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## SACRED ENCOUNTER OF THE LIVING SPIRIT

### Narratives and Living Faith in *Rûah Elohim*

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#### Abstract

With the inclusion of the plural religions as integral to God's economy of salvation, the Church has changed her perspectives on the beliefs of the primal religions. This shift has enabled theologians to generate a more sensitive theological framework in appreciation of the primal religions. The emerging perspective of creational pneumatology postulates that *Rûah Elohim*, who emanates creation, has assumed a panentheistic corporeality with the Cosmos-Earth. This perspective further posits that all created ancestral and nature spirits are the localized presence of *Rûah Elohim*, and nature/Earth is the divine expression of *Rûah Elohim*. This corporeal perspective facilitates the integration of the lifegiving spirits with the faith of the indigenous Christians.

**Keywords:** Ancestral Spirits, Creational Pneumatology, Jewish Mysticism, Indigenous Religions, In-spirational Co-creativity, Interreligious Dialogue, Mythological World, Religious Pluralism, Primal Religions, *Rûah Elohim*

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## Introduction

The plural churches, mosques, synagogues and temples that sustain the noble longings of the believers for the Divine solace and provide ethical values and religious meanings to believers alert us that religious pluralism is a sociological reality. The Church recognizes how the ethics and spiritualities of these religions have shaped the diverse histories and cultures of humankind. These religions are part of God's economy of salvation.

Religious pluralism has enabled the Church to revalue the primal religions in their beliefs of a supreme divine being or the Great Spirit and the spirit world or the spirits. Since Vatican II, the shift is taking place in dialogue with the reputable leaders of the primal religions – from outright condemnation of the primal religions as idolatrous superstitions to acknowledging the compatibility between their ethos, folklores, myths and worldview with the Christian faith.

In this paper, such convergence is expressed by a few indigenous voices in section one. Section two offers a portrait of the pantheon of deities and spirits of the Muruts in East Malaysia and the emerging perspectives of some theologians on the primal religions. Creational Pneumatology, explained in section three, offers a cosmic paradigm that all things created are the divine expressions of the co-creativity of God's Spirit. The last section explains the importance of the cosmic perspective for understanding the nexus of the mythological pantheon with the Divine Spirit in the light of Jewish mysticism.

### 1. Indigenous Voices

The indigenous believers have expressed the integration of their indigenous heritage and Christian faith.

Mrs. Pa La, a Catholic school teacher from the Dokdaeng village of the Karen of northern Thailand expresses her beliefs:

The Creator, Taj Thi Ta Tau and Ywa, are spirits who received the mandate from God, working and taking care of nature. The spirits are the servants (*playj* in Thai) of God, taking care of the forest, the soil, the water. The water-spirit ritual is very good ritual to protect our natural resources since they give us life and for us show our respect and thanksgiving. The rituals help to make the surrounding sacred because all nature is made by God.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Personal interview with Pa La in her village on April 22, 2013.

Sherry Balcombe, leader of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry in Victoria, Australia shares the lore of her people that offers a glimpse of the interrelations between the Creator Spirit, the Spirit of the land, the ritual celebrations:

We are born of the Spirit of this country and land. We are conceived from it. It is our home, and it is where we belong. The Earth is our mother. That is the easiest way to explain it. We must always respect and protect your mother. This is linked to our survival as a race. Through our mother earth, we have a deep connection with the Creator Spirit, God.<sup>2</sup>

William, a 74 year-old Huitoto tribe elder, Columbia, Latin America shares how he integrates Huitoto spirituality and the Catholic faith:

When one is baptized in the Catholic religion, one is Catholic. We do speak of the Earth, of nature – but we don't have any problem [with being Catholic], because everything is the same universe. All is complete. The jungle, the trees, all are created by God. The trees are living beings. That is why they were created. God maintains life. Our lives. God maintains the trees. And our Lord Jesus Christ came down to Earth to save us from our sins. That's the way it is.<sup>3</sup>

These voices amplify the more integrative perspective proclaimed by Pope John Paul II in his Alice Springs' address: "That Gospel now invites you to become, through and through, Aboriginal Christians... You do not have to be people divided into two parts."<sup>4</sup> Much remains to be integrated in the other areas of the mythological world of the primal religions.

## 2. The Indigenous Mythological World

The articulation of the mythological world of the Muruts in East Malaysia offers a context for generating the more sensitive emerging theological perspectives on the primal religions.

### 2.1. Local Beliefs and Practices

Among the educated indigenous Muruts of Sabah (the erstwhile British North Borneo), the ordinary spirit dwelling in the tree or the

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<sup>2</sup>Sherry Balcombe, "Aboriginal Spirituality: A Testimony from Australia," in *Christianities and Indigenous Peoples, The Concilium* 4 (2019) 15-19, at 16.

<sup>3</sup>Mary Jo McConahay, "A Gracious Overnight with an Indigenous Catholic Family in the Amazon," <https://www.ncronline.org/news/people/gracious-overnight-indigenous-catholic-family-amazon>, accessed 24 October, 2019.

<sup>4</sup>Address of John Paul II to the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in Blatherskite Park, Alice Spring, Australia, 29 November 1986, [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1986/november/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19861129\\_aborigeni-alice-springs-australia.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1986/november/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19861129_aborigeni-alice-springs-australia.html)

rock is not inconsistent with God. The presence of *aru* enables the Muruts to live the moral imperative that nature and animals must be respected. To ridicule and disrespect them will incur punishment while to honour and respect them will bring blessings and rewards. The Muruts believe that when they sail past or underneath some boulders along the river, they observe a custom known as *amupuk*.<sup>5</sup> Water from the river is sprinkled on the heads of those who made their first trip to the sacred sites, particularly young kids as they sailed upstream. It is a sign of respect paid to the spirits or *aru*. At the same time, when they pass these boulders, it is customary to utter a few words, asking to be excused or offering an apology for the use of the passage. During such times, no one is allowed to shout, bang the boat or swim in the river, out of deference for the *aru* of the boulders. The Muruts relate to the spirit-world through taboo, divination, ritual and magic. The taboos governing their everyday life are communicated to them via dreams. The omens and divinations enable them to avoid coming into conflict with the supernatural spirits. They also placate them through individual and group rituals.

This mythological world remains an ecclesial frontier for many theologians.

## 2.2. Emerging Theological Framework

Theologians, sensitive to the mythological beliefs, have generated a commendable theological framework. In Michael Amaladoss' opinion, creation and the Earth are considered "'a subject' energized by the Spirit."<sup>6</sup> Felix Wilfred likewise opines that the God who is revealed in the created world, is the God who is "present 'in all things'" (Col 3:11) and "there is an invisible dimension in all things visible, a "beyond" to everything material" so much so that "all creation is a palpable mystery, an immense 'incarnation' of cosmic proportion."<sup>7</sup> To A. Orabator, "the Earth is a footrest of the divine" and "nature is a privileged focus for encountering the gods, goddesses, deities, and ancestral spirits."<sup>8</sup> Karl Caspar, a Filipino anthropologist-theologian posits that, "the world of the Lumad is a

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<sup>5</sup>Fung, "The Legendary Batu Punggul," *Sabah Society Journal* 15 (1998) 70.

<sup>6</sup>Michael Amaladoss, "A Spirituality of Creation According to Pope Francis," *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 79, 8 (2015) 565-578.

<sup>7</sup>Felix Wilfred, "Eco-theology: An Inter-religious Perspective," *Concilium* 3 (2008) 43-54.

<sup>8</sup>A. Orabator, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot*, Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 2008, 132.

world of meaning embodied in the very gentle system of beliefs” that facilitates the relation of the indigenous communities with the forests and spirits, mountains and goddesses, rivers and nymphs, caves, communities and ancestors.<sup>9</sup> Niphot Thienvehan, a diocesan priest, avers that,

the lived-experience of the many holy/sacred spirits make it easier to connect with the one Big Holy Spirit who is omnipresent who is in everyone and everything but the theological conception of the One Holy Spirit cannot monopolize the omnipresence of God’s Spirit. Western philosophy and theology use Eurocentric concepts that are limited.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, Leroy Little Bear, a Native American, posits that “the Indigenous’ paradigm is comprised of and includes ideas of constant motion and flux, existence consisting of energy, waves, interrelationships, all things being animate, space/place, renewal, and all things being imbued with spirits.”<sup>11</sup> Mark I. Wallace avers that “God as Trinity subsists in interpersonal unity through incarnating itself in all things that swim, creep, crawl, run, fly, and grow upon the earth” while the scripture “figures the Spirit as creaturely lifeforms always already interpenetrated by the material world.”<sup>12</sup> As a Karen Jesuit-anthropologist of Chiangmai, Thailand, Vinai Boonlue states, “the Holy Spirit exists within the trinitarian relationship and this relationship enjoins that humans need to exist with nature, like the rivers and trees, and the spirits therein.”<sup>13</sup> Yangkahao Vashum, a Tankhul theologian of North East India states, “The tribal believes in spirit, the spirit who pervades and controls the whole universe, might be applied to interpret an understanding of the Holy Spirit from a tribal perspective.”<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, it is safe to conclude the way Robert R. Marsh posits, namely, creation/earth “swims in a sea of spirits” for the created

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<sup>9</sup>Orabator, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot*, 132.

<sup>10</sup>Personal conversation, December 31, 2017, Research and Training Center in Sankampaen, Chianmgai, Thailand.

<sup>11</sup>Yangkahao Vashum, *Christology in Context: A Tribal-Indigenous Appraisal of North East India*, New Delhi: Christian World Imprint, 2017, 121.

<sup>12</sup>Mark I. Wallace, “The Green Face of God: Christianity in an Age of Ecocide,” *Cross Currents* 50 (Fall 2000) 310-331, at 315, 318. See also Matthew Eaton, “An-Archy and Awakening: The Ethical and Political Temporalities of Christology and Pneumatology,” *The Heythrop Journal: A Bimonthly Review of Philosophy and Theology* 60 (July 2019) 624-641, at 630.

<sup>13</sup>Personal Conversation with Vinai Boonlue in Casa Sosa, December 13, 2017.

<sup>14</sup>Vashum, *Chrsistology in Context*, 123.

visible world mediately makes present the created world of spirits in a manner that both worlds speak to us of the need for the future sustainability of life in a creation and on Earth deemed as sacred.<sup>15</sup>

### 3. Emanation of Creational Pneumatology

Creational pneumatology offers the living narratives of the indigenous mythology a biblical cosmic perspective. This perspective alerts us that *Rûah Elohim* is corporealized in creation and the entire cosmos is divine. Therefore, each created creature is divinized and regarded as sacred.

#### 3.1. *Rûah* of “Triunological Othering”<sup>16</sup>

At the heart of creational pneumatology is a materialist perspective of *Rûah Elohim* as the primordial spirit that brings forth creation and shares a corporeality with the cosmos.

Creational pneumatology is premised on a biblical notion of the Triune God who is Spirit/*Rûah* (Jn 4:24). *Rûah Elohim* is best understood, in Diarmuid O’Murchu’s postulation, as the “*primordial spirit power, a creative resilience, without beginning or end – a foundational, energetic wisdom.*”<sup>17</sup> The pre-existent *Rûah Elohim*, Mark I. Wallace posits, “breathes the world into existence and therefore enfleshes herself in the creation and maintenance of the natural order.”<sup>18</sup> *Rûah Elohim*, Wallace further postulates, is not only the power of *koinonia* in the triune God, but the *Rûah* “between God and the whole creation as well.”<sup>19</sup> Wallace believes that *Rûah Elohim* who continues the in-spirational co-creativity of the triune God, has assumed “a creaturely lifeform always already interpenetrated by the material world.”<sup>20</sup> This means, Wallace adds, “the Spirit *is* in nature as its interanimating force, as important as that is, but that Spirit *is* a

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<sup>15</sup>Robert R. Marsh SJ, “Ecology, Angels and Virtual Reality,” *The Way* 54, 4 (October 2015) 39-50, at 49-50.

<sup>16</sup>I first introduced this term “triunological othering” in my article “Pneumatology of Sacred Sustainability: Foundation of Cosmicism & Enspirited Leadership,” *Loyola Papers: Alumni and Student Journal of the Loyola School of Theology* 1 (2020) 59-102.

<sup>17</sup>Diarmuid O’Murchu, *In The Beginning Was the Spirit: Science, Religion, and Indigenous Spirituality*, New York: Orbis Books, 2012, 29.

<sup>18</sup>Wallace, “The Green Face of God: Christianity in an Age of Ecocide,” 318.

<sup>19</sup>Wallace, “The Green Face of God: Christianity in an Age of Ecocide,” 317.

<sup>20</sup>Mark I. Wallace, “Christian Animism, Green Spirit Theology, and the Global Hope in an Age of Radical Ecology,” in Deiter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed., *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000, 51-72.

natural being who leads all creation into a peaceable relationship with itself."<sup>21</sup>

Both *Ruâh Elohim* and the cosmos "internally condition and permeate one another without collapsing into undifferentiated sameness or equivalence."<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Wallace adds, all things are "Divine expression, be it the Son's or the Spirit's, is neither disembodied nor phantasmal... Now all things are bearers of the sacred; everything that is, is holy; each and every creature is a portrait of God."<sup>23</sup> Ultimately, all things created, Robert D. Hughes asserts, "including the dust-we-are, is saved, transfigured, spiritualized because of its relationship with God in Christ through the incarnation and consummation in the final commonwealth. All as the work of the Holy Spirit."<sup>24</sup>

Hence, as Marc Wallace opines, creational pneumatology offers a poignant perspective that *Ruâh Elohim* "lives and breathes in the creativity of nature itself" as "God's agent of interdependence and unity within all creation."<sup>25</sup> Wallace further opines that "the Spirit is the hidden, inner life of the world, and the earth is the outward manifestation of the Spirit's sustaining energies."<sup>26</sup> In this sense, Wallace adds, "the Spirit is the "soul" of the earth – the wild, life-giving breath of creation – empowering all life-forms to enter into a dynamic relationship with the greater whole."<sup>27</sup>

This emergent perspective of creation as the corporeality of *Ruâh Elohim* alerts us that the life-giving spirits of the primal religions are the localized presence of *Ruâh Elohim* in the ancestors and in nature. Hence, in the light of *Querida Amazonia* (QA), the indigenous "ancestral wisdom" (QA 51) refers to the "various beings" (QA, 42) of the ancestral and nature spirits of indigenous mysticism (QA, 73) that make possible the good living or *buen vivir* (QA, 8, 26, 71) in the

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<sup>21</sup> Matthew Eaton, "An-Archy and Awakening: The Ethical and Political Temporalities of Christology and Pneumatology," *The Heythrop Journal: A Bimonthly Review of Philosophy and Theology* 60 (2019) 624-64, at 633.

<sup>22</sup>Mark I. Wallace, "The Wild Birds who Heals," *Theology Today* 50, 1 (1992) 13-28, at 15.

<sup>23</sup>Wallace, "Christian Animism, Green Spirit Theology, and the Global Crisis Today," 221.

<sup>24</sup>Robert Davies Hughes, III, *Beloved Dust: Tides of the Spirit in Christian Life*, New York & London: Continuum, 2008, 274.

<sup>25</sup>Marc Wallace, *Fragments of the Spirit*, Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002, 162.

<sup>26</sup>Marc Wallace, *Finding God in the Singing River*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005, 127.

<sup>27</sup>Wallace, *Finding God in the Singing River*, 163.

indigenous homeland.<sup>28</sup> This pneumatic perspective offers a recognition of the hybridized identity of many indigenous Christians who value their heritage and their faith.

#### 4. Critical Correlation of the “Many” and the “One”

The abysmal theological “chasm” between the One Holy Spirit and the plural spirits finds an analogy in the angelology of Jewish mysticism.<sup>38</sup> There is a parallelism between the plural lifegiving and death-dealing plural spirits with the good and the fallen angels. In Zohar 1119b and 2:4b, the good angels are “the angels stemming from the highest light” who are created “on the first Day of Creation,” while Zohar 1:17b, 46a refers to the fallen angels as “having rebelled against God” were created “on the second Day of Creation.”<sup>39</sup> In other words, the parallelism enables us to conclude that like the angels, the plural spirits are also spirit-beings created by God.

Of immediate relevance is how the plural nature spirits find comparable correspondences in Jewish Mysticism that alludes to angels whose beings “consist of fire and water” which in another account, alludes to angels “of four heavenly elements: mercy, strength, beauty, and dominion, corresponding to the four earthly elements: water, fire, earth, and air (Sefer Yezirah (‘Book of Creation’) Ch.1, 7; Paredes Rimmonim, Sect. 24. Ch.10f).”<sup>40</sup> Furthermore in the Hagiographa, the “families of the nations” (Ps 29:1; Ps.78:49; Ps 104:4) most probably refer to “forces of nature that perform God’s will.”<sup>41</sup> These forces of nature later morphed into “elemental angels in the book of Revelation which mentions “the angel of water” (Rev 16:5), the angel “who has power over fire” (Rev 14:18; cf. 7:1; 19:17), and the “angels of the bottomless pit” (Rev 9:11).<sup>42</sup> Akin to Wallace’s idea of the Spirit’s eruption in the animal, vegetal and elements of nature, the Book of Jubilees and 1 Enoch refer to these “elemental spirits” as “the angels of the spirit of fire, of the spirit of the wind, the clouds, darkness, snow and hail,

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<sup>28</sup> The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Querida Amazonia*, [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20200202\\_querida-amazonia.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20200202_querida-amazonia.html)

<sup>38</sup>“Jewish Concepts: Angels and Angelology,” <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/angels-and-angelology-2>

<sup>39</sup>“Jewish Concepts: Angels and Angelology.”

<sup>40</sup>“Jewish Concepts: Angels and Angelology.”

<sup>41</sup>“Jewish Concepts: Angels and Angelology.”

<sup>42</sup>“Jewish Concepts: Angels and Angelology.”



thunder and lightning (Jub 2:2 ff.; 1 En 60:11ff; 65:8; Or. Sybill. 7:33ff., etc.), including the angels of the seasons of the year (1 En 82:10ff.).<sup>43</sup> The recital of sacred chants, and animal sacrifices with wine and flowers in the ritual celebrations find supportive arguments in *Sefer ha-Razim* (ed. Margaliot, 1:123-126; 2:99; introduction, 8-9) where incantations and other methods were offered “over flasks of wine and blood, by burning incense, sacrifices” “for influencing the angels, stars, and the moon.”<sup>44</sup>

In Scripture, the angels are “spirits” (Heb 1:14) by nature<sup>45</sup> with designations for the collectivity of angles as “councils” (Ps 89:78) and “congregation” (Ps 82:1; 89:5) and “the heavenly host” or “the company of divine beings” (Ps 29:7), ruling over the gentile nations (Deut 32:8-9), standing in awe before God and praising God (Ps 89:6-9; 1 En 40; Test. Patr., Lev 4).<sup>46</sup> In his pastoral letters, Paul designated these collectives as “principalities” “powers” “thrones” and “dominions” (Col 1:16), that “were created through Christ and unto Him.”<sup>47</sup> These Pauline designations provide the biblico-theological space for the inclusion of the plural supreme beings, such as *A-Per-Miae/A-Per-A-Pee* of the Akha, *Phajow of the Lua*, *Guisha* of the Lahu and *Taj Thi Ta Tau* of the Karen in the Mekong sub-region, the ancestral and nature spirits who “act as God’s messengers” to humankind and “as agents who carry out God’s will.”<sup>48</sup> Their spirit presence ensures the sacralization of creation and hence ensure the sacred sustainability of nature, all life-forms, humankind, Mother Earth and the cosmos.

The plural malevolent spirits are associated with the dark world of sorcery and witchcraft in which the evil spirits are invoked for inflicting untold suffering that culminates in abominable death. These harmful spirits correspond with the fallen angels (1 En 9:1; 10:1 ff; 54:6), “the idea of vanquished gods or demons, who then appeared as accursed and damned”<sup>49</sup> for violating God’s will. The fallen angels were first reported in the book of Enoch (6ff) and later

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<sup>43</sup>“Jewish Concepts: Angels and Angelology.”

<sup>44</sup>“Jewish Concepts: Angels and Angelology.”

<sup>45</sup>For more detail, see J.M. Wilson, “Angels,” in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Everett F. Harrison, Roland K. Harrison William Sanford LaSor, Edgar W. Smith, JR., ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 1, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979, 124-127, at 124.

<sup>46</sup>“Jewish Concepts: Angels and Angelology.”

<sup>47</sup>Wilson, “Angels,” 124.

<sup>48</sup>Wilson, “Angels,” 124.

<sup>49</sup>Wilson, “Angels,” 124.

in the Book of Jubilee (4:15; 5:1f). In the War Scroll (1QM 13:10-12) and the manual of Discipline (1QS 3:20-22), these fallen angels were “the Angel of Darkness” who were associated with “the sons of darkness.”<sup>50</sup> Among the fallen angels, “the angel of death (*malakh ha-mavet*) is the most evil among the wicked angels (*malakhei habbalah*).<sup>51</sup> Paul mentioned “the enslaving ‘spirits’”<sup>52</sup> and the Cosmic Christ’s victory over all “throne, dominations, principalities and authorities (Col 1:16; Eph 1:21), and the “elements of the world” (Col 2:20), the “powers the world-rulers of the present darkness and evil spiritual hosts.”<sup>53</sup>

The wicked spirits with their afflictions correspond to the angels with destructive mission, exemplified in the two angels sent to destroy Sodom (Gen 19:13), the angel who destroys the Israelites during David’s reign with pestilence (2 Sam 24:16); the angel who destroys the Assyrian army (2 Kings 19:12); the six angels commanded to destroy the sinful inhabitants of Jerusalem (Ezek 9:1, 5, 7). The destructive mission of the angels offers a scriptural basis for the moral explanation of the punitive aspect of the ancestral and nature spirits.

Creational pneumatology offers due recognition of the creators, the lifegiving ancestral and nature spirits as created beings, governed in their collectivity by *Rûah Elohim* (Deut 10:17; Ps 82:1). These creators, ancestral and nature spirits collectively participate in the power of *Rûah Elohim* (Ps 29:1; 82:1; Deut 10:17) in suffusing, sacralizing, sensitizing and sustaining creation and the Earth. Together with *Rûah Elohim*, they ensure the sacred sustainability of creation. These lifegiving plural spirits have guided the reputable wo/men chiefs, healers, mystics, sages and shamans in the diverse and different religio-cultural communities, in the way that *Rûah Elohim* has overshadowed Jesus and his prophetic mission (Lk 4:18-19) in early Palestine. These reputable religio-cultural personages gain access to the spirit power of the plural spirits who also mediate the Spirit power of *Rûah Elohim*.

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<sup>50</sup>“Jewish Concepts: Angels and Angelology.”

<sup>51</sup>“Jewish Concepts: Angels and Angelology.”

<sup>52</sup>“Jewish Concepts: Angels and Angelology.” See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “Pauline Theology,” in Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy, *The New Jerusalem Biblical Commentary*, Makati and Quezon City: St Paul’s Publications and Claretian Publications, 1993, 1403.

<sup>53</sup>“Jewish Concepts: Angels and Angelology.”

The Spirit power of *Rûah Elohim* and the plural lifegiving spirits has suffused the Cosmos-Earth with God's sacred power and goodness (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). This suffusion has sacralised creation. And all things created manifest the sacred, the holy, and each and every creature is a portrait of God.

The deliberation of the "many" and the "one" has enabled us to understand further the correlation of the various and diverse ancestral and elemental spirits who participate in the primordial power of the Creative Spirit of sacred sustainability. These spirits, including the deities, are arguably the spirits of sacred sustainability, as their spirit-presence and power enable the local communities to conserve and manage the human and nonhuman worlds. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that these nature spirits who participate in the Spirit-power of *Rûah Elohim* constitute what Matthew Eaton calls "a fellowship of the Holy Spirit" here on Earth, and this pneumatic fellowship orients the Earth towards becoming an "eschatologically minded community (2 Cor 13:13)."<sup>54</sup>

## Conclusion

This reflection, informed by religious pluralism, has delved into the changing perspectives since Vatican II that facilitate the sacred encounter of the Living Spirit as we reflect on the narratives of the believers of the primal religions and their living faith in *Rûah Elohim*. The creational pneumatology offers a germinal pneumatic framework of a creation borne of *Rûah Elohim* (*creatio ex Spiritus*) who is corporealized in the Cosmos and Mother Earth. This pneumatic perspective enables believers of the primal religions to behold creation with awe and gratitude, acknowledging our Cosmos-Earth as always sacralised and sacredly sustained by the primordial Spirit power of *Rûah Elohim*. Such a cosmic paradigm privileges the life-sustaining ancestral and nature spirits, acknowledging them as divinely created spirits who participate in the Spirit power of *Rûah Elohim* in the cocreation of the Cosmos and the Earth. At the same, the life-giving ancestral and nature spirits are revered by the indigenous communities as localized presence of *Rûah Elohim* in the indigenous homeland.

These localized spirits mediate the divine/sacred power of *Rûah Elohim* to the extent that the sayings of the reputable indigenous wo/men leaders (elders, healers, leaders, mystics, sages and

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<sup>54</sup>Eaton, "An-Archy and Awakening," 633.

shamans) strike at the strings of our hearts with a reverberating joy and gratitude when they speak of their integrated faith that “*the jungle, the trees, all are created by God. The trees are living beings*”; “*We are born of the Spirit of the country and the land. Through our mother earth, we have a deep connection with the Creator Spirit, God*” and “*The spirits are the servants of God, taking care of the forest, the soil, the water.*”

These emerging perspectives on indigenous religions have pushed the boundary of interreligious dialogue aimed at the development of a new theology of religious pluralism that facilitates the acceptability of a hybridized identity among the Christians.