

**AFRICAN ECO-THEOLOGY: LAND, ECOLOGY, AND INDIGENOUS WISDOM IN
THE WORKS OF SAMSON GITAU, KAPYA KAOMA AND JESSE MUGAMBI**

by

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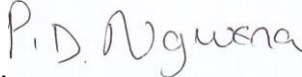
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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Patricia Dudu Ngwena (Student Number: 47350679) hereby declare that, the content of this thesis to be my original work that has not at any time, totally or partially been submitted to any other university for the purpose of attaining a degree.

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ABSTRACT

Using an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach, this study investigates the eco-theological contributions of three main interlocutors from East and Southern Africa, namely Samson Gitau, Kapya Kaoma and Jesse Mugambi, all of whom are African theologians. The three theologians seek to address ecological degradation from an African ecological perspective, by drawing on African Indigenous Knowledge Systems and African Christianity and Religiosity. The contributions of the three theologians in their respective chapters enable the study to identify the systems and practices that are under-researched and not utilised even though they are ecologically sensitive systems. Owing to a number of factors, African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems have not been adequately explored. African Indigenous Wisdom is a body of knowledge systems with ecological overtones. From a theological and African religiosity perspective, Gitau, Kaoma and Mugambi highlight the need for natural theology to be adopted by the Church as an institution. Gitau stresses the importance of relations based on the African concept of God, humanity and creation.

The study addresses the gap in the existing knowledge by drawing on the main interlocutors to investigate the ecological crisis and by adopting an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach. According to this approach, as applied by Gitau, Kaoma and Mugambi, the indigene's systems are not adequately explored and churches in Africa are ecologically insensitive. African churches ought to embrace Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems and form an African eco-theology. The study has brought to the fore the ecological overtones of African religious belief systems and African Christianity that, together, provide the basis for Christian ecological ethics inside and outside the faith community. Gitau, Kaoma and Mugambi condemn the Church as an institution and other voices for not taking a leading role in addressing contemporary ecological issues.

Keywords: African religion; African theology; Eco-theology; African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems; Land degradation

ISISHWANKATHELO

Olu phando lusebenzisa iindidi ngeendidi zophando, esi sifundo siphanda ngegalelo labangeneleli abathathu – uGitau, uKaoma kwakunye noMugambi – kwela candelo lengqiqo-buThixo eligqale kulwalamano oluphakathi kwenkolo nendalo. Bobathathu ke aba baziingcali zengqiqo-buThixo zase-Afrika. Ezi ngcali zontathu zijongene nokuthotywa kwesidima sendalo, kwakunye nokonakaliswa kwayo, besebenzisa ukuqonda kwase-Afrika, betsala kwizimvo zeeNkqubo Zolwazi Lwemveli Lwama-Afrika, ubuKhristu ngokwama-Afrika kwakunye nenkolo. Igalelo lengcali nganye, ngokwezahluco abathe bazibhala, libangela olu phando luzibone izithuba ezikhokhelela kwiinkqubo nezithethe ezingaphandisiswanga, nezingasetyenziswayo, nangona zona ziyihlonipha indalo. Ngenxa yeemeko ngeemeko, ulwazi lwesintu alunikwanga ngqalelo ngokwaneleyo. Xa kujongwa intlalo ngokwesintu, kuyacaca ukuba ulwazi lwesintu lulwazi olucwangcisekileyo, olukwaquke nolondolozo lwendalo. Xa sisondela kulo mba wolondolozo lwendalo ngokwengqiqo-buThixo, uGitau, uKaoma kwakunye noMugambi bagxininisa ukubaluleka kwecandelo lengqiqo-buThixo elijongene nokutyhileka kukaThixo endalweni, kwakunye nokwamkelwa kweli candelo emabandleni onke, kwiimvaba zonke, nakwinkolo yesintu. UGitau ugxininisa ukubaluleka kobudlelwane obusekwe kwindlela uThixo abonwa ngayo ngama-Afrika, kuluntu nakwindalo.

Olu phando luzama ukuvala isikhewu esikulwazi olukhoyo ngokufumana ukuqonda kwaba bangeneleli bathathu, ngenjongo yokujongana nolondolozo lwendalo olusebenzisa iindidi ngendidi zokuphanda. Le nkqubo yophando phakathi kwamacandelo ngamacandelo isetyenziswa nguGitau, uKaoma kunye noMugambi ibonakalise inyani yokuba iinkqubo zesintu azihlolisiswanga ngokwaneleyo kwaye iinkonzo zaseAfrika aziyini ngqalelo indalo, kwaye kufuneka zamkele ulwazi lwesintu ukuze kwakheke icandelo lengqiqo-buThixo elingqale kulo mba wolondolozo lwendalo ngokwase-Afrika. Olu phando luveze into yokuba inkolo yesintu kunye neenkonzo zase-Afrika zilufanele ulondolozo lwendalo, kwaye imigaqo yokuziphatha yamaKhristu malunga nolu londolozo ezinkonzweni nasekuhlaleni, lusekwe phezu kwazo. UGitau, uKaoma kwakunye noMugambi bayalikhalmela ibandla lamaKhristu, kunye nezinye izimvo ezichazwayo kolu phando, ngokungathathi nxaxheba ikhokelayo ekulungisweni kwemiba yangoku yolondolozo lwendalo.

Amagama Aphambili: Inkolo yaseAfrika; Ingqiqo-buThixo yase-Afrika; Icandelo lengqiqo-buThixo Elingqale Kulondolozo Lwendalo; Iinkqubo Zemveli Zobulumko Nolwazi Lwesintu; Ukonakaliswa Komhlaba

OPSOMMING

Volgens 'n interdisiplinêre en multidisiplinêre benadering ondersoek hierdie studie die ekoteologiese bydraes van drie Afrika-teoloë uit Oos- en Suider-Afrika, naamlik Samson Gitau, Kopya Kaoma en Jesse Mugambi. Hierdie drie teoloë beskou die kwessie van ekologiese agteruitgang uit 'n Afrika- ekologiese perspektief en put uit inheemse Afrika-kennisstelsels en die Afrika-Christendom en religiositeit. 'n Ondersoek na die bydraes van elke teoloog, elkeen s'n in 'n afsonderlike hoofstuk, bring stelsels en praktyke aan die lig wat nog nie genoegsaam nagevors is nie, en nie gebruik word nie, alhoewel dit ekologies sensitiewe stelsels en praktyke is. As gevolg van verskeie faktore is inheemse Afrika-wysheid-en-kennisstelsels nog nie voldoende ondersoek nie. Inheemse Afrika-wysheid-en-kennisstelsels is kennisstelsels met 'n ekologiese ondertoon. Uit 'n teologiese perspektief dring Gitau, Kaoma en Mugambi daarop aan dat die Kerk as 'n instelling die ekologiese teologie volgens Afrika-religiositeit aanvaar. Gitau beklemtoon die belangrikheid van verhoudings wat op die Afrika-konsep van God, menslikheid en skepping gebaseer is.

Hierdie studie vul 'n leemte in die bestaande kennis aan deur uit die primêre gespreksgenote se kennis te put om die ekologiese krisis deur 'n interdisiplinêre en multidisiplinêre benadering aan te pak. Volgens hierdie benadering, wat deur Gitau, Kaoma en Mugambi volg word, is inheemse kennisstelsels nog nie na behore ondersoek is nie, is kerke in Afrika ekologies onsensitief, en moet hulle inheemse wysheid-en-kennisstelsels omhels om 'n Afrika-ekoteologie te ontwikkel. In die studie tree die ekologiese toonaard van die Afrika-gelowe en die Afrika-Christendom na vore, wat saam die grondslag vir 'n Christelike ekologiese etiek binne en buite die geloofsgemeenskap vorm. Gitau, Kaoma en Mugambi veroordeel die Kerk as 'n instelling en ander stemme omdat hulle nie 'n leidende rol in die aanpak van hedendaagse ekologiese kwessies speel nie.

Trefwoorde: Afrika-godsdiens; Afrika-teologie; Ekoteologie; inheemse Afrika-wysheid-en-kennisstelsels; Gronddegradasie

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My interest in ecological ethics is really attributed to the love of creation which developed during my childhood years growing up in Nhlanguano, Eswatini in an African Christian Community that was also informed by African Religion as well as African Indigenous belief systems. This inter-connected communal setting displayed ecological sensitivity in its life-worlds. I was not specifically taught about the intrinsic value of creation but it was a lifestyle within my environment. African Christianity and African religiosity together provide the foundation for African Christianity. The two entities with a critical and an in-depth examination of both religious worldviews uncover their complementary emphases on human responsibility as custodians of the land within the earth community. The African Religion concept of God, humanity and the natural/wild world, assess the biblical understanding of the ecologically inter-dependence of all creation and the quest for a theology of nature. The main thrust of the study as part of a wider discourse across disciplines and religiosity is to ensure the future of all life-forms on this planet regardless of original and characteristics.

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CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1 Thesis statement

The aim of this study is to explore the works of African theologians, namely Gitau, Kaoma and Mugambi in raising ecological concerns, with a focus on land degradation and African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems from an African theological perspective.

2 Hypothesis

During the research period of this study, the following hypotheses have been closely studied. As a result, three major starting points were formulated regarding the escalating ecological crisis drawing insights from eco-theological contributions of African theology with a focus on land degradation and African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge systems. The advocacy is about collaboration through inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary approach.

The first hypothesis is linked to land degradation in the faith community that is rooted to Christian anthropocentrism as a result of biblical misinterpretation.

The second hypothesis explores whether the church as an institution is applying natural theology in its hermeneutical missiology as a response towards ecological degradation.

The third one is linked to the eco-theological contribution of African theology, African religion and belief systems with regard to creation. African religiosity viewed nature as sacred which contributed positively in preserving bio-diversity.

In order to put these hypotheses into praxis, the research study has applied the following methods of investigation; desk top research, library research which formed secondary and primary information, for example, books, theses, journals, reviews and dissertations related to the subject.

3 Research questions

In this investigation, the main question is: If ecological degradation is a global concern, can a response through inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches be a way forward in addressing the problem from an African theologically perspective?

The following sub-questions will guide the rest of the study:

First, what is the meaning of land, ecology and African indigenous wisdom knowledge systems?

Second, what is the response and possible solutions towards ecological degradation from an African perspective?

Third, what is the contribution of African theology and African religion in addressing the problematic issue with regard to land degradation and the marginalisation of African indigenous wisdom systems/practice? The works of Gitau, Kaoma and Mugambi enable the author and a broader audience within the earth community to wear different lenses in viewing and understanding creation from different angles including African religiosity and indigenous life-worlds.

4 Methodology

The premise of the methodology of the thesis is that addressing the contemporary ecological crisis requires an inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary approach. I have, therefore, appropriated the eco-theologies of Gitau, Kaoma and Mugambi as representative of an inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary approach. The study applies the thinking of these three main theologians through their works drawing insights from the faith community, African belief systems and African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems. The study will critically analyse the contributions of Gitau, Kaoma and Mugambi to show their responsiveness to the ecological crisis as well as to demonstrate their similarities, differences and aporias. The ultimate goal is to construct an integrated analytical framework that speaks to an inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary approach regarding land degradation even within the discipline of theology.

Gitau' theological framework focuses on biblical teaching and African theology on the concept of God, humanity and the natural/wild world. It links African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems with the contemporary ecological crisis. Kaoma's Christological approach brings forth Christ as the original ancestor to all life-forms which changes conversations across disciplines regarding the ecological crisis. He argues that the world can benefit from exploring how African Christianity and African religion as well as cultural practices of African people(s) including African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems can safeguard (when retrieved) the earth while protecting the livelihoods of the earth community without prejudice (Kaoma 2015:24).

Mugambi on the other hand approaches the crisis not only from a pollution viewpoint, but from a global advocacy perspective. He argues that the under-developed countries

particularly in Africa are used as dumping sites for industrialised/household waste. According to Mugambi this has continued for centuries disguised by the wealthy nations as developing enterprises to the needy (Mugambi, 2011:41).

By bringing the works of Gitau, Kaoma and Mugambi together, the study conducts a systematic theological study that has the capacity to deepen understanding of ecological crisis and its complexity and, ultimately develop an integrated, inter-disciplinary and multidisciplinary response.

5 Motivation of the Study

Arguably, eco-theology is a relatively young discipline. Nevertheless, from an African Christian and religious perspectives, it has already faced great difficulties/challenges in defining the moral and ethical status of the natural/wild world in the face of humanity. These difficulties come as no surprise given that historically; the ethical systems that are dominant in this era are the product of the industrialised western world which is perpetrating pollution among various factors of human ill-practice. While economic progress has been skewed in terms of over-provision in the Global North and under-provision in the Global South, it has brought with it discernible gains for the global community which has become part of modernity, including among other aspects, the harnessing of energy, mass production of food, communication and transportation systems that brings nations together in the shortest possible time. While life continues at a fast pace, land degradation is escalating and the earth is in peril. In pursuit of economic gains, massive exploitation of Africa's natural resources has been normalised, aggressive mechanised commercial farming which has replaced the African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge practice systems although ecologically sensitive have been side-lined.

Due to Africa's colonialism and missionary invasion, the continent remains at the receiving end of sheer exploitation and abuse in a number of areas that have and continues to contribute to the contemporary ecological degradation. What is missing in humanity as custodians of the earth is love, reverence, spirituality, healing and reconciling with creation. The earth is groaning in pain and as humanity, we remain the perpetrators as well as victims. As plunderers of the very eco-systems that aid humanity's own existence is a complete alienation from African values and belief systems (Kaoma, 2015:23-24).

The present investigation on eco-theological contributions of African theology with focus on land degradation and African indigenous wisdom systems will be completed through a

combination of methods. The first method involves both a multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approaches with regard to land degradation. This method is useful as it addresses the ecological crisis within the same discipline of theology. The second method is analytical as it is based on collection and integrated analytical framework of data on African theology, land degradation and African indigenous wisdom knowledge systems. The third method is essentially narrative as it provides insights into the works of various African theologians. The study further provides understandings as why African Indigenous Knowledge Systems and African religious belief systems despite being ecologically relevant are side-lined.

From a semantic point of view, the concept of eco-theology can be defined as a footprint for humanity to be ecologically sensitive towards creation and all life-forms. Within the discipline of eco-theology, there is a gap of knowledge to map the confusing terrain of the theological discourses underlying practices and approaches towards land degradation (land that has been exploited and abused).

In the same illustration, the idea of African theology refers to works aimed at promoting ecologically sensitivity to communities across disciplines and religiosity. According to Kaoma, African theology remains an extension of Western theologies in an African blanket (Kaoma, 2015:85).

The concept of African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems can be defined as a belief system from an African perspective that the natural world is a living phenomenon and as humanity, we are connected and inter-dependent. Unfortunately, the superiority of scientific method/approach has been accepted as the dominant knowledge systems and shunning the African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems. Hence, this study is about making a case for collaboration in ways that take African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems noted as an essential party in research and exploration of possible solutions in addressing ecological degradation.

6 Structure of the study

Following this introduction, chapter 2 of the thesis presents African cosmologies through the land, ecology and African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems and practice, (and not an ideal) from an African ecological perspective. The trio interlocutors draw insights from African Indigenous Knowledge Systems as the corner-stone in establishing African Theology from an academic standpoint.

In the third chapter, I present African Theology and African Christianity intertwined in addressing contemporary ecological degradation. The church is drawn in the conversation using the concept of '*Oikos-theology*'. The use of the '*Oikos*' metaphor in the chapter is to portray the essence of inter-relatedness, inter-dependence and recognition within the faith community and the earth community.

The fourth chapter focuses on exploring critically the basic framework of the late Rev. Samson Gitau's eco-theological views drawing from the African conception of God, humanity and the natural/wild world established on relations. From this backdrop, Gitau then assesses the biblical understanding of reverence towards ecology. Gitau's main argument is that African churches need to adopt a theology of nature which will enable the church to embrace African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems.

The fifth chapter analyses Rev. Kapya Kaoma introduction of the creator Christ as the original ancestor and the ethic of *Ubuntu* as a theme from African Christianity and African Religion perspectives with a strong emphasis on the ethic of *Ubuntu*. His approach in addressing ecological degradation is channelled by different ecological dimensions with a unique Christological outlook.

The sixth chapter's main contribution is Jesse Mugambi's advocacy towards ecological degradation from an African Christian perspective. He challenges the churches ambiguous stance towards ecology in Christian education, Christian anthropocentrism and security of the earth and all its inhabitants. Mugambi's argument is that the African churches need to critically address ill-practice by the North-Atlantic industrialised nation's extreme pollution resulting in the contemporary ecological degradation.

The seventh chapter reviews the works of Gitau, Kaoma and Mugambi and highlights the African connectedness to the land and underlines the fact that every creature remains part and parcel of the African life.

The final chapter is the conclusion where we summarise the finding and provide suggestions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO: LAND, ECOLOGY AND AFRICAN INDIGENOUS WISDOM KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS: FROM AN AFRICAN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

“The land is always stalking people. The land makes people live right. The land looks after us. The land looks after people” (Annie Peaches, 1976:38).

1 Introduction

Society is a global web of world-views, diversity and complex entities. Socially we are largely influenced by various factors, including culture, religion, education, historical background, politics, and economic as well as social status. Different communities across the globe relate to the natural/wild world differently, some ethically and others unethically. For indigenous communities, their social systems and practices are part of a holistic world-view towards the natural/wild world and not a separate entity. Ecological knowledge of the indigenes is often dismissed and labelled as traditional and out-dated, and therefore irrelevant of western or contemporary ecological knowledge in terms of assessment and environmental management. According to Mwende, the indigenes ecological knowledge systems, is packaged through, beliefs and praxis transmitted to generations as a lifestyle that is ecologically sensitive to all life-forms (Mwende, 2011:35-47). It is a lifestyle that embraces life in its totality. The paradigm of globalisation, with great emphasis on science and technology (which has improved and added value to our existence) unfortunately has gradually side-lined African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems as a non-sustainable entity. Humanity by existence, as Sittler sums it well in his publication, *“Evocations of Grace, Writings on Ecology, Theology & Ethics”*, is an attempt by humanity to define and assess the human condition by focusing on the theological categories of nature, grace and sin (Sittler, 1974:101). Therefore, humanity becomes an ecological entity in building relations across man-made structures/barriers.

This chapter seeks to persuade society at large across disciplines to acknowledge that African indigenous and western ecological knowledge systems, though founded/established on distinguished world-views, can be re-visited and harnessed to assess and address the ecological crisis on hand, from a broader perspective through research, dialogue and collaboration. Contemporary, it is comprehensible that it is our conviction that the magnitude

and the extent of the world's ecological crisis requires, at the very least, collaboration among various disciplines of knowledge including indigenous ecological knowledge systems. Any possible solution at this stage requires an ethical, systematic, and praxiological response through the unity of knowledge whether short-term or long-term, limited or on a grand scale. We live in societies that have assimilated and adopted modernity and have become socially and economically diverse. These societal changes occurred particularly in Europe and the Americas and spread to Africa following the Industrial Revolution which brought along the production of knowledge, the division of labour between intellectual and non-intellectuals and resulted in categorisation and compartmentalisation of institutes (Asoanya, 2011:87). Amidst all these developments the indigenes have retained something from their past and remained ecological sensitive as a lifestyle incorporated in their life-worlds (Kaoma, 2015:6-7).

According to Kaoma, the concept of ancestry as custodian of the earth plays an important role in unifying African cultures and belief systems which carry highly articulated ecological overtones. Ancestors in this concept not only are perceived as custodians of the land/earth and morality but also the unconquered everlasting bridge between humanity, the natural/wild world and the spirit world. The role of the ancestors is to connect ecologically sensitive as well as none ecological sensitive communities to the ancestors and ultimately to the Creator/the Supreme Being of the universe and all that is in it (Kaoma, 2013:53). Exploitation and land abuse are regarded as taboo to the indigenous ecological sensitive communities. It is completely unacceptable and is shunned away by the communities. Western societies cannot conceive that the notion of taboos, myth and proverbs can influence communities to be environmental sensitive in their life-worlds. For them, this is all far-fetched and without substance. For decades Indigenous Ecological Wisdom Knowledge Systems have been perceived by many scholars opposing or in binary towards western ecological praxis. Their reasoning is African indigenous wisdom knowledge is unsystematic and totally incapable of meeting the productivity and requirements of modern day life experiences (Battiste, 2002:23). The chapter seeks to challenge such world-views and promote amicable dialogue and collaboration. This is a nuanced approach to address ecological degradation.

Historically, the value of land in African cosmologies can be illustrated through the practice conducted by communities when dealing with conquered land, internal and civil wars during the pre-colonial era. The sacred nature of land did not allow land dispossession from defeated nations/cultures. This was the practice and not an ideal (Mbiti, 1975:31). The

victorious groups, who feared to interfere with the spirits guarding the land of the conquered nations more than their living descendants, as a result they did not drive their enemies off the land. They could plunder and cause extensive damage to property but not the land and its natural resources. From an African religious and non-religious world-view land is sacred and holds motherly status which means that it cannot be viewed as one's sole property (Maathai, 2010:95).

The land is the source and identity of the African people/dwellers. Therefore, African descendants cannot be weaned from the land, but have an ethical duty to protect and nurture the land and all inhabitants. That said, the colonial invasion of Africa and the ruthless plunder of African land by colonists and their successors was a transformative event (given the western denigration of African culture and religiosity which gave birth to African theology) but in an enormously negative sense. Colonialism ushered in values that negated the African traditional relationship with the land. Not only were African people(s) dispossessed of their land but the land was also put to the service of individual possession, the pursuit of profit and the domination of humankind over nature. To borrow from McFague's terminology, colonists were the purveyors of a 'neo-classical regime' that introduced to Africa a rapacious economic paradigm that does not respect or care about the environment and its inhabitants (McFague, 2000:119).

McFague in Conradie, concludes that as the earth community, we have lost our identity in the household of God who creates, nurtures, and redeems this world and all its creatures. As humanity, we tend to distance ourselves from the fact that we are part of a living, non-static dynamic cosmos that has its solid foundation in and through God. Domination has become a natural instinct to humanity because of humankind's subversions which are focused on individual accumulation that alienates beings from their environment. To avoid self-alienation humanity should perceive the land as the household of God shared by all inhabitants within the earth community (Conradie, 2011:45). The fundamental observation or plea in my view is that humanity cannot continue to plunder the earth at ease as the consequences are dire and the evidence of suffering at this point is beyond measure. During his time, Schweitzer became famous for his outlook on the need for a 'reverence for all life' including the connotations of awe, wonder and fear also attributed to Sittler, which we ought to adopt in our endeavour to address ecological degradation contemporary (Conradie, 2011:63).

There are notable similarities between indigenous African people(s) and Native Americans in conceptualising the idea of sacred land and identity (Jennings, 2010:61). Indigenous life-worlds and historical background are personifications of cultural practices which in-turn regulate and manifest in communities livelihood. Any groups of people and individual(s) outside this notion with regard to land and the people connectedness will struggle to understand especially the above epigraph in this chapter originally from Annie Peaches an elder of the Western Apache tribe among the native Americans in an interview with anthropologist Keith Basso in Angela Tarango's article "*The Land is Always Stalking Us*". (Tarango, 2014:397-406). There is a deep connection between land and cultural identity. This connection is extremely difficult to comprehend for those formed by different cultures and world-views, especially those influenced by western culture and modernity (Jennings, 2010:1-2). The conquest of land from the indigenous people in Africa, Asia and the Americas during the colonial era had a transformative impact on land and identity. Notwithstanding land invasion, violence, forced removals and geographical displacement from a specific order of place, specific land, specific environment, in spite of all the injustice, the imposition of a colonial order did not replace the people's true identity or deprive the captured people of vision and imagination. They continued to observe and practice their cultures in the most difficult circumstances.

The loss of identity past and present suffered by the indigenes has escaped the western discursive hegemony. It has failed to understand that the construction or formation of identity of indigenes is something that can only be fully articulated in the context of land appropriation. The aim of the colonial project was the possession of the land which colonists referred to as untamed land with raw material. Native inhabitants were barred from their ancestral land which had been a constant signifier of identity. The only symbol of identity they could hold on to was their physical bodies, language and culture. This became a distorted version of creation. From a theological perspective part of humanity has not been able to overcome this eternal loss of identity. As much as this occurrence is in the past, it cannot be erased as it is deeply embedded in the spirits of the indigenes. Indigenous people view themselves as part of the environment and an extended ecological family with common ancestry and origins (Kaoma, 2015:131). Salmon used the terminology 'Kincentric Ecology' to capture the relations between indigenous people and ecology (Salmon, 2000:21). According to Salmon, describing Kincentric ecology as kindred spirit of oneness within the earth community can be valuable and meaningful only when humanity views the

surroundings as kin including all life-forms and ecosystem (Salmon, 2000:132). It is a belief system among indigenes that they remain inter-dependent with all life-forms. From a spiritual perspective living in harmony as the earth community enhances livelihood in all spheres of life. Scholars such as (McFague, 2001:33-67), (Rasmussen, 1996:322-325), (Solle and Cloyes, 1984:1-21) emphasise that the earth should be viewed as the body of the Creator, a sacred entity and responsibility bestowed to humanity.

2 The Indigenous Principle

From the beginning of time, the lifestyle and behavioural patterns of the indigenous people(s) is incommensurable. By inclination, the indigenous people(s) testify that all that we have comes from the natural world in particular from the Earth (Mother Earth). Most indigenous ecological sensitive communities use the metaphor 'Mother' referring to the 'Earth', which emphasise the value and sacredness of the Earth. In their mind-set, 'Mother Earth' cannot be classified under 'resources', such as the raw materials, because she is a living deity, and encompasses life in its totality. Therefore, the natural world cannot be exploited or abused by its very dwellers. The land and all that is in it cannot even be measured according to its capacity to meet production quotas and endless human needs. The principle of connectedness to the land is akin to the heart and soul of the people(s). It transforms the value system and culture which binds creation to this incommensurable connection with the indigenes. It is through story telling that culture and indigenous knowledge wisdom is shared and transmitted from generation to generation. When stories are repeated time after time, they are socially integrated into the masses. Stories are not owned but shared among communities. Accuracy (not only in terms of words and details but wisdom and responsibility) from the storytellers is very important as they are perceived as primary sources. Cultures are not static and the indigenous practices are very diverse. Therefore, they cannot be treated as a single entity. The indigenes from Africa, Americas, Asia, Europe and Australia have their unique historical backgrounds which influence their economic, political, and religious practises. Within these communities knowledge is not homogeneous but there is a vast degree of assimilation and retention of traditions. Society contemporary tends to have a negative perception of Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems as something belonging to only certain ethnic groups. However, there is a growing realization that this knowledge is part and parcel of the global heritage and a national resource to be explored and utilized in the fight against earth degradation (Ntuli & Vilakazi, 1999:190).

3 Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems from an African Ecological Perspective

Ecological challenges have enormously risen in sub-Saharan Africa and are of such magnitude that the earth community is threatened and lives are lost due to a number of factors. Factors such as, human-induced climate change, resulting to the depletion of the ozone layer, de-forestation, air, water pollution carried out by industrialisation from developed countries continue to cause ecological degradation, not to mention the deplorable health challenges arising from illegal dumping of industrial and household waste, gas flaring and all sources of water contamination leading to all kinds of diseases (Gitau, 2000:49). According to the Nobel Prize laureate Wangari Maathai, (for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace), across disciplines and religiosity she led debates and dialogue towards saving the Congo rain forests in Central Africa which is home to indigenes among the inhabitants. This has been an on-going conversation for decades (Maathai, 2009:261). The Congo Basin rainforests ecosystem is a phenomenon as it holds about a quarter of the world's remnants of tropical rainforests, and provides a blanket of all of Africa's vegetation which includes a large number of forests, savannah, woodlands aquatic and riverine habitats (Maathai, 2009:265). This has promoted the most biodiversity in Africa in terms of species of birds and thousands of species of plants mostly endemic and thousands of reptiles and mammal species. Deforestation particularly in the Congo Basin has a negative impact on weather patterns throughout the continent. The livelihood of the indigenous people(s) living in the Congo Basin depends on hunter-gathering and subsistence farming. The people of the forests (as they are commonly referred) for centuries have had long relations with the areas flora and fauna. Therefore, in order to safeguard the forest and the Congo basin, the forest dwellers should be involved in most decision-making on commercial use of natural resources and biodiversity measures of the basin (Maathai, 2000:270). The forest is their only dwelling place and a source of their identity which is shared with the forest species and the entire vegetation. Maathai warns that peace on earth depends entirely on our ability (as humanity) to secure our living environment (Maathai, 2008:24).

From an African world-view the word 'community' does not refer to a mere association of isolated individuals or groups of people sharing world-views or tradition. The term suggests 'bondedness', sharing and living in communion with others regardless of culture, religion or historical background (Sindima, 2013:7). The notion of bondedness informs and orders man-made structures such as politics, religious institutions and traditional societies. The community-based life-worlds brings forth caring and nurturing the environment and all its

constituents. From an early age, African indigenous people treated the environment with the utmost respect. As much as African communities, indigenous, religious and non-religious groups can be understood sociologically, religious views plays an important role that brings forth holistic understanding. Unity as well as diversity characterises the various African religions. In general, however, (which for African people(s) is coextensive with being humane) follows a life-affirming, life sustaining behavioural patterns. By the same token, we cannot overlook the fact that African people(s) not only had authentic religious practices and beliefs systems before the advent of western modernity, but that these belief systems varied and imbued with profound symbolic values. As societies, it must also be borne in mind that not only African religion but all religions are born from human institutions, and have been subject to change, distortion, misconception, decay and de-generation over a period of time (Thorpe, 1991:105).

Religious values form and inform individuals and groups of people(s) ethical behavioural patterns to a great extent and enhance community life (Kaoma, 2015:29). A life lived in community is conducive in maintaining harmonious relations between the Creator, the living/non-living (ancestral spirits), present and future generations and the natural/wild world. Sharing of resources particularly food becomes an obligation and not an epiphany. This is also accompanied by a common myth in Africa which attest that a selfish and unfriendly individual in the community is likely 'to end up as a wizard', because one's prosperity is monitored by how much it enhances and adds value to the community at large (Kenyatta, 1965:18.) This statement is completely bizarre to westerners' world-view. It contrasts with the views of Rene Descartes and Democritus as early as 400 BC and Francis Bacon who viewed the environment as matter and motion and beings separated from nature. According to Descartes, humans have distinguished themselves from nature by intelligence and nature can be understood simply by following logical objectives and rationality. He boasted that, as humanity 'we can identify ourselves as masters and possessors of the natural world'. Christian anthropocentrism shares sentiments with Descartes views and associates by rendering humanity as the Prince of all of creation due to a misconception of the biblical text(s). Humanity has established a tendency to ignore the fact that all life-forms bear an intrinsic value regardless of categories or origins.

The indigenes differ from the views of Descartes and followers in such way that their life-worlds displayed ecological wisdom and knowledge in their daily experiences. The knowledge is a manifestation from years of experience and problem-solving methods by

different groups of people(s) working towards solving ecological problems confronted in their daily experiences drawing from the mere resources at hand (Chavunduka, 1995:46). Intellectual groups in society tend to label Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems as localised, simply because they are constructed in a local context for solving short-term and long-term environmental challenges. Chavunduka and Masuku-van Damme argue that indigenous practices should not be limited to ecological sensitive indigenous communities, but should be used boldly in order to influence other entities nationally and globally. This thesis seeks to persuade the readership across disciplines that Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems contemporary should be viewed as a universal heritage and resource to be explored. There is no method that can be practised in isolation and then prosper. Through collaboration dialogue is formed across structural barriers. The Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems are not only embodied in the African context but it is also a global heritage among indigenes communities who believe in living harmoniously with the natural/wild world and all life-forms within the earth community.

The ecological debate has been going on across disciplines for decades. Some academics are completely dismissive of African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems as a prospect. However, there are those who define Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems as the body of generational wisdom that has manifested from years of experience and trial-and-error problem-solving approaches by the indigenes across the world (Green, 1995:51). Authors such as O'Donoghue, Vilakazi and McClure, warn that the systems should be considered and not dismissed at face value based on the assumption by intellectuals. It is evident today we are facing ecological degradation among other compelling factors, the decline of Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems/processes utilisation cannot be ignored. The above trio argue that indigenous peoples lived in conscious harmony with the natural/wild world and their traditional practices complemented their values, though gradually eroded due to enculturation and adaptation. For example, from a South African perspective our education system has, regrettably, not incorporated Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems in the curriculum. It is through education that a number of approaches and methods in addressing ecological degradation can be established and some re-visited across cultures and disciplines (Vilakazi, 1999:203).

The Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems according to Vilakazi, can be located in various sources, including the elders, community leaders, ordinary and non-certificated religious groups in society particularly in rural settings. In order to embrace Indigenous

Wisdom Knowledge Systems, we should have full participation in all sectors (the intellectual, urban as well as rural dwellers, indigenes communities, the church and most importantly the school curriculum from an elementary level to higher learning institutions particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

3.1 Contemporary Africa land use and deforestation

Among the negative factors contributing to the devastation of ecology is the misuse of land and deforestation. Tropical forest scholars, such as, Norman Myers have warned that deforestation releases to the atmosphere large amounts of bio-mass carbon and the combination form carbon dioxide which fuels the percentage of greenhouse deadly gases which is methane and nitrous oxide (The Kyoto Protocol, 1997). This combination is hazardous not only to the environment but also to all inhabitants/creation (Asoanya, 2004:112). Among the African populace both religious and non-religious groups of people(s) adhere to the fact that land is shared as a common denominator where problems and hope are shared. 'Land tenure' is a common term used when referring to 'land ownership', in terms of how the land was acquired from ancestors, transferred or used by those in authority of the land (land tenure). The use of land is crucial among African people. Indigenes, in particular perceive land as the truest identity of the people and it should be preserved. For example, the Kikuyu and the Massai communities of Kenya perceive the land tenure system as the prestigious factor in political, social, religious and economic life. This perception is shared with other indigenous ethnicities across Africa especially those practising agriculture as the main source of survival. They depend entirely on the land and they look after the land in terms of nurturing and preservation (Mackenzie, 1998:25). Above all, the concept of God from an African perspective as the main source of all things alive and dead plays an important role in influencing the relations of beings towards the natural/wild world among African people(s) (Gitau, 2000:56). From a theological perspective, as the earth community we co-exist with nature and it is of utmost importance to respect the earth and all life-forms. In order to symbolically express gratitude to 'Mother Earth' for sustaining nations and all inhabitants, during the harvest season, planting season, rain supplication and other memorable events, many rituals are conducted by ecological sensitive communities. There are numerous feast activities held in honour of the divine life-giver which gives rise to the holistic vision to the earth community (Ekekwe, and Oluge, 1997:132).

Land degradation and desertification across Africa is a major environmental concern as it impacts negatively on food security and sustainability. The preservation of our forests has

been an on-going debate among African leaders both in politics and environmental circles. The main concern is that earth inhabitants are losing the battle for clean air and a shortage of potable water supply due to the high level of pollution. Another main problem apart from air and water pollution is water scarcity due to the continuous draught which has become a permanent factor affecting all life-forms. This has resulted in the loss of life especially in the wild-world and severe malnutrition and related diseases affecting humans due to vegetation degradation (Lloyd, 1994:87). The loss of forests across Africa means that there is no vegetation left to hold the soil in its place resulting in an enormous amount of valuable topsoil being swept away. During rainy seasons, rain water flows downstream through over-cultivated land causing massive soil erosion and floods destroying crops and wild life. Colonial commercial exploitation cleared indigenous trees in favour of non-indigenous trees to accommodate mainly one agricultural practice (commercial monoculture). For example, the Shamba plantations (engaging in commercial monoculture farming) in Kenya which are continuously planted and harvested have drastically reduced the prospects of local biodiversity in agricultural farming practices (Maathai, 2009:244).

Restoring the environment, particularly land, should be prioritised otherwise Africa will never be in a position to alleviate poverty. To reverse the process of desertification requires inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary collaboration including drawing on Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems and practices to be re-investigated. African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems, African environmental ethics and intergenerational ethics among other approaches need to be re-visited in the fight against land degradation. A number of African cultures in an attempt to curb the ecological challenge are promoting inter-generational ethics and solidarity between generations (Murove, 2009:315). The present generation is under obligation to the past (the spirits) and the future generation in the African continent.

According to Murove in his publication, *“African Ethics, An anthology of comparative and applied ethics”*, the present generation of the African people(s) shall contribute to its own existence into the future when it becomes the past (Murove, 2009:17). Based on anamnestic solidarity living in commune past and present, is received as a gift or an honour to be transmitted down to generations. For instance, the communal owned land/gifted land from the Creator given to the ancestry lineage belongs to all generations. From an African indigenous perspective because it is communal land and the dwellers are expected to take full responsibility of the land at all cost. There is no doubt that this is perceived by many scholars

and independent thinkers especially in western culture as a backwards-looking notion of duties. However, from an ecological African perspective, this is one of the most significant contributions which enhance moral obligation to the future. This is not a new phenomenon to the world of indigenous communities across the globe but a shared value among indigenes, African religion and ecological sensitive communities elsewhere. According to Conradie, in Dean-Drummond's publication, "*Eco-theology*", the wisdom of ordinary people/communities is vital in order to acknowledge the role of indigenous knowledge (Deane-Drummond, 2006:50). From a South African context it is of great concern that such indigenous wisdom knowledge may be lost in the process of urbanisation and industrialisation. This is highly problematic because indigenous life-worlds have been practised for decades, an ability (not just in theory but in praxis) to live within the carrying capacity of the land. It is therefore crucial to retrieve such prudence so that people can adopt a sustainable lifestyle on a broader basis. This is an untapped heritage waiting to be explored and utilised to its full capacity.

4 An Ecological Perspective on Ubuntu (humanness) and Ukama (relatedness)

In the views of Ramose and Murove based on the notion of African indigenous wisdom or prudence knowledge and practices, they attest to the view that '*Ukama*' and '*Ubuntu*' are inter-changeable concepts. Murove stresses that the concepts are the foundation of African environmental ethics because they are rooted in an ethic of inter-dependence. *Ukama* is a Shona word meaning *relatedness* and *Ubuntu* is a famous Nguni word referring to the past, present and future and how one relates to creation not necessarily human to human relations, but broadly across creatures. Ramose describes African behavioural patterns with values that ascribe ontological primacy to the community at large without denying human individuality. The individual is known through the community by their good deeds and moral standing which enhances communal welfare instead of individual interest and self-gratification. Murove maintains that there is *Ukama* between the living and the non-living which brings forth anamnestic solidarity. The present tends to follow or repeat the trends of the past. If the past generations (which will be us in the near future) were ecologically sensitive in their behavioural patterns, the present/future inherits the pattern. These are values that promote harmonious existence among the entities are immortal. For example, the existence of the present generation depends on the past generation and the former aspires to live ethically and influence the coming generation. The understanding of *Ukama* that manifests itself through *Ubuntu* leads to the communal appreciation of the existence of others past and present (Ramose, 2009:124, Murove, 2004:194-215).

According to Ramose, *Ubuntu* brings an affirmation that individual existence is possible because of the existence of others past and present. Hence, in *Ukama*, as Murove puts it, the individual inherits *Ubuntu* as a way of life and culture transmitted to generation(s). It is not a state of being, but of becoming. Ramose's expression of *Ubuntu* infuses both the ontological and cosmological dimensions of human existence in a model that suggests the connectedness between human existence and the environment/natural world. From an ecological perspective a person who bears *Ubuntu* does not only respect other humans, but respects all of creation and is not abusive in any spheres of life towards all life-forms. With this philosophy of life, the individual or groups of people do not produce good deeds only because they follow the biblical command by God 'love thy neighbour', but demonstrate the true meaning of being humane. Long before the environmental crisis, African religion perceived the natural world and humanity on the premise that the whole universe has been created to sustain beings, and in return beings had the mandate to care for the natural/wild world (Gitau, 2000:56).

As a symbol of appreciation, the African religious and indigenous people(s) celebrate events such as good harvest, rain, and new season(s) and new life. Indigenes view themselves as the earth custodians such that if they exploited the natural/wild world they would not survive and the curse would be transmitted down to generations. There is no doubt that there has been a paradigm shift since industrialisation and enculturation is part and parcel of today's world. However, the good practices by the indigenes and African religion followers should be incorporated in search of approaches and models towards saving the environment in the present and beyond. African ethics as espoused in *Ukama* and *Ubuntu* offer a paradigm that can assist the present generation to live harmoniously with the natural world. If *Ukama* systematically practices the authenticity of human existence, it should embrace human togetherness in all spheres of life and in all life-forms in the social, spiritual, ecological, political and economic spheres. The connectedness between immortality and morality is infused in celebrating life through ceremonial events, ritual practices that acknowledge the past and influences the present to be ecologically sensitive or else there will be no land or earth for the new generation to inherit. Human interdependence with the environment is an important reason for upholding a narrative in African ethics that stresses oneness as well as reverence for the natural/wild world.

The dialogue across disciplines focuses on the issue of the land status and usage of land in lieu of the coming generation. Concerns or issues such as population growth, the depletion of

non-renewable resources, the storage of toxic waste, air and water pollution and deforestation are prioritised in an attempt by institutions and individuals to find long-term solutions. Conradie sums it well in his publication, “*Christianity and Earth keeping, In search of an inspiring vision*”, by addressing consumerism and immediate gratification as a norm (Conradie, 2011:43). He points out that, we do not only inherit the land from past generations, but we also borrow it from our descendants (Conradie, 2011:43). The sense of harmony between God the Creator, humanity and the land is exemplary to the African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems life-worlds. According to Daneel, within communities ecological sensitivity is evident in practices and advocacy such as the planting of trees by the Association of Zimbabwean Traditional Ecologists (AZTREC 1992) and the Green Belt Movement (GBM) of Kenya founded by the laureate Wangari Maathai in 1977, among other ecologically nurturing practices/organisations within African Christianity and the African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems across the continent.

4.1 Indigenous Ecological Knowledge and Western Ecological Knowledge: Complementary or Contradictory?

The gap between western ecological knowledge and indigenous ecological wisdom knowledge is not as wide as it appears. Both entities strive for ecological sensitiveness and awareness. The main difference is that western ecological knowledge is open, systematic, objective and analytical. Historically, Indigenous ecological wisdom knowledge is closed, conservative, holistic rather than analytical. African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems thrives on generic inheritance rather than assimilation. The western philosophy brings the Eurocentric attitude to knowledge which is not compatible with the indigenous philosophy of life. In order to collaborate on conditions of equality, both entities should be treated with respect and regarded as valid and practical in their own right and none should be treated as inferior, out-dated and irrelevant. According to Tangwa et al, Indigenous Ecological Wisdom Knowledge Systems is more than the binary of western ecological knowledge, but a system practised over a period of time with positive results by communities across the globe (Mwende, 2011:37). In Africa, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, there are many communities that practice indigenous wisdom ecological systems in its totality. Examples, include ecological sensitive communities like the Massai and Kikuyu in Kenya, the Igbo in Nigeria, the Nankani communities in Ghana, the Shona in Zimbabwe, the Chishinga in Zambia and Malawi, the Imvelo ye Maswati in Eswatini, and the Simaamba Tonga in the Kariba region of the Gwembe Valley (Nyamiti, 1984:20, Mugambi, 2009:22 &

Magesa, 1990:129-130). According to Gitau, based on the Nankani life-worlds, spirituality plays an important role. This is because the Nankani religious belief system draws heavily from the natural world as either spiritual entities in themselves or as channels of their speciality. Based on the Nankani views, the natural world/wild world is a complex religio-cultural entity. This is illustrated by Gitau in his publication, *“The Environment Crisis: A Challenge for African Christianity”*, that the natural is not an empty impersonal object or phenomena, but it is associated with religious significance (Gitau, 2000:42)..

It will be a great loss for intercultural dialogue and the development of common responses, should the western ecological knowledge continue to disregard Indigenous Ecological Wisdom Knowledge Systems, regardless of the fact that indigenes have their own distinct approaches/methods of transmitting knowledge and sustaining their livelihoods. Practices and approaches are not static or standardised but change timeously. What is important, as we re-visit the indigenous wisdom knowledge system contemporary, is to invest in approaches that are inter-changeable, adaptive and contributing positively to ecological degradation. An attempt for eco-theologians to research on African sacred ecologies in an effort to catalyse further research on the ecological dynamics of contemporary Africa, and diversity mostly based on social institutions organised by communities.

5 Conceptualising Indigenous Ecological Wisdom Knowledge

Obiora and Emeka note that various scholars are gradually giving African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems attention in an attempt to find a possible solution to the environmental crisis. However, its relevance with regard to ecological preservation and sustainable development remains controversial according to Wolfgram and others suggesting an elaborate study in the subject. (Wolfgram, 2006:67). This controversy emanates from a number of factors, particularly from scientific views. Scientists tend to be sceptical and dismissive towards claims that have no scientific backing or lack scientific credibility. The problem of credibility is compounded because some indigenous and religious knowledge includes elements such as the religious dimensions of the environment that cannot be verified in scientific terms. The African people, indigenous, religious and non-religious people(s) share the belief system or understanding that the natural world holds intrinsic value and should be given the same respect as beings because all creation is connected regardless of its originality. The African cosmologies, as Asante observes, are founded on the notion of a Supreme Being who is Spirit and Creator and the source of all power and energy. The Creator granted existence to all life-forms. Such belief systems are grounded and embedded to the

African religious and indigenes purely on religious convictions which makes it impossible for scientific verification (scientific proofs and credibility) because there are no tools for the study of the spiritual dimension of the environment or spirituality claims by the Africans or ecological indigenous communities other than their belief systems and life-worlds (Asante, 1985:9). Between the two disciplines there is power wielding concerning authority over knowledge and the complexity becomes an issue of debate rather than dialogue and collaboration. Unfortunately, the superiority of scientific methods/approach has been accepted as the dominant knowledge systems and shunning the African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems. Hence, this study is about making a case for collaboration in ways that take African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems is noted as an essential partner in research and exploration of possible solutions in addressing ecological degradation.

The dialectic between indigenous and western ecological knowledge revolves around the question of credibility. Is the African Indigenous Ecological Wisdom Knowledge Systems credible to be adequately explored or consulted in addressing human ill-practice, such as environmental degradation, food security, health issues and policies? In an attempt to answer this particular question one has to define the term 'indigenous wisdom knowledge' from both an indigenous perspective and the western perspective. The term 'indigenous wisdom knowledge' in this context denotes understanding of a communal lifestyle lived in a specific area. It is naturally processed by communities in a broader context in human daily experiences, historical background, agricultural practices and education. Indigenes are a mixture of educated/non-educated communities sharing the common goal which is nurturing and protecting the earth as the main responsibility bestowed to human kind. The applied tools in validating this form of knowledge involve its practice and contribution to the globe. It is a web of multi-faceted bodies of knowledge practised and sustained by different communities (Owuor, 2007:24). Its experience generates from the past experiences, such as oral history, music, folklore, narrative and rituals, adaptation and reflection. The wisdom and skills applied by the indigenes maintains their dynamic distinct lifestyle with regard to the environment. It is not a static approach or standardised. It evolves timeously as change is permitted and influenced through conscious attempts by communities to define their challenges and seek solutions through experiments/trials and innovation with an open mind-set.

In the education system, western scientific knowledge is historically perceived as the only credible knowledge. African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems which has been

followed by ecological sensitive communities from the beginning of man tends to be disregarded. According to Metuh, there are different views in conceptualising the two entities, African cosmology and western cosmology. Western cosmology comes across as static, objective, dichotomised and dualistic in its distinction of body and soul, matter and spirit. There is no provision for oneness or connectedness. On the other hand the understanding of matter from an African perspective serves only as a system of signs which translates the single reality of the universe. But the African understanding of cosmic 'oneness' is beyond and above the visible physical world. There is the spirit world which envelopes the former and permeates all life-forms through love and respect (Ibe, 2003:47). Mbiti's observations of African cosmology of oneness, and viewing the universe as a larger part of creation are based on the religious conviction of the African people(s).

Posey and Graham, on the other hand caution that Indigenous Ecological Wisdom Knowledge Systems and western scientific ecological knowledge need not be on opposite sides (Posey & Graham, 1996:44). Rather than being on the opposite fence, they should emphasise the potential complementarities and join forces across man-made barriers and across disciplines. They ought to have dialogue and work towards a possible solution and save the planet. The indigenes life-worlds perceive the universe in a two-fold form; the visible physical world, and the invisible disembodied spirit world of the ancestry/spirits. The populace of the visible world consists of man as part of the environment. The heavenly part of the universe from an African perspective is home to the stars, moon, sun, meteorites, rain, wind, thunder/storms and eclipses. Above all it is the home of the Creator, the Supreme Being who is in total control of all life-forms seen and unseen. The main task to humanity from an African indigenous ecological wisdom knowledge view is to live harmoniously with the created world and with awe and reverence.

Western ecological knowledge can be analysed, evaluated and tested at any given time by individuals, scholars and institutions. Therefore, western ecological knowledge is understood, but not absolute from an epistemic framework committed to the search for universal validity. However, even when knowledge professes to be universal it does not necessarily mean that in its application it will be universally beneficial and inclusive. For ecological knowledge to be universally beneficial, it must seek to be inclusive regardless of cultural, religiosity, intellectual and social differences. It must have the capacity to take into account economic differences and accommodate cultural diversity so that in pursuing a universal goal it does not marginalise, especially, poorer countries in the global south as it has occurred with many

so-called global policies. Collaboration across disciplines on an equal basis is a better way forward in addressing the environmental crisis.

Like in any social system and practice one finds a combination of the modern and the old, constraints and challenges. Indigenous Ecological Wisdom Knowledge Systems cannot be dismissed as old and out-dated. Modernity does not automatically translate into progressive ecological policies and practices. Government policies can work against the benefit of the environment and philosophy of the indigenes. The state first and foremost, is not objective towards industrialisation if it is packaged under the term ‘economic development’, particularly in the African continent. The political elite of Africa in pursuit of instant gratification at the expense of ecological integrity, has contributed to extreme poverty and complete disregard of the environment. We live in hope and expectation that the government of the day within sub-Saharan Africa will wake up to the call and safeguard the environment which is alarmingly reaching a boiling point and a complete destruction. The policies that need to be followed in order to safeguard the environment are overshadowed by the desire for economic growth perpetuated by the state and investors who will disregard any policy that will hinder their profit margins.

On the global scale according to Kaoma, in his publication, *“The Creator’s Symphony. African Christianity, The Plight of the Earth”*, the poorest nations facing environmental challenges are in most cases due to multi-national corporations, which put profit above the ecological livelihood of creation in the disguise of good investments and economic growth including job creation and sustainability (Kaoma, 2015:19). The state does not reflect positively on ecological degradation resulting in all kinds of pollution and abuse of the environment and all inhabitants. From an African ecological perspective, any form of abuse or exploitation is a grievous sin committed not only to creation but mostly to the Creator of all life-forms within the earth community.

5.1 African Sacred Ecologies as Culture, Myth and Taboo towards Conserving Biodiversity

During the colonial era as well in post-colonial Africa the indigenes even without written literature, indigenes bonded with creation. They established relations with the three entities, the Supreme Being, the natural/wild world and humanity. In their life-worlds expressed their belief systems and attitudes towards the environment through myths, stories, proverbs, taboos, dance and songs, oral history, rituals and symbols. The late Rev. Gitau in his

publication, *“The Environmental Crisis: A Challenge for African Christianity”*, argues that Africa has a rich environmental ecological sensitive culture. In order to understand African indigenes and African Christians life-worlds one ought to listen to their taboos, myth and oral history (Gitau, 2002:32). He uses the Igbo nation of Nigeria and its ecological communities as an example. Among the Igbos, some ethical prescription-taboos are associated with some rivers and forests to safeguard them from pollution, exploitation and abuse. In other African societies, certain animals and plants (particularly medicinal plants) are associated with spirits and cannot be utilised except by designated community leaders, such as those within priestly status who perform rituals and sacrifices to appease the spirits/ancestors (Forde, 1998:52). Through these practices and lifestyle, the African people(s) were able to successfully control proper usage of the land and its resources. However, colonisation opened the doors to the industrial and commercial exploitation of the environment. Western cultures have encroached through coercion, enculturation and seduction in successfully destroying many of the existing African cultural forms (Alokwa, 2009:67). At the same time, the encroachment has not been complete. We still have communities that follow Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems in selected ecological sensitive communities not just in Africa but across the globe.

African indigenous communities and religious communities particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, from the beginning of time were very much aware of African cosmology. It is unfortunate that the first missionaries did not seek to study and understand African anthropology. Instead they discarded and condemned the beliefs and customs practised by African people(s). According to Kaoma, the missionaries not only down-graded the African people(s) belief systems but also introduced the mission theory of Christianity, development and commerce which gave birth to rampant consumerism (Kaoma, 2015:17). Thus led and converted the African people(s) into Christianity which they did not fully comprehend. They began to abandon the intrinsic value of nature and trading it with economic gains. Many coveted and still covet a lavish lifestyle which is purely self-centred, and environmentally ignorant.

From an African perspective, the roots of African cosmology lie deep in myths and rituals that are still practised mainly by the indigenes and African religious communities, despite the intervention of western Christianity. The African myths, among various communities in sub-Saharan Africa reflect a ‘cosmic oneness’, in which the natural world, humanity and the spirits are interconnected. According to Kayake, when defining the role of nature in African cosmologies, writes; ‘Nature is not an object to use. Nature is the partner or an ally or mother

who has given birth to all life-forms'. Therefore, we are called to live in harmony with other species the environment by following and respecting the rules/taboo set by our ancestors and divinities. The land is the people and people are the land. The ancestors become the custodians of the land. Humans are expected to use the land wisely and perceived as a sacred trust.

The taboos and proverbs within African communities are a set of rules followed by certain communities' thus preventing exploitation of species, forests, and medicinal plants. Communities' are responsible for monitoring over-grazing and over-harvesting. However, indigenous communities and religious leaders hold a priestly duty to ensure the harmony of creation. This is normally practised through meditation, sacrifice and rituals by the affected communities. Among various rituals/symbols, the elders/community leaders will collect ashes and spray over the field which will manifest as fertiliser and in turn will protect the soil from turning into laterite or brick like soil. Different types of crops are grown concurrently in the same field as a simulation of biodiversity forming a natural ecosystem. The sacred trees are used particularly in covenant-making between individuals; also it can be used as the place to gather for meetings/settling disputes and also for the demarcation of land between families, the purification and fortification of community leaders (Kanu, 2015:40). During community disputes, a person can swear on a sacred tree. It is perceived as an abomination to cut or fell sacred trees used as demarcation or covenants.

Contemporary we are living in a post-colonial, post-apartheid era in extreme diversity economic, political and social status. Particularly in South Africa, communities live in two separate economic statuses. One group is wealthy and the other group live in extreme poverty. Both groups share an ecology that is degraded to the highest point. Some are concerned about the state of the environment and some are completely at ease. It is utterly impossible for humanity (groups of people(s) and individuals) to wake up one day and suddenly decide to care for creation. The only time this epiphany will happen is when humanity decides to establish relations with the natural/wild world. Empathy will lead to attachment and care. You cannot begin to save and protect what you do not love. Environmental activists in the past and present have continuously hammered people with environmental statistics, showed documentaries of land abuse and exploitation in vain. People only reflect on ecological degradation because of the love towards the Creator and all of creation. We cannot ignore the fact that society at large suffers from a disease which I may describe it as 'impaired empathy', which lies on a continuum of societal alienation and

fear that undermines the dignity and sacredness of each part of creation, particularly the environment and marginalised groups of society. This is due to increasingly under-developed capacity for empathy which enhances our inability to respond positively to the ecological crisis. Most communities believe that the environmental concern is an issue for the wealthy members of society who seem to be concerned more by pollution than the lives of people living in extreme poverty (without shelter, running water, health services and food). Obviously, the poor communities are mostly concerned about survival than ecological concerns.

Ecologically sensitive communities, regardless of institutional background, should make an effort to create awareness among the groups of people and individuals that are not concerned about the plight of the environment. From a Christian theological perspective, environmental care and nurturing can be approached in two separate but complementary entities. One is the covenantal approach and the other is the sacramental approach. The covenantal approach draws insight from the Bible and is popular among Protestant Christians and Orthodox Christians as observed by Rosemary Ruether in Conradie's publication, "*Christianity and Earth Keeping, In search of an inspiring vision*". The covenant approach strengthens relations and commitment between God and the earth community. The sacramental approach also draws insights from the Bible, as well as on patristic and medieval mysticism which inspires the vision of the sacred and the expression in communion practices and events within the earth dwellers religious and non-religious. The Orthodox Christian mission displays their sacramental approach mainly in the conversion from paganism which focuses on preservation of the natural/wild world. For illustration, the works and life of the hermit St. Herman of Alaska (d. 1837) who is famous for his sympathetic engagement and socialisation with the indigenous people of Alaska known as the Aleut community. He protected the indigenes against exploitation and abuse by Russian traders and promoted the idea and importance of protecting wild life and encouraging sustenance farming instead of commercial farming. He strongly objected to the slaughter of wild animals by the western traders (Smith & Oleksa, 1987:44). He perceived nature from an orthodox spiritual realm as a sacramental approach pointing towards the salvific process of *theosis*, by which humanity acts in the spirit of love and compassion (inter-connectedness).

The Indigenous Ecological Wisdom Knowledge Systems with regard to the environmental skills or methods required in ecological sensitive practices are transmitted down through generations. There is no literature, but through the informal systems of indigenous wisdom

knowledge life-worlds embedded in the cultural and social organisation of communities particularly those in rural and communal settings. It is a fundamental obligation to the elders to educate the present communities about the corner stone and upkeep of indigenous wisdom knowledge systems. It is of critical knowledge for the present generation to acknowledge that the land, the soil, animals, mountains, rivers, lakes and the entire vegetation are all sacred. Inter-disciplinary efforts through hybrid scientific and humanistic methodologies if explored can lead to a step forward towards conserving biodiversity. For example, the cultural use of the wild olive trees in South Africa by the *amaXhosa* people (both rural and urban) in the Eastern Cape Province demonstrates the continuity of the indigenous practice and acknowledgement of the olive trees and its durability through centuries. The belief is that the wild olive oil protects not only human life in terms of longevity but the environment as well. It is regarded as taboo to over harvest the trees (Nyamweru, 2008:286). The taboos with regard to resource extraction not only enable relict tree cover but also promote secondary forests and biodiversity as it is the case in the Congo basin. There has been a wide spread of social and cultural changes that are not ecologically sensitive, but the indigenous practices and protection of the environment, though it is in small doses it is relevant contemporary.

The historical nature of sacred forests was part of the indigenous religious beliefs systems and its sanctuaries. The clumps of very tall trees formed groves and they will build a hut with a tower as a temple or place of worship. The appointed leader normally a priest will be permitted to live in the groves guarding the trees against intruders and sacred tree cutters for individual gain. Each community according to Willem Bosman, a Dutch traveller who lived in West Africa around the seventeenth century, testifies that sacred forests had temples where leaders on behalf of the community would go for sacrificial rituals (Jube-Beaulaton, 2008:16). It is not about new methods or approaches which hold a scientific value that will shed light on this global escalating environmental crisis but past and present methods that have been tried and tested before need to be explored. From a biblical perspective, drawing from Jesus's teaching using wine and wineskins as an illustration, Jesus taught that new wine cannot be put into old wineskins. An iteration of this teaching would be that, in some cases (particularly the debate about African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems and scientific methods in addressing ecological degradation) a new expression of older ideas is not a 'new wine', but an aged, mature wine whose quality and taste can be appreciated today after it had gone through a millennia of bad weather, shifting winds and trends, but emerges from its

casks fresh and refreshing to be stored in the new wineskins. It is time to invest in research and explore Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems that were put in place by past generations across the globe. Pope Francis 1 shared the value of new and old ideas when he addressed an audience at Saint Peter's Square in June 2013, on World Environmental Day, under the auspices of the United Nations. He reflected strongly on the relationship between contemporary ideas concerning the environmental crisis and the charge or command given to the first beings illustrated in Genesis 2, and posed a question for the world to ponder. *'What does cultivating and preserving the earth mean? Are we truly cultivation and caring for creation? Or are we exploiting and neglecting it?'* His interpretation is that, *'cultivation and caring for creation means making the world a beautiful garden, an inhabitable place for us all'*. Human ecology is connected to environment ecology (Pope, Francis, 2013). The Pope continues to teach about taking care of creation published in the encyclical titled *"On Care for our common home"*.

The Benin intervention of 1985 comprising of agronomist, ecologists and global earth conversational intervention as reported by (Mama, 1985:45) called for a global initiative and biodiversity conservation to put in place national authorities that safeguard the earth through legislation and proper management of sacred sites (Nyamweru, 2008:15). Historically, these sites are embedded in diverse social histories and systems of cultural values which are transmitted to generations. Therefore, conservation of the sacred sites should not be reduced to a haphazard policy model of the day. African sacred ecologies formation is based upon the insight and wisdom knowledge of the early generation of African indigenous communities and religious sectors. Today, the environmental crisis has propelled a burning desire to an ecologically concerned society for enhanced earth conservation and replenishment across disciplines and religiosity.

5.2 Creating Environmental Awareness applying the Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems

Through generations, it has been observed that sub-Saharan indigenous communities have good knowledge and understanding of their environment. The knowledge and experience provide the communities with the wisdom and insight about the implications due to abuse and exploitation of natural resources, which is home to all life-forms with the wide range of resources. Indigenous communities for usage with regard to hygiene, domestic and health care they use different plants/species required and recommended for that purpose. For example, for dietary, medicinal and other domestic purpose including soap and deodorants fig

trees and palm oil are most common. The indication of harmonious living within the indigenes environment is that they live in one area for generations. For food consumption in most cases they are hunter-gatherers and substance farming for sustenance, but not for commercial gains or sport/entertainment. For decades this lifestyle promoted harmony between mankind and the natural/wild world. Unfortunately, there has not been a vested interest in the study of African cultures or African anthropology to reveal more clearly the relationship of the African people(s), indigenous and non-indigenous people(s), Christians and non-Christians with regard to creation. Instead, there is a lot of speculation, distortion and misconception. What has been reported or studied about African cultures comes from academic studies in ethno-archaeology and anthropology by non-African scholars, who often are dismissive and biased of African cultures. In the process, African voices are not heard and the African people(s) do not get to tell their own stories first hand.

From an African perspective, knowledge is transmitted among societies not only through education in terms of literature, documentaries and research, but also by praxis. There are also cultural tools that distinguish groups of people including one group of indigenes from another. For example, the earlier African indigenous and non-indigenous peoples used a hoe to plough seeds which was very time-consuming. A new method of using a span of oxen was introduced which later was replaced by a much effective and faster method of ploughing using machinery (tractors) by western culture. The tractors/machinery method came with hidden running costs and pollution to both the land and air. The machine caused air pollution as it uses petrol or diesel. The process became faster but the environment sustained a negative impact. This does not mean that we should abandon modernity and return to using the hoe and span of oxen. It simply means we should adopt modernity and also be ecologically sensitive. As the earth community, we should apply precaution and moderation in all usage in order to safeguard the environment.

The vision of creating a new Garden of Eden by the western missionaries inspired change and also mixed feelings among indigenes. The new approach of subduing nature and replacing the wilderness with plantations and farms in return for a better life-style became an attraction to some indigenous community leaders. Western missionaries particularly in the Protestant mission believed that teaching indigenous converts to farm in a modern way would promote them to civilisation and be accepted by their white counterparts/immigrants. Today, some of the missionaries across Africa and elsewhere are working extensively to correct the errors of earlier missionaries and their condescending attitudes towards indigenes and indifference to

the environment. They are involved in educational projects that assist indigenous communities with learning about modern methods of preserving and protecting rain forests from exploitation by oil companies, plantation growers and other commercially driven institutions. Ignoring the Indigenous ecological practices has caused a lot of harm to the environment. This is shown by a well-documented study by the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) in the 1950s. Sudan Interior Mission introduced modern agriculture (ploughing machinery and the use of chemical fertiliser) and single-crop farming in unsuitable land (Robert, 2011:127). The practice resulted in desertification and loss of medicinal indigenous trees. The indigenous community had planted trees to mark suitable land for produce which was totally ignored by SIM through zealous propagation that promoted tree-planting disregarding the social context of land use.

On the positive side, we now have missions and missionaries with a deep understanding of local cultural anthropology, indigenous or modern through dialogue and collaboration. For example, earth replenishing projects spearheaded by names, such as Borman in Ecuador, Daneel in Zimbabwe, the organisation of Earth keeping Christian Communities in South Africa (NECCSA), and the Catholic sister's movements for ecological justice and sustainability in the Philippines, Bangladesh, Panama and other locations (Dowsett, 2012:28). At the Fourth Global Lausanne Congress held in Cape Town, in 2010, about 4, 500 people from the faith community committed to serving the environment gathered to speak with one voice with regard to ecological degradation. They came out with this affirmative statement, which reads;

If Jesus is Lord of all the earth, we cannot separate our relationship to Christ from how we act in relation to the Earth. For to proclaim the gospel that says 'Jesus is Lord', is to proclaim that the earth, and Christ's Lordship is over all creation (Dowsett, 2012: 28).

The Cape Town Commitment has led to a massive global movement under the auspices of the Lausanne and the World Evangelical Alliance.

Another ecological positive initiative is the Green Belt Movement by the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Wangari Maathai of Kenya. She introduced tree planting to the communities in order to preserve the land from further ecological degradation (Maathai, 1977:48). Adaptation initiatives conducted by the Utooni Development Organisation in Eastern Kenya since 1978 are another environmental preservation initiative in Kenya. These initiatives have

transformed communities who were living in semi-arid and extremely eroded land to become ecological sensitive communities. They have been developing long-term strategic plans on how to conserve the earth for future generations by simply harvesting rain runoff water. They have put in place hundreds of sand dams, holding billions of water harvested from rain runoffs. They have built thousands of water tanks, contracted hundreds of kilometres of terraces, and planted hundreds of thousands of trees (Mugambi, 2009:34). The initiatives serve as examples of cross-cultural mission in the 21st century and their identification with indigenous life-worlds and preservation of the environment (Kaoma, 2015:80-81).

5.3 Ecological Land Ethics as cultural practice

One of the first names that come to mind when one think of land ethics is Leonardo Boff's contributions. In his publication, "*Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*", he expresses his ecological concerns citing, for example, the complete extermination of the earth community in the Amazon forests disguised by the investors and the state as development and sustainability (Boff, 1997:96). In order to capture the gigantic scale of the environmental destruction and the dispossession suffered by the indigenes, he uses the term 'The Holocaust of the Innocent'. According to Boff, the acts of aggression against nature in the Amazon have been perpetrated by industrial companies, such as Grande Carajas Agricola Company in conjunction with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which is comprised of twenty-two Japanese investment companies. Although, JICA recommended ecological precautions be carried out to harmonise agricultural development and environmental preservation. Boff, states that the government ignored the warning and chose a technological approach. The indigenous populace protested against this brutality but they were silenced. These people have lived and practised ecological wisdom knowledge systems in the Amazon for thousands of years. Communities were disposed of their land most of the communities perished and the remnants peasants displaced. To speed up the clearing of the forests and all life-forms they used a highly poisonous chemicals 155-Br and 101-Br, sprayed from helicopters, thereby polluting rivers, grounds, wiping out the human species and the natural/wild world (Boff, 1997:102).

It should not be difficult for humanity to acknowledge the planet earth, the household of the Creator and all of creation. There is a political need for ecological education that will enable beings to live harmoniously with the natural/wild world and enjoy universal communion respectively. Cosmic elements enable community life to function and progress. Humans as one of the species are searching for an ethic that will ensure that the land will forever be

habitable. Land degradation has become one of the most urgent challenges in the globe and human-induced global warming is one of the most debated themes. Therefore, ecology as a study is one of the important fields in the search for such an ethic through research and dialogue across disciplines including African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems. Colonialism in Africa capitalised on land violation. Colonial land dispossession and land degradation through commercial exploitation became the most affected aspect of indigenes' traditional relationship with the environment. The attachment of monetary value to land has encouraged land grabbing and private ownership resulting in the constant displacement of people, particularly the poorer sections of the populace and the mushrooming of overcrowded and squalid urban settlements – the so-called squatter camps (informal settlement). The colonists' desire and motive to exploit natural resources, particularly the forest, led to the loss of biodiversity and totally undermined the indigenous ecological life-worlds.

6 Conclusion

Ecological challenges are rife on account of devastating losses in biodiversity. While the earth community is affected adversely so, the most affected are the natural/wild world as well as marginalised groups of society. Despite all attempts to safeguard the planet from different sectors/institutions, continued ecological injustice indicates that we have yet to develop an effective praxis orientation. From a theological perspective praxis is an effective practical engagement that brings mutual respect, reverence, renewal of ideas/theories, redistribution of duties and accountability through collaboration with individuals and groups of people sharing the same ecological concern or the problem issue.

CHAPTER THREE: AFRICAN THEOLOGY AND AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY: A RESPONSE TOWARDS ECOLOGICAL DEGRADATION

The whole universe and the marvellous interdependency of all creatures sing of the love of the Creator. Creation is the supreme manifestation of the essence of God, sharing Godself in a continuous life-giving act of love. And all that he has made was so good, that God sent his only begotten Son – Christ to be incarnated as a creature. God sent His Son to help us discover that the whole Creation is full of the Spirit of God. The incarnation of Jesus brings to fulfilment the whole plan and process of Creation, revealing how God shares His love with all creatures since all eternity (Linares, (2010:1).

3 Introduction

The main task of doing theology is to understand how the world relates to God, how humanity relates to creation and how creation, itself, can be understood through its relationship to the Creator. From a Christian perspective influenced by the doctrine of creation, humanity stands for the appropriation of the foundation to facilitate and acknowledge the transcendence of God, the ineffable mystery and wonder before us. Theologically, the church is one of the foundations, even though at times the church perpetuates Christian anthropocentrism based on biblical misconceptions and interpretation. Cultural assumptions and religious belief systems revolve around an anthropocentric perspective. For humanity to reverse cultural anthropocentrism, we need to undergo a major reconstruction of attitudes and that our thought processes ought to be constantly renewed, as illustrated in the following texts (Romans 8:18-25, Colossians 1:15 and Ephesians 1:10) as acceptable behavioural patterns are required. Similarly, to reverse Christian anthropocentrism and address ecological degradation adequately, we need to reinvestigate, rediscover and reform Christian doctrine(s) and dogmas periodically. My growing interest and understanding of the environment as a sacred entity, its inter-connectedness with all life-forms, and especially its position within African spirituality is rooted from my upbringing in a communal life-world from an African Christian and religious perspective. In various African communities it is a strong belief that the spiritual dimension is part of the entire dimension in all aspects of life and daily experiences (Thorpe, 1991:28).

A number of factors, including colonialism, modernisation and industrialisation, continue to contribute negatively to the earth causing the contemporary ecological crisis. The colonial

era, which we cannot escape in dialogue, introduced to Africa the notion of exploitation of natural and human resources, specifically for the benefit colonial masters and their countries of origin. Ignorance and misconceptions historically tends to radically alienate humanity from the natural/wild world. Tarnished relations between humanity and other species have a negative impact to the entire earth community. From an African perspective various ideologies that humanity experiences, such as dualism, colonialism, capitalism, holism, animism, and the ethics of Ubuntu are all different ways of relating to the earth. The attitudes, mind-sets and other related philosophies need to be re-visited in an attempt to resolve the environmental crisis, bearing in mind the importance of not marginalising ecologically sensitive systems that have already been developed but are underutilised. The objective of the chapter in response to ecological degradation among other approaches is seeking to establish a theological theme from an African Christian perspective in developing indigenous theologies in the African churches.

A new but not lone voice from an African Christian perspective is that of Alokwu. He brings to the conversation the concept of *oikos-theology* as a response towards ecological degradation involving the church. The concept of '*Oikos*' according to Alokwu, has emerged as a theological framework depicting the expectant relations between humanity and the rest of the earth community. Alokwu echoes the works of Warmback whose earlier contributions were influenced by Western ideologies. Both theologians are concerned with the pragmatic exigencies of the '*Oikos*' (Earth) that is ecologically decimated and economically impoverished. They argue that it is time for a paradigm shift and for the church to construct an eco-theological mission. The church as an institution, must draw inspiration from employing the '*oikos*' metaphor in relation to an ecological discourse (Alokwu, 2017:78). According to Alokwu, the usage of the '*Oikos*' metaphor magnifies the essence of inter-relatedness, inter-dependence and recognition within the faith community and the earth community. The concept motivates humanity to engage in an overarching framework for the re-visioning of religious engagement and the imagination of eco-theological spirituality that supports the abundant life that Christ gave to all of creation, as illustrated in John 10:10. Conradie defines the term '*Oikos*', as the household of all life-forms life preserved by God, which adhere to creation as a whole and is beyond human comprehension (Conradie, 2005:7). Conradie attests that the impetus behind the emergence of '*Oikos*' as an eco-theological concept is precisely the need for inclusiveness of all life-forms within the earth community (Conradie, 2005:220). This is a constant reminder to the earth community particularly human

beings that from creation we are bound with the historical background of all life-forms and humanity cannot exist without the natural/wild world. Warmback argues that humanity should perceive the household of God (*'Oikos'*) as a structured home with care, assurance of belonging, substance and support system (Warmback, 2005:181). A home regardless of its occupants reinforces relations of inter-relatedness as well as inter-dependence, without oppression and rivalry. Based on an African Christian and religious sectors a Home is a communal place of reconciliation, wholeness, connectedness, love, generosity, sacrifice and hospitality to strangers as well as neighbours.

According to Alokwu's observation, in order to fulfil its mandate, the contemporary church ought to be mindful of the need to engage in theology contextually (doing theology) rather than thinking theology which ends up as an abstract, but doing theology gives birth to praxis (Alokwu, 2009:21-22). Alokwu, in his works highlights a theological theme that has been overlooked by the church and academics towards the development of indigenous theologies in the continent (Alokwu, 2009:22). African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems were successful over decades until the influx of Western Christian anthropocentrism and the anthropocentric culture became a global phenomenon. African indigenes though ecological sensitive communities in their life-worlds are in most cases side-lined by societies. The globalised anthropocentric culture and mechanistic/technological world-view have created a great need for a multi-disciplinary attempt in addressing the environmental crisis. We cannot ignore the fact that technology yields both positive and negative results. Positively it has improved lifestyles and operations. On a negative note it has contributed to the environmental crisis in a number of areas. The forces driven by avarice and self-gratification have led to exploitation of raw materials and production of hazardous waste to the environment. The list of destruction is endless. While there are no marks for guessing that human ill-practice is a major contributing factor to ecological degradation, it is apparent that not all beings bears the same footprint in destroying the earth, but destruction comes in different dimensions and proportions due to inequality within communities livelihood.

4 The Plight of the Earth in the face of humanity

Whilst we speak of the environmental crisis, described as degraded, the natural world will never be in a crisis. It is not nature that is diminishing, but humanity's dominant culture of economic growth and indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources for commercial gain and self-gratification is instrumental to land degradation one among various aspects responsible for ecological degradation. No matter how degraded and diminished, the natural

world can survive in a number of different forms. For example, nature is endowed with *autopoiesis* (nature's self-organizing capacity), self-manifestation, subjectivity or interiority). In a nut-shell, *autopoiesis* is the power of self-articulation which runs from an atom's self-organisation and longevity, whereas humans are prone to mortality and finitude. According to Rasmussen (1996:28-29), creation in communion is a universal principle for the internal relatedness and interconnectedness of creation through reciprocity and affiliation within the earth community. An individual is essentially a relational being, meaning a being in relationship with God, other beings and the rest of creation. Ecological distress is a crisis due to cultural practices and negative attitude towards creation. Christian anthropocentrism has and continues to alienate humanity from the rest of creation. Rasmussen compares ecological degradation to the apartheid system of governance where humans were hierarchically categorised and alienated from each other. Anthropocentric thinking alienates beings from the natural/wild world which has propelled the quest for dominance and power against the weak and vulnerable (Rasmussen, 1996:75-80). According to Conradie, (2005:26) the human self-alienation from the rest of creation has fundamental theological implications. Such as; different views on the absolute transcendence of the Creator, the missiological and soteriology focus on temporal dwellers on earth en-route to heaven; and the eschatological exit from the earth community.

Within humanity the quest for knowledge is a fundamental part of our composition. We are driven by inclination to acquire knowledge across disciplines and in most cases compete which in many instances has resulted in divisions and apartness of world-views and policies. We may not predict the severe effect of the human induced climate change to the earth, but it is totally unacceptable to be pumping greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere at this alarming rate. Our task in addressing ecological degradation is to find a balance between the two human perspectives, the vertical and the horizontal. To be able to make a distinction between knowledge based on measurement and data collection, and knowledge based from wisdom and expertise. It is critical to be mindful of the importance of applying spiritual values, ethics and morality in our thought processes (Maathai, 2010:74).

5 Theology and African Christianity

The quest for African theologies among many theologians, past and present, is really an attempt to construct coherent African religious identities which are accountable to the past, present and future of the African people(s). African theology is positioned in a discourse between African Christianity and the continually recurring religions and spiritualities of the

African people(s). Through dialogue, we are able to gain an insight that informs us about vision/imagination of society at large. Our main task as African theologians is to make it clear academically that during the process of conversion with regard to Christianity there must be cultural continuity. Cultural alienation dismembers the unity and connectedness within the earth community regardless of originality. The community of faith should bear the cross as symbolised in the incarnation. From an African Christian and religious perspective, African theologies are rooted in African soil (Mbiti, 1991:38). The responsibility between humanity and the natural/wild world ultimately determine relations with the Creator whom at the highest degree shows concern for the whole of creation. African world-views places Christ, through the incarnation, as the first born and citizen of this world. He becomes the Proto-ancestor and unites proctology and eschatology in himself. He is the first and the last (Mbiti, 2008:172). Mbiti argues that African world-view, which embraces that everything comes from God, also acknowledges that everything proceeds in a cycle ordained by God. But the idea of redemption is not a new phenomenon except that, from an African perspective, redemption is not only for individual lost souls, as portrayed by Christian missiologists, but for all creation. The Ugandan poet p' Bitek, warned African intellectuals not to seek, at all costs, to revert to the characteristics of Greek metaphysics to express African realities. According to Okot p' Bitek dialogue should not be interpreted or understood as giving in to somebody's world-view, but as a process where dialogue flows into conversation that can lead to mutual understanding or even into assimilation and modification of ideas. For example, African people(s) religious communities and those outside the community of faith believe that sin or evil deeds occur during the absence of love. Sin or evil deeds are not heritable. Therefore, sin cannot be transmitted down through generations. Biblical literature the Old Testament and the New Testament teaches that as a result of sin human nature has been corrupted, and therefore creation is under siege. In African cosmology, as Mbiti puts it eloquently, sin occur whenever the relationship within the earth community is tarnished and the responsible person or persons are punished by the community to ensure continued stability. Conradie, drawing from a theological reflection on the nature of sin, easily concludes that sin cannot be defined but can only be opposed. If there was a possibility of capturing sin it could have been easier to alienate the challenge. Contemporary sin is understood by masses as hideous, distasteful and elusive, but appearing in a disguised sheep skin timeously without warning.

5.1 Language and Liturgy significant role in African Theology

It is imperative to acknowledge that language and liturgy play an important role in African theology, as cultural practices which reinforce identity. Missionaries overlooked the most important part when evangelising African people(s). They focused on wielding power by denying that the colonised peoples had a culture and belief systems. Instead of denigrating and diminishing cultural practices, they should have made African culture the grid and vital space in which the symbol of the death and resurrection of Christ are interpreted and expressed (Kabasele, 1996:154). Fundamental contributions to African theology, among others, were the liturgies, ritual and symbols, celebrations of life and rites of passage. Rituals would be analysed and scrutinised by the liturgist in order to discover their connection with the natural/wild world, humanity and the church. According to Kabasele, communication from an African world-view perspective forms an integral part of celebration. In Christian liturgy, the church represents a community actualising the paschal mystery by affirming, through liturgy, the work of salvation in which Christ continuously intercedes for humanity. Every liturgy fundamentally serves as a sermon and a symbol of love, particularly when delivered in the vernacular. To engage African theology in one's language informs the cultural context of the message and empowers both the recipients and the presenter.

We cannot ignore the fact that culture is not static and, therefore, the evolution of culture automatically influences the evolution of rituals/symbols. In most African Christian denominations, prayer begins with hymns which are accompanied by dance, offering of gifts followed by the word/sermon. From an African Christian and religious perspective the organisers of African Eucharist stress the importance of receiving the word/text reading before supplications for God's mercy are conducted. This is an affirmation of believers' attitudes before their father (the divine-Ancestor to use Nyamiti's notion) which is widely used in African Christology (Kaoma, 2015:45). The Eucharist symbolises joy and not guilt whilst song and dance represent communion. This act or event bears witness to an African optimistic anthropology and shuns the Western anthropology which is pessimistic. African liturgies choose to be contextual and responsive to the African environment. It is not by accident that both African Eucharistic prayers and liturgy in words and acts exude the African environment. Imagination of the African terrain, with its beautiful mountains and valleys, rivers and lakes, forests and plains, vegetation and the wild world all join in the rhythmic praise of the Creator. The community of faith and African religious sectors as well as indigenous communities celebrate and pray for harmonious living within the earth

community. Through Eucharistic celebrations, the dance during liturgy portrays a confident acknowledgment of God's gift of life which is nurtured and made productive and creative (Uzukwu, 1994:110). According to Uzukwu, the attention drawn to the body of the dancer projects the anchoring of the life of the community in its dynamic ancestral/spiritual world that is confessed as reaching its culmination in the word of God through liturgy. From an African Christian perspective the written and spoken word is the prophetic tool that has the power and ability to transform not only communities but society at large. During transformation cultural practices, as displayed in liturgy, cannot be alienated as they constitute the identity of the people(s). Therefore, through Eucharist celebration, the evocation of life, fertility and vitality makes the Eucharistic action dynamic. It is the symbolic action that creates the environment for the realisation of its purpose.

It is undisputed that African communities lost their coherence and autonomy during colonial invasions and evangelisation. Contemporary African people(s) particularly in South Africa due to the legacy of apartheid nationals are in the midst of a cultural revolution. It is possible in the process to isolate some basic trends and orientations that form the deeper underlying foundations against and over which the on-going transformations are happening. This happens consciously and sub-consciously during the process of enculturation as a result of transformation. Past and present decisions are part of the elements influencing change positively and negatively particularly towards the outcome of decisive historical events that people uphold as they transform. The alienation from indigenous cultural practices has to be taken into account from an African theological perspective. Contemporary power structures are in part remnants of colonial man-made structures. The structures have resulted in widening inequality gaps between the elites and the poor populace (Kalilombe, 2012:70). Decolonisation/independence in many instances has not brought autonomy and empowerment for the majority of people; hence the gigantic scale of poverty experienced across the continent, partly as a result of the environmental crisis.

Apart from ecological degradation, which is a serious contributor towards poverty in the African continent, there is also a hidden factor which is equally impoverishing to humanity, namely, anthropological poverty. Anthropological poverty occurs when humanity is not only deprived of materialistic possession, but also moral, intellectual, cultural and spiritual order which forms a solid foundation of communities' well being (Frerer, 2016:75). From a South African perspective, due to the legacy of apartheid, millions of people are bereft of their dignity, identity and language such that they sink to anthropological poverty. For black South

Africans the working class in particular, poverty can be absolute both in rural and urban settlements which makes it a theological problem as much as it is a sociological problem. African theologians find it remarkable that Yahweh of the historical exodus narrative is portrayed as God of mercy and grace, who descended from the throne of justice not only due to human circumstances, but to the dungeon of slavery and of gross oppression, by those in power against the powerless. The same God continues contemporaneously to express divine concern for all of creation through his begotten Son. In him and through him God chose to be born on earth within a peasant Jewish family and experienced poverty and rejection by society. Christ suffered dearly and ended up crucified as a rejected outcast in order to give redemption and instil hope to the hopeless, poor and downtrodden. According to the African theological perception, the incarnation is the event which clearly demonstrates that the Creator shows mercy to the suffering, hopeless, marginalised/outcast and He is the voice of the voiceless. Tutu, as quoted in Maimela's article, sums it well when he says;

In the process of saving the world, of establishing His kingdom, God, our God demonstrated that He was no neutral God, but a thoroughly biased God who was forever taking the side of the oppressed, of the weak, of the exploited of the hungry and the homeless, of the refugees, of the scum of society. So my dear friends we celebrate worship and adore God, the biased God, He who is not neutral, the God who always takes sides (Maimela 1986:46).

African theology is under scrutiny from critics and the argument is that God cannot be understood as the God of the poor and downtrodden masses. In defence, African theology argues that it is vital to portray God as one who advocates for peace towards the downtrodden communities across the globe, regardless of morality and self-dispositions of the downtrodden. African theologians pose a challenge to the church that it should prioritise its teachings to assist the poor masses in terms of poverty alleviation and self-empowerment. The critics, mostly liberal theologians, argue that the church cannot prefer the oppressed because this would mean that God is now portrayed as against wealthy Christians. Driven by the ideology of justification by faith through grace, the role of faith in justification from a theological perspective is to receive and not to earn the gift God is offering. The Catholic Council of Trent defined faith as 'the foundation of justification' (Hebrews 11:6). But liberal theologians resist any informative discussion of God in relation to the problems faced by the marginalised members of society. In the meantime the plea or affirmation of bringing all the heavily burdened to the cross does not automatically solve racial classification and

anthropological poverty for the downtrodden. From an African perspective, it is of utmost importance to portray God as the divine advocate on behalf of the marginalised groups of people(s) regardless of their short-comings. Among the twentieth century theologians Karl Barth, as cited by Araya, articulated God's chosen option for the poor in this way;

God always takes His stand unconditionally and passionately on this side and on this side alone. Against the lofty and on behalf of the lowly; against those who already enjoy right and privilege and on behalf of those who are denied it and deprived of it (Araya, 1987:44).

Many authors across disciplines are advocating justice with regard to ecological degradation. Swimme and Barry calls for '*the integrity of creation*', meaning that the earth community is inter-connected. When one component is in jeopardy so are the rest of the members (Swimme & Barry, 1992:226). Long before the earth's distress took the turn of no return as Biblical Isaiah in the (sixth century BCE), warned that;

The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants, for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse devours the earth and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt and the inhabitants of the earth dwindled, and a few people left. The wine dries up, the vine languishes and all the merry hearted sigh. The city of chaos is broken down. Every house is shut up so that no one can enter; there is an outcry in the streets for lack of wine. All joy has reached its eventide and the gladness of the earth is banished (Isaiah 24:5-7).

The above Isaianic passages pronounce that ecological concerns are not only a 21st century phenomenon. Therefore, faith communities, religious communities and non-religious communities adhere to the knowledge of God to such an extent that creation (apart from beings) was put aside in consideration of the world as a configuration of the natural/wild world. Humanity's subjectivity and individualistic consciousness became the place of an encounter with God. Therefore, religion (based on the sacramental approach) past and present becomes an orientation towards the non-exhaustible, enlivening, empowering and liberating depth of reality or mystery which is beyond the empirically prescribed world from an African perspective (Magesa, 2004:75). The most important contribution that African religiosity can add value to African Christianity and spiritual consciousness particularly during worship. This awareness arises out of realisation that all morality and grace including human ill-practice is acted out in the universe and has consequences throughout. The choice is upon

humanity as part of creation to respect and safeguard the earth community and all life-forms. According to Maathai, the greater awareness for all earth dwellers across disciplines and world religions, particularly the faith community is to apply critical and exegetical thinking to their sacred texts in order to promote a just and ecological sensitive vision (Maathai, 2010:174).

At this point based on the scale of the earth distress, I concur with His Excellency Vaclav Havel's utterances cited in Rasmussen's publication *'Earth Community. Earth Ethics'*, articulation and proclamation that, 'Only the Almighty God can save us now'. His concern which he brings to our attention is that the only saving grace at this point for a new world order is one which includes a universal respect for all life-forms within their democratic practices. He warns that this cannot materialise unless the imperatives are grounded from ethical human praxis acknowledging the miracle of nature and the miracle of our own existence as part of creation (Rasmussen, 1996:16-19). Morally this applies to all who respect the universal order of creation, and all its components regardless of background and originality of species. It is paramount to acknowledge that the natural/wild world and the earth are comprised of a single community of inhabitants.

According to Rasmussen, Jones's articulation is an illustration of responsibility that should influence all humanity regardless of background and diversity it reads;

We must go forward, not backward. We must build our own faith, for better or for worse we are living in the world of the 21st century, and our lives must be lived amid the complexities which the accumulation that many generations have produced. We cannot bodily lift and take over for our spiritual uses the religious setting or the intellectual outlook of any former period. We can find inspiration, kindling power, leadership, eternal truth, immortal words, and the most dynamic Person of all the centuries when we go back to the heights where the stream began, but we must work out our own Church, our own faith, our own body of thought, our own interpretation, our own social order, and if we are ever to have a kingdom of God it must be one we ourselves build by going forward with our faith, hope and love (Jones 1924:23).

The above metaphor used by Jones is an outcry as well as reflection on the faith community, religious sectors and individuals that ecological degradation is a responsibility to the earth community particularly humanity. Idowu (1973:13) shares the same sentiments and uses the church as an illustration. He compares the church to a powerful living stream which flows

into and through the nations. Its clean waters enrich the lands through which it passes with the silt it has collected throughout its journey. However, it is empirical to learn that the stream cannot help but adapt itself to new shapes and features of each locality, taking its colouring from the native soil, regardless of man-made structural adaptation and diversification.

3.2 Contemporary African Christologies and African Theology

African theology by its composition carries various definitions with different approaches and methods, which explains the close link between African Christologies and African theology. In its broadest etymological sense, African theology is a discourse on God and all that is related to the Creator in accordance with the African people(s) life-worlds and world-view. African theology is packaged in different theologies, such as, African traditional theology found in various African religions, African Christian theology, and African liberation theology/black theology which gained prominence in South Africa during the struggle for freedom from apartheid governance. In respect of the latter, the liberation struggle focused mainly on racial discrimination (segregation), dehumanisation of the national groups of people. African Christology on the other hand is the relations and identification of Christ with regard to religion and cultural practices of the African people(s). African Christology draws deeply from African themes or notions such as, Christ the ancestor, life giver, healer, chief and liberator (Bujo, 2009:42; Nyamiti, 1984:28). These themes or Christological notions are envisaged in the light of their constitutive elements embedded in most cultures of the African communities, particularly those in the faith community and African religion(s). Among the Christological themes mentioned above, discourses are established including teachings on Christ incarnation, his birth, baptism, crucifixion and resurrection from an African perspective. The incarnation is inseparable with redemption, not only because the two Christian mysteries are jointly presented but also because African Christology attests that they are intertwined (Mugambi, 2009:24; Magesa, 1989:136).

The worldview of Bujo, in his publication, “*African Theology in Its Social Context*”, states that in developing a discourse based on the Christological notion of ‘Christ as the Proto-Ancestor’. In African world-views, the future depends on the ancestral cult, since it absorbs eco-social, religious and moral overtones. Although from the western anthropological perspective the cult is understood from the perspective of authoritarianism. But Bujo corrects this misconception and interprets it from a social functional viewpoint. According to Bujo, the primarily role of the cult of ancestors is to safeguard the future of the community. For

example, as Proto-Ancestor, Jesus becomes an instrument of change and brings new life that unites and enhances the community (Bujo, 1992:24). The historical Jesus throughout His teaching uplifted the weak, vulnerable and oppressed population. He related with the outcast and downtrodden members of society and that is fulfilled through Christ incarnation. Bujo categorises ancestors as good as well as bad just as humanity ought to depend on their social and ethical conduct. Bujo's understanding of the functions of the Pro-Ancestor is limited to humanity. Kaoma in disagreement with Bujo, points out that ecologically, Jesus, as the Pro-Ancestor, has responsibility through humanity towards the earth community and all life-forms (Kaoma, 2015:48). Nyamiti highlights that African theology and Christology in their collaboration bring light not only to the pluriformity of such theology and Christology, but also to the neglected areas of African Christology (Nyamiti, 1990:129). Perhaps the neglect is due to the narrow conception of African Christology and African theology, as a result of limiting the discourse to systematic theology and theological doctrines. The main Christological question is: is Christ understood in African culture and world-view? The answer is 'certainly'. Through human relations African people(s) are able to receive and adopt Christ in their world as the Original Ancestor, the Creator, the Father and the life giver. The cult of ancestors makes a clear statement, thus, ancestors share the earth with the past, present and future dwellers without prejudice (Kaoma, 2013:52).

3.3 The Theology of Inculturation and the analogy of Christ incarnation from an African Christian perspective

Inculturation is a theological method or approach that enables the integration of the Gospel in any culture. It also seeks to resolve conflict between the Gospel and different cultural and historical backgrounds. Shorter, aptly expound on the notion of inculturation that it is 'an on-going dialogue between the faith community and different cultures' (Shorter, 1988:52). Inculturation stands for the creative and profound relationship between the faith community biblical teaching and other cultures/belief systems. Most theologians, particularly missiologists, use a number of similar concepts in defining inculturation such as, adaptation, enculturation, acculturation and contextualisation (Onwubiko, 1992:1-4). From an anthropological perspective, culture is the manifestation of human behavioural patterns in society, a way of life of individuals and groups of people(s) in various communities. Culture embodies the acquired aspect as opposed to the inherited aspect. Culture cannot only be defined by human behaviour but also by ideas, symbols, and attitude towards life, stories and myths transmitted generationally (Tanner, 1997:62). The concept of inculturation can be

used inter-changeably with enculturation and acculturation, as it is the case with various authors across disciplines. Acculturation according to Onwubiko, is a cultural anthropological concept denoting the interaction of two or more cultures and the changes as the result. For instance, acculturation occurs when an individual or groups of people migrate to different countries. Acculturation denotes the process of integration of a person coming from a different culture into a host culture. As humanity, we have cognitive and rational capacities which allow us to adapt to new and different cultural traditions. During the process of acculturation individuals assimilate some aspects of the new culture and at the same time retain some of their own cultures. This can happen consciously or sub-consciously. Language and liturgy as forms of worship are some of the best examples of acculturation. According to Chupongco's analysis adaptation is an integral element of acculturation. It is characterised by substitution and assimilation which are the result of the recognition of cultural pluralism (Chupongco, 1982, 23-24).

The analogy of the incarnation of Christ as the paradigm of inculturation brings to the fore the indispensability of culture for impacting evangelization of the African people(s). The incarnation analogy is adopted or encultured as a suitable or workable principle of inculturation because its purpose is to make Christ relevant to the masses within the ambience of their cultures.

According to Nyamiti, inculturation plays an important role in African Christology by incarnating the gospel teachings within African cultures/African religions. The approach to biblical/Christian mysteries in many instances is ontological, functional, practical and analytical (Nyamiti, 1994:65). African Christology can be approached using different methods. The comparative analogical method commonly applied by African authors in this discipline is the holistic engagement of African different themes rooted in African theologies which complements Christian mysteries. The analogical method enables African culture to integrate into theological collaboration and formulation of the Christian mysteries. Identification is realised when the African themes join in the Christian mysteries and form a theologically solid entity. This said, we still look at the analysis of the components of the African and Christian elements that form the entity to determine the differences and similarities between the themes and mysteries. For example, the statement or notion of 'Christ the ancestor' is a profound identification of Christ from an African world-view with regard to relations. Kaoma (2015:56) adds value through his notion of 'Christ being the ecological ancestor', the original ancestor to all of creation. Christ according to Kaoma from

the African world-view, becomes the origin of all biota, the only one regarded as the 'I AM' is the life giver ancestry of the entire cosmos.

Contemporary, ecological concerns are not adequately observed and addressed in African theology, even though African cosmologies adheres ecological themes that can enhance ecological awareness and responsibility. The following ecological themes serve as examples in this regard: 'land as a common or community trust', meaning land belongs to the present, the past, and up-coming generations and that humanity plays the role of an ontological custodian of the land); 'sacred places' meaning places which must be protected from human destruction and exploitation at all cost and which, in turn translate, into ecological sensitivity and recognition of both the natural and wild world); and '*vital force*', describing the enduring Spirit which binds the entire universe together, the undisputable African concept of God and relations to all life-forms. (Kaoma, 2013:70).

3.4 Inculturation from the biblical perspective

In the biblical text we find passages which are anchored in different approaches and methods towards inculturation. Biblical scholars, for an example, Maher, argue that due to the Israelites' encounter with many cultures, the book of Genesis is a collection of literature from different cultures chronologically. Onwubiko concurs with Maher, when he writes;

In the Old Testament, the influence of the Nations in the purification of Israel monotheistic beliefs serves as a good reference point of inculturation. For instance Israel copied three basic practices from other cultures; the Canaanite agricultural festivals (whose fertility aspects they ignored but re-interpreted in the light of Israel divine history and gave them salvific importance. Pagan symbols, i.e. the Temples, were integrated, justified religiously and theologically. Rituals too were taken over from the Arabians and Mesopotamians. (The name Mesopotamia, is a Greek word meaning between the two main rivers) refers to the area between the two east-flowing rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates) (Onwubiko, 1992:72).

Therefore the New Testament brings to the fore the fundamental role of culture, the mystery of Jesus's incarnation on which the theology of inculturation is anchored. It cannot be understood unless one has acquired knowledge of both Jewish and Hellenistic cultures. We learn from the letter of Jeremiah admonishing the Jewish people to adhere to their traditions/customs in view of the influence of Hellenistic culture. The book of Baruch (with Jeremiah's letter) carries a similar warning concerning the Roman rule that people should not

worship Babylonian gods (Boshoff, Scheffler & Spangenberg, 2006: 228). The book of Acts, with records of historical practices of the first community of faith, reveals to us insights into the challenges early Christianity faced when ministering to other cultures outside Jewish territories. Religion, trade and culture played an important role during the inculturation process of the biblical nations. The Hellenistic age was a tumultuous period in Jewish history. Various Jewish groups came into existence and maintained their identity while experiencing turmoil at the hands of Hellenism (Spangenberg, 2006:236). We learn from the book of Acts (chapter 15), the first celebrated council of Jerusalem which was convened principally to deal with cultural issues mainly whether or not to require circumcision from non-Jewish (Greek and Gentiles) converts to Christianity (Olowa Chikwu, 2011:111-2). Paul's missionary activities particularly in the gentile world were practised within the cultural framework of Greco-Roman influence. Therefore, Paul established the groundwork for inculturation as a profound approach towards evangelisation. He distanced himself from uncritical Judeo-Christian gospel formulation which disregarded cultures of other groups of people mainly the gentile converts. The same argument is propounded when it comes to the African Gospel evangelisation (Olowa Chukwu, 2011:112). In order for faith to be rooted in the new converts, it must engage every culture encountered and it must be presented in a constructive manner/dialogue. Dialogue between the Gospel and culture through the instrumentation of inculturation goes beyond the external adaptation of faith to a particular culture. The growth of the community of faith is a result of inclusive gospel teachings and dialogue across ideologies, philosophies and cultures.

Based on the biblical foundation of inculturation I wish to conclude with two observations. First, that faith is a catalyst in the history of humanity and a product of inculturation, that faith transcends every culture, but cannot be transmuted by one culture. Second, God self-revelation is established intelligible in various people's cultures, without excluding any particular culture from serving/worshipping as a means through which God-self manifest.

3.5 The Spirit of solidarity in the African community regarding ecology

The majority of countries in sub-Saharan Africa can attest to the fact that ecological crises are aggravated by many factors, such as erratic economy development, also liberalisation from post-colonialism, which unfortunately led to side-lining and undermining the African traditional values and religious/cultural realities (Asoanya, 2011:28). Further negative contributions towards ecology in this regard are market economies, bureaucratic corruption, and lack of ethical and enlightened political leaders, which have resulted to the continent

notorious debt-trap (Speckman, 2012:126). On the same note we cannot overlook population problems due to political disasters and the long standing issues of casteism, massive illiteracy, urban and rural poverty due to overnight informal settlements, commonly referred by South Africans as 'squatter camps' has become the order of day causing havoc to the earth community.

All beings in an African context form the community. The community is made up of the extended family based on established relations through kinship, or an affinity through marriage in different clans and ethnicities. The community also arises from the hospitality extended to and interaction with neighbours. Individuals or groups of people create a special type of bonding within which gives rise to mutual respect, and understanding mutual rights and duties. At a personal level, individuals acquire their basic identity through guaranteed cultural exchange and values. If Descartes' expression of a community is '*I think therefore I am*', African people(s) according to Pobee, opted for this notion, '*I am related, therefore, we are*' (Pobee, 2001 :). In an African communal setting the value of inter-dependence through establishing relationships is rated higher than individualism and personal independence. On the same note, co-operation is understood as solidarity and community-building whilst competition and self-gratification are regarded as individualistic and self-alienating. The African widely used proverb that reads; '*It takes a whole village to raise a child,*' is an arch example of African solidarity. Sharing and distribution of resources within the community becomes an ideal practice in terms of community solidarity, which is gradually becoming distant due to many factors particularly the scarcity of resources and a high rate of consumerism. If there are individuals within the community that may wish to surpass others in terms of accumulating wealth, consumerism, influence and power, they constitute a minority. They are labelled as outcasts and even shunned by the community. They may lose their communal rights and privileges. The idea of communalism is not applicable only to African communities but has wider global relevance. From an African perspective, relations established between humanity and the rest of the universe is not a project of conquering and exploiting the weak and vulnerable, but a bigger project of existence. It is a project of mutual dependence within the earth community encompassing all life-forms - the visible and non-visible/spiritual worlds.

3.6 Ecological Spirituality from the African context

Fundamentally, ecological spirituality is the role played by religion and culture towards nurturing and protecting the Earth. It becomes the unifying power or centre of the ecological

circle of the transforming religious perspective towards relations with the environment and the entire earth community (Asoanya, 2004:309). From an ecological perspective, there is a glimpse of hope currently as ecological awareness across the globe continues to rise. Across and beyond Africa, communities are gradually becoming ecologically sensitive. It begins by authenticating moral practices and enhancing spiritual and religious concerns. In turn, this releases the cosmic imagination to humanity, and removes the arrogant ways of perceiving the earth based on Christian anthropocentrism and other factors. Writing from a theological perspective influenced by the doctrine of creation, Fox articulates ecological spirituality by posing the question: How can humanity deal with cosmic energy and responsibility for it without a cosmic spirituality? (Fox, 1983:13). Thus, humanity ought to acknowledge that ecological spirituality is formed when we acknowledge creation, and when we are grateful and joyful that all life-forms owe their existence to the Creator. Through spirituality we enter into a new understanding of creation where God is first and foremost the Creator and Lord of the universe at all times past and present. Thus, we continue to renew our relations with God and the created world regardless of origins. It is a misconception to think that ecological spirituality is all about worshipping the natural world. Ecological spirituality shows the depth of ethics and that justice and environmental concerns intrinsically and inextricably are intertwined (Asoanya, 2004:312). The ecological degradation we are facing is not only because of Christian anthropocentrism or social, political, economic and technological factors. It is also due to lack of spirituality among communities and individuals. In order to change our attitudes and ill-practices towards the environment, it is paramount to address the underlying issues from a multi-disciplinary approach, including revisiting Christian doctrines and African Indigenous Wisdom Systems in search of the cosmic spirituality.

3.7 African Indigenous Spirituality/morality

According to Magesa, there are fundamental distinctions between African Christian and African indigenous spiritualities (Magesa, 1998:124). Both spiritualities apply different religious approaches. The Christian approach is the ‘vertical approach’, meaning a direct relationship with God. From a Christian perspective God can be personal through Christ (as illustrated in the books of (John 1:14 and Mathew 1:23) and he can be approached by individuals and mediators at any given time. Therefore, the doctrine of incarnation, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is central to African Christian spirituality. African indigenous spirituality applies the ‘horizontal approach’, meaning a relationship with God through creation particularly the earth community. Immersion into the life of the world

through praxis is core to African indigenous spirituality and morality. From an African religion perspective, spirituality and morality are inter-changeable and they both relate to humanity's attitudes and behavioural patterns. It is not necessarily about what God expects from humanity but it is about what the community through culture and tradition expects from individuals or groups of people. By transgression it means I do not stand accused in God's eyes alone, but also in the eyes of the entire earth community (Magesa, 2015:71). The community is perceived as an inclusive entity embracing the totality of creation, from the living-dead to present and future generations (Bujo, 2011:120). For the indigenes and African religious sectors, it is crucial to understand African spirituality as the process of redemption within the order of creation.

The life-worlds of indigenes in its totality are through communal living/participation. From this perspective spirituality and morality ultimately influence attitudes and behavioural patterns to individuals and communities. Therefore, the Supreme Being is the original source of every life-form is the ultimate sustainer of the communities through the agency of the spiritual world (ancestors). Ancestors remain part and parcel of the tangible and non-tangible sources. Spiritual meditation is both integral and crucial to African religious belief systems. The ancestors' role is to mediate on behalf of the community through prayer in the form of rituals and sacrifices. This is not by any indication a form of ancestral worshipping but a veneration of ancestors through liturgy and sacrifice. Veneration of ancestors is a symbol of respect for their divine entity in terms of wisdom within the community. The Creator is perceived as the one and only transcendence which is above and beyond all transcendences. The ideology of eschatology does not feature in the African religion and indigenous spirituality at all. African spirituality entails immersion into life at its maximum. The ideal is to embrace creation and preserve the cosmos in its totality as created by God. Only then can the vital forces within the earth community work together in harmony for the sake of the community's endurance and vitality.

Mugambi and Magesa argue that prayer and worship from an indigenous world-view is the profound expression of spiritual life (Magesa, 1997: 31; Mugambi, 1989:56). The notion of Jesus as the 'Pro-ancestor', healer, life giver, chief and master of initiation is what makes the connection with African people(s) rather than the Western notion of Redeemer or Saviour. Within the African holistic world-view, prayer follows a conversation path which is active rather than passive because ancestors are regarded as part of the community. Having conversations with ancestors in jubilation, disappointment, anger or frustration is a natural

process to the life-worlds of African peoples. African indigenous spirituality is on par with African Christian spirituality as they all seek for an abundant life in the earth community and in concrete terms. Misfortunes as a result of engaging in ill-practice by communities attract prayer and repentance through different approaches and methods. According to Pobee, the God of history speaks to all people(s) in different and particular ways (Pobee, 1979:22). The salvation of individuals or groups of people is inextricably bound cosmologically, thus African spirituality is central to creation's fundamental premise. African cultural practices are a source or study of the African experience of God among our midst, which enriches African theology and spirituality (Pobee, 2001:55).

The African Indigenous Churches (AICs) are institutions that seek to recognise African humanity, using Harvey's definition; it is a distinct approach of the theologies and establishing independent churches. This approach emanates from binaries of how Africans strictly construed missionary's theological world-views (Harvey, 1994:132). It became a priority for the African churches to re-interpret aspects of the Christian doctrines in order to re-introducing Christianity from an African perspective. The paradigm shift ought to be based on African epistemology as the only framework that will enhance people(s) to share space and live a Christian authentic life within the earth community. In pursuit of the authenticity of the African Churches the delegates to the World Church Council Faith and Order Consultation in 1974, in Accra, concluded that;

For all Africans, even after many years of Christianity, and standing fully within the Christian revelation, spirituality and world-view of their fore-fathers is still very present. We feel, therefore that all expressions of the Christian Faith up to now, from whatever area which takes up the Christian church from (Orthodox, Roman, Catholic and Protestant) do not speak to us at the depth of our situation, past, present or future. However, when we come to the Crucified One straight out of our cultural and historical situation, it is then that He has meaning and become not only our Saviour, but the Saviour of all of creation. He then helps us to understand God as the One and Only, the Inscrutable and incomprehensible one. For from our unique heritage, we bring the view that God is '*Umvelinqantii*' (one whose beginning or end no man can know or fathom), '*Unkulunkulu*', (a Power greater than all powers) (Sindima, 1994:133).

4 The African Perspective towards Ancestral Ecclesiology

One of the aspects of African world-view and cosmology is that the community of faith should inculcate into its ecclesiology is the role of ancestors in the life of the African people(s) and the place of traditions and customs during the process of inculturation. The reality is that Christianity did not begin in the abstract. Christianity exists in human culture. Therefore, ancestors are an integral part of African religiosity and social structures. Kaoma and Sindima explain the importance of ancestors in an African communal setting as the pillars on which communities rest. Ancestors constitute the unity of the community and represent the pivotal point from which all deeds of the members of the community derive their legitimacy (Kaoma, 2013:52; Sindima, 1994:153). Bujo introduces the notion of Jesus as the 'Pro-ancestor', following the events leading to Christ crucifixion, resurrection and ascension when he returns to the realm of the spirits. As a Pro-ancestor, Jesus transcends Africa's concept of ancestor, giving it new impetus and understanding. By his incarnation Jesus achieved solidarity with humanity far more than our natural ancestors (Bujo, 1992:80). Bediako's underscores a theological perspective that recognises Jesus as the ultimate ancestor and source of our existence when he says;

Because of the sacrifice Christ brought a new and better covenant between God and humanity (Hebrews 8:6 & 12:24). Jesus brings the redeemed into the experience of a new identity in which he links their human destinies directly and consciously with the external, gracious will and purpose of a loving God (Hebrews 12:22-24). No longer are human horizons bounded by lineage, geographical locations, clan, nation or tribes (Bediako, 2004:30).

When exploring the theology of the communion of saints, the similarities or parallels between the veneration of ancestors and the faith community's veneration of the cult of saints are striking. By virtue of their standing the saints are perceived as closer to God than general beings. This is not different with African ancestors, especially if one looks at the respective practices of veneration and mediatory roles. Two observations can be made in this regard. Firstly, as part of venerating the saints, the faith community visits the tombs of the martyrs, for example, to offer prayers. This is not different from the practice of African communities when they visit the resting sacred places of their ancestors to perform symbolic rituals to offer peace and seek blessings especially if a particular community is addressing disputes. Secondly, just as the cult of saints pursues heroic and exemplary deeds, so do African

ancestors who also play a mediatory role between God and humanity (Olowa Chukwu, 2011:186).

4.1 The significance of the Christian faith in African life-worlds

Historically the African people(s) are notoriously religious in the world-view of Mbiti, which is shared by other theological authors contemporaneously in Africa (Mbiti, 1996:178; Pobee: 1979:72; Idowu, 1983:205; Chukwu, 2011:180). Mbiti has sought to preserve the integrity of African religiosity in the light of its marginalisation and denigration by European missionaries and evangelism (Mbiti, 1969:42). The European mission in spreading Christianity in the continent failed to tap into African religiosity and to study cultural anthropology of the African people(s). Mbiti captures this shortcoming in the following, it reads;

The missionaries who began this modern phase of Christian expansion in Africa, together with their African helpers, were devout, sincere and dedicated men and women. But they were not theologians. These workers were more concerned with practical evangelism, education, medical care and infrastructure than any theological or academic issues that might arise from the presence of Christianity in Africa. Mission Christianity was not from the beginning prepared to face a serious encounter even resistance with either the traditional beliefs and philosophy or modern changes taking place in Africa. The contemporary church finds itself in a situation of trying to exist without a theology (Mbiti, 2000:229).

When African religion and philosophy are viewed from this perception, its deeper meaning becomes apparent to all concerned. African Christians and African religions together with their historical background are a cultural unit within humanity and should not be discarded. Given this reality, it is not necessary to convince any audience that the various religions of Africa contain long-standing potentialities which influence life-styles and behavioural patterns positively for communities and societies at large.

4.2 The Significance of Scriptures translated in vernacular

There is no doubt that any literature written in or translated into the mother tongue reaches a wider circulation of readership. The scriptures in all their numerous linguistic forms in the faith community and institutions are the fruit of translation. The prevalent view with regard to translation is that it is utterly impossible to translate languages adequately without losing its context in the process. Studying the text in its original language and also in its context at the

time it was written is of utmost importance. Reading the Bible in its context allows the reader or audience to participate in their world of experience and understanding of the text. On the same token readers should bear in mind that the Bible is hermeneutical. Therefore, it cannot go unchallenged. For example, the Bible was used by European powers to legitimise the dehumanisation and the exploitation of the African people(s) during the advent of slavery and colonialism. According to Weems, biblical scriptures should not be understood as a universal, transcendent, timeless force to which communities in the name of being pious and faithful Christians must meekly submit (Weems, 2003:2). The Bible, particularly in Africa, should be understood as politically and socially drenched and invested in building relations between the Creator and all of creation. From a liberation theological perspective, the Biblical text speaks of freedom from all kinds of oppression/bondage. God is perceived as a just loving God as illustrated in the Exodus story and the biblical history of the oppressed Israelites. During the apartheid regime in South Africa, both the oppressed and the oppressor used the Bible to justify their actions. The Dutch Reformed Church believed they had biblical support for perpetrating racial discrimination. Tutu in response offered an opposing interpretation from the same bible. He says;

The Bible is the most revolutionary, the most radical book there is. If a book had to be banned by those who rule unjustly and as tyrants then it ought to have been the Bible. The Europeans brought us the Bible and we are taking it seriously (Tutu, 1994:72).

The black populace suffering under white supremacy from a theological perspective, cultural anthropologists and inter-faith preachers/lay-preachers have challenged traditional biblical interpretations that have validated racial oppression, for example, readings/passages with regard to the curse of Ham in (Genesis 9:20-27), that identifies Noah's cursed son as black and an outcast even though the ancient text does not mention colour. Chronologically we observe the identity of the dominant parties and the oppressed by other nations fluctuates. At times the Israelites were oppressed by other groups, such as the Egyptians, Babylonians or Romans, but occasionally it was the Israelites who attacked and subjugate other groups of people, such as the Canaanites or Samaritans. Colonialism at its aftermath provides room for different biblical interpretations. The focus on this dimension is on expansion, domination and imperialism defining both the biblical narratives and interpretation (Dube, 2001:3-5). Reading and interpreting the bible in vernacular, biblical hermeneutics encourages the readership to connect and re-discover their own literary, customs, culture and religion impacts as an instrument for understanding biblical ideas and narratives. According to Dube,

the common theme in interpretative approaches from an African Christian perspective is reading the Bible as a continuous story as this method promotes dialogue within and beyond literature. The African women past and contemporary use storytelling to read the text and apply it to their context. This method makes use of African communication skills of depicting life and transmitting values and wisdom to generations. The storyteller does not own the story, or have the last word but holds credibility.

5 Life-worlds of the African People towards Ecology

It was customary for African indigenes to disappear into the landscape, but not to stand out against it. They treated the land and all that it bore with consideration and care, not attempting to improve upon it or to desecrate it. They understood that the spirits of the earth, air and water should not be antagonised. When they hunted, it was with the same discretion for consumption and not for culling. They did not drain and ravage the rivers/lakes and streams even though they practised furrow irrigation. The forests were not harvested either but used in moderation. These were ecologically sensitive communities and we ought to learn from their systems regardless of modernity.

From an African perspective, both from the faith community and African religious sectors, the most intimate area of life is to respect the environment in its totality. This is exemplified in farming practices. Farming methods are mostly bush-fallowing and land rotation. The social systems in these communities are closely linked to the rainfall determined seasons. This involves propagation by deep and shallow roots, tubers and cutting which generates a non-intervention attitude to the environment of which beings are perceived as an integral part of the entire ecosystem rather than perceived as the dominant part. Contemporary environmental crisis is as a result of the accelerated disturbance of a delicate equilibrium due to human ill-practice. Stock farming is largely practised by the African ecological sensitive communities who engage in pastoralism and environmental awareness to safeguard the vegetation. Nomadic pastoralism is the predominant livestock production system and relies normally on natural foliage for feeds, and on natural watering points which means the shepherds ought to be knowledgeable about the distribution of such areas and facilities. Commercial farming relies on non-ecological devices for monetary gain and without care for the ecological systems.

6 Conclusion

African Christians and religious heritage links African people(s) with creation based on the concept of God with all of creation visible and invisible, which all manifest through creation. The beauty and grandeur of nature positively impacts all of humanity. From panoramic vistas to the tiniest life-forms, it is our human duty and responsibility to safeguard the environment which is the continuing revelation of the divine. Therefore, it is our call as the earth community to develop compassion towards all life-forms. The current environmental crisis is unprecedented and accelerating at an alarming rate. In destroying creation due to human ill practice, we are limiting our ability to fully comprehend God. This ecological degradation is in dire need for individual(s) repentance to all beings across disciplines and world-views. World-views that contribute negatively to the ecological crisis across the globe comes from different dimensions which includes, dualism, colonialism, Christian anthropocentrism and other related philosophies/mind-sets that tend to elevate humanity as distinctly superior than the rest of creation. Caring for the environment is not an option but an expectation to all communities and individuals. Reading the passages in (Genesis 3:17-18), the author places the different concepts of dominion and protection alongside each other. The audience or reader is expected to understand the free will to either destroy or to nurture, to protect or to subdue, to dominate or be a custodian of the natural/wild world. Based on unethical decisions and misconceptions the consequences are dire and this is our experience as the earth community contemporary, but there is always room for self-repentance and change in our attitudes and behavioural patterns in order to replenish and safeguard the earth.

CHAPTER FOUR: ECO-THEOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION OF AFRICAN THEOLOGY AND AFRICAN RELIGION: A FOCUS ON LAND DEGRADATION, GITAU'S THEORETICAL VIEWS

The earth is in peril. Our only home is in plain jeopardy. We are at the precipice of self-destruction. For the very first time in the history of creation, certain life support systems of the planet are being destroyed by human actions. We have seen signs of the poor who struggle against poverty and oppression. The majority of the population know deeply degrading conditions of life. Poverty and violence are overwhelming against human beings, alongside with high levels of environmental degradation pollution. Pollution of water, soil and air are greater than ever (Granberg-Michaelson, 1992:70).

1. Introduction

This chapter focuses in exploring critically the basic framework of Gitau's eco-theology as a response to the environmental crisis. I draw on other conversation partners across disciplines, African Christianity and African religious belief systems. The objective is to gain insight on the theoretical as well as praxis of the African concept of God and creation. In order to follow the conversation on Gitau's theoretical framework the chapter builds on an approach based on the doctrine of providence. This is an approach Gitau borrows from John Calvin and Walter Brueggemann (Brueggemann, 1977:47). The principalities of this approach affirms that if one believes in divine providence as presented in the text, one cannot simultaneously abuse creation (Mathew 10:29-30). From an African perspective Gitau draws on the ecological insights from the life-worlds of the Massai and Kikuyu ecological sensitive communities in Kenya. He compares the natural/wild world to African religion, African Christianity, African Indigenous Wisdom knowledge Systems and culture towards the environment. His approach stands out because where African indigenous spirituality is retrieved, there is little attention or even none paid to Christian theology. Instead, the theme of harmony or harmonious living comes to the fore in legends, proverbs, songs and dance as a way of life by the African people(s) across cultures, traditions and religiosity.

The chapter seeks to synthesise Gitau's theory which focuses on biblical teaching and African theology on the concept of God, humanity and the natural/wild world, and links it to the African indigenous wisdom knowledge systems with reference the contemporary ecological degradation. The African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems have not been

explored exhaustively. The systems provide an alternative or complementary approach towards ecological degradation. The ecological overtones of African religion and African Christianity enable the basis for ecological awareness and sensitivity. The chapter also highlights complementary practises and responsibility taken by indigenes towards land nurturing and preservation. This study takes the view that indigenous African communities and religious sector's practices continue to have positive effects towards preserving and nurturing the environment. For example, forests that are regarded by many African communities as sacred facilitate biodiversity conservation (Kaoma, 2013:70). These groups of people(s), (African religion and indigenes) were and continue to be realistic towards the natural world and not sentimental. They experienced the vagaries brought by nature; they accepted and learned from calamities brought by natural disasters. This was demonstrated in their attitudes not to compete with nature through their behavioural patterns. These attitudes are reflected in the rituals and mythologies of creation (Asoanya, 2011:44-45).

Eco-theologists, including Boff, McDonagh, Gitau, Kaoma, and Mugambi, suggest that caring for nature should be prioritised and that the theology of creation should be re-visited among other tools in addressing ecological degradation from a theological perspective. This can be partly achieved by borrowing the famous phrase from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's '*costly grace*' from Walter's publication, '*Cost of discipleship*' (Walker, 2010:61). According to Bonhoeffer, there is a distinction between '*cheap grace*' and '*costly grace*'. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline and communion without confession. Costly grace is the type of grace that demands courage and sacrifice (Asoanya, 2011:45). Gitau argues that there is sufficient evidence in the scriptures regarding the nature of responsibility bestowed on humanity by the Creator. For instance Genesis 1:26-31 speaks of the creation of both species man and woman in God's likeness (*Imago Dei*). Adam and Eve (the first created human species) were given responsibility to replenish the earth and all life-forms within the earth community. The serpent account that unfolded dramatically in the Garden of Eden is not the central figure. It is humanity that is at the centre of rebelling against the Creator; hence to date, human ill-practice among other negative contributing factors that are responsible for ecological degradation.

According to Gitau, it is imperative for humanity particularly the faith community to adhere to the covenants God has made with humanity. The first is the ecological covenant with Noah in Genesis 9. The second is the land covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17 and the third is the Sinai covenant in Exodus 9. In all the covenants God establishes perpetuity with

humanity and with all of creation unconditionally. The text reading which illustrates the doctrine of God's preservation of all of creation is in Psalms 104. According to Gitau, the doctrine of preservation teaches the human species that the Creator maintains the integrity of all things both in their simplicity and complexity. Within African religion, societies are expected to co-exist with the natural world. From an African cultural world-view, the environment or ecology denotes life in its totality (Mbiti, 1971:33). Culture does not only exist in people's life-worlds. It also includes their values, belief systems, behavioural patterns and enculturation as well as adaptation. Culture is not a static phenomenon but changes gradually through adaptation, assimilation and enculturation.

To elaborate the concept of God based on the African theological understanding with regard to ecology it is essential to explore the relations among three entities: God the Creator, humanity and the natural/wild world. According to Mbiti, before the Enlightenment Age, the African belief systems perceived nature and humanity as a package and God the Creator at the centre and in control of the universe (Mbiti, 1990:34). From a theological and Christian perspective creation (referring to all flora and fauna including humanity working together) should aim at inculcating humanity into respecting other cultures and their belief systems and not perpetuate Christian anthropocentrism which elevates humanity over all creation. Thus, creation should be at the centre of theological attention instead of being sub-ordinated to the theme of redemption. Redemption, on the other hand, should not be anthropocentrically perceived by the faith community as the redemption only for humanity, but as one overall aspect of God's creative spirit in the universe. Over the past two decades, environmental degradation has become a crucial theme in theological discussions throughout the world and across disciplines. The main interlocutors in this study, Rev. Gitau, Rev. Kaoma and Mugambi continue to voice their concerns about the plight of our environment. In this chapter, I focus on Gitau's ecological concerns. The next chapters respectively I extend the focus to the ecological concerns and different approaches raised by Kaoma and Mugambi respectively.

2. The African Concept of God, humanity and the natural/wild world

The African concept towards ecology, humanity and the behavioural patterns of communities are mainly influenced by the understanding that all creation is bonded with each other and ultimately with the Creator. The notion of bonding in African culture informs and orders social structures such as religious institutions (the church) political affiliations, economic, social status both in rural and urban settings and society at large. The communal life-style of

the African indigenous and religious groups is a result of understanding the concept of bondedness of life which is characterised or driven by concern and care of creation. Therefore, the social, religious or moral life is grounded in and guided by the concept of bondedness of life within communities extended to the earth community (Sindima, 1989:538). African people particularly in sub-Saharan Africa place value in communal living. Communal values express appreciation, recognition and worthy of the community at large. The values of social interaction of people and interpersonal bonds are beyond the DNA or biological affinity as far as communal values are concerned. Caring for the natural/wild world is a way of life in its totality (Igboin, 2011:99). According to Stinton, African people(s) use Christological notions such as life-giver, healer, ancestor, liberator, provider, friend, and leader to identify with God the Creator (Stinton, 2004:54). Geographical location, language and cultural beliefs are instrumental in the different notions used when referring to God. According to biblical expositions Christians are called or expected to transform societies into places of greater equality among beings and the larger earth community. The expectation is that the faith community and fellow communities should work towards a lifestyle that is positive and balanced in its intersection with the environment and its natural resources and not possessed by the devouring spirit on hand within humanity.

From an African perspective, the communal lifestyle which is shared across sub-Saharan Africa means inter-connectedness that is characterised by concern and caring for others and the natural/wild world (Sindima, 1989:538). The religiosity of Africans as Magesa puts it, enables African communities' in their life-worlds to maintain the evenness on both sides that separate two important expertise of the universe, which are physical world non-visible spiritual world of the ancestors/spirits. The maintenance of these spheres enables harmonious living in the earth community and imposes an ethical obligation for humanity to safeguard the environment and its inhabitants. According to Magesa humanity is the most privilege species in the earth community to live through the connectedness with all life-forms (Magesa, 1997:53). He clarifies that the African perception of a deity is not in competition with the Supreme Being as God takes the highest dignified position in the first place. God by definition is 'incomprehensible and mysterious' omnipresent and acknowledged as the Creator of all things dead and alive. His creation is continuous (Opoku, 1993:70-71 and Mbiti, 1970:45).

The ecological crisis has created a pivotal moral and religious challenge. It brings a new context to theology with an emphasis on renewal of spiritual sensitivity to the natural/wild

world of which the African people religious and indigenous groups from the beginning of time have been spiritually connected. Human ethics should uphold natural inter-dependency as a way of enhancing life. African Christianity and African religion draw their teachings from both the Old Testament and New Testament as well as Old Christian doctrines. The Christian doctrine of creation is assimilated into African ontology. Mbiti sums it well in his monumental research on the African perception of God, the Supreme Being, when he says;

God is the Originator and Sustainer of man; the spirits explain the destiny of man, man is the center of this ontology; the animals, plants and natural phenomena and other objects constitute the environment in which humanity lives, provides a means of existence and if need be, humanity established a mystical relationship with them (Mbiti, 1970:3-4).

Mbiti stresses that even though the African communal lifestyle or bondedness is a shared phenomenon, the African anthropocentric ontology originated from solidarity or a covenant which means it cannot be destroyed because one mode of existence presupposes all the other principalities (Creator, humanity and the natural world). Mbiti acknowledges that within the African communal settings relations are built from a solid foundation based on Christian values and African religious beliefs systems and traditions.

2.1 The African concept of creation

Africans perceive creation in terms of the relation between humanity and ecology. A world without a community (which brings a sense of belonging) is a world that is unthinkable to the African people(s) because it is incomplete. Humanity completes or adds value to creation and in all life-forms. This is why it becomes unacceptable for humanity to engage in ill-practices which cause enormous ecological degradation. Exploitation and abuse of any nature is a sin against creation particularly the Creator. The concept of oneness or harmony in an African view allows God to transcend all life-forms as Creator and actively involved in all spheres of life, from plant germination to economic, political and social activities. According to African theologians such as Gitau, Mbiti, Kaoma, Mugambi and others, the problem is not only about lack of human interaction with the natural/wild world, but institutions that reinforce domination and social hierarchy among humanity.

Kaoma in his publication, *“The Creators’ Symphony”*, stresses that humanity should go beyond the anthropocentric views which are deeply intertwined in western philosophies continues to be affirmed by institutions which have misused and misinterpreted the Hebrew

and Christian biblical teachings. In order to experience the fullness of life, it is of immense value for humanity to realise the human potential and opportunities that allow individuals and groups of people to become ecologically sensitive. Morality plays a key role in African communities. The individual is not merely a human rights-holder but has an obligation towards the community. Thomas Berry blames moral theology for its failure to incorporate the natural world in its position or code (Berry, 1988: 113). From an African perspective, the community stands to benefit from one individual act of kindness/goodness; therefore, social standing within the community is highly regarded. When ill-practice or crime is committed by an individual, the whole community is tainted and covered in shame.

Contemporarily, we are faced with a world that is diverse and multi-faceted. This results in differences of opinions and world-views. Maathai's view is that the impact of colonialism among other misdeeds caused the African people(s) to shun away from their core values, namely respect of all of creation including the environment (Maathai, 2010:32-33). She regards this experience as an eschatological crisis from which we are not anywhere near recovery. She reminisces that in our traditional belief systems; we did not cut trees for commercial purposes or self-gain. We did not practice monocultures resulting in the destruction of the ecosystems (Maathai, 2009:177). We treated nature with the utmost respect because we believe God manifests through the natural/wild world. In the mean-time, we need to be constantly in dialogue across disciplines and cultural barriers in order to address the ecological crisis that is threatening all life-forms in the earth community.

2.2 The African concept of spiritualism and Christianity

African spiritualism is the core aspect that binds African communities to a belief system that respects and honours land as the greatest asset and gift from God 'The Supreme Being' that was bestowed on our ancestors. Land should, therefore, be protected and nurtured by all its inhabitants particularly humans. One could ask if there is a connection between Christianity and African spiritualism. When European missionaries introduced Christianity to the African people one among many errors of judgement they committed is that they did not bother to study African anthropology even at an elementary level. Instead they ridiculed the identity, culture, tradition and customs of the African people(s) and reduced their beliefs system into paganism and nothing but myth perpetuated by heathens. Ironically, the African people(s) believe in the myth of creation by God and that there was no animosity between humanity and the natural/wild world. All creation belongs to God's family. The concept of family in African culture brings interconnectedness/unity (*imbumbe*) among the people. Theologians

such as Charles Nyamiti, Harvey Sindima, Kapya Kaoma and John Mbiti explain the complexity of the universe as an organic wholeness which comprises of supra-sensible mystical encounters including beings. This approach affirms the intrinsic value of the environment which also takes into account the manifestation of ancestors and other spirits of nature (Asoanya, 2011:329).

For the African people, the community of faith is the core seed of Christology which articulates the significance of Jesus Christ's teachings. To establish relations with Christ and adhere to his teachings, African people(s) embrace notions that allow them to identify with Christ as the saviour and liberator rather than an angry Christ who is out to change people's beliefs and tradition at all costs. Jesus, as an ancestor, aligns himself spiritually with African Christians and as one who came first before their ancestors and gave life (Stinton, 2004). Christological reflection cannot be separated from Africa's socio-political, religious, cultural and customs contexts which is a daily experience across communities both the community of faith/religious sectors and indigenes. Above all, African spiritualism is the core aspect that binds the African Community to a belief system that perceives land to be the greatest asset and a gift from God Almighty that needs to be cherished, protected and nurtured. In African religion according to Kaoma, the general concept of the earth, as 'Mother Earth' is rife and assimilated to Christian ethics which attest to earth preservation and nurturing (Kaoma, 2013:15). Bujo, in his publication, *"Foundations of an African ethic. Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality"*, explains that dignity and respect accorded to beings includes dignity and respect for the entire creation, so that the two are united into a cosmic dimension and basic component (Bujo, 2011:2).

3. Samson Gitau's eco-theology

Gitau's theological framework focuses on the concept of God, from an African Christianity, religion, humanity and the natural/wild world, taking into account the biblical understanding of ecology and the issues pertaining to the contemporary environmental crisis (Gitau, 2002:25). In his publication, *"The Environmental Crisis: A Challenge for African Christianity"*, Gitau argues that the attempt to develop African Christian and religious theologies with regard to land degradation is long overdue. Extensive research has been conducted for decades exclusively along with scientific, economic and political perspectives. Gitau calls for a theological paradigm shift and argues that it is time to investigate African religious conceptions of God, humanity and the environment and access the biblical understanding of ecology and creation as a whole (Gitau, 2002:47). The Christian

imagination of God's presence in all of creation is an existential reality within the faith community and outside the faith community. There is a shared view regarding creation and all life-forms which is moving away from theories implying that God is separate from the world. What stands out is the recognition and acknowledgement of the presence of God in the world and the presence of the world in God as the spirit of the universe (Daneel, 1996:166). McFague, echoing Daneel, suggests that in order to drive the ecological mission to the core we should think of God's transcendence in an immanent way (McFague, 1993:56).

According to Gitau, biblical expositions expose the theology of responsibility guardianship/custodianship of the natural/wild world which enables total respect of the environment by human species in the earth community. The scriptures in the creation narratives portray humanity as occupying a unique place in the earth community and fulfilling a key role in God's plan and purpose for the whole of creation regardless of background. All institutions, particularly the church as well as academic institutions should bear an environmental vision that embraces peace and integrity within creation thriving for the holistic environment. However, African indigenes, as much as they did not have any documented literature regarding their relationship with the Creator and the environment, but their ethical life-worlds speak volumes. Notwithstanding their ecological sensitivity practices, the indigenes showed utmost respect and honour towards ecology (Gitau, 2000:48).

In addition, respect for the environment manifested in the treatment of both the natural and wild world in order to harness the wisdom of existence under the grace of the Creator and sharing space in the household of God (referring to the earth). As a result, not all animals were domesticated and not all animals were edible. Hunters and gatherers had to be selective in their prey. These beliefs in the selection of edible and non-edible animals assisted in species preservation (Kaoma, 2013:29). One can describe it as myth practice but myth works under certain belief systems and it is taboo if one goes against myth. According to Gitau there will be scholars who refer to myth as imagination and unfounded tales, but behind myth are historical events past and present. There is no single index for gathering the truth as what counts as truth is subjective and relative. What should be understood about mythology is that the truth is gathered by comparison and not by classification or by conceptualisation (Gitau, 2002:30-31). Contemporary human ill-practice and negative attitudes towards the natural world have led to irreversible hazardous factors, such as, pollution of the air, water, land, deforestation, climate change induced by humanity with detrimental effects to all inhabitants. Arguably both in African religion and African Christians, belief systems propel and attest that

nature has its own sacred and intrinsic value regardless of its enrichment to humanity. From an African context, African world-view and belief system is not an isolated behavioural pattern but an open view that all creation is co-dependent and God the Creator is the main source of supply and sustainability to all life-forms.

According to Gitau's eco-theology, the concept of God, humanity and nature varies between different beliefs system. Gitau draws his thoughts from the belief system of the Kikuyu and Massai communities in Kenya and how they relate to the environment. The Kikuyu community constitute about 22% of the Kenyan population of 40 million. It is customary among the Kikuyu to use proverbs, riddles, myth and rituals to demonstrate African indigenous methods or approaches towards environmental preservation and nurturing (Gitau, 2000:44-45). The Kikuyu's ecological sensitivity life-worlds are influenced by their belief system which is shared among various African indigenous groups of people including the Massai that the environment is sacred and should be protected at all costs. The religious consciousness towards the environment according to Gitau's observation is drawn from the words of the Psalmist 24:1, it reads, "*the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it*", which is attributed to African proverbs. From an African perspective, proverbs are used to illustrate ideas, reinforce arguments, advice and deliver messages of inspiration, consolation, celebration and sympathetic expressions. Chinua Achebe sums it well in his "African Trilogy", when he says, "*proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten*" (The African Trilogy, 1988:20). In an attempt to minimise deforestation, desertification and soil degradation, some African churches including the African indigenous/independent churches have adopted a reforestation/tree planting Eucharist's project as an approach in celebrating and identifying the death and resurrection of Christ as a symbol of the life in its totality. This concept is an attempt towards unity and reconciliation. According to Daneel, the planting or replacing trees by the faith community is the sacramental recognition of the Lordship of Christ who reigns over and brings life and celebration to all of creation (Daneel, 2002:262).

In explaining the notions of God among the Kikuyu community, Gitau informs us that God is known by different names such as, '*Nga*', (meaning one who distributes) or '*Mwene Nyaga*' (meaning one who possesses brightness). '*Murungu*' (meaning mysterious and merciful) describes God's nature from their perspective (Gitau, 2000:33-36). God is perceived as the powerful force in the universe who appointed humanity to be custodians of the earth and all its dwellers and resources in lieu of the future generation. Most of the plants, forests and

mountains are regarded as sacred which has greatly promoted and replenished biodiversity. The wisdom in viewing mountains as sacred protects the surrounding ecological zones from encroachment and mass destruction by human activities especially agricultural farming and deforestation. The water catchment areas/regions were safeguarded from human ill-practice (Gitau, 2000:46). The metaphor of sacredness is expressed mostly in proverbs which are transmitted down to generations. The authors of “*Theology of Reconstruction; Exploratory Essays*”, Getui and Obeng, complements Gitau’s view in the conversation and highlights that in African religiosity creation represents the works of God in his architectural being. If an individual violated nature in any form or practice, that could *endanger* the livelihood of the whole community. Taboos and proverbs are formulated to reinforce God’s power and greatness (Getui & Obeng, 2003:19-21).

The concept of God among the African belief systems particularly the Kikuyu and the Massai as articulated by Gitau in his publication “*The Environmental Crisis: A challenge for African Christianity*”, has influenced people’s relationship towards ecology and across African borders. It is unfortunate that humanity in many areas has failed to emulate God and wear a charitable heart with a positive attitude towards all of creation as custodians of the environment. Instead, in the name of modernity or civilisation that is driven by human avarice, we witness water pollution, air pollution, and waste dumping on land and water which has become the order of the day resulting in ecological degradation. Today, we are no longer facing an ecological crisis but a cultural crisis too. Ecological issues transcend national boundaries and jurisdictions. Therefore, it is imperative to seek collective solutions/contributions across disciplines and man-made barriers. Environmental studies have been conducted over long periods of time, but unfortunately, much emphasis has been placed or channelled on the techno-scientific options in addressing ecological challenges. Other avenues such as religion and theology, culture, African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems and other avenues which play a crucial role in environmental nurturing and protection have been marginalised. Religion, as Gitau observes, upholds the archetypes, the sacramental symbols, of the sacred and their relationship with the cosmos and the earth community (Gitau 2000:78). His Holiness, John Pope 11, when honouring Patriarch Bartholomew in Rome-Venice on the 10th June, 2002, said;

What is required is an act of repentance on our part and a renewed attempt to view ourselves, one another, and the world around us within the perspective of the divine design for creation. The problem is not simply economic and technological; it is

moral and spiritual. A solution at the economic and technological level can be found only if we undergo, in the most radical way, an inner change of heart, which can lead to a change of lifestyle and unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. A genuine conversation in Christ will enable us to change the way we think and act (Pope John 11, 2002).

His Holiness is emphasising that in order for humanity (as part of creation) to follow this conviction, we need a radical change in our attitudes and behavioural patterns towards the created world. Ecological sensitivity as a lifestyle is requisite in order to find a solution to earth degradation. Gitau is adamant that the church should change its agenda and attitude in the pulpit and highlight environmental concerns. At the moment according to Gitau, the church teaching gives priority to other ecclesiastical matters, for instance, sacraments, saving souls against eternal damnation in the world beyond the grave and even politics compared to the struggle against environmental degradation (Gitau, 2000:79). The faith community has a mandate to teach and encourage individuals and the masses to join forces towards establishing harmony between humanity and the environment. From a theological perspective, the mandate ought to be the foundation of the ethics of replenishing the earth. Applying ethics for the faith community should not be an effort instead it is in direct contrast to the aspirations of the doctrine of dominion which seems to contribute negatively to the African economic development and policies which in many instances disregards the environmental ethos. Once humanity acknowledges holistic understanding that all creation is significant (individual repentance) we can begin to address the ecological crisis critically.

Based on the order of creation there is no background hierarchy. Beings are not superior over the natural/wild world or any other element, community regardless of background, history or characteristics. From an African world-view, according to Mbiti, the world is perceived through religious spectacles. The cultural heritage of the African people over decades has become not merely the locus of divine revelation, but also the means of humanity's response towards the environment as a divine entity (Mbiti, 1990:82 and Idowu, 1999:70-71). Niwagila in Mugambi and Vahakangas publication, "*Christian Theology and Environmental Responsibility*", emphasise the importance of a holistic understanding of the interdependence in creation. Niwagila points out explicitly that;

The interdependence that exists between humanity and the natural/wild world makes the African people(s) take high regard of the environment as part of our existence and to be cherished (Mugambi & Vahakangas, 2001:62).

3.1 Gitau's concerns regarding the church's position and understanding of a theology of nature

Drawing on the findings from the empirical research conducted in a number of churches in Kenya, Gitau observes that the church is not in tune with the theology of nature (relating to the faith community towards ecology). The paramount concern of the church (based on the research study conducted) is preparing the flock for the Parousia, which is around the corner. According to various preachers/lay preachers, the ecclesiastical focus is that when Jesus returns, all material possessions, including land and all its inhabitants will no longer matter. These are some of the central church teachings that continue to contribute negatively to the faith community by implying that ecological concerns are secondary to human suffering (Gitau, 2000:82-83). Gitau's point is that the church ought to prioritise its biblical teaching on human relations with the rest of creation and that there is no better platform than the pulpit to reach society in its diversity and complexity.

The church leaders/ministers and the clergy are recognised by the flock. Incorporating environmental awareness teachings at the place of worship can serve as a positive effective channel for creating an ecological sensitive society as part of the mass mobilisation of people from all backgrounds for spiritual salvation. It is unfortunate though as well as a challenge that most of the church leadership are not ecologically sensitive due to inadequate education/training to understanding relations between Creation and the Creator. This reality contributes negatively towards environmental education/awareness not just for the faith community but society at large. Maathai, the Noble Prize laureate and educator, advocate, and ecologist, noted that the church in its totality lags behind instead of being at the forefront in educating masses on how to replenish the environment. Gitau adds that indeed, it is time for the church to wake up and drum the environmental message' (Gitau, 2000:87). In the same way, as churches were vocal in condemning the exploitation of the continent by the missionaries and colonialism, Maathai stresses that it is time that the church adopts the same tone and attitude in addressing the environmental crisis on hand, just as the church intervened critically during the liberation struggle across the continent.

From a theological perspective, the Bible does not portray a perfect world for the faith community with a happy ending. On the contrary, the Bible portrays everything as being imperfect and engaged in a continuous process of completion and fulfilment (Gitau, 2000:89-90). Gitau sums it aptly when he says, ‘humanity should stand together and advance the kingdom of God on earth. The church as an institution has the authority to challenge the state on environmental policies in order to safeguard the earth against abuse and exploitation. Apart from the churches lack in conscientising the masses; another secondary challenge towards earth degradation apart from different world-views is sheer ignorance which has resulted in environmental negligence. As the faith community, we ought to display a charitable heart and embrace creation in its totality. The following words are taken from a hymn composed by Fred Green (later sung by Ian Brableys, 1990) aptly poignantly to the gift of creation, human neglect of ecology and our obligation to remedy the neglect. It reads;

*God in such love for us lent us this planet,
Gave it a purpose in time and in place,
Small as a spark from the fire of creation,
Cradle of life and the home of our race.*

*Thanks be to God for its bounty and beauty,
Life that sustains us in body and mind,
Plenty for all, if we learn to share it,
Riches undreamed of to fathom and find (Green, 1973).*

3.2 Gitau’s examples of two main Ecological sensitive communities in Kenya

Gitau has suggested that one possible approach to formulating an African theology with regard to God, humanity and the natural/wild world would be through a synthesis on what philosophy holds as intrinsic principles towards the environment and also the biblical teaching on human’s relationship with the created world? Both the Massai and Kikuyu belief systems and life-worlds confirm God’s creation and that humanity is given a responsibility to nurture and protect the earth. This is expressed in mysticism, proverbs, taboos and legends transmitted down to generations. The environment is perceived by these communities as of

divine creation. It is automatically viewed religiously and treated with the utmost respect and honour. According to legends shared by the Kikuyu and the Massai, God, also known as 'Ngai' to the Kikuyu and 'En-kai' to the Massai, is perceived as the almighty, the Creator of all things and life-giver (Gitau, 2000:112). According to Gitau, this conception of God as the Creator compares significantly with biblical teaching. In the book of (Genesis 1:1) in particular, God is portrayed as the Lord of all of creation. The intended relations by God between humanity and creation are illustrated in the Genesis narratives.

The book of Genesis makes an obvious point that God's primary vision expressed in the story of the Garden of Eden is one about beings living harmoniously with the natural world. The Kikuyu and Massai communities, because of their life-worlds and belief systems as Gitau has shared, do not have an ounce or a tiny thought of rebellion against the environment or any form of abuse and exploitation. Gitau emphasises that these two ecologically sensitive communities embrace both the biblical conception of God and creation and a concept of creation originating from mythologies. These conceptions of God and creation make a positive impact on society when transmitted through myth as a favourable avenue encompassing the creative power of God. It is essential for the generations' future and present of the Massai as well as the Kikuyu to hold in high esteem the belief that God's creation is not static but improving every minute of our existence. The Maasai as part of their livelihood predominantly keeps livestock; cattle, goats, sheep, and donkeys. For nutrition and sustenance from livestock the supply of milk, blood, meat, ghee calabashes, shoes (sandals) clothing and bedding made from animal skin (Asoanya, 2011:59).

To date the Massai land which stretches into Tanzania host the great wildlife reserves in the world. The Massai-Serengeti eco-systems are home to the wildlife earth community encompassing the cross-border (Kenya/Tanzania). Game Reserve on the Massai and the Serengeti National Park of Tanzania. It is the native home to our noble animals, such as, the lion, elephant, cheetah and giraffe. The Massai community was known as the nomadic pastoralism ecological sensitive community supplementing animal dietary with agricultural produce, such as, millet, beans, maize and vegetables. The Kikuyu livelihood is based on agricultural produce. Farming systems mostly practised by these indigenes comprise bush-fallowing method and land rotation to avoid soil erosion resulting in land degradation. The tools used are mainly home-made, for example, hand hoes, ox-ploughs, machetes, axes as well as human agents such as domestic livestock and fire. Social systems are tied to the

seasonal rainfall predicted and sometimes non-predictable due to human-induced climate change. However, the seasonal metamorphosis of vegetation draws to Africa's amazing menagerie of fauna which includes large mammals domesticated and non-domesticated which feed on African grass as well as carnivores. The Massai nationals have a comprehensive notion of the divine which includes ecology. The land is perceived to possess both the cosmic and spiritual significance requiring total commitment holistically from the earth community. This is captured in the Massai daily prayer which reads;

*Father-Mother-Earth, we pray thee at sunrise and sunset,
That you may not abandon your sacred duty of sustaining our lives.
The water that quenches our thirst, the air that we breath,
the trees that provides shade, and the animals that keeps us company,
All makes life real and creation complete. We the children of the Earth
pray for wisdom, that in turn we may be good custodians of this precious
Gift to us and our unborn generations (Asoanya, 2011:66).*

The ecologically sensitive Kikuyu and Massai communities understand that the Creator did not abandon creation to the devices organised by predetermined laws of nature and man-made structures. This belief system, Gitau observes, has over the centuries enabled these two communities to view as sacred things or elements assimilated with procreation, nurturing and enhancing life not only for individuals but for the greater earth community regardless of background. It is taboo to disregard the sacredness of life in its totality. There is a famous Kikuyu saying, according to Gitau, that says, '*Thi ituragio ni Nyene*' (meaning the world is sustained by God) to emphasise creation's dependence on God – its Creator (Gitau, 2000:114). Therefore, the consciousness of God's presence at all times enables the people(s) to remain ecological sensitive in their life-worlds. It is of common knowledge grounded from an African religion perspective that Africa's cosmologies are founded on the concept of a Supreme Being. He is the only source of our being who granted existence to all of creation. It is beyond comprehension that a created being can be the one disrespecting God's creation by abusing the natural/wild world through ill-practice which perpetuates ecological degradation. Hence, Gitau pleads for the church to change its teaching on redemption for humanity so that it can be inclusive and teach about redemption for all of creation.

From a theological perspective, Gitau points out one among various factors that contributes to the environmental crisis on hand, the biblical teachings that are intensely anthropocentric and thereby promote the beliefs that humanity is divinely ordained to rule over the earth community and dominate.

3.3 The Significance of Gitau with regard to the ecological crisis

As his main ecological contribution, Gitau develops an approach which draws into the conversation the African conception of God which is inseparable from universal humanity and nature. This integrated or symbiotic concept allows Gitau to view nature as sacred based on African religiosity, African Christianity and African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems views as a natural phenomenon fundamentally aligned with God. The approach leaves no room for treating separately the natural order/universe because from an African religion perspective the two are intertwined. It is significant that Gitau also draws from the Bible as his vantage point. He argues that African religion and biblical traditions are complementary in enabling the African people(s) relations with the natural environment to co-exist (Gitau, 2000:59-60). He builds his argument on a premise based on biblical norms on how humanity should or ought to relate with God and creation. The following factors strengthen Gitau's argument in the conversation. First, Gitau aligns African religion and the Jewish tradition with the biblical teachings in the following books; Genesis, the second Isaiah, and the book of Jacob, the proverbs, Psalms and other Wisdom literature. From these teachings, he draws the premise that there cannot be the redemption of souls without creation. The accounts on creation in Genesis run in two separate but complementary voices. The Priestly creation account in (Genesis 1:1-2) and the Yahwistic version of account in (Genesis 2:4) are the cornerstone or pillars of Gitau theory. On the same note, Gitau seems to be positioning humanity in an anthropocentric category. In this hierarchical notion, Gitau treats humanity as occupying a stewardship position where beings have a responsibility to nurture and preserve creation in its totality. He regards the Garden of Eden as the first place where humanity was placed to execute the first assignment in a conducive natural environment.

Second, Gitau is critical of the Church. He draws attention to its failure to protect and preserve creation. He cites (Colossians 1:16-17) to highlight the inseparability of nature from God;

Christ is the visible likeness of the invisible God. He is the first-born son, superior to all created things. For through him, God created everything in heaven and on earth,

the seen and the unseen things including spiritual power, Lords and authorities. God created the universe through him and for him. Christ existed before all things, and in union with him, all things have their proper dwelling place.

In order to draw attention to the church's teachings/sermons in Kenya, Gitau conducted an empirical study on the church and leadership. The focus was on the church's failure to incorporate environmental issues that have and continue to contribute negatively towards ecological preservation. The findings indicated that teachings/sermons and revivals about politics and redemption of souls against eternal damnation take a centre-stage in the church. The theology of nature is simply not part of the church's teaching. This is in construct with biblical teachings. Christ, the founder of Christianity, highlighted the importance and relevance of the natural world. For example, not only did Christ teach in the synagogues, he also taught in the open environment, such as the wells, mountains, valleys, river banks and lakes as well as in people's homes. The church as an institution and a representative of communities/societies at large ought to serve as an effective mass communication channel in addressing ecological concerns. In Gitau's view, it is, therefore, imperative for the faith community to be conscientised on the significance of creation and the responsibility of nurturing the environment bestowed to humanity.

The church has a mandate to communicate the message. The challenge in Gitau's theory is that as much as the divine commands state that humanity ought to take care of the natural/wild world, we are facing an environmental crisis. Perhaps the church ought to engage specifically on the interpretation of 'dominion'. The narrative in (Genesis 1:27-28) implies that the term 'dominion' should be understood as a description of human responsibilities. It is evident from the narratives in (Genesis 2) that Eden is the garden and not paradise but a promise. Therefore, humanity has a task of tending the garden and naming the wild world independently. Furthermore, it is clear from the narrative that human responsibility cannot be derived from the 'divine command' as stipulated in (Genesis 1 and 2), but should be perceived as a graceful act of divine intervention. Christ represents the story of grace which is cosmic in scope but yet to reach its narrative completion. In this sense we are able to visualise ecological anthropology blanketed by an ecological soteriology and eschatology. Once we recognise the harm caused by human ill-practice we are able to understand the nature of human ecological responsibility. The message of the greening of the church is a step forward towards reconciliation between the Creator and the created world (Cock, 1992:175). According to Cock, a number of church leaders across the continent

including South Africa raise a concern about the plight of the earth and acknowledge that there is little evidence of immediate and future plans translating their ecological concern into concrete workable programmes of action. Should the church as an institution make an effort to educate individual(s) and masses about ecological degradation contemporary, and be actively involved in replenishing the earth, the impact could be positive. The church is a powerful potential ally and is a rightful platform for multitudes to address societal issues.

As much as Gitau points directly to the churches in Kenya and their failure to use the pulpit to educate the masses about the environmental crisis, there is also a theological reflection reference to earth keeping that needs to be addressed. Rasmussen argues consistently that earth keeping as the faith community can relate to earth from the deepest Christian traditions, convictions and symbols of our faith (Rasmussen, 2001:135). What Rasmussen is saying finds support in studies that have been conducted on different Christian doctrines with regard to creation. Examples in this regard are the following works of past and present theologians. Names, such as, Paul Santmire's publication ' *The Travail of Nature* ', where he outlines the unclear theological themes of Christian theologies; Joseph Sittler's ' *Evocations of Grace: writings on Ecology, Theology and Ethics* ', which is grounded in Psalms 104 also known as 'Sittler's beloved 'ecological doxology'; Richard Wilbur's poem, ' *Advise to the Prophet* ', published in the New Yorker in April, 1959, which emphasised the bondedness of humanity and the natural/wild world; and Denis Edwards' volume of essays in ' *Earth healing – Earth revealing* '. Therefore, it is not just the church which has fallen short, there have been conversations going on for decades and numerous publications from a number of authors within the discipline and across disciplines. It is evident that there are mountains of work yet to be researched through inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary among approaches/methods in addressing ecological concerns. As a starting point let us re-visit and retrieve some of the doctrines and dogmas of Christianity and correct misconceptions and overhaul the systems in place.

In addressing the ecological crisis I believe that the first step towards reconciliation with all of creation is to exercise responsibility and accountability which will result in individual repentance. From a theology based on the doctrine of creation, it is often stated by many authors that the whole of creation as a one-time endowment has its own intrinsic integrity and dignity which needs protection like any person's dignity. From a theological perspective the dignity of the whole of creation derives from the confession and illustration on (Psalms 24:1) The evangelism that the church witnesses or teaches about creation and grace must be in the

deeds as well as in the words proclaimed. If the church does not adhere to the theology of nature, then concerned communities and individual(s) will arbitrate as midwives with sound informative voices for nature's unsilenceable cries and enunciate a theology of nature. This is significant contribution of Gitau which has not been pursued by the churches in Kenya and across sub-Saharan Africa. However, there has been a paradigm shift in some of the churches at present with regard to the earth degradation and redemption of creation with a positive response. Most churches realise that unless the reference and the power of the redemptive act include all of creation, it is incomplete.

Third, Gitau draws into the discussion the controversial stewardship approach with regard to the escalating ecological transgressions. The stewardship notion implies that humanity is responsible for the earth and that it is a divine command from God. Therefore stewardship cannot be misunderstood as a licence for exploitation and abuse to the environment through human ill-practice. According to Hall, in Conradie's publication, '*Christianity and Earth keeping*' stewardship has different dimensions which can be eschatological, anthropological, ecclesiastical, Christological and theological. I will explain each dimension briefly.

a) *The eschatological dimension* posits the life of a steward/guardian being timely conscious of the coming end (Parousia) with an overwhelming belief that it is around the corner as illustrated in (Luke 12:35). Thus, people are not settled in the earth community but on transit to the next world. Obviously, they cannot be bothered by nurturing and preserving the Earth in lieu of the present or the next generations.

b) *The anthropological dimension* applies to all categories of humanity across disciplines and religiosity. Human beings as part of the created species are given the command to look after the environment. It is their vocation as illustrated in (Colossians 4:2).

c) *The theological dimension* posits Christ in the position of authority and the only person who guides the stewards into managing the environment as demonstrated in Christ teachings and confession that creation in all its totality belongs to the Creator.

d) *The ecclesiastical dimension* perceives the church as the stewarding community and the body of Christ. The church is not an end in itself but an umbrella body that safeguards and empowers the faith community to serve the needs of the environment and all life-forms.

e) *The Christological dimension* posits Christ as the prior steward redefined as the servant who served the world first. When we receive His grace we are able to participate in his workmanship through faith.

It is not crystal clear from which dimension Gitau approaches stewardship. It is possible that he does so from the Christological or ecclesiastic dimension. But because he posits his argument with a focus on the failure of the church to incorporate ecological awareness into church teachings/sermons it is safer to say he is applying the ecclesiastic dimension. Based on his approach to African religion and the concept of God, humanity and creation from an African perspective, Gitau is applying the Christological dimension as an attempt to address the ecological concern.

The notion of stewardship carries a profound prescription of the expected/anticipated role of humanity in society at large. God the Creator, beings will be the caretakers of the natural world and ought to preserve the earth and all its inhabitants. From a theological perspective, the stewardship metaphor has been widely criticised. Most of the criticisms focus on the exegetical basis with reference to the text(s) interpretations of (Genesis 1:29). Gitau's theory of stewardship is grounded on exegesis and can be understood as an extension of St. Benedictine monastery teachings, which states that monastic life does not exist in isolation but for the sake of others. The idea of stewardship should be perceived as such. Gitau's sees the battle against ecological degradation as one battle for the Christians to win. He notes that African Christianity must emulate the kind of life portrayed by Christ and biblical expositions (Gitau, 2000:160). However, it remains crucial to appreciate that the extent and the magnitude of ecological degradation requires collaboration across disciplines, culture, and religion using multi-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary approaches. From an inter-disciplinary perspective, the concept is a cross-breed from different disciplines and knowledge. Part of the missing link or gap in Gitau's approach as his point of departure, he capitalises on a single dimension (the ecclesiastical dimension) in his response and disregards or overlooks multi-disciplinary avenues.

In adopting a one-dimensional ecclesiastical approach, Gitau's approach is similar to that of Nigerian theologian, Obiora Alokwu. According to Alokwu the churches in Nigeria ought to teach the masses about the environmental crisis. The faith community, as Alokwu observes, is in a position not only to serve the poor and downtrodden but to serve all of creation. He uses for an example, the involvement of the early church theologians with regard to the

environment invoking names such as, Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, the Patron Saint (Francis of Assisi) and Albert Schweitzer which made remarkable contributions with regard to the natural/wild world. These theologians were influenced by the texts(s) for example, (Colossians 1:15-17). The passage suggests an intimate bond between Christ and the cosmos therefore, humanity is not in a position to abuse and exploit the environment. The establishment of the Creator's rule on creation proclaimed by the church is a profound message of holistic redemption epitomised in the mission of Christ. The church should view salvation not only for individual redemption from sin but the renewal and transformation of all aspects of creation (Alokwu, 2009:149).

4. Conclusion

Gitau is optimistic, that the church as an institution and representative of the body of Christ and communities at large, can contribute constructively to society by including and prioritising ecological degradation as a critical subject matter of redemption. Redemption is not only for the lost souls, but all of creation. Human ill-practice has resulted in an environmental crisis. He stresses that drawn from ecclesiastical teachings the messages resonate with an ecological sensitive world view as illustrated in the creation story in (Genesis 1 and 2). The African concept of God, humanity and creation assess the biblical understanding of ecology. It is for the greater good that the religious significance of nature should not be misinterpreted and side-lined. Gitau's work brings forth syntheses of the life-worlds of the Massai and Kikuyu ecological sensitive communities' views towards God, humanity and the natural/wild world side by side with the biblical teachings on harmonious living within the earth community. Creation viewed through spiritual lenses allows humanity to see God's revelation in the earth community and questions the injustice perpetrated by beings through ill-practice. The ecological sensitive communities within the faith community and outside the faith community perceive the cosmos as an integrated whole and an experience of divine on-going creativity.

Creation from the spiritual dimension is an important contribution to Christianity's ethical response to the ecological disorder. Nature's gratefulness is evidence in its cultivation of an interior life of contemplation, wonder and awe that attempts to experience the Creator's presence within the earth community. It is through His grace in humanity searching for ecological and spiritual wholeness. It is the ecological praxis of grace whether in eco-justice, ecological advocacy, African religion and culture, stewardship/guardianship, or spirituality need not be exclusive of the other methods or approaches of ethical praxis among various

responses towards earth degradation, based on its intrinsic value, living in a biotic and relations established community, as part of the ecological systems points to the interconnectedness of all life-forms. The main role for beings emphasised in this chapter is to recognise and appreciate that we are part of creation, we originate from other lives into our past, future and present. There are reasons and potential for our existence. The indigenes as well as the African religious ecological sensitive communities' serves as an example of communal living based on culture and belief systems.

From a South African perspective, there is an emerging environmental awareness across society starting with the churches, ecological sensitive communities, Non-governmental organisation and individual(s). Most informed people across the continent are well aware that the destruction of the environment due to human ill-practice is affecting the perpetrators and victims (humanity) as a result poverty is at an alarming rate. We are the earth community rooted in the African soil. The widely used notion by indigenes that caring for the earth enhances bio-diversity is integral to African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems. By the same token, we cannot overlook the environmental crisis on hand and the work that lies ahead applying inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches across disciplines in addressing the ecological degradation. In concluding I wish to end with the voice of Cone, in "*Earth Habitat: Eco-injustice and the Church's Response*", contemporary addressing ecological concerns cannot be separated from other ills and injustice to all life-forms (Cone, 2001:23).

CHAPTER FIVE: ECO-THEOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION OF AFRICAN THEOLOGY: A FOCUS ON ETHICAL THEMES, KAOMA'S VIEWS FROM AN AFRICAN CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

I am a son of the soil, for without the dirt of the Earth, I do not exist (Kaoma, 2015).

1. Introduction

Kapya Kaoma is one among many African theologians whose ecological concerns are discussed in the thesis, along with Gitau, Mugambi and other voices. Kaoma in this chapter invites the world to explore how African Christianity and African religion as well as cultural practices of African people(s), including African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems, can safeguard the earth while protecting the livelihoods of the earth community without prejudice. The questions to ponder for humanity is; Can the earth community live in harmony with all creation regardless of originality, historical backgrounds, religion, culture and tradition? Kaoma suggests that it is possible to transform and reconcile with creation as the faith community and other fraternity. We can reconstruct a new world in which God's creation is cared for, respected and loved unconditionally. The alarming ecological crisis is as a result of human ill-practice. As humanity, we are victims as well as perpetrators, can also solve the ecological issue, by first and foremost acknowledging (self-repentance) the problem created and then look at means in repairing the damage and secure the future of many generations to come (Kaoma, 2015:28). One may argue that all life-forms have intrinsic value and that the natural/wild world creatures are not merely valuable because of their instrumental and commercial value for humanity. We can base our arguments towards replenishing the Earth in a number of dimensions both on defence and apologetic, but the truth remains with humanity to reconcile with the earth community. What is good also an advantage with regard to the notion of intrinsic value to all life-forms does not differentiate whether or not the wild-life has rights similar to those of beings? If all of creation has intrinsic value irrespective of whether humans as moral agents have a duty to protect the

other species, the fact remains that all life-forms should be protected, respected and loved. Once you love something or somebody, you protect them at all costs. Creation is solely depended on human intervention in order to safeguard the earth.

The African continent is known for its diverse communal cultures with a depressing colonial history. During colonisation and trade in slavery, Africa's economic systems of self-sufficient livelihood were vastly undermined and displaced. However, it is still a continent of immense diversity, in geographical, cultural, sociological, political and economic terms. Culture and religion play an important role in influencing ethical behavioural patterns and social standing within communities. This is applicable across belief systems. It is an accepted recognition that Africa has various religious systems with multiple religious practices and ecological sensitiveness. According to Mbiti, even though religion may be expressed differently on the continent, nonetheless, the underlying philosophy is similar. As a result, the African people(s) share a number of similarities. For example, we believe in the Most High God, who surpasses human comprehension and unifies communities regardless of historical backgrounds (Mbiti, 1990:1-3). The religious values form and inform morality among communities from different historical backgrounds across sub-Saharan Africa as demonstrated in their African life-worlds which are often clustered by patriarchal systems.

The basis of African morality is about maintaining harmonious relationships between the Creator, the living and non-living and the yet to come (future generations). In an African world view 'kinship' on the other hand is perceived as the foundation of community life. The role of the kinship is a link between humanity, environment and the Creator. In addition, the kinship will determine and control all social gatherings and behavioural patterns aspects in the community. Within African societies, there are also groups of indigenes that follow the traditional ecological lifestyle. Referring to the African indigenous people(s) Mbiti writes,

As they went through life and hardship, the African indigenes observed the world surrounding them and reflected upon it. They looked at the sky above with its stars, moon, sun and meteorites, with its clouds, rain, rainbows and the movements of the winds from different directions of the cardinal points. On the land they observed with approval its myriad of all life-forms, animals, insects, plants, rivers and lakes, mountains and valleys. They did not underestimate the power of creation and the Creator. They understood the limitations and vulnerability of beings in all spheres of life, as they witnessed the process of birth, death, and procreation. They lived through

the agony of hunger and thirst, the emotions brought by fear, joy and love shared and experienced in their communal settings (Mbiti, 1975:10).

Therefore, communities from an African understanding are not simple associations of groups of people or individual(s) put into categories, but they are a solid sharing space (Kaoma, 2015:28). Kenyatta sums it well when he says; ‘there is no real individual affair in an African cultural setting because everything has a moral and social reference’ (Kenyatta, 1938:115). The virtue of sharing represents how communities perceive success in life. Individual achievement is celebrated by the entire community through feast, music and dance also the ancestors are appeased.

African ethics asserts that an individual exists within the realm of social and spiritual interconnectedness to all life-forms. Therefore, ecological degradation due to human ill-practice is totally unacceptable. For this reason, certain transgressions, such as, murder, incest and rape are tabooed atrocities that pollute not only society but also the land (Kaoma, 2015:3-32). An individual who has conducted himself/herself unethically and shames the community cannot be regarded as an ancestor when he or she joins the spirit world. Ancestors are regarded as guardians of family affairs, traditions and ethics. These are people that lived an ethical life during their time on earth and established harmonious relations with all life-forms and addressed disputes amicably. Bujo interprets the role of ancestors as the forbearers of rites of passage and mediators between God, humanity and all creation (2011:85-86). According to Bujo, the problem with the English word ‘ancestor’ arises not only in translation but also in cross-cultural interpretations. Based on this phenomenon Bujo insists that African theology should be written in the author’s vernacular to avoid misinterpretation and miscommunication. African theology in my view cannot be limited to vernacular in order to reach a broader audience and be accessible across disciplines and cultural barriers. As described by Maimela, theology as a discipline is a platform to launch theories and theological themes (Maimela, 1981:46). However, Bediako concurs with Bujo adding that vernacular languages have the potential to carry new idioms that are crucial in discovering new insights into our common understanding of Christ as an ancestor (in this study Christ is referred to an ecological ancestor) (Kaoma, 2013:174).

From Kaoma’s publication, “*God’s Family, God’s Earth: Christian Ecological Ethics of Ubuntu*”, advocates for the ecological role of ancestor-ship in Christian theology to be explored (Kaoma, 2013:33). His argument is that while Jesus is the ultimate ancestor to the

human race, he is also the ecological ancestor to all life-forms. He draws insights from biblical text(s) using an approach similar to Gitau's eco-theological framework. Kaoma stresses that the biblical world held ancestors in great esteem. Ancestors are perceived as the source of life and identity. Thus, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rachel, Jacob, Rebecca and Leah were the co-founders of the nation of Israel which spread into the 12 tribes of the Israelites (Genesis 12:1-3) whilst God was held by the first Christians as the source of the nation.

The concept of the ancestry line, which unifies African cultures and tradition, has sound ecological overtones. From an African perspective, ancestors are not only regarded as custodians of the land and morality but also a link between humanity, the environment, the Creator and the spirit world. The tradition of honouring or acknowledging ancestors is customary. As an illustration we conceptualise the story of the Samaritan woman (John 4:20). Though Jesus was perceived as Jewish and superior to the Samaritans, he did not place the Samaritan woman in any inferior category but affirmed her that time is near and she will worship God anywhere on Earth. The earth from an African religiosity perspective is the spiritual sacramental place for worshipping (Kaoma, 2015:56). From a liturgical perspective, all creation worships and praises the Creator. Among the African people(s) ancestor ship is an act of communion in remembrance that is also actualisation. They are perceived in the same way as the living elders of society as far as the experience of kinship and communion is concerned (Magesa, 1998:78-79).

2. The connection between morality/ethics in African Religiosity

In this chapter, the author uses the terms morality and ethics interchangeably. Morality in this regard is defined as normative patterns in life choices by a group of people and individual(s) (Magesa, 1998:57). Ethics on the other hand becomes the pattern of such a normative order. African religion is a profound unity which enables people to understand the connectedness of all things (God, humanity and creation). Morals and ethics are the vehicle or instrument in expressing and maintaining unity. Religion and culture plays an important role is strengthen ethics among societies (Turaki, 1999:56). The created world is understood by Africans as one organic platform (Magesa, 1998:72). The critical question at this point is what constitutes human ill-practice towards the environment. Immediately what comes to mind as an answer to this transgression is avarice. It is the most grievous sinful act that divides and destroys communities. Hospitality negates greed. Being hospitable is a lifestyle among African people(s) particularly the faith community. By doing so, we honour God and creation as well as our spirit world. The purpose of hospitality overall is to enhance all life-forms in all

dimensions spiritually and physically. Even at the height of colonialism some of the perpetrators did acknowledge that against the brutality the African people were hospitable, and the act of dehumanisation and massacres took them by surprise in most cases. Strange as this can be to our western counterparts, it is a norm to the African people(s) due to the understanding that we are all connected including the environment. In *“Vital Participation”*, edited by Kwesi, Dickson and Ellingworth, Mulago describes the notion of connectedness highlighting communality as a lived and shared experience (Mulago, 1969:137-158).

From an African perspective as Mulago highlights morality and African religion are interconnected. The interconnection is a way of life in its totality even though it is under scrutiny across disciplines and religiosity. We can acknowledge in this conversation that to try and separate between sacred and secular views is daunting to formulate morality/ethics. We can for the sake of argument go way back to Plato’s famous philosophical Euthyphro dilemma which carries the question; ‘Is morality and ethics a command from biblical teachings, or is it commanded by God?’ There are critics of course such as Barley, in Kaoma, *“Integrating African Religion and Christianity, in Ecological Ethics”*, But people do act morally as they choose too independent of any religious teachings (Kaoma, 2010:132-133). Barley’s recommendation as well as suggestion is that in most cases or situations, reason and other social forces are influential in decision making. The fact that African communities are inter-connected suggests that behavioural patterns are influenced both by religion and social bearings/associations. Should any decree in transmission of life weather inter-personal or relationships need to be addressed amicably and allow harmony among the communities? Therefore, an ethical duty or responsibility above all is to serve, be dependable and an asset to your community rather than a liability.

Among African scholars some argue that religion does not play any major role in ethics, but society is the source of morality. According to Gyekye what is morally right is not because it’s God’s command or any Supreme Being including deities. Rather what is good by human standard based on daily experiences in their respected communities (Gyekye, 1995:131). He what is perceived as moral behaviour enhances harmonious living and solidarity among people. Goodness will always be measured against the welfare and livelihood in communities and independent from super natural powers or heads of lineages. Clearly, Gyekye is eliminating ancestors/spirit world and religion in African ethics. He writes;

It is true and even necessary that religion influences morality/ethics in a positive way of life, for the phenomenon of religion is not complete without an ethical dimension. Therefore, it is indisputable that religions across the globe have moulded the moral life and attitudes of communities, particularly where religion is dominant. But even if that maybe the case, it is undeniable that it is not all the ethics which even a dominant religion teaches that is practised by the masses; neither it is true that the entire body of the ethical concepts and norms of society, however simple, is influenced by religion but other factors (Gyekye & Kudadjie, 1976:67).

2.1 Kopya Kaoma's eco-theology

Kaoma is one of the African theologians voices discussed in the thesis raising concern towards the escalating contemporary land degradation from an African Christian and African religion perspective drawing from the ethic of *Ubuntu*. His approach in addressing the environment concern comes from different ecological dimensions; from an ecclesiastical and Christological dimension (Christ as the ecological ancestor of every bio kind), the ethics of 'ubuntu' as the concept of ecological interconnectedness. *Ubuntu* in this study emphasises and acknowledges that we are all inextricably bound as creation. When we perceive creation as the household of God, adds to our moral responsibility towards the environment. The notion of *ubuntu* with regard to the natural and wild world, from Kaoma's observation is that for the African people(s) nature holds the power that can be used to influence how we relate to the environment. From an African perspective most animals, plants, mountains, rivers and lakes are perceived as sacred. From an African religion perspective, the belief is that the earth belongs to the Supreme Being. Therefore, abuse and exploitation of the natural resources, deforestation, pollution in land and water is an attack to the Supreme Being and the consequences for such ill-practice are dire to the present and the future generation (Kaoma, 2013:102).

Based on eco-social ethics we have the potential to address ecological concerns across disciplines. Another ecological dimension Kaoma approaches is African religiosity particularly the concept of ancestors (which unifies African cultures and carries ecological overtones) thus, ancestors not only are they perceived as guardians/custodians of the land and morality. They are the middleman between humanity, the environment and the intangible world. According to Kaoma, though colonialism outlawed most ancestral practices, Africans continued to live between the two worlds of ancestors and colonialism. The family of God metaphor which Kaoma embraces from an ecological perspective has obligations on all of

creation. Referring to the earth as the household of God can re-enforce morality to the human species within the faith community and outside the faith community, African religion and indigenes.

From Kaoma's perspective, the Doctrine of Creation which consists of God, Spirits, humanity and the natural/wild world, exists in constant harmony with diverse ontological categories (humanity, natural/wild world) with intrinsic values. None can exist without the other (Kaoma, 2013:22-23). The African people(s) religious and Christian groups understood this phenomenon well before Christianity dominated most African societies. According to the African tradition and belief system, individualism/self-centeredness is to be shunned in favour of co-operation and inclusiveness. The interpretation of 'dominion' or 'conquering' is a foreign concept to the African people and their philosophy of life. Mbiti sums it well in Kaoma's publication "*God's Family, God's Earth: Christian Ecological Ethics of Ubuntu*", as an illustration and confirmation of the relations between God and the earth community, when he says;

Humanity lives in a religious universe, so that the natural world phenomena and objects are intimately associated with God. They not only originate from him but also bear witness to him. Man's understanding of God is strongly coloured by the universe of which man is himself is a part. Man sees in the universe not only the imprint but also the reflection of God and whether that image is marred or clearly focused and defined, it is nevertheless an image of God, and the only image perceived in traditional African societies (Kaoma, 2013:26).

From a theological perspective, the creation of beings as illustrated in Genesis 1, presupposes the external world which already exists. The mandate from God and the continuing assignment for humanity is to take care of creation as an obligation and responsibility. Based on the text (in Colossians 1:17), Jesus is perceived as the origin of all creation. African cosmology views the ancestors as the first born of the human race in the earth community and the guardians/custodians of the land and all that is in it (Kaoma, 2013:173). From the perspective of African religion, humanity does not have sovereignty over the universe. As it is from a Christian perspective, that humans are created in God's likeness. But this does not mean, as many have misinterpreted, that humans are holding the supreme power over all of creation and can abuse and exploit the environment at will. The vital point humanity should adhere to is that humanity is expected to be custodians of the earth.

Citing Zahan, Kaoma observes that humanity can only be measured positively by our actions towards creation (Kaoma, 2015:133). Theologians before us, such as, St. Francis of Assisi, also known as the patron (declared by the Pope, and Albert Schweitzer's advocacy on the equality of life of all inhabitants on earth, have influenced many intellectual and independent thinkers to be ecologically sensitive in order to protect all life-forms. However, African Christianity, African religious groups and indigenes did not have literature for inspiration, but the community elders as well as their ancestors functioned as their role models. They learnt from inherited life-worlds how to be ecologically sensitive and from oral history transmitted down through generations. Earth replenishing as it was done by the fore-bearers who also inherited the practice and experience from their past and present elders respectively within communities. This experience gave birth to African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems which have been around for thousands of years. The indigenes life-worlds to date remain ecological sensitive. Irresponsible mind-sets leading to extensive deforestation, pollution (air and water) land degradation, uncontrollable population and displacement of people due to internal wars, famine and other factors including human-induced climate change are threatening both the present and future of the earth community.

According to Kaoma, Christian theologians should embrace the fact that Christ is the ecological ancestor. He argues that much as Christ is the ultimate ancestor to the human race, from an African Christological perspective, Christ remains the ecological ancestor to all creatures (Kaoma, 2015:105). From the Jewish perspective as observed by Asoanya, the art of creation is deep in their communities' well-being and how they respond to the environmental crisis. They believe that Yahweh's manifestation is in nature/creation found or illustrated in the wisdom literature, the books of Proverbs and Job. Scholars, like Schmid, have recognised that the natural phenomena of creation plays an important role is wisdom literature in providing a 'call of the world order'. The call of the world order may be used along with priests, Rabbis and prophets to inform and educate the masses of the good life that Yahweh has provided to humanity as a gift. In the wisdom literature which is a cornerstone of the Jewish community with regard to the environment, the foundation of history is the cosmos, the point of morality and intellectual orientation is not about the history of the nation, but the history with regard to creation. This theme is explored adequately in the book of Job (Schmid, 1984: 102-117). In agreement with Schmid, Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, addressing the World Jewish Congress on ecology, uses Adam, the first created species as an example. He said; Now when the in peril, and all inhabitants are in constant danger of being

polluted, and various species, animals in particular are extinct, therefore, our Jewish mandate is to look after our 'Mother Earth', it is a moral responsibility that is laid on us all (Hertberg, 1991:22).

Kaoma's reverence for creation was influenced as a child by listening to folk stories, customs and tradition told by the elders in the community. At the World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 2010, Kaoma made a call for a paradigm shift between the notion of '*Missio Dei*' to that of '*missio Creator Dei*' (Kaoma, 2015:10). He argues that the interpretation of '*missio Dei*' puts great emphasis and alleviates humanity and less emphasis on the creation order. We should acknowledge that the essence of the image of God/likeness involves knowledge, relations and responsibilities to the Creator and the created world with all its inhabitants. It is mandatory for humanity to replenish and nurture the earth. We were created in His image and given the responsibility as well as the ability to fulfil God's purpose towards creation which is mainly love and care. In a nut shell the '*Imago Dei*' in humanity affirms that humans were created as moral beings with ethical obligations to undertake on earth or the greater earth community as custodians. From a theological perspective, based on the passage in (Genesis 2:15), the main purpose of the scripture is to educate humanity to serve, protect and nurture the Garden of God (God's creation). Regardless of land degradation continuing due to human ill-practice, the earth community ought to do the utmost in addressing ecological concerns across disciplines. According to Kaoma, the call is for moral theologians who can understand the continent in its complexity and diversity from the perspective of the Creator. From an African religiosity, God is visualised as the 'Father', both in terms of supremacy, universal Creator, the provider and above all His personal availability to individuals or groups of people in times of need.

Kaoma draws insights from the biblical teachings that ancestors are held in high esteem as a source of life and identity. For example, the Jewish Christian community view their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as dead but alive and a vital link to Yahweh's covenant. Therefore, because of Christ's incarnation all creation is brought together under the Creator's umbrella body and the sole ecological ancestor to all biota and the abundant life that creation seeks (Kaoma, 2015:56). The crucial question we should be asking today is how do we change the natural work paradigm based on the knowledge and understanding of the works of the planetary system and the interconnectedness of all of creation. The ultimate question should be directed towards approaches for investigations that have not been explored? We ought to re-visit biblical norms and follow 'the notion of providence' as we attempt

developing human-nature relations? God's providence, which pertains to His intelligence and will, is the act whereby through compassion and care, directs all creation to its particular ends, that is God's manifestation. The doctrine of providence in a nut shell is God's guidance and care of all of creation emanating from His concern and achievement of his purpose (creation living in harmony). Following St. Francis of Assisi's teachings, the patron Saint of ecology, can be a possible solution towards land degradation. In his own fashion, St. Francis of Assisi can be perceived as the original earth advocate of times. Not only did he care for the poor and destitute, in most of his multiple sermons he preached about the importance of creation in unionism. Contemporary the question to ponder is What about the understudied African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems methods and practices towards earth preservation and nurturing which are not explored contemporary?

Based on the world-view of African indigenous religion and ecological sensitive communities, it is clear that creation is a natural phenomenon and an instrument of divine mysteries which cannot be reduced or simplified by humanity's ill-practice and limitations. According to Kaoma, communities are encouraged to question not only immediate members but also within social gatherings in order to avoid consequences as a result of human ill-practice. On the contrary, certain acts were executed out of community obligations rather than religious sanctions. However, the interconnectedness and human ethics suggest that morality exists within the religious sphere just as water exists in a waterfall. Thus, religion infuses all aspects of human life such that even the slightest attempt to dismiss this link is rejecting the interconnectedness of African life. The most important aspect in African religious world-view carries a strong emphasis on establishing relations. Through the act of creation, God is related in an unbreakable way to the entire universe from species to objects.

Kaoma's main concern from a Christian and African perspective is that the future of the continent depends on how the faith community, politicians and the state address the alarming ecological crisis. Failure to do so will result in extreme poverty, further land degradation and further conflicts and political instability in the continent. Kaoma observes that on the global scale, the poorest nations are facing environmental hardship due to multi-national corporations waving profits above ecological sensitivity and the people(s) livelihood. These companies are disguised as investors and job creators, building the economy for Africa. Politicians and authorities either turn a blind eye or go along with the scrupulous corporations in return of wealth. Sadly, the poor and vulnerable populace suffers the most, because their livelihoods depend solely on the land. Land degradation has condemned communities to

extreme poverty. From a theological perspective, Kaoma stresses that intervention in terms of a possible solution concerning the abuse of creation and exploitation of the poor is evil and sinful. Unfortunately, the situation is not different for those in urban areas, where the poor live in slums next to illegal dumping sites (both industrial waste and household) particularly in South Africa as mining explorations continue and old mines abandoned. There is no debate that colonialism robbed Africans of their prime land and land in general, but corruption has further destroyed the land and benefited a few (Kaoma, 2015:18-19). The majority of people(s) in Africa are landless due to economic status. The system based on monetary value determines who gets the land in post-independent Africa. This has resulted in the poor migrating to the urban areas to live a peasants' life in the swamps and dumping sites in the search for unskilled employment.

While originally (before the commercialisation of the land and its resources), the African people(s) had no boundaries to access game reserves. Contemporary this privilege is perceived by the majority of people as a luxury befitting the wealthy. Privatisation of waterfronts, game parks and wells are now privately owned in most countries. While the intentions to protect wild-life for commercial gains are for the chosen few. The interest in protecting resources such as land ought to be balanced with the interest of the community which is totally not the case in contemporary Africa. The environmental crisis and the plight of the poor are intertwined; therefore, creation care becomes a moral responsibility to all parties. The indigenes once referred to by then British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, as primitive tribes of the jungle; also praise them for 'having the spirit of oneness with their environment that has been lost in urban jungle' (Asoanya, 2011:46). Unfortunately, such a statement can be misunderstood or imply that indigenes (the primitive tribes as Thatcher refers) practices or life-worlds are not static. Through assimilation and enculturation cultures and tradition changes gradually as people(s) interact. Contemporary, we acknowledge and appreciate ecological indigenous wisdom knowledge systems/practices. Our western counterparts lack the understanding of the ethic of love and respect for creation of which the African indigenes upholds.

The African people(s) particularly the ecological sensitive communities have an intimate relationship with nature, utmost respect, interdependence and equilibrium. Based on this reason it is not an idle claim that these people have developed economic, social and cultural models that do not indulge in abuse of nature. Instead they have committed to a life time custodianship of the land and all that is in it. African theology scholars ought to present the

cultural models attractive and emulative as a model for ecological sound informative practices to be reckoned with. It cannot remain as a glorious past story or experiences of traditional African people. Unless there is a paradigm shift by African scholars particularly in theology in academia, the African Wisdom Knowledge and Systems will remain a tale of the past.

3. Christ is the Ecological Ancestor

Kaoma is adamant in using the notion referring to Christ as an 'ecological ancestor' to all of creation as a response to ecological degradation. Based on biblical principles, Kaoma states that Christ is presented as the first of all creation Colossians 1:16-17, reads; "*Through whom all things were created*". From a theological perspective, Christ is both the first ancestor and the provider of life in its totality. Creation ultimately belongs to the Supreme Being. Humanity on the other hand can never rule over creation. It is only through Christian anthropocentrism that humanity is elevated to the position of a ruler. However, African cosmologies perceive ancestors as the first-born of human lineage on earth created by God or the Supreme Being. The land is a gift and a treasure to be cared for and not to destroy or abandon. The land as an ancestral trust or as a Common according to Kaoma is crucial to ecological ethics. It is a trust that humanity for their own good as ontological guardians, they safeguard the land. Kaoma argues that as much as the passage in (John 1:3) testifies that Christ is the ecological ancestor and the abundant life that creation seeks. But the Nicene Creed limits redemption to humanity. In the text (John 1:3) the passage testifies on behalf of creation, it points out that, 'through him (Christ the ecological ancestor) all things were made and without him, nothing was made'. The Nicene Creed, on the other hand, reads;

We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light. True God from true God, begotten not made one in being with the Father.

Through him all things were made. For us men and our salvation he came down from heaven, by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary and became a man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered, died and was buried. On the third day he rose again in fulfilment of the Scriptures, he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His Kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son, He is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in the holy catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen (First Council of Nicaea, 325 AD).

Therefore, it is time for contemporary theologians and biblical scholars to insist on an inclusive and ecological creed; hence from a liturgical perception we are created for communion with the natural world as illustrated in (Psalms 148). We worship and praise the Creator particularly when we recognise that all creation bears originality in Christ (Colossians 1:15), (Kaoma, 2015:56-57). According to Kaoma, should humanity be separated from the rest of creation, then our interpretation that Christ as the ecological ancestor to all bio kind is translated to heresy.

Kaoma's Christological work responding to ecological degradation from an African Christian perspective introduces a theological theme to his African eco-theology. The restoration of our land in its totality with a flourishing environment is central to salvation. The eschatological understanding and complete distraction to those of sinful acts sinners, nor is the Armageddon theory where the earth winds up in flames and the righteous spared, is outrageous and shun by the African beliefs system. The Supreme Being manifest in the natural/wild world, for example, as Jack Glazier observed, among the Kenyan people (based on cultic observances) (Glazier, 1984:133-147). The Chewa of Malawi and Zambia share similar beliefs and that on the wild species, certain snakes, (particularly the python is associated with divine) zebras, lions are considered ancestors avenues (Kaoma, 2010:75). A similar example from David Childester that Zulu nation in South Africa present sacrifices to their ancestral spirits as part of their ritual practices, through snakes as an avenue of ancestors (Childester, 1996:128).

Jomo Kenyatta, back in 1938 explaining the concept of African ontology and its use to his western counterparts wrote;

Ancestors are vested with mystical powers and authority. They retain a functional role in creation particularly in the world of the living and in the lives of their kinsmen. African kin-groups are often described as communities of both the living and the dead. The relation of the ancestors of their living kinsmen has been described as

ambivalent, as both punitive and benevolent and sometimes even as capricious. In general, ancestral benevolence is assured through propitiation and sacrifice. Neglecting creation (beings and environment) is believed to bring about punishment in terms of misfortunes. Ancestors are intimately involved with the welfare of their kin-group but not simultaneously to each member of the group. The linkage is structured through elders and authoritarian within the group. In short the elders are the representatives of the ancestor and play a mediator role between ancestors and the kin-group (Kenyatta, 1938:255).

From an African environmental Christological perspective, Kaoma argues that the role of ancestor-ship has not been explored adequately in Christian doctrines. Goergen concurs with Kaoma and adds that the main contribution of an ancestor Christology enhances knowledge towards an ecological Christology founded in African religiosity as well as Christianity. Christ becomes enculturated within the African cultures and perceived as the original ancestor of all biota (Goergen, 2009:46). The text in (John 8:59) reads; '*Before Abraham was born, I AM*' can be understood by many distinctly to the faith community. However, "I AM", from an ecological perspective is crucial to the ancestor Christology. Charles Nyamiti, in par with Kaoma, views ecological Christology from a Trinitarian perspective and explains the ancestry cult in stages. As kin to creation, responsibility of the living to respect their ancestors through ritual offering and supplications, and custodians to the land and all that is in it dead or alive. The Trinitarian approach stresses that mission becomes the appendix to God's work. Recognising creation brings ethical responsibility to humanity particularly the faith community, which perpetuates to a certain degree Christian anthropocentrism.

Kaoma warns that unless there is a paradigm shift in Christian theology and Jesus the ecological ancestor is explained in light of how he is experienced and identified life-worlds of communities in the faith community and outside the faith community. Otherwise, the relevance of the ancestor Christology will forever remain the unsolved myth in academia. According to Kaoma, western theology has not capitalised in providing a theological rationale for God's involvement in the natural/wild world, hence African theology is making an attempt. African deities were and still are ecological sensitive in supplication, hence the need for an ecological theology that positions and interprets God, ancestors and spirits from the earth perspective. From a Christian perspective, creation is a sacrament to the earth community; hence how societies relate towards the environment is a spiritual dimension. It is

a responsibility for the faith community to address not only ecological concern but the plight of the poor in the household of God, the Earth.

3.1 Replenishing the Land our inheritance

Kaoma's views of Christ and creation play an important role in building relations to humanity and the environment. Because creation including humanity traces their ancestry to Christ, are ontologically related to each other and ultimately to the Creator, we all have a moral obligation towards ecology and ought to take full responsibility for our short comings in negatively contributing to the ecological degradation (Kaoma, 2013:188). As moral beings, it is our primary duty to protect, respect, and nourish the Earth for the present and future generations of all life-forms. At the moment humanity continues to leave a trail of havoc on planet earth. From African Christianity and religiosity, the belief is that the natural world and resources are a gift from the ancestors and the Supreme Being. The assumption is that when we live harmoniously with the natural/wild world we are protected. When natural disasters strike we are punished for abusing the earth and failing to be proper guardians/custodians within the earth community.

However, much as the African people did not have a guide to follow in restoring land, it was not of sheer ignorance. The life-worlds of African people(s) were of communal setting and respected nature/wild world. They domesticated certain animals; planted trees (wild and edible) maintained sacred grooves and tended gardens. Maathai claims that replenishing the earth cannot be taught or preached, but it is a lifestyle in most people in Africa particularly the indigenes. Certainly, it is important to learn about the earth, understanding its ecosystems helps in creating relations between humanity and the natural world. Sacred grooves are no longer regarded as sacred as our world-views are influenced by different factors have collided. Fighting for control and ownership over the meaning and significance of the spiritual landscape is now regarded as an ancient tale. The book of Hebrews serves as an example of some of the conflicts over sacred grooves.

The struggle of the Yahwistic Priests to destroy the cult of Asherah, a goddess whom the Israelites encountered after settling in Canaan, and who was worshipped extensively during the 1st and 2nd millennia before the common era is one example. During that period places of worship were held in higher places, such as mountains and hills and under big green trees such as oaks or terabits. Among the Hebrews, the sacred trees and wells were used as oracles. God's servants normally received divine communication near a sacred tree. We can draw-

back to the Old Testament Moses's first encounter with God through vegetation by means of the burning bush in (Exodus 3:1-2). Similarly, it was at the oak of Moreh that God uttered this promise to Abraham, '*To your descendants, I will give you the land of Canaan*' (Genesis 12:6-8). The notable sacred mountains are Mount Sinai or Horeb and Mount Camel. It was in Mt. Sinai where Moses received a divine call to assist in freeing the Israelites from bondage in Egypt and the solemn covenant of Yahweh and the Israelites. We also learn of the Prophet Elijah to have fled to this mountain after the slaughter of Baal's prophets (1 Kings 19:8-18), and after the storms and earthquakes, God spoke to Elijah from Mt. Sinai.

The author of Deuteronomy also gives us insights on how humanity (particularly the Hebrew nation) led ecologically sensitive lifestyle. For instance, although woodlands had to be cleared in order to build homesteads, they were careful not to destroy edible trees (fruit trees). Even during wars, it was forbidden to destroy fruit trees (Deuteronomy 20:19). This injunction was extended to all forms of wanton destruction. When King Solomon constructed the magnificent temple in Jerusalem it was built of cedar rather than from fruit-bearing wood. The locals did not use edible trees to build homes. Wells and springs were supreme commodities to the nomadic people. Consequently, the scripture in the OT mentions oracle wells and poetic songs (Numbers 21:17), known as the 'Song of the well'. Among other benefits, water is used as a symbol of cleansing as it is illustrated in the practice of Baptism to date.

Comparatively, the biblical concept of sacred environment particularly trees is similar to the life-worlds of the Kikuyu and Massai ecological sensitive communities in Kenya discussed in chapter three of the thesis. Among the Kikuyu the fig trees (*Mugumo and Mukuyu*) are regarded as sacred trees. During drought seasons or any crisis, the community led by the elders would gather under the fig tree for worship and offered sacrifices to the Creator. The Land is still treated with utmost respect by the Kikuyu and the Massai communities. Neither cultivation nor grazing was haphazard. The type of soil, crop suitability and climate regimes are carefully balanced toward possible maximisation of production and maintenance towards balancing ecological systems. According to Kenyatta, in his treatise on Kikuyu agricultural practices, the cultivation of yams, sugar-cane and bananas the method has been transmitted down to generations (Kenyatta, 1975:9). The people did not use unsuitable soil for the produce. They deployed animal manure and waste vegetables to fertilise the land. Animal and vegetable wastes are good sources of organic fertiliser. By acknowledging creation and all life-forms humanity with a winning attitude can be able to replenish the land.

Celebrating nature using totems symbolises the unity between the African people and the natural/wild world. Mbiti states that totem is shared across African communities as a symbol of oneness. In the Nguni culture, people(s) share the same names as animals and vegetation, such as snakes (*inyoka*) crocodiles (*Ngwenya*) soil or land (*Inhlabatsi*) the leopard (*Ingwe*) elephants (*Indlovu*) a cow (*Inkhomo*) and a zebra (*Lidvube*). Therefore, individuals or groups of people sharing the same name of an animal or type of vegetation they respect those items and if it's edible they cannot harm that animal or eat from that particular tree. This is about honouring and respecting the ecosphere. Most clannish names as part of the Nguni culture resemble plants and animals.

3.2 When and how are we drawn to Moral/Ethical Consciousness?

From an African world-view, the universe consists of the interaction of various divine forces. The world is sacred and home to all forces (God, humanity, the spirit world and the environment) religion gives humanity character and our ethical consciousness. Martin Luther (Jr), in his famous last apocalyptic sermon on the eve of his assassination, from a humanitarian and Christian perspective which addresses morality/ethical consciousness said these words of encouragement;

It's alright to talk about 'long white robes over yonder', in all of its symbolism. But ultimately people want to wear suits, dresses and shoes to wear down here. It is alright to talk about 'streets that are flowing with milk and honey', but God has commanded us to be concerned about the slums down here, and his children who can't eat three square meals a day. It's alright to talk about the New Jerusalem, but one day, God's preachers will talk about the new New York, the new Atlanta, the new Philadelphia, the new Los Angeles, and the new Memphis, Tennessee. This is what we have to do (Washington, 1986:282).

We can apply these words of wisdom towards ecological degradation. It must be persistently emphasised that earth and its present environmental crisis call for nothing but religious and social re-formation/imagination across cultures and belief systems. Through imagination, we are able to visualise the earth as the household of God occupied by all inhabitants in their different dwelling places living in harmony within the designated species. There is no doubt that in the past two decades South Africa as a country dominated with the struggle for freedom. Liberation theologians enthusiastically used the Gospel among various approaches in addressing their concern and advocacy of marginalised members of the earth community.

The cries of the victims of oppression, dehumanisation, land dispossession, forced removals accompanied by torture and death took centre stage in the struggle for emancipation. According to Maathai, the same attitude and enthusiasm should be adopted in the liberation struggle for the environment using the same tool or approach which is the Gospel. The redemption message should not only be for the lost souls but for saving the environment as well (Maathai, 2011:41)). From a South African perspective, ecological degradation concerns vary due to economic status and cultural diversity across our complex and fractured communities. In most cases, poverty discriminates against ecological degradation. The hungry and homeless are more concerned about surviving each day rather than ecological concern. While we understand that both the environmental crisis and poverty is a complex phenomenon contemporarily it remains a major concern.

From an inter-disciplinary approach in addressing ecological degradation which is threatening all life-forms, as an illustration of our concern let us borrow from Maslow's theory of motivation describing basic poverty syndrome which affects mostly the poor populace in our communities in the South African context. These are basic needs which determine human behaviour and general sustainability (Maslow, 1954:30-33). Sadly, the poor populace is less concerned about ecological degradation hence they feel abandoned and marginalised. Therefore, we need to conceptualise poverty not only as an extreme deprivation of human livelihood, but also refer to poverty as the deprivation of quality of life. While addressing ecological concerns across disciplines, poverty alleviation goes hand in hand with ecological alleviation for the greater good to all of creation. This can only be achieved if society at large becomes morally/ethically conscious in all spheres of life. Most South Africans in our era are recognising the environmental crisis at hand, and there is emerging awareness exposing societal challenges that cannot be separated from the land degradation which affects our well-being negatively cited by the following authors in a joint publication (Conradie, Sigabi, Molobi, Field & Majiza 2001:138).

The land is our only dwelling place in the earth community and should be protected and nourished at all costs. The question to ponder is how can communities at large respond creatively and constructively in order to safe guard the earth at this juncture. Studies have been conducted extensively across scientific fields; hence we are facing the ecological degradation challenge at an alarming rate. Perhaps what is missing in response is the 'theology for earth' as proposed by Joseph Sittler in one of his 1954 essays, that 'man is no longer related to nature in God's intended ways' (Sittler, 2000:188). Therefore, it is time to

wear ecological sensitive lenses as a step towards earth reconciliation and dialogue. According to Johnson, as we put on the new spectacles in viewing creation we should remove our shoes too because the land is sacred (the earth (Johnson, 2000:3).

While originally (before commercialisation of land resources) the African people(s) today nature is perceived by the majority as a luxury befitting the wealthy. While the intention to protect wild-life from poachers is important, land resources are part of the common inheritance for the nations. Commercial interest ought to be balanced with the interest of the community which is totally not the case in contemporary Africa. The environmental crisis and the plight of the poor are intertwined; therefore, creation care becomes a moral responsibility to all parties.

4. Conclusion

Ecological degradation is at an alarming rate and multi-disciplinary approaches/methods are the only way forward. The chapter has discussed ecological contributions from different avenues in the faith community and outside the faith community. Kaoma has introduced different dimensions to address ecological degradation. He has shared beliefs systems and cultures from both African Christianity and African religion. Kaoma's contribution using the Christological approach which brings forth Christ as the original ancestor is significant. From an African perspective, ancestors function as gate keepers for communities' well-being by enforcing directives and authority against exploitation and abuse of the natural/wild world. The ethical concept of interconnectedness illustrated in the ethics of *ubuntu* should be prioritised by nations within sub-Saharan Africa and across the continent in order to safeguard the environment. From an African perspective the ethics of '*ubuntu*' as articulated by Kaoma imply or intensify the importance of respecting the natural world. Should humanity demean this inherent value through human ill-practice it cannot claim to possess '*ubuntu*' in its life-worlds? Positioning '*ubuntu*' from a theological conviction in Christ does not only represent humanity, but represents all of creation. Desmond Tutu, in his publication, "*God has a Dream*", articulates his *ubuntu* theology and adds to Kaoma's ethics of *ubuntu* with an affirmation that creation depends on harmonious existence with other species. In his illustration he writes;

When African people(s) in conversation said, "Oh, don't treat that tree like that, it feels pain" others used to say, "Ah, they are pre-scientific, they're primitive". It is wonderful now how we are beginning to discover that it is true – that the tree does

hurt, and if you hurt the tree, in an extraordinary way, you hurt yourself. Human relations within the earth community should be that of viceroys, caring as God would – caringly, gentle and not harshly or exploitative, but with deep reverence, for all is ultimately holy ground and we should figuratively take off our sandals/shoes for it all has the potential to be ‘theophanic’ – to reveal the divine. Every shrub and by extension every creature has the ability to be a burning bush and to offer us an encounter with the transcendent (Tutu, 2004:29).

Indigenous ecological sensitive communities continue in their life-worlds to preserve and nourish the land as discussed in chapter three of the thesis. Natural disasters in an African world-view are a result of points at human ill practice (Kaoma, 2010:38). From an ecclesiastical ecological dimension, the love we share with our neighbours in the earth community is extended to all creation seen and unseen. There is no room for debate that the mounting ecological crisis bears religious ramifications based on Christian anthropocentrism. From an African religion world-view life cannot be rationed as practised by westerners. What is characterized under secular issues in the western culture is regarded as spiritual within an African context. The life-worlds of the African people(s) are shared among the earth community inhabitants regardless of originality and characteristics, including wild life.

The inter-connectedness and sensitivity discussed in the works of the main interlocutors in the manuscript advocates for a paradigm shift in addressing ecological concerns. The universe is sacred by virtue as creation’s origin and humanity bears the responsibility and mandate of caretaker. The inter-connectedness perceived attributes virtue and the respect of the spirit world (ancestors/custodians of the earth) and humanity as part of the created world with a responsibility of caretaker. In order to make a positive contribution to escalating ecological degradation, there has to be a paradigm shift in theology as a discipline. From a theological perspective, humanity cannot continue to view the natural world from purely an instrumental and self-serving purpose. We need to replace this outlook with holistic and spiritual approaches/methods that have the capacity to acknowledge and honour the interconnectedness of the symphony of life (Kaoma, 2015:136-137). Based on the ethics of ‘ubuntu’, the realisation brought by Kaoma’s theory is that ‘I am because I am ecologically connected, not only to fellow beings but to all of creation’. The interconnectedness is at the heart of communal living by the African people(s) as part of their cultural identity in terms of Africanism which adheres to a communal setting that extends to the natural/wild and sacred places. The intrinsic value of all life-forms is a reality shared by the faith community and

across religious beliefs and culture. According to Kaoma's sacramental approach (safeguarding creation) attest to the divine presence of God in nature which is rooted in the historical background of creation. Creation is the truest manifestation and witness of the Creator's glory. When humanity abuse and exploit the environment we are committing sacrilege against God. (Psalms 19.1) holds a profound statement to all nations. Christian anthropocentrism channels humanity to believe that we are second in command, below the Creator. This misconception sadly has been justified through the Genesis text(s) in the creation narratives and other scriptures. This is a very deceptive theology and misleading in all areas particularly to the faith community. Humanity has no power over creation but has a responsibility to care, protect and replenish the environment.

Based on his works Kaoma calls for a paradigm shift in how creation is perceived by the human populace. The view that the Earth's resources exists for humanity to plunder and abuse, needs urgent theological and ethical attention. The meaning and interpretation of the concepts 'to rule' and 'to subdue', will shed light and be the key to unlock Christian ecological ethics based on the second Genesis narratives which states that beings from the beginning of creation were mandated to care of the earth as custodians on behalf of the Creator (Genesis 2:15). The link between theology, ethics and the church should bring forth the concept of the '*Missio Dei*'. Contemporarily this work notion is extended as Kaoma puts it to the '*Missio Creator Dei*'. *The Missio Creator Dei* affirms God's active presence in all of creation. The missiological, ethical and theological tasks of earth caring were pronounced earlier to the first generation of beings (the Creator) mandated humanity to take part in the mission caring for creation. According to Kaoma, the key instrument or tool towards earth degradation is when humanity views the earth as the Creator's symphony and an involvement will enable humanity to relate to the earth with dignity, appreciation and acknowledgement. Based on the sacramental commons, all creatures' needs should be addressed respectfully as all creation is dependent on each other in integrated dwelling spaces in the earth community. Kaoma makes a fundamental effort in emphasising this point and uses the following poem/prayer as a plea to humanity to stop abusing the earth which has resulted in the ecological degradation. He writes;

The Creator's symphony
In silence, this world must hear.
Jesus the ecological ancestor
Our perception to enlarge,

The Plight of Earth to grasp,
The Plight of the poor to empathize,
Christ the first-born of all Creation,
Help us to feel, and to see,
Our rugged Mother's wounds
Scared by her children,
For countless generations, she mourns,
Yet to see, touch, and smell,
The beauty of her life-giving womb,
For without her womb, all life is not (Kaoma, 2015:145).

Indigenous ecological sensitive communities hold a positive view of the environment. They value human-nature relations and believe that none is above the other, and none can exist without the other. All creation is bound together regardless of its origins and instrumental value to other species in the earth community. The indigenes and other ecological sensitive communities prioritise the Earth well-being through practices and beliefs in myths, taboos, rituals, sacrifices and religious symbols carried out of reverence for the ancestors and the Creator of all life-forms.

CHAPTER SIX: ECO-THEOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION OF AFRICAN THEOLOGY: A FOCUS ON ETHICAL THEMES AND MUGAMBI'S ADVOCACY FROM AN AFRICAN CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Africa has eyes to see the conduct of the rich and powerful nations (gross and per capita) in response to the current ecological crisis. Africa has ears to hear the deliberations and arguments of diplomats in global forums. When trade is disguised as aid, the poor nations observe. Credibility cannot be demanded, but earned. Respect cannot be commanded. It can only be achieved (Mugambi, 2002:45).

1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to illustrate different approaches addressing ecological concerns focusing on Mugambi's approach applying ethical themes as a response to ecological degradation. Mugambi's advocacy in eco-theology focuses not only on environmental pollution which has caused irreversible damage to the earth and all life-forms. He also argues that emission trading is based on discriminatory assumptions or biased understanding by promoters of such trading that developing countries in Africa are used as dumping sites for industrial/household waste and benefit economically. The industrialised polluting nations should not be allowed to use under-developed countries as scapegoats through funding projects disguised as developing enterprises. Mugambi is adamant that the faith community, religious sectors and African indigenous traditions particularly their ethical expressions, can effectively address the ecological crisis, ameliorate its impacts, and advocate ecological sensitivity in the present and future life-worlds.

The theme of ecology became a research study for Jesse Mugambi early in 1972 while an undergraduate at the University of Nairobi, published "*God, Humanity and Nature in relation to Justice and Peace*". The objective was to open a dialogue in regard to relations to three entities, God, humanity and the natural/world. This was followed by a publication in 2001 titled "*Christian Theology and Environmental Responsibility*", which he co-authored with Mika Vähäkangas. Mugambi emphasises that in order for the earth community to survive across disciplines and cultural differences depends on collaboration and dialogue. He remains instrumental in promoting indigenous and modern awareness about the global environmental crisis among various African communities. Mugambi is instrumental in practised theological

ethic which exposes the modes of thoughts and expressions among individuals and groups of people across disciplines and cultural diversity. Mugambi's theological proposal or recommendation is, in order to avert an imminent ecological crisis, contemporary humanity at its best should incline towards a philosophical approach for cultivating a responsible relationship towards the environment as a major part of creation which holds all creation together (Mugambi, 2009:32). From an ecumenical perspective, Mugambi believes the church should encourage the clergy to conscientise the faith community on the centrality of worshipping God in cosmic terms. This is out of the realisation that environmental degradation is a sin committed by humanity against the natural/wild world.

Before the advent western Christianity in Africa by the early missionaries, African people(s) through their religion, culture and traditions adhered to ecological life-worlds which served them well at the time, and continues to do so especially for the ecological sensitive communities across Africa. For many centuries African cosmology has presented a concept which is totally different from its modern/western counterparts which have resulted in ecological degradation. According to Olupona, it is regrettable that Africans shun the indigenous ecological knowledge systems and have been susceptible to uncritically borrowing from western ideologies and cultures at the expense of the environment (Olupona, 1991:41). According to Sindima, African people(s) responded differently to missionary evangelism with some rejecting Christianity for numerous reasons that can be catalogued chronologically. Part of the shortcomings with the manner in which Christianity as a foreign religion was introduced is that it did not invest in African anthropology, but forcefully and brutally pushed their prejudice agenda without care or concern about the people or the environment (Sindima, 1994:125).

According to Mugambi's observation, human beings have overstepped the margin and have become comfortable in exploitation and abuse, not only with each other and among groups of people (particularly the marginalised) but to the entire ecology. Despite the intelligence with which humanity is endowed, there are those who are content with earth degradation. Africa is overcome by power struggles and political conflicts among those wielding power over and those that oppose under-development, exploitation, consumerism and commercialising the earth's resources (Mugambi, 2001:29). Pollution and illegal dumping have become the norm in the African continent by the global north. Air pollution has repercussions for the water clouds which are contaminated by fossil fuels burned in factories, homes and auto-mobiles. This contamination produces acid rain with devastating results to the environment and human

species (Wangari, 2003:78-79). In his advocacy, Mugambi highlights Africa status with regard to ecology that the continent is not ignorant of the earth's plight but encultured to such an extent that we are no longer ecologically sensitive and have moved away from the biblical wisdom/prophetic imagination which is a foundation of African theology. In a prophetic voice, Mugambi quotes the prophet Micah (Micah 6:8) when addressing the Israelites saying that they should behave accordingly (Mugambi, 2014:12). Brueggemann also on a prophetic wisdom note says, 'Prophetic ministry consists of offering an alternative perception of reality in letting people see their own history and mistakes in the light of God's freedom and his will for justice' (Brueggemann, 1977:33). The sacred teachings of religions including African religion (orally) uphold the Creator of the universe. According to Mugambi, it is time for humanity to be practical and creative in finding solutions towards the ecological crisis. Mugambi observes that mitigation is solely a burden for the industrialised nations because their industrialisation is at the expense of the environment, which consists of communities and all life-forms. Mugambi calls for a paradigm shift in our attitudes and that it is time to open our minds to different voices raising ecological concern across structured and non-structured barriers.

Ecological degradation is the worst sin humanity has committed historically. According to Mugambi, Africa should demand that industrialists promote non-polluting technologies and aim for industrial and ecological friendly industrialization for the benefit of all of creation and inhabitants. He argues that it is unfortunate that to date we are witnessing the 'law of the jungle' imposed on under-developed countries by the developed countries, as it is brutally reinforced by the powerful nations wielding power over and against the powerless (Mugambi, 2001). African religion, as well as African Christianity, attests that God's presence is revealed in creation which speaks for awe and reverence. According to Mugambi, African Religion, African Christianity and the entire faith community are the utmost vehicle for social mobilisation and ethical behavioural patterns.

The general observation is that communal life which is mostly practised by rural dwellers no longer attracts the youth due to lack of basic provision by the state. For example, basic needs such as running water and proper sanitation, adequate education as well as lack of infrastructure and technology in some areas. Unfortunately, the school curriculum does not improve the situation because learners at foundation phase level are not conscientised about the importance of the environment and its inhabitants, and how to take care of the environment as a major part of our existence. Agricultural programmes (including the

indigenous method of harvesting rain water) and earth keeping projects should be taught at an elementary level in our community schools to bring awareness and ecological sensitivity to learners (both rural and urban dwellers). Given the support and personal will power, communities can change a hostile environment to an ecological sensitive and hospitable habitat when engaging in subsistence agricultural production for sustainability and environmental protection and nurturing.

Ecological degradation is a global concern; therefore education cannot be restricted into boundaries or geographical settings. Mugambi has been a leading voice in mobilising communities towards environmental education and rehabilitation (Mugambi, 2013:22). He stresses that, as part of ecological education from both institutions in academia and the church, it is vital to put emphasis on the principle of precaution as well as mitigation strategies should be applied at all costs as part of the ecological assessment. Scientific and technological methods should be applied in ways that are not hazardous to the natural world and its inhabitants (Mugambi, 2009:5-8).

Conradie complements Mugambi when he brings to the conversation the notion of 'reverence' which highlights the spiritual dimension and moral respect of all life-forms (Conradie, 2011:66). The notion of 'reverence for all life-forms' was earlier introduced by Schweitzer, including the connotations of awe, fear and wonder. He expressed that all life-forms must be cherished (Schweitzer, 1875-1965). At that time Schweitzer was ridiculed by critics that were asking negative questions, for example, should one cherish or be expected to cherish a malaria-carrying mosquito or any deadly disease carrier? The critics overlooked the point that this notion is not by far a rule for decision making, but it is an attitude and virtue of which one may approach when dealing with moral dilemmas and that one cannot escape human responsibility.

Contemporary theologians are challenged with Christian anthropocentrism and should not be distracted by the short comings White's, Jr. publication, *The 'Historical Roots of our Environmental Crisis'*, from actual complicity Christianity in historical processes that resulted in the present ecological crisis. However, we cannot deny the negative contribution that technological control/human ill-practice over the natural/wild world bears on the environmental crisis justified or legitimised on the basis of Christian notions, such as, 'dominion' over the earth. Historically the misinterpretation of the genesis notion in (Genesis 1:28) has indeed created dialogue across disciplines towards ecological degradation.

Ecological sensitiveness enhances our obligation as towards the environment. The natural/wild world is valuable because it is God's creation and not because of its utility for humanity. The misconception nature as an instrumental tool for humanity's validation has a negative impact on ecology. Humanity ought to identify its relevance vocation on earth by exploring alternatives such as solidarity and a co-existence with other species based on gratitude and respect for otherness (Conradie, 2011:88).

Mugambi's main focus in the ecological contribution is about the conservation of the environment. He cautions that Africa should take heed of internal factors, such as African governments overlooking the ecological disaster at hand. The livelihood of communities and societies are largely affected by ecological degradation. In most cases, according to Mugambi, among elements that are causing havoc to the environment, some are disguised under 'development' are micro-economic, global corporate prices and industrialisation. The impact of industrial pollution from the industrialised nations has been a major threat to the African continent for decades. There will be autochthonous factors, such as population pressure, inadequate land for rural settlement among other negative contributory factors to the ecology from an African perspective. Therefore, as a counteractive approach, African communities, religious and non-religious, should invest more in environmental education and rehabilitation of the masses. In Africa, Christian education, for instance, should engage in the transformation of attitudes towards the natural/wild world as well as life aspirations in general. African Christianity ought to present the earth community as the centre of divine engagements. This will enable inculcating the respect for the earth as fundamental to Christian witness and piety and also challenging the unlimited exploitation of the earth natural resources while encouraging human ethics and morality. Christian education in partnership with environment education ought to raise people(s) and individuals ecological sensitivity and instil the ethics of earth-care on the other hand.

From a Western theological perspective, Ruether has echoed Mugambi in suggesting ways of addressing the ecological crisis. According to Ruether, as well as Gitau, Kaoma and other theological voices, apart from investing in environmental education, we should go back to the root error which is the misconception and misinterpretation of scriptures among other contributing factors particularly the biblical injunction to conquer and subdue the earth (Genesis 1:28). Conradie shares the same sentiment that re-visiting Christian doctrines and retrieving biblical wisdom will correct some of the biblical misinterpretations reinforcing human domination over creation (Conradie, 2011:5-6)). According to Oduyoye, there is

overwhelming evidence that as humanity, we have ignored biblical principles and Christian teaching (Oduyoye, 2004:16-19). Humanity is fully aware of the choices but continues to disregard and exploit the environment. Patricia Mische sums it well when she writes;

Most people contemporary are aware that we have serious ecological problems. But there is a lingering gap between knowing that we face serious ecological problems and acting on this knowledge in our personal, political and social choices. While more people have taken some modest steps, such as recycling, changes in people's worldviews, attitudes and behavioural patterns have not been commensurate to the gravity and global scale of the problems. Communities are in conflict they pay less or no attention to ecological concerns (Mische, 2000:59).

Kaoma and Nyamiti have argued that the notion of '*ancestor*' from a communal dimension/anthropological cultural foundation was foreign to the missionaries as it is to date to some missiologists (Kaoma, 2013:174, & Nyamiti, 1984:36). The commonality between African people(s) is that they live in closely related communities, which is composed living and non-living (spiritual world) and the natural/wild world within the earth community. However, the African conception of God and creation, as Gitau and Kaoma eloquently put it, is that the cosmos is perceived as God's manifestation. The concept of God is a significant belief in African Christianity, religion and indigenes because it influences good relations among created species. Everything is dependent on the Creator of all of creation for existence and sustainability. Referring to the Supreme Being as '*divine*' from an African perspective elevates the holistic vision which brings the divine, the cosmos and humanity in an integral relationship blanketed by compassion and respect. A mystical consciousness creates wisdom that perceives the earth community as connected (*imbumba*). Therefore, exploitation and abuse of the environment are unthinkable (Gitau, 2000:17 & Kaoma, 2013:35). Due to the influx of inculturation, colonialism, consumerism, modern technology, social status, dualistic philosophies and ideology there has been a paradigm shift across societies and disciplines, which has resulted to contemporary ecological degradation. There is a lack of civic responsibilities among groups of people, communities at large and individuals. The '*Garden of Eden*', as a metaphor with biblical Adam and Eve serve as ecological custodians against all kinds of pollution, soil erosion, deforestation and unwarranted killings of the wild world species (Asoanya, 2004:217).

2. The ambiguous ecological promise of Christian theology

According to Mugambi, it is time for the faith community to wear ecological spectacles in order to see through and amidst the debris. Should humanity apply ethics in behavioural patterns we could still re-trieve the humane part which may still be at the bottom in humanity's consciousness and thought processes. The main question is whether the faith community offers through its doctrine and dogma's protection for an endangered biosphere (Rasmussen, 1996:270). If the church across the globe were to pledge the security of all of creation and resolve to order all relations accordingly, with the integrity of creation, perhaps something salvatory will occur at this crucial time. Nonetheless, humanity across disciplines and religion has the power, knowledge and potential to refrain from ill-practice. If and when we look at Luther's theology of the cross we are able to trace the ability of Christianity's potential for the earth protection and nurturing applying multi-disciplinary approaches and methods. Luther affirms that whichever approach we choose in addressing ecological issues, God is pegged to Earth (Rasmussen, 1996:42). As individual(s) if you experience God's love in your life, you ought to fall in love with the earth intensely, and use tools within your possession to replenish the earth (Santmire, 1958:189). Therefore, do not look up to God's assurance but look around you, the finite is surrounding you because all that is, is at your disposal.

Luther in Santmire's publication "*The Travail of Nature*" concludes that the Earth distress is a challenge and concern to all parties. Christianity's fundamental symbols and theological construal's are in the limelight. To borrow from Haught's notion, the main task is not only the re-examination of conscience that religious traditions need to re-visit but its corollary examination of faith and ethics (Haught, 1993:1-17). Dickson echoes Haught's theory and adds that as much as scripture, experience, culture and church traditions are the main factors in theologising unfortunately lack in praxis. He stresses on spirituality when addressing challenges including the ecological crisis and other societal ills (Dickson, 1984:29-30).

When addressing the plight of the earth without the spiritual dimension, it will be difficult if not impossible to get to the bottom of the ecological crisis. The main task towards a possible solution is that it must be interpreted from the standpoint of faith/belief and anthropological culture which understands the fragmentary and broken down characters of humanity's relations towards creation. The WCC 1992 conference at the Earth Summit in Geneva emphasised the importance of spiritual dimension in addressing ecological degradation through the church's pulpit across the globe. It reads;

The Spirit is the giver and sustainer of life. All that fosters life, such as justice, solidarity, love, and all that defends life, such as the evangelization commitment to stand with the poor, the struggle against racism and casteism, and the pledge to reduce armaments and violence, concretely signifies living according to the Spirit. This is more than a political act for Christianity; it is spiritual practice and reality. Where we must always begin is with the veneration and respect of all creatures, especially for humanity beginning with those most in need. The Spirit teaches us to go first to those places where community and creation are most obviously languishing, those melancholy places where the cry of the people and the cry of the earth are intermingled. Here we meet Christ, who goes before us, in solidarity and healing, (WCC Conference letter to the churches, Geneva, 1992:73).

WCC as the body continues to express the common ecological concern across nations. The council reminded humanity that the cosmos is a common factor as it envelopes all life-forms and shared according to the divine order (Mugambi, 2001:9-10). Through human ill-practice (particularly the excess use of fossil fuels) the toxins in the air and all earth habitants are at high risk, hence the current climate change. The wealthy industrialised nations who are the main perpetrators in pollution should be held accountable. They ought to be penalised for their ill practice. Therefore, under-developed countries will benefit and develop ecological sensitive renewable energy. According to Mugambi, the on-going debate on emissions trading is a symptom of animosity with the world. It can be best understood in the context of current configurations of the world in its complexity and diversity.

Consider that it is never too late to acknowledge and substitute ourselves as humanity and part of creation to take responsibility and address the plight of the earth across disciplines and cultural barriers. It is indeed humbling to be aware that it is sinful and unethical to refuse to be ecologically sensitive and turn a blind eye against the injustice perpetrated by humanity's ill-practice driven by avarice. Based on sociologist world-view by Ellwood in Kaoma's publication, "*God's Family, God's Earth: Christian Ecological Ethics of Ubuntu*". Ellwood argues that human behaviour or attitude is not always driven by avarice, but it is influenced by social interactions.

3. Ecological Degradation as a Pastoral Challenge from an African Christian Perspective

In the beginning was the Word (Logos) and the Word was with God and the Word was God. (John 1:1).

The above text identifies Christ the first-born of all creation as the symbol of the intangible God. He himself holds all things together.

Based on the world-view of the African people(s) whether in the faith community, religion and non-religious sectors acknowledges that God is the original source to all life-forms within the earth community. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that all beings ought to preserve this gift described as life, (the spiritual world). Ancestors from an African world-view are the living dead instrumental to the present, past and future generations (Kaoma, 2015:46). God is perceived as the only protector and provider not only to human kind but the entire creation; hence he is the Father of all nations and to all life-forms. The power of the Creator is revealed and manifest in creation, in which the lakes, streams, the wild-world, from birds to insects, all creation calls for awe and wonder (Mugambi, 2001:59). Bujo, observes that many stories, legends and myths represent the African God as one who has not only given moral instruction to the common ancestors but lives in community with them. God is present at all times in the life of man-kind (Bujo, 1998:36). Bujo in illustrating the point uses Kessler's words when he says; 'God is present among all his creatures' (Bujo, 1998:215). Humanity, under no circumstances should exploit and abuse God's created world, we should apply empathy and reverence towards the natural/wild world. All creatures are co-dependent to ensure harmonious partnership, thus humanity as part of creation should lead by example. An abundantly simple life lived means a life lived in reconciliation. Thus, humanity ought to respect, acknowledge and cherish all of creation as it is a gift from the Creator. Contemporary we are more concerned about economic growth, political affiliation, social status and self-gratification regardless of the dire consequences due to ecological degradation.

3.1 Ecological degradation from an African Religion perspective

Based on religiosity and African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems, respect, integrity, dignity and sanctity of all of creation are fundamental human ethics. Most of the natural world is regarded as sacred and ancestry/spiritual places surrounded by myth and taboos. However, due to a number of factors, some of which have already been discussed in previous chapters of the thesis, humanity continues to cause havoc to creation, hence the ecological

crisis on hand despite all the advocacy, awareness, dialogues and events/declarations conducted across disciplines and cultural/religious barriers seems futile. According to Hallman, all participatory institutions and individuals propel us to engage in ethical behavioural patterns. Living in a spiritual relation with the natural/wild world requires a different attitude and lifestyle which will enhance non-exploitation, biota-reverence, and ecosystems (Hallman, 1994:233). Echoing Hallman, Mugambi adds that the problem with regard to ecological degradation from both African Christianity and religion is not that the African people(s) remain content within their surroundings. The issue has escalated due to lack of ethics from the state and authority that allows the industrialized countries to disregard and exploit the land at ease (Mugambi, 2014:11-12). Mugambi implicates the direct correlation as unethical practise by industrialised nations. He uses as an example which is self-explanatory, the report on Libya and Algeria in 2014 by the Human Development among the top 100 countries.

Mugambi warns that it is not too late for humanity to seek wisdom and adhere to the principles of equity. When protecting the environment not only shall we add value to humanity but to the entire earth community. However, the escalating human induced climate change according to Mugambi calls for Africa to embark on radical change not only in adaptation but to monitor the toxins due the concentrations of CO² surrounding the earth. A future of clean renewable energy possibility should the industrialised nations adhere and consider the plight of Africa. It is crucial for societies at large to use less of avoid poisonous gasses which are multiplied by the excessive use of fossil fuels. It is evident that various greenhouse disastrous impacts (CO²) have an enormous negative reflection on the environment both on air and on land. Mugambi warns the principalities contemporary should consider the earth community. He recommends that among other possible avenues with regard to ecological degradation is a legal restriction on the destruction of biodiversity. This serves as a more convincing strategy compared to the market economy, as long as it can be implemented and monitored. According to Mugambi, penalties should be put in place as deterrents in order to enable communities to change behavioural patterns and attitude towards the natural/wild world. On the same note, we cannot underestimate complexity the market and environmental concerns. It has been argued in the past and present that the market system is the root cause of the earth degradation because it fosters consumerism that is an ecological incentive in terms of energy use, pollution, waste of resources, illegal dumping of both industrial and household waste and more. Others believe that market systems are the only

productive mechanism to move goods to consumers. But, there is an added disadvantage of globalisation according to Mugambi which undermines policies of trade from African developing countries. The wild fire spread in global biotechnology through social impacts often disrupts indigenous life-worlds, traditions and cultures that are ecologically sensitive. In addition, the widespread growth of such technologies poses a significant challenge not only to the contemporary earth community, but also in the context of future generations who stand to inherit irresponsible behavioural patterns and erroneous attitudes towards the environment.

The faith community doctrine on par with African religiosity, where by Creator, the spirit world, and the natural/wild world exist in constant harmony regardless of different characteristics and originality. Each ontological category holds intrinsic value. An ethical approach towards the environment from an African perspective allows the individual(s) to understand the value of inter-connectedness. The entire network consists not just of humanity but the entire cosmos. Should the environment be neglected humanity becomes self-destructed to a point of breaking down communal existence. Through avarice, humanity continues to plunder the earth resources regardless of dire consequences. According to Oduyoye's ecological contribution, the ecological degradation among other factors points towards an academic shortfall and that African theologians in particular have not brought forth the importance of natural theology as a discipline (Oduyoye, 1979:110). The concept of communal within the earth community has ecological significance for the African ancestry. The cult of ancestors, as explained by Idowu, is the primary object of African supplication. According to Idowu the ancestors are perceived by the African people(s) as heads of communities and families to which they belonged during their time in the earth community. However, the ancestors as mediators during conflicts in communities and family disputes play a significant role (Idowu, 1973:186).

3.2 Community based approaches/methods in addressing the ecological concern

Ecological concern has been debated for decades across disciplines and that the mounting the ecological crisis is a result of human ill-practice coupled with arrogance towards the interconnected ecosphere. At this juncture we are desperate for possible solutions, and it is advisable to embark on different approaches and methods across disciplines and belief systems. The theological concept of 'Jesus the Pro-ancestor' brings an ecological Christology that presents Christ as the guardian of the land/earth *par excellence*. This concept draws its roots from the biblical teachings in (Colossians 1:16). "*Through whom all things were created*". From a theological perspective, Christ, is both the origin of our ancestors and of all

creation, as well as the provider of the abundant life *par excellence*. As an ecological ancestor Christ sacralises the universe and enables creation to follow the sacramental divine presence and commitment order to the environment (Kaoma, 2013:26).

Biblical principles drawn from the book of (Proverbs 28.19) read, “*Where there is no vision, we shall perish*”. The ecological sensitive communities establish means and ways to overcome the environmental crisis using Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems and community-based projects to safeguard and replenish the environment. Mugambi has played an important facilitator’s position in a number of community-based projects in Kenya and beyond. For example, in Ajumako, Accra, the restoration project funded by WCC working group August 1996 introduced *ngoro* system (multi-purpose method) to the local community, and to date the project is sustainable. The *ngoro* system is mainly practised in places where there is heavy rainfall that destroys crops planted on hill sides in countries like in Tanzania and Swaziland. The local communities from the beginning established the system of mix/cropping, shifting cultivation, intercropping and transhumance which protect their farmlands against erosion. The method also helps to harvest the rapid run-off water which improves the moisture of the soil and also conserves soil fertility by composting using the crops covered by rain water (Mugambi, 2010:48). Not only does the *ngoro* system conserve the soil and prevent erosion, but it also improves crop symbiotic relationships such as nitrogen fixation and weed control. It also reduces the risk of total crop failure through hazardous agents as a result of having multiple crops with different cultivation periods and longevity. The Emaswati people use a zoning system (*kuhlinzekela imfuyo*) among other environmental preservation measures where there are few grazing areas particularly seasons between June and October. The system involves conservation of grazing and fodder lands by retaining an area of standing hay as reserves, which also encourages vegetation regeneration. This is usually supplemented by tree planting by the community at large. The areas will be closed off for a period between 2 to 5 years from human and animal invasion, and only used periodically for monitored animal grazing.

The African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems are not static, but change chronologically and according to the communities’ life-worlds. The ecological sensitive communities in Kenya particularly those dwelling on shores of Lake Victoria do not share the same life-worlds as the people living in Swaziland. The Massai people in Kenya who are generational pastoralists practice different cultures than those people living in the Lamu Island on the Indian Ocean whose livelihood is based mostly on fishery and other aquatic

products. The islanders or communities depending on fishery uses ecological friendly tools and equipment, including nets, spears, traps, canoes and stockades of a rudimentary nature that causes over-harvesting to be extremely difficult. In the past, the communities living along the Nile perch in Lake Victoria (Tanzania) could embark on fishing sustainability throughout the year because the Lake had many indigenous species with different breeding seasons, which they mastered over decades. But when the Nile perch (in the name of development) was released into the Lake and all the indigenous species were lost and the communities lost the availability and sustainability of different types of fish that were available throughout the seasons.

African environment and its dwellers brings diversity rather than generalization of the African people's life-worlds whether indigenous or modern, they display ecological sensitivity in their life-worlds. For example, the San people of southern Africa live in simplicity where subsistence farming and hunter-gathering is still the norm. These practices have been described or labelled as backwardness, static and a complete hindrance to modernity. However, according to Orindi, African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems are neither 'pseudoscience' nor 'anti-science' (Orindi, 1992:28). It is unfortunate that very little literature has been recorded of the Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems, yet they represent immensely valuable information in the midst of our ecological crisis. Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge life-worlds continue to provide valuable insights on how communities, particularly ecological sensitive communities, have interacted with their local environment in the past as well as in present times. There is no doubt that indigenous knowledge in the African context has been ignored and maligned by the industrialized nations. However, gradually there is a positive change as governments in Africa and policy makers are recognising the indigenous life-worlds and its conception of the natural/wild world (Warren, 1991:1-15). In countries like Kenya, South Africa, Eswatini and Tanzania, indigenous systems permeate most aspects of life, there is not enough literature/documentation captured. There is an overwhelming need for research in order to deepen our understanding as well as innovate by building on existing knowledge.

For indigenous, God is self-revealing not so much in the context of history and time, but in the history of creation. The context of time and space historically is a product of the missionary endeavour which automatically places the missionary at an advantage as first recipients of the Gospel in a linear time-frame (Deane-Drummond, 2006:52). Due to lack of understanding the cultural anthropology on the part of the missionaries/colonisers, the indigenous were uprooted

and displaced from self-sustaining ecological sensitive communities and relocated to barren unproductive places (the reserves) thus losing their identity in the process. Indigenes perceive human space and land as a key symbol in union with all creatures/earth inhabitants regardless of originality. Writing from a historical background, Schama brings to the fore the extent to which historically our western counterparts have been insensitive to the indissoluble connections between people(s) and land. In his publication "*Landscape and Memory*" Schama emphasises that it is impossible to try and separate natural world using the landscape as an expression of such connectedness. Such a view challenges the perception that it is possible for humanity to embrace what is inherent in the natural world without alteration and abuse. Land and the people or inhabitants are originally connected, as much as change is inevitable moderation and consideration of the earth community remains the responsibility of humanity. Schama's view is implicit in indigenous life-worlds not just in Africa but more broadly. From an African perspective Gitau makes a significant contribution to this study. He draws on the ecological insights of the Massai and the Kikuyu community's life-worlds and the natural/wild world. He focuses on the concept of God from an African Christian and religion which builds strongly on relations and respect to all of creation (Gitau, 2000:46-47).

This study is an attempt to persuade societies across disciplines and cultural norms that indigenous knowledge systems are crucial for the survival of many ecological life-worlds. When communities are adequately empowered, development and prosperity occur systematically. For instance, food production and security which motivates, encourages cultural pride in solving community problems on both short-term and long-term bases. It remains a crucial aspect of having sustainable development abundantly without donor intervention. Based on the historical background of some indigenous communities, there is tangible evidence that indigenes have also contributed negatively to the environment. Some of the examples are over-grazing (resulting to soil erosion) and over-hunting (resulting in the extinction of some species). However, in some instances biodiversity from an African perspective is preserved due to some of the totems, taboos and African proverbs where certain ethnic groups or clans are prohibited from eating certain wildlife or marine species (Mugambi, 2008:31). Some plants, birds and insects are also associated with certain family names and clans. For example, Emaswati nation will preserve at all cost a rare bird known as '*ligwalagwala*' as its red feathers are saved for royalty. The clan known as '*Nyoni*' (bird) do not kill or eat any bird and in equal measure the clan that use the totem '*Dube*' (Zebra) pay

respect to such wild-life and the vegetation required to sustain wildlife. Some plants such as '*umlahlambantfu*', (*Zizyphus mucronata*) are used for burial purposes (Mugambi, 2009:54).

From an African religiosity perspective to preserve the biodiversity in most countries the belief that forests, hills and wetlands marked as sacred places hold significant value as an inter-dependent ecosystems. These places are spared and guarded by local communities against exploitation by invaders/commercial seekers. Wetlands, marshes and swamps are common at the edges of rivers, streams, ponds and lakes. They are essential habitats for biodiversity as many species of flora and fauna thrive in these locations. It is through religious convictions that this is carried out and indigenous knowledge systems transmitted to generations. An example is the Ongoye forest in South Africa in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. For generations, the forest has been perceived as sacred as it was used as a hunting ground for the Zulu Kings and home to Queen Nandi. Today it is protected rangers (Wane, 2005:28). It is 3 900 hectares indigenous forest, hosting 500-year-old trees, plants and animals. Only verified traditional renowned healers like ubaba uBiyela, uNgema and few others are allowed entry to the sacred forest (Warren, 1992:18). Overall, the protection of the natural/wild world has enabled bio-diversity to flourish providing sanctuary to all life-forms. Humanity through ill-practice has contributed largely to the environmental crisis. However, there is room for redemption based on Bujo's observation, that from an African Christian perspective through the Creator and all of creation (Bujo, 1998:62). Kyomo, echoes Bujo and adds that it is expected for the earth community to safeguard the environment and all inhabitants regardless of origin and characteristics. The call to African intellectuals through their works/publications and advocacy according to Kyomo is to demonstrate to the African populace (those communities that are not ecologically sensitive) the importance of protecting and nurturing the environment. As the earth community we should adhere to the fact and all creation is sacred. Therefore, life in its totality is realised through reconciliation with cosmology (Kyomo, 2001:57). According to Bujo, reconciliation of the entire cosmos includes humanity, because humanity and the cosmos are inter-dependent. Among the various African proverbs, there is one that illustrates reconciliation as a virtue (Kyomo, 2001: 63).

The ecological lesson for the earth community from all backgrounds is to approach the problem armed with multi-disciplinary skills and methods including ecological therapy. The ecological therapy notion is applicable only if the African people(s) return to the basics and re-visit the principles and foundations of their relations with God and the universe (Gitau,

2000:48). An appreciation for sustaining natural resources emerges from complex and diverse interactions within the earth community. The famous ecologist and cultural critic of his time Leopold is known for this utterance; 'A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community', cited by Dean-Drummond in her publication "*Eco-theology*", (Dean Drummond, 2006:33). Leopold's understanding of ecology was based on dependency within the earth inhabitants' relations leading to harmony and stability. He believed that the unforeseen disastrous changes to the created order are due to human ill-practice. Otherwise, in his world-view, the land or earth possessed an underlying philosophical holism and those sustainable practices, for example, hunters were permitted as long as the ecology was not abused and exploited. Exploitation according to Leopold could only be avoided by observing and acknowledging the land ethic which plays a significant role in developing ecological sensitivity (Leopold, 1949:56).

From a theological perspective, theology allows constructive informative conversations/dialogism in the moral vernacular already in place in most communities. Doing theology other than thinking theology enhances mutual respect across cultures and belief systems. Therefore, the ecological crisis is a pastoral challenge to all nations globally. Because we are the faith community, for a number of reasons, reminded timeously in our Christian convictions that caring for the environment is a mandate and that we have a duty to safeguard the natural/wild world. First and foremost, we are part of creation which puts us in alliance with God and the entire cosmos. Secondly, Christian anthropocentrism supports the theory of nature as an instrument and fulfilment of humanity without care. Thirdly, the assumption that redemption is for humanity,. Fourthly, creation is a gift from the Creator that should be returned back to the owner in good statue free from all hazards. The question is how we complement nature and its glorious past when we continue to destroy God's gift to the created world, when driven by avarice to complete destruction of the earth. The only possible solution at this point is an individual responsibility, repentance, change of attitude and learning from the ecological sensitive communities across the globe through extensive research. The relations between biodiversity and ecosystem function is a major research area within ecology. Like all natural sciences, ecological research from a multi-disciplinary approach attempts to bracket cultural issues and religious beliefs systems, including Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems and moral values in order to focus on its use, experience and objectivity in addressing the ecological crisis.

4. The Ethics of Ubuntu and African Morality with regard to Ecology

In all communities across cultures and religious sectors morality and ethics are an important aspect of life, because they are central to personal, family, social and environmental well-being. Ethics, as described by McCormick is the study of moral experience which is systematic and a communal reflection within individuals as well as communities (McCormick, 1998:175). For example, it may be customary for a certain community to exploit and abuse natural resources (water in particular). Following critical reflection, a certain group of people within that community or outside that community may consider that practice as unethical and totally unacceptable, and describe that community as ecologically insensitive and irresponsible expressing their disapproval. Therefore, morality is a social enterprise that involves systems of rules, regulations even sanctions to perpetrators of immorality in order to safeguard essential functions of harmony and cooperation in societies. Our moral norms prescribe ways and methods that in turn influence our behavioural patterns, for example, treating the environment with respect and having compassion inside and outside communities. A moral person is able to discuss moral issues and theories intelligently without prejudice driven by the love of God and the love of creation regardless of the historical background of encounters. Kinoti adds that currently the level of confusion in the world and uncertainty about what is right and wrong is very high and a clear liberating moral framework is required not just for African communities but across the globe (Kinoti, 1994:76). What distinguishes African morality from the rest of the world is the traditional role of the ancestor-ship status as guardians of the community's morality. The best element of African morality is the promotion of humanness (*ubuntu*) social harmony, communal settings which include sharing not only material/resources but life in its totality.

The African people(s) understanding of morality across cultural beliefs are that morality is linked to abundant life but it is not static. Due to a number of factors including inculturation and adaptation African values are changing gradually. However, cultural change is negotiated between the spiritual world and the earth community with great emphasis on humanity (Kalu, 1993:119). It is of great expectation a person with virtue, by all means, enhances community life and respect the environment as the dwelling place for the earth community. Wisdom knowledge is not taught through literature but obtained through community associations and life-worlds transmitted to generations. We experience life differently and interpret time and space based on historical backgrounds. According to Makwasha, historical events and seasons constituted time, and it did not matter whether rainy seasons come. Whether there are

challenges people adapt to their new circumstances and life continues. Periodically natural challenges and concerns become secondary (Makwasha, 2010:70). However, in the midst of all the changes and calamities endured by African communities, they continued to trade with other nations using the barter system. That was ahead of the European invasion in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Trade was conducted ethically until the enlightenment era where trade is now viewed as individualistic, competitive and power-based rather than a community enterprise. Natural resources that were marked for building/supporting communities were now exploited for individual for economic gain. Therefore, competition became the norm and co-operation disbanded (Kaoma, 2013:95). The consequences due to wealth and power distanced people from the land which was once regarded as the 'common land' and trust for the people and their communities. Law and behold through inculturation and adaptation land became a commodity to be sold, bought and ultimately exploited. This unsustainable shift transformed the African people(s) from viewing land as the source for abundant life to that of a competitive business commodity which has resulted to the ecological crisis on hand, as a result, masses of African people(s) are displaced and poverty is normalised.

The generalisation for decades is that early missionaries and western anthropologists in their presentation of Africa were biased against African cultures and belief systems. Indeed that was the practice in most cases, but at large African people(s) resisted the western influence and ideology, and continued with their life-worlds even when persecuted. Africa is a huge continent and extremely complex and diverse. Its complexity makes it difficult to study Africa as homogenised entity due to different customs and traditions. Therefore, we should be mindful of colonial consolidation of the African people(s) which resulted in the alienation of the human species. Bongmba warns African intellectuals to consider themes that hinder people(s) understanding culture as part of the discourse. The danger of generalization or stereotyping disadvantaged communities at large. According to Bongmba's observation, such concerns, including stereotyping regarding the nature of African societies based on linguistic similarities and religious practices (Bongmba, 2004:294).

4.1 The Eco-social ethic of Ubuntu

In general, the ethic of *ubuntu* towards ecology strengthens relations with the entire cosmos. It recognises that we are all inextricably connected to each other regardless of our different characteristics. The eco-social ethics of *ubuntu* has the potential to address concerns, such as injustice, ecological degradation, political upheavals and other social ill-practices across

cultures and religion. All beings (humaneness) born with potential which can only be realised or lived through building relations. In short to possess the *Ubuntu* character societies becomes hospitable to all creatures within the earth community. According to Tutu, it is apparent with the human species that one can detect that the *ubuntu* ethic is present to a particular individual or a community (Tutu, 2004:28). Tutu draws from the biblical teachings that creation is from God and a gift to humanity. Therefore, our solemn duty is to preserve and protect creation at all costs. If we apply the ethic of *ubuntu* in our endeavours with a deep reverence we cannot exploit and abuse the environment as that would be a contradiction. The *ubuntu* ethic reinforces the connection as the earth community.

Regardless of the etymological link, we cannot assume that the other species are guarded. Neither should overlook nor underestimate the consequences of contemporary ecological degradation because we think. The ecological effects are mounting every minute and the impact on the poor nations is life-threatening. The fact is the eco-social *ubuntu* ethical system is disintegrating gradually and self-gratification is overpowering communalism which Africa exhibits. Western scholars interpret *ubuntu* as fundamental to good governance and by extension to the well-being of the earth community (Makgoba, 1996:23). Makgoba's argument is that democracy is not a one size fit all remedy. He adds that in the European context which is the formation of democracy is nationalistic and not accommodating different cultures.. We cannot forget that historically Western ideology was about the oppression of masses, exploitation and plunder. Its background promoted individualism, unethical competition, a corrupt system and exploitation of the land and its resources. The philosophy of *ubuntu* according to Makgoba is an approach that can be explored in addressing ecological degradation.

From a South African perspective, the ethic of *ubuntu* discourse has focused on issues around textual violence and corruption. We have failed to uphold the notion of *ubuntu* historically because they are gaps in our conversation with regard to inclusiveness. Therefore, we to address the violence against the natural/wild world and together rise above such environmental violence. According to Mugambi and Gitau, the church is one among many platforms to address the environmental massacre across inter-faith, culture and belief systems (Mugambi, 2011:22 & Gitau, 2000:35).

The ethic of *ubuntu* can lead African leaders to be accountable to their nations. The scale of corruption and abuse of public office in the political arena, environmental exploitation, abuse

and economic power-wielding authoritarian mongers is a new blanket covering post-colonial Africa. There are no marks for guessing that the ethical system of *ubuntu* is yet to permeate contemporary some of the African people(s) and communities. It was in 1998 at the United Nations University presentation where Mbeki used *Ubuntu* concept in his presentation. He eloquently asserted in his speech that globalization illustrates the interconnectedness of humanity. He said;

The world is an inter-dependent whole in which none can truly be free unless all are free, in which none can be truly prosperous unless none elsewhere in the world goes hungry, and in which none of us can be guaranteed a good quality of life, unless we act together to protect the environment (Mbeki, 1998).

The level of corruption is a threat to the well-being of African people(s). According to Mugambi, international trade in diamonds, oil, gas, coltan, timber and gold are among the goods/natural resources in Africa that have prompted civil wars, violence, and vast environmental degradation. The business deals with international industrialized nations are not complementing Africa's growth but compromising the economic growth of the continent. African countries on paper may have policies in place to protect and promote livelihood of the continent, but these are sleeping gatekeepers. They allow projects that are hazardous not only to the people but the entire environment. For example, African wetlands across sub-Saharan Africa and other ecologically sensitive areas have been converted to human settlements and land conversion is on the increase, so is the human populace (Kaoma, 2013:117). The population growth in Africa coupled with poverty is prompting people to communal settings, and ethic of *ubuntu*. The involvement and responsibility to all community members' young and old provided support not only materialistic but holistic engagement in all spheres of life.

Africa welcomes development that upholds communities' allows communities to align themselves as custodians of the earth. The African indigenes past and present have practised this ethic and lived sustainably with the entire biota. Contemporary, the economic pressures facing Africa are negatively contributing to the abandonment of the ethic of sustainable living of which the ancestral phenomenon of *ubuntu* depends. This has resulted in individualism and consumerism which has perpetuated poverty to the poor nations across the globe (Kaoma, 2013:169). Despite the intense exploitation for centuries, the plight of the continent is in dire stress. A vast number of African countries cannot sustain running water or proper sanitation

for the majority of its current population, neither can Africa sustain or provide food security. For Africa's populace; we need to robustly address the environmental challenges undermining food security. On a positive note, Mugambi observes that for decades South Africa has invested extensively in dams to store water for irrigation, domestic use and electricity. Next to each dam you cannot fail to notice the impressive plantations. Regardless of a fragile environment area bordering the Kalahari Desert, South Africa has become the net exporter of agricultural products for a very long time. In capital investment for agricultural production, the rest of Africa is looming behind South Africa and Egypt. According to Mugambi, both countries have a greater economic output than the rest of the African nations, which is very encouraging. The challenge though is about policy and planning to ensure that the wealthy do not enrich themselves at the expense of the poor resulting in the collapse of national economies (Mugambi, 2013:17).

5. Conclusion

Mugambi points out that whatever the prevailing foreign influence theologically or ideologically the African people(s) face internal factors and pressures within the continent. On the political front we cannot overlook the fact that African governments and those in authority in various sectors have a tendency overlook the current ecological concern regardless of mounting evidence that the livelihood of the earth community is adversely affected by land degradation as a result of both micro-economic and global corporate practices among other elements. Food and water shortages have often been blamed on the weather/natural causes. Sadly, African nations have lost their sovereignty through their dependence on bilateral and multilateral aid which is often tied to conditions that are favourable to the benefactors rather than the beneficiaries. As a region, Africa is partially industrialised. Therefore, all types of pollution from African industries have been negligible in terms of global statistics. At the same time, the impact of industrial pollution (on land, air and water) from the industrialised nations constitutes a major threat to the destitute African populace. The degradation of fragile natural habitat increases the pressure on more habitable areas and virgin areas and the destruction is accelerating at an alarming rate.

Mugambi recommends that changing our attitudes and behavioural patterns as the faith community and other societal structures towards ecology, and challenging the ill- responsible terms and legislation of international trade is non-negotiable in addressing the ecological crisis. Adequate ethical policies and dialogue will enable communities an upper hand towards the senseless negligence and mass exploitation of the environment which has resulted in

ecological degradation. Mugambi stresses that industrialised countries emissions precipitate human-induced climate change; therefore it is their moral duty to substantially reduce their own emissions. It has been decades since Climate Change Convention Summit in 1992, but the ecological degradation has escalated. It is time to seek an alternative approach in addressing the plight of the earth. Mugambi observes that a most suitable approach in lieu of the ecological degradation that will be (GACM). Therefore, countries abusing the (GACF) will be penalised. The GACF will assist under-developed countries towards a non-carbon economy focusing on renewable energy sources. (Mugambi, 2001:12). Humanity should bear in mind that the atmospheric space belongs to one body, but is to be shared by every creature today and for ever. Beings do not have a right to pollute the atmospheric space nor should we claim possession for it. We are dwellers in the household of the Creator and it is our moral duty to be ecologically sensitive. The *ubuntu* ethic originates from the communality perceptive. It acknowledges, respects intrinsic value and all life-forms in its totality. The universe is sacred and enhances ecological sensitivity across disciplines, culture and religiosity.

CHAPTER SEVEN: GENERAL CONCLUSION. CONSTRUCTING AN INTEGRATED ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: BRINGING TOGETHER THE VOICES OF GITAU, KAOMA AND MUGAMBI

Farewell, young trees of Africa, and all the beasts of the continent. Farewell to every creature, ant, snake, cow, goat, birds and all that dwell on land and in its waters. This human shipping shall be told to my generation. Farewell souls of Africa, where animals nibble (George Musowe, 1968).

1. Introduction

This chapter brings together the three main interlocutors in the thesis, Gitau, Kaoma and Mugambi to highlight the importance of inter-disciplinary approach regarding the ecological crisis even within the same discipline of theology. The chapter is written against the backdrop of the attachment and connectedness that African people(s) have long demonstrated towards the land of their forbearers. This attachment and connectedness is apparent in the above epigraph which takes the poetic form by Musowe. Whilst capturing the moment when African people(s) during the era of trans-Atlantic slavery were forcibly uprooted from their environment both socially and ecologically, the epigraph also illustrates African connectedness to the land and all its inhabitants even at a time of catastrophe. It underlines that every creature remains valuable. It also appeals to what is ecologically implied in the ethic of *Ubuntu*. Kaoma invites humanity to uphold its African proverb, ‘I am because I am ecologically interconnected to all life-forms within the earth community’ (Kaoma, 2013:44).

Gitau’s theological framework focuses on the concept of God, humanity and the natural/wild world. According to Gitau, God is perceived in African Christianity, African religion and African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems as the ‘Supreme Being’ both in heaven and on earth and the Creator who has appointed humanity to be custodians of the environment and all that is in it, in lieu of the coming generations (Gitau, 2000:12). Gitau, emphasises that this approach ought to enhance humanity’s relations towards ecology and the entire universe. According to African theologian’ voices, such as Gitau, Mbiti, Kaoma, and Mugambi the problem is not due to lack of human interaction with the natural world, but due to a number of factors influenced by different theories and world-views. As an illustration of good custodianship Gitau displayed the life-worlds of two ecological-sensitive communities in Kenya, the Kikuyu and the Massai (Gitau, 2000:44). Contemporary the life-worlds of these

communities capture the African wisdom which perceived nature as more than just matter to be exploited (Gitau, 2000:4-5). He calls for a theological paradigm shift and argues that it is time to investigate African religious conceptions of God, humanity and the environment and access the biblical understanding of ecology and creation as a whole (Gitau, 2002:47). This is a theological attempt to reverse the trend of ecological degradation on a global scale. The church, according to Gitau, is called upon to pay critical attention and adequately address the environmental concerns. Individualistic commitment is paramount in addressing ecological degradation through moral formation. According to Conradie this is an added advantage because it brings moral vision and imagination of a better-cared for environment. For many communities the contemporary environmental crisis in its scope and complexity is not only the result of economic, political, religion and social factors, but it is also due to lack of morality and spirituality among humanity (Conradie, 2011:14). The concerns with regard to ecological degradation are indeed deeply intertwined with a number of other social concerns, some of which are highlighted in the thesis.

In his publication *“God’s family, God’s Earth: Christian Ecological Ethics of Ubuntu”*, Kaoma, who hails from a Franciscan Order, focuses his ecological approach on African religion and African Christianity. He brings into the eco-theological fold the concept of ancestors which unifies African cultures and carries ecological overtones. Ancestors not only are perceived by African people(s) as guardians/custodians of the earth. As much as culture is not static especially after colonialism outlawed most ancestral practices and customs, nonetheless, the African people(s) continue to exist between the two worlds - the physical and spiritual worlds. From Kaoma’s perspective, the Doctrine of Creation consists of God (the Creator) and creation (human beings and natural/wild world), all exists in constant harmony with diverse ontological categories. Kaoma’s ecological framework is based on the Christian ethics which he sums as follows;

Humanity dwells in religious spheres. Human beings interpretation and understanding of God is influenced by creation which we are part of. Man perceives creation as God’s revelation in all spheres of life (Kaoma, 2013:26).

African Christianity, African religiosity and non-religious people(s) speak about life and its connectedness as an expression and understanding of life in the earth community from the perspective of ecological neighbourhood. This means humanity exists in the web of active ecological relations with the natural and spiritual world (Kaoma, 2015:27).

Jesse Mugambi's advocacy from an ecumenical approach towards ecological degradation has blown the trumpet on the need for dialogue for decades. Mugambi emphasises that in order for the earth community to survive across disciplines, culture and religion depends on how valuable we perceive the flora and fauna. He remains instrumental in promoting indigenous African wisdom and modern awareness about the global environmental crisis among various African communities within the faith community and outside the faith community. He has taken keen interest in applied theological ethics which exposes the modes of thoughts and expressions among individuals and groups of people across disciplines and cultural backgrounds. Mugambi's theological proposal or recommendation is that, to avert an imminent ecological crisis, contemporary humanity should manifest a quest for a philosophical approach that is aimed at cultivating responsible relationship with the environment as the major part of creation because it holds all of creation together (Mugambi, 2009:32). From an ecumenical perspective, Mugambi says the church should encourage the clergy to conscientise the faith community on the centrality of worshipping God in cosmic terms. This is out of a realisation that environmental degradation is a sin committed by humanity against the natural/wild world. The theme of creation as an independent doctrine within theology historically was formulated during the era of King David. This is where we are informed biblically by Yahweh's covenant in perpetuity with David. In the book of Jeremiah we gather the prophetic words of Jeremiah and declaration that Yahweh is the Creator of the Earth and all that is in it (Jeremiah 27:5, 32:17).

2. Analysing the works of Gitau, Kaoma and Mugambi

In any ecological discourse one finds similarities, differences and aporias even among interlocutors who are committed to the same ecological ends. The same holds for the theological approaches of Gitau, Kaoma and Mugambi. There are areas where the voices of these interlocutors converge and areas where they diverge. Moreover, as with any disciplinary approach, their analytical frameworks are not complete solutions as they also indicate gaps which are open to dialogue.

2.1 Ethical Scrutiny

The doctrine of creation is on par with the African ontology of creation. Each ontological category is valuable. Thus, destroying one element disrupts the harmonious connectedness of creation in its totality (Gitau, 2000:42). Sindima echoes Gitau and underlines the importance of our attitudes within the earth community (Sindima, 2013:9-11). His position is that how

we think about creation affects our life-worlds in particular our understanding of the natural/wild world. According to Sindima, most people(s) on the continent are still intended to lifestyles of our western counterparts. Consequently, their ideological perspective views nature as a commodity for the benefit of humanity (Sindima, 1990:138).

The belief that the future of all of creation in its diversity and complexity depends on the ethical conduct of societies within their respective communities is widely shared among African people(s). The common African proverbs such as myth, taboos, rituals, language, songs, dance, poems and drama play an important role as educational tools for the masses. They have done so in the past and the present and will continue to do so in the future. These educational tools are imbued with morality which is sapiential in character and is transmitted from one generation to another. According to Bujo, the transmitted word is eaten and digested as a source of wisdom for all life experienced. It carries weight than the written word, its message can only be realised through fellowship. Most importantly, African ethics then manifests into life lived abundantly and in its totality (Mbiti, 1970:57). From an African perspective life is not lived in alienation. The famous inalienable fundamental principle of African ethics has been repeated for generations in almost a lullaby song that ‘I am because we are, and because we are, I am too’. This notion by virtue of its nature upholds its conviction in life lived with others and across man-made barriers.

Kaoma’s approach in applying ethical analysis introduces the ethic of *Ubuntu*. To possess *Ubuntu* automatically is when we recognise all life-forms. When humanity, whether as individuals or groups, disrupt the Creator’s order we regard it as immoral behaviour. Based on African morality, although the ‘Supreme Being’ is perceived as the life giver, the African people(s) regard elders and influential beings/leaders of certain communities as custodians towards the well-being and livelihood within the earth community. The ethic of *Ubuntu* brings to the fore ecological implications or awareness which in turn allows society to reflect on societal matters, for example in economic, politics, extreme poverty and the escalation of population. Unfortunately current population growths in sub-Saharan Africa do not match economic growth. This disparity is one of the factors responsible for ecological degradation.

2.2 Theological Analysis

The following paragraph plays a re-enforcement role for humanity to take full responsibility as custodians of the Earth from a theological perspective drawing insights from biblical genealogies. This portrays humanity to lead in reconciliation with the natural/wild world in

order to safeguard and replenish the earth. It is time for humanity to re-evaluate our values, theology and spirituality across structural barriers including religiosity in addressing the ecological crisis mounting and irreversible.

The Biblical genealogies demonstrate a link between the present, past and future generations' life-worlds in all spheres of life. Just as African indigenes experienced life over centuries through storytelling, biblical knowledge much as it is documented; it is also transmitted from one generation to another. The Bible is a book of ancient wisdom which is relevant today across nations. According to Brown, a biblical scholar of the New Testament, biblical genealogies have served many purposes including identity. He uses Paul as an example, when defending his citizenry in order to be released from jail and when asserting his Jewishness which was disputed by fellow Jews, he used his ancestry and aligned his roots appropriately to Abrahamic lineage and ultimately to the Creator of all life-forms. Brown in his publication, *"The Birth of the Messiah"*, explains how biblical Mathew referred to Christ as the Son of David, (Brown, 1977:66).

The faith community and religious establishments should adopt the ethics of replenishing the earth. Theologians ought to be sensitive towards earth keeping. For example, the earth keeping/nurturing project that is spearheaded by Daneel in Zimbabwe capitalises on the diverse historical, religious and cultural heritages of communities and enhances ecological responsibilities and praxis (Daneel, 2001:39). Similar methods are widely practised by indigenes and ecologically sensitive communities across the globe. From an African Christian perspective the notion of oneness is grounded on the ancestral realm for many African people(s) within the continent and those in diaspora. Mbiti warns that theology in Africa has unfortunately remained a theology without Earth replenishing, and by implication it has unwittingly, promoted the ideology of the domination of the natural/wild world (Mbiti, 1971:48).

According to Kaoma's observation there is a major challenge in popularising Christian ecological ethics across Africa. Firstly, Natural theology in Africa has not been researched, hence literature is not easily available. Secondly, funding is not always available to allow fully comprehensive studies that will include participant observation of numerous traditional ceremonies and rituals which holds potential in illustrating ecological concerns. At the same time, as Sakupapa argues, African theology can contribute to the discourse on African Christians and non-Christian ethical responses to the ecological degradation. What needs to

be articulated is an ecological pneumatology (Sakupapa, 2012:36). The pneumatological understanding of creation is not common in theological doctrines, but common within African Christianity and religion perspectives. It is influenced by the text illustration (Colossians 1:15-20) particularly in Christological terms.

From an African perspective, the ‘Supreme being’ or the Creator whose spirit unites humanity and all life-forms in mutual respect regardless of cultural diversity. What is important in addressing ecological degradation is to bear in mind the reverence for life which ensures that such perception is valuable in African life-worlds. It is the instrumental tool towards earth keeping because all of creation is inter-dependent (Kaoma, 2010:34). An attempt to uphold the life-worlds as African people(s) both in the faith community, religion and African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems with regard to future generations.

The ideology of conquering natural resources due to industrialisation, modernity, economic growth/development by policy makers and state) threatens our inter-connectedness and ecological sensitivity as the earth community. Pope Francis has underlined that, as humanity, we can co-operate with conviction, commitment, and talents (Pope Francis, 2015:14). For African people(s) this Papal message entails returning to African ethical values that safeguard and perceive the Earth as sacred. If we do not conserve the Earth, as Kaoma puts it, ‘we are spitting into the well from which we drink’ (Kaoma, 2017:9). Current experiences with extreme weather conditions, from heat waves, floods, wild fires and landslides among natural disasters are life threatening. Therefore, it is irresponsible for humanity to worsen the already dire situation, by engaging in ill-practice, pollution water/air, soil erosion and land exploitation.

3. Similarities among the Main Interlocutors

The first premise that the thesis presumes is that an inter-disciplinary approach is relevant in addressing ecological concern across disciplines and belief systems. Eco-theology as a discipline has the capacity to reflect on different facets of theology in as much as they are influenced by a number of factors, including culture, education, religion, indigenous wisdom knowledge systems and other belief systems. The main interlocutors in this study – Gitau, Kaoma and Mugambi - share similar views in terms of relations to God, humanity and the natural/wild world. Taking into account the wide-spread of secular engagement with environmental issues at global, national and local levels, such expression of theology is significant. Gitau on par with his counterpart theologians attempt to develop an African

Christian theological basis drawing his theory from the African concept of God, humanity and creation relations. The motive behind Gitau's ecological theory is the observation that most contemporary research has been conducted almost exclusively along scientific, economic and political lines. The African religiosity and African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems significance and aspects of nature seem to have been side-lined. It is therefore imperative for this study to investigate or address the ecological concern across disciplines and different approaches outside the faith community. The religious approach applied by Gitau, its main thrust is to elaborate from an African perspective the conception of God, and creation, articulate the biblical understanding of ecology in such a way that humanity takes full responsibility of its own negative contribution through ill-practice (Gitau, 2000:4-5).

Gitau, Kaoma and Mugambi are in agreement that, when addressing the ecological concerns, the notion of stewardship, which is situated within creation stories in the book of Genesis, resonates well with cultures, customs and traditions, including African cultures and traditions, which have continued to resist the tendency towards desecration of nature for plunder and grandeur. The characteristics and strengths of a theology of stewardship in its strong emphasis on human responsibility towards creation come in a number of areas. The most significant strength of the Creator is through humanity (instrumental), epitomised life and works of Christ, and not in an interventionist way 'directly from above'.

The strength of the notion of stewardship has been elaborated upon by David Field. In his publication titled "*Stewards of Shalom*" Field highlights the following elements as the salient aspects of stewardship; and human beings are not entitled to exploit, but to safeguard and replenish the earth, species as God's representatives in creation. According to Field, human persons possess dignity and value (Field, 2002:383-396). Regardless of various scholars such as Field and others who have described 'the notion of stewardship', it remains a contested concept. Some scholars regard it as too androcentric and Eurocentric to support the ecological ethos and imagination of the place of humanity in creation today. Peterson argues that there is still a misconception regarding stewardship and humanity superiority in the earth community (Peterson, 2001:52). This is because humanity is positioned as qualitatively responsible for the rest of creation. Harmonious relations are estranged due to humanity's ill practice to the environment (Peterson, 2001:52). George Tinker, a Lutheran theologian and Native American, provides a supporting view, underlining the oneness of creation. He speaks of creation as intimate kin and emphasises the need to maintain harmony and balance in all

one's relationships. This focus on inter-relatedness and inter-dependence assumes respect for every life-forms based on acknowledgement of the inherent worth of all of creation (Tinker, 1992:144-145). The inherent worth and oneness of creation is a shared belief system among the African people(s) religion, the faith community and indigenes. In addition respecting creation in its diversity and complexity is an underlying sense of reciprocity. For the earth community, particularly the human nature in order to maintain the delicate balance in the created order, we need to give something back to the earth by using the natural resources in moderation and responsibility.

Therefore, the church ought to integrate the environmental component in her ecclesiastical mission. The concept of salvation should embrace both the spirit and the physical components of humanity. The church as an institution has the platform to educate masses on environmental issues. The church in Africa has a mandate to pay critical attention not only the ecological symptoms, but also the root causes of the ecological degradation, including avarice, self-gratification, corruption of individuals and institutions and industrial pollution. Gitau, Kaoma and Mugambi emphasise the need for humanity to take care of creation in order for the environment to be conducive to all created species. It is utterly impossible for economic sustainability if the natural resources on which economic productivity depends are depleted. The earth community can only thrive in a conducive environment by establishing relations in order to interact amicably across man-made structures and disciplines.

Mugambi observes that while global warming is mostly an effect from industrialised countries, African countries are predicted to suffer disproportionately under its impact. The fact is that ecological degradation is intertwined with the harsh forces of economic globalisation. For instance, neo-liberal policies, biased trade agreements and the burden of international debt, continue to cripple African economies. The impact of these factors is not always visible in places where policies for achieving globalisation are developed (Mugambi, 2010:15). There is no doubt that economic growth is desirable and it can be equated with progress particularly in developing countries. But caution and moderation should be applicable profoundly in the use resources.

Sharing the same views with Mugambi, Kaoma observes that ecological degradation is undermining the African continent. As much as economic development is the common song in sub-Saharan Africa, extreme poverty is rife and has an adverse impact on all initiatives in environmental protection and earth replenishing. He uses Zambia as a case study and states

that the poor populace in Zambia and elsewhere are forced by circumstances to cut trees for charcoal and wood fuel resulting in severe deforestation. For Africa in order to move forward in environmental protection, it calls for global, regional, national and local development initiatives that are set with multi-cultural approaches and methods to combat the environmental crisis. While in a number of countries attempts are made to address the problem through modern agricultural methods, the challenge in securing food security ought to be addressed from an eco-theological perspective. Aiming to obtain bumper harvest at all cost will negatively contribute to ecological degradation. Moral responsibility, steadfast missiology, and theological, human and ethical reflections are necessary in order to save the earth and its natural resources for future generations. We are the current generation but not the last generation to exist on this planet, thus from an African perspective how we relate to planet earth is critical to the survival of our species, to our spirituality and to our participation as the faith community in the mission of the Creator. It is our mandate to become earth healers out of our reverence to God whose Holy Spirit dwells in all of creation. In the words of Kaoma, 'The next generation most likely will pardon colonialism acts of evil but unlikely to forgive us, African people(s), for destroying their sacred heritage'. Therefore, the 'Kairos' moment is now. After all, the faith community across structures share the same sentiments that creation revealed in the cosmos. It is unfortunate that the ecosystems of the continent are threatened by neo-colonial and imperialistic economic policies of which our staggering economics are built (Kaoma, 2015:24).

Gitau, Kaoma and Mugambi share the same sentiments with regard to a new epistemology towards an ecological missiology. As the ecological crisis escalates it is evident that missiology needs ecological hermeneutics. This is a reflection towards the question that environmental mission is profoundly based on God's love for creation. On the one hand, a number of factors including Christian anthropocentrism distract us from seeing God's love manifest in creation. On the other, ecological missiology enables humanity, particularly in the faith community to reconnect with the natural/wild world. Whereas theologies and ideologies spearheaded by modernity place great instrumental value to the natural/wild world, rather than claiming and honouring the ecological relatedness with the entire created order, the church as a mission is mandated to work towards the holistic liberation of all creatures. According to Kaoma, the paradigm shift here is reflecting on Christ as the ecological ancestor to all life-forms. Christianity across the globe need to go back to the basics and re-discover the Christian faith embedded in cultures and a holistic reading, understanding and

interpretation of the text. It is of utmost importance to distinguish between the great commission in reaching out to lost souls and the importance of redeeming a destroyed ecology. In order to address the ecological concern from a theological perspective, it is crucial to encompass the following elements in depth.

- to correct man-made structures that are divisive, and to challenge injustice and pursue peace, harmony and reconciliation;
- to strive towards replenishing the earth at all cost and without prejudice;
- to partner with other creeds establishments across structures and learn from ecological sensitive communities life-worlds.

4. Differences in methods and approaches; Gitau, Kaoma and Mugambi

It is generally accepted that one of the current compelling characteristics in our existence is that humanity is at an ecological crossroads in the history of mankind regarding the Earth. Consequently, an understanding of different world-views is essential in our era both for achieving ecological literacy and for establishing rational public policy and aspirations across disciplines and religiosity to conserve natural resources, and replenish the earth, in order to develop a sustainable economy and food security. We tend to overlook the fact that humanity whether ecological sensitive or non-ecological sensitive evolves and exists in the biosphere, the thin layer of life-supporting elements consisting of a mixture of air, water, plants, microbes and the wild world with which we interact and to which we are inter-connected is a reality. It is the fact of life lived and experienced. These ecosystems within their complex network of interactions among the earth community provide insight into the nature of human relationships that impact and interact with the natural/wild world. When we destroy the environment through human ill-practice, we are directly responsible for the gross disruption of the created order.

Gitau is adamant that side-lining African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems and other avenues that are not classified or channelled on the techno-scientific options are under-utilised. Unfortunately, this has worsened land degradation and the earth community livelihood is threatened. He supports his statement in demonstrating the life-worlds of the two ecological sensitive communities, the Kikuyu and Massai and how they relate to the environment (Gitau, 2000:44). The Kikuyu's ecological sensitivity life-worlds are influenced by their belief systems which are shared among various groups of people including the Massai that the environment is sacred and should be protected at all costs. African religious

beliefs share the same sentiments with the indigenes. Religion, as Gitau observes, upholds the archetypes, the sacramental symbols, of the sacred and the relationship with the cosmos and the earth community. The religious consciousness towards the environment according to Gitau's views is drawn from the words of the Psalmist 24.1, it reads, "*the earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all that is in it*", which is attributed to African proverbs.

Kaoma advocates for the ecological of ancestor-ship in Christian theology to be explored (Kaoma, 2013.32-33). His argument is that while Christ is the ultimate ancestor to the human race he is also the original ancestor to all creation. Kaoma draws insight from biblical text(s) particularly in the Genesis narratives on creation. He stresses the importance of ancestry from biblical perspective as well as African religiosity. Ancestors are regarded or held in great esteem and their spirits dwell in creation, hence creation is sacred. He further outlines the ancestry genealogy of the human race tracing it back from Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rachel, Rebecca and Leah as co-founders of the nation of Israel spreading to the 12 tribes (Genesis 12:1-3). Christian theology according to Kaoma ought to prioritise ecological awareness and consciousness in its missiology.

Mugambi argues that the relations approach between God, humanity and the natural/wild world have not yielded fruit. The secular world is interested in production and commercial gain for the world markets. This has resulted in soil erosion, loss of water, wildlife massacre, deforestation, extinction of thousands of species, and epidemics of all kinds of life threatening diseases. For decades Africa has become a bank of poverty, as more mineral, industrial, and chemical run-offs find themselves on our land and in our waters and air (Mugambi, 2012:44). Mugambi warns that the global ecological crisis is escalating due to emission since 1850s. According to Mugambi, these emissions have been produced mainly by factories, motorised transportation and mechanised farms to meet the energy requirements of cities particularly in the industrialised nations. Africa's per capita contribution of Green House Gas (GHG) emissions is less than 3%, half of which comes from Egypt and South Africa. The remaining 52 African nations contribute less than 1.5% of all greenhouse gas emissions. He insists that Africa should demand just economic policies that respect the integrity of the earth and its dwellers. This is a challenge to Africa due to political instability and power hungry dictators colluding with capitalists. Africa's natural resources are under political and influential people driven by avarice, the ecological crisis is worsening.

It is of common knowledge that available arable land in Africa continues to shrink, and available fresh water supply continues to decrease per capita owing to reduced precipitation. This ecological degradation is the result of human induced climate change, largely attributed to unprecedented industrial pollution – particularly the emission of excessive carbon dioxide. Mugambi observes that the African continent orbital position makes it the most affected, even though African nations are the least responsible for this mess. The debate and figure pointing continues, but the least industrialized nations, particularly in Africa, are left to their own devices, bearing the brunt of ecological disaster for which they are the least responsible. There is a proverb that; when elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers. Africa's rural communities continue to suffer the consequences of ecological degradation not directly but indirectly responsible. For the industrialized wealthy nations, it is business as usual, to maximise profits and increase the luxuries that consumers cherish. Ecological sensitivity is the least of their concern.

From the perspective of applied ethics, the “*Earth Charter, 1992*” challenges all people in all nations of goodwill to respond on the basis of the ‘principle of the common good’ but taking into account respective capabilities and responsibilities. For example, responding towards land degradation the African Union proposed a project, “*The Great Green Wall of Africa*”, which was endorsed by the African Union Head of States in 2007. In 2013 the African Union launched the fifty-year Strategic Plan titled “*Agenda 2063, The Africa we want*”. The project entails a fifteen kilometre block of the forest to be planted, stretching seven thousand kilometres across the edges of the Sahara Desert. It will go through eleven nations,(Mugambi, 2017:114).

During the United Nations World Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 at Stockholm, Sweden, World Environmental Day (5th of June) was proclaimed in recognition of the ecological crisis that is contemporary prevalent. It is a day that marks reverence for ecological preservation irrespective of the moral and religious/non-religious dispositions that any person may hold or propagate. The long term goal, hope and vision for Africa is to create a green buffer for stopping the spread of the Sahara desert southwards beyond this Green Belt. The late Nobel Prize Laureate Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan national, invested passionately towards saving the environment and all its inhabitants. She was instrumental towards this milestone and her leadership skills in mobilizing communities provided impetus for it. Since the inception of the Wold Environmental Day, we have experienced multi-faceted responses, some of which carry different signals. Politicians deliberate from the

perspective of power and wealth for the few individuals between and within influential states/nations (Mugambi, 2017:111). The faith community believes that ecology, justice, stewardship of creation and redemption are inter-dependent. Religion and non-religious sectors perceive creation as sacred; therefore, it is a cultural practice and belief system to be ecological sensitive in all life-worlds (Mbiti, 1970:33).

In his publication titled, *Cultural Values: A forgotten Strategy for Building Community Support for protected areas in Africa*, Infield observes that the protection and management of natural resources can benefit greatly from people's cultural values. He argues that culture could enable 'incentives' to conserve and replenish the environment and its inhabitants. Different people(s) in greater Africa perceive the natural/wild world from different traditions and customs that influence, interpretation and approaches to individuals and groups of people. On the other hand economic incentives are packaged and presented as a solution to poverty alleviation and economic development (Infield, 2001:802). He further argues that the African people(s) will respond positively to any methods of earth preservation once ecological sensitivity is of paramount consideration. Among various reasons the African people believe in natural medicine for health and vitality. The earth is linked to their traditional heritage. Certain trees and herbs are used not only for health reasons but food for most life-forms within the earth community. According to Epstein and Ferber, among other approaches, observes that African people(s) use songs and poems to educate their communities about the importance of safeguarding the earth. For example, the song by a Zimbabwean national the late Oliver Mutukudzi, '*Pindirai*' (intervene). Land degradation, illegal dumping sites, pollution in our wells and rivers affects society at large. In his song, interpreted eloquently by Kaoma, Mutukudzi is not blaming outsiders, but African people(s) themselves. The artist views the ecological crisis as the failure for post-colonial Africa to safeguard the environment. He concludes that relations due to modernity and life-styles we have become our own distraction. Nowadays, through human ill practise vegetation is destroyed for survival. Maathai observes that it is unfortunate the fact that humanity has forgotten its originality. She adds that ecological degradation also threatens cultural identity because as human beings we are by products of our communities environments. She says;

All human beings, where we were born or grew up, the environment fostered our values, nurtured our bodies, and developed our religions and life-worlds. It defines who we are and how we see ourselves (Maathai, 2009:177).

Maathai warns that from an African perspective, we cannot overlook the western influence and views regarding African traditions and belief systems as mere nature worshippers without reservation. From our western counterparts it's simple an attempt to overrule, ridicule and side-line other world-views. However, it is an insignificant and inconsiderate assumption. According to Magesa, African people(s) religious and non-religious perceive God as the 'Supreme being' and understand that creation is sacred because all of creation originates from the Supreme Being, the one who is above All. Therefore, since the natural/wild world is part of the sacred universe, spiritual beings, nature in all aspects the Creator is revealed through creation (Magesa, 1997:58).

5. Limitations in Theoretical Approaches of the three Interlocutors

Gitau in his publication, "*The Environment Crisis: A Challenge for African Christianity*", distinguishes his thoughts based from African concept of God. The relations of the three entities, God, humanity and the natural/wild world intertwined (Gitau, 2000:133). Contrary to misconceptions of early missionaries and western anthropology they all wanted the world to believe that African people(s) worshipped mountains and practised paganism. Though perceived as sacred, mountains were never aligned to the Supreme God of creation. They were and still are regarded as manifestation of God's presence and power. However, places regarded as Holy and sacred the African communities mark those places for prayer meetings as it is with the contemporary church. From an ecological perspective the wisdom behind the sacred/holy places safeguard the surrounding ecological zones against encroachment and land degradation due to human ill-practice. Gitau stresses with conviction that although not all African Christians and religiosity world-views pertaining to God, humanity and the environment may be of advantage in our quest for philosophy on responsible ecological sensitivity in our behavioural patterns, nonetheless it is logical to argue that belief systems including African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems which carries spiritual wisdom are striking for their sense of the numinous in the created world. Their philosophy is rooted on the basis of maintaining the balance or equilibrium between humanity and the natural/wild world. The communities' collective goodness provided and enabled the ethical foundation and mutual respect within the earth community. This African wisdom ought to be retrieved and integrated to our daily thoughts, experiences and attitudes towards God's creation and all life-forms if humanity is concerned about the ecological crisis.

Based on the Old Testament, Gitau upholds that Christ as the founder of the faith community demonstrated ecological sensitivity through-out his life and ministry on earth. His theory of

life centres on simplistic grounds. He emphasises the need for interior attitude of detachment as well as an exterior of material resources that desires only the basic minimum necessities for life. Thus Christ stressed the philosophy of voluntary poverty as an essential prerequisite for a new order of society. Contemporarily the philosophy of voluntary poverty is transformed to servitude which the faith community practices through individuals, the church and society at large. As an illustration the book of Genesis recapitulate centrality of nature in God's creation and humanity's responsibility is shepherding, nurturing and protecting the natural/ world. It is also in the same text where one witnesses God establishing the Noahic covenant (Genesis 9:11).

Kaoma in his publication, *“God's family, God's Earth: Christian Ecological Ethics of Ubuntu”*, Kaoma attempts to address the theological issue leaning heavily on the conceptualisation of sacredness of creation. Sacred spaces or places inform ecological consciousness and sensitivity. However, Kaoma does not unpack the notion of 'vital force' to an extent where one can develop a model or a theme. He gives a descriptive measure of the notion that it is the spirit that holds the universe together (Kaoma, 2013:70-71). It is a common belief among the African groups of people(s) Christianised/non-Christianised, religious/non-religious particularly the African indigenes, that the 'Supreme Being' (the Creator) is the main source. The Creator is the main source that transcends all of creation and connects the entire earth community to a web of dynamic and intricate relationships across species in its unique and diverse form. Nkemnkia adds that African vitality holds the view that the 'vital force' holds life together (Nkemnkia, 1999:24). Sakupapa's emphasis is African theology has not articulated a pneumatology that binds African intellectual, belief systems and cultural anthropology emulated in the dialogue.

Mugambi identifies African Theology of Reconstruction as a theme that has not been applied in addressing the ecological crisis. His basic theory of reconstruction theology is influenced by Nehemiah's biblical narratives of the reconstruction theme provides theological paradigm shift for the construction of the communities, whether ecological sensitive or non-ecological sensitive and the social transformation of the African continent in the aftermath of colonialism, segregation in South Africa not to mention the Cold War. Apart from a victorious outcome from injustice according to Mugambi, highlight advocacy towards stability among nations. Therefore, beholding and bedevilling becomes a possibility toward peace and harmony (Mugambi, 2017:314). Ironically the African continent upholds vegetation, filled with various natural resources, but due to human ill-practice it remains the

struggling continent without food security and notoriously under-developed. Theology of construction by Mugambi has not been favourable from a number of theologians, such as, Maluleke, (1996:473), (Dube, 2002:4), (Dedji, 2003:16) and (Niwagila, 1997:19). The critics warn that Mugambi's approach can bring about false hope to the African people(s) who are still experiencing bondage in different spheres of life. Some can attest that the long expectant freedom from all kinds of oppression has resulted in bewilderment. Many African nations have been confined to the wilderness to die in poverty as refugees and discarded people/nations. Perhaps African theologians could re-channel Mugambi's reconstruction theology towards the church of Africa particularly with regard to conquering division, but for the faith community to invest in communal relations and reject the negative ethnocentrism against Christian identity.

Another factor in addressing ecological degradation that Mugambi identifies as another gap to be explored is the ecumenical approach in introducing ecological education not only in the church, but also in higher learning institutions. Despite the church's ecumenically Committee of Climate Change, in its Sixth Conference of Parties on at The Hague, in Netherlands, there is still a major concern as ecological degradation is at an alarming rate (Mugambi, 2009:15). The statement emphasises the fact that the atmosphere belongs to all beings equally, and is, therefore, a global common. However, in addressing climate change concerns, the principle of equity across cultures and generations ought to take precedence over national and corporate self-gratification (Mugambi, 2001:24). In this case, theology as an intellectual enterprise is concerned primarily with the spiritual side of humanity. It is serving an important role towards a positive theology of nature. It can expand and demonstrate using the biblical exposition the organic development of dogmatic, metaphors and parables of both the Old and New Testaments.

6. Living in simplicity is a choice compared to consumerism regarding ecology

Simplicity versus consumerism is another factor, which Gitau addressed in his works in demonstrating life-worlds of African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge System. For example, he brings to our attention the lifestyle and consistency of the Kikuyu and the Massai ecological sensitive communities in Kenya. Simplicity is more rewarding regardless of historical background. As much as consumption is a necessity to humanity for sustainability and survival, it is of utmost importance to apply moderation even when there is an oversupply of resources. The over-provided members of society have a choice between moderate consumerism and excessive consumerism, whereas the under-resourced populace is likely to

share and save the little they have. Rasmussen observes that there is a threshold beyond which the quality of life actually decreases with a further increase of material abundance resulting to consumerism and self-indulgence. At the end the lifestyle of the affluent contributes to ecological degradation in a number of areas (Rasmussen, 1996:75).

Compared to the indigenes life-worlds and spirituality, Africa has sadly been attracted to the affluent lifestyle and is trapped in the culture of consumerism, globally with dire consequences not only to the environment but to all created species particularly human beings. For the faith community simplicity must be perceived within the context of spiritual discipline and voluntary poverty that finds joy in sharing, communal living and servitude. It is aligned with the Christian virtues of moderation, temperance and self-control. The Christian teachings based on biblical principles affirm the value of creation and all life-forms. The teachings emphasise the importance of inner freedom that leads to a life of contentment and gratitude which liberates one from the devouring spirit and the desire to hoard possessions. In a nut shell living in simplicity does not entail denial of progress or development in any form. Instead, simplicity attracts alternative dimensions of any development or achievement that is spiritually inclined. It is the ability of society at large to transfer or shift energy and attention towards non-materialistic values in ways that contribute towards capacity building and engender a strong sense of community bonds. By doing so, society will not only be able to address ill-health lifestyle conditions but also ecological concerns. The ecological crisis lays bare the depth of humanity's morality. If we devalue the natural/wild world and focus on self-gratification not only are we committing a crime against creation but also against ourselves since we form part of creation. Fr. Linera, notes that all creatures are potential manifestation of the Creator, regardless of background and characteristics. He writes;

The whole universe and the marvellous inter-dependency of all creatures sing of the love of the Creator. Creation is the supreme manifestation of the essence of God, sharing Himself in a continuous life-giving act of love. And 'all that He has made was so good' that God sent His Son Jesus to be incarnated as a creature. God sent His Son to help us discover that the whole Creation is full of the Spirit of God. The incarnation of Jesus brings to fulfilment the whole plan and process of Creation, revealing how God shares His love with all creatures since all eternity (Fr. Linera, 2010:224).

According to Mvula, how we perceive the earth reflects on how we relate to the Creator. It is not possible to love and respect God on the other hand rejecting and exploiting his very creation. From a theological perspective, when seeking a full biblical understanding of creation we should start from the beginning of the Bible and the story of creation itself, where we unpack God's glory expressed in the praise of creation and the fullness of the earth and God's utmost redemptive purpose of creation. Therefore, creation care to the faith community is a Christian mission. In the biblical text in (Colossians 1:15-20) and the (Hebrews 1:2-3), inclusively teaches that;

The earth is created, sustained and redeemed by Christ. We cannot claim to love God while abusing what belongs to Christ by right of creation, redemption and inheritance. We care for the earth and responsibly use of its abundant resources, not according to the rationale of the secular world, but for the Lord's sake. If Jesus is Lord of all the earth, we cannot separate our relationship to Christ from how we act in relation to the earth. For us to proclaim the gospel that says 'Jesus is Lord' is to proclaim the gospel that includes the earth, since Christ's Lordship is over all creation. Creation care is thus a gospel issue within the Lordship of Christ.

Within the faith community creation care embodies a biblical balance of compassion and justice against human ill-practice. It is truly a form of biblical and godly altruism to individuals and communities who demonstrate love in their life-worlds by emulating God's unconditional love to all of creation. Justice against human ill-practice is a form of defending the weak and vulnerable against the strong and powerful (the industrialized wealthy nations polluting the earth without care). The environment is at an alarming stage of vulnerability. In terms of humanity living righteous the Psalmist places God's care of creation simultaneously with his liberating and vindication acts of justice for his people. Therefore, by bringing the creative and redemptive traditions of the Old Testament in a holistic and harmonious manner justice can be realized (Kaoma, 2015:196).

Living in simplicity enables individual(s) and groups of people(s) in Africa and globally to acknowledge that the earth in its degradation status calls for immediate and long-term solutions across cultures, disciplines, religiosity, faith community and non-faith community structures towards the ecological crisis. On the same note we cannot afford to be overcritical towards consumerism. There are positive aspects to consumerism such as making the products available for consumers in a manner that contributes towards a culture of prosperity,

interaction between humanity, and creativity. Consumption cannot be undervalued as it is indeed a necessity to the earth community. However, consumerism has been excessive and open to abuse and exploitation of marginalised communities and people(s).

6.1 Recommendations

The study and the analytic framework if developed can be understood as a counterpoint to a culture of excessive consumerism and complete disregard of the environment. What Gitau, Kaoma and Mugambi are imploring us to do is not to abandon contemporary lifestyles. Rather they are commending humanity across disciplines, religiosity and African Wisdom Knowledge Systems that incline us towards a lifestyle that is moderate and in synchrony with ecological balance.

Contemporary the ecological crisis has become a moral concern towards the earth community; we need both short-term and long-term solutions applying inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches in addressing land degradation. It is imperative to re-visit the African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge System and draw insights from the existing ecological sensitive communities through empirical research. It is a must for African theology or any theology to priorities natural theology in its hermeneutical missiology. The church as an institution has an advantage of a realistic platform and influence more than any other secular institutions. The church is a representative of all communities, rich or poor. Higher learning institutions do not have direct face to face interactions with society in large numbers at a very short space of time compared to the church. Biblical teaching put great emphases on the significance of creation and all life-forms. An empirical or desk top research takes longer to bear fruit but with lasting results. Due to the escalating ecological crisis the earth community is under siege and radical change is attitudes, policies and individual repentance is a must.

7. Conclusion

The study is an attempt and plea across disciplines and religiosity towards ecological sensitivity from inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary approach and invites its readership to appreciate the comparisons and contrast between African Christianity and biblical teaching towards contemporary ecological degradation. Both the faith community, religious and non-religious establishment should rise to the opportunity collectively and address the ecological crisis towards replenishing the earth regardless of cultural differences, assimilation, adaptation and enculturation. It is never too late to emulate the ecological sensitive

communities in Africa who value the African heritage which continues to resist the ideology of materialistic and utilitarian exploitation of nature (Gitau, 2000:38). From an African perspective, God (the Supreme Being) is perceived as the original source of life, present and the future. Ancestors are understood as the spirit life/living dead that plays the role of intermediating between God and communities. According to the African world-view, life in abundance only manifests when effectively and positively involves reconciliation with the entire cosmos. Both the living community and the spirit world are intertwined. Therefore, humanity and all creation are inter-dependent (Bujo, 1998:67).

Based on the ecological perspective, biblical passages provide all the theological insights encouraging earth replenishing. The exception is the anthropocentric perspective which in most cases tends to cloud people(s) judgement with regard to ecology. The eschatological picture painted of Paradise in a heavenly realm inhabited exclusively by angelic beings and saints is far removed from the world and its suffering episodes. However, it is not remotely related to the biblical understanding of the new creation that comes down from heaven and expressed here on earth. From the biblical perspective, the heavens and the earth meet in God, who is the source of everything and whose glory they reflect. Because we are the earth community, God entrusted humanity with the care of creation regardless of cultural background and belief systems. According to Mvula's observation this is a 'creation mandate' (Mvula, 2014:117). Furthermore, the Prophet Isaiah grand mission for humanity is to live in sacred peace. Political affiliations, economic, social status and ecological exploitation and abuse need to be addressed. Every creature(s) according prophesy has access as well as sacred rights to life in its totality (Isaiah, 11:6-9). St. Paul concurs with Isaiah's eschatological picture when he notes that '*the fullness of time will involve all things in Christ,*' (Ephesians 1:10). Against this background, climate disasters, species extinction, landlessness, anthropological poverty and extreme poverty (particularly in Africa) and all types of pollution on land, water and on air, have resulted in ecological degradation due to human ill-practice driven by avarice.

However, globally people(s) are coming to terms with the reality of ecological degradation caused by a number of factors leading to extreme human induced climate change in temperatures, rainfall, snow, strong winds and uncontrollable floods causing havoc in all life-forms including loss of life. Apart from introducing new diseases as a result of human induced climate crisis Africa continues to suffer due to the rapid change in the globe coupled with atmospheric temperatures since the 20th century.

As the earth community we can address ecological degradation successfully. We are able to halt or put an end to deforestation and all other ill-practice including pollution of the highest order since mankind existed on planet earth. We can reduce our carbon footprints by adaptation and learning from ecological sensitive communities across discipline, culture and belief systems. After all, we are the most ferocious predators within the earth community. We are both victims and perpetrators with regard to ecological devastation. As the faith community, African Christianity and religiosity, African Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems it is our deepest conviction that God is known to us in various ways of self-revelations and manifestation through creation. Though we cannot fully fathom this mystery of mysteries which is beyond human comprehension, we fully comprehend the love of the creator revealed through Christ. Ecological degradation perpetuated by human ill-practice is a grievous sin against all of creation and ultimately the Creator. Regardless of our transgressions against the earth, God remains eternally loyal throughout the seasons, every moment in time and space to all life-forms.

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