

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MCSA Conference 2017 Bible study: the link between soil, soul and society</b></p>
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Greetings to all.

Who is the most environmentally friendly dressed Bishop???

Genesis 1: <sup>26</sup> *Then God said, “Let us make humankind<sup>[c]</sup> in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth,<sup>[d]</sup> and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”*

<sup>27</sup> *So God created humankind<sup>[e]</sup> in his image, in the image of God he created them;<sup>[f]</sup> male and female he created them.*

<sup>28</sup> *God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”* <sup>29</sup> *God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.* <sup>30</sup> *And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.”* *And it was so.* <sup>31</sup> *God saw everything that*

*he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

Let me briefly give readers digest or Wikipedia version of a sense of the early Hebraic cosmology.

“It envisaged that the earth was flat which floated on water. The ancient Israelites envisaged a universe made up of a **Flat Earth** a flat disc-shaped earth, floating on water, **heaven** above, **underworld** below. Humans inhabited earth during life and the underworld after death, and the underworld was morally neutral.<sup>1</sup>

I wish only to acknowledge that what Genesis emphasises is that it is the One God who creates the heavens and the earth. There were many other cosmologies or creations stories at the time which sounded similar to the one in Genesis. As Nigerian theologian Orobator says in his book *Theology brewed in an African Pot*, “*In the beginning there were many stories...*”

One such story comes from isiZulu cosmology of life and death, I want to thank Rev Purity Malinga from whom I first heard the telling

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<sup>11</sup> [Wright|2002|pp=117,124–125] only in Hellenistic times (after c.330 BCE) did Jews begin to adopt the Hades a Greek idea that it would be a place of punishment for misdeeds, and that the righteous would enjoy an afterlife in heaven. In this period, too the older three-level cosmology in large measure gave way to the Greek concept of a suspended in at the geocentric centre of a number of Celestial spheres concentric heavens

During the Hellenistic period, a geocentric model of the universe largely replaced the older three-tiered universe model, for Greek thinkers (such as Aristotle and Eratosthenes) proposed that the earth was a sphere suspended freely in space.”

of this story and to Rev Sifiso Khuzwayo for putting in writing for me as follows:

*“The **unwabu** (chameleon) was sent by God to tell the people, they shall not die and it took so long busy eating berries along the way. And then God sent **intulo** (agama/bloukop) which sprinted but in its sprint got the message mixed up and said “People **SHALL** die!” and the people accepted their fate.*

*Later the chameleon arrived with the news that people **SHALL NOT** die. The people were so upset that they beat up the chameleon and because it couldn't run very fast, it changed its colours so they couldn't spot it easily. The **bloukop** having realised its mistake whenever it sees a human being it runs very fast and climbs the tree so that they can never catch it.*

*Therefore, the blame for death cannot be placed on God but on the chameleon and lizard.”*

Most cosmologies acknowledge a prime source or creator. In the case of isiZulu With my limited research, most if not all, place humans and nature in strong relationship with each other.

It is said that long before any humans or animals were on earth, there was only darkness, then *Umvelinqangi* (most use the word *umkhulukhulu*), *Umvelinqangi* (the one who was before all else) dropped seeds and long reeds Uhlanga, *As he walked along the Earth*

*he saw other men and woman growing from the reeds. This does not necessarily mean that humans are the product of the reeds; the actual story is we came from underground through the bed of reeds. This is critical in the understanding of the celebration of the Reed Dance which represents this idea of humans emerging from a bed of reeds. Umvelinqangi also pulled off from other reeds of cattle and fish and fierce creatures...*

The King of the Zulus; “Uhlanga lomhlabathi” (The reed of the soil/ground). The Zulu nation is also referred to as “Uhlanga” (the reed) thus also the title of “inkosi yohlanga” which refers to the king as the “king of the reed.” Humans came from underground through the bed of reeds. This is critical in the understanding of the celebration of the Reed Dance which represents this idea of humans emerging from a bed of reeds.

Most times this relationship is hostile. Nature is something to fear. So, it is important for us to spend a moment and get a basic understanding of this verse:

*“let them **have dominion over** the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth,<sup>[d]</sup> and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”*

What dangerous words: subdue; exploit, have dominion over, are to those who are ignorant of its truer meaning – Especially in this age of technology and machinery that can remove the lungs of the earth, the

rainforests, in a matter of weeks, so that they can have large beef farms to help to spread the epidemic of obesity, and ultimately, we end up destroying ourselves.

***Have dominion over*** are dangerous words in 21<sup>st</sup> Century!!!! If not understood properly. Many modern humans justify the destruction of nature by distorting our Creator's words that they must subdue and exploit the earth.

Allow me to contextualise the implication of the distortion of the words " *let them have dominion over*."

My dear sisters and brothers, is it too late for us to discuss and do anything about planet earth? According to research, we have passed our critical point of survival on 8 August 2017

*"Humans have already used up their allowance for water, soil, clean air and other resources on Earth<sup>2</sup> for the whole of 2017.*

*Earth Overshoot Day is on 2 August this year, according to environmental groups World Wildlife Foundation and the Global Footprint Network.*

*The date, earlier this year than in 2016, means humanity will survive on "credit" until 31 December.*

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<sup>2</sup> Thanks to Wikipedia google Hebraic cosmology

*“By August 2 2017, we will have used more from Nature than our planet can renew in the whole year,” the groups said in a statement.*

*“This means that in seven months, we emitted more carbon than the oceans and forests can absorb in a year, we caught more fish, felled more trees, harvested more, and consumed more water than the Earth was able to produce in the same period.”*

*According to campaigners, the equivalent of 1.7 planets would be needed to produce enough natural resources to match our consumption rates and a growing population.*

*The Earth Overshoot Day measure has been calculated since 1986 and the day has never fallen so early as in 2017. It looks at the balance between global footprint - what humans take from the earth - and biocapacity, which allows us to produce resources and absorb our waste.*

*In the 1980s, the overshoot day fell in November, shifting back to October by 1993 and to September just after the millennium.*

*By 2016 it had reached 8 August.”*

Why now bother with anything in this life, let us give up everything, let's forget about the business of Conference much of what we are going to do is of no consequence. Let us like some of the early

church, stop working and wait for the great Parousia, the coming of Jesus, why bother with anything.

Let us resign ourselves that we are going to fry on earth because temperatures are rising. In fact, let us exploit the earth more so that Jesus comes back sooner, after all USA Presidents George Bush and Donald Trump can't be wrong

Capitalism and rampant consumerism has finally destroyed our home the earth. We don't need a nuclear war to destroy we are all complicit in killing ourselves.

We have dismissed the earth-keepers who in the main are indigenous people, and stolen their land and polluted their water so that we can drink coke; bottled water, have fossil fuel, drive a car and have a cell phone.

A visit to a coal mine in N KZN, revealed how 35 years ago the community had water and fertile ground. They were by and large self-sustained. With the coming of the mining company, water was diverted and today the mines control the opening and closing of the water taps when they deem necessary. Pollution, dust is causing health problems. The huge trucks have killed both livestock and injured people. Even the game reserve is problem when wild animals kill livestock etc.

We are doing a highly efficient job of excellence as we remove the major two lungs of the earth from whence much of our oxygen comes: The rainforests in the Amazon and the DRC. These forests are making way so you and I can have a hamburger. They are being hacked down to make way for cattle farms. Cattle are one of the major contributors, to polluting the atmospheres as they fart lethal methane<sup>3</sup> into the air.

Presiding Bishop Sir, and Conference, we have a Trilemma based on three narratives from which we can choose.

1. We resign ourselves to the narrative which says why bother we are already doomed, let us wait for the coming of Jesus to sort all this out for us. In fact, let us hasten His return and destroy the earth. Climate change and global warming is an invention by the Chinese.
2. We deny that there is anything wrong. The earth will fix itself.
3. We choose to become African Wesleyan earth-keepers and with our belief that we have choice and can do something now; that it is not too late. This means that together we are to become a willing African Wesleyan-discipleship movement transforming/restoring soil, soul and society.

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<sup>3</sup> UN report suggests:



I want to underline African because according to AE Orobator SJ<sup>4</sup> Nigerian Priest: *“Africans possess a lively, expansive faith that proceeds from the affirmation of creation and culminates in the proclamation of the existence of the creator”*

The late Africanist leader Robert Sobukwe is clear that Africans are linked with the soil when he says in his inaugural speech of 1959: *“Our answer, Mr. Speaker and **children of the Soil**, has been given by the African leaders of the continent...”*

However, we are losing connection with the soil so says **Satish Kumar**<sup>5</sup> who wants us to understand the convergence between soil, soul and society and *drop ego in favour of eco*

Kumar points out that: *“Many historical movements in the world have three key words that express their spirit. During the French Revolution the words were "liberté, égalité, fraternité", in the American Declaration of Independence they were "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness".*

*The implication of both phrases is very similar. It is human life, human liberty, human equality and human happiness. Even the words adopted by the New Age movement - "mind, body, spirit" - refer to the human mind, human body and human spirit. It's an anthropocentric*

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<sup>4</sup> AE Orobator SJ, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot*, Paulines Publication Africa 2009, p49

<sup>5</sup> Satish Kumar is the editor-in-chief of *Resurgence & Ecologist*. His new book *Soil, Soul, Society* is published by Leaping Hare Press.

*worldview - the view that human beings are at the centre of the universe.*

**Satish Kumar contends very strongly that:** *This worldview is no longer valid - we are utterly dependent on other species and we have to take care of them. We are members of one Earth community and need a new trinity that is holistic and inclusive, that embraces the entire planet and all species upon it.* Kumar proposes “a new trinity of soil, soul, society”.

Soil *represents the entire natural world. Without soil, there is no food and without food there is no life, trees, forests, animals or people.*

*In our education systems, we have come to think that soil simply means dirt and that dirt means dirty. But dirt is not dirty; it is the source of life. Without it there is no life.*

*We are related to and dependent on the soil. If somebody grows food, we think: "Oh poor man, peasant, labourer - he is not educated so he has to grow food." If you are educated you don't grow food - you manufacture cars, televisions, computers or work in a bank or office. We sit at our computers and our food comes from somewhere.*

*The word peasant itself has become a term of an insult. I want to change that. I want to reinstate a respect for soil. We must touch the soil. How many times do we touch our mobile phone every day?*

*Maybe 100 times. How many times do we touch the soil? Hardly ever.  
We must give dignity to peasants, farmers and gardeners.*

***We are all part of this healthy web of life maintained by soil. The Latin word humus means soil. The words human, humility and humus all come from the same root. When humans lose contact with soil, they are no longer humans.”***

In most cosmologies<sup>6</sup> of the birth of creation there are vivid references to the connectedness between soil and creation.

Most cosmologies did theology as they stargazed<sup>7</sup>. All of these creation stories tell us that we are connected through the merging/unity of soil, soul and society (community).

However, many cosmologies also emphasise **humanity in fear of nature**, therefore you need a Creator and or gods to protect humanity

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<sup>6</sup> Let us pause a moment as we look at least one African and one Hebraic cosmologies:

I have just watched the video now. There overall theme of the story seems to be true, however, it is very Christianised. The African story does not say where Umvelinqangi (here they used umkhulukhulu) came from. The video has translated Umvelinqangi (the one who was before all else) literally and given that attribute to God as also having been created from the reeds. Thus a created God can't be the ultimate for if he is created than that which created him must be greater than him. IN FACT, the person most closely linked to the idea purported here, by title, is the King of the Zulus; “Uhlanga lomhlabathi” (The reed of the soil/ground). The Zulu nation is also referred to as “Uhlanga” (the reed) thus also the title of “inkosi yohlanga” which refers to the king as the “king of the reed.”

Secondly, this creation from the reeds suggests that humans are the product of the reeds, whereas the actual story is we came from underground through the bed of reeds. This is critical in the understanding of the celebration of the Reed Dance which represents this idea of humans emerging from a bed of reeds.

The cause of death story has been linked onto this although it is actually a second story. The unwabu (chameleon) was sent by God to tell the people, they shall not die and it took so long busy eating berries along the way. And then God sent intulo (agama/bloukop) which sprinted but in its sprint got the message mixed up and said “People SHALL die!” and the people accepted their fate. Later the chameleon arrived with the news that people SHALL NOT die. The people were so upset that they beat up the chameleon and because it couldn't run very fast, it changed its colours so they couldn't spot it easily. The bloukop having realised its mistake whenever it sees a human being it runs very fast and climbs the tree so that they can never catch it. Therefore the blame for death cannot be place on God but on the chameleon and lizard.

I hope this helps somehow. Blessings Sifiso

<sup>7</sup> Fresh from the Word 2017, p228. Ibra press.

I think that one of the most dangerous cosmologies, which is unashamedly anthropocentric, is found in a document called the National Development Plan based on Neo-Liberal Capitalism. It is influenced by the global assertion of the inevitability of the growth cities, seems to dismiss taking care of the soil. I would propose that it promotes alienation from the soil, soul and community. The global cosmology upon which much of the NDP is based tells us:

*“Today, 54 per cent of the world’s population lives in urban areas, a proportion that is expected to increase to 66 per cent by 2050.*

*Projections show that urbanization combined with the overall growth of the world’s population could add another 2.5 billion people to urban populations by 2050, with close to 90 percent of the increase concentrated in Asia and Africa, according to a new United Nations report launched today.*

*The 2014 revision of the World Urbanization Prospects by UN DESA’s Population Division notes that the largest urban growth will take place in India, China and Nigeria. These three countries will account for 37 per cent of the projected growth of the world’s urban population between 2014 and 2050. By 2050, India is projected to add 404 million urban dwellers, China 292 million and Nigeria 212 million.*

Let us pause a moment and look at three views of soil in 21<sup>st</sup>

Worldview parlance:

- **Soil as property:** Every time we place a fence around the soil it becomes contested property<sup>8</sup>, and may well be the cause of many wars.

Our soil has become what author Karen Armstrong calls ‘*Fields of blood*’<sup>9</sup>, because the land is constantly violated. She says when “*humans made the transition to agrarian life. ...came civilisation and with civilisation warfare.*”

In ancient times Farming implements were depicted as weapons that wounded the earth, so farming fields became fields of blood.

Humans have continued to live in this trajectory and with the exponential development of unchecked technology, we are now at a place where we will not only see fields of blood, but the mutilation and destroying the earth in its entirety.

We have poisoned the soil and will continue to do so through fracking; more mining; nuclear waste from nuclear plants and the list go on.

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<sup>8</sup> Perhaps this is why God was not pleased Israel becoming a monarchy.. Reference Tribal confederation to Monarchy Judges 21:25 In those days Israel had no king. Each person did what they considered to be right

<sup>9</sup> Fields of Blood, Karen Armstrong, pp 9/10 points out that in a period of human history there is little evidence that early humans regularly fought one another. Human “life changed forever when pioneering farmers “learned to grow and store wild grain. They produced harvests that were able to support larger populations than ever before and eventually they grew more food than they needed. As a result human population increased so dramatically that the great majority of “humans made the transition to agrarian life. And with agriculture came civilisation and with civilisation warfare.”

- **Soil as land:** This a highly charged and politicised term. We need to return the land to the people etc. this understanding of land is often confined to particular geographical location and is linked to historical stealing of land by colonisers. Molefe Ike Mafole says our: *“fundamental issue of our struggle: the land question. Here Sobukwe says: “The struggle in South Africa is part of the greater struggle throughout the Continent for the restoration to the African people of the effective control of their land”<sup>10</sup>*. Most wars are about soil as land
- **Soil as the earth:** Sees the earth as our home. It sees that the earth is the lord’s. Psalm 24

<sup>1</sup> The earth is the LORD’s and all that is in it,  
the world, and those who live in it;  
<sup>2</sup> for he has founded it on the seas,  
and established it on the rivers. (NRSV)

Pope Francis says; “The Earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth. In many parts of the planet, the elderly lament that once beautiful landscapes are now covered with rubbish. Industrial waste and chemical products utilised in cities and agricultural areas can lead to bioaccumulation in the organisms of the local

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<sup>10</sup> PAC has repeated this so many times since its inception in April 1959 that “Africa for Africans; Africans for Humanity; Humanity for God”. We will continue to repeat these slogans until “Izwe MoleLethu, I-Afrika!” becomes a reality in this country and on the continent. The institutional form this must assume is the independent and sovereign controlled territories formerly colonised and under white minority rule that must constitute the basis and framework for the establishment of the United States of Africa from Cape to Cairo, Madagascar to Morocco. The formation of the United States of Africa can also be initiated within the framework of existing regional groupings such as ECOWAS, SADC, EAC or simply between two or more neighbouring states sharing borders. Izwe Lethu! I-Afrika!”<sup>10</sup>

population, even when levels of toxins in those places are low. Frequently no measures are taken until after people's health has been irreversibly affected."

What happens in New York affects Lagos. The entire planet is connected. The issue of unhealthy soil caused by the neo-liberal cosmology crosses sovereign states and is the concern of all of us<sup>11</sup>.

In Exodus 2:5 & 6 we read: *"if you allow any of your animals to stray from your property and graze in someone else's field or vineyard, you must repay the damage from the best part of your own harvest of grapes and grain.... If you carelessly let a fire spread from your property to someone else's, you must repay the owner for any crops or fields destroyed by the fire."*

If we apply this principle where the 'fire' spreads from one property to another to pollution – then the pollution coming from one property into another needs to stop (Do you hear this Mr. USA President and all other major polluters of the earth including South Africa – I am not including the other nations of our Connexion, because they seem to have healthier environments)

I think we should rename our connexional trust properties to Connexional Earth keepers?

The great Africanist **Robert Sobukwe** also reiterates our connectedness with the earth when says:

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<sup>11</sup> Sutar reminds us that: *Trees, animals, plants, rocks, mountains, rivers, worms, butterflies, honeybees – all have intrinsic value. They have the right to be as they are. We talk about human rights, and that's fine. But nature also has rights. The trees have a right to exist. We have no right to cut them down without proper purpose. When we recognise the rights of nature, then we have understood the meaning of the word soil.* " A Judaic-Christian worldview may not agree entirely with the view that of intrinsic value, would it? Several Countries have given natural rights.

“Here is a tree rooted in African soil, nourished with waters from the rivers of Afrika. Come and sit under its shade and become, with us, the leaves of the same branch and the branches of the same tree” (I wish to return to the issue of water tomorrow)

How goes it with our soil?

**So, if the words *have dominion over* are not about giving us permission to destroy the earth. How then should we understand this passage?**

These words *have dominion over* were said so that humanity need not live in fear of nature, because our Creator says that nature was good. Humans must engage nature without fear.

African Theologians Barnabe Asshoto (Benin) and Samuel Ngewa (Kenya) say of this verse that this mission to have dominion “*was not a heavy burden but a gift from God. Human beings were to occupy and enjoy, not fear creation. This mission indicates that the first way in which all of us can glorify and serve God is by caring for God’s creation.*”

Catholic Parish Priest and author, Denis Edwards, from Australia, says of this passage that it is “*the harsh language of kingly rule*”. He further underscores that is dangerous language in the context of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, in its *original context, it would have had a liberating intention*”



Humans have the power to destroy the entire earth or they have the ability to be like the Shephard king and become good earth-keepers, nurturers of the earth and all its inhabitants. Let us hear these words of our creator with new ears and live in harmony not hostility with nature.

We note how Wesley in archaic 19<sup>th</sup> Century English says something similar John Wesley also sees the link between our salvation and of animal kingdom John Wesley and his connection with Soul and nature: Sermon on Deliverance (We will spend time tomorrow looking at what he said)

Kumar says *“So if you want to take care of the universe, start with your soul<sup>12</sup>.*

*If you want power, possessions and clutter, it is because you have lost touch with your soul. Then your soul is hungry or empty. But that emptiness will not be filled by computers, cars or mobile phones. Slow down and take care of your soul. Without spiritual fulfilment, there is no happiness. Spiritual poverty is the greatest poverty, greater than*

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<sup>12</sup> Care of the soul is for self-realisation. When you are at home within, you are at home in the universe. Taking care of yourself, being at ease with yourself, being happy within yourself, being fulfilled in yourself is a prerequisite, an imperative for self-realisation. Everything you truly need and want is within you. You are capable of solving every problem in the world with your inner wisdom.

This notion of one race is underscored by scripture in Ephesians 2<sup>12,14</sup> *For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.* <sup>15</sup> *He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace,* <sup>16</sup> *and might reconcile both groups to God in one body<sup>17</sup> through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it*

*any physical poverty. And as we take care of the soil, we take care of the soul. When we take care of both we achieve true wellbeing.*

### **How goes it with your soul?**

I identify with what Wesley says: “The bottom of the soul may be in repose, even while we are in many outward troubles; just as the bottom of the sea is calm, while the surface is strongly agitated.”

### **HOW GOES IT WITH OUR SOCIETY?**

Kumar says: *“Caring for the soul has nothing to do with individualism or ego. This is why I include the **word society in this trinity**. We are members of the Earth community and we are also members of the human community.*

### **CONCLUSION:**

Which part of our trilemma do you want to embrace?

1. We resign ourselves to the narrative which says why bother we are already doomed, let us wait for the coming of Jesus to sort all this out for us. In fact, let us hasten His return and destroy the earth.
2. We deny that there is anything wrong. The earth will fix itself. Climate change and global warming is fake news propagated by the Chinese government.

3. We choose to become Wesleyan earth-keepers and with our belief that we have choice and can do something now; that it is not too late.

Let us together choose to become a willing Wesleyan African-discipleship movement transforming/restoring soil, soul and society. Let us embrace a Wesleyan-African discipleship movement of radical earth-keepers.

But if you choose to wait for the great Parousia, heed the warning from the church in Thessalonica who were diverted on their call and responsibilities in the here and now to the approaching end times.

Some were so obsessed with the second coming of Jesus that they gave up their day jobs and as time went by become moochers off other members of the Thessalonian church. So Paul warns them: 1 Thess: 5: <sup>14</sup> *And we urge you, beloved,<sup>[d]</sup> to admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them.* <sup>15</sup> *See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all.*

I want to propose that we start a national movement within church and our six countries of small groups that ask three questions of each other<sup>13</sup>:

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<sup>13</sup> We could also add these to questions we already ask Rev Ted from the UMC says "In early Methodist class meetings, the leader asked everyone, him/herself included, about the condition of their souls. The groups I have led or participated in have used these 4 questions:

1 — How is it with your soul?

2 — Have you done all the good you could and avoided all the evil you could this week?

3 — How have you availed yourself of the means of grace?

4 — How can we as a group best pray for and support you?

- How is it with your soil?
- How goes it with your soul?
- How goes it with your wider society?

Let these be our guiding questions as we engage with questions of structures and boundaries.

More importantly let us embrace the words from the Catholic church:

*A theology of creation presents the Church's thinking about the relationship between God and the world as it is informed by understandings of Holy Scripture and observations of nature. It seeks to express in human language the mysteries of this relationship. It is not a theory about the universe but a doctrine about the God who creates it.*<sup>2</sup>

We don't need to reinvent the wheel; as church, we already have the organisation and structures and Conference directives in place. As Bishop Denis Motsolo said at our July 2017 meetings: *It is not a case of knowing what to do, but doing what we know...*

### **Three Magi gather before the journey**

And so, the three Magi are together.

The first Magi points with his index finger to a bright star and tells the others: "Look"

The second Magi turns his head and looks up and says: "Wow I see you have painted your nails. The colour suits your eyes."

The third Magi says: “Gosh you have stubby fingers...”

The first Magi responds: “No you fool, look beyond to that which my finger is pointing; look at the bright star.... Come let us follow it...”

There is a well-known African proverb: “*When I point to the stars all you see is my fingertip*”

PB, Sir and members of Conference, let us not be obsessed with looking at the fingertip of the business of Conference but let us look to the greater vision of the universe which God created, is this not central to our *raison d’etre*.

Our finger tips point to:

*For God so loved the cosmos the universe that he entered our space to liberate us from our stupidity...*

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and first earth passed away, and the sea was no more -Amen*