (Ladd 1982: 59). This means that human beings have a foretaste of what the Kingdom will be like. This approach to eschatology allows salvation to be viewed not only as a future event, but as a *kairos* moment as well.

C. Keller provides an argument for an eschatology that considers ecological concerns to be of primary importance (1994: 326-345). She maintains that an eschatology that is responsible should be orientated towards ecology. Keller also appears to endorse a realised eschatology. She argues that previous notions of eschatology have focused on the apocalyptic idea of a new heaven and new earth where an all-powerful God intervenes to bring about a new creation in the future. Keller seems to imply that such an “unearthly eschatology” does not promote human responsibility for nature, but distracts humankind from it (: 330). An unearthly eschatology does not take sustainability seriously, because it is assumed that endless renewable resources are unnecessary since the earth will eventually meet its end. This type of eschatology prevents human beings from considering the needs and rights of all members of the earth community (: 331). In other words salvation becomes an abstract concept with little or no relevance to the planet’s well being. Keller argues that the bible does not understand the *eschaton* to mean a time when the world will end (: 337). Her argument is valid when considering the holistic anthropology promulgated by the biblical writers who had a far more positive view of the physical world than did the Greek thinkers. Keller believes the bible views salvation in a holistic manner. *Shalom* is a term that describes how all reality will be restored. Salvation in this manner hopes for the time when the earth will be reformed to the point that it may, “be lovingly and equitably cohabitated by all creature” (: 338). Even the book of Revelations does

not point towards an unearthly reformation and the New Jerusalem is the hope for creation's restoration. Keller maintains that salvation needs to become an earthly affair. She states this succinctly,

when salvation means removal from the earth to a heavenly home, then our *oikos* (home) is abandoned to the assaults of those whose ultimate concern is neither heaven nor earth, but the power and wealth of their particular households (: 332) (Emphasis Keller's).

Keller therefore uses an *oikos* theology in her eschatology. This means that human beings need to understand the earth as their home. Keller reminds readers that *home* does not imply an *end*. Human beings are not simply orientated towards another home, but are located in the earth home (: 341). Keller believes that an earthly eschatology should motivate human beings to take care of the earth; the biblical metaphor for this being stewardship (: 328). Such an approach addresses social issues and thus matters pertaining to economic justice and the natural environment. Keller refers to her eschatology as, "eco-eschatology" (: 343).

McFague's approach to ecojustice has much in common with Keller's eco-eschatology. It stresses human responsibility for the earth and thus has notions of sin and salvation that takes ecological issues seriously. Moreover, McFague accentuates the need for sustainability. Like Keller she advocates the notion of *oikos* and incorporates the stewardship metaphor into the body of God anthropology. Both these thinkers highlight the need for theology to be involved in justice issues that impact the natural environment. McFague's approach to ecojustice therefore appears to be a form of eco-eschatology. A positive aspect to McFague's anthropology is that it includes the natural order within the scope of salvation.

The body of God anthropology's focus on human responsibility for the earth raises an important issue in regard to grace. A central feature of McFague ecological theology is that it appears to be orientated towards ecological ethics. This is characteristic of most liberation theologies that are orientated towards praxis (Villa-Vicencio 1994: 189). A challenge for these kinds of theology is how to express God's unique involvement in emancipating the oppressed. It was shown previously that there is a strong Pelagian influence in the body of God anthropology. This means that McFague views grace as external to human beings. The body of God anthropology demonstrates how human responsibility and freedom interact with God's grace to care for the world and thus overcome sin.

The problem with the body of God anthropology on this point is that does not consider the notion that grace impacts the human being internally as well. A reason for this is that McFague appears to adopt an antirealist position in relation to God. The strength of the body of God model is that it may be able to affect human beings on the cognitive level. In this manner humankind could change its opinion about the natural order. However, a critical realist perspective highlights the idea that God is both external and internal to the human being. This implies that God's grace may be able to change human beings at the psychological and ontological levels. The body of God model does not imply that God operates within the human being through the Holy Spirit and gives them plenitude of life (Comblin 1990: 228).

The Holy Spirit bestows grace and as such is not passive, but active in the lives of human beings (Berkhof 1986: 428). It was intimated before that in the *imago Dei* makes human beings open to God and the world. In other words, this openness allows human beings to access grace through the Holy Spirit.

Boff identifies various virtues of grace: faith, hope, love, friendship, peace, joy, critical spirit, courage and humour (1984: 163-173)⁴⁹. The first three of these occur at the ontological level before the psychological level and are found in the bible (1 Cor. 13:13; 1 Thess. 1:3; Gal. 5:6; Rom. 5:1-5). In other words faith, hope and love are as a result of the internal operation of grace within human beings. Faith means being open to and then accepting God. Graced human beings are able to hope for a better future and then live out this hope in a meaningful manner. Love also comes about through openness to grace and involves the acceptance of the other and involvement of oneself in the other's reality. Love is thus relevant in terms of accepting the differences of both human and non-human beings.

Particularly significant are the outward manifestation of God's grace. Accepting God's grace results in "friendly relations" (: 169). Friendship is a concept that may be extended to the natural order as well. Peace is a virtue that opposes fragmentation and thus promotes wholeness and completeness (Rom. 5:1; Gal 5:22). The virtue of peace thus prevents a violent attitude to human and non-human beings. It also allows human beings to feel connectedness with God, each other and the natural order (: 170). Grace generates a critical spirit. Being

⁴⁹ O. Meyer endorses the view that the Spirit is not merely the sustainer of life, but the giver of virtues as well. These virtues are also sustained by the Spirit (2002: 45-6).

critical is the ability to discern true from false and good from bad so that false ideologies may be identified (Prov. 13:7; Rom. 12:2). This is important for any liberation theology that attempts to identify sinful social structures and ideologies. Grace allows human beings to be courageous when confronting injustices. Courage is therefore due to divine strength and not only human ability (Acts 9:27-8; Phil. 1:20). The last virtue that Boff identifies is humour. Humour is located within the human being and is energised by grace. It functions as a coping mechanism for human beings.

These insights from Boff are examples of the impact that grace has on human beings. A need for the body of God anthropology is to create a balance between internal and external notions of grace. This may pose a challenge for McFague's anthropology considering its antirealist stance. This may be achieved by articulating the idea that religious metaphors are humankind's response to God's grace⁵⁰. The body of God anthropology therefore needs more emphasis on the internal operation of God's grace in human beings. In this manner humankind's understanding of the natural order is influenced by religious metaphors (i.e. worldviews), as well as God's grace. If the internal nature of grace is not described then the body of God may be accused of salvation by good works and not God's grace.

In light of what has been discussed the body of God anthropology affirms *point five* of the study's anthropology reflection. It prioritises ecojustice and insists on the rights and values of all creation.

5.6 The body of God anthropology and its understanding of the relationship between nature and history

This chapter is concluded with a reflection on the body of God model's approach to the relationship between nature and history. McFague's approach to this issue is influenced by her embodiment metaphysic. Her high regard for physical reality allows McFague to insist, "bodies matter" (1993a: 23).

⁵⁰ R. Otto refers to the experience of God as the numinous where the self experiences God as *Mysterium Tremendum* (1950: 12). This is an overpowering and almost overwhelming experience of the divine. One way to understand these interactions with God would be through metaphor. Metaphor assists human beings to make sense of these encounters with God.

Bodies need space to exist. McFague's anthropology therefore places a priority on the notion of space. Bodies need space so that they can have access to air, water and food (: 99). Space is a concrete, physical reality, whereas time is a human phenomenon. McFague believes an emphasis on space is necessary, because this indicates that human and non-human beings all occupy one space: the earth. The common creation story highlights the unity and diversity of creation. This influences how space is to be understood. The unity of creation means that everything has one space in which to live; however in terms of diversity each entity needs a particular space in which to survive. In other words understanding creation's diversity provides knowledge of the kind of space needed for each being. This signifies that the primary space, the earth, needs to be cared for and maintained. Space therefore requires engagement with issues relating to ecojustice. McFague does acknowledge that time has a role vis-a-vis ecojustice, because the earth cannot be abused any longer. However, time is a factor, because the abuse of space affects time. McFague writes,

Geography, often considered a trivial subject compared to the more splendid history (the feats of the forefathers) might well be *the* subject of the twenty-first century (: 101) (Emphasis McFague's).

Space is a justice issue, because when space is neglected then the availability of land becomes a concern. Those with power will control the availability of good land. The danger with this is that human beings and endangered species are threatened, because their access to space is threatened.

Space is humankind's place (: 102). In other words human beings are located in and belong on the earth. An emphasis on space highlights the notion that human beings do not merely belong to another realm such as heaven. This means that a focus on space is meant to remove the alienation between humanity and nature. McFague argues that the ascetic spirituality that characterises much of the Christian tradition has not endorsed the, "preciousness, and vulnerability of the earth and its many creature" (: 102)⁵¹. The body of God model views the earth as part of God's body. This obliges humankind to love nature.

Moltmann is in agreement with McFague. He believes it is necessary to integrate the concept of history into the notion of nature and asserts that it is human time needs to be synchronised

⁵¹ This comment by McFague does not take into account the strand of Christian spirituality that marvels at the creation. See Santmire, 1985. *The Travail of Nature*.

with creation's time (1985:125, 137-9). He maintains the modern understanding of time in terms of progress needs to be negated and brought into harmony with nature's cycles and rhythms. Moltmann's views seem relevant, as they signify the concept that human beings are not against creation, but *with* it.

McFague has given a clear preference for space. The body of God anthropology is thus in agreement with *point six* of the study's anthropological reflection.

Conclusion.

It was found that McFague adopts a relational anthropology and is in agreement with *point one* of the anthropology criteria. The common creation story qualifies the body of God anthropology. This means that human beings are dependent on the natural order for their well being. McFague negates anthropocentrism by appealing to the common creation story. She argues for a holistic anthropology that highlights the uniqueness of humankind, but the failure of the body of God model to describe the interaction between mind and body, as well as its neglect of a complexity hierarchy make it susceptible to reductionism. It is thus in disagreement with *point two* of the study's anthropology requirements. It was also noted that the body of God anthropology does not use an *imago Dei* theology as its departure point and thus contravenes *point three* of the study's anthropology criteria. It was suggested that supervenience theory, transpersonal psychology and biblical anthropology are needed as input for the body of God anthropology to support its case for a holistic anthropology that emphasises human particularity. McFague's view on sin takes natural reality seriously and is in agreement with *point four* of the anthropology criteria. Suggestions were made to broaden the scope of McFague understanding of sin. The Pelagian influence on McFague's theology means she stresses human responsibility for the environment. She believes part of human responsibility for the natural environment is adopting a loving eye towards it. This allows the body of God model to address ecojustice issues. It was argued that McFague's analysis of economics and the natural environment is in agreement with *point five* of the study's anthropology requirements. This focus on ecojustice makes the body of God model compatible with an ecoeschatology. It was pointed out that an internalised understanding of grace should be introduced into the body of God anthropology. McFague argues convincingly for a theology orientated towards space rather than human history. The body of God anthropology thus affirms *point six* of the anthropological reflection.

Chapter 6: An evaluation of Sallie McFague's body of God theology

Introduction

This chapter begins with a discussion of McFague's views on several models for the G-W relationship. She takes issue with those that sanction an external relationship between God and the world and thence proposes the body of God model as an alternative. McFague argues that the body of God model is a form of panentheism. The researcher will argue it is not panentheistic, but tends towards pantheism. In this regard a critique of McFague's notion of divine agency and transcendence is provided. The study will focus on the metaphors of mother, lover, friend and God as embodied spirit. The chapter then addresses McFague's pneumatology to determine its cosmic nature. A critique is made of the body of God model's understanding of Christ's identity and function. The chapter closes with a reflection of the extent of McFague's Trinitarian thought.

6.1 McFague's critique of various models for the God-world relationship

McFague identifies five models for the G-W dynamic: deistic, dialogic, monarchical, agential and organic (1993a: 137-140). She rightly takes issue with *deism*. As was noted before deism focuses on God's transcendence and forces an ontological divide between God and creation. The result of this is creation is not viewed as sacred or holy. McFague believes that an advantage with deism is it allows science to scrutinize the natural world without considering divine control, but this expels God from the world. Science is believed to be the only manner of interpreting the world and Christians have, "an interventionist, God-of-the-gaps view of divine reality" (: 138).

The *dialogical* model endorses the notion of a God who speaks to human beings who then respond to God (2002b: 38). In other words faith in this model is about a personal interaction between God and the believer. McFague notes that this model is apparent in the existential theologians such as Kierkegaard and Bultmann. Issues such as sin, guilt and forgiveness have a central role in the dialogical model. The relationship between God and the individual is an I-

Thou type. McFague rightly critiques this model, because of its anthropocentrism and individualism. The dialogical model does not take natural and social reality into consideration.

The third model that McFague considers is the *monarchical* (: 39). This model bears resemblance to theism. God is understood as a king who controls loyal and obedient subjects. The monarchical model informs several theologies' views on creation and providence. God's transcendence is emphasised in order to affirm His power and glory. God is understood in personal and political terms and thus opposes the negative tendencies of deism and the dialogical model. However, McFague takes issue with this model and identifies three major flaws with it: God is remote from the world, is only concerned with human reality and controls the world by dominating it (1987: 65).

First, the monarchical model stresses God's otherness and does not consider His being as a part of creation. God is understood as a king located in an otherworldly kingdom. The consequence of this is, "God is worldless and the world is Godless" (: 65). God's involvement with the world is sporadic and external. This means that God cannot be internally related to creation.

A second issue with the monarchical model is its anthropocentrism (: 66f). God as a powerful king is only concerned with His human subjects and not the cosmos. God provides orders to human subjects who obey, but non-human beings are unable to do this. The monarchical model introduces and promotes dualistic hierarchies, because human subjects are inferior to their king. It was noted before what the consequences of a dualistic hierarchy may be.

McFague also takes issue with the monarchical model's approach to God's exercise of power (: 68f). God acts *on* the world, but not *in* it. According to McFague such an understanding of divine agency negates "human growth and responsibility" (: 68). The reason for this is that God does not distribute power, but monopolises it. The researcher is in agreement with McFague on this point. Such a view of divine sovereignty implies that human beings do not possess any capacity for self-transcendence and it does not acknowledge the power that human beings *do* have.

McFague addresses the *agential* model as well (2002b: 40). This model presupposes God as a person. This means that God may be viewed as a personal, historical agent: His intent and purpose is demonstrated in history. This model has been a resource for the doctrines of

creation, providence, salvation and eschatology: God creates ex nihilo for His glory and not out of necessity, guides and cares for the creation, provides an atoning sacrifice for humankind when it sins and then brings creation to fulfillment (: 41). McFague identifies difficulties with the agential model (: 41f). In the first instance, the sciences do not always facilitate divine agency. Attempts to correlate divine agency with cosmic processes simply endeavours to validate God's existence and scientific truth; they don't "pay attention to the world for its own flourishing" (: 41). Despite these issues McFague believes the agential model is promising, because it uses insights on human personhood.

McFague believes the agential model needs to be synthesised with the organic model (1993a: 141). The former maintains divine transcendence and the latter, divine immanence. The agential model cannot be used alone, because God gains a monopoly on power and freedom, while the organic model on its own negates individuality and freedom. McFague therefore attempts to construct a panentheistic model for the G-W relationship.

Macquarrie also takes issue with the monarchical model, arguing that Christian theology should focus attention on the organic model (1975: 151). The organic model affirms the mysteriousness and dignity of creation and therefore opposes anthropocentrism. Macquarrie insists, however, that the organic model should qualify the monarchical model and uses E. Brunner's equations for the G-W relationship to explain this. Brunner argued for the sovereignty of God with the following equations:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{God minus the world} &= \text{God} \\ \text{The world minus God} &= \text{Zero} (: 148)\end{aligned}$$

Macquarrie observes that the organic model accepts the second of these equations, because the world requires the Spirit for its existence. The organic model cannot affirm the first equation, because it implies that God is not affected by the world. Macquarrie argues that while a loving God is influenced by the world, God did not create out of necessity, but due to the fact that God by God's nature is creative. Macquarrie maintains that the monarchical model needs qualification by the organic model and this will, in turn, "promote better attitudes to the physical environment" (: 151). Macquarrie, like McFague, is critical of the monarchical model, however he does not abandon it choosing instead to synthesise it with the organic model.

McFague and Macquarrie thus both make an attempt to balance God's transcendence and immanence.

Barbour critiques the monarchical, deistic, dialogical and agential models. He believes the *monarchical* model with its stress on divine omnipotence does not facilitate human freedom sufficiently⁵² and makes God accountable for suffering and evil (1974: 157). Moreover, God's omnipotence is in opposition to natural laws, because God is understood to be able to negate these laws. Barbour believes the *deistic* model separates God and the universe. Providence is understood as God giving nature laws that allow it to be self-regulatory. According to this body, the universe is not dependent on God (: 157). Barbour believes the *dialogical* model separates humankind and nature to such a degree that cannot be validated by insights from ecology and evolutionary biologies. The overly subjective tendency of this model does not allow God to be related to nature (: 158). Barbour is more positive about the agential model, which indicates the notion that God relates to nature, but not in a coercive manner. According to this model God is able to act through natural and historical structures. If God's intentions are expressed in the cosmic process then the universe may be seen as part of God's purpose. According to this model God's intentions gain priority over divine causation (: 160).

Barbour believes the dialogical and agential models are complimentary (: 166). Whereas the former stresses God's relationship with humankind, the latter addresses God's relationship with nature. Barbour's approach seems reasonable. A synthesis of these two models appears to overcome anthropocentrism and cosmocentrism. Such a synthesis may be theocentric, because God is the common factor for both. However, Barbour prefers a process model, because it provides a coherent account of the G-W relationship. He thus views the other models as secondary. What Barbour and McFague have in common is their appeal for an organic view of life, because process philosophy endorses the idea of the world as an organism. McFague, on the other hand stresses the agential model, while Barbour views it as secondary to the process model.

⁵² Barbour raises the issue of predestination here. The researcher is in agreement with him on this point, because predestination is deterministic and invariably results in fatalism.

6.2 The world as God's body

6.2.1 Internal relations

McFague's synthesis of the agential and organic models appears to be informed by her search for a relational view of the G-W relationship. She believes that the notion of relationship needs to be understood at the "deepest possible level" (1993a: 145). Extending this view to the G-W relationship means that God and creation need to be understood as internally related.

Metaphors derived from the monarchical model are inappropriate, as they underplay the idea that God and the world are in a mutual relationship (1987: 61). The body of God model stresses the notion of an internal relationship between God and creation. McFague argues this type of relationship makes divine agency and knowledge vis-a-vis the universe possible. Divine agency is interior, as God expresses God's intentions in the universe and operates within creation's natural processes. McFague argues just as human beings have immediate knowledge of their bodies, so God knows His or Her body, the universe. In other words God has interior knowledge of the universe (: 73). McFague writes,

this knowledge is empathetic, intimate, sympathetic knowledge, closer to feeling than to rationality. It is knowledge 'by acquaintance'; it is not 'information about'. Just as we are internally related to our bodies, so God is internally related to all that is (: 73).

C. Johnston affirms McFague's notion of internal relationship (1992: 155-9)⁵³. She argues the notion of external relations is epitomised by the Reformers who used voluntarism as a mechanism to overcome the medieval synthesis that reinforced the social hierarchy known as feudalism. This voluntarism culminated in what Johnston refers to as "atomistic individualism", a worldview that emphasises a remote God, human beings in external relations and nature composed of "atomistic entities" that are externally related (: 156). The notion of external relations does not endorse the interrelatedness of nature, understands human beings as independent of nature and allows ecosystems to be abused. Johnston maintains that the idea of external relations is contrary to contemporary science, which stresses internal relations. At the theological level God is internally related to the world: the notion of the indwelling Holy Spirit and the suffering Christ both attest to this. The indwelling Spirit, "is able to empower and liberate the whole creation through God's loving influence in every entity" (: 167). The view

⁵³ Clayton believes a value of panentheism is its stress on internal divine agency (2004d).

that God is inherently relational provides a strong case for the doctrine of the Trinity.

Johnston's argument appears reasonable. If a relational God is stressed then the doctrine of perichoresis, as well as the economic and immanent doctrines of the Trinity are applicable for an ecological theology. These insights show the value in McFague's appeal for the notion of internal relations vis-a-vis God, humankind and nature.

6.2.2 McFague's claim that the body of God model is a form of panentheism

McFague argues that the universe as God's body is profoundly incarnational (2002a: 50). She maintains God is permanently incarnated and that incarnation is a part of God's very nature. The body of God model therefore synthesises the doctrines of creation and incarnation so that God is viewed as the source of everything that exists. In this manner God is, "the One *in* whom we live and move and have our being" (1988a: 672) (emphasis the researcher's). McFague understands *being* in this quotation as both spiritual and bodily being.

McFague insists that the body of God model is panentheistic (1987: 72). If God is the source of all that is then nothing can exist outside of God, however God cannot be reduced to the creation. In other words the world cannot exist without God. McFague extends her argument for panentheism by reflecting on Ex. 33: 23b where Moses is forbidden to see God's face and only His back. She argues that this story prompts humankind to see God's "invisible grandeur" in the bodies of planet earth. In other words earthly bodies reflect something about God (1993a: 131).

McFague maintains that the body of God model changes the way divine transcendence and immanence are understood. The universe is characterised by embodiment and if God is *in* creation it suggests, "God's transcendence is embodied" (: 133). In other words humankind can only perceive or understand divine transcendence in terms of embodiment. McFague therefore seems to be arguing that God is incarnated in the universe's diverse bodies. The implication of this is that no one body holds a monopoly on the divine presence. All the bodies of the universe and earth reflect God. McFague reiterates that viewing bodies as God's reflection is seeing God from the back, as was the case with Moses. This means that bodies are *reflections* of God, but not God Him or Herself. McFague therefore attempts to maintain a balance between divine immanence and transcendence. As was noted before the body of God model also synthesises the agential and organic models to preserve a panentheistic theology.

McFague claims that the world as God's body opposes pantheism. She argues that the body of God model is closer to pantheism than a monarchical model, which may tend to deism, but the body of God model does not completely identify God with the world (1987: 71). In this manner God cannot be reduced to the world. McFague asserts that agential metaphors are needed to prevent the body of God from becoming pantheistic and proposes God as: mother, lover, friend and embodied spirit of the universe. The first three will now be addressed.

6.2.2.1 Divine agency: God as mother, lover and friend

McFague uses personal metaphors to describe divine agency: mother, lover and friend. She argues that these metaphors reflect central relationships necessary for being human, providing important notions of human agency. McFague insists, because human beings are the *imago Dei*, it is tenable to use human agency as an analogue for divine agency (: 81). McFague argues that the significance of using these personal agential metaphors is due to their stress on divine immanence, because God is understood to be deeply involved in a relational and mutualistic manner with the world (: 85).

Moreover, these personal metaphors appear to provide a Trinitarian framework for McFague's panentheism (: 91) In terms of the *mother* metaphor⁵⁴, God is understood to be the creator of the universe, but remains intimately involved with the creation. God as mother means that God is most concerned with life in its totality. In other words life is an expression of God, though not identical to God in the same manner that children are an expression of their parents, but not identical to them. God as *lover* means that God suffers with His or Her body, the world, and desires for it to be healed and all its parts reunited. Just as lovers view each other as precious, so God views the world. God as love means that God is the world's saviour. God as *friend* views God as the world's sustainer. According to this metaphor divine immanence is stressed. God is understood as a companion who is in a reciprocal relationship with humankind. This partnership is meant to bring about the healing of the body's parts.

Divine agency vis-a-vis these personal metaphors is understood by McFague as God loving and caring for the world. Central to the body of God model is the notion that God loves bodies

⁵⁴ It is worth noting that McFague also denotes this metaphor as *parent*, but appears to favour mother in order to address issues relating to feminist theology. She argues a matriarchical view of God does not intend to generate another form of dualistic hierarchy (1989: 139).

(: 74). In order to love bodies God is in an internal relationship with them. To assert that God loves bodies means that She or He requires for their basic needs to be met. Humankind is to function as co-workers with God in order to achieve this. How does love relate to God as mother, lover and friend?

Each expresses love in a unique manner, but have in common the purpose to unite life. God as mother expresses love in the form of *agape*. This is the love for life in its entirety. This means God the parent-mother desires to affirm the diverse creatures that have “bodied forth” from Him or Her (: 92). *Agape* love assists the continuation of life in the universe. For McFague *agape* is a form of love that is unique to parenthood and she writes,

Parental love is the most powerful and intimate experience we have of giving love whose return is not calculated (though a return is appreciated): it is the gift of *life as such* to others (1988b: 255) (Emphasis McFague’s).

God as lover expresses *eros* love incarnationally towards God’s beloved creation. It is through this love that God heals, reunites and accepts all the bodies in the world. God as friend expresses *philia* love in terms of companionship. This love assists human beings as co-workers with God to bring all of creation to fulfillment. This means that the sharing of life’s basic needs is critical to *philia*.

God’s love for the world means God cares for it internally. This caring attitude highlights the notion of a God who acts in the natural processes of the world (: 73). God is the agent in these processes and therefore is not reduced to the world. His or Her aims are expressed within the universe. God’s care for the world is thus a form of divine providence. McFague argues that this care is expressed in a manner similar to the way human beings care for their own bodies, “with a high degree of *sympathetic concern*” (: 74) (Emphasis the researcher’s).

6.2.2.2 Divine agency: God as the embodied spirit of the universe

The fourth metaphor McFague uses to describe divine agency is God as “embodied spirit of the universe” (1993a: 150). She argues that if the G-W relationship were understood analogously to the relationship between spirit and body then an agential-organic model is possible. In other words God is to world as spirit is to body. McFague insists both spirit and body are metaphors and relate to the back of God and not His or Her face. She prefers the use

of spirit rather than other agential metaphors such as soul, heart, self or mind, because it is generic (: 144). It is only human beings that possess a mind or self. In other words by making use of spirit, McFague attempts to negate anthropocentrism. She takes issue particularly with theories that use the mind-body dynamic to understand the G-W relationship, because they operate within a dualistic framework⁵⁵ and often explain divine agency as controlling. The implication of such theories is that God orders, directs and controls the universe. McFague has a valid argument, because the mind-body analogy seems to imply an asymmetrical relationship where God assumes the majority of power and this in turn may limit the freedom of the universe. Spirit, on the other hand, promotes a relational view of the G-W dynamic.

The body of God model therefore appears to have a significant pneumatology. It understands the world as God's body, a body that the spirit enlivens and empowers. McFague understands this process of enlivening as the work of the spirit as the breath of life (: 143). She argues the breath of life makes creation dependent on God. In addition to this the spirit as the breath of life unites creation, because all creatures require it for their existence. McFague uses Gen. 2 to support her view. She insists that this story shows the universe's dust to be empowered by God's breath. In this manner God is viewed as the creator and renewer of the universe. McFague understands God as the source of the dynamic and diverse universe. She therefore argues it is God that allows creation to evolve in the manner that it does. The stress of the body of God model is therefore on the continuous creative activity of God. McFague asserts that divine activity, when God is understood as the breath of life, is not focused on direction or purpose, but on divine presence (: 146). Her logic is that all bodies are inspirited and evolving. God is the spirit of these bodies and is therefore in the process of evolution, or as she puts it, "continuous with this evolutionary process" (: 146). By doing this McFague attempts to explain divine agency in relation to postmodern science.

By stressing a form of permanent incarnation, she argues against divine intervention. McFague stresses the notion of empowerment vis-a-vis divine agency. She writes,

God's presence and action are evident as the breath of life that gives all bodies, all forms of matter, the energy or power to become themselves (: 148).

⁵⁵ McFague insists one of the values with the body of God model is that it overcomes dualism and thus makes salvation relevant to both the spiritual and physical aspects of life. Her argument is that if God is embodied then bodies matter to Him or Her (1988: 672).

McFague stresses the empowering role of the spirit, rather than its function as the guide or director of the evolutionary process. God as the spirit of the world acts in a ubiquitous manner by providing creation with the ability to diversify. The spirit of life initiates this diversification mechanism. The researcher understands McFague to mean that the evolutionary process was begun by the spirit of life and is maintained by it.

In addition to this McFague stresses the redemptive role of God. It was noted before that the role of God as friend is to sustain creation. McFague imports the sustaining function of God into her pneumatology. She differentiates between the spirit, which is the source of life, and the Holy Spirit, which renews life. For the body of God model it is not the spirit that gives direction to the creative process, but the Holy Spirit that does this (: 147-8). McFague appears to be implying that the Holy Spirit does not *direct* natural processes, but gives them *direction*. In other words it does not coerce, but lures creation⁵⁶. The Holy Spirit not only gives creation direction at the biological level, but also at the cultural and historical levels. It therefore functions through humankind. In this manner human beings become the, “hands and feet of the body of God on our planet” (: 148). By giving creation direction, the Holy Spirit is bringing it to fulfillment. In other words there is an eschatological role for the Holy Spirit, which will bring, “creation into harmonious union” (: 147).

These insights from McFague appear to bear resemblance to Tillich’s notion of God’s originating, sustaining and directing creativity (1968: 281-298)⁵⁷. For Tillich God’s *originating creativity* is His or Her act of creation. Tillich accepts the doctrine of creation ex nihilo, unlike McFague who believes it is unbiblical (1993a: 151). However, what is significant about Tillich’s views on God’s act of creation is his idea of creatureliness. He maintains creation out of nothing prevents dualism. In other words Tillich appears to be endorsing a monistic view of reality. Thinkers may argue that Tillich, with his extensive existential analysis, is orientated primarily towards humankind. However, monism implies that everything is in some manner interconnected and interrelated. The consequence of this is God, humankind and natures are in a dynamic relationship. Tillich insists creatureliness, “carries in itself the power of being” (: 281). In a monistic view of reality, creatureliness may be extended from the human level to creation in general. In other words all creation inherently has the

⁵⁶ See L. Ford’s understanding of the manner in which God lures creation to higher possibilities from a process perspective in his, *The Lure of God*.

⁵⁷ This is taken from volume one of Tillich’s *Systematic Theology*.

power of being. What is unique about human beings is that they are able to participate in the God who is the ground of being in order to overcome nonbeing (i.e. anxiety). These reflections on Tillich's view on creatureliness imply the dependence of creation on God, a notion that resonates through McFague's thought.

In terms of *sustaining creativity*, Tillich accepts the notion that God preserves the world and thus rejects deism (: 290). For Tillich, God's relationship with the world is characterised by continuous creation. This divine action operates within the natural laws and structures set in place by God. Tillich insists that God by God's nature is creative and functions creatively within temporal reality. God gives, "the power of being to everything that has being out of the creative ground of the divine life" (: 291).

Finally, Tillich refers to the *directing creativity* of God (: 293). He understands this as divine providence. For Tillich providence must be understood such that the freedom of both God and creation is preserved. It is a permanent form of divine agency where God brings everything to fulfillment. This direction is available in every finite situation. Tillich does not understand God's directing creativity as coercion, but rather as a quality of God that "drives" or "lures" (: 296).

McFague insists that the spirit as the source of life is panentheistic (: 149-150). The world is in God and God is in the world, yet the world is dependent on God for its existence. In other words God is the breath of the world. God does not require breath from the world. For McFague,

God is embodied but not necessarily or totally. Rather, God is *sacramentally embodied*: God is mediated, expressed, in and through embodiment, but not necessarily or totally (: 150) (Emphasis the researcher's).

McFague argues that this approach does not reduce God to the world; neither does it locate God in another reality. In terms of divine immanence God is present as the breath of life and in His or Her transcendence is the empowerer of the universe.

6.2.2.3 Divine agency: creation

McFague uses three metaphors to explain creation: production, procreation, and procreation-emanation (: 151). She takes issue with the production metaphor, which is described in the Genesis creation stories. This metaphor emphasises God's transcendence, which then implies divine sovereignty. The result of this is God controls the world externally. The deistic and monarchical models for the G-W relationship fit into production views of creation. Creation is understood as complete, static and *ex nihilo* (: 152). The problem with this is creation is not understood as continuous and dynamic. Moreover, the production model enforces a dualistic hierarchy of mind and body (: 156). In this view the mind is superior to the body and controls it.

McFague believes the procreation model is a better alternative to the production metaphor. This approach underscores God's immanence and appears to stress that God is internally related to creation. This intimacy is due to creation coming from God and not from some *stuff* other than God (: 151). McFague argues creation out of nothing generates an external relationship between God and the world, while creation out of something other than God negates the creation's dependence on God. Creation from God's being, on the other hand, presents an internal relationship between God and creation, however McFague stresses that this does not mean that God is reduced to creation. The procreation model supports the notion of a continuous creation. This endorses God's continual divine agency in the creative processes of nature, as was described previously. For McFague creation emerges from God and then continues to grow and change (: 152).

McFague again makes an attempt to balance divine transcendence with divine immanence. She does this by synthesising the procreation model with the metaphor of emanation (: 153). Emanation is the doctrine that creation's life comes about from the energy of its divine source. The procreation model implies that God gives the universe its multitude of bodies, while emanation signifies the idea that God empowers and enlivens these bodies. This makes creation dependent on God who is the source of life. McFague's synthesis of the procreation and emanation metaphors supports her notion of "immanent transcendence" (: 154). She prefers to understand transcendence not as existing apart from physical reality, but rather as describing something extraordinary. This means God's transcendence is concrete. It can be seen in those facets of creation that are extraordinary. McFague argues that is the diversity of

creation that reflects the glory of God. The procreative-emanationist model stresses God as the originator of and empowerer of creation. It is this breath of life that facilitates creation's diversity.

6.2.2.4. Suffering

In terms of theodicy McFague signifies the notion of God being at risk vis-a-vis the world (1987: 72). She assumes a monistic view in this regard and therefore does accept a dualism where two realities are in opposition to each other. This implies that God has the capacity to suffer and be vulnerable. With its stress on divine immanence the body of God model stresses that suffering and evil impact God, humanity and the natural order. God is in a sense involved with evil, but is not the source of it. By this McFague appears to mean that God is personally affected by the suffering that is a consequence of evil. God therefore experiences the pain⁵⁸ caused by evil. If the universe is God's body then God experiences the pain felt by creation. The advantage with this approach to suffering is that God has suffered not just on the cross, but before and after it as well. McFague insists that God overcomes suffering through the power of love. This makes human beings co-workers with God in addressing situations that cause suffering. Human beings are to overcome evil and suffering, not through domination and control, but through love and care. The researcher supports McFague vis-a-vis the issue of theodicy, because the body of God theology signifies a God who suffers, as well as human responsibility.

6.3 Is the body of God model panentheistic?

It was indicated previously that the body of God model makes a sustained attempt to balance divine transcendence and immanence. McFague's argument for panentheism is determined by her understanding of divine agency. A convincing argument for divine immanence is presented throughout the body of God model. McFague's concepts of internal relations; her use of personal metaphors and the notion of an embodied spirit for divine agency; and the use of a procreative-emanationist understanding of creation all signify God's immanence in creation. In

⁵⁸ M. Sarot argues that divine passibility implies that God can feel pain and must therefore be corporeal in: 1992, *God, Passibility and Corporeality*.

addition to this McFague uses the panentheistic *en* metaphor in various places of her theological reflection.

She asserts for example that creation has its existence *in* God and the body of God model emphasises the “creator *in* the creation” (1993a: 132, 133). McFague writes,

a panentheistic view of the relation of God and the world is compatible with our model of God as the spirit that is the source... Everything that is *in* God and God is *in* all things and yet God is not identical with the universe (1993a: 149).

There are therefore indications that the body of God model is panentheistic. However, McFague’s argument for panentheism hinges on the issue of divine agency. If her understanding of divine agency can support divine transcendence then the body of God model is a form of panentheism. A critique will thus be provided of McFague’s use of personal metaphors, God as embodied spirit and the notion of procreative-emanationist creation.

6.3.1 Mother, lover and friend

It was indicated before that one of the requirements for theological language is there should be a dialectical relationship between primary-religious and secondary-theological language. Theological language interprets religious language in an ordered, coherent manner. Not all of religious language can be taken literally. To do so would result in over-familiarity with God and thus idolatry. In other words, there needs to be a balance between primary-religious and secondary-theological language. Specifically, theological language should be both existential and conceptual.

McFague’s use of the metaphors mother, lover and friend is motivated by an emphasis on the notion of internal relations. These three metaphors emphasise the intimate, close relationship that God has with the world, however they do not seem to move from the primary-religious level to the theological-conceptual stage. Religious language relates to the subjective experience of God, while theological language addresses the ontological aspect of God and thus considers God’s objective reality. In other words theological language attempts to conceptualise God’s otherness. The metaphors of mother, lover and friend do not appear to address God’s transcendence adequately. Moreover, they lack conceptual purchase.

Another problem the researcher has with the body of God model's use of personal metaphors is whether these articulate a genuine relationship between God and the world. The study noted before that in order for two parties to be in a relationship, both need their identity (i.e. their otherness) to be affirmed. The metaphors of mother, lover and friend do not appear to make a clear distinction between the world and God's otherness. McFague's counter to this would be that a metaphor relates to the *is* and *is not* of its reference point. God has a body in a manner that is and is not like a human body. But a concern here is that the body of God model argues extensively for the *is* of God, but does not focus much on the *is not* of God. The consequence of this is that God's otherness does not get sufficient conceptualisation. In this manner a relationship between two *others* is not maintained.

Kaufman affirms what the researcher has been arguing. He maintains that the metaphors of mother, lover and friend are applicable if they are able to depict a relationship where the distinctiveness of both persons is presented in such a manner that the two remain in a positive relationship with each other (1988: 16). Kaufman observes that the world as the body of God implies that God appears to be mother of His or Her own body. Moreover, it appears that God directs love and friendship towards His or Her own body rather than to personal counterparts. Kaufman is implying that God appears to be in a relationship with Him or Herself and not with unique subjects. The impression here is that if the body of God model were to be orientated more towards divine transcendence then it may be able to argue convincingly for a genuine relationship between God and the world.

Kaufman also argues that personalistic metaphors, such as those employed by McFague, do not address complex realities such as *God* or the *natural order*. Complex realities also need to be understood conceptually. He insists that if reflection on the G-W relationship is to be relevant, it needs to centralise concepts such as "life", "creativity" or "universe" and not personalistic images (: 17). Kaufman believes that McFague has not conceptualised her personalistic metaphors sufficiently and the result of this is theology has religious images as its foundation. He insists that a theology that is concerned with ecological issues needs to reflect on God by using metaphors that are conceptual by nature, as these are able to take up into themselves, "the great complexity of reality as we know it today" (: 18). Kaufman believes a concept such the Trinity would prove to be more adequate for such theological reflection.

These insights signify a problem with using highly personalistic metaphors such as mother, lover and friend. McFague's use of these terms has an implicit Trinitarian theology, but this is not conceptualised satisfactorily. The metaphors of mother, lover and friend do seem to stress divine immanence and are therefore prone to reducing God to the world. McFague's metaphor of the world as God's body therefore appears to be more pantheistic than panentheistic. Divine agency is only possible if the notion of a transcendent God is clearly articulated. In order to act in the world, God needs to be transcendent. Her metaphor of God as the embodied spirit of the world is now considered.

6.3.2 God: the embodied spirit of the world

McFague argues for the notion of divine embodied spirit from the perspective that human beings are inspirited bodies. The advantage to such an approach is that it understands spirit as a general term and therefore negates anthropocentrism. By adopting such an approach McFague is able to signify the unity of God, humankind and nature. She argues against the use of the mind-body analogy to articulate the G-W relationship, because it is dualistic and views God as controlling. The body of God model is what McFague terms a "spirit theology" (1993a: 145). It is therefore an attempt to explain how God as spirit is able to influence physical reality, however McFague is not clear about this issue. In light of what has been discussed, the researcher takes issue with the body of God model on two fronts: it appears to be ambiguous about how exactly the spirit may influence physical reality and does not seem to explain God's transcendence sufficiently.

6.3.2.1 Divine agency

McFague believes the spirit theology she is advocating is commensurate with postmodern science. The spirit empowers creation and thence allows diversifying in the manner that it does. This empowerment mechanism is for McFague evidence of God's involvement with the evolutionary process. God is both source and empowerer of the natural order. The value to such an approach is that it makes creation dependent on God. A problem with McFague's approach is it does not seem to be clear about how exactly a spiritual entity, such as God, is able to influence physical realities such as cosmic and biological processes. In addition to this, the body of God model does not stipulate how God's spirit relates to space and time. The body of God model does not specify how is it possible for the infinite to incorporate the finite into

its mode of being. Pannenberg's notion of the infinite that includes the finite is important in this regard (Tupper 1973: 204). Process philosophy's notion of time in the mode of God's being appears to be an adequate reflection as well.

Moltmann's concept of the indwelling Spirit takes God's occupation of space and time seriously. In this manner Moltmann is able to express divine immanence without compromising God's spiritual nature. In addition to this, Moltmann addresses scientific concerns about how the non-physical may influence the physical. The Spirit gives nature its capacity for change. It "penetrates" the world and thus provides it with the potential to change and evolve (1985: 12).

Moltmann links God's omnipresence with His or Her spatial presence and therefore attempts to make space an attribute of God⁵⁹. He uses the term "absolute space" to denote the space in which created beings exist (: 154). Absolute space is the spatial aspect of the divine reality and thus the direct presence of God. Moltmann makes a distinction between space and matter. Finite objects are located in absolute space, which is infinite. This distinction allows Moltmann to articulate the difference between God and creation. In this manner objects are located in God, but are not God. Moltmann writes,

if God perceives everything immediately and directly through his omnipresence, this presupposes that God's eternal, uncreated omnipresence is *the same as* the omnipresence of space (: 155).

Moltmann also addresses the issue of God and time (1985: 114). He believes at the moment of creation, God drew His (sic) eternity into himself in order to make time for the creation. In this manner God gave creation its own particular form of time. God's relationship with creation's time is a halfway point between God's eternity and creation's time. It is at this point where God expresses God's "resolve to create" (: 114). Moltmann thus presents a convincing argument for the indwelling of God in space and time.

These insights highlight the possibility of relating God's Spirit to space and time. A problem with the body of God model is that it does not indicate how the empowering spirit is located in the universe's space and time. This compromises McFague's conjecture that the spirit is a

⁵⁹ Pannenberg maintains the Spirit operates in space and time, "to time by the power of the future that gives creatures their own present.. to space by the simultaneity of creatures in their duration" (1994: 102).

divine agent. The consequence of this is her argument for panentheism is weakened, with a resulting tendency towards pantheism. The issue of God's transcendence in the body of God model then becomes problematic.

6.3.2.2 Transcendence

McFague claims that the body of God model is a form of panentheism. She provides a sustained argument for the presence of God's spirit within creation and thus makes a strong case for divine immanence. The body of God model disavows the mind-body analogy as an argument for panentheism.

Despite the fact that that McFague takes issue with the mind-body analogy, she initially uses it as an argument against pantheism. She insists that just as human beings do not identify themselves completely with their bodies, so God cannot be completely identified with the world (1990: 213). Human bodies are expressions of humanhood, but human beings have the unique ability to *reflect* about their bodies and therefore to objectify them. Human beings verbalize about the human body. This indicates that the human self is able to consciously disconnect from his or her body. McFague argues that this is analogous with the world as God's body. God has the capacity to reflect on His or Her body, the world. In other words McFague has used the mind-body dynamic to prevent the body of God model from being a form of pantheism, but in later theological reflection has abandoned the use of this analogy altogether so as to prevent anthropocentrism. The consequence of this is a central argument for divine transcendence in the body of God model is neglected in McFague's later theological reflection.

Moreover, by focusing on spirit and body at the expense of mind, the body of God model utilises a narrow anthropology for theological reflection on the G-W relationship. Jesus is recorded as saying that human beings are to love God, "with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind" (Mk. 12:30). Human beings are therefore not just spirit and body, but mind as well. It was highlighted previously that mentality is not unique to human beings. The process concept of panpsychism was used to illustrate this. If the human being is an appropriate representation of what God is like then it is important to have a broad anthropology. It was for this reason that the researcher suggested a modification of McFague's anthropology to include the notion of mind or in the least, mentality. The idea that the mind is

irreducible to the body has implications at the theological level, for it implies that if God has a mind it cannot be reduced to the world. In addition to this it was argued before that embodied beings have the capacity for self-transcendence. Human beings in particular are more than their bodies. If the G-W relationship were understood in this manner than a stronger case for panentheism vis-a-vis divine embodiment may be possible. In this manner the world may be understood as God's body, moreover, with God transcending it. In the body of God model's case, little consideration is given to the mind-body interaction. It is for this reason that McFague's doctrine of God may have reductionistic tendencies.

A problem with the body of God model is that it, as is the case with some forms of panentheism, views transcendence as the opposite of immanence. G. Jantzen believes that transcendence needs to be understood as the opposite of reductionism and not immanence (1984: 127). She maintains such an approach stresses the irreducibility of God to the universe and that the universe is God's body. McFague insists the body of God model does not reduce God to the world; neither does it locate God in another reality. God is present as the breath of life and in His or Her transcendence is the empowerer of the universe, but McFague makes this claim without viewing transcendence as the opposite of reductionism. She focuses instead on God's presence in the world as the embodied spirit.

The researcher believes the mind-body metaphor is better able to demonstrate the nature of God's transcendence and His or Her immanent agency within creation. In addition to this it appears to present a stronger argument for divine embodiment than the body of God model, because it is able to reflect on how it is possible for the non-physical to influence the physical. This has implications for how divine agency and transcendence is to be understood. Jantzen and Clayton both make use of the mind-body analogy to argue for panentheism.

Jantzen argues that if God is to be considered a person then it seems appropriate to affirm divine embodiment. She insists there are three abilities needed for something to be considered a person: perception, action and presence (1984: 74-100). The body of God model seems to meet Jantzen's second and third requirements for personhood, but what of perception (i.e. the concept of mind)? Perception requires sensory organs and this necessitates embodiment (: 74-8). It has been argued by theologians that God does not require perception to know what human beings know: God can know what human beings know without sensory organs. In response to this Jantzen differentiates between two types of perception (: 79). The first is

perception of objects and events external to the person through sensory organs. The second is perception of objects and events internally, that is, within the body and these include experiences such as hunger, pain or contentment. Jantzen denotes the latter as “direct awareness”, because it is unmediated (: 79). She argues theologians typically understand God’s knowledge of the world as direct. God does not need light waves to see or sound waves to hear human being’s thoughts and intentions. If we are to understand God’s knowledge of the world as unmediated then it is tenable to refer to the world as God’s body. Jantzen does identify disanalogies: God is omniscient and thus has complete knowledge of the processes of His or Her body, whereas human beings have partial knowledge of their bodies. What is significant at this point is Jantzen has provided an argument for the notion of a divine mind functioning within the world. Perception requires a mind. God therefore appears to have a mind that interacts with the world.

The body of God does not reflect adequately on the concept of mind. The result of this is it does not seem to provide an argument for omniscience and divine embodiment, because both of these require a divine mind. McFague does not seem to affirm how exactly God’s omniscience is to be understood. In this manner God’s transcendence is compromised.

Clayton makes extensive use of the mind-body analogy to articulate God’s irreducibility (i.e. God’s transcendence) and divine agency. He believes human agency is an adequate analogy of divine action in the world⁶⁰. An advantage to this approach is its ability to explain the relationship between divine agency and natural laws (1997: 242). Clayton then describes supervenience theory in order to articulate the thesis that non-physical properties are able to influence physical states. He uses this as an analogy for divine agency and terms it the “Panentheistic Analogy” (2004a: 210). Clayton argues there is a bi-directional information flow between mental properties and the brain. This becomes an analogy for the G-W relationship where God is viewed as the mind of the world. God has contact with all events in the universe, albeit on a non-physical level and monitors this input of data. God then responds to this input by acting on the universe. While the universe influences God, He or She is not reduced to it. The concept of spirit is at a higher level than the mind, with the former being irreducible to the latter. The spirit is mediated through the mind and thence acts on the

⁶⁰ Clayton believes however that divine agency cannot be limited to one body as is the case with human beings. It includes the entire universe (2004c).

universe (: 211). The researcher is in agreement with Clayton. The benefits with the panentheistic analogy are: God is not reduced to the world and divine transcendence is maintained⁶¹, God is understood to be influenced by the world (i.e. theodicy) and God affects the world through downward causation.

These insights from Jantzen and Clayton stress the need for a mind-body analogy to argue for divine transcendence and embodiment. The researcher suggests the body of God model needs to incorporate the concept of mind into its argument for God's transcendence and agency. If this is not done then the body of God model may tend towards pantheism. Moreover, McFague is not clear about divine agency. Her insistence on a spiritual theology that disavows any reflection on the mind-body dynamic presents a genuine problem with any attempt to integrate the notion of mind into the body of God model.

6.3.2.3 Creation

McFague insists the doctrine of creation ex nihilo is unbiblical and was a theological development in the early church (1993a: 151). Jantzen affirms this view and believes the doctrine of creation ex nihilo, "is nowhere directly stated in the bible" (1984: 133). McFague and Jantzen's views appear sensible. If it is assumed God did not create out of *nothing* or *something* or *anything at all* then it seems reasonable to assert that all there was at the moment of creation was God. In other words God had to create out of what was available to God: His or Her being.

However, Macquarrie offers valuable insights on the concepts *being* and *nothing* vis-a-vis God. He maintains panentheism presents God as being and nothing (1984: 172). The term *being* refers to the manner in which something is able to exist. For example human existence is different from the way a stone exists. While both exist, their modes of existence differ. This is affirmative of God. God does not exist in the same manner as objects in time and space. In this sense God does not exist, because God's mode of existence is at a higher, incomprehensible level. This means that God is *nothing*. The researcher interprets Macquarrie's proposal here as implying that God's transcendence is God's nothingness. To

⁶¹ The implication of this is that God is not dependent on the world in order to exist. This makes belief in an eternal life possible, because God does not need a body to exist.

assert that God created out of nothing appears to indicate that God created out of God's transcendence. This highlights the notion that God gave creation being⁶². Macquarrie writes, "God exists in the sense of the *source* of all existence" (: 173) (emphasis the researcher's). Macquarrie argues from a panentheistic perspective and this means God remains in the world after creating it. The notion that God gives being or *lets be* highlights God's desire for life. This means God is more focused on giving life than coercing creation to His or Her divine will. These reflections are significant because they affirm: God's transcendence, creation ex nihilo, the dependence of creation on God and God's immanent life giving attributes.

These insights highlight the notion that creation ex nihilo may be possible. Moreover, God is transcendent and also immanent as the life giving Spirit. God therefore remains in creation by augmenting its being. The importance of Macquarrie's insights is that it balances the notion of divine transcendence with an emanationist creation approach⁶³.

McFague's approach expresses the closeness of God with the creation. The procreative and emanation models both stress God's immanence. However, McFague's argument for divine transcendence vis-a-vis to creation does not appear convincing⁶⁴. She prefers to understand divine transcendence as something extraordinary. It can be seen in those facets of creation that are extraordinary. McFague argues it is the diversity of creation that reflects the glory of God. The procreative-emanationist model stresses God as the originator and empowerer of a diverse creation. While these arguments are convincing from an aesthetic, emotive perspective, they have less purchase from a rational, intellectual point of view. McFague declares, "The doctrine of creation in this view is a practical, not an intellectual affair" (2002b: 43). The consequence of this view is God's transcendence is not giving enough conceptual clarity. McFague's approach to creation appears to be a form of pantheism.

The above reflection shows the body of God model has a tendency towards pantheism and is thus in disagreement with *point one* of the study's requirements for an ecological theology. McFague's argument for divine transcendence and agency were shown to be weak. Her disavowal of the mind-body analogy as an argument for divine corporeality was indicated to be

⁶² This would equate with Tillich's concept of God as the ground of being.

⁶³ He uses two metaphors to denote classical theism's account of creation and an emanationist view of creation. The former is referred to as "making" and the latter as "emanation" (1984: 37). *Making* emphasises God's external relationship with creation and *emanation* stresses God's closeness.

⁶⁴ K. Tanner notes that the old models of creation that McFague critiques were also used to signify the creation's dependence on God. According to these models God is the universe's goal, power and source (1994: 418).

unwarranted. The doctrine of creation ex nihilo was shown to be able to preserve God's transcendence and intimate relationship with creation. This view of creation is thus in opposition to McFague's procreation-emanation perspective.

6.4 The body of God pneumatology

It was noted previously that McFague does not adequately explain how a non-physical reality such as God's embodied spirit may influence physical reality. She has little reflection on how God's spirit may be in space and time. It was suggested that the body of God model should make use of the mind-body analogy in order to correct this problem. The value with McFague's spirit theology is that it does attempt to address divine agency vis-a-vis the evolutionary process. The notion that the embodied spirit is the source of life and the empowerer of natural processes highlights creation's dependence on God. McFague's views on the work of the spirit is reflected in the following words by Moltmann,

The possibility of perceiving God in all things, and all things in God, is grounded theologically on an understanding of the Spirit of God as the *power* of creation and the *wellspring* of life (1992: 35) (Emphasis the researcher's).

While McFague's pneumatology is not as developed as Moltmann's, its intention is the same: an orientation towards the cosmos. In other words McFague's spirit theology is a *cosmic* pneumatology. The spirit as the source and empowerer of nature's dynamic processes is continuous with the evolutionary process.

McFague's intention vis-a-vis to her pneumatology is to signify the concept of God dwelling in and permeating creation with the spirit. This is important, because creation is viewed as holy. M. Brinkman maintains the Christian understanding of a transcendent God only views divine immanence in terms of Christ's Spirit. The operation of the Spirit of Christ is believed to be efficient only in the preaching of the gospel and in the sacraments (1998: 209).

According to such a view the Holy Spirit is merely concerned with the sanctification of human beings. Brinkman's insights are relevant. Such a view of the Holy Spirit is problematic, because it is anthropocentric and localises God's presence in the sacraments.

The body of God model overcomes these two problems with the Spirit, because it stresses the spirit in creation and its processes. Moreover, McFague broadens the scope of the sacraments

to include all creation. She insists that God's presence is one of sacramental embodiment. This means the world is a sacrament of the divine. This affirms Ruether's view that an ecological theology may be of the sacramental or covenantal variety (2000: 603-14)⁶⁵. The former uses the bible and mysticism to generate an experience where human beings feel an intimate connection with God and the earth. The focus is thus on togetherness and communion. The covenantal approach uses the bible and the entire covenant tradition as paradigms for what should constitute correct relationships with God and the earth. The body of God model appears to be a sacramental ecological theology. A challenge for such a sacramental is how to reflect on God's transcendence. Brinkman writes,

Besides the more 'intimate' imagery of the creator-creature relation, which the pneumatologically orientated theologians are presently highlighting, there is also the more 'distanced' imagery, easily recognised in Scripture (1998: 210).

Brinkman provides a necessary reminder that God's transcendence needs as much articulation in an ecological theology as divine immanence. It was highlighted before that McFague's argument for divine transcendence is problematic with the result that her approach seems pantheistic.

Moreover, McFague creates a dichotomy between the spirit and the Holy Spirit. The former is the source of life and the latter its renewer. McFague believes the Holy Spirit gives natural and cultural/historical processes direction and will thus bring all creation to fulfillment. Christian theology affirms the notion that it is the one Spirit that is involved in creation, as well as its renewal. K. Nürnberger asserts,

the Spirit is indeed an expression of the creative, redemptive and transformative presence of God in Christ, valid and accessible in all times and all places (2002: 78).

Moltmann argues that humankind's experience of the Holy Spirit reveals the creative Spirit in nature (1985: 101). He supports his argument by referring to Pauline theology in Romans. Moltmann understands the term "yearning" to be the self's experience of the Holy Spirit, because believers long to be God's children (Rom. 8: 23). This "yearning" is also an experience of creation, which longs for God's sons to be revealed. Moreover, the Holy Spirit

⁶⁵ J. Haught identifies three approaches to a theology of the environment: apologetic, sacramental and eschatological (1993: 90-110). He favours the eschatological approach, arguing that, "in the Bible sacramentality is taken up into eschatology" (: 105).

expresses this restlessness with “inexpressible sighing” (Rom. 8: 26). In other words what believers experience as the Holy Spirit is also an experience of the Spirit in creation. This signifies the continuity between the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of creation. They are the same Spirit. This means the one Spirit is the source, empowerer and transformer of creation. McFague’s dichotomy therefore appears to be a false one. The consequence of this is the Trinitarian aspect of McFague’s cosmic pneumatology is weakened. This will be discussed under the Trinitarian analysis of the body of God model.

Is McFague’s pneumatology acceptable for an ecological theology? The body of God pneumatology is cosmic by nature. While McFague does not provide a strong argument for how precisely the spirit may penetrate matter, she does argue for an extension of the notion of sacrament to include the entire universe. The importance of this approach is that it makes creation dependent on God. However, McFague separates the spirit from the Holy Spirit. In this manner the possibility for Trinitarian reflection is reduced. The researcher is therefore undecided about the compatibility of McFague’s pneumatology with *point two* of the requirements for an ecological theology.

6.5 Body of God Christology

McFague does not accept traditional understandings of the identity and work of Jesus Christ, arguing that these interpretations lead to “Jesusolatry”, anthropocentrism, individualism and a spiritualised soteriology (2001: 159).

In terms of *Jesusolatry*, Jesus is understood to be the unique incarnation of God. This means God entered the world as Jesus at one particular time and place, to die a unique death for human sin in the form of a sacrifice and then to be resurrected so that when human beings are united with Jesus they are freed from sin. McFague believes this Jesus-centredness limits God, because God is confined to, “Jesus and to Jesus’ work of forgiving human sin” (: 159). In other words not only is God’s work bound, but human responsibility as well. In this manner injustice at the human and natural level is ignored.

Christology has also focused on an *anthropocentric, individualistic and spiritualised* soteriology. McFague believes these interpretations of salvation are psychological, as they ease the sinner’s conscience (: 160). The consequence of this is salvation does not relate to the

earth's well being. A spiritualised understanding of salvation permits human beings to overlook injustices in this world and thus support the status quo.

McFague therefore attempts to construct a Christology that addresses ecological concerns⁶⁶. She maintains there are six possible Christologies in this regard: prophetic, Wisdom⁶⁷, sacramental, eschatological⁶⁸, process⁶⁹ and liberation⁷⁰. McFague favours prophetic and sacramental Christologies.

McFague's approach to an ecological Christology is qualified by the theological injunction, "God with us" and centres on Jesus' ministry as a paradigm for praxis (2000: 34). A *prophetic Christology* is concerned with Jesus' ministry towards the oppressed. McFague believes Jesus' words and works were an attempt to overcome oppressive hierarchies that held the oppressed in bondage. She maintains his ministry needs to be extended to nature. In this manner justice and rights are understood for human beings and nature. Moreover, the term *neighbour* in the Great Commandments should be extended to non-human beings. Loving creation and accepting the intrinsic worth of non-human beings are central for McFague. Struggling for the rights of all creation requires a theology of the cross, where human beings put themselves at risk for the well being of human and non-human beings (: 36). In these circumstances, *God is with us*.

McFague believes a *sacramental Christology* overcomes Jesusolatry, because it focuses not merely on a prophet, but on God (: 37). The incarnation is understood as God's continuous presence in the world. Jesus incarnation is therefore not unique, because it is merely a paradigm of God's continuous operation in the world. This means the entire universe is a sacrament of God. For McFague history occurs within nature. A God of history is therefore a God of nature. A sacramental Christology accentuates embodiment and therefore prioritises matter. The resurrection is understood as a source of hope, because it is a symbol of life triumphing over death. This highlights the concept of a God of life. As human beings oppose

⁶⁶ This chapter may also be found in Hessel, D and Ruether, RR. (Eds). 2000. *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-being of Earth and Humans*. pp 29-45.

⁶⁷ Jesus is viewed as, "the embodiment of Sophia, God's creative and ordering energy" (McFague 2003: 335).

⁶⁸ With these Christologies God's Spirit operates in Christ to transform the world towards peace and reconciliation (: 335).

⁶⁹ These Christologies stress nature's organic unity and the intrinsic worth of all creatures (: 336).

⁷⁰ Liberation Christologies focus on Jesus ministry to the oppressed. They have recently recognised the relationship between human and nature's oppression (: 336).

injustices and struggle for life, God is with them. McFague maintains cosmic Christology is a form of sacramental Christology.

Both prophetic and sacramental Christology provide an edifice for McFague's body of God Christology. McFague structures her Christology in two sections: the shape of the body and the scope of the body (1993a: 162-191).

McFague denotes the shape of the body as, "the Christic Paradigm" (: 162). According to this view, Jesus functions as a paradigm for the incarnation. This means that Jesus' incarnation is not unique, because it merely signifies what God is already doing in the universe. In other words the incarnation of Jesus did not localise or particularise God's presence and agency. McFague believes there are three aspects of Jesus' ministry, which characterise the shape of God's embodiment (: 168). There is the *deconstructive* phase where Jesus' parables challenged oppressive hierarchies that caused poverty. The parables highlight Jesus' inclusive love for the poor and McFague suggests that nature should be seen as the "new poor" (: 165). The *reconstructive* phase concerns Jesus' healing ministry, which shows the importance of bodily needs⁷¹. The *prospective* phase concerns Jesus' fellowship with sinners and those considered outcasts. This phase signifies Jesus' concern for people's physical needs. McFague argues for solidarity with the oppressed, including nature (: 171). These reflections indicate that the Christic paradigm is a prophetic Christology. McFague also addresses the issue of natural selection and those who are victims of natural processes. She asserts,

Solidarity with the oppressed, then, becomes the Christian form of both consonance with and defiance of the evolutionary principle (: 172).

In other words Christians are to remain in solidarity with those human and non-human victims of natural selection. In this manner human beings should oppose the oppression of those who are affected by the negative aspect of evolution.

In regard to the scope of the body, McFague makes use of the cosmic Christ motif.

Interestingly, McFague relates the cosmic Christ to the resurrection and writes

The resurrected Christ is the cosmic Christ, the Christ freed from the body of Jesus of Nazareth, to be present in and to all bodies (1996b: 286).

McFague's intention here is to highlight the notion of God's presence at all places. In other words the resurrection did not remove God from the world, because He or She is present incarnationally. McFague therefore seems to be implying that the resurrection is a sign of God's continued presence in the world. The resurrection provides hope for the future. The risen Christ is Christianity's mode of expressing faith and hope, with Christ identified as the new creation's firstborn who is then pursued by the creation (: 295).

In addition to this the cosmic Christ reflects divine immanence and is identified with the entirety of evolutionary history. In this manner salvation occurs in time and space and is not an otherworldly issue. In other words salvation is relevant in creation, specifically in God's body, to such a degree that Christ's healing ministry, "takes place *in* and *for* creation" (: 288) (emphasis McFague's). McFague argues that the scope of the body requires for the Christic paradigm to be extended to the natural order. The three phases of Jesus' ministry are thus applicable to the totality of creation.

McFague uses traditional sacramental imagery as a framework for her Christology. She values traditional sacramentalism, because of its focus on the physical as a channel for God's presence and activity (: 290). On the other hand, McFague believes traditional sacramentalism has a utilitarian understanding of objects, because these are understood in terms of their usefulness for divine presence. She believes traditional sacramentalism needs to be viewed in a non-utilitarian manner so as to affirm creation's intrinsic value. In addition to this, McFague believes traditional sacramentalism needs to be complimented with "negative sacramentalism", which is an awareness of evil and devastation in the natural order (: 291). McFague insists human beings are to struggle against ecological disaster. The presence of God understood as the cosmic Christ highlights that God is with humankind in this regard. McFague writes vis-a-vis the cosmic Christ,

God suffers with us in our suffering, that divine love is not only with us in our active work against the destruction of our planet but also in our passive suffering when we and the health of our planet are defeated (: 294).

The following is an appraisal of the body of God Christology. McFague's cosmic Christology has positive features. It is a lucid attempt to integrate the doctrines of creation, Christology and

⁷¹ McFague terms this "sustainability", or the capacity to function according to the needs of the body (1993: 168).

redemption. McFague thus reduces the traditional dichotomy between salvation and creation. All the thinkers that the study consulted, who endorse a cosmic Christology, are in agreement with this. For McFague the Christic paradigm is applicable to God's entire body. This generates a link between redemption and creation. As was the case with Moltmann's cosmic Christology, McFague addresses the issue of natural selection and the victims of evolution. These victims are included in the salvific process.

McFague's approach to Christology bears resemblance to that of liberation theology, because of its prophetic stance. The value to such an approach is the historical Jesus is used as a paradigm for ethical behaviour. This allows McFague to avoid speculating about Christ's divinity and focus instead on Jesus' praxis vis-a-vis the oppressed. This gives McFague scope for a concrete view of sin and salvation. Her approach is therefore a Christology from below⁷².

Moreover, McFague provides a strong case for theodicy. Her conjecture that Jesus' incarnation was not unique and is a paradigm for God's activity in general implies that God suffered before the cross and continues to do so. This is significant if the cross is understood according to McFague's view of incarnation. In this manner the cross is not unique, it merely describes what God's activity has always been: to be with creation and thus suffer with it. This approach challenges views that God is impassible or apathetic. In the same manner the resurrection describes God's passion for life and the knowledge that suffering will end.

McFague's insistence that the incarnation was not unique appears to locate her theology under the rubric of religious pluralism⁷³. The view that all religions are equal may be a valuable entry point into discussions pertaining to ecological issues. Religious tolerance is a sociological factor that influences peaceful relations between human beings. A peaceful society has the potential to care for the natural environment. An advantage to an ecological theology that takes religious pluralism seriously is that the natural order is as important as issues relating to God or human beings⁷⁴. This reflection indicates that McFague supports a degree Christology.

⁷² Such a Christology takes Jesus' humanity as its premise. Jesus is viewed as different from other human beings but only in degree. This approach may thus be termed a "degree Christology" (Van Niekerk 1982: 6). Scholars who study the historical Jesus, particularly theological liberals, tend towards a degree Christology.

⁷³ Religious pluralism stresses the equality of all religions and the quality of salvation in them. As a result, all religions have salvific efficacy and ultimately lead to God or Ultimate Reality. Jesus Christ is therefore not the only channel or means of salvation. The orientation is thus towards God as the source of revelation and salvation, not to a unique saviour figure (Kärkkäinen 2003: 166-171).

⁷⁴ For such an earth centred approach vis-a-vis religious pluralism see: Knitter, P. 1995. *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility*.

There are however difficulties with the body of God Christology. While McFague does show a close connection between Christ and creation, she does not link salvation with grace. God's grace operates through Jesus Christ (Peters 1992: 246). In other words Christ is the source of grace and the Holy Spirit its dispenser (Berkhof 1986: 426f). McFague does not make much reference to grace at all. The implication of this is that human beings focus on the historical Jesus as a moral example and not on Jesus as the source of grace. The researcher believes the latter is as significant as the former, because grace assists human beings to become like Christ who is *the image Dei* (Heb. 1:3).

McFague's degree Christology is important in terms of religious pluralism, but it also compromises Jesus' uniqueness. She writes vis-a-vis God's presence

Jesus is one such place for Christians, but there are other paradigmatic persons and events- and the natural world (1993a: 162).

A problem with theological positions that endorse a degree Christology in order to facilitate religious pluralism is that they have a tendency towards epistemological reductionism. These positions promote a single truth proposition: all religions make equally valid truth claims. While it is important to preserve the equality of all religions, not all religions make the same truth claims and these are often in conflict with each other. The researcher believes a better and more peaceful alternative would be to acknowledge the uniqueness of religions without reducing their central truth claims. Respect and tolerance for differences appears to be a more viable option. Christians are therefore entitled to acknowledge the uniqueness of Jesus Christ who is the self-disclosure of a God who loves the entire creation.

A consequence of McFague's degree Christology is its failure to reflect sufficiently on Christ's divinity. A reason for this is McFague's suspicion of logos Christology. W. McWilliams insists a logos Christology is one important means of articulating the cosmic Christ (1998: 345). McFague writes,

But any intimacy between God and matter came to an abrupt end when, in the Nicene faith, the Logos became identified exclusively with the second person of the trinity, with the transcendent God (1993a: 32).

Van Dyk understands this as a, “serious distortion of logos-christology” (1994: 178). The researcher is in agreement with Van Dyk. The logos concept was used by the conciliar church to articulate Christ’s divinity⁷⁵. Justin Martyr understood Logos to mean divine reason. The Logos was the principle through which the world was formed and governed. By drawing on Jn. 1:1-14, Martyr argued Jesus was the Logos and thus the perfect expression of God’s nature and function. Athanasius in defending Christ’s divinity argued that Jesus as the Logos became flesh and did not merely enter into a human being (McKim 1988: 27, 32). In other words the Logos was understood to be a cosmic principle that brought creation into existence and then ordered it. It was shown previously that Moltmann uses the Word in his cosmic Christology to describe how diversity is generated.

Pannenberg appropriates this idea and terms the Logos, “the productive principle of diversity” (1994: 62). This means the Logos, who is the Father’s eternal Son, is the origin and orderer of diversity. The Logos is different and thus transcendent to the diversity of creatures, but is also operative in them by maintaining their identity.

These insights highlight the potential a logos Christology has for constructing a cosmic Christology. It is able to describe how Christ interacts with the cosmos and also affirms the divinity of Jesus. Unfortunately the body of God Christology does not make use of logos Christology and thus does not provide a fuller description of the role of the cosmic Christ in the universe.

Is the body of God Christology adequate in terms of the study’s ecological requirements? It does not express Christ’s divinity sufficiently and therefore is not clear how exactly Christ may be cosmic in scope. Despite this McFague has made an important attempt to bridge the doctrine of salvation with the doctrine of creation. Her approach is more centred on a christopraxis⁷⁶ than reflection on ontological speculation about Christ’s two natures. In other words McFague is more concerned with an ecological ethic based on Jesus’ relationship with the oppressed. The body of God Christology should be understood in this light. It is for this reason that McFague’s Christology affirms *point three* of an adequate ecological theology.

⁷⁵ According to S. Need, McFague understands the incarnational language of Chalcedon to be static, however he argues it articulates, “a complex, fluid relationship between the human and the divine” (1995: 253).

⁷⁶ This term is borrowed from Moltmann (1994: 2).

Another consequence of McFague's Christology is it does not have the resources for a sufficient Trinitarian reflection. She suggests that face, body and spirit should replace the traditional terms for the trinity, but does not elaborate much on this (1993a: 191). This is the issue that the study now addresses.

6.6 The degree of Trinitarian reflection in the body of God model

McFague's use of the personal metaphors mother, lover and friend allude to a Trinitarian theology. Mother relates to God's creative nature and signifies that God is a God of life. God expresses life, but is not identical to it. The mother metaphor expresses an intimate relationship between God and creation just as Jesus used *abba* to highlight an intimate relationship between God and His children (Mk. 14: 36). As lover God suffers with creation and thence is its saviour. God desires for the world to be healed. As friend God sustains the world. God is understood as companion with humankind and this partnership is designed to facilitate the earth's healing.

It was argued previously that these personal metaphors lack conceptual purchase. Moreover, they appear to be a form of modalism. This is the view that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have distinct expressions in the world- as creator, redeemer and sanctifier (Peters 1992: 98). The eternal God does not possess any distinctions, however when God expresses Godself in temporal reality then the Father, Son and Spirit become distinct. A problem with modalism is it compromises the Trinity's unity. If God is to be omnipresent, then God is fully God in all places. This means God's actions of creation, redemption and sanctification are the work of the one Triune God.

Gaybba believes actions that extend beyond the parameters of the Godhead are performed by all three persons of the Trinity, arguing from the standpoint of the mutual relationship (i.e. perichoresis) located in the Godhead (2004: 96). He argues that even though all three Persons of the Trinity are involved in creation, redemption and sanctification, their roles in each of these is different. Gaybba uses creation as an example. The Father is the source of everything and the Son reveals God's image. The Spirit is the bond of love between Father and Son and in this manner allowed love to be shared at the creation of the universe. Love is the "motivating power" behind the Trinity's actions (: 114). McFague's Trinitarian theology vis-a-vis the

personal metaphors she uses therefore needs development, because in their unrevised version they are modalistic.

In addition to the modalistic nature of McFague's personal metaphors, her notion of God as the embodied spirit of the world is also problematic from a Trinitarian perspective. The body of God model introduces a dichotomy between the spirit and the Holy Spirit. A consequence of this is that the spirit may be understood as something foreign to the Trinity. Moreover, McFague believes the spirit is the source and empowerer of the universe. Even if the spirit and the Holy Spirit were the same, creation and providence becomes the sole function of the Spirit. In addition to this McFague does not describe the work of the Spirit and the work of Christ sufficiently. The body of God model fails to link its pneumatology with Christology. The result of this is that McFague is unable to describe how the Spirit and Christ operate in creation's processes. Gaybba states, "The Father made everything through the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit" (2004: 114).

It was noted under the study's ecological theology reflection that Moltmann is a theologian who has maintained a strong Trinitarian approach to his ecological theology. He believes the Spirit produces new types of interaction during the evolutionary process. In addition to this the Spirit harmonises these interactions and thus makes creation coherent. The Spirit therefore unifies reality, as everything has the one Spirit, but also allows creation to maintain its uniqueness. It is the Word that is the source of this diversity. The Spirit therefore gives creation access to the source of diversity. These insights indicate that a Trinitarian approach is needed to articulate God's action in the evolutionary process.

Perichoresis is a doctrine that supports a relational view of God. McFague does not make use of this insight. The reason for this is she may be suspicious of Trinitarian speculation on the immanent Trinity. However, a relational view of God may be supported not only by reflection on the immanent Trinity, but also on the economic Trinity. Rahner asserts that the economic and immanent Trinity are the same (1970: 21-2). In other words God reveals Godself as a network of relationships in the salvific history of humankind and in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. McFague does not argue for a relational view of God from a Trinitarian perspective, but from the vantage point of the common creation story. Her thesis is that if reality is relational then God must be as well. In other words, the body of God model has not provided an adequate *theological* argument for the concept of a relational God.

McFague discards the traditional terms for the Trinity and suggests the “invisible face, the visible body, and the mediating spirit” (1993a: 193). Her reason for doing this is that the traditional view of the Trinity is unable to preserve God’s transcendence and immanence. McFague is suggesting that there is no such thing as Trinitarian panentheism. She prefers a “monotheistic, panentheism theology” where God is in some degree physical and not just spiritual (1990: 213). The researcher is in disagreement with McFague on this point. Moltmann’s panentheism is clearly Trinitarian. Moreover, Edwards argues that a Trinitarian panentheism is crucial to understand how creation is relational (2004: 200). Field believes an ecological ethic needs to be based not on a monotheistic theology, but on a Trinitarian theology that underscores divine transcendence and immanence (1994: 204).

After consideration of these insights, the researcher believes the body of God model provides an inadequate Trinitarian reflection. McWilliams affirms the researcher’s findings and writes, “Although she draws insights from Jesus’ teaching and ministry, McFague does not make christological or trinitarian concerns central to her program” (1998: 351). The body of God model is thus in disagreement with *point four* of the study’s requirements for an ecological theology.

Conclusion

The body of God model was found to be pantheistic. McFague’s argument for divine transcendence and agency were shown to be problematic. Contrary to McFague’s sentiment, the mind-body analogy is a valid argument for divine corporeality. Her argument that creation ex nihilo causes a dualism between God and world is unwarranted. The doctrine of creation as a synthesis of procreation and emanation is therefore unable to signify divine transcendence. The body of God model is thus contrary to *point one* of the study’s theological criteria. The researcher is undecided about the applicability of the body of God model’s pneumatology vis-a-vis *point two* of the theological criteria. McFague’s separation of the spirit from the Holy Spirit compromises Trinitarian reflection. The body of God Christology was accepted, because of its focus on christopraxis. This degree Christology is not clear about the two natures of Christ, but does stress the cosmic scope of Christ and is therefore compatible with *point three* of the study’s theological reflection. The body of God model does not have adequate Trinitarian reflection and is in opposition to *point four* of the theological criteria.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Contextualisation

Two criteria were formulated to address the validity of McFague's metaphorical theology. It was argued that theological language should balance primary-religious and secondary-theological language. McFague's metaphorical theology meets these two criteria, however it was argued that it might be a form of antirealism. It was suggested that the notion of divine revelation needs to be stressed in McFague's theological method to counter the charge of antirealism.

McFague's use of the term *postmodern science* is ambiguous and the researcher suggested that contemporary science seems more appropriate. The body of God model does not locate science as its foundation, but understands it as a dialogue partner. The researcher found the body of God model to be in agreement with *points two and three* of the study's cosmological criteria. McFague provides a lucid argument for a relational view of the cosmos. This means the body of God model is congruent with the term *ecology*, which is a study of relationships. The body of God model is therefore a form of holism that opposes dualism. Moreover, McFague argues convincingly for a theocentric cosmology. Her intention in this regard is to signify creation's dependence on God, a characteristic of the body of God model that is observed in the notion of God as the embodied spirit of the world. The researcher argued the body of God model tends towards reductionism, because it does not incorporate a complexity hierarchy. Integrating Wilber's holoarchy concept, as well as process philosophy's panpsychism may decrease this tendency. In this manner the body of God model may be modified in order to meet the requirements of *point one* of the cosmological criteria. There are therefore theoretical resources to modify the body of God model's cosmological weaknesses. A consideration of these reflections seems convincing enough evidence for the researcher to accept the body of God model as a resource for a Christian cosmology. As a metaphor it provokes a change in the manner in which human beings are able to view the world. In this regard McFague appears to be promoting a cosmology that is functional. This approach is directed towards ethics and thus how human beings are meant to behave towards the natural order in a manner that benefits all creation.

The researcher found the body of God anthropology to be relational and thus compatible with *point one* of the anthropological criteria. McFague's use of the common creation story

provides a strong argument against anthropocentrism. She understands human beings as part of the natural order. A weakness with McFague's anthropology is it does not provide a strong argument for human particularity. It was argued the body of God anthropology tends towards reductionism and is not theocentric, thus placing it in disagreement with *points two and three* of the study's anthropological criteria. The researcher suggested the integration of supervenience theory, transpersonal psychology and biblical anthropology with the body of God anthropology to overcome reductionism. The researcher believes the greatest strength with McFague's anthropology is its affirmation of *points four, five and six* of the study's anthropological requirements. It has a notion of sin that includes the natural order. The body of God model provokes human beings to develop a loving eye or attention epistemology vis-a-vis nature. This means appreciating the natural order for its intrinsic value and not as a resource for human benefit. The body of God model functions as a powerful transformative metaphor in this regard. McFague's orientation towards an ecological ethic stresses human responsibility for the natural environment. The significance of this is human beings are discouraged from blaming God for environmental degradation. McFague takes ecojustice issues seriously. She has a concrete understanding of sin and salvation and thus appropriates insights from liberation theology. Moreover, the body of God anthropology is orientated towards space rather than time. It is therefore a form of ecoeschatology. The researcher believes these insights justify the body of God anthropology as an adequate resource for a Christian ecological theology.

The researcher argued the body of God model appears to be a form of pantheism. It does not seem to provide a strong argument for divine transcendence and agency due to its disavowal of the mind-body analogy and an overemphasis on divine immanence vis-a-vis creation as procreation-emanation. McFague's conjecture that creation ex nihilo causes a dualism between God and world was shown to be unwarranted. McFague's over identification of God with the world makes it contrary to *point one* of the study's theological criteria. The researcher is undecided about the applicability of the body of God model's pneumatology vis-a-vis *point two* of the theological criteria. McFague's separation of the spirit from the Holy Spirit compromises a Trinitarian reflection. The body of God Christology was accepted, because of its focus on christopraxis. This degree Christology is not clear about Christ's two natures, but does stress the cosmic scope of Christ and is thus compatible with *point three* of the theological criteria. McFague's focus on christopraxis links up with her anthropology, because Jesus Christ is understood as the paradigm for human action towards the natural environment.

This provides a strong Christian basis for the body of God model. It was discovered the body of God model has minimal Trinitarian reflection and is in opposition to *point four* of the theological criteria. The researcher believes the body of God model needs more theological development vis-a-vis the doctrines of God, creation, pneumatology and Trinity.

After consideration of these three areas of McFague's thought, the researcher believes the body of God model is a necessary resource for a Christian ecological theology. Its strength is a clear orientation towards ethics that takes Jesus' praxis as its departure point. In this manner the historical Jesus is taken seriously. The body of God model functions as a transformative metaphor that takes into account the social reality that affects the health of planet earth. It is inclined towards reductionism, but there are sufficient resources from other theorists that can be integrated into the body of God model in order to overcome this charge.

The researcher believes the body of God model is relevant for the South African context. South Africa is a country with its own unique history. A significant part of that history was the policy of apartheid. This system of forced race separation had dire socio-economic consequences for the majority of South Africans. It caused injustices in relation to ownership of land and led to racial prejudice. The body of God model addresses these three issues.

In regard to the *socio-economic issue*, the body of God model with its emphasis on ecojustice is important for the South African context. South Africa is part of the global economy and has thus become a consumer society. Its macro-economic policy has been designed for globalisation and is a form of centralised economics where government invests in a small number of corporations (Boult, Cunningham and Popenoe 1998: 381). This economic policy is known as GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution) and highlights the need to create jobs and distribute income to the poor (: 382). GEAR is an attempt to overcome the economic poverty caused by apartheid, however it encourages a consumer society (and thus the economic growth model) and endorses the mechanism of globalisation.

The body of God model is directly critical of consumerism and implicitly critical of globalisation. It is opposed to consumerism, which results in a utilitarian view of the natural order and believes natural resources are unlimited. Moreover, a consumer society places resources in the hands of a select few. In other words, consumerism culminates in injustice for

both humankind and the natural environment. Globalisation on the other hand does not appear to eradicate economic poverty or benefit the natural environment. Transnational corporations (TNC's) control the world economy by situating their operations in countries where there are low wages and minimal controls on the natural environment and employment (Page 2006). This forces governments to lower wages and employment standards in order to maintain contact with these TNC's. This does not benefit the poor. Globalisation may result in the deterioration of the natural environment. An increase in trade requires more transport and therefore higher levels of pollution, which increases greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, raw materials are sold at a lower cost than their true worth to corporations. The body of God model argues for an economic strategy that focuses on the well-being of human and non-human beings. In other words it insists on the notion of economics orientated towards ecology rather than consumerism or globalisation.

The body of God model challenges GEAR to affirm number 24 of the Bill of Rights in the South African constitution (Act 108 of 1996) which states,

Everyone has the right-

- (a) to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being; and
- (b) to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measure (1996: 11).

The body of God model has relevance for the South African context in terms of the *land issue*. From June 1913 and through the apartheid era, thousands of people were forcibly removed from the land that they owned. The post-apartheid government has put into place land reform programs to restore these people to their land. These programs include the restitution program, redistribution implementation system and the tenure reform program⁷⁷. The body of God model would support such programs, because of its focus on space. Space is a justice issue, because when space is neglected then the availability of land becomes a concern. The danger with this is that human beings are threatened, because their access to space is limited. Government programs such as those mentioned attempt to give all human beings access to space. However, the body of God model stresses that non-beings also need access to land on which they can flourish. The South African government has implemented the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), which attempts to conserve biodiversity, use South Africa's biodiversity in a sustainable manner and encourage the sharing of resources

⁷⁷ This information was retrieved from http://land.pwv.gov.za/land_reform on 11 November 2006.

derived from this biodiversity⁷⁸. This plan assesses South Africa's species and the status of the ecosystem by identifying threats to the dwelling places of various species. The body of God model affirms such an approach.

The body of God model also addresses the issue of *racism*. According to A. Nolan there is a link between racism and treatment of the natural environment (in Warmback 2005: 188). He believes those who understand themselves as superior to other human beings have a tendency to misuse all of God's creation. Nolan maintains it is when human beings develop a respectful attitude towards nature that they are able to respect one another. The body of God model encourages human beings to develop a loving eye towards creation. This sentiment translates into a society where respect for diversity is paramount. A loving eye is relevant for South Africa, because it opposes racism and promotes love for the natural order. Moreover, the body of God model is postmodern by nature and therefore takes cultural and religious diversity seriously. This is important for South Africa, which has several religious and cultural systems. Sallie McFague's entire theological oeuvre may be summarised in the following quotation from her book, *Models of God*,

I have suggested that a new sensibility is required, one characterised by the felt awareness of our intrinsic interdependence with all that lives, a holistic, evolutionary, ecological vision that overcomes ancient and oppressive dualisms and hierarchies, that encourages change and novelty, and that promotes an ethic of justice and care, one characterized as well by a profound acceptance of human responsibility for the fate of the earth... and therefore by the willingness to think differently, to think in metaphors and models that support a unified, interdependent understanding of God-world and human-world relationships (1987: 27).

⁷⁸ This information was retrieved from <http://www.environment.gov.za/> on 11 November 2006.

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