

Christianity and African Traditional Religion in dialogue; An Ecological Future for Africa

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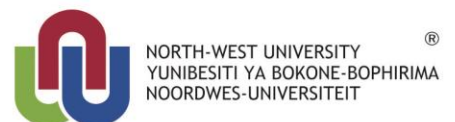
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It all starts here [™]



DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been appropriately acknowledged. The thesis is in submission for a doctoral degree in Missiology at the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of the Department of Theology and Philosophy of the North West University, Mafikeng Campus, South Africa. No part of this work has ever been submitted previously for any degree or examination at any other university.

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Preface

Caring for the environment has been an inherent part of every society since creation and has extended across different cultures, influencing their worldview. The African perspective belief portrayed the land as the “mother”, who provides and as the abode of people, and the Western perspective, also Christian in nature, similarly considered the earth as the provider. Both perspectives held the earth in high esteem. However, the arrival of globalisation through technology and enlightenment through reason altered man’s perception of the earth. And the earth became an object that could be exploited. That led to the negligence of ecology as understood by postmodernism and nature as understood by Africans.

Ecology is, in simple terms, a science that focuses on the study of the ecosystem – a system populated by animal and plant species, people, community and the biosphere. The main task of ecology is to alleviate the burden that has been placed on the environment by the inhabitants of the earth. From an African philosophy, *ubuntu* was seen as a vehicle that could address the exploitation of nature and fosters instead to bring about love, trust and commitment.

According to Mpofu (2002:10), *ubuntu* encourages collective efforts in order to secure the optimal survival of society and is a notion that is applicable to the earth. This knowledge that is passed on from generation to generation influences the African’s view of the environment and how humanity relates to it. *Ubuntu* encourages communalism and from that perspective an African is in relationship with the earth and treats the earth as part of humanity and yet this study shows how the African has gone out of his way to exploit and abuse the earth.

The same is applicable to Christians who maintains the ecosystem mentality but yet misuse the earth for their own benefit. Christianity propagates what the scripture teaches about the preservation of the earth and on the other hand do the opposite. That is why the study sees similar actions of exploiting the earth from both the Africans and Christians, thereby from the acknowledgement of the actions, contact points of restoring the earth are possible.

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CHAPTER ONE

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The chapter will entail the historical background and developments on preservation of the earth. Preservation of the earth is not a new phenomenon among Christians and African traditional religion. There has been previous initiatives from different realms being the political and social, on preservation of the earth. That is why this chapter will be highlight these historical and present endeavours on how different groupings tried to come about with means of preservation of the earth. Despite the groupings efforts of implementing strategies, policies, plans and methods of preserving the earth, the earth's condition has deteriorated.

1.1 Background

Ecology and the environment have been of concern globally in various forums, sectors and institutions. These sectors include the political, the social and even the religious arenas. Seeking to address the concern, the 1989 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit became the event for paving the way forward for planning, education and negotiations among all member states of the United Nations (UN). This endeavour resulted in the adoption of Agenda 21¹, with its wide-ranging blueprint measures of action for sustainable development programmes on global environmental issues. Upon its conclusion, Maurice Strong, the Conference Secretary-General, called the summit a “historic moment for humanity”. Despite the weakening of Agenda 21, by compromise and negotiation, it remains the most comprehensive and effective programme of action ever sanctioned by the international community to redress environmental issues², if implemented and adopted by all member states.

The above summit gave rise to the 2012 United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Doha, Qatar. The conference did not reach consensus on climate change and led to Todd Stern,

¹ “Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of action to be undertaken globally, nationally and locally by organisations of the United Nations, governments and major groups in all areas in terms of the human impact on the environment. This programme was strongly reaffirmed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg, South Africa from 26 August to 4 September 2002.”

² Environmental issues refer in this study to climate change; deforestation; global warming; sustainable development, air pollution and consumerism.

the then United States Special Envoy for Climate Change to UN, referring to the Kyoto Protocol³;

“Climate change is not a conventional environmental issue...It implicates virtually every aspect of a state’s economy, so it makes countries nervous about growth and development. This is an economic issue as well as an environmental one.”

It may perhaps lie at the core of worldview and is in that sense also a religious issue. He further added that because the framework system comprises over 190 countries and negotiations are governed by consensus, small groups of countries can often block progress (Conference of the Parties (COP) 18; UN Climate Change Conference, 2012).

Consequently, the European Union (EU) faced a huge challenge in October 2014 with its preparation for the international talks in 2015 on how to set benchmarks for the debate of a new collection of climate targets for 2030. Being anxious to set benchmarks and proceed with its battle against climate change, the EU was keen to make its mark ahead of the 2015 negotiations for a new global climate treaty in Paris. Thus the following communication from the EU President, Herman Van Rompuy, to leaders ahead of the two-day summit; “It is my intention that we endeavour to complete these negotiations...on Thursday” (News 24 Broadcast, 2014).

The negotiations proved to be trying for the EU, given the reliance of countries like Poland and others on coal (a polluting energy source) and concerns over new targets driving up electricity costs, adversely affecting their economies. These concerns arose from the EU’s proposal of a 40% decrease in carbon dioxide emissions, based on the 1990 levels, as well as the intent to derive at least 27% of the EU’s energy from renewable sources and cut energy consumption by 30%. Britain, a heavyweight in the EU, remained to be convinced and has been pushing against EU targets on renewable energy and efficiency, arguing for flexibility. China and the United States of America might also drag their feet, given their large contribution to pollution (Conference of the Parties (COP); 18 UN Climate Change Conference, 2012).

Aligning itself with the world leaders on the deliberations and challenges affecting environmental issues, Africa offered NEPAD⁴’s initiatives as vehicle for driving such

³ Kyoto Protocol “is an international agreement linked to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate, drawn up in 1997 in Kyoto, Japan and came into force in February 1998. It, however, came to a deadlock on the eve of the Doha, Qatar conference.”

⁴ “Planning and coordinating technical body of the African Union, aiming to eradicate poverty and create sustainable growth.” www.nepad.org.

campaigns. These initiatives comprise; combating desertification, deforestation, wetland conservation, invasive alien species, coastal management, global warming, cross-border conservation areas, environmental governance and financing.

The objective of the NEPAD's Environment Action Plan is to complement other African processes, including the programme of the revitalised African Ministers Conference on Environment (AMCEN) and improving on environmental conditions in Africa, by means of economic growth and poverty eradication. The initiative also aims to assist African countries to implement regional and international environmental agreements.

Notwithstanding, the UN, EU and NEPAD programmes, the church did not go unnoticed on environmental issues either. Churches showed its participation and concern by signing the Accra Confession (2002)⁵, which was adopted by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) 24th General Council in Accra, Ghana (2004). This confession (2002) is based on the theological conviction "that the economic and environmental injustices of today's global economy require the Reformed family to respond as a matter of faith to the gospel of Jesus Christ".

Furthermore, the Accra Confession 2002 notes that the policy of unlimited growth among industrialised countries and the drive for profit of transnational corporations have plundered the earth and severely damaged the environment (Accra Confession, 2002:8). This document is the sequel to the 1989 report, referenced in the confession, which highlights the numbers of rare animals species going extinct every day and by 2000 it came to one every hour and exacerbated by climate change, the depletion of fish stocks, deforestation, soil erosion and threats to fresh water that have devastating consequences. These consequences disrupt communities, livelihoods are lost, coastal regions and Pacific islands are threatened with inundation and storms increase. In addition, high levels of radioactivity threaten health and ecology. Life forms and cultural knowledge are being patented in exchange for the financial gain of rich countries.

The 55th synod of the 2010 Methodist Church of Southern Africa, Limpopo District, held in Nelspruit (Mbombela), adopted a resolution 7 in support of the Accra Confession. The motion entailed conserving the environment by discontinuing the use of water bottles, arguing that empty bottles are simply discarded and thus pollute the environment.

⁵ The Accra Confession was signed by nine churches in order to address the major environmental problem facing Africa (cf. Accra Confession, 2004). The conference was held in Accra, Ghana, Africa.

It is clear from the above developments that the threat to the environment is a global phenomenon and needs to be addressed. Firstly, the study attempts to identify the existence of the factors affecting the environment in Africa. Secondly, the study seeks to determine the means and ways in which these issues shape both Christian and African worldviews as well as the impact of the worldviews of Christianity and Africans on the issues. Thirdly, the study seeks to identify how Christianity and African worldviews may contribute to addressing environmental issues. Fourthly, then the study outlines contact points between Christianity and African Traditional Religion which can advance dialogue between them to formulate an ecological paradigm for addressing environmental issues in Africa.

1.2 Africa and the environment

In order to achieve the abovementioned objectives, the study will highlight how the environment in Africa has been affected and how neglecting the environment has contributed towards earth degradation.

- Daneel (1998:5) maintains that the aftermath of the *chimurenga* (Zimbabwe's liberation struggle) contributed towards earth degradation. "This was due to the exodus of squatters who settled in the catchment area of Lake Kyle near Great Zimbabwe (a forest. In the process of settling, the squatters chopped away at the indigenous trees like the *msasa* (indigenous hardwood tree) and *mutondo* (hard tree) which were contributing towards the substance of environment near the Lake Kyle. This process of deforestation made the earth bare, unprotected and exposed to the elements like soil erosion; made the earth venerable to be washed away during rainy seasons. The resultant thereof was the veld laying forlorn, lifeless and stumps jutting hopelessly like fingers which are pleading for the wounded earth. The process was a "systematic" exercise of wounding the earth."

The above description speaks of systematic soil erosion and eradication of vegetation in settlement areas. "Systematic", as defined by Nwaigbo (2011:374), "is a process in which humans destroy the complex network of organisms and plant life that constitute the pedestal bearing of the ecosystem. Such excessive interference with the natural order of the ecosystem has a devastating impact on the future of humanity. The posterity of all lifeforms on earth is threatened by ecological crises, due to man's failure to care for the earth and could lead to the decimation of the vitality on earth." This process can be termed deforestation.

- The Kijabe forests in Kenya among the Kikuyu tribe are facing deforestation. According to Sorley (2011:137), “the diminishing of the forests of Kijabe is merely a microcosm of a growing reality compared to what is happening globally. Like in many parts of the world, particularly in Africa, countless communities are living in dire circumstances like poverty, which contribute enormously to environmental degradation unprecedented in history. Most disturbing about environmental degradation is the speed at which circumstances like overgrazing; erosion; loss of biodiversity; a warming and drying climate; are contributing towards increasing difficulty to obtain consistent food and water supplies.” The results thereof are increased hardship and suffering, perpetuating poverty, hunger, disease, and death.
- Dakin (2004:185) confirms the above catastrophic events and adds that “the growth in population and a rise in demand for fire-wood accelerate the trend in some areas, especially in times of drought. Other nations in East Africa like Kenya are similarly affected especially on the agricultural sector; e.g. deforestation and farming on steep slopes lead to soil erosion and loss of precious water resources. As crops decline, farmers inevitably become discouraged. In support of Dakin (2004), Sorley (2011:138) cites statistics by the Kenyan government that estimates an astounding 55% loss of the remaining woodland and forest cover in the past thirty years (1973-2003).”

“Compounding the farmers’ challenges is the toxic waste introduced into the environment by the chemical industry and agriculture that has undoubtedly had an adverse effect on the environment, particularly on humanity” (Okonkwo, 2011:34). If human beings were to become more aware of the seemingly inseparable relationship between man and the earth, they may realise that they share a common destiny with the earth. It should inspire them to reflect on the way they treat the earth, but are sometimes too selfish and self-centred to do so.

- Selfishness and self-centredness has contributed to humanity treating creation as an object to be exploited, as though it has an autonomous right to do so. This practice is obvious from the value placed on time and money. Echoing the assertion over humanity’s insistence on time and money, Bohlin (2014:7) states;
 “Our often uncontrolled greed and haste have led to the deterioration of the environment. We evaluate projects almost exclusively in terms of their potential impact on humans.

For instance, builders know that it is faster and more cost effective to bulldoze trees that are growing on the site of a proposed subdivision than it is to build the houses around them. Even if the uprooted trees are replaced with saplings once the houses are constructed, the loss of the mature trees leads to soil-erosion, eliminates a means of absorbing pollutants, producing oxygen, and providing shade, and produces a scar that heals slowly if at all.”

- Similarly, the church has also failed to take environmental concerns serious. This is clear from the following reference of Warmback (2012:23) and Conradie (2011:8) to statements made by the South African sociologist Jacklyn Cock, in her report titled *Towards the Greening of the Church in South Africa*;

In that report she labelled the response of the church in South Africa “as one of ‘deep silence’ and ‘blind spot’ when coming to matters of earth preservation.” Reviewing the efforts of the Roman Catholic, Anglican and other churches, and analysing their policies and publications, she found that despite speaking out on issues of militarization, political detainees, rent boycotts, negotiations, HIV/AIDS, objection, capital punishment, sexual abuse, torture and racism. “There is a silence on the environment conscientious.” On the whole, “neither were church organisations responsive to environmental concerns” (Cock, 1991). Cock pointed out that the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT), closely associated with the *Kairos Document*, was quiet when it came to the area of the environment.”

The above claim also emerges in Bohlin (2014:8) who maintains that “the church is vocal on materialism of science as it resonates itself in the issues of abortion, human dignity, evolution and genetic engineering which are the products of the Industrial Revolution, instead of doing the same on its mission which is stewardship of the earth, which is scanty. The church has shown lacklustre on issues of environment.” Thence, the church is losing a great evangelistic opportunity, which is desirable for by many and thus culminating in the church promoting consumerism.

- Consumerism has created a global crisis, the result of humanity’s exploitation of each other and of the earth. The powerful exploit the powerless and the earth to satisfy their desire for wealth, comfort and power (Field, 2001:69; Nürnberger, 2007:215-216). Field (2001:69) emphasises that “the powerless have in turn been forced to exploit the earth to survive. Hence, the radical questions about the future of human society as we know it

and the growing recognition of the interrelationship of all dimensions of the biosphere, the awareness that humanity is part of and not separate from nature. Humanity's prosperity is thus dependent on the health of the earth community (ecosystem), not on the wealth of certain individuals."

Consequently, humanity has created a world of wealth in an attempt to organise and integrate poverty and inequality, but has instead promoted and imposed "globalisation" as the ultimate answer. "Neo-liberal economic globalisation has not reduced poverty, inequality and ecological destruction. On the contrary, globalisation has led to the destruction of the environment and widened the gap between the rich and the poor, making societies less resilient. It has marginalised the most vulnerable of the affected groups; women, youth, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities and the impoverished." (Kennedy, 2010:147). Because people are desirable for evangelistic preaching, a major challenge for the church is to listen to the prophetic voice of those people and employ a new way of analysing, reflecting on and acting against economic and ecological injustices.

Regarding the above notion, Nürnberger (2007:217) argues that "in a closed system like that of poor countries or underdeveloped countries construction of energy (focus on development) in one area is always matched by a higher degree of deconstruction (affecting the poor) elsewhere in its environment." He adds that "energy must after all come from somewhere. Although technology enhances the "throughput" from resource base to waste, accelerating the entropic process, there is in the meantime a steady import of energy from the sun into the ecosystem of the earth. The process is slow, leading to something like partial closure."

This explains why the partial closure cannot keep pace with the rate of development in technology, consumerism and globalisation. It thus has an adverse impact on the environment, especially the natural world, which is already groaning under the impact of modern malicious practice by humanity and consumerism. This can be seen in vastly populated world parts such as China, India, Indonesia, Latin American and Africa that were successful in their bid to achieve American and European living standards. All the while there is still rampant population growth in the poorest countries, partly as a result of poverty and partly due to traditionalism. If this were to continue, the ecosystem would hardly be able to bear it.

- Even the green movements⁶ who advocates earth preservation seems not to be succeeding in preserving the earth as promised, but seems to be merely focusing on other issues than promoting earth preservation. According to Bauman (2000:9), “the green movement's lobby is silent on issues of global warming, which is the largest non-event threat since the swine flu⁷.” This is echoed by Dicks (2013:9-10) who adds that; “their preservation ethos is selective in a sense that it relies on sponsorship. Their interest in preserving penguins, owls and other bigot’s species rather than humanity, is the reason they worked tirelessly to displace several thousand families in the north-western states like Oregon, Washington, Idaho in the United State of America in order to preserve a dozen owls. Baby seals apparently have a lot more friends in environmental circles lobby and in the courts than their human counterparts.”

The above indicates how humanity's practices and deeds have placed a burden on natural resources, wounding the earth. Humanity's exploitative measures in its greed for wealth, uncaring attitude and consumerism have compromised the earth. The earth turning into a desert, due to soil erosion and deforestation, is now inevitable. The green movements are not reaching fast enough their intended mission of preserving the environment. The church is similarly failing to bring peace and harmony on earth, but has resorted to being pantheistic⁸ in character. This all implies that the earth is on the brink of catastrophe, of degradation and becoming inhabitable from this study’s perspective.

It may be concluded from the above that the earth is facing unrepairable damage, initiated by humanity’s actions towards the environment. Should this behaviour not be reined in, the decimation of the earth will continue to its ultimate destruction. If the world is to remain habitable, we need to start preserving it now and seek the means and ways to make that a reality. In fact, humanity should rather contribute towards renewing the earth, in anticipation of the return of Jesus Christ, who will come to make all things new (cf. Rev. 21:1; 2 Pet. 3:13).

1.3 Worldviews

Human behaviour is shaped by the interrelatedness of worldview and religion and humanity’s perspective of the earth and its care. That is why different religions has their own paradigm about

⁶ Bodies or organisations that advocates for the earth preservation and keeping environment intact.

⁷ “When it was first detected in 2009, it was called “swine flu” because the virus was similar to those found in pigs. The H1N1 virus has become a seasonal flu virus found in humans.” [www.flu.gov/About the Flu](http://www.flu.gov/About_the_Flu)

⁸ “Pantheism is a doctrine that equates God with the forces and laws of the universe.”

the planet earth. Christians consider it part of creation and not nature, because creation supersedes nature (creation comes before nature), while for other religions like the African traditional it is part of Mother Earth. According to Van der Walt (2001:66); “some Eastern worldviews regard nature as divine and to be revered, sometimes even worshipped. In Africa (with its holistic, organistic worldview) humanity is deemed as part of nature and should treat it with respect. Any intercession should be made with caution. In the Enlightenment era nature is viewed more or less as an object. Nature is to be conquered, used and even exploited to the benefit of the humanity.”

There are different solutions to the exploitation of the earth from every religion and worldview, but ultimately we all live together. Each inhabitant of the earth has a relationship with the earth and deems it the primary source for satisfying needs and desires. It is a kind of “serving platter” that provides in all needs (e.g. food, mineral resources, land for residential development, clothing - through animal skin) and in turn feed on the grass, trees for shade, earth to toil for food, etc. The benefit to humanity from the earth has made him totally reliant on the earth and hence Africans reference to Mother Earth,⁹ and the inhabitants are her “children” i.e. it is the mother that caters for the needs of her children. The above reliance has culminated in the exploitation and abuse of the earth through over-demand, overgrazing, over-mining for minerals and the like by the “children”.

1.3.1 Earth as the mother

The above exploitation had resulted in a crisis that had affected Africa’s relationship with nature. Asante (1985:289) concluded that “this was due to the years of ecological mismanagement, overgrazing, deforestation, uncontrolled and indiscriminate poaching and similar far-reaching errors that have placed the entire African continent on the brink of total ecological disaster.” Amanze (2009:129) echoes Asante (1985) and state that “human activities like deforestation; eradication of wildlife; as well as urban and rural pollution of water, air and even the soil have depleted the environment. by referring to the present state of the earth; among others, global warming, over-grazing and the erosion of soil (due to poor agricultural practices).”

⁹ “Mother Earth as God (*Onyame*) who provides as mother to his children (Agyarko 2013:53). This notion is common among Africans, given their relationship with the earth that gives them life, an ideology that is even shared by the Chinese” (Pan-chiu, 2013:71). Hence the study will investigate that relationship, and how it led to exploitation of the earth in Chapter 4.

Furthermore, the “over” syndrome is diminishing all natural resources at a rapid pace, because the earth can no longer bear the load. Despite the imminent destruction of the wounded earth, the relationship between humanity and the earth remains solid. So solid in fact that Chirongoma (2012:169) describes this relationship as follows;

“The Shona people (like many other African communities) usually refer to the earth as feminine and it is common to hear them speak of ‘the Motherland’ whenever they are referring to their homeland, particularly where one was born and raised. It is in this context that the paper uses the term ‘mother-earth’ to refer to the centrality of Karanga people’s perceptions of their ecology. Whenever one goes into a foreign setting and encounters difficulties, they are often reminded of the Shona proverb ‘*Kusina maihakuendwi*’ literally, “do not go far away from your motherland, because home is always best. Hence, the Shona always relate their homes with the warmth and security that mothers have to offer.”

This relationship is similar to the mother-child bond, wherein Mother Earth is the giver of security. In reference to this relationship, Lane (1994:7-8) explains that “the metaphor of the earth as mother goes back to primeval scratchings on the walls of Cro-Magnon caves, in which stone figurines depict the goddess of earth giving birth to all life. It is an image as old as art, as recurrent as the rhythmic seasons of life. In ancient Greece she was honoured as *Gaia*. Plato spoke of her as the mother and nurse of all existing things. In Asia Minor she was Ishtar, Astarte or Artemis/Diana and in Egypt her name was Isis.” Lane (1994:8) explains that according to the Stoics;

“The world was the visible body of the invisible deity and the deity the invisible soul of the visible world. Throughout the ancient Near East, the earth was consistently personified with feminine and maternal characteristics, if not also deified.”

The female gender connection between man and earth is termed ecofeminism in Africa. Conradie (2011:56) explains what the female Malawian theologian, Fuluta Moyo (2009), describes her spirituality in terms of her interconnectedness to Mother Earth through her body and sexuality. Drawing from her Malawian experiences, she describes such spirituality in the following way;

“I deal with the experience of women in Southern Malawi who sing and dance bare footed and with bare breasts, with strands of coloured beads around their waists, gyrating as they dance. Through the dance, they show that they are at one with Mother Earth. They praise the power of their bodies and how apart from bringing life, these same bodies bring down even the strongest

man. They praise the power of Mother Earth who produces in abundance to feed everyone, and whom everyone depends for life.”

The metaphor of Mother Earth also appears in the tenth chapter of II Esdras¹⁰ as follows; “A woman whose only child has died goes out into the dark night, with ashes on her head, to a remote field filled with flowers. In agony she pours out the grief that is hers, determined to stay there until she dies. The prophet Esdras speaks to her, in the depths of her suffering, telling her to “ask the earth” what pain is all about. No mother grieves like that mother, says Esdras. The earth weeps for every creature to which she has given birth, for every creature returns to her in death. One does not know grief until one knows the depth of the Mother Earth's pain. This is a strange comfort the prophet offers the woman. Go to the earth, he says, and let your grief be swallowed up in her grief.” (Lane, 1994:9).

Even if Mother Earth can seemingly stomach grief, pain and distress, she still groans under the suffering it endures from humanity. Sin has caused all creation to fall from the perfect state in which God created it. The world is in bondage to death and decay, making it unable to fulfil its intended purpose (Rom. 8:22). It is the result of humanity's treatment of the earth since the fall into sin. In the post-modern era this treatment manifests in the form of abuse, pollution, over-grazing, exploitation, etc. Mother Earth is seen as an object to be conquered, not as a mother to be respected and looked after. She thus groans, because she cannot take such abuse any longer. Lane (1994:12-13) states as follows;

“We have scarred her body with the ravages of war, the oil spills of super tankers, the destruction of rainforests. We have allowed the politics of greed to govern the management of natural resources. We have forgotten those stories that identify us as interdependent upon all other creatures. Yet the memory of the earth as mother is not entirely lost upon us. If one were to go to Mexico City, to visit the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, one would notice under the image of the Virgin the words written in Spanish, ‘Don't you know who I *am* I am your mother.’ This is Maria Tonantzin, a mother figure thoroughly incorporating the mystique of an earlier goddess and earth mother in pre-Columbian Mexico. In an image that draws pilgrims from all over the world, she stands on the sphere of the earth, her dress studded with stars - a cosmic mother, calling to her children who have forgotten who *she* is and who *they* are.”

¹⁰ Apocrypha Book of the Bible

1.3.2 Biblical perspective on earth

The Bible proclaims that the earth and everything on it and all who live in it belongs to God, its Creator (Ps. 24:1). Humanity is placed on earth to be stewards or caretakers, to the glory of God. All humans should be committed to the proper care of this world and its resources, but that is not the case. It is, however, important to know that God is the only creator and owner of the heavens and earth (Ps. 8).

God's ownership of earth, as the Creator, is already made clear in Gen. 1:1-2. The statement “the earth was formless and empty” provides the setting for the creation narrative that follows. God gave form to the universe on the second and third days of creation and over the next three days, God filled the earth with living beings. The “darkness...over the surface of the deep” was dispelled on the first day, when God created light. God created the earth in an orderly fashion (e.g. first He created light and then the plant life) and then created man, a unique being capable of communication with Him. No other part of creation can claim this remarkable privilege and is why God seeks to continue a relationship with man, even after the fall into sin, giving rise to *missio Dei*¹¹ (Bosch, 2010:390).

God entrusted humanity with tremendous authority - to rule the earth - but with great authority comes the great responsibility of managing its resources wisely and God will hold humanity accountable for humanity's failure for his stewardship. Humanity must live in harmony with the earth and the creatures who abode in it, thereby taking care and preserving it for all generations.

It is thus evident from the above that *missio Dei* is God's plan of restoring creation after humanity's fall into sin. God, who lives in relationship of the Trinity, seeks to restore and live in relationship with humanity as steward of his creation. “This stems from God's creation plan. The interconnectedness and interrelatedness between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit as *koinonia* (fellowship) shows within the context of the missional dimension *missio Dei* as a restoration process and the revelation, through Jesus Christ, of God's purpose with the world and the earth” (Kok, 2010:4-5). God is guiding the history to the consummation where all will be restored in the new heaven and earth. This is only possible through the work of Jesus Christ.

Missio Dei, which is Trinitarian in nature, reveals the Trinitarian theology. This Trinitarian theology is understood as “persons-in-relationship” and suggests that humans, being made in the

¹¹ “*missio Dei* (God's plan) for his creation” (Bosch, 2010:390)

image of God (*imago Dei*), are to be understood as “persons-in-relationship” rather than disengaged objects. Conradie (2011:43) maintained that “the relatedness of everything in the cosmos mirrors the primal, reciprocal, indwelling and interpenetration of the mutual indwelling of the three persons of the triune God in one another (*perichoresis*)¹²” This implies that the recognition that God’s being is “to-be-in-relationship” calls for the rethinking not only of the human person and of social relationships, but also of all reality. It suggests “ontology of communion”, where relationships define the very nature of being.

The intimacy or *perichoresis* is visible as mentioned in Gen. 2:19, wherein God out of the ground formed every creature and every bird of the air and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. Whatever Adam called each living creature that was its name. That naming process signifies the intimacy of God and his creation inclusive of humanity. This clearly illustrates and confirms the relationships which formerly existed among God and His creatures. But humanity entered into sin and the relationship was strained, but not obliterated.

However, God ratified this interconnected relationship and its affirmation with God and creation by establishing a covenantal relationship with humanity, after the fall into sin, through His chosen people, Israel (Gen 12). God blessed Israel and continued blessing them, even when Israel fell into sin. It means that through blessing, as described in Deuteronomy, God is keeping the relationship alive. God's intentions and aims about ownership and caring for the land are clear (Deut. 33:13-16).

1.3.3 African worldview about the earth¹³

According to the African worldview, the *botho*¹⁴ ontology is embedded in creation and the “Supreme Being”; this is demonstrated through the religious rituals of many Africans who affirm their connectedness to the earth, other people, a Supreme Being and their ancestors. According to LenkaBula (2008:386; “these rituals symbolically demonstrate the understanding of many communities of their ontology as their ties to the earth, specifically to plants, land animals or

¹² *Perichoresis*; “A word derived from the Greek *peril* (around) and *chorus* (a dance). It expresses a profound sense of intimacy, literally capturing the way dancers circle around each other and where the one constitutes the centre of gravity of the other and balances the centrifugal tendencies of the other. It represents the closest possible relationship with another, without fusing into the other” (Conradie, 2011:143).

¹³ “Worldview is the perspective on created reality. It indicates our place in the world, in which we have to fulfil our cultural task, the direction of which is provided by the will (laws) of something or someone regarded as the absolute authority in life. It functions like a map, it provides orientation like a compass and it gives direction from a deeply religious or African commitment.” (Van der Walt, 2001:58).

¹⁴ *Botho*; “a Sesotho word evoking relationality and respect for humanity, describing the right relationship with self and others.” (LenkaBula, 2008:375).

marine creatures. Relevant examples of these are the clans in Batswana and Basotho nations who commonly associate their being with *inter alia* lions, crocodiles, buffaloes and elephants. They narrate and chant to totems, describing this connectedness to that creation. Being in relationship, through this connectedness with the earth, implies caring is paramount from an African view.”

Thence Mapadimeng (2011:253) concluded that “caring for the land is an inherent attribute of *ubuntu* and Africanism, embedded in communalism that makes individual interests subjected to that of the group/clan and hence the terms universal brotherhood, interdependence, human dignity, humaneness, collective unity, conformity, compassion and hospitality.” Similarly, LenkaBula (2008:381) explains that “communalism as life ethos guides political relations at personal, communal and structural levels as well as the distribution of power and the uses and sharing of natural resources, including land. Within the context of the care and nurture of the earth and the African ethos on life, *botho* is understood as an expression of justice, wisdom intergenerational concern and commitment as well as compassion in daily relations.”

Besides being associated with creation, communalism embraces relationship with the creatures of the earth and their existence. According to LenkaBula (2008:384) “*Botho* thus opposes human conduct that results in ecological degradation. If the earth or creation is us and part of us, its destruction is our own destruction.” In other words, if we kill or destroy the natural environment, we will also perish. This implies that *botho* has to become a consciousness that encourages and inspires people to take care of themselves, one another and creation as well as be faithful to God, who is understood to be the Creator.

The above discussion seems to indicate the commonality between Africanism and Christianity in relation to sustainable earth preservation, given the relationship African traditional religion (ATR) has with the earth as the Mother and the Christian belief that the earth is the footstool of God as the created dwelling place of humanity (Is. 66:1-2).

Although the focus of this study is on the relationship between African traditional religion and Christianity and the earth, further discourses pertinent to the environment must be addressed to establish common ground or a contact point for dialogue on ecological issues.

1.4 Discourses facing Africa

In South Africa the environmental issue is intertwined with the everyday difficulties of the poor and the marginalised. This is evident from the number of cases on land distribution still pending in Africa, including South Africa. Moyo (2009:1) describes it as follows;

“The greatest threat to security in southern Africa lies in the unequal land ownership patterns in countries where poor people’s livelihoods depend on farming. There are too many blacks who remain unemployed, landless, and homeless and shut out of the agricultural economic base of the region. This is due, in part, to the political independence agreements within the sub-region that failed to address the core racial problem of inequitable land and natural resource ownership, and the commensurate dearth of economic opportunities. Moreover, continuing land conflicts along racial lines suggest the fallibility of efforts for reconciliation that fail to humanely and fairly address economic, political and social justice concerns. Simply put, a major problem in addressing land conflict is the racially based ideological distortion that shrouds social, political and economic debates about land and agriculture in southern Africa.”

The above is supported by Conradie (2011:48) who highlights that the following aspects are evident within the South African context;

- “The poor are generally marginalised and thus forced to live in adverse physical conditions of low environmental quality (which are usually acceptable and “open” for occupation). They live in urban waste dumps and many accept employment in deplorable conditions, which places their lives and well-being at risk.
- In rural areas the scarcity of clean drinking water and firewood are environmental concerns. Under Apartheid deportation to homelands led to over-population and thus overgrazing, soil erosion and exhaustion and depletion of water supplies and plants.
- People living in urban areas are subjected to the hazardous fumes of nearby industries. Communities living under such circumstances are indeed an environmental problem. The lack of infrastructure, sanitation and hygiene exposes them to a high incidence of contagious disease; inadequate waste disposal; the visual ugliness of stinking and rotting garbage, in many poor neighbourhoods; regular flooding or landslides; deforestation, to provide in firewood needs; and the struggle for political control over ever-scarcer resources. All of these have a direct effect on the environment.”

Upon reflection on the debates related to the abovementioned, occurring globally and inter-continentially (including Africa and South Africa), it is clear that serious attention should be given to the environment. People of all walks of life need to come together to gain a clear understanding of how they could contribute to earth preservation and this is only possible through dialogue. Dialogue is inevitable and could lead to partnerships that will promote environmental conservation. Based on this premise, the study investigates the possible contact points between African traditional religion and Christianity in an attempt to formulate an ecological paradigm that will contribute to addressing environmental issues.

1.5 Problem statement

Reflecting on environmental debates and discussions makes it clear that the dialogue between different worldviews and stakeholders has to date not succeeded to engender a substantial contribution to address the ecological challenges Africa faces. Christianity has lapsed into church politics and African traditional religion into Africanism, neither having any intention of employing dialogue as vehicle for sustainable environmental preservation. Progress has been minimal, as this study indicates. All concerned burrow into their own “comfort zone” on environmental issues, solely promoting their own views and ideologies. If we do not start to work together now, it will be too late. Destruction is imminent!!!

Even if dialogue occurred, e.g. 10th Assembly of All-African Conference, neither parties have sought to identify contact points for dialogue on environmental issues. Given the prevailing environmental conditions shown by this study, like neglect and exploitation, it is vital to establish a dialogue on ecological matters between African traditional religion and Christianity to preserve the earth for generations to come. Talking together may assist in developing common ground and create the foundation for the betterment of the environment.

Self-centredness is rife among humanity, despite the good relationship God intended humanity to have with the earth. Humanity’s fall into sin seriously affected the relationship. Humanity lost sight of its mandate to care for the earth, through glorifying God, and instead started to exploit it for personal benefit. Sin turned humanity from the glory of God and humanity grew powerful and unconcerned about God's mandate to care for the earth.

Sorley (2011:137) explains that “the root of the problem lies in the simple but critical fact that the hearts and minds of people (and of societies) are corrupted by sin. They lack the moral and

spiritual conviction of the need to be good stewards of creation and thus proceeded to exploit the earth, making it into an unwelcoming dwelling place unable to bear up under the strain.”

The same can be said of Africans who speak of Mother Earth. They do not care for her, but deem it her responsibility to provide for her children at all costs, even to the extent of misusing her. This treatment has left Mother Earth seriously wounded and she has now started to groan.

Now humanity faces the consequences of its lacklustre effort, the destruction of the earth and catastrophe hanging over its heads. It is for this reason that this study seeks ways and means to contribute towards curbing the misuse and exploitation of the earth, rampant in Africa at present.

1.6 Central research questions

The central research questions of this study are; Can dialogue between Christianity, embedded in *missio Dei*, and African traditional religion (ATR), based on Mother Earth, establish a shared understanding of stewardship to preserve the earth (in Africa) for the coming generations¹⁵ as follows;

- How can dialogue between the two religious paradigms assist in the development of a sustainable ecological paradigm that can effectively address conservation of the earth, to the glory of God, through the missional stewardship of future generations?

The questions arising from the above concerns and historical backgrounds are the following;

- What are the historical background and developments on preservation of the earth?
- What is the Christian paradigm on the use/misuse of the earth in Africa?
- What is the African traditional religion paradigm on the use/misuse of the earth in Africa?
- What is the African traditional religion worldview on the earth as mother and its consequences for the establishing an ecological paradigm for Africa?
- What is the Biblical missional environmental paradigm?
- How can Christianity and African traditional religion, in dialogue, preserve the earth in Africa?

¹⁵This study is confined to dialogue between Christianity and African traditional religion, but such dialogue must also include all other religions (e.g. Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and New Age). It would be too broad to include in this study.

1.7 Aims and objectives

Aim;

The aim of this study is to participate in a dialogue between Christianity, partaking in *missio Dei*, and African traditional religion to develop a stewardship paradigm that will cultivate and preserve Africa for future generations. Other aspects that the study take cognisance of are the following;

This study endeavours to “develop a sustainable ecological/stewardship paradigm” to enable dialogue “embedded in *missio Dei*” for the purpose of contributing towards “preserving the earth for future generations. If it is successful in introducing this endeavour, but, it fails to go beyond a “humanistic/relativistic (Christian and ATR similarities)” and becomes a “let’s work together and save this world” agreement. It lacks the following;

- A reformed/Biblical perspective on the fact/the results and the consequences of the Fall of humanity (Gen. 3). This is the reason why humanity is destroying the world they live in. Humanity is dead in sin and is also killing the world because of it.
- A “*missio Dei*” perspective that goes beyond “saving the world” towards God saving humanity (recreation) and enabling humanity to live in a new way in a dying world whilst preparing for the new world. Humanity will eventually not save the world! A much more kingdom focused approach on the “already but not yet” of God’s reign is needed.
- The only people who really understand their “new” relationship to the dying world will be Christians who were made “new” by God (new relationship to God through Jesus Christ) and Africans who also maintain that there is the existence of the Supreme Being who control the earth. Thence the missiological paradigm of ecological concern (and dialogue) should have more than only humanist focus. The Christians and Africans has much more to offer on ecological survival.
- It will be imperative that the contact points envisaged should seek to be based on the mandate of creation and how both (ATR and Christian) see and understand the keeping and taking care of the earth. This is due to the fact that both religions maintain that the earth belong to the Supreme Being and acknowledge that fact. That point will assist both

parties to come out with an environmental missional ecological paradigm which can contribute to preserve the environment for future generation.

Reaching the above aim requires meeting the following objectives;

Objectives;

- To study and analyse the historical background and development of earth preservation.
- To study and expound the Christian paradigm on the use/misuse of the earth in Africa.
- To study and expound the African traditional religion paradigm on the use/misuse of the earth in Africa.
- To study and analyse the African worldview of the earth as mother.
- To study and analyse the Biblical missional environmental paradigm.
- To expound the possible outcome of the dialogue between Christianity and African traditional religion for the preservation of the earth in Africa.

1.8 Hypothesis

The central theoretical argument of this study is that an ecological paradigm, embedded in *missio Dei* and in dialogue with African traditional religion, will influence and enrich both worldviews to care for the conserving of the environment and curb the destruction of the earth.

1.9 Literature review

There is literature on the ecological crisis of the earth from the Christian viewpoint and there is also literature on African traditional religion and its stance on the earth, but there is no literature on a dialogue between Christianity and African traditional religion on ecological matters (as per the Nexus Research Database Report, 2014). Hence, this study focuses on this apparent gap. It should however be noted that both Africanism, embedded in *ubuntu* and communalism (LenkaBula, 2008), and Christianity have a relationship with the earth (Bosch, 2010; Kok, 2010). Humanity has nevertheless created a consumerism cult, through science and technology, which has resulted in the depletion of natural resources (Field 2001; Nürnberger, 2007; Kennedy 2010) and led to the marginalisation of the poor and destruction of the environment. Even environmental conservation organisations have failed in their endeavours to save the earth (Bauman, 2000).

1.9.1 Definition of concepts

- **Mother Earth;**

In the African worldview the relationship between people and the land is traditional and constitute a range of concepts and interpretations of attachment. Africans' relationship with Mother Earth is one of belonging and intimate connection, based on the roots of the particular clan or tribe. Verstraelen (1996:195) describes this relationship as follows; "In the traditional understanding, land (home)...is a place of connection with Mother Earth, where one's roots are, where one's umbilical cord has been buried, where one's ancestors are deposited, a place of connection and orientation."

In other words, to some Africans land consists of things that can be qualified and not quantified. It offers them identity, history and a livelihood. It is sacred.

- ***Missio Dei;***

According to Flett (2009:15), "*Missio Dei* is Trinitarian in nature and begins with God as Father, Son and Spirit. It is the living God who in himself, from all eternity, lives in partnership with his creation, in the history of the traversing. In that his life in *se* (apart) overcomes the distance between himself and his creation, without destroying that distinction, God is a missionary God. This position retains all the necessary caveats; the priority of God's perfection, as a deliberate act, but eternally so in the life of God; and the intentionality of his act (that God remains subject in his act). This God is not remote from humanity. God remains the subject in his life, as history in partnership, and allows humanity to share in his act and so share in his life."

- **Mission;**

Bosch (2010:392) describes mission "as primarily and ultimately the work of the Triune God (Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier) for the sake of the world, a mission in which the church is privileged to participate. Mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is the fountain of sending love, which is the deepest source of mission. It is possible to penetrate deeper still; there is mission because God loves his people. Mission addresses all wrongs, e.g. oppression, poverty, sinfulness and even the exploitation of the earth".

- **Dialogue;**

According to Rule (2006:86), “dialogue involves the recognition of difference not as a way of foreclosing engagement (“let’s us accept our differences and leave it at that”), but of “seeing” and engaging with each other. The etymology itself indicates a negotiation or contestation of the word (*logue*) between two who are different (*dia*) and this is the value of dialogue; not that the two become one, but that they create new, shared meaning out of their engagement to which they contribute.”

- **African traditional religion;**

Religion in Africa is based on traditionalism. “The cornerstone of traditionalism is the devoted worship of the ancestors. Ancestors are superiors whose life force has gone, but whose authority and power has grown. They are primarily the religious counterparts of the living who watch over the inherited traditions, punish transgressors and bless their offspring. While they have more dynamistic power than the living, they are not omnipotent. The Supreme Being is the source of all dynamistic power, but is not usually accessible on a personal basis” (Nürnberg, 2007:54).

Mashau (2009:117) and Mogoba (2011:175) confirm the above by asserting that “to African traditional religion, God is transcendent but is not part of the community. The usage of spiritual powers, whether for good or bad, is common practice. These characteristics are common across Africa, even if expressions of these characteristics vary.”

- **Ecology;**

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English (1990:371) defines ecology as “the branch of biology dealing with the relations of organisms to one another and their physical surroundings. In full human ecology is the study of the interaction of people with their environment. This environment is directed at the earth and its surroundings.”

- **Earth and preservation;**

“Earth is, in scientific terms, a planet in the solar system orbiting around the sun between Venus and Mars; it is the planet on which we live. Religiously it is the abode of humanity, as distinct from heaven or hell; the world.” (The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 1990:369).

The concept preservation derives from the verb “preserve” and means to keep safe or free from harm, decay etc.; keep alive or maintain a thing in its existing state (The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 1990:943). It can thus be concluded that earth preservation is the process of keeping the earth in an intact and habitable state to all who dwell on it, by means of preservation by humanity in his role of steward.

- **Africa;**

According to Otijele (1991:4), “Africa is the second largest continent in the world. It covers about one-fifth of the world’s land area and has about one-eighth (about 480m) of the world’s population. It’s very highly varied topography rises from 436 feet (Below Sea Level), at the Oattara Depression in Egypt, to about 18,340 feet (Above Sea Level) at the ever-snowy peak of Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. The climate varies approximately with the relief. The coastlines of Africa (a gigantic island) are bordered on the west by the Atlantic Ocean; on the north by the Mediterranean Sea; and on the east by the Suez Canal, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean which joins the Atlantic at Cape Coast.”

- **African;**

The term “African” is intended to refer to the people who practice the traditional African way of life and who generally reside or originate from the Negroid area of Africa, roughly between the Sahara Desert in the north and the Zambezi River in the south as well as whatever pertains to their way of life.

- **Humanity and mankind;**

“Humanity” is a synonym of “mankind” where it is used it does not infer discrimination on gender or does not imply that women were not taken into consideration. What it implies in this study is that it embrace all human beings irrespective of gender. Therefore, where the word “humanity” or “mankind is used” both genders of human beings are included. Whenever the words he/she is used in reference to mankind or humanity, it is inclusive of both genders. The words ‘humanity’ and ‘mankind’ in this study will be used interchangeably.

1.10 Research Methodology

The study is conducted from a “Reformed Christian tradition,” and therefore it is expected that certain “reformed/Biblical” perspectives will be referred to in the text. “Thereby the Bible will

be referred to as the highest authority. The Bible thus teaches the difference between right and wrong. Authority is then simply a matter of orders, on the one hand, and obedience on the other.” (Wright, 2006:52).

The point of departure of the research is thus based on the missiological perspective of bringing forth dialogue between Christianity and African traditional religion for preserving the earth. It employs the literature to expound different paradigms and formulate them with the intention of drawing them into a dialogue. It is matching missiology with African traditional religion to establish the contact points that could enable dialogue between the two, in order to achieve the aim and objectives of the study. Identifying, expounding and analysing contact points on ecological matters between Christianity and African traditional religion enable the development of a complementary understanding on how environmental issues can be addressed. This is attainable by drawing from evidence, an interdisciplinary in-depth literature study, which forms the predominant basis of this study.

The study engages a range of literature advocating Mother Earth as the basis of the relationship between humanity and the earth to determine how the Mother Earth concept is understood from its African historical background.

The most important sources are a wide variety books, newspapers and journal articles spanning several decades and containing contrasting worldviews. It is, however, not merely a literary or theological review, but goes beyond that into conceptual analysis, to interpret and understand African and Christian worldviews with the purpose of initiating new understandings.

Since the overall aim of the study is to formulate a stewardship paradigm that will assist in curbing the destruction of the earth, the methodology can be described as operating within a broadly critical paradigm. Furthermore, because the study seeks to contribute to a restoration process, it initially takes an unobtrusive¹⁶ approach.

A comparative methodology is followed as principal approach through all stages in order to compare, contrast, synthesize and interpret with the aim to identify points of connection between

¹⁶ “The piling on of examples to demonstrate the ubiquity, significance and interpenetration of social forms.” (Lee, 2000:8).

divergent or different worldviews and to relate these to possible conservation model management contexts in current ecology and stewardship transformations.

Deriving implications and wisdom to formulate a stewardship paradigm requires promoting a consultative atmosphere, to pave way for dialogue around the issue of earth preservation. Such dialogue will assist in preserving the earth and bringing glory to God.

1.11 Study limitations

The study is confined to the Christian and African traditional religion perspectives. Dialogue with other religious groups is equally important, but lies outside the scope of this study. There are a great number of interrelated issues that this study cannot address and that call for further study. The context of the study is limited to the available comparative literature and there are related studies, which are yet to be completed that might oppose the relevance of this study on evaluation of conservation.

Despite the above limitations, the study lays an informed basis for future research, taking into consideration the period during which the study is conducted. It will be able to offer assistance on the issues that relate to identifying conservation methods for saving the earth by future generations.

1.12 Arrangement of chapters

This study is structured as follows;

Chapter 1 provides an orientation plan, consisting of historical and present developments pertaining to environmental issues. It furthermore touches on how the two different worldviews, i.e. Christianity and African traditional religion, understand environment and the discourse hindering earth preservation.

Chapter 2 investigates how the Christian worldview has contributed to the use/misuse of the earth, in specific relation to Africa.

Chapter 3 investigate how the African worldview has contributed to the misuse/use of the earth in Africa. It furthermore expounds how land matters are addressed within the tribal domain.

Chapter 4 presents an overview of Mother Earth and contact points between African traditional religion and Christianity.

Chapter 5 presents a Biblical environmental paradigm, as embedded in *missio Dei*.

Chapter 6 presents the outcome of the dialogue between Christianity and African traditional religion for formulating a new paradigm for the preservation of the earth in Africa.

1.13 Summary

This chapter introduces the subject of the study and highlights the origins of the problem.

It brings to light that the responsibilities and the stewardship given to humanity have been mismanaged and how the earth has been relegated to an object being misused, exploited and left to the anarchy of destruction and catastrophe.

The challenge presented at the outset, as the impetus for this study, is that the damage wrought to the earth cannot be reversed and faith has been replaced by science. The world is no longer what God intended, but has become the stage for air pollution, climate warming, deforestation, poaching and destruction as well as the extermination of fauna and flora. It has given rise to soil erosion and the earth inevitably turning into an inhabitable desert.

Chapter 2 thus investigates how the Christian paradigm developed from creation onwards, the causation behind it and how the events have contributed to the imminent destruction of the earth. The movement from the old to the new paradigm has affected all spheres of lives; i.e. the Christian as well as African view of creation; the earth as well as ecology.

CHAPTER TWO

CHRISTIAN PARADIGM AND CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW; THE USE/MISUSE OF THE EARTH

From the developmental historical background as mentioned in the previous chapter, the study have noted that the earth is facing a catastrophe and this continues at an alarming rate. There are stake holders like Christianity and African traditional religion who are contributing towards the extinction of the earth and its preservation on the other hand. One of this stakeholders is Christianity. Thence this chapter will highlight the Christian paradigm on the use/misuse of the earth in Africa. That premise will showcase that even Christians who are supposed to be stewards of creation are doing the opposite.

2.1 Background

According to Ratcliffe (1983:147), a paradigm is “a world view, a way of ordering and simplifying the perceptual world’s stunning complexity by making certain fundamental assumptions about the nature of the universe, of the individual, and of society. Paradigms are normative; they determine what the practitioner views as important and unimportant, reasonable and unreasonable, legitimate and illegitimate, possible and impossible, and what to attend to and what to ignore. In learning a paradigm, theory, method, and standards are acquired together, typically in an inextricable mixture. Moreover, through the theories they embody, paradigms prove to be constitutive of all normal scientific activity, including underlying assumptions made, problem definition, areas of investigation, questions posed and, particularly, data interpretation, conclusions drawn and policy recommendations made at the end of the research process. Thus all theories as well as the methods generated by them are, ultimately, paradigm based.” That is why the paradigm can be copied and used by other people in a different set-up or situation. Therefore, the study asserts that the paradigm is situational in character.

From the above premise, Göktürk (sine anno-:6) defines a paradigm as “a basic change of the initial picture of the subject matter within a science. It describes what should be studied? What questions should be asked and what rules should be followed in explaining the meaning of the answers obtained”. The paradigm is the broadest unit of agreement within a science and serves to

differentiate one scientific community (or sub-community) from another. It includes, explains and coordinates the patterns, theories, methods and tools that exist within it.

In addition, after considering different viewpoints of scholars in *Transforming Mission* Bosch (2010:185) defines paradigm as “a knowledge that belongs to a community and is influenced by the dynamics operative in such a community,” Such a pattern is also applicable to Christians and how it can influence their worldview. However, it is important to note that paradigms are always changing to address new knowledge. This change is termed “paradigm shift.”

From the above definitions, the study concludes that a paradigm can be referred to as a pattern or a situation which humanity finds themselves in and live with that pattern or circumstances at a particular time in history; e.g. how the effects of erstwhile colonialism has now changed. Meaning that it can be a worldview which directs the way of that particular pattern life in a particular time and situation. Therefore, people in one paradigm are subjected to that paradigm’s needs and demands. This means if the “paradigm” changes or affects the people in that particular environment, those people are subjected to that change.

Thence, Bosch (2010:184) maintains that paradigms are not static, they develop over time and eras, moving from the “old” to the “new” paradigm. This process is called a “paradigm shift”. The movement or shift from “old” to “new” does not occur in a vacuum. It is influenced by times, people or community as well as situational analysis in that particularly domain.

Mentioned should be made that, the importance of defining the paradigm and its changes for this study is to see, firstly; whether there was in the past misuse/use of the creation, secondly; whether the subdue command gives rises to the exploitation of the earth, thirdly; whether there is a common ground between Christianity and ATR and fourthly, to take note that “paradigms” change and that affects the worldview of the particular sector where change takes place.

2.2 Introduction

The above contention about “paradigms change” and how people react to them are experienced in Christianity and other religions. The Christian faith has been affected by these changes and their faith has been tarnished by change. Presently, the Christian church is in dire straits about the changes that are taking place within and around the church. Thence, there are following critical issues that are facing the contemporary church and the Christian mission presently;

- In the postmodern era, Christians has come to the realisation that the exploration of minerals is effective to an extent that it contribute towards the earth shrinking. They are also aware one cannot separate environment as the abode of its inhabitants. That means mankind relies on environment for survival. From this contention, mankind and environment are mutually connected and interdependent. Thence, Capra (1987:519) calls this “emerging premise the *ganz-hetlich-okologisch* (comprehensively ecological).” This interdependency is complemented by Gathogo (2007:344) by referring “to the change in the African indigenous society wherein paradigm shifts do not necessarily shift radically. Rather, some elements of the previous paradigm remain in the new, as they guarantee harmony in the particular society that is undergoing change.”
- In relation to the above Zaleha (2013:139), argues that “the more traditional and conservative Christians consider traditional Christian doctrine to be consistent with environmental concerns.” Fowler, 1995:76; Gottlieb, 2006:30; Ohlman, 2010 reason that “all of creation belongs to God and that humans are merely entrusted with the care and stewardship of this divinely owned domain.” Some call this the “stewardship” school of Christian environmental concern.
- Within this conservative Christian worldview paradigm, certain more liberal Christian environmentalists, who remain devoted to traditional church doctrine, have come to accept new paradigms. One example is panentheism, “wherein God is deemed encompassing and interpenetrating the universe, but at the same time is greater than creation”. (Fox 1988:17). The possible significance of this trend in liberal Christian thought is that “if the planetary environment is not merely God’s property, but actually part of God, then environmental protection becomes even more important and urgent, because humanity becomes capable in this view of at least partial deicide.”

It is presently not only possible to kill God’s earth, but also - for the first time in history - to wipe out humanity. This means that if the state of the environment calls for an ecological appropriate response, the threat of a nuclear holocaust raises the challenge to reply by working for peace with justice.

In reference to the above, Helton and Helton (2007:147-148) maintain that “there are distinctions inherent to Christianity that relate to creed, ideology, values and lifestyle. In the event of change or a paradigm shift, demanding or calling to be embraced, such distinctions are also affected and

there will always be Christians who tend to hold on to the old paradigm. Besides fundamentalists (those still holding on to the old paradigm), the study takes into account this deep sentimental attitude and Christian theology which are compatible. There have nevertheless been developments in environmental paradigms.”

In support of the above, Marangudakis (2008:246) argues that “today Christians, of any denomination, do not exhibit any more or any less environmental concern than the rest of the general population.” Marangudakis draws from Lynn White (1967:1203) who refers “to the historical analysis of the “Medieval roots” that refers to the famous passage in the Bible related to God giving control and mastery of the earth to humanity;” Then God said; “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all creatures that move along the ground.” (Gen. 1:26). Lynn White observes that this Judeo-Christian divine message is unique among religious traditions, while other traditions tend to have a more benign view of nature for its own sake.

Marangudakis (2001:2) maintains that “western Christian theology from the Greek, Latin and American countries reduced the status of the natural environment to its utilitarian use. Even, today, of course, Christian thought is emphasising the significance of the natural environment as God’s creation and the stewardship role of man, but, obviously, without abandoning the principle of the central role humanity plays in the divine drama¹⁷.” Thus, notwithstanding particular theological or rationalistic reasoning, both Christians and non-Christians agree that nature needs to be protected for the sake of future sustainability and human advancement. This brings the study to the various aspects that shaped the Christian paradigm.

2.3 Biblical Christian paradigm on environment

The foundation of the Biblical Christian paradigm on environment is that humanity was created in the image of God (*imago Dei*)¹⁸, is conspicuous in the description of humanity’s creation Gen. 1:26; “Now we will make humans, and they will be like us. We will let them rule the fish, the birds, and all other living creatures.” This verse relates the purpose of creation. Man is created in the image of God in order to have dominion but not ownership. This dominion is indicated with

¹⁷ “The biblical story can be summarised as a great drama, a story about what God is doing in our lives.”

<https://www.gci.org/wfos/mm002>

¹⁸ “It is essentially a reflection in personhood of God, which is itself the lively or quickening image of God. Man has thus been made such that it is humanity’s “special duty” to give ear to the Word of God. *Imago Dei* is God’s pure grace and man’s response to that act of grace.” (Hoekema, 1994:47).

the word “rule”. In this sense, humanity can indeed be called God’s representative on earth (Loader, 1987:18; Hoekema, 1994:37).

This representative is seen as the steward or caretaker of the earth. Thus the Biblical paradigm of Gen. 2 is that humans are caretakers who look after God’s creation. This understanding is illustrated by Strivers’ (2004:81) reference “that all creatures are good.” “Mankind is created in the image of God with a special dignity bestowed upon them. This special dignity conveys not moral superiority, but a call to responsibility and servanthood to the rest of creation. This dignity furthermore has its own intrinsic value as part of God's created order. Mankind has dominion, but as God’s representative this dominion is not absolute – i.e. mankind is not the absolute ruler, but a caretaker.” The mandate is to keep and cultivate the earth as conscientious steward, enjoying God and creation forever.

Strivers (2004:81) concludes that in today's context “it means to restore, protect and preserve both human and natural communities. It means connection to the earth, appreciation of God's spirit in nature - including humanity as his creation - and awe at the wonder of it all. It also means redemption; redemption from sin in order to respond with love and justice to the neighbour and to be a good steward for other species, free from exploitation.”

It is thus clear from the above that the Biblical Christian paradigm on the environment is based on the creation narrative, as set out in Gen. 2:18. It implies that mankind’s stewardship on earth is not confined to economics, but encompasses the whole of life of all inhabitants of the earth. Stewardship is from God and mandated by him to humanity as the Creator of heaven and earth (Gen. 1). He does not relinquish his ownership. Full ownership of the earth belongs to God, humanity is merely a steward who must act according to God’s mandate and plan.

Van der Walt (2003:464-465) articulates God’s mandate and plan for his creation as follows;

- “The non-ownership stance does not make humanity irresponsible, in fact it means an even greater responsibility. It demands habitual accountability from humanity because of their trusteeship position of the creation. In essence that makes humanity co-owners of the creation and that calls for responsible mandate.

- Stewardship, as mandate from God, demands that humanity develop God's creation to bear fruits and bring prosperity. 2 Thessalonians 3:10 clearly illustrates that "if a person is not willing to work he will also not eat". Labour is not, as capitalism teaches, simply a means of production towards a consumption end. Labour is not simply a commodity, but has its own value as Gen. 1:28 indicates; "Fill the earth and govern it." Biblically, it is seen as a calling to service by God.
- Humanity should take note that one cannot divorce cultivation and care whereby making the exploitation and abuse of any kind to earth unacceptable in the eyes of God. Any selfish economic actions that are accompanied by exploitation of the earth should not be entertained and must be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- Economics is for man and not man for economics. Stewardship includes love of nature and the endeavour to promote harmony among the inhabitants of the earth. "Love thyself as you love your neighbour" should be the key principle of promoting good relationships. In support of this, the study deems the instructions to the Israelites in the Old Testament (Lev. 19) to care for the needy, widows, orphans and foreigners among them as well as the land, as critical and paramount for their lives and livelihood, as the Biblical economic paradigm. This practice was evident in the formation of the church as described in Acts 4:32.
- Sinfulness nature of mankind hinders mankind to save itself, but stewardship and repentance demonstrates the willingness to own up to failed responsibilities to God, his creation and humanity. Confession and acknowledgement of guilt opens the way towards self-examination, the willingness to ask honestly and acknowledge sin and repent. Then it will become clear how wrong the exploitation of the earth is and how humanity has transgressed in the eyes of God.
- Through stewardship and repentance of the sin of failing to obey God's mandate to care for his creation, humanity is granted the free gift of grace that is prevenient in nature and status – that is God's undeserving mercy and blessings."

From Van Der Walt's (2003), articulation on stewardship, it can be confirmed that humanity mandate was not a licence or permission to override what God intended for creation. It must be

borne in mind that creation was done solely to glorify God and be God's footstool. Creation was supposed to be kept intact and in an orderly manner that God deemed fit and appropriate. The riches beneath the earth belongs to God. Thence the Psalm 24 states clearly as follows; "The earth is the Lord and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." Furthermore, a true and potentially comprehensible record of creation affirms the meaning of both natural history and human history.

In addition, Christianity is fundamentally a historical religion, and our understanding of God is based on His historical interaction with His people. Human history flows backward seamlessly into natural history, and anything which brings into question the validity of the latter threatens also our confidence in the former. The integrity of creation upholds the trustworthiness of God's character. The God revealed in nature is the same God who has revealed Himself in scripture and in human flesh - that is, the God of history and the God of truth.

In support to its above, understanding, the study aligns itself to Conradie (2011:82) who highlights another dimension to the stewardship God intended. "Stewardship, in a responsible position, should not be understood as a licence for exploitative subjugation or merely for personal benefit. This responsibility must be exercised in the light not only of the immediate situation, but of the near and distant future as well. In this way grace, which is a free gift from God, reflects God's glory. Aside from God's good intentions about his creation that come with stewardship embedded in responsibility, certain elements contribute towards placing the Christian paradigm into a position of responsibility to care for God's creation."

The elements of responsibility on stewardship has the following dimensions. According to Conradie (2011:82), "stewardship is not a licence to exploitative subjugation." From this understanding Conradie (2011) draws the dimensions from Hall (1990);

- "A *theological dimension*; It is God's affairs the steward is to manage. Against all human presumption, it has to be confessed that all authority is ultimately from God. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.
- A *Christological dimension*; Jesus Christ fulfils the office of steward, redefined as servant. Stewardship is not only exemplified by Jesus; it is prior stewardship of Christ into which humanity is initiated by the Spirit and through faith. It is his stewardship in

which by God's grace, man may participate in the theology of stewardship through grace, and not of law. Stewardship can only spring from receiving the gift of new life.

- An *ecclesiastical dimension*; The church is a stewarding community. As the body of Christ, the community of disciples is being incorporated into the work of the great steward, Jesus Christ our Lord. Disciples thus become servants and followers of the Suffering Servant. Furthermore, the church is not an end in itself. Against pursuit of ecclesiastical power and ambition, the steward community exists to serve the needs of the world.
- An *anthropological dimension*; Not only Christians, but all human beings have stewardship as their vocation. The metaphor is therefore applicable to humanity as a whole, who are called to serve each other and the environment/earth/creation. In this way a "new humanity" (Col. 3:10) may emerge. Since human beings bear the image of God, they have to follow the Creator's concern for creation by acting as stewards of God's creation.
- An *eschatological dimension*; The life of a steward is one of being conscious of the coming End. Stewards must be watchful (Luke 12), trustworthy (1 Cor. 4:2) and blameless (Tit. 1:7). The impending judgement will begin with the household of God (1 Pet. 4:17)."

Conradie (2011:83) further affirms that Hall's dimension theory, on the theology of stewardship, is "to confirm in totality God's love for the world and counter a form of Christianity that is docetic and idealist in character. Stewards are also the priests of creation; they represent God before other creatures and also other creatures before God. The priest is called upon to mediate with empathy and compassion, in order to reintegrate a world subjected to environmental degradation and the disintegration of ecosystems."

This perspective makes it clear that the intent of stewardship is for humanity to care for creation and be in a relationship with its Creator, who is God. God does not need a steward. God is omnipresent and can look after his creation, but out of love God chose humanity to be his steward and uphold a relationship with him. The stewardship mandate is characterised by responsibility and that makes human beings morally accountable to manage the inhabitants on

earth - not to exploit and abuse them, but to look after them. Humanity has to ensure continuity, sustainability of livelihood and a healthy ecology. Meaning, that a much more focused approach on the “already but not yet of God’s reign is needed. But sin has, however, made humanity violate this mandate of stewardship.

Humanity is created in the image of God and by properly applying all God has provided, humanity can bring forth unrealised beauty and accomplishment to God’s creation. This human-induced development, in turn, points back to the amazing creation with which the Lord blessed humanity, emphasising God’s intent to provide human beings with goodness and prosperity. Using nature for industry is God’s command and desire, but it also bears the responsibility of protecting the land and not exploiting it. This is the key to Biblical stewardship of the environment.

The above discussions can be attributed to what Gitau (2011:321) alludes to when highlighting humanity mandate from God and its implications. “Since God has delegated the dominion of humankind over the earth with a view to co-operate with him and share the mother-nature’s produce with others, then they are accountable to him for their stewardship. Humanity have no liberty to do what they like with their natural environment. It is not for human beings to treat as they are pleased; ‘dominion’ is not a synonym for ‘destruction.’ Since humankind hold it in trust, they have to manage it responsibly and productively not only for their own sake but also for subsequent generations.”

Thence, there are some people who have used the Judaeo-Christian conception of nature, that is, humanity is free to deal with nature as it pleases, to justify destructive approach to the environment. God did not intend to have people destroy creation, which he described to be very good. Humanity need to read the Scriptures with ‘new eyes’ and realize that dominion is not a license for domination and ruthless exploitation of nature, but to observe, keep and look after as God’s intended plan.

This understanding of stewardship, as explored above, leads to the following paradigms that influence Christianity’s view on the environment.

2.4 Paradigms that influence Christianity

2.4.1 Pantheism

Grula (2008:160) defines and describes pantheism as follows; “the doctrine that God is not an immanent or transcendent supernatural being but that all laws, forces, manifestations of the self-existing natural universe constitute an all-inclusive divine Unity.” Pantheists maintain that modern science of the universe has elucidated a design imprinted on the universe, since the time of the Big Bang¹⁹. They claim that “this design provides the foundation for the divine and sacred nature of the creation and the concept that “God” and earth are one and the same.” The ID (Intelligent Design)²⁰ movement “is preoccupied with showing that an intelligent designer created biological complexity, rapid change in the fossil record and the large differences between species” (Brumfeil, 2005b). Pantheism denies the existence of an intelligent designer and affirms that biological evolution is explained by Darwinian principles²¹ and their modern qualities.

Pantheism thus denies the existence of a transcendent, supernatural creator and instead asserts that God and the universe are one and the same, in contrast with this study. God is the Creator of heaven and earth and has the sole power on earth. God cannot therefore be equated with the earth or the universe (Gen. 1:1-2; Ps. 24:1-2). This study also argues from a Reformational paradigm that accepts the authority of the Bible, as the revelation of God - it is maintained that God is the creator of all and has the sole power over all.

Consequently, according to Geisler (2010:302), “pantheism is the belief that all things are God or God is all. Thus, nature is revered because it is divine. Pantheists’ belief that nature is divine means that they not only wish to protect it from destruction and misuse, but also from being used for human improvement and human purposes. They place human beings on an equal level with

¹⁹ “The Bing Bang theory is an effort to explain the origin of the universe. Discoveries in astronomy and physics have shown beyond a reasonable doubt that the universe did in fact have a beginning. Prior to that moment there was nothing; during and after that moment there was something; the universe. The Big Bang theory is an attempt to explain what happened during and after that moment.” See <http://www.big-bang-theory.com/#sthash.5fptkxXM.dpuf>

²⁰ “The Intelligent Design (ID) movement promotes the idea that many aspects of life are too complex to have evolved without the intervention of a supernatural being — the intelligent designer. Advocates of intelligent design generally accept that the earth is billions of years old and that evolution has occurred, but maintain that in many cases, especially with regard to the origin of complex characteristics or new taxa, the work of an intelligent designer, not an evolutionary process, is responsible. Backers of intelligent design frequently misrepresent or disregard aspects of evolutionary theory, the results of evolutionary research and the nature of science in order to promote their agenda and sway public opinion against evolutionary biology.” See www.intelligentdesign.org.

²¹ “Darwin’s Theory of Evolution is the widely held notion that all life is related and has descended from a common ancestor; the birds and the bananas, the fishes and the flowers -- all related. Darwin’s general theory presumes the development of life from non-life and stresses a purely naturalistic (undirected) “descent with modification”. Complex creatures evolve from more simplistic ancestors naturally over time. In a nutshell, as random genetic mutations occur within an organism’s genetic code, the beneficial mutations are preserved because they aid survival -- a process known as “natural selection.” See <http://www.darwins-theory-of-evolution.com/#sthash.w37L1muz.dpuf>

nature, because all is God. Consequently, pantheists abhor the way man uses nature, refuting humanity's dominion over nature and mankind should serve nature as god and revere it."

That is why, the influence of pantheism has made some Christians servants to nature. This influence has 'planted' a seed that the earth is an object to be misused and exploited for the benefit of humanity. This exploitation usually occurs in the name of development, war or harvesting.

Contrary to the above, Schaeffer (1970:25) states; "While there is a unity of human beings and nature, there is no identity between them." While God has given humanity dominion over nature, it is not a mandate to destroy, but to preserve. As seen earlier, it is clearly a mandate to use nature and care for nature. God desires humanity to be good stewards of the gift of nature, using it wisely and purposefully and exercising justice.

From the above, it can be concluded that the pantheists are clearly mistaken, because nature is not God. Rather, God created nature and for this reason alone He deserves respect. Nature does not need to be God to be respected; God demands respect for nature, because He created it beautiful and wonderful. The Creator granted man dominion over nature, which led to the unequal relationship between man and nature. Humanity came to dominate nature, since its care was in his hands, and nature became a submissive partner. God created human beings in his image and made them beings separate from all other living beings (Gen. 1:27).

2.4.2 Social and justice

Besides pantheism, Christianity has also been influenced by social and justice factors. Feygina (2013:365) explains "that the philosophies of Plato²² and subsequently Aristotle posited that humanity's intellectual superiority over other animals and capacity for reason and rationality places humanity in the centre of the world and closest to God in the hierarchy of nature, with other animals in subservient positions." Platonic philosophy²³ looked at a "breach into Christianity and placed an additional association of sin, dirt and disgust onto the material and the animal." This led to the Enlightenment arranging human separation from and domination of

²² "Platonists look at religious ideas, beliefs and perceptions and have examined the ways religious systems conceptualise nature and natural kinds." (Anderson, 2012:10).

²³"Plato's philosophy corresponds to Christianity in its essential opposition to any form of monism or absolutism. The world of time and change, in which finite entities are acted upon and act on one another, possesses only a limited subordinate existence. But it does exist." (Wild, 1949:10).

nature into the roots of the modern Western worldview via urbanisation, technological development and industrialisation.

Feygina (2013:365) substantiates his stance by referring to Horkheimer (1947/2005) who proposed that “in the process of mastering nature for the sake of establishing an industrial society, nature needs a steward and this hierarchy of power and subjugation of external forces is echoed at the personal level.”

Horkheimer (1947/2005) argues that “civilization has learned to turn such revolt, both from humanity and from nature, into a means of perpetuating the very problems that caused it, with dreadful results; On the one hand, nature has been stripped of all intrinsic value or meaning. On the other, humanity has been stripped of all aims except self-preservation”. Nature and the human spirit have come to be seen in purely practical terms, as means to production and wealth, not as ends in and of themselves that deserve care and respect.

Horkheimer (1947/2005) traces this mentality of domination to the foundations of Christian doctrine, which is inextricably integrated into contemporary worldviews that proclaims the human soul can be saved, while animals have no means of salvation from the suffering of existence. Therefore, human beings have no obligation to animals or to nature and are justified in dominating them as a means to their own ends.

Wakarega (2009:132) supports this notion and argues that “exploitation within relationships, whether among human beings themselves or between human beings and the environment, is common. In this context, the exploitative tendency towards the created order of the human and non-human is not surprising. In the modern world it is the order of the day for human beings to pervert justice and consistently control the created order. Human beings most certainly seek to “Lord” and “own” the earth.” This attitude is motivated by the desire to have and enjoy rather than to be and to grow, which is based on the subject-object paradigm; “People consume the resources of the earth and their own life in an excessive and disordered way.” (Wakarega, 2009:132). This means exploitation directed to the earth affects the way people will live in the future. The future will be bleak because the condition of the earth will deteriorate to an extent that inhabitants of the earth will experience conditions like climate change, air-pollution etc.

In completing the above, Wakarega (2009) refers to Moltmann (1985:2) who insists that “the subject-object paradigm needs to change.” He argues that human beings must strive to learn a new, communicative and integrative thought. This is important for the simple reason that “to be alive means existing in relationships with other people and things, life is communication of communion” (Wakarega 2009:140). We must ensure that there is no arbitrary use of the earth and the required relationship is underlined and stressed in the context of communion in the *Lineamenta* (2006) conference²⁴. *Lineamenta* (2006) emphasises that “the idea of communion and the mystery of the communication of God’s love to humanity is a sign and an instrument of the communion of the human family with God Himself, - communion among men and communion with the whole creation”. This communion is “already but not yet” because Jesus has already done it and it will be confirmed in the “not yet” when the Kingdom God makes all things anew in eschatology.

This communal relationship between man and creation is based on love, wherein *Lineamenta* (2006) acknowledges that “Jesus Christ restored the beauty of matrimony, proposing once again the one plan of God which was abandoned because of the hardness of the human heart, even within the tradition of the people of Israel (Matt. 5:31-32; 19:3-12). Returning to the beginning, Jesus taught the unity and faithfulness of the husband and wife, refuting the practice of repudiation and adultery - precisely through the extraordinary beauty of human love, already celebrated in a heightened manner as inspired by the Song of Songs, and the bond of marriage called for and defended by prophets like Hosea (Hos. 1:2 & 3:3) and Malachi (Mal 2:13-16).”

Furthermore, “Jesus affirmed the original dignity of the married love of man and woman. Marriage is between two people who are in love. This “in-loveness” is based on marriage and the vows in marriage are of caring for each other. In addition, both persons and the couple are made in the image of God and from the dust. It thus makes sense to recognise that marriage does not take away man’s relationship with the environment, but fortifies the relationship due to man’s interconnectedness with the earth and the mandate of caring. Marriage is a partnership that already existed between humanity and the earth. The partners in marriage have a relationship with the earth, prior their vows of marriage, through kingship and priesthood bestowed on them by God.”

²⁴ Special council of churches in Africa that focuses on social justice and reconciliation.

Feygina (2013), Wakarega (2009) and Moltmann (1985) make it clear that “some Christians consider themselves above the earth and its inhabitants, which are there for them to exploit and abuse for their own gain. They disregard the vows of marriage, which are interconnected with caring for the environment, by abusing their respective partners in matrimony. They tend to forget that both parties to a marriage have been made in the image of God and have equal privilege to be on the earth. There are also disobedient Christians who distort the Bible’s teachings to validate their own desires. This has resulted in them losing their love, compassion and caring for the environment, instead resorting to injustice and a total disregard of the environment in their exploitation of the earth.”

Mankind has “internalised” domination, as a means of existence for the sake of establishing and maintaining society. Because the relationship with nature has been directed toward serving industrial society, a meaningful relationship has not been developed. Humanity has not engaged with their reactions to it either, but rather have come to suppress and repress it. This process of repression has been carried over from the human relationship with nature to the relationship between individuals and groups within society, giving rise to resistance in the form of social rebellions.

This exploitation has affected the environment to such an extent that it gave rise to climate change.

2.4.3 Climate change

The exploitation of the earth by disobedient Christians gave rise to the World Council of Churches issuing a statement, “Together towards Life” (*Mission and the Flourishing of Creation*) in an endeavour to redress climate change, which sets out confidence measures that could be adopted to reduce the threat of climate change and affirm the church’s stance on climate change;

- “Industrialised countries must demonstrate, in the near future, real and significant reductions in domestic greenhouse gas emissions which many studies have shown to be possible with a considerable net benefit to their economies.

- Though developing countries should not be subject to formal emission limitation commitments yet, many of them are pursuing measures and can continue their efforts to become more energy-efficient and to limit greenhouse gas emissions.
- The sharing of finance and technological resources is needed, but it is also very important to exchange experiences from both south and north including those of indigenous cultures, women's organisations and others which can offer lessons and tools for learning to live in a socially just, equitable and ecologically sustainable manner.
- In these remaining days of COP (Conference of the Parties of the UN), let us shift our energies away from trying to figure out how to attain the minimum and channel them instead toward creative risk-taking options for accomplishing the maximum.”

In reacting to the above statement, Toroitich and Kerber (2014:299) respond as follows;

“This care for creation and climate justice approach has not been exclusive to Christian theology. It has also been reflected in some interfaith statements, such as the Uppsala Interfaith Climate Manifesto 2008. From religious traditions, with different approaches to religious life, we all share the responsibility of being conscious caretakers of our home, planet Earth. And the religious leaders commit themselves to focus on the struggle against global warming and draw upon our innermost religious convictions about the meaning of life. This commitment is a deeply spiritual question concerning justice, peace and hopes for a future in love and solidarity with all human beings and the whole of creation.”

The above deliberations and discussion seem to reflect Christians' awareness about their responsibility to care for the earth. It is clear that the discourse on the state of the earth has greatly affected the Christian paradigm and Christians have come to realise their part in the misuse of the earth and acted accordingly. Christianity has addressed this shortcoming by establishing concerns, bodies or institutions that claim to care about the earth and environmental preservation. This is how the “Care” society came into being.

2.4.4 “Care”

The Modern Church Conference²⁵ formulated an earth charter in which it observes the earth’s neglect and the need for action. It summarises the global situation in its preamble as follows; “The dominant patterns of production and consumption are causing environmental devastation, the depletion of resources, and a massive extinction of species. Communities are being undermined. The benefits of development are not shared equitably and the gap between rich and poor is widening. Injustice, poverty, ignorance, and violent conflict are widespread and the cause of great suffering. An unprecedented rise in human population has overburdened ecological and social systems.” (Newman, 2013:328). The foundations of global security are threatened.

Principle 2 of the charter exhorts to “care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love” (Newman, 2013:331). Newman (2013:331) indicates that “the concept of “care” in relation to the charter was developed by Leonardo Boff (2001), who notes in an eloquent article titled “*The Ethic of Care*” that the word “care” occurs prominently four times and echoes of care or similar terms permeate the entire text. Categories correlated with care, such as especially “sustainability” or “responsibilities”, are prominent.”

Boff (2001:60) suggest that “care” together with “sustainability” are the two central categories of what he calls “the new planetary paradigm” and that together they can inform our relationship to “life” “way of life”, “livelihood”, “society” and “global community”, terms which each play a key role in the charter. “Care” is primordial, explains Boff (2001), it is present before the body or the spirit and is ontological in character; *a priori*²⁶ on which we human beings depend and can rely.

It is quite evident from the above that care can have a major impact on preserving the environment. It is not necessary to experience drought or famine or climate change to care for the environment. As a priority and mandatory principle, caring for the environment is like looking after the body and keeping it in good healthy shape. If the body is fed food and liquid

²⁵ “The Modern Church is the main proponent of liberal theology among the British churches. “Liberal theology” means that religious beliefs can and should develop in the light of new insights. Divine revelation has not come to an end. God invites us to believe in ways appropriate to the 21st century. New ideas should be judged on their merits. They may be true today, even if they have not been officially accepted by church leaders in the past.”

www.modernchurch.org.uk/index.php/christianity.../environment.html

²⁶ “Relating to or denoting reasoning or knowledge which proceeds from theoretical deduction rather than from observation or experience.” See www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/a%20priori

and air that are unhealthy, the body will deteriorated to the extent of dying. If the earth is not cared for, there will be chaos. It will be the direct result of the degradation of the earth and lead to climate change, soil erosion and even turning earth into an inhabitable desert. Caring for the environment is thus vital for sustaining the environment and can save as well as protect the environment for future generations.

2.4.5 Stewardship and Christianity

Care is part of the stewardship mandate in the creation narrative (Gen. 2:15). Bhagwat, *et al.*, (2011:48) maintains that “ecological advocates within religions like Christianity, Judaism and Islam adhere to the principle of stewardship of nature or the idea that nature should be revered. These religions furthermore ascribe to the Abrahamic traditions that tend to centre environmental ethic on the concept of stewardship and thus maintain that humanity is responsible for the conservation and management of the environment.”

In addition, religions originating in Asia and certain indigenous religions often emphasise the divinity of nature, its forces or its creatures. All of these religions, in various ways (and sometimes with unfortunate omissions), tend to value altruistic behaviours and consider compassion a virtue - sometimes even compassion toward non-human beings.

The above indicates that not all religions disregard ecology and ecological stewardship is a common denominator amongst most religions, which in itself is encouraging environmental conservation. It furthermore creates a positive platform for Christians to contribute and thus fulfil God’s mandate in creation narrative (Genesis). Despite this mandate of stewardship, humanity has and continues to exploit the environment.

Van der Walt (2003:428) maintains that humanity’s influence on creation has it not only shouting with joy, but also groaning in pain according to Romans 8:19-22. He adds that “creation is waiting in anticipation when the song of groaning will be the song of pure joy as God’s intention about his creation. All living creatures, birds and environment are hopeful for the better future wherein the birth of a new creation without degradation will be a reality”

The lamentation shows how the earth is yearning for joy and happiness, but that looks as if it is not forthcoming due to humanity’s misuse of the earth. This leads to how most Christians have misused the earth and moved away from God’s mandate of stewardship.

2.5 Christian misuse of the earth

“Christianity was to set the example and take responsibility for preserving the earth or obey the command to tend to and care for the earth, but this has not been the case. Colonisation, which accompanied Christendom, affected and wounded the earth. European missionaries introduced Christianity to sub-Saharan Africa several centuries ago.” (Oladipo, 2010:33). “Starting with the United East Indian Company establishing a refreshment post at the Cape of Good Hope (now Cape Town) in 1652 for ships en-route to the East and expatriates colonising the Cape, acting as colonial agents for both the church and state. This endeavour was to receive worldwide attention and the British joined the Dutch. It wasn’t a marriage that was to last long.” (Neider-Heitmann, 2003:180).

Neider-Heitmann (2003:185) explains that “the marriage disintegrated after the Enlightenment period, when the discovery of diamonds and gold led the British Empire to wage war to obtain control over the 19th century Afrikaner republics for the empire. The three defeated republics, together with the Cape Colony, were united in 1910 to form the Union of South Africa. The defeat heightened the crisis of colonial-Reformed Christianity, fuelling the modern-day nationalism and the dream for a republic. It also led to the exploration of mineral resources in Africa, by Christian Westerners or colonisers, a process that left the earth scarred.”

White (1967:155) terms this practice by some Christians towards nature as arrogance. White (1967:120) lays the blame for the (then) contemporary environmental problems facing humanity at the feet of Judeo-Christian attitudes towards nature. The premise of White's (1967:120) argument is as follows;

“What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them; human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny- that is, by religion.”

White (1967) has, however, met with much opposition from theology scholars who maintain such a notion is unfounded and baseless. De Vries (2012:12) argues that Lynn White’s accusation that Christian opinion was the aftermath of the irresponsible abuse of resources is unfounded, because White is selective in her use of sources. He suggests that “the core of the Christian idea emanates from the Biblical notion that humanity was given the task to exploit the earth and rule over all living and non-living organisms. White failed to take cognisance that throughout history theologians have emphasised that the term for “rule over” in Hebrew literally

means “taking care of someone else’s goods”, rather than exploiting these goods for one’s own interests.”

White (1967), suggests in a way that Christians still have Paradise - meaning “humanity was to dress and keep the garden otherwise the plant life would degenerate. Nature was made for humanity and thus his calling was to ennoble it and to make paradise, which though so lovely, was susceptible to development, a transparent mirror of the Creator's glory (and the permission to exploit the place) in mind when developing culture in general and technology in particular.” White was selective in calling for witnesses, since many mainstream Christian thinkers do not comply with this image of the Christian attitude toward the concept of Paradise.

Rather, it is a secularised form of the Paradise ideal that moves people in a direction to assume that there are no limits to its motivating force; an assumption that causes people to develop technologies in often irresponsible ways.

Jacka (2010:30), in support of White (1967:1205), refers to the “Ancient and Medieval West perspectives that see Christianity as having supplanted the Animistic beliefs of the common people. He adds that Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.” This, means that contemporary Western society (post-Christian) is nevertheless underpinned by Christian ideals, which posit human dominion over all the other species on the planet, especially in reference to Gen. 1:28-29.

Masenya (2010:54) concurs with White (1967), arguing that “the ecological crisis could ultimately be traced back to the Old Testament. She adds that the (male) anthropocentric reading of such texts have perpetuated the domination not only of nature by powerful men, but also that of other “disposable” human beings, the Africans, the black people, the poor, the women, the homosexuals, etc.” Masenya (2010:54) adds that “it unsurprising then that even in Biblical scholarship the male human being has always been the subject of Biblical interpretation. Nature could thus be subjugated and manipulated by humans and is indeed the case in Western civilization. Because earth became a “thing” or object, it could be objectified, studied, analysed and exploited as well as “available” for scientific investigation”. This way science could develop and so Christianity is to be credited with cultivating the ground for the seed of science to grow.

- In contrast, Nürnberger (2011:209) argues that “the Bible employs a various metaphors to describe God's creative and redemptive activity underlying experienced reality. God acts in all these cases through his creation, not apart from it. The Biblical faith assumes that energy and natural laws are derived from the creative power and intentionality of God.”
- Conradie (2011:5), like Nürnberger (2011), propagates that “Christianity has given religious support to the notion that the world has been created primarily for the benefit of human beings. Modern science is an extrapolation of medieval natural theology, while industrial technology constitutes a realisation of the Christian notion of human mastery of nature. The Judeo-Christian tradition, and its typical vision of a better future, has had a lasting influence on the Western world, also through variants of this tradition such as Marxism and secularism.” This puts Conradie (2011:5) in agreement with White (1967:120) who maintains that “Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen” and concludes that; “Christianity (as people has twisted it) bears a huge burden of guilt” for the environmental crisis.
- Nürnberger (2011:12), in correspondence to Conradie (2011), maintains that “ecologically speaking the infrastructure of life on earth is in danger of collapsing under the weight of human extraction, production, consumption and waste. Climate change; depletion of plant and animal life; pollution of water and air; soil erosion; and declining food security in many parts of the world are the symptoms of a deadly trend that must be reversed if humanity (and much of life in general) is to have a future”.
- Consumerism has affected economics of the world to the extent that there is an imbalance between production capacity and life demands. Nürnberger (2011:12).argues that “this imbalances has a negative impact on the growing world population thereby pushing them out of the stream of formal economy altogether. Instead what is supposed to benefit the population benefit the few elites who indulge in luxury and the majority suffers. This suffering culminates in rising debt levels which impacts harshly on individuals and the state and majority ”

Therefore, from a spiritual perspective, Nürnberger (2011:13) concludes that “these developments have led to a concentration of human goals on material wants; the artificial creation of a culture of discontent; a narcissistic mind-set devoid of wider horizons and long-

term visions; the dismantling of traditional systems of meaning, cultural values and social norms without providing valid alternatives and the concomitant dissolution of extended families and communities. Science has displaced religion and the latter grew defensive as if being undermined, failing to state the case of environment described in the Bible, culminating in damage of environment.”

The above has exacerbated the exploitation of the nature leading to its damage. Mankind has been given the power to control the earth due to his consumerism and now man is the master. Nature becomes subjected to exploitation, abuse and utilised to fit mankind’s desires Exploration of minerals is done with wealthiness in mind not as the way of developing others. Due to that, other spheres also take advantage of nature (Nürnberg, 2011:31). Science provides the insights, technology provides the means and commerce provides the motivation to do so. Science uncovers the secrets of nature; technology transforms nature; commerce turns nature into tradable goods and services, which are consumed and turned into waste. Nature is analysed and taken apart. Useful components are reassembled into marketable artefacts; the rest is discarded.

A further consequence of this exploitation has been the eradication of the traditional awe of nature. Countless creatures and species have disappeared under the impact, yet it is the transformation of nature as a whole that matters most. The earth has increasingly turned into a world of human constructs - the modern city; industry; mechanised and computerised agriculture; the synthetic home; electronic means of communication; the financial system; the airways; highways and railways lines traversing a domesticated natural world, including animals as part of creation.

2.5.1 Christians and the animal kingdom

Bekoff (2003:922) explains how humanity is part of nature as follows;

“We are deeply embedded in nature and do not stand above or to the side of other natural processes. There is no duality, no ‘them’ and ‘us’. Trying to separate our own reality from that of other nature causes much discontent and discord, for it is so very unnatural. Indeed, we are part of nature's wisdom, although at times it does not appear so. Given whom we are and that we are all over Earth, we do indeed have the power to dominate nature. Thus, our animal kin depend on our goodwill, mercy, and wisdom. We hunt other animals, we eat them, we use them in education and research, and we let them entertain and amuse us. We also spread human diseases when we visit the places where animals live. Our relationship with other animals is

usually very lopsided, with few if any benefits for the animals. We can choose to be intrusive, abusive, or compassionate.”

Bekoff (2003:924) adds that “humanity has certain responsibilities toward the animal kingdom. Firstly, humanity should show respect, compassion and admiration for animals first and foremost. Secondly, humanity should consider the animals’ perspective and err on the side of caution when it is unclear whether they are feeling pain. Thirdly, humanity should recognise that much research is fundamentally exploitative and that almost all of the methods that are used to study animals, even in the field, are intrusions into their lives. Fourthly, humanity should accept how misguided are speciesistic views and vague notions such as intelligence and cognitive or mental complexity for informing assessments of well-being. Fifthly, humanity is called upon to show common sense and empathy towards animals when conducting scientific research on animals. These responsibilities should be accepted as a sign of recognising animal behaviour and their nature’s wisdom as part of creation.”

Conradie (201:61) agrees with Bekoff (2003) that “there are indeed institutions that show concern for animals. Such welfare missions are based on the assumption that humanity has the right to use animals to meet its needs, but that some restraint should be exercised in order to prevent excessive cruelty.” Humanity have responsibilities regarding animals due to ownership and rights over them. Humanity is indeed the dominant specie, but should exercise such power by caring for other creatures with mercy and kindness. God did indeed give man the mandate to rule over the rest of creation, but should do so in a way that reflects the Creator’s love for all creatures.

It is clear from the above that some Christians have disregarded animal life, the environment and all its inhabitants. Christians make decisions and accept morals that they believe will sustain their worldview. The world people live in, influenced by the way people think, and development in other areas (e.g. natural sciences, technology) affect the paradigm according to which Christians live. It is thus important to explore the Christian worldview on nature, creation, time, life, development and religion.

2.6 Christian worldview

Edgell (2007:52) describes worldview as follows;

“Every human life and all human cultures are under the jurisdiction of a particular sign or set of signs that holds sway over individual and collective consciousness. This internalized, semiotic structure may assume the form of doctrines or propositions, but ultimately it consists of and is traceable to a series of world-interpreting narratives that provide the individual's bottom-line as well as the primary cultural given.” A more concise rendition of Edgell’s (2007) definition of worldview is “that mental medium by which the world is known”.

The above description is applicable to the Christian worldview and forms the basis and functions of the worldview.

2.6.1 View on creation

Embedded in God’s creation is world and nature, thus creation is God-given. According to Rottenberg (2000:411), “the God of the Bible is the Creator God, who is confessed as the God of the Covenant. This is a fundamental principle shared by Judaism and Christianity, a perspective that has profoundly influenced the history of the West and beyond. The “Lord” of the universe, out of sheer sovereign grace, enters into relationship with mortals (bearers of the *imago Dei*), seeks them out and calls them to obedience and service to a world that has lost its way.” The Biblical doctrine of creation encompasses a *Weltanschauung*²⁷ “a way in which countless millions of people have viewed, experienced and approached reality.”(Thomson, 2012:179)

The above is further clarified by Grudem (2010:263) who affirms “that God created both heavens and earth and everything in them”. This is substantiated in the New Testament where, for example, Acts 24:24 speaks of God as the “Sovereign Lord who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them”. One of the first ways of identifying God is to say that He is the one who created all things. Barnabas and Paul explain to the pagan audience at Lystra that “they are the messengers of “a living God who made heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them” (Acts 14:15). Similarly, when Paul is speaking to pagan Greek philosophers in Athens, he identifies the true God as “the God who made the world and everything in it” and furthermore add that this God “gives to all men life and breath and everything” (Acts 17:25-25; Is. 45:18; Rev. 10:6).

²⁷ “A *Weltanschauung* starts from what is, as being the meaning, in order to step up from the depths to the conception of a God; but Holy Scripture has to do with heaven and earth and with man solely in the context of “I believe in God the Creator of Heaven and earth”. In this genitive it is made manifest that I believe not in creation, but in God, the Creator.” (Barth, 1949:61).

Grudem (2010:267) adds that “God is also very much involved in creation, for it is continually dependent on him for its existence and its functioning. The technical term used to speak of God’s involvement in creation is “immanent” meaning “remaining in” creation. The God of the Bible is no abstract deity removed from and uninterested in his creation. The Bible is the story of God’s involvement with his creation and particularly the people in it. This is affirmed by Job who states that even animals and plants depend on God; “In his hand is life of every living thing and the breath of humanity” (Job 12:10). This affirmation can be seen in the New Testament, where Paul states that God “gives to all men life and breath and everything” and that “in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:25, 28). Indeed in Christ “all things hold together” (Col. 1:17). God’s transcendence and immanence are both affirmed in a single verse, when Paul speaks of “one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:6).

In reference to the above notions, the study supports Rottenberg (2000:420) who argues that “the Creator God is the God of the Covenant, the One who comes and cares, and the God who dwells in the midst of God's people (*Shekhinah*), the transcendent One who is the present One and the God who works wonders, i.e. “I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst” (Hos. 11:9b).

Koyama (1999:96) asserts that “the God of the Bible is not an *apatheia*²⁸ God or a *nirvana*²⁹-oriented God, but a history-oriented God. This is the perspective, which has shaped the thought and actions of nations and continents, from which history is viewed, experienced and lived out as destiny. Time has a *telos*; world history is “going somewhere” and the destiny of the journey is ultimately in the hands of the sovereign and merciful Almighty God who chooses to be in partnership with humans. Through this partnership peace (*shalom*) will prevail on earth.”

2.6.2 View on nature

From a Christian’s view according to Van der Walt, 2003:425, “nature is understood as divine creation, because it involves the environment, whereas creation deals with the calling forth by the Eternal One who speaks - and it is there (Gen. 1). Nature is not divine, an emanation from God's being, nor is it demonic, inhabited by spirits that must be feared and appeased. The creation narratives account presents a “good-earth theology”, understood to mean that God was

²⁸ “freedom from suffering, from French *apathie*, from Latin *apathia*, from Greek *apatheia* "freedom from suffering, impassability, want of sensation," from *apathes* "without feeling, without suffering or having suffered", from a “without” See [dictionary.reference.com/browse/apatheia](https://www.dictionary.reference.com/browse/apatheia)

²⁹ “The state of perfect happiness and peace in Buddhism where there is release from all forms of suffering; a state or place of great happiness and peace.” See www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nirvana

and is present in the creation and activities of his creation.” There cannot, therefore, be an earth without God’s presence and God’s will. God saw that all he had created was excellent in every way.

That is why it is “good” after God has created human being; “God looked over all he had made, and saw that it was VERY good!!!” (Gen. 1:31) after six days.

2.6.3 View on time

The view on time is influenced by the view of earth. According to Van der Walt (2001:67), “time is a commodity “outside” man “through” which he moves. He has to use and fill it. This is evident from expressions like “time lost”, “saved”, “made up”, “passed and time wasted”. “Time is an abstract concept, independent of ordinary life, measured and determined by a clock on the wall or a watch on the wrist.” The implications of this view are, on the one hand, impoverishing because it reduces man to a slave of time. It results in the well-known *rat race*, tense human relationships and alienation from others. On the other hand, it leads to punctuality or effective use of time, thorough planning and tight schedules.”

Van Der Walt (2001) further adds that “time moves from the past, through the present, towards the future (i.e. a linear concept and not a cyclical concept as in some cultures) and thus its close relationship to the Western idea of history becomes evident. In contrast with the African worldview, which emphasises and respects the past, the eyes of the Christian man are directed towards the future. This future-oriented inclination is clearly evident in their idea of progress. Many are, however, of the opinion that this concept of time brings earlier eschatological expectations.” This concept of time has led to development tainting their worldview.

Unlike the cyclical concept of time in classical pantheism and some forms of animism, the Biblical perspective of time is linear; the history of the world has a beginning, direction, and culmination and (in some sense) end. For this reason, more than in any other religion, Judeo-Christianity has numerous predictive prophecies - more than a fourth of the Bible. The Christian faith takes objective history seriously as demonstrated in Creation, the Incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection and second coming of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:3-27). God enters time and

space to relate dynamically with human beings. Simultaneously this same sovereign God is transcendent, existing outside of creational dimensions.³⁰

Seen from a Biblical viewpoint, time and creation have a beginning but no definitive end. This is clearly illustrated in *From the Garden to the City* written by John Dyer (2011). Dyer (2011:29) considers technology as a means “that developed with time and formulated a definition of technology by tracing the history and development of the term. The process teaches much about technology and its influence upon humanity. At one end of this story is a pristine garden prepared by God for humankind to develop and transform. At the other end is a glorious, heavenly city full of human creations, art, and technology. At the centre is our Saviour Jesus Christ crucified on a cross, the most horrific of all technological distortions, built by transforming a tree from the natural world into a tool of death. Yet in his resurrection, Christ redeemed even that tool, transforming it into the symbol of our faith that eternally portrays his power over death and sin. In the time between the garden and the city, between Christ’s first and second coming (when he will complete his work of redemption and restoration).”

It is the reason the physical order was created and will continue in some form forever, although the nature of time and space may be radically transformed. Such fundamental categories of existence belong to the covenant that the Triune God has made with finite personal beings. Believers are given “eternal life” - a life filled with the plenitude of the Lord, a life of elevated quality, finally with “spiritual bodies” (1 Cor. 15:44) - but always within some kind of time and space whether heavenly or earthly (cf. Rev. 22:2), as these seem essential to creation (Horell 2009:144).

2.6.4 View on development

Development, as part of the Enlightenment, has made the West superior and instilled the desire to use the earth. Economic and political progress has led to development, ultimately to the degree of destruction of the earth. Christians have not remained uninvolved or unaffected by such development. Like all other inhabitants of the universe, Christians are affected by the changes occurring in all spheres of life whether socially, politically or even that which disregards environmental conservation. Development has also shaped Christians’ worldviews.

³⁰ “The church fathers struggled with the concept of eternity as do Christian philosophers today. Some say that God exists in time as people do; others say that God in His transcendence exists outside of time. Augustine suggested that time was created along with the universe.” (The City of God XI, 6).

Van der Walt (2001:68) affirms that “development may have improved human welfare, but not humanity well-being or human dignity and have led to the exploitation of the environment, making creation less and less habitable for future generation.”

The abovementioned can be ascribed to the damage that Western technology, as part of Western culture, to other cultures inevitably wreaks. Van Der Walt (2001:69) argues that; “taking technology out of its original cultural milieu creates havoc, following the laws of its own making. When transferred to another culture, it threatens the receiving culture and finally replaces it. That is why in some quarters the development that comes with the West is rejected. Others moderately bemoan the fact that the non-western world tends to borrow the wrong aspects of Western culture. They borrow the profit motive of capitalism, but not the entrepreneurial spirit; the West’s consumption patterns, but not its techniques of production; its acquisitive appetite, but not its creative spirit.”

It can be concluded from the above that development has always trumped environmental issues, exploited for its wealth and for amassing riches by developing countries. The environment has thus become an object to be “milked” of its resources and abilities. This is evident in how the partitioning of Africa was manifested and how the colonial system of the West aimed to streamline the wealth of annexed colonial entities. There was no consideration of the environment or its welfare in the issuing years after colonisation. Africa is an example of how colonisation can leave a planet barren and groaning, in need of saving from total destruction.

2.6.5 View on religion

Religion is the demonstration of faith. Christians believe that God created the earth as his domain - not to be destroyed, but to be preserved for all who dwell on it. The Reformed tradition recognises the Bible as the authority, which clearly states that God created the earth and all that “is in it and upon which he laid its foundation on the seas and built it in the ocean depths.” (Ps. 24:1-2).

According to Erickson (2007:77), “God is the ultimate when it comes to religious matters. He has the right, both by virtue of who He is and what He does, to establish the standard for belief and practice. This authority is enshrined in the Bible, because it conveys his message. The Bible carries the same weight as God himself, were He to speak personally. God is transcendent; He goes beyond any categories and can never be fully grasped within human finite concepts or

human vocabulary. He is rather known, in as far as He reveals himself, but not comprehensively. These limitations are inherent in human beings. They are not the result of the fall or of individual human sin, but of the Creator-creature relationship.”

Erickson (2007:79).maintains that “the utterance from God is through the Holy Spirit, who guides believers into all the truth; because the authority from God which comes through the Holy Spirit makes such utterance valid and gives it authority (John 16:34). From this premise of John, the Spirit guides us into the truth, calling to remembrance the words of Jesus Christ, not speaking on his own, but speaking what he hears, bringing about conviction, witnessing to Christ. This should not be viewed as a new revelation, but that brings belief, persuasion and conviction.”

“This authority is like a command that instruct humanity on what to do and not what to do. It carries obedience from humanity and authority from God. Authority is mandatory in character and legalise action to be taken. Authority authorises, it grants freedom to act within boundaries. It authorises humanity to exercise immense freedom of action on and above the surface of the earth. The authority of the Bible is that it brings us primarily into contact with reality of God himself, whose authority has been there before creation. The Bible is a custodian/library of God’s authority as mentioned therein in an intrinsically manner.” (Wright, 2006:53-54).

It is why Calvin (2009:30) confirms that “because this relationship is acknowledged as the Word of God, and no person, unless void of common sense and the feelings of mankind, will have the desperate hardihood to refuse credit to the speaker sent by God. However, since no daily responses are given from heaven and that Scripture is the only record in which God has been pleased to consign his truth to perpetual remembrance, the full authority which they ought to possess with the faithful is not recognised, unless they are believed to have come from heaven, as directly as if God had been heard giving utterance to them.”

These realities are Bible bound, the Bible becomes the ultimately authority that provides knowledge and seeks to explain the mysteries which human beings cannot comprehend. This revelation can only be found in the Bible, as the authority. Gardner (1999:183) explains that “the Bible is the only source of knowledge that can enhance the human mind. Biblical truth gives ultimate meaning to life in this universe. The great Biblical doctrine of creation helps man see himself as more than a complex animal, but as having spiritual and eternal worth being made in the image of God. It helps to see that the physical world should be used, not misused, for man’s

well-being and a testimony to God's wisdom and glory. The transcendent God provides a basis for ultimate values and meaning.”

In addition, Gardner (1999:184).resonates that “teaching of God's love speaks powerfully to spiritual needs. Philosophers debate how the universal relates to the particulars, but the dramatic entrance of the eternal, infinite God into time and space in human history in the person of Jesus of Nazareth helps to see how finite humans can know the infinite God. The search for the good, the true and the beautiful finds much assistance from the Bible. The Bible gives a panoramic view of human history, from the creation to the final consummation. Scripture offers a perspective that can guides the view of the past, the present and the future even on environmental issues.”

The Bible does not reveal all possible truth about the world and life. Since God created the physical world, truth discovered in the physical world in these areas will ultimately agree with truth revealed in Scripture when both are rightly understood. Christians need not be anti-intellectual, standing in opposition to learning about the world and man. Because the undermining of the authority leads to sin and that sin can be the exploitation of the earth due to negligence of the mandate of stewardship. When Christians are learning about the earth, one aspect which is important is nature and life which is experienced on earth.

2.6.6 View on life

Makhado & Si Dean (2001:140) alludes that the “western thought left the holistic life view of the Middle-Ages in favour of a dualistic Enlightenment view, which brought change and from this move, Western Christianity bears the weight of Western dualism with it, such that the faith of the Gospel is a private matter between God and the individual, leaving the shaping of everyday communal affairs and the social order to the forces of secularism; outside the influence of the transforming power of the Gospel.”

Similarly, Van der Walt (2003:425) complement Makhado & Si Dean (2001) as he argues that; “life is a precious commodity that God has given to humanity as well as the creatures that inhabit the earth. Since life is from God alone, life should be preserved and not harmed. It should be noted that humanity is the son of the earth, because he and all other forms of life come from the earth. God breathing life into man made him a living organism and part of the living creation.”

In Gen. 1:28 God blessed all He created. The blessing was not solely directed at Adam and Eve, but the whole of creation. He also blessed the birds, fish and animals (Gen. 1:22). When Christ ascended to heaven, He lifted his hands in blessing (Luke 24:50-51). He did not only bless his disciples, but the whole groaning creation for which He has died.

Consequently, Horell (2009:138) complement Van Der Walt (2003) and adds that “God manifests a multiplicity of affections - all as a moral, purposeful Being. Just as Scripture establishes that each member of the Godhead reasons, exercises volition and manifests a plurality of feelings, so finite persons evince similar characteristics. Other aspects of the divine image include creativity, aesthetic appreciation, moral conscience, aptitude for dominion, a sense of immortality as well as the desire and capacity for an *I-thou* relationship.”

Human beings may have fallen into sin and suffer the defects of the Fall, *the imago Dei*, though disfigured, is not beyond recognition. Human beings have eternal value, because the Creator of the universe is also personal and God has come to humanity in Jesus Christ, the express image and manifestation of God.

Horell, 2009) adds that, “this manifestation of God gives Christians a new life, which is prepared for them by God himself. Because God owns and love his creation, God is grateful for that. That is why in Christianity the doctrine of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the structure and ontological ground for the realities of personhood; self-consciousness, rationality, self-determinative choices, a plethora of affections and emotions, a sense of afterlife, moral sensibilities of right and wrong, and the capacity for relationships with God and with other human beings. In Trinitarian faith, humanity has found its home.”

This is in line with Van der Walt’s (2003:426) assertion that for no reason can humanity inhabit a lifeless ground, mute plants, and dead animals. The animals, plants and life as parts of the creation has value. Their value does not solely lie in their use for human beings and humanity is not afforded the right or privilege to value God’s creatures more or less, according to particular personal values. “Trees do not merely exist to provide oxygen, firewood, furniture and paper to man and poultry should not be degraded as simply a source of meat by confining them to small cages their whole life. Plants, animals and trees serve the purpose of keeping balance in the ecosystem for ecosystem’s existence. Therefore, humanity should take cognisance of the

importance of trees, animals and plants as their contribution towards the ecosystem is paramount in sustaining it.”

Like Van der Walt (2003), Conradie (2011:59) asserts that “if humanity expects the best out of the earth, he needs to give the best. It is moving away from the notion that non-human beings are there to serve human beings, because it is that belief that leads to exploitation, killing and abuse. Every bit of creation has intrinsic value that includes the value to live, irrespective of whether human beings recognise it or not. Human beings as moral agents have the moral duty to protect them and their right to live, regardless of whether they see those animals as protected or unprotected specie. God does not prohibit the use of land, plants and animals, but their misuse or mistreatment.” Humanity must learn spiritual discernment in order to relate to the earth.

The above contentions suggest, in full awareness of the diversity in opinion among human beings, then that the basic premise of life is that man may not kill and destroy as he wishes (as seen in the poaching of rhinos and elephants to satisfy man’s lust for wealth). If man established a true relationship with earth and its organisms, creation would not be the object of exploitation and human greed.

2.7 Influence of spiritualism on the environment

From Merchant (1992:43) point of view, “the relation between spirituality and the environment is culturally bound, whether from a Christian or a non-Christian worldview. Many traditional cultures have described the earth as a nurturing mother in which minerals and metals ripens in the uterus of the Earth Mother, the mine is her vagina and metallurgy is the human hastening of the birth of the living metal in the artificial womb of the furnace - an abortion of the metal’s natural growth cycle before its time. This image of the earth as a living organism has served as a cultural constraint against the wrongful actions of human beings. One does not readily slay a mother, dig into her entrails for gold or mutilate her body, although commercial mining requires it.” As long as the earth is considered to be alive and sensitive, it will be considered a breach of human ethical behaviour to carry out destructive acts against it.”

The above claim is supported by Barry (2010:122) in his analyses of the findings of the tetrad³¹ programme concept on environment to investigate how humanity treats the environment and how the environment can be sustainable. He refers to four ideologies; “the environment is there to be conquered; the environment is there to be controlled; the environment is there to be exploited; and lastly the environment is there to be worshipped.” These four ideologies revolve around the relationship that the environment has with its inhabitants, namely humans and their spirituality.

Barry (2010:123) thus refers in his conclusion to patriarchy (owner of the land), which is compounded in the Western world by the roles ascribed to men and women through the Judeo-Christian faith.

Barry’s (2010:123) notion is similar in sentiment to Conradie’s (2005:282) assertion that; “Ecological theology is an attempt to retrieve the ecological wisdom in Christianity, in response to environmental threats and injustices. It is also an attempt to reinvestigate, rediscover and renew the Christian tradition in the light of the challenges posed by the environmental crisis. In other words, ecological theology offers a Christian critique of the cultural habits underlying ecological destruction and an ecological critique of Christianity. Ecological preservation is not only concerned with the question as to how Christianity can respond to environmental concerns, it also offers Christianity the opportunity for renewal and reformation.”

2.8 Conclusion

The chapter provides an analysis of the Christian perspective on the environment and from that viewpoint the study exposes how the Christian paradigm has been influenced by development, like technology and modern inventions, as it relates to the well-being of the earth. Even the Christian-based notion has failed to inspire Christians to care for the environment; instead, some Christians have exploited the earth. This exploitation and misuse has shown that although Christians know the law of conservation, the earth has still been wounded. The next chapter analyses and expounds the African traditional religion paradigm on the use/misuse of the earth, in order to identify points of convergence that may assist the formulation of an environmental missional paradigm that can save the earth.

³¹ “Tetrad is a program which creates, simulates data from, estimates, tests, predicts with and searches for causal and statistical models. The aim of the programme is to provide sophisticated methods in a friendly interface, requiring very little statistical sophistication of the user and no programming knowledge.” See www.phil.cmc.edu/tetrad/

CHAPTER THREE

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION (ATR) PARADIGM; WORLDVIEW AND THE USE/MISUSE OF THE EARTH

“To be able to have an informed dimensions of both Christianity and ATR, the study will in this chapter expound on how the ATR paradigm can impact on how ATR use/misuse the earth in Africa as it did on the previous chapter about Christianity. It will furthermore bring forth different worldview of ATR based on the African philosophy. Centuries ago Christians enjoyed supremacy over other faiths, which ushered in an era of complacency among Christians.” (Oke 2010:147). Oke (2010) further adds that “Christianity was regarded as the only true and saving religion. Today most people agree that freedom of religion is a basic right. This, together with a number of other factors, forces Christians to re-evaluate their attitude toward and understanding of other faiths.”

3.1 Background

African traditional religion (ATR) is based on the African worldview, i.e. Africans’ understanding and beliefs as well as how they relate to their world. It encompasses their experiences and how it has come to be the cornerstone of their beliefs and culture. It is a worldview severely impacted by the influx of missionaries into Africa and their influence on African culture. Missionaries set out to convert the so-called “heathens”, but were in reality sent by their respective governments to colonise African as mentioned in chapter two. Balia (2007:203) explains in his abstract as follows;

“The nineteenth-century missionary enterprise in Britain was given an enduring African dimension when six men and their families left for Southern Africa in 1834. Here they succeeded in establishing missions stations along the eastern coastline of Natal, where their main objective was to convert the Zulu king Dingaan and establish self-supporting indigenous churches among his people. Motivated in part by guilt over complicity in slavery, but also by a burning desire to save the heathen world, the missionaries carried with them a view of Africa that would be severely challenged by their new converts. There was a distinct lack of urgency to establish a native ministry, despite the principle of self-government which was consistently upheld as critical for successful missions. Africans were considered to be living in the muck and mire of sin, with no moral backbone, and having no conception of a God.”

Not surprisingly, their day of glad tidings would come when they were granted large tracts of land within tribal boundaries in order to establish “mission reserves,³² where they were able to exercise authority. This authority centred on establishing schools, hospitals, churches and training facilities in the “reserves”. In these isolated domains the missionary ruled as “chief” with authority to parcel out land to his new converts in order to sustain their agricultural livelihoods, but also to offer refuge to all those fleeing the dictates of their traditional rulers sometimes too despotic in their governance. It could well be argued that the thought of being independent, self-sufficient and in charge might have come naturally to those reared in congregational polity.

In support to Balia (2007;210), Etherington (2011;183) sees ‘mission stations’ or ‘mission reserves’ as follows; “mission schools taught the rudiments of literacy and numeracy essential to the functioning of a modern capitalist society. They also aimed to instil the habits of regular and disciplined industry required in modern workplaces. However, it has yet to be demonstrated that these practices were in any way crucial to the transformation of African and Asian societies. Societies where Christian missions were absent or a negligible presence – for example, Japan and Thailand – managed modernization perfectly well without them. In contrast, in some heavily missionized colonies such as South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, modernizing white supremacist regimes scorned the products of mission stations as useless or subversive.”

In elaborating the above mention stance, Etherington (2011:184), argues in Richard Elphick; *The Equality of Believers*, that the “instrument of control that almost emerged during the missionaries’ era was the “mission reserves” or “mission station” in the 19th century. Mission stations were sites of intense struggle even of violence. They were in many respect what missionaries had intended to be as learning centres; health centres and religious centres. Rather, as time unfolded, they were there to monitor, supervise, impose and change the cultural beliefs of the Indigenous people. And mainly they were there to enforce control and implement change and mind-set of the Africans.”

³² “Letter of Newton Adams, February 15, 1842, Missionary Herald 38 (1842); 341. Clifton Phillips notes that “it was the British who saw in this policy of apartheid or segregation the surest method of preserving the Bantu race. The Americans had an opportunity to help shape this program in 1846” when the missionaries served on the land claims commission. He concludes that “just as the London [Missionary] Society earlier had approved complete segregation as a solution to racial conflict, planting their missions in areas set aside for native reserves, the Americans co-operated fully in a scheme two of their number had had a hand in drawing up.” (Phillips, 1969: 220-21)

Not all missionaries saw their invitation by the kings as an opportunity to establish mission stations as a priority and conversion of heathens. Others like Eugène Casalis and Thomas Arbousset went to Lesotho on the invitation of King Moshoeshoe. On arrival in Lesotho, their focus was on mission through translation. Through translation they were able to accomplish their church planting mission in Lesotho. From this endeavour, the study assumes that Casalis and Arbousset aligned themselves to Sanneh (1989) book entitled *Translation the Message*; which have the following extract; “vernacular translation often converged with steps to encourage indigenous ascendancy. In their vernacular work, Christian missions helped nurse the sentiments for foe national cause, which mother tongues crystallized and incited.” (Sanneh 1989:125).

The above meant vernacular translation was a way of accommodating the Basotho indigenous people and the acceptability of Christianity was easy and not imposed by the missionaries. That is why their first objective was to learn the indigenous language. Thereafter, they were in the position to translate the Bible to vernacular. Translation of the Bible to indigenous language and them learning the Bible from the mother-tongue, the message was understood and read. Marginalisation of culture and inferiority complex were eliminated among the indigenous people, and the message was receptacle to the indigenous.

From the above, it can be concluded that not all missionaries had the illusion of “converting heathens” and bringing them to God. Others saw that as an opportunity to promote their imperialistic intention, whilst other like Casalis and Arbousset saw it as an opportunity that God mission as mentioned in the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) should be accomplished. This translation of message embraces culture and worldview and church planting becomes easy.

Despite the above which were positive, there were other negative aspects about some missionaries according to Balia (2007:210). Balia (2007) contents that “white missionaries in South Africa were all too conscious about their growing social status in the rapidly changing society to be swayed by such mental perception. Many preferred, instead, to dwell on the important role they perceived themselves to be playing in gaining land and other concessions from the colonial authorities. Similarly, the British working on the Natal coastal area found themselves caught in the midst of a land-grab between Zulus and British settlers. Newton Adams welcomed the British intention to reoccupy Natal in 1842, claiming that “we may now consider the native population of this country as permanent and safe under the protection of the English government”.

Balia concludes from the statement that the missionaries themselves were objects of such colonial protection, because shortly thereafter they were invited to serve on a commission to investigate land claims and make recommendations.

Balia (2007:212) further argues that “being appointed as land commissioners, the missionaries fortified their sense of security and superiority in an otherwise alien land. Additionally, the missionaries was the “rightful and gifted” to decide on what constituted the requisite evidence of piety in order to discern who might and might not be considered to belong to the Kingdom of God. It would be some time before the new spiritual “babes” would be ready to assume that role in any concerted way. For now, though, it was enough that “we do sometimes invite to our tables the native preachers, but we do not wish them to expect such favours.”³³

African beliefs were thus undermined by the missionaries, as affirmed by Balia (2007:211) who concludes that “the missionaries were the guardian of Western civilization wherever the idolatrous nature of pagan religion held sway. All evidence of Zulu character and culture had to be swept away and replaced, for there is nothing worth preserving in the native tongue. They would be no poorer to lose it. They have no books, no literature - no history.” This was done due to the illusion that Christianity was brought by missionaries to ignorant “heathens” to bring the Good News.

The above argument by Balia that Christianity was brought by missionaries is not fully supported. There are scholars who maintains that before the missionaries embarked on what was termed “partition of Africa”, Africans were religious inclined and Christianity was embedded in their worldview. Parrinder (1969:101); Heilderbrandt (1981:101) and Ayegboyin (1999) in Ore (2010:148) argues as follows;

“Obviously, Ayegboyin expresses that such observations are based on limited research and they are therefore misleading. He clarifies that the reality is that there were churches in Africa long before the nineteenth century, although the exact date could not be pinpointed. He reiterates that for this fact of unknown dating of the coming of Christianity to Africa the traditional belief is align with that of Geoffrey Parrinder’s position that; Christianity entered Africa in the first century of our era and it has had a continuous history in Egypt and Ethiopia so that it is truly a traditional religion of Africa. To Hildebrandt, Christianity came into Africa shortly after the

³³Wilder to Clark, August 6, 1874. Quoted in Dinnerstein, "The American Board Mission to the Zulu.

founding of the Christian Church at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost in AD 30. In actual fact one could say that Christianity came to Africa before the institutionalized church; for Joseph of Arimathea who carried the cross of Jesus Christ was believed to be an African probably from the modern day Turkey. This implies that even before the preaching of the day of Pentecost, African has had the taste of the Gospel.”

Still, missionary accounts of Zulu religious beliefs differed greatly. “Others were willing to concede the existence of *UmVelinqangi* or *uNkulunkulu* who had created the world, human beings and all creatures. Others believed that African traditional religion is not based on a body of beliefs that someone subscribes to or adopts; so that once you have agreed with those beliefs, you then become a member of the African traditional religion. African traditional religion is based on belonging, on being born into a community, a group of people, a clan and a family. African traditional religion includes those who are long gone, the ancestors or “living dead”; it includes the living today, the present community; it also includes those yet to be born. This means that belonging to that wide community of people through family group is the beginning of what it means to be part of African traditional religion.” (Jafta, 1992:82; Oladipo, 2010:45).

3.2 Introduction

In the past, most of African traditional religion was not recorded in writing and much of it was passed by word of mouth, through observation, through practice, from generation to generation and would require at times directly speaking to the holders of such, those who over the years have accumulated knowledge and wisdom about African traditional religion. Mbiti (1990:3) describes “this oral transmission as not written on paper, but in the people’s hearts, minds, rituals and religious personages like the priests, rainmakers, officiating elders and even kings. Everybody is a religious carrier. Many may look down on African traditional religion for its lack of recorded content, but that does not mean religious illiteracy.”

“African people are not religiously illiterate, but are traditional in character based on a particular tribe or clan worldview in Africa and from there the name African traditional religion. Since traditional religion permeates all areas of life, there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular; between religious and non-religious; between the spiritual and the material.” (Healey, 1981:25). Furthermore, Healey adds that “wherever the African is, there is his religion; he carries it to the fields, where he is sowing seeds or harvesting the crop; he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes his religion with

him to the examination room at school or university; if he is a politician he takes it to the house of parliament.”

In reference to the above explanation by Healy, Mbiti (1990:2) substantiate it as follows when describing the religion from an African’s perspective; “it is apparent that religion to Africans is; “how you live your daily life; what you do?, what you say?; and how you say it? All activity is religion. Religion to Africans is the way you live and what you do about that life and most importantly how you behave towards others. Religion is about others- it is not an individualistic venture, but one for the community.” To be human in Africa means to belong to the community and to do so involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community.

Mafico (2011:57) supports this inference in saying that “African culture and religion is intrinsically one and the same thing. An African cannot experience life without religion. Life is guided by religion and religion is how one interacts with all of nature and humanity. The difference between the Western and African worlds is that Western religion is based on an abstract concept of God - as a spiritual being - whilst African theology is the experience of life on the land that their ancestors have entrusted and the belief in the Supreme Being.”

Kruger *et al.* (2012:36) explains that “throughout most of Africa there is a belief in a Supreme Being, described by one or more names, either in terms of activities or place of abode.” This Supreme Being, whom Kruger (2012) refers to as God, is the Creator and upholder of all things. “He can be described as a parent, father, mother, grandfather, friend, saviour, shepherd, healer, protector, guardian, ruler, master and judge. People also conceive of God in ethical terms, such as loving, patient, generous, kind, just, perfect, holy, dependable, good, merciful, compassionate and caring. Africans relate to or worship God through praying; singing and dancing; making sacrifices and offerings; dedications and invoking blessings”.

Furthermore, “God is at the centre of African religious consciousness. An intense awareness of the spiritual world means that Africans know God through the lens of the primordial universe. The understanding of God through this lens transcends the knowledge of God provided solely through the lens of the physical world. God is manifested through the all-pervading fragrance of the Spirit and Africans know God primarily in the Spirit, rather than through dogma, doctrine and theological thinking influenced by the quasi-scientific worldview.” (Oladipo, 2010:45).

3.3 Supreme Being

At the centre of African traditional religion is the Supreme Being, who has this name in all societies and communities of Africa (Ikenga-Metuh, 1987:68; Mbiti, 1969; Jarvis, 2009:23).

According to Nürnberger (2007:10), “the Supreme Being is deemed to be the ultimate source of all power. Dynamistic power is within all and around all. It is closer than skin. Yet, it is unpredictable. It can lift up or pull down. This ambiguity of reality is reflected in perceptions regarding the Supreme Being. It can stand for truth and goodness, but also for undesirable situations and unfortunate events. The Supreme Being is usually personified and a lot of mythology is spun around it, but it is not necessarily experienced as a person in the Western sense of the word. In most cases it does not speak, listen or receive sacrifices. It is present, but inaccessible and that is why it is referred to by a personal name.”

In an African context a personal name is unique in each society and is filled with symbolic expression and meaning. The names often describe the nature and character of God, as perceived by the people, and portray people’s belief in reliance on the Supreme Being. Thence, Essien (2013:238) states that “the meaning of the name is different among different tribes in Africa; among the Ibibio, God is called *Abasi Ibom* (meaning- God of heaven and earth), in Nigeria; among the Igbo God is called *Chukwu* or *Chineke* (meaning- Creator of the World); among the Yoruba, God is called *Olodumare* or *Olorum* (meaning- Owner of the universe, Supreme god); the Edo people call God *Osanobwa* (meaning- the source of all beings who carries and sustain the world and the universe) ; the Nupe people call God *Soko* (meaning- Earth Mother), while God is called *Temearsu* or *Tamuno* (meaning- the Great) among the Ijos.”

According to Okungu (2000) “the diversity of cultures in Africa was matched by more or less a corresponding number of religious faiths before the coming of Christianity. But these religions varied in structure and were uniquely appealing to the individual communities. They were not recognised and appreciated for what they were by early visitors to the continent. The rites were considered repugnant. Africa, with its diversity of cultures, had, before the advent of Christianity, religions, each with a different structure according to the individual communities. These religions were long branded satanic by those who did not appreciate their significance.”

Throughout the continent, there were probably five component elements that went into the making of African traditional religions. These were/are the belief in God; belief in the divinities;

belief in spirits; belief in ancestors; and the practice of magic and medicine. These component elements are not invariably identical in Africa. Certain elements were more pronounced in certain areas than in others. For example, the case of divinities obtained very conspicuously over certain wide areas while in others it obtained rather tenuously, and still others, practically not at all. This confirms the slight, if not profound structural differences in the African religions. God, to both the African of the past Century and of today was and is a reality, and each community has a name for God, names which are unique to the deity.

In addition to the above, just as it is difficult to talk of an African culture, so it is equally difficult to talk of a traditional African religion. Africa of the past Century knew and recognised the supreme God, the creator, whom they referred to with different names. African Church Information Service in Nairobi avail the following information; “*How the Old African Religions were Structured*” dated the 11th December 2000, compiled by Vincent Okungu;

“For example, there is the Yoruba's Olodumare and Igbo's Chukwu, meaning Great Spirit, among others. Still, in many African societies, God is seen as unique, the absolute controller of the universe and the only one.”

According to Okere (1984:152), scholars such as Idowu Bolaji have described West Africa “as the home of divinities, yet there are variations from a very crowded pantheon to a very thinly populated one. The divinities came into being in the nature of things with regard to the divine ordering of the universe. Orisamla, (arch divinity among the Yoruba) derivation partaking of the very nature and metaphysical attributes of Olodumare, hence he was known as deity's son or deputy with powers and authority of royal son ship. This is why the Bahia community compared their cult with Christianity and identified with Jesus Christ. Olokun in Benin is known as the son of the Osanobwa, the son rested with power and majesty of his father.”

The Lozi of Zambia had the Supreme creator God, Nyambe/Mulimu, at the helm, followed in power and importance into royal and non-royal ancestors (bulimu in both cases). At the bottom were the *muluti* (shadows or spirits). The royal graves and ancestor cult received prayers and sacrifices addressed to the spirits of the ancestor kings.

Though fewer and fewer individuals still practice African traditional religions, it is nevertheless fundamental to note that any religion exists to carry the load of human spiritual, physical,

emotional and psychological needs or frustrations. All said, it is the belief in the Supreme creator God that gives human life meaning.

God is also beyond physical and mental images. The Zulus in South Africa, for example, use the word *Unkulunkulu* (the highest) for God. According to Setiloane (2000:62), “the word literally means “the one big beyond being big - unimaginably big”. The phrase in the Sotho-Tswana language, *Modimo ke moya*, can be translated as “God is Spirit.” God is frequently described in African cosmology and most consistently through God’s divine activities. Although God is not a noun, God is not impersonal. It cannot therefore be said that God “exists” in African cosmological vision, but that God is. When you awake to the fragrance of the Spirit that pervades the universe, then you can truly say that you know God in the African experience.

“Even in South Africa God is called by different names such as *Moliremo*, *Mdali*, *Qamata*, and *Mwelinzani*, depending on the meaning and understanding a tribe or clan ascribe to it. He is all powerful and the Creator of all. He is utterly other than his creation, in other words, He is transcendent and not to be approached lightly by humanity, for He will fill humanity with a numinous wave.” (Setiloane, 2000; Michael & Cook, 2009; Karamaga, 2014:97-98).

Illustrating this supremacy Mbiti (1970:11) refers to “God’s omnipotence in relation to natural phenomena. The Kiga people refer to God as “the One who makes the sun to set” and say that what He wants He takes away that very day, without waiting even one day more. Near or at the equator, where the Kiga people dwell, the rhythm of the rising and setting of the sun is seemingly the same throughout the year. It is something beyond human power, but God controls it and must therefore be omnipotent. The Gikuyu turn to God in times of great crises such as epidemics, droughts, calamities and wars.” They make a sacrifice for rain and pray to God through intermediaries, like ancestors, in terms that refer and appeal to his omnipotence as follows;

“You who make mountains tremble and rivers flow, we offer to you this sacrifice that you may bring us rain. People and children are crying. We beseech you to accept this, our sacrifice, and bring us prosperity.” (Mbiti, 1970:11)

Here, both people and animals appeal to God to use his great power to intervene with rain and prosperity, for it is only He who controls the weather and wealth. This control means God, from an African religion paradigm, is in charge.

Awolalu (1981:3-4) qualifies Mbiti's (1970:11) notion by asserting that "the Yoruba clan believe in the existence of a self-existent being, believed to be responsible for creating and upholding heaven and earth." Supreme Being is responsible for men and women and their being. Supreme Being is also the one who has brought into being divinities and spirits. It is believed that the Supreme Being appoints divinities and spirits to be his functionaries in the theocratic world, acting as intermediaries between humanity and the self-existent Being. From this notion, it can be assumed that the Yoruba people further believe that the Supreme Being is pure, which is why they associate the colour white with Him. "They consider God too great to directly approach him and that He has delegated the care of blacks to the *Orisa* (master of heaven). God enjoys abundance and gentle rest, whilst keeping his favour for the white man. It is the reason the white man attends God naturally, but blacks owe their sacrifices, their offerings and their prayers to *Orisa* only and He is the owner of the land and the creator."

All comes from God, who gives and takes as He wishes, but can be approached in times of trouble. This is evident in how African traditional religion views the creation of the earth and humanity.

3.4 Creation of the earth and man

Mafico (2011:61) explains that "the African regarded the land as a sacred heritage that could neither be sold nor purchased. Land was inherited and passed from generation to generation. This resembles the African religious context and African worldview that the land and traditions, observed by the people, are entrusted to the king as the custodian of culture, norms and tribal laws." The original owners thus felt anchored to the ancestral land, inherited from their forefathers. This however changed with the rise of colonialization.

Erstwhile, Mbiti (1971:162), has described God as follows; "God is seen as a "potter" who created man from clay. The Bambuti clan tells in another story that God made the body of the first man by kneading and then covered him with a skin and poured blood into his lifeless body. Man then breathed his first breath and God whispered softly in his ear; "You will beget children who will live in the forest." The man was called *Baatsi*.

According to Awolalu (1981), a similar story is that of the Fon tribe who maintains that "once God had set the universe in order and had created the animal and plant life, He formed the first human beings from clay and water. Others, like the Shilluk, maintain that man was made out of

different colours of clay and that is the reason for different skin pigmentation. He then gave man legs, with which to walk and run; then hands, with which to plant grain; eyes, with which to see that grain; and a mouth, with which to eat. Thereafter God gave man a tongue, with which to sing and talk; and finally ears, so that he may enjoy the sound of music, of dance and of the talk of great men. God then sent man out, a complete man. This idea of man created through clay and water is common in Africa.”

Frazer, (1975:22-23) indicates that the above creation myth of clay and water corresponds to the creation analogy of the Shilluk (*Ocolo*)³⁴, of the Sudan Region, as follows;

“The creator *Juok* moulded all people of earth. While he was engaged in the work of creation, he wandered about the world. In the land of the whites he found a pure white earth or sand, and out of it he shaped white people. Then he came to the land of Egypt and out of the mud of the Nile he made red or brown people. Lastly, he came to the land of *Col*, and finding there black earth he created black people out of it. The way in which he modelled human beings was this. He took a lump of earth and said to himself, “I will make humans, but they must be able to walk and run and go out into the fields, so I will give each of them two long legs, like the flamingo.” Having done so, he thought again, “They must be able to cultivate millet, so I will give each of them two arms, one to hold the hoe, and the other to tear up the weeds.” So he gave humans two arms. Then he thought again, “They must be able to see the millet, so I will give them two eyes.” He did so accordingly. Next he thought to himself, “They must be able to eat their millet, so I will give each a mouth.” And a mouth he gave accordingly. After that he thought within himself, “They must be able to dance and speak and sing and shout, and for these purposes they must have tongues.” And tongues he gave accordingly. Lastly the Deity said to himself, “They must be able to hear the noise of the dance and the speech of the great ones, and for that they need two ears.” So two ears each he gave, and sent them out into the world as perfect humans.”

What is paramount from the above discussion is that there is a Creator called the Supreme Being who have created both humanity and the earth. All creation is from the Supreme Being alone who is called by different name by different tribe in relation to their perspective and worldview.

3.5 Ancestorism and divinities

Awolalu (1981:65) explains that is “in the Yoruba tribe not every ancestor is worshiped, only those ancestors who lived well on earth and have been “justified” by *Olodumare* (one who has

³⁴ “Shilluk is the name of Arab origin. They call themselves Col or Ocolo, translated as “the children of Col”.

the fullness or superlative greatness; the everlasting majesty upon whom man depends) to go, in consequence of the final judgement, to *orun rere* (good heaven or heaven of the fathers) and are permitted to reincarnate. It is these good ancestors that are invoked, because it is believed that they have found favour with *Olodumare* and can be employed by the living in their appeal to the Supreme Being.”

Michael and Cook (2009:679) and Nürnberger (2007:25) describe ancestor veneration “as a non-spiritual device to secure eternal life or play down the horror and the finality of death, as death cannot be considered gaining a more glorious form of existence. The afterlife is not a desirable goal, except perhaps for the elderly who have become tired of life and feel frail and useless. Nobody looks forward to becoming an ancestor, since ancestors depend on the recognition of their offspring for continued authority and belonging. If they are not remembered, i.e. they are no longer respected as superiors by their descendants, they are lost.”

The above implication thereof, is that should you be an ancestor that has been forgotten by your people, you can punish and send them bad luck.

That is why, according to Jarvis (2009:19), “ancestor veneration means that African people live with an acute awareness of the spirit and believe that most events have some relationship to the influence of the “people without bodies”. Since the ancestors are believed to have influence over everyday events of life, bad and good fortune are attributed to the favour or displeasure of the ancestors.”

Ancestralism, therefore, creates a fatalistic outlook on life. Fear of these unknown supernatural powers drives people to seek supernatural answers, rather than practical and reasoned solutions. Belief that spiritual beings are the source of everything (good or bad) that occurs in life means that all diseases are caused by these spiritual beings, including HIV/AIDS. Munza (2005:78) explains as follows; “We are not satisfied with scientific medical treatment because we “KNOW” there is someone behind the disease who is causing it. It cannot be satisfactorily treated with medicine alone.” This means the ancestors are authoritative in nature.

This authority is even seen in times of dire straits, when the Supreme Being is approached to stop a “mishap” that has befallen the tribe. Tutu (1999) describes this as follows;

“The African’s notion of God was one which stressed his holy transcendence. When they were in dire straits, when all their usual attempts, for instance, failed to break a drought, then usually they approached this transcendent Supreme Being directly, they addressed their prayers to him without intermediary; but more usually, they approached him through the intercession of their ancestors - living dead. Those who should have known better, called it the cult of ancestors, ancestor’s worship.”

Setiloane (2000:20) supports the above notion that a human being does not have a body, but is a body. “Similarly, an ancestor is precisely the human being that once lived, not the spiritual part of his/her previous life. The body of the deceased is buried, rots and plays no further role. Yet, where ancestors “appear” for example in dreams, they appear in their full bodily form, exactly as they were known to exist. They are not “spirits”, but “presences” - the continuing presence of the past persons.” Denial of this notion can be viewed as taboo and disrespect to the ancestors.

That is why Essien (2013:239) argues that “the dead are regarded as the living dead and are part of the environment in which Africans live in as well as the development that comes with it. Even if African traditional religion believes God to be the Supreme Being who is in control and is omnipotent, they still maintain that God can do it all alone. God has certain agencies, like divinities, who are assigned certain specific functions to perform.”

Essien (2013:239) further explains that one group of these agencies/divinities is the anti-wickedness divinities, who punish moral offenders. “The Yoruba tribe also has multi-wickedness divinities, such as; *Ogun* (the god of iron), *Sango* (the god of thunder), *Sopona* (the god of smallpox) and *Esu* (the trickster; the inspector of rituals). *Abasi Ukot*, *Abasi Eyeyen*, and *Abasi esenowo/eseninuasiet* are all assigned the function of maintaining social order. When humanity is punished by these divinities, it is said to be a royal punishment because it is done on behalf of God, who has delegated power and authority to them. The ancestors also punish moral offenders in the family or dereliction of filial duties; all matters of grave concern in the family are referred to these superintendents of family affairs. Although they cannot act beyond their families, these divinities can also protect the family members. Such protection will, however, be denied if these members are not in tune with what should keep the family and society together as a communal entity. The role of these divinities is to keep the social order and enforce the authority of the ancestors.”

Punishment and happiness of the African people is on the shoulders of the ancestors and the mood of the divinities. If both are unhappy then the wrath will befall who ever according to them is guilty and did not appease them.

3.6 Sin and Salvation

From the above discussions, sin in an African worldview is about erring in terms of the community, not to God. God can only be approached in times that may be seen as “bad-luck” when there is no rain or when there is an epidemic. Adeyemo (1979:52-53) mentions that “in African traditional religion sins are grouped into two categories, namely major and minor sins. The major sins (*Ese nla*) include violation of tribal taboos, such as revealing the secret of the events that occur in the shrine to women or the uninitiated; adultery with a neighbour’s wife or the wife of a relative; stealing; murder; and witchcraft. The punishment for major sins varies from drinking of human waste matter to capital punishment. In some cases, adultery demands that the guilty party drink wine mixed with human waste from the adulterous woman. Minor sins (*Ese kekere*) comprise of the day-to-day shortcomings of every individual such as lying, disobedience, selfishness and failure to show hospitality to strangers. No serious punishment is attached to minor sins. Sometimes the offender is scolded in family circles or by friends.”

Thence, Turaki (1997:71) explains that “in African traditional religion, which is based on the African worldview, sin, shame and guilt are felt by individuals and groups only in relationship to kinship and not in terms of outsiders or strangers. One sins only against kinsfolk and feels ashamed or guilty because of them. The behaviour, attitudes and practices of individuals and groups within the context of the modern state do not carry with them any strong sense of sin, shame or guilt. It is on account of this that the state’s moral and ethical codes are not always adhered to or respected. They are usually considered to be of the outside world, hence lacking legitimacy and authority.”

In complementing Adeyemo (1979) and Turaki (1997) Van der Walt (2001:71) concludes that “to Africans salvation is not about belonging to God, but to an extended family or community, clan and tribe at peace with the spirit world. Living in relationship with the powerful, omnipresent spirit is inseparable from Africans’ daily lives and imperative to them. Because of the unpredictability of the world and humanity’s lack of power, spirits have to be appeased and manipulated through pacification. In the act of pacification human beings need to perform certain rituals of which the basic element is water.”

From the above it could be inferred that one can only be saved through communalism, if one is not in a collectivism relationship with members of the community then salvation cannot be realised. Salvation relies on humanity relationship with others. Without being in fellowship with others humanity cannot be saved. The relationship with the spirits should be maintained at all costs.

3.7 Water and healing

Water which is finite and increasingly scarce commodity is a vital substance in the ritual life of the African initiated churches, including African traditional religion. According to Adewale (1986:28), “the use of water for cultic rituals is crucial for the religion and social life of the adherents of the African traditional religion and culture. E.g. the Yoruba tribe religion, water, whether running streams or wells plays a positive or negative role in all forms of divine- minor or major worship. Ritual ceremonies and socio-religion rites performed in honour of ancestors on behalf of human beings.” All this are done through a ritual bath.

Fatokun (2008:336) aligns with Adewale (1986) that “ritual bath is essential in healing and deliverance rituals of the African traditional religion especially those who wears “white garments”. This explains why they worship near the river or the stream. Ritual bath prescription is believed to be a very effective ritual in dealing with any problem of life. Cases like; attack with sicknesses and diseases. Joblessness, barrenness, late marriage, stagnation in business and bad luck are administered through a different forms of ritual bath. The common one is the flowing or running ritual bath which can be found in rivers or streams. If that is not available stagnant ritual bath is used.”

They emphasise that water has both creative and re-creative virtues. “Through the use of water, as the symbol of life in prayer, God can bring into being new things and “put things right” that have gone wrong in human life. This is why, more than any element of ritual and even more than anointing oil, water is used as the stimulant of faith in prayer rituals” (Fatokun 2008:351).

The above has explained the role of water and its symbolism. Water is further used as the source of healing because it plays an essential condiment in healing.

According to Essien (2013:237) “most of the African tribes in Africa believe in some forms and methods of orthodox healthcare for treating disease and sickness, African traditional religion

believes in mystical forces such as amulets, charms, herbs, sorcery, witchcraft and medicine. It is in this regard that misfortunes, disease, mishap and sickness are seen or believed to affect victims - even without direct contact. This explains the crucial position traditional medicine men and diviners hold in the healing and healthcare of Africans. Africans believe that Western healthcare programmes are expensive and slow to achieve much needed results. In addition, Africans are unhappy about the delay at health centres. The home delivery service systems provided by the traditional religious priests, also known as *Abia Idiong*, makes it more convenient for the sick and the elderly to receive treatment.”

“In an African set-up or society, shrines are found everywhere as symbols of worship and channels of communication and healing between humanity and spiritual worlds. The African landscape is dotted with sacred places, which are focal points for medicine and healing. They believe that God puts the “soul”, the vital force, into human beings and thus makes them living persons. This shows that God alone controls creation - a belief pattern that constitutes a central theme in African religion and healing. Africans have a subtle orchestration notion about God as the originator and prime source of healing. The rituals as they are conducted are concerned with controlling and harnessing this force to heal tribal members and are performed in correlation with nature, spirits and other benevolent alien forces.” (Essien 2013:238-239).

From the above, it can be assumed that hope of healing and purification through rituals is the prerogative of the divinities who approach the ancestors for assistance. Healing can only be possible if the ancestors accedes to the request and the Supreme Being is approached to give prescription on what to administer to the patient. Healing is bestowed on priests or divinities not on God, the healer.

Having expounded the African paradigm, the focus now shifts to how the African traditional religion paradigm (that has undergone change) has led to the use/misuse of the environment. Then African worldviews and their relationship with the paradigm, especially the environment, are unpacked as it relates to this study.

3.8 African traditional religion and the misuse of the environment

The above discussion has shown that water is an essential element of healing, cleansing and purification. From the African traditional religion’s perspective and yet the water shortage

brought about by climate change and the environmental circumstances man faces, water should be preserved at all times for future generations and for times of drought.

According to Fatokun (2008:354), “the Osun River is subjected to contingency of local tribes, clans and worldwide people who frequent the river to draw water. There is a notion that the water in that river can bring healing due to its supernatural powers of purification. This mentality has stretched the river capacity- meaning the demand cannot handle the supply. Due to that the river is subjected to degradation.”

Furthermore, Fatokun (2008:355) adds that; “the Osun River is diminishing, which is attributed to the abuse and exploitation of the river and water reservoir. This will in the long run result in the river running dry. What was sacred and good for the Yoruba people and beneficial to the religious will turn into a disaster for the Yoruba people and for the environment as well, as a result of the pressure exerted on the river and the demand for water.”

Aside from the source of water for washing and drinking, there are other items that are used during the purification, healing and cleansing rituals, e.g. snuff, toilet paper, dead hens, goats, sheep, candles and matchsticks. The use of such items contributes to immeasurable damage to the river and its surroundings, if they are not monitored. This contamination of their drinking water could become a severe health hazard for the Yoruba people.

The above concern is supported by Fatokun (2008:356) who relates how the large number of people drawing water from Ilesha,³⁵ competing for access to this sanctified stream, led to the stream soon drying up. In their desperation to fill their bottles for prayer during healing and cleansing prayer’s ceremonies, people turned to the nearby abandoned muddy and overgrown with thickets stream called *Ora*. The rush was such that the over-excited crowd reportedly trampled with their feet the wild and tall grasses. The actions of the Yoruba tribe is tantamount to misuse of the earth by African traditional religion in search of so-called happiness, success, protection from enemies and better life with the aid of water.

In addition, Fatokun (2008:373) asserts that “the way and manner some of the churches within African traditional religion are polluting water resources, constitutes a public nuisance to the

³⁵ “A stream called Ilesha (Ijesha, a subtribe of the Yoruba) from Ibokun, 12 miles (19 km) east, it remained a small town subservient to the Ijesha kingdom of Ilesha, to the southeast, until it was greatly enlarged in the early 19th century by an influx of Oyo-Yorubas fleeing from the Fulani conquerors.” See www.britannica.com/place/Oshogbo

community. The ritual bathing and different forms of deliverance rituals some of the churches carry out on the banks of water sources create a great deal of pollution by discarding anointing oil, ritual candles, soap remnants, sponges and at times personal clothing items into the river or stream to the detriment of the water creatures in these water sources.”

Fatokun (2008:374) further emphasises that “the chemical substances, like snuff and candles, damage the bio-diversity of water and water species. Some species might be unconsciously wiped out of existence in the course of persistent pollution of water by purification and cleansing ritual baths. They also do damage to other users of water sources. Not taking into consideration how the chemicals and carcasses of animals affect rivers/streams can be called exploitation or abuse of the environment in the name of cleansing, healing and purification. The next section thus examines the environment in terms of African traditional religion.”

Besides healing in which water serves as a condiment, African traditional religion use traditional medicine which are derived from the roots of the trees and the plants in the healing process. This action contribute immensely to the destruction of the ecosystem. Because the traditional medicine are plugged from the earth are not replaced thereby total elimination of the trees or plants is evident.

The above is complemented by Mulaa (2014:365) who describe the misuse as follows; “traditional medicine is complementary and not necessarily a replacement of western medicine. Traditional medicine is a culture, a way of life for many in Africa. Thence, practices of traditional medicine are integrated into traditional values. These medicines are used in the treatment of diseases and enhancement of well-being. That human healing is connected to the environment and compels humanity to explore and exploit the environment resources to the fullest in search of those items of medicinal value that can be used to better human health.”

The above healing process might be beneficial to humanity, but it affects the environment and contribute negatively towards the up keeping of the environment. It can be concluded that the selfishness of humanity is satisfied at the expense of the earth. And this is tantamount to misuse.

3.8.1 African traditional religion and the environment

The process of healing, cleansing and purification demonstrates how the environment is disregarded or abused. The environment has been seriously affected by man’s actions and how

man has taken to controlling it, instead of being a steward. The romanticising and venerating of culture and beliefs have led to environment being exploited. This control in the name of culture is illustrated by the attitude the Shona tribe takes to the environment, as described by Taringa (2006:201) in an article titled *How Environmental is African Traditional Religion*. It details the following discourse that highlight the contribution of African traditional religion to the misuse of the earth in Africa.

Taringa (2006:203) relates, in reference to Turaki (1999), how the Shona believe in the Supreme Being as with all African traditional religion adherents. This belief is based on how they interpret their worldview and their surroundings. This interpretation is based on belief and life experience, which plays a vital role in their culture and understanding. According to Taringa (2006:203), “the Shona are no different than other African tribes whose spiritual world consists of God (*Mwari*) - name of the Supreme Being of the Shona. The Shona believe that *Mwari* created the world and everything in it. *Mwari* is regarded as the Great Spirit whose voice used to be heard at the Matopo hills. The Great Spirit *Mwari* is also sometimes referred to as *mudzimumukuru* (great ancestral spirit). Most Shona people believe that nature is a product of ancestral spirits, probably with *Mwari* as their leader. This belief is found in the Shona myth of creation.”

3.8.2 The natural world

“The human world, like the natural world of the Shona people, consists of the living, the dead (ancestors) and those yet to be born. There is, therefore, emphasis on obedience to hierarchical powers, human and spiritual. Authority, old age and the spiritual are regarded as sacred. Human life is also one with the animals, the plants and the rest of the world.” (Adeyemo, 1997:61).

This would imply that the Shona hold a paradoxical belief that the ancestral spirits are in control and must be approached at all times. It suggests that their belief is based on the understanding that the natural world is guided and controlled by the ancestors. “The ancestors are the cornerstone of ecology. Man thus has no say in caring for the earth and cannot contribute positively to its preservation. All advice and action lie in the hands of the ancestors. Man can thus conveniently shirk his responsibility towards environment.” (Taringa, 2006:203).

3.8.3 The land

“The Shona shares with most Africans the belief that land is sacred, because it belongs to the ancestors. It is an ancestral land and bears the remains of the ancestors, particularly in the form of graves of chiefs. Shona religion is based on the grave. In the central rituals of *kumutsa midzimu* (rituals in honour of ancestors) the point of entry is the grave. In other rituals libations are poured on the ground and umbilical cords are buried. It is the abode of the dead. The counting of family members always includes *varipasi* (those in the underworld).” (Adeyemo, 1997:63).

As a result, “the land is personified in sayings such as *pasirat-samwa, pasi panodya* (the land is angry, the land can kill). As explained above, ancestral spirits and chiefs own the land. Upon inauguration, the chief holds in his clenched fist soil mixed with the body fluids of the late chief/just soil from his grave. It is primarily the chieftdom that stands in special relationship to the land, as the land is bequeathed to the chief by the ancestors. Land belongs to the living, the unborn and the dead. Man is therefore not entitled to do as he pleases with land, because it is the property of the ancestors and is as such sacred. The steward of the land is the chief (Taringa 2006:204). The chief exploring the land for his own benefit is not questioned, since the king is the sole owner of the land.”

As indicated in Conradie (2011:71-72), the above is contrary to the statement of the African Regional Consultation on Environment and Sustainability, held at Machakos in Kenya on 6-10 May 2002, in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Developments (Johannesburg 2002) in the following extract from *The Earth Belongs to God*;

- “The land does not belong to us as people. Instead we belong to the land.
- We came from the earth and to the earth we will return.
- We are not living on the earth; we are part of the earth’s biosphere.
- We form part of the land and we live from the earth for the flourishing of the earth.
- The well-being of the earth transcends all of us because it is something bigger than our own interest.”

The above statement clearly shows that the king has no jurisdiction to claim that the earth belongs to him and cannot with authority claim to control the earth as a trustee. The land belongs to God and the king is there through God’s will, not his own strength.

3.8.4 The animals and taboos

“The chief acts as the trustee and allocates land to people. The land does not have a marketable value and cannot be sold or transferred to another. The chief also ensures that people refrain from certain taboos - e.g. the taboo of commoners eating the flesh of an ant bear, because it burrows in the land and is a delicacy of the chief. Furthermore, the chief also authorises through ritual the gathering of wild fruit in forests regarded as sacred. He prohibits and allows the cutting of certain trees and the hunting of certain animals and the pollution of certain water bodies. So the fundamental attitude to land is a religious one and is based on fear of mystical sanction by the ancestors. The chief's family may even protect some animals of religious significance purely for consumption. Thus the chief and his family have privileged access to natural resources, as with all other aspects of nature like animals.” (Taringa, 2006: 205).

“The Shona, like many other African people, recognise that spirits operate in the human world through animals, birds and fish. Each Shona subgroup has its own taboos and restrictions in terms of particular animals. Certain animals and birds like *mvuu* (hippo), *hove* (fish), *mheta* (water-python), *gawe* (crocodile), *hungwe* (fish-eagle), *mbiti* (otter), *soko* (monkey), *shava* (antelope), *beta* (termites), *humba* (wildpig/avarthog), *nzou* (elephant), *shumba* (lion) and *nyati* (buffalo) are considered totems.” (Taringa, 2006: 206; LenkaBula, 2008; 381).

Animals classified as totems are respected and treated as such. This clear from what LenkaBula (2008; 386) alludes to about how Africans relate to totems, which describe the connectedness and centeredness of creation with the Africans. This implies that most totemic animals are protected or endangered species and must be treated as such. The Shona kill them for special rituals or for using their skin for ceremonial dress for chiefs or when diviners perform rituals for public interest.

“Totemism is also prevalent among the Akan society, as a means of preserving animal endangered species. *Totem* is a term derived from the North American Ojibwa word *ototomen* or maternal relatives.” (Rose *et al* 2003). Amongst the Akan people, the largest ethnic group in Ghana, the word which most closely fits the understanding of totem is *Akyeneboa*. This term is literally translated as “an animal that one leans upon or relies on for spiritual protection” (Awuah-Nyameke, 2012:85). The study of totems shows that apart from the religious undertone, the concept of totemism helps in the conservation of the flora and fauna. This is because totemic

plants and animals are not harmed, but are rather protected in traditional African societies and thereby protect the lives of the endangered species.

The Shona associate other animals that are not totemic animals such as the owl, tortoise and hyena with a bad omen. Killing such animals is believed to be a bad omen, given the Shona belief that these animals are used in witchcraft. Sometimes other animals are killed in large numbers in the belief to hunt down alien spirits invoked by witchcraft.

Similarly, the Akan tribe identified sacred groves and the prohibitive regulations- groves are conserved and maintained through a combination of taboos, prohibitions, beliefs and restrictions, which are implemented so as to enable protection to the environment from being destroyed through hunting and deforestation. This is applicable to what Anane (1997;101) discovered about the monkeys in the Boabeng-Fiema village of the Nkoranza District of Ghana with a diverse types of rare species of monkeys, like the Black and White *Colobus* and *Mona* monkeys. These type of monkeys are not to be harmed or hunted because the Akan refer to them as “children of the gods.” The naming is due to the fact that their abode is on the sacred groves.

From the above practice as indicated by Anane (1997), “most monkey species has been conserved and that made it possible for those species not to be eliminated. The non-elimination of this monkey has contributed towards preservation of the environment and the ecology of the Ghanaians in Nkoranza District. Further scientific research will be possible due to this practice. The practice by the Ghana people has contributed immensely to the preservation of special species. The species mentioned had enhanced other spheres of study like anthropology and wildlife. Furthermore, it has boasted the tourist attraction whereby promoting economic conditions of the indigenous people of Ghana.”

3.8.5 Trees, forests and mountain forests

From Daneel (1998:208) findings, the Shona believe “that particular trees, forests and mountain forests contain spirits. They develop, like in the case of animals, taboos around the cutting and destruction of certain trees, shrubs and forests. Forests identified as sacred groves are protected and are traditionally called *rambatemwa*. This literally means “woodlands that cannot be cut”. The ancestral spirits rest there. They are the passage and habitat of *mhondoro* (ancestral spirits in the form of animals). The Shona consider it morally wrong to cut trees in these places. Firewood and building material are gathered from places other than these sacred places.”

According to Awuah-Nyameke, (2009a: 30) “in around the Akan tribe settlement, there are trees which consists of 125 species which include rare ones like *Pericopsis elata*. These species are found in the sacred groves. These sacred groves are not only shrines, but also serve as windbreaks and aid in photosynthesis for oxygen production, essential for human survival. Trees and plantations serves an essential part in the ecosystem of the Akan tribe. This contribution or measures by the Akan tribe is necessary for the improvement and the preservation of environment. Better more, if the plantation is unpreserved the earth will turn into a “desert” and humanity and animals will find hard to survive.”

The contributions and initiatives of the Akan in Ghana reflect how the African takes the preservation of earth serious. These efforts could play a significant role towards developing a stewardship paradigm that will cultivate and guard Africa for the generations to come.

3.8.6 Water bodies/wetlands

“Water bodies/wetlands are sacred, as the abode of animals associated with spirits. The Shona use the concept *kuyera* in relation with this of which the closest English translation is “abstinence.” This means people should approach sacred water bodies carefully and observe taboos, such as refraining from the use of iron buckets to draw water from these places. They must use gourds, wooden or clay containers that have not been used for cooking. The guardians of wetlands are animals such as the python and *njuzu* (water spirits). The Shona believe that these animals keep these waters on behalf of *varipasi* (underworld) and wrongdoers may be drowned in the pool by these animals.” (Taringa, 2006:207).

Water from such sources is used for ritual purposes. For example, the most Africans believe that it has healing powers and can be used by traditional healers to initiate spirit possession and cooling avenging spirits. Some water sources are associated with a historical healing spirit medium.

This can be alluded to what Mukamuri (1995:297) ascertained that; “territorial cults are rituals to counteract droughts, floods, blights, pests and epidemic disease afflicting cattle and man ... territorial cults function in respect of the well-being of the community, its fields and livestock ... and the general economic interests ... they also issue and enforce directives with regard to a community's use of the environment ... The impact of territorial cults on the ecological system is

such that, borrowing Rappaport's phrase, we may justifiably speak of a 'ritually directed ecosystem.'

From the above discourses, Taringa (2006:208) can articulate as follows; "does the above analysis of Shona attitudes to nature suggest that at the heart of Shona religion stands the question of environmental conservation? Theoretically one can give an affirmative answer and argue that Shona religion necessarily serve environmental functions. This is the position of the romantic school. It tends to imply that the Shona plan to practice such attitudes in the way a religious environmentalist would do. The problem is that while theoretically the Shona believe that they are kin to nature in practice, their attitudes are ambivalent and discriminative."

Taringa (2006:211) further argues that "the Shona attitudes to nature show that not all animals, plant life and water sources are sacred. This means not all aspects of nature play a pivotal and vital role in their beliefs about salvation. So there is a different understanding of nature in terms of its sacredness. As a result, some aspects are treated with least care and reverence. Regarding totemic animals, the issue is even ambivalent as ecologically responsible and harmful attitudes coincide. In terms of environmental conservation, it means the least revered species are more prone to destruction than those the Shona believe are imbued with spirits. So this may lead to the problem of overexploitation and underutilisation of natural resources."

After articulating her argument, Taringa (2006:214) reaches the following conclusion; In the light of this we can note five attitudes to nature. These are to maintain, obey and act on it. The first two are related to sacred aspects of nature. They are primarily based on fear of reprisal from powerful ancestral spirits. As we mentioned in the discussions above the attitudes are one of placation appeal and coercion. Sacred aspects are not indifferent. They are morally significant. They care. They are involved in conduct. So they constitute a system of moral consequences. This is why respect is based on fear rather than on environmental consciousness.

Reverence to some aspects of nature is a religious attitude that develops around social, political and economic spheres of life. The whole scheme is tied to expressing loyalty to the chief. We saw how the chief is respected because of his connection with sovereignty over land. He holds land as a trustee of ancestral spirits who are the real owners. The spirits are approached through the chief who works in close association with spirit mediums. The chief is the one who intercedes with his ancestors who are linked to the productivity of the land. So ecologically

responsible attitudes are stronger when attached to traditional social, political and economic organization.” We noted how this results in a privileged access to natural resources by the chief and his close kin.

From the above deliberations by Taringa (2006) it is evident that culture has taken the upper hand and has led to discrimination among species - what is not cultural and in line with the belief must be mistreated, because the chief or culture rejects it as non-conformist. If the status quo persists, the non-conformist classified species will be eradicated from the earth. This in itself is the misuse of the earth by African traditional religion.

The mistreatment of the species was resonated by Baidi-Ntiamoa (1971:120) who refers to the over-exploited of the species in West Africa. “In Ghana, pygmy hippotamus has been exterminated, while large numbers of species including the manatee, aardvark and various primates, olice colobus, black and white colobus are in danger of extermination. This is chiefly as the results of over-exploitation and the habitat destruction by the population of the wildest animals’ species in the region at dangerously low levels.”

That is why, taking away the responsibility of stewardship from man and laying it at the feet of the chief and ancestors makes land preservation difficult and can have detrimental consequences like poaching and illegal exploration, if allowed by the chief or by culture and belief. Humanity should be a steward and responsibility should be shared among all. This practice will ingrain the realisation that one of humanity main duties is to look after the environment, because humanity is part of it.

This chapter has up to this point detailed the cultural and religious basis of African traditional religion. That leads to the conclusion that culture and belief are the two core factors that contribute towards how Africans perceive the world in which they live. The chapter now shifts focus to the African worldview and its effects on the environment.

3.9 African worldview

Otijele (1991:9) resonates that “the African traditional religion (and also the worldview that underlies it, namely the African worldview) is essentially concerned with beliefs about and valuational attitudes of Africans toward the Supreme Being, suprahuman spirits and towards human beings (the unborn, the living, living dead/ancestor spirits, nature spirits, organic and

inorganic matter). These beliefs and attitudes also reveal Africans' awareness of the universe (and reality as a whole) as mystery. African traditional religion and by inference the African worldview, therefore entail a confrontation with mystery and an open-ended conscious or subconscious search for meaning in human existence and its ontological milieu."

The results of the confrontation with mystery and the on-going search for meaning may sometimes be expressed individualistically but, by and large, they are expressed corporately through communal interactions in the forms of mythologies, poems, rituals, art and other social symbols. In other words, the oral pictorial or ritualistic texts of the African traditional worldview are mostly the collective product of the community. As Imasogie (1986:66) explains, "the typical African worldview sees the universe as a multidimensional entity inhabited by hierarchical forces of spiritual beings and forces. The earth is seen as an arena where these spiritual beings and forces interact with man for good or ill depending upon the circumstances."

Imasogie (1982:56) states "the earth is, therefore, not only mysterious but sacred and impregnated with good and evil as well as neutral spiritual force which can be exploited by man". It is clear, from Imasogie's (1982:56) that "the Supreme Being is a class in himself and is the creator and ultimate controller of all spiritual beings, all human beings and the mysterious spiritual forces in the universe as well as the organic and inorganic nature."

The multidimensional aspects of the African worldview may be adequately analysed and evaluated under the following few recurrent thematic strands.

3.9.1 View on creation

Kirby (2007:13) maintains that "the traditional African considers God, the Supreme Being, as the creator of the universe. The Supreme Being who created the universe at some unknown point in the distant past. This Being continues to be involved, but also distant from humanity because God does not interfere with humanity's daily activities. God only becomes involved in the process of new creation through his control of reproduction and procreation, sustenance and governance and through the establishment of law and order by ordination of kings and chiefs and through the enablement of the smooth realisation of prenatal destiny of individual human beings."

An African believes that God created at least three categories of existence, namely; the spirits; humans, animals and plant life; and the inanimate or inorganic nature. There are several types of spirit-beings including the divinities, the nature spirits (good and bad) and the ancestral spirits as well as the prenatal human spirits (souls?).

Kirby (2007:14) further argues that “besides having many divinities and spirits, God is an abstract and philosophical entity that possesses divine attributes. It is very difficult to explain the concept of the Supreme; God by definition is beyond description, designation and category. Each tradition opens the story with the Creator, the Supreme Being, albeit with different names.”

The stories told about the Creator, i.e. creation narratives seek to explain the how and the why of the origins of the world and man. The Creator, first and foremost, is the Moulder of all; Giver of breath and life; Giver of rain and sunshine; One who brings the seasons and God of destiny. God is Spirit and the Spirit is often said to be transcendent, living in heaven where men/women naturally revere and recognise his greatness. The divine attributes associated with the Spirit usually include descriptions such as all-knowing, all-seeing, all-doing and eternal. Physical human characteristics are also assigned to the Supreme Being; just, powerful, wise and benevolent. The First Ancestor, the Ultimate Great, the Great Spirit is best captured in the following creation myth, as an example, in which the Tswana people of Botswana perceive the Creator as follows;

“*Modimo* was the Creator. He distributed good things, appeared in the east and belonged to the element water. At the same time he was a destroyer, a terrifying creature responsible for drought, hail, cyclones and earthquakes. When these things happened, he appeared in the west and was part of the element fire. *Modimo* was also sky and light, earth and root. He was unique and singular. He had no ancestors, no past or future. He pervaded the whole of creation. His name was taboo and could be spoken only by priests and seers.”

3.9.2 View on nature and life

According to Makhado & Si Dean (2001:142), “the core elements of the Afrocentric worldview include a strong sense of community and holistic approach to life...life considered as an exclusive property of the Supreme Deity”.

Makhado & Si Dean (2001:142) is complemented by Nwaigbo (2013:157) who asserts that; “the African’s view of the earth is one of relationship with nature, Mother Earth. In describing

this relationship, uses an analogy of the earth as sacrifice and argues from that perspective that the African worldview does not distinguish between the sacred and the secular. “It is only experienced in the context of the secular - both build an inseparable unity. This salutary manner of understanding the world of nature/creation must be taken seriously in a sacrificial theology of ecology in Africa, underscored by repeated reference to the holy and sacred. In African religious worldviews, the earth and all nature is sacred and energised with the spiritual forces. The African religious views find the presence of the spirits throughout the cosmos, especially the significance of the spirits of the ancestors who bring blessings, fertility, health and life to humanity.”

Mother Nature is no longer the object of manipulation by industrialist economic forces. This worldview enables them to take control of their own destiny and bring about communities which are truly humane. The crucial concept here is that of community, which gives the concept of ecology its particular right. In this community, a human person is precious and his/her life is equally unconditionally protected. The lives of animals, plants, mountains and seas deserve the same protection, preservation and care. The unbridled exploitation of natural resources of life, insensitive destruction of the biosphere and degradation of the cosmos are all acts of injustice. Human beings have the responsibility to care for Mother Earth.

The above relates to Taringa’s (2006:211) conclusion about the African worldview on nature. Taringa (2006:211) maintains that “Shona practices reflect that not all animals, plant life and water sources are sacred.” In other words, not all aspects of nature play a pivotal and vital role in their beliefs about salvation. So there is a different understanding of nature in terms of its sacredness and as a result some aspects are treated with less care and reverence. Regarding totemic animals the issue is even ambivalent as ecologically responsible and harmful attitudes coincide. It means, in terms of environmental conservation, the less revered species are more prone to destruction than those the Shona believe are imbued with spirits. This may well lead to exploitation and underutilisation of natural resources.

The above is complemented by Oladipo (2010:46) who asserts that “God is central to everything that is real for Africans. Contrary to the understanding of some scholars, God is not equated with nature within the African metaphysical understanding. God is properly distinguished from creation, but God’s “biography” is more clearly and more abundantly revealed through nature and Africans know God first through nature.”

From the above discussion, the study can conclude that the Supreme Being plays a prominent role in the social life and worldview of the African traditional religion. Everything is from the Supreme Being who gives life, food, and creation. So for the survival of the African traditional religion, they have to recognise and pay homage to the Supreme Being at all times.

3.9.3 View on time

“The concept of time aids in explaining beliefs, attitudes, practices and the general way of life of African people not only in the traditional scenario, but also in the modern situation whether political, economic, education or religious.” (Mbiti, 1990:16).

Van der Walt (2003:161), in reference to Mbiti (1990), indicates that “the African adheres to the two dimensional view of time; a long past, a present and practically no concept of the future. This perspective can be ascribed to the African belief that the world of ancestors is always uppermost, closer to the perfect origin and thus more potent than the present or future. Anything passed down from the ancestors (such as culture, religion, technology, education and social institutions) must be upheld, preserved, protected and eventually passed on to the next generation. The moral obligation to conform to traditions and conventions overrides any desire for change or non-conformity.”

Oladipo (2010:60), in support of Van der Walt (2003), adds that “understanding the concept of time in sub-Saharan Africa is important in order to grasp their worldview. Africans calculate time for a concrete and specific purpose, marking time in connection with events and not with digital clocks. An expectant mother in the rural area of Zululand counts the lunar months of her pregnancy; a farmer in Ghana counts the rainy and dry seasons; a traveller from the rural areas of Kenya counts the number of days and nights it would take him to travel from one part of the country to another. These are natural events associated with time reckoning by indigenous Africans. In many parts of sub-Saharan Africa events in life or phenomena constitute time.”

Oladipo (201:61-62) explains the concept of time in relation to the church. “The event principle of time management has translated into liturgical liveliness, where every worship service is an event. Worship services are usually long, but also colourful with liturgy in order to usher African worshippers into the spiritual world. Every worship service is an event. In other words, every worship experience represents an important moment of experiencing the open frontier between the physical and spirit worlds to encounter God. There is no hurry, because personal relationship

with God is the only factor that dictates the worship experience. The preacher receives feedback from the congregation at times that can dictate the outcome of his sermon, a style many Westerners deem as loose and porous. It shows development on liturgical approach.”

Time is spend on all African occasions. Time shows respect and means the ‘conclusion and bring to an end’ the occasion.’ This is evident due to the time and resources placed on every celebration or occasion. Family gathering, weddings, funerals and rituals are given prime time. They are used as ‘meeting occasion’ wherein families, relatives, old friends have time to ‘bond’ and recall old memories.

3.9.4 View on development

According to Awuah-Nyameke (2009c:34), “even if the Akan tribe is culturally bound and expect the earth to provide for them, there exist an element that the earth need to be developed and preserved. For this to happen, the Akan tribe has inculcated environmental awareness to the people. In their endeavours to enforce environmental awareness stringent measures or rules have been put in place.”

For example the Akan tribe, according to Awuah-Nyameke (2012:86-87) “observe taboos pertaining to the earth. Traditionally in the Akan tribe it is a sin/taboo to defecate near a river or to plough near it. They believe that acts which are done nearer exposes the river to direct rays of the sun and that can result in the evaporation of the water in the river. To curb evaporation of water and the river running dry some deeds are prohibited near the river. Thus perennial flow of water in the river is ensured.” This measures seemed to have contributed positively and effectively towards earth preservation in the Akan tribe paradigm.

This injunction is further bolstered by the sanctity that Akan society attaches to *Bosompo* (the sea goddess) who also controls the day. This is reference to what Awuah-Nyameke (2012:86) alludes to when attaching meaning to taboos. For example, “Tuesday has a traditional religious implication in the Akan tribe hence it is a taboo to fish in the sea on Tuesday. Tuesday is specifically reserved for no-fishing because that can offend the goddess.”

From the practice, the study can assume that it was a way of resting the sea because, the Akkadians livelihood is centred on fishing. It can be referred to as the ‘cooling period’. This practice can be viewed as positive contribution towards the welfare of the Akan society.

3.9.5 View on religion

“Africans deem the whole of existence as a religious phenomenon; man is a deeply religious being, living in a religious universe. This religious phenomenon is ontological in nature, because of its anthropocentric sense that everything is viewed in relation to man.” (Mbiti, 1990:15). The above is supported by Taringa (2006:196), who affirms that it divides the religious worldview into the following categories;

- “God is the explanation and sustenance of both man and all things.
- Spirits consist of extra-human beings and the spirits of men long since dead, the ancestors
- Man, both the living and those yet to be born
- Animals and plants or the remainder of biological life
- Phenomena and objects without biological life.”

“The above categories show God to be the Originator and Sustainer of man; the spirits explain the destiny of man; man is the centre of this ontology; the animals, plants and natural phenomena and objects constitute the environment in which man lives, provide a means of existence and, if need be, man establishes a mystical relationship with them.” (Mbiti, 1990; Taringa, 2006:196). This anthropocentric ontology is a complete unity or a solidarity nothing can break up or destroy.

Destroying or removing one of the categories is to destroy all that exists, including the Creator and that is not impossible. One mode of existence presupposes all the others and a balance must be maintained so that these modes neither drift too far apart, nor get close to one another. In addition to the five categories, there seems to be a force power or energy permeating the whole universe. God is the Source and ultimate controller of this force; but the spirit has access to a degree and is why a chosen few like medicine men, witches, priests and rainmakers can manipulate and have the knowledge and ability to tap into the Source. The usage can be good or detrimental to a community, depending on the impact of the spirit.

3.10 African traditional religion and *ubuntu*

Ubuntu has been a popular ‘term’ in the 20th century especially in the African worldview domain. Various authors, scholars, religions and researchers has used the word interchangeable to illustrate communalism and promotion of peace and reconciliation. This was meant to bring into the fore peace because the world is tired of the wars and conflict which are prevalent in Africa.

According to LenkaBula (2008:378), “*ubuntu* is *botho* in the Sotho language and describes personhood and humaneness. It has an ontological, socio-political, economic, ecological and religious dynamic.” This notion explains the relationship of humanity to themselves (Mnyaka & Motlhabi, 2005:217-218) “as well as the embeddedness of human life to the ecological life, thus highlighting that the self can never be fully without the ecological systems within which they exist. *Botho* is also an expression of people’s dual identity, i.e. in relation to themselves as well as in relation to non-human creatures.”

“The word *ubuntu* is found in almost all African languages in South Africa; *ubuntu* in IsiNguni, *botho* in Sesotho, *vumunhi* in Xitsonga and *uvhuthu* in TshiVenda. Humanism is vital in African culture and involves charity, sympathy, caring, sensitivity to the needs of others, respect, consideration, patience and kindness. Its spirit emphasises respect for humanity dignity, marking a shift from confrontation to conciliation.” (Mabovula, 2011:41)

LenkaBula (2008) and Barret (2008:9) describe *ubuntu* as “a richly nuanced word for the key African concept of the fullness of human being by virtue of a person’s life in community. It implies a sense of caring commitment to and responsibility for all members of a clan or society, together with a strong obligation to uphold the harmony of the group. It can also refer to a much wider extent of solidarity, namely the nation as a whole.”

Nolte-Schamm (2006:370-371) describes *ubuntu* as follows;

“Ubuntu is the common denominator of all brands of African anthropology (as well as African religion and philosophy) and can be shared among all people. As a universal philosophical concept, ubuntu embraces every human being, all races and nations, uniting them into a universal ‘familiarity’, where individuals, communities and nations can discover the vital fact that they are an integral part of each other, meaning it is communalistic in character.”

Magezi *et al.* (2009:181) note that in Africa the family includes the extended family; “The family members are relationally interconnected and they seek the good of the other. The context of hospitality is the home and the extended family, a communality that is foundational. Not belonging to a community makes you an outsider or stranger, therefore fit for rejection and humiliation.” These relationships are fundamental for community building and apart from them there could be no community.

In relation to the above Ramose (1999:309) argues that “the principle of wholeness applies also to the relation between human beings and physical or objective nature. Caring for each other implies caring for the physical nature as well. Without such care, the interdependence between human beings and physical nature would be undermined. Moreover, human beings are indeed an intrinsic part of physical nature, although possibly a privileged part. Therefore, caring for one another is the fulfilment of the natural duty to care for physical nature too.

The concept of harmony in African thought is comprehensive in the sense that it conceives of balance in terms of the totality of relations that can be maintained between and among human beings as well as between human beings and physical nature. The quest for harmony is thus striving to maintain a comprehensive, but specific, relational condition among organisms and entities. This means the relationship characterised by *ubuntu* strives to maintain a balance between human beings and physical nature.”

In light of the above explanations and descriptions, it can be concluded that *ubuntu* is the pillar of African traditional religion. *Ubuntu* brings interconnectedness, fellowship and communalism; it is the paradigm that makes African unity. It is the paradigm African practise, live and cherish. Without this interconnectedness that reflects community based on communalism, African traditional religion would not exist. Mbiti (1990:40) supports this notion in saying that “religion is part of Africans and is based on family, clan and tribal affiliations.”

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter sets out the development of the African Traditional Religion paradigm and how it has been affected by changing times. Culture and faith, as the main components of the African worldview are also explained. The study has revealed that African traditional religion has not been innocent in the misuse of the earth and has contributed immensely through its cultural beliefs, but on the other hand they have contributed towards conserving the earth. The African worldview, which influences African traditional religion, has played its part in the promotion of *ubuntu*. It is found that in *ubuntu*, the relationships between human beings do not end there, but cascades to the physical environment - the earth.

In light of the above analysis, the study asserts that *ubuntu* could be the vehicle for establishing the principle of caring for the environment and preserving the earth for future generations. The study now turns to the characteristics and relation between the environment and Mother Earth.

CHAPTER FOUR

EARTH AS THE MOTHER AND CONTACT POINTS

The study so far as expounded on the historical background on earth preservation and how different religions namely Christianity and ATR has contributed positively and negatively towards earth preservation. In this chapter which links to the previous chapter focus will be on how the earth given the conspicuous status on “Mother” has been ill- treated and abuse because of the status. The chapter will also reflect on the “Earth as mother” and its implications to both Christianity and ATR. In doing that the study will seek to find the contact points that can contribute towards dialogue between Christianity and ATR.

4.1 Background

The notion of Mother Earth as the provider and sustainer is an acceptable concept in Africa. It is a concept that originated as worldview and then turned into an ideology that most religions accept. It comes from the understanding of the mother as the giver and sustainer of life and proceeds to Mother Earth as the protector. Greek agricultural society worshipped the goddess Gaia, Mother Earth as the goddess of food.

The globally acceptable norm of Mother Earth can be illustrated with the example of Papua Guinea and its forests, since the people of this country shares the same ideology and worldview of the earth as mother as other nations in Africa. In the province of Porgera, Papua Guinea, the forests are controlled by spirits. These spirits are referred to as the earth mother women.

According to Jacka (2010:36), “in the lower rain forest (*wapi*) the most important spirits in terms of conservation are called *yu angini wanda* or “earth mother women.” Despite this rather benevolent-sounding name from a Western environmentalist perspective, to Porgerans these spirits are the most feared among the pantheon that inhabit their world. Earth mother women can, and occasionally do, kill anyone they come into contact with in the lower rain forest. Cassowaries and marsupials are the “pigs” of the earth mother women, while fruit pandanus are called their “sweet potatoes”. As the most bio-diverse and environmentally rich ecological zone, hunting and gathering trips into the lower rain forest can result in spectacular foraging success.”

In addition Jacka (2010:37) affirms that according to Porgerans, “earth mother women are extremely unpredictable and many people mention that even on private property it is unsure whether they will attack. This fear works as an obvious deterrent to overharvesting, especially in that particular zone

The above example demonstrates that the Mother Earth epistemology did not originate in Africa, but it is a worldwide phenomenon. This explains why the concept of Mother Earth and how Africans and African traditional religion understand it and its influence on tradition and culture is still alive today.

4.2 Introduction

Different names and traits have been assigned to Mother Earth. It would seem, in reference to Danquah (1968) and Boaten (1998:42) “that responding positively to the dictates of nature Africans regarded the earth (*Asase*) as “mother” (*Asase Yaa/E/ua*), the provider and sustainer of life. Man, therefore, offered prayers before cultivation and celebrated “harvest festivals” such as *Homowo (Ga)*, *Ohum (Abuakwa)* and *Odwira (Akuapel)* to commemorate the generosity of Mother Earth. In order to allow the earth to continuously play its mothership role and to enhance the biodiversity, Africans developed a body of laws and regulations known as taboos to regulate their relationship with Mother Earth.”

The relationship between African traditional religion and the earth seals how Africans look and understand the world they live in. It further brings African closer to the supernatural world, from where the whole earth is controlled. This relationship influences the differences between world pictures and worldviews as Van der Walt (2003:100) sets out;

“In a traditional African way the world is pictured as an organism, whereas in the modern Western way the world is pictured as a machine. A world view depicts reality as similar to an organism or a machine, while with a worldview reality is really an organism/machine - the picture became a design, standard or model according to which reality is constructed.”

Therefore, from this understanding the study maintains that, how to handle and treat the world is determined by how an individual perceive and treat the world. If one treats the world as an organism, one will see the world as a living entity which deserves to be treated as such. If one treats the world as a machine, exploitation of the world is inevitable and non-stoppable.”

Ebere (2011:481) supports the above, in reference to Conner (2003), as follows;

“When we speak of African traditional religion we mean the indigenous beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, customs, and practices of Africans born out of the expression and deep reflection of their forebears. These traditions evolved over many centuries as the people of Africa responded to the situations of their life and reflected upon their experiences. The world scope of African traditional religion is associated with ‘natural elements (including earth, air, fire, and water, as well as particular plants, animals, and stones), life experiences (such as birth, loving union, and death), occupations (spiritual leader, artist and so on) and other matters including gender and sexuality.’ That is why this religion has served from the dawn of history as the ultimate source for men and women in Africa to understand their origin, position, and relationship among themselves and within the universe. Indeed, it is their way of coming to terms with reality.”

From the above, the study will move firstly seeks, in reference to the above, to identify aspects that are relevant to the relationship between Mother Earth and the environment. Secondly, the study sets out common contacts points between Christianity and African traditional religion that if properly utilised could contribute positively towards an ecological paradigm for preserving the earth for the next generation.

4.2.1 Earth and ecology

Chirongoma (2012:123) elucidate that “healthy ecology is paramount to the Shona in Zimbabwe, like to most African cultures, because Zimbabwe’s economy is based on agriculture. Consequently, Zimbabweans’ view on the universe is enshrined in myths, legends and taboos. Local knowledge systems are informed by such views and reinforce the relationship between humanity and all other forms of life in the ecological system. The Shona believe in the existence of a Supreme Being, usually referred to as *Mwari*, *Musikavanhu* or *Nyadenga*, who is the creator of everything. There is a strong belief in *vadzimu* (ancestors) and the ancestral spirits are the most central part of the universe. The ancestors are hailed as (*varidzi venyikä*) the real owners/guardians (*varidzi venyikä*) of the land and all that is on it.”

They believe that the land they occupy was entrusted to them by the ancestors (Chirongoma, 2012:124). “The Shona do not consider ecology inert, but that there are forces embedded within the ecological order - both forces of the living and the dead. Women in Shona religion are, therefore, informed by these myths and taboos, which provide rules and regulations regarding their relationship with the ecological realm. Preserving and safe-guarding the ecological order is

of utmost importance in Shona religion, since the universe is believed to belong to the ancestral realm. Any failure to adhere to ancestral ecological rules and regulations is believed to result in their punishing of either the individual perpetrator or the whole community.”

As such, the whole community is responsible for enforcing the observance of taboos and regulations to preserve Mother Earth and dwell in harmony with the spiritual realm. This responsibility lies heavily on women who are regarded as the teachers and preservers of morality in the community, who were the last to be created at creation.

Chirongoma (2012:126) refers to Passmore (1974:36), to substantiate her stance, who maintains that; “the fact that human beings especially women were created last in the series of creative acts of God (Gen. 1:26-28) calls humanity to respect those who came before them (nature) - humanity does not enjoy absolute right of disposition over natural resources, but it is their steward, the caretaker of the divine owner; using them and preserving them for future ages.”

4.2.2 Mother Earth and the Supreme Being

Awuah-Nyameke (2009a:31) argues that the Akan tribes “ imbue the laws, customs, taboos and other codes of ethics with divine backing, i.e. they are believed to have been sanctioned by the gods and ancestors, who invoke sanctions against anyone who disobeys them. This belief is so strong among the people, they comply even when alone.” From that argument it can be assumed that the worldview of the traditional Akan people in Ghana portrays the Supreme Being, the gods, the ancestors and the other spirits as “policemen”. This imply that the Akan tribe rely on the Supreme Being. When it comes to environment preservation. Thereby, it is thus difficult to deny that African traditional religion has care of the environment in African today.

From the above, it is imperative to note that the laws which are embedded in the worldview assist in the preservation of the earth. They also instil the sense of treating the world as an organism – meaning the world is a living entity and as such needs to be respected, loved and cared for. The laws also bring forth the sense of responsibility among the Akan people. This can be seen how an individual can practice the laws even when alone.

Oladipo (2010:46) supports the above notion by explaining the duties of the divinities as follows; “the deity of iron protects blacksmiths and drivers from accidental death; and the deity of Mother Earth guides farmers in planting crops at the appropriate time. Likewise, the deity of waters

secures beneficial rains for the farmers and the deity of fire assists women while cooking as well as protecting them from harm. These lesser deities occasionally make mistakes, resulting in catastrophe and devastation. It is because of such errors that human beings often suffer catastrophe and misfortune. This cosmological vision exonerates God from being the author and source of evil and catastrophe in the world. Evils are associated with these lesser deities and when they occur, Africans offer corresponding rituals of renewal and restoration or supplication and celebration.”

The study (in agreement with the above descriptions and definitions) shares the assumptions of Van der Walt (2003), and Oladipo (2010) that makes the understanding culture as a prime factor for tradition, as illustrated by the Ghanaians. It is an indication of man’s place in the world in which he has to fulfil his cultural task, the direction of which is provided by the will (laws) of something or Someone (Supreme Being) regarded as the absolute authority in life. Taking cognisance of different worldviews (as earlier mentioned) functions like a map, like an orientation or compass giving it direction from a deep religious and social environment. A worldview also calls for action. It should not only help us to understand reality better, but also to deal with it correctly. Its beneficial results will determine its value especially when coming to discussions around Christian and African worldviews on Mother Earth.

The above, can be attributed to what Van Der Walt (2003:101) contents; that “a worldview is the compass that directs our lives and influence it to a certain extent. When, the worldview is influence by detractors like Enlightenment and it becomes “refined”. On the contrary it is warned that humanity should be aware that a worldview can turn into an ideology. It forces reality into its own preconceived mould and wants to change it accordingly. That change can influence how people view things after that.”

According to Turaki (1997:54), “the spiritual life defines the African worldview and life. Persuasive, unexplainable, unpredictable and powerful spirits govern and control everything and everyone and affect the well-being of individuals, families, clans and tribes. The fear of these hidden and mysterious powers can be frightening, consuming and devastating. Thus they have to be placated, manipulated and even used for personal advantage or another’s disadvantage. The assistance of special people (intermediaries) are often needed.”

In agreeing with Turaki (1997), Chike (2008:222-223) adds that “traditionally Africans see the universe in spiritual terms. The Western distinction between the material and spiritual would never be a part of the traditional African worldview. Africans deem the “material” and the “spiritual” as interwoven.” Mbiti (1969:74) writes that Africans believe that “the spiritual universe is a unit with the physical, and that the two intermingle and dovetail into each other so much that it is not easy, or even necessary, at times to draw the distinction or separate them”.

The implication of the above, can be seen in many aspects of life. It is quite common among Africans to trace the root causes of a misfortune, such as a road accident or an illness, to spiritual matters like the relationship with the ancestors or the actions of deities or evil spirits.

The study surmises, from the above notions, the same understanding of the earth or creation is applicable to how African traditional religion sees the earth as the mother. This assumption is based on the finding that Africans see the material world, which is the earth and the spiritual, as the same (Kalu, 2002:119). Mbiti (1990:96) alludes that “the two are virtually intertwined and it is not easy or even necessary at times to draw the distinctions that separate them.” Ssettuuma (2004:190) supports Mbiti when arguing that “human beings and nature are seen as united in vital or organic communion among themselves. Africans consider earth and also the spiritual world are part of them, where in the latter intermediaries live on their behalf.”

4.2.3 Mother Earth as earth deity

Kalu (2002:121) elucidates that “next after the Supreme Being is the earth deity who is seen or understood as the mother. This is the reason the earth is portrayed as feminine in most African societies. For example, the Akan of Ghana and the Igbo of Nigeria regard the earth as a goddess. Among the Akan, she ranks next after the Supreme Being and the second deity to be offered a drink during worship. Her day of rest is Thursday and severe punishment was meted out in the past to those who violated this taboo. Although there are no temples, shrines or priests dedicated to her, because her bounty is accessible to all, she nonetheless receives offerings and sacrifices at the planting season.”

Thence, the land generally cannot be farmed without obtaining her permission. Prior to the digging of a grave, a sacrifice is offered to the spirit of the earth. The Igbo of Nigeria, unlike the Akan, dedicate shrines and priestesses to the mother goddess, the queen of the underworld, who is responsible for public morality. Homicide, kidnapping, stealing farm products, adultery and

giving birth to twins or abnormal children are all offenses against her. Laws are made and oaths sworn in her name.

According to Parrinder (1974), “*Ani* or *Ale* is the most-loved deity and the goddess closest to the people. She aids them if they are in trouble with other divinities, but punishes hardened criminals. The most important festival, the yam (harvest) festival, is held in her honour. She receives offerings during the planting season and also when the first of the fruit is harvested.”

Parrinder’s (1974) assumption is confirmed by singer Rasta Raphel (2012), who describes “*Ala* as the Igbo fertility goddess of the earth. The Igbo people of Nigeria call her the mother of all things, but she is both the fertile earth and the empty field after the harvest. She is present at the beginning of the cycle of life, making children grow in their mother’s womb, and is there at the end of the cycle to receive the souls of the dead into her own womb. *Ala* also prescribes laws to the people, emphasising the importance of honesty and respect. Temples to *Ala*, called *mbari*, are built in the centre of villages and contain a mud statue of *Ala* painted in bright colours. These statues usually show *Ala* with a long torso and long thick neck, which are considered to be signs of beauty among the Ibo. She is joined by other deities and animals. *Ala* is also known as *Ale*, *Ani*, *Ana*, *Alla*, and *Ane*.” She is the most important *Alusi* (goddess) in the Igbo pantheon.

“The Igbo believe that *Chukwu/Chineke* is the infinitely powerful, indefinable supreme deity, represented by the sun (the eye of light) from which all other aspects of our existence spring. Unlike God in Euro-Christianity, but similar to Islam and Judaism; *Chineke/Chukwu* is not humanised by the Igbo. *Chukwu/Chineke* is the creator of the world and everything good in it as well as the evil forces that intrude on life. It is believed that all of this has been done for definite reasons and to coexist in harmony and evolve.” according to Rasta Raphel (2012).

Though *Chukwu/Chineke* has no known physical form, it is believed to indirectly impact the affairs of the human world. *Chineke/Chukwu* manifests in many forms, but it is anchored in the sanctity of the earth deity (Mother Earth) called *Ani* or *Ala* (land), which is the physical manifestation of *Ani*. In fact, *Odinani* literally means- “it is anchored on the Earth Deity.”

Therefore, the Igbo sacred sciences are socio-environmental as well as metaphysical. Temporary houses (*mbari*), made to accommodate sacred sculptures and other statues representing deities, always contain the statue of *Ani* at its centre. She is depicted as a mother with a child in her

arms or knees and a sword in her hand. Facing *Ala* is the storm god, a subordinate counterpart of the goddess.

4.2.4 Mother Earth as woman

According to Kojo-Antik (2014), the Ghana musician, “the importance of women in African society is portrayed in the following Ghanaian proverb; “A woman is a flower in a garden, her husband is the fence around.” This implies that women in Ghana are seen as related to the earth and are treated as such. This relationship or analogy seems to indicate that women play an important role in African traditional religion, as it is they who give beauty to the earth. Generally, however, women are considered the mothers of humanity, from whom all people originated. The Akposso tribe of Togo relate that when God made human beings, He made the woman first and bore her the first child, the first human being. The main idea here, according to Mbiti (1994), “is to link human life directly with God through the woman. The woman herself is created by God and in turn becomes the instrument of human life.”

The above is also highlighted by Mukonyora (1999:283), who argues that “the creative power of God is manifested in Mother Earth (a woman), who gives life, as the *Mai Vedu* (womb) in which life on earth generated. *Mwari* created the earth and shaped it like a *rusero* (a shallow round basket used by women for winnowing). He took the water from the clouds and from the sun the fire, placing both in the belly of the earth (*mudumbu renyika*) to make it fertile. As *Mai Vedu* puts it, “I can give life to plants and trees”. In reply to her question to *Mwari* about the source of animal life, God replied; “I gave you power to give life.” This gives importance to *Mai Vedu*, although she is dependent on the hidden Supreme Being *Mwari*, from whom she is distinguished as the creative agent who brings about life on earth.”

Consequently, Daneel (1998:45) has concluded that there are two dimensions of *Mwari*; “the male dimension exists above and the female is represented by earth below. It is not the sexuality of the hidden *Mwari* that is important here, but the fact that the gift of life comes through Mother Earth. In the myth of the male *Musikavanhu* (maker of humanity), the latter drops from the heavens in his sleep. He is awakened beside the beautiful shape of a virgin woman standing by a pool. The woman shape is awakened into a full human being and children are born of her and *Musikavanhu*, the first couple on earth. This not only highlights the close relationship between woman and earth in the Karanga thought pattern, but reminds of the association between water, woman and life found in existence by *Musikavanhu*. Also made apparent in the story of

Musikavanhu, is the complementarity of the male and female natures in the making of humanity at creation.”

From the above discussions and notions it is imperative that the Africans believe and maintains that there is a creator whether the creator is god or goddess. This creator is the one who brings meaning of life to them. Their worldview and understanding of their origin is centred on their creation as it reflect to their lives. Most importantly, Africans believe in creation narratives and respect that, thence, they pay homage and respect to the creator. Their perspectives is that for everything there is a god or goddess whom permission should be sought from.

4.2.5 Mother Earth and sin

Awolalu (1976:257) explains that “one of the fundamental beliefs of Africans is that man, as the head of all creation, was created a moral agent, gifted with the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. Like most African counterparts, the Shona religion is premised upon a community spirit. The central belief is that community, primarily the family, is the paramount social reality apart from which humanity cannot exist. Community is understood as a sacred phenomenon created by God (*Afwari*), protected by divinities and governed by ancestral spirits.” Therefore, “full participation in the community is a fundamental requirement of all humans” (Taringa, 2007:253). Negative participation is tantamount to sin.

“Sin is failing to abide with rituals and showing hatred towards other men. Sin is not deemed an act of wrong against the Supreme Being, but wrongdoing against the community and earth.” (Mbiti, 1970:3). That is why it is forbidden for a man to cohabit with a woman on the bare ground, it is an unclean act and desecrates the earth. According to (Awolalu, 1976:280), the Yoruba will say of the person “*o ha He je*” – “he has spoiled (desecrated) the earth”. This is because the earth is believed to be indwelt by a powerful spirit. He further adds that, “a person who breaks such a taboo will have to undergo an elaborate ritual ceremony, lest he is overtaken by disaster. If the culprits are not discovered and the ritual cleansing is performed, the earth will not yield its increase and all sorts of misfortunes will befall not only the culprits, but also the community at large.”

4.2.6 Mother Earth and goddess

In addition to the above, according to Awolalu (1976:282) “the Mende of Sierra Leone also regards Mother Earth as a goddess, the common mother of humanity and the wife of God (*Maa-*

ndoo). It is the mother of all human beings. *Maa-ndoo* forbids the Mende to have sexual intercourse in the bush and does not tolerate sexual immorality.” Like the Akan, the Mende do not worship the spirit of the earth, although she is invoked together with God (*NGEWO*) during important occasions. “Laws are made to protect her sanctity, for example, sexual intercourse in the bush is a violation of her sacredness and offenders severely punished. Apart from the earth goddess, several other deities are found residing in bodies of water.” (Adelowo, 1990)

The above reveals that Mother Earth is a goddess and the failure to observe her sacredness is a taboo deserving of punishment. This means the earth and nature needs to be respected at all times. This practice is common and evident in African traditional religion and is the reason Mbiti (1979:48) contends that “in African traditional world view, the well-being of man is intimately connected with the well-being of the total creation. If man abuses nature or the environment, nature also will abuse man”. Among the Igbo people of Nigeria, for example, there is a common belief that the earth is a goddess that oversees various activities of human beings and punishes any grievous contravention. Okonkwo (2011:38) emphasises that “Africans believe that human beings live in an African religious Universe, so that natural phenomena and objects are intimately associated with God.”

From the above, Okonkwo (2011:39) contends that abuse of nature is considered taboo because of nature and humanity association with God. “Such actions are believed to have the capacity to inflict harm on the entire community, until sacrifices are offered to appease the gods. Among the Akan (and even a wide range of Africans), some transgressions are considered taboos (*Aru/Nso Ala*) - offences against the earth and the earth goddess. In most cases, those guilty of violating any taboos are ostracised from community (functions) until the prescribed rituals to appease the gods are performed. Contravention of taboos connotes the highest degree of sin in some parts of Africa. Due to its gravity, the culprit is most often not spared until he/she pays the price for his/her misdeeds. The catastrophic effect is also believed to have the potential of affecting a lineage. Other forms are bad behaviour (*ajo omume*) and bad deeds (*Njo or ajo ihe*), but none can be as severe as those against the earth.”

From his argument, Okonkwo,(2011;39) concludes that “the sacredness of and respect to earth as the goddess is maintained by purposefully leaving some land to grow trees of various sizes, with the prohibition that those who trespass or fell any of the trees will attract the wrath of the gods.

Furthermore, various communities have one totem or another protected from any kind of harmful overture from those who aim to curse of harm them.”

By so doing, the lives of many beings have been saved over the years. The quest for genuine sustainable development needs to consider (though not exclusively) the extent to which importance is still given to these and similar practices.

4.2.7 Mother Earth and rituals

Kalu (2002:118) resonates that reality is divided in two; “the human world and the spirit world. Each is however a replica of the other; thus if an important person or a chief dies, he will still have the same status in the spirit world.” This explains why some communities bury slaves to continue serving their master in the spirit world. Tied to this is an anthropology in which a creator deity delegated subalterns to mould human beings from clay, while he himself breathed life- into them. The blood transmits life throughout the entire body system. Upon death, the personality-soul or life-breath continues a new life cycle in the spirit world, now as an ancestor who is still a member of his earthly family.

That is why Kalu (2002) refers to childbirth rituals, which are practised by some Africans. When a child is born, “diviners are consulted to indicate who has returned. The umbilical cord is put in a calabash and sprinkled with certain herbs, an old man of the family speaks incantations over it and buries the calabash under a tree at the back of the family's compound.” Planting the umbilical cord signifies the relationship between humanity and the earth. In complementing this, Mbiti, (1990:110) and Taringa, (2007:264) maintains that “the child is rooted to the earth, the land of his ancestors. The occasion determines the name that the child is given on the eighth day, at an outdoor ceremony. Various rites of passage are performed as the individual progresses from adolescence, through adult roles, to the status of an elder of the community. Different social organisations further root the person into a sense of community; some are achieved, others ascribed; some are open, others are secret.”

From the above, the study concludes that the ritual or birth ceremony shows that there is a relation between man and earth. Man sees the earth as the mother, because the umbilical cord is put in a calabash and buried under a tree at the back of the family compound. The same can be said for the body of a deceased man who is buried in the earth that he may return from where he

came. This stems from the serious relationship between man and Mother Earth through land ownership.

4.2.8 Mother Earth and climate change in Guinea Bissau (Diola)

The Diola tribe serves as example to illustrate the causes that can affect Mother Earth's execution of her duties. The Diola tribe inhabits the coastal region of West Africa from the southern Gambia to the northwest corner of Guinea-Bissau, including the Casamance region of Senegal. Climate change is one of the factors that hinders the effectiveness of Mother Earth, especially when it comes to the growth of rice. Climate change that is caused by factors like pollution, deforestation, drought and modern technology contributed towards Mother Earth's effectiveness among the Diola tribe.

The Diola tribe lives in an area of low-lying, lush forest and mangrove swamps, where they have been expertly growing rice for at least a thousand years. Rice to them is a source of living and can only be accessed through Mother Earth (Linares, 2002).³⁶

According to Davidson (2012:367), rice as a staple food and the economic source from the Mother Earth who provides and the goddess of rice, then the significance of rice to the Diola tribe is as follows; "the Diola rice cultivation practices are meant to produce a crop that has multiple valences for the Diola. It is impossible to exaggerate the all-important presence of rice among the Diola. As with most cultural groups in this region, one has not eaten if one has not eaten rice. More than mere food, rice textures Diola lives in many ways; it is connected to status, social relations, and ritual activities. New-borns are given overcooked and chewed rice to eat (despite various attempts by outside health workers to stop this practice), commencing the intimate and embodied link between Diola people and rice from the very beginning of their lives. At funerals every in-married woman, from the dead person's lineage, brings a cup of pounded rice and pours it on the corpse after he or she is positioned on the stretcher for the corpse inquisition. Then they throw a small bouquet of un-milled rice next to the corpse. The Diola believe that when the dead are reincarnated in another lineage or neighbourhood, they should always carry some rice seeds from their previous lineages with them. Rice permeates Diola

³⁶ "The years of drought had a profound impact on the Jola agricultural system and, more specifically, on the farming practices of the Jipalom inhabitants. In this community, the deep and productive fields that had been carved from the mangrove (i.e. the *weng*) no longer existed. In their place was a salt-encrusted expanse of barren land. The *kuyolen* (with an "o") area, located behind the compounds, which in 1965 was entirely prepared as nurseries, was now definitely abandoned and overrun with weeds. It was substituted by a few nurseries, made in the backyards of houses. Only a third or half of the rain-fed or *biit* fields were being cultivated. The only paddy fields that could be counted on to yield a decent harvest were the *kuyelen* (with an "e"), where runoff rainwater accumulated." See www.pnas.org/content/99/25/16360.full

economic, social and symbolic life. The Diola see rice as part of a covenant with their supreme deity, *Emitai*, in which they work hard to cultivate the crop and *Emitai* sends rain to nourish it.”

Davidson (2012) relates that “due to climate change in contemporary Guinea-Bissau, Diola can no longer grow enough rice - not only to meet their ceremonial needs, but even to feed their families. Declining rainfall, desertification and widespread soil erosion in northern Guinea-Bissau have within the past thirty years increasingly challenged Diola villagers' ability to provision themselves through the wet rice cultivation practices that have long defined them as a people.”

According to Davidson (2012:368), “these environmental factors have combined with neglectful and disadvantageous government policies and programmes, with regard to rural development; difficult marketing conditions; and diminished labour capacity due to out-migration of the youth. All of these factors have worsened agricultural conditions in rural rice-growing regions of the country. The decrease in rice production has already had significant consequences for Diola ritual activities. Most shrine ceremonies require copious paddy rice expenditures. “Sack rice”, what Diola calls imported rice, cannot be purchased in sufficient quantities and would not be acceptable for most ritual practices anyway.”

Furthermore, “beyond its impact on ritual life, diminishing crop yields has impacted negatively in what might be called the Diola social security system. This is particularly the case with regard to vulnerable segments of Diola society, such as widows and, at the most basic level, decreased rice on Diola land has contributed to increased anxiety about sustenance. In what was already a taxing labour regime, many Diola villagers now work harder and with less certainty that their efforts will result in an adequate rice harvest.” (Davidson 2012:369).

The Diola's are an industrious people and their various occupations included large scale rice cultivation, honey collecting, palm wine tapping (bounouk), fishing, oyster collecting and other agricultural activities. Many women are employed in Gambian households as domestic maids. Their wealth was measured in the amount of rice owned as opposed to the Fulani who measured their wealth in the number of cattle one possessed. In a typical Diola village the eldest man who founded the village would be the head but had no power other than as a ritual head and adjudicator in any disputes. However, in times of war or when Diola villages were attacked

villages would get together in a temporary alliance under an acceptable warrior. This alliance would end as soon as the war ended. (Hope-senegal.2012 org.uk/index.php/history-of-the-**diola**).

The above information leads to the conclusion that the growing of rice as a means of symbolism, economic hub, social standing and cultural principles of the Diola tribe is dedicated to Mother Earth as the provider of it all. The Diola tribe could not have achieved any of it, without the assistance and permission from Mother Earth. The tribe thus consider the production of rice as a perpetual source of sustenance the earth, as the mother, will provide. Mother Earth is expected to supply and maintain the status quo, despite climate conditions unfavourable for rice farming.

“The sustenance of rice depends on Mother Earth, even if climate change contributes to a low crop. The Diola tribe saw the rice being controlled from somewhere hence when the change became inevitable and each household started to produce only enough rice to last three months, and when this supply is exhausted, most rural Guinean Diola spend the rest of the year scraping together what they can on a day-to-day basis to buy a kilogram of imported rice. Another common strategy among adult Diola, with families to care for, is to work harder and rebuke (and often punish) those shifting their primary allegiance away from rice cultivation and toward other livelihood strategies.” (Davidson: 2009; 2012:370). This in a way illustrates how Mother Earth is deemed the source of sustenance, even with the emergence of climate change that is out of the tribe’s hands.

Diola families are now investing in the education of their children and pinning their hopes for the future on their children's academic success, because of the effect climate change has on rice cultivation and Mother Earth can no longer be seen as the provider of rice.

4.2.9 Mother Earth and spiritualism

Merchant (1999:243), asserts that from an African perspective “the earth is considered a producer and sustainer of life. The spiritualism expressed therein clearly illustrates the relationship between the earth, as the giver of life, and the inhabitants of the earth. It is the cultural belief that the spirit transmitted to the inhabitants through the birth of a child establishes a bond between the earth and man, a relationship that is spiritual in nature. If this spiritual connection is explored to the full, the earth could be preserved for future generations.”

4.2.10 Mother Earth and *ubuntu*

Ramose (1999:309) clearly articulates “that *ubuntu* is not only an ideology confined to man, but cascades to the natural environment. The earth participates in this realm, because *ubuntu* respects or is aware of its surroundings. It means the inhabitants of the earth should look after the earth, as they practice *ubuntu* among themselves. There must be communal relationship between the earth and its inhabitants. This means that there is relationship between people and with the physical nature (the earth) for the earth to be subdued.”

According to Hennig (2011: unnumbered) *ubuntu* can from the Mother earth perspective is that “Mother earth - synonymous with mother nature. It is responsible for the life cycle that starts when a seed is planted and ends with our return to the soil when we die, we need to respect the soil. We need to respect everything in nature. Nature and the earth are what give us life. There is a complete interdependence, explained by the concept of *Ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* (is) the essence of being human. *Ubuntu* speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can't be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality- *ubuntu*— you are known for your generosity is for the whole of humanity.”

This study shows that if the principle of *ubuntu* is practised on earth, wherein the earth is seen as the ‘mother’ who must be respected and look after, then the earth will be preserved for future generation.

4.3 Conclusion

From chapter 2 and 3, the study has realised the following contact points which can serve as the points of convergence between Christianity and African traditional religion. These points will serve as the basis for contributing towards the formulation of the missional paradigm that can add value towards earth preservation.

- Both religion believes that there exist a power above all powers even if that power is called in many names. What is paramount is that, that powerful being Supreme Being is the creator of the earth. This is inferred in what Christians call the “transcendcy of God” and what ATR calls the God who is with them but far because he can only be approached in times of calamity.

- Both religions are related to their connectedness to the earth from birth. Christianity maintains that they were made from clay and dust and in the image of God (*imago Dei*), whereas the African traditional religion adherents believe that when they were born, the umbilical cord was planted back to earth to showcase their intensive relationship with the earth. These understandings bring forth a clear understanding that humanity is from the earth and there shall he go back when he dies.
- Both religions assert that the earth is the Mother who gives life, food, and addresses the humanity needs at all times. They even went to agree that this Mother is the one who gives minerals which promotes consumerism among people, hence, humanity has decided to be selfish and self-centred in exploiting the earth for own benefit.
- Both religions accept and acknowledge their responsibilities in the misuse of the earth and that they played a prominent role in degrading the earth to the extent of destruction. On the same note however, both religions maintained that even if the Mother earth gives all, what is essential is that Mother earth needs to be preserved at all cost for future generations.
- Both religions are conscious of the fact there is life after death and that brings them to the notion that in preserving the earth, the earth will be their abode in the after death during the “already” and the “not yet.”
- Both have the rules and on how to look after the earth and have placed measures in place that can be implemented to preserve environment. They even introduced the punitive laws and ways that can assist in curbing earth degradation and bring sanity to the inhabitants of the earth.
- Both religions believe in sin and salvation; African perspective is that one sin to the community and belonging is rime. If one has to sin to the Supreme Being, then some rituals should be done to appease the wrath of the Supreme Being. Whereas, the Christians believe that salvation is possible through the death of Jesus Christ.

- From both the religions, earth preservation is late and must be done as a matter of priority.

The above discussion clearly illustrate there are contact points that if properly developed, will contribute positively to the preservation of the earth. These contact points demonstrate that there is a relationship between Christianity and African traditional religion and the African worldview. It is a relationship that is environmentally bound in the common ground found between Christianity and African traditional religion in regard to the earth, as the study has shown.

Therefore, from that premise, the study has investigated and acknowledge the contacts points that will assist the study in seeking to contribute towards preservation of the earth for future generations. Working together will enable both Christianity and African traditional religion to see the earth as an abode for all who live in it.

CHAPTER FIVE

BIBLICAL ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

After identifying the contact points and covering both Christianity and ATR worldviews and ATR and their agreement that Mother Earth is an organism which needs to be treated with care, respect and love. Due to that the stance and the locus of the study focus is explicitly from the Reformed tradition and as such the Bible is the only authority. That means certain Biblical texts will be referred to as to enhance the explanation when required. Thence, it is imperative that the study must seek to bring forth how biblical missional environmental paradigm can be analysed.

5.1 Background

According to Wright (2006:397), “Genesis 1 confirms and affirms that God is the Creator and the owner of the earth. It further confirms that the creation was done in a period of six days and on the evening thereof God was satisfied and impressed hence God proclaimed as that it was good (Gen 1:9-12). This notion is confirmed by the Psalmist in Psalm 115:6; God is the earth’s landlord and human beings are God’s tenants. This implies that humanity was given a privilege not a right to reside on earth, therefore humanity cannot claim any right on earth. His duty of stewardship was a sign of appreciating what God has done to him. Thence, the earth is God’s domain alone.”

Furthermore, Wright (2006:398) adds “that this ownership was the beginning of God having an everlasting relationship with mankind. This arrangement which is based on God as the Creator and the initiator of the relationship is seen as a landlord-tenant relationship. Cognisant should be taken that humanity is placed and abode on earth on God’s mandate alone which is to look after creation. By doing this God was showing his goodness. Goodness can only be the attribute of God himself, because it reflects and attests of this goodness.” (Ps. 19:29; Job 12:7-9; Rom. 1:20).

The creation narrative as mentioned in Gen. are wholly on God’s hands as the Creator. Because humanity was made in God’s image and as God’s intention, humanity cannot claim any share in the creation process. Humanity was invited to created work of God as stewards or one can say “willing participants.” When starting to abode on earth, humanity found the earth and all that was on earth being created through the word from God and belonging to God. That is why God

would make rounds in the evening to inspect or admire his creation (Gen 3:8). So humanity is part of creation not part of the creation process. So, humanity is on earth through God's grace and not through ability and choice. That is why Wright (2006) sees this as a landlord-tenant relationship.

The aftermath of the five days was on the sixth day, God created man in his image and blessed them (Gen. 1:27). God also gives man, in Gen. 1:26, the mandate to rule over creation and its living creatures. Man was then placed in the Garden of Eden to tend and care for it (Gen. 2:15). It can thus be concluded that man was given environmental stewardship as part of God's plan for his creation.

Pertinent to the above, there have been numerous debates in relation to caring for creation and stewardship. Berry (2012;170) explains that "the first publication in this regard came from Thomas Burnet, whose writings of 1681 was translated in English in 1684, who believed that God had created the earth as a perfect sphere and all its irregularities (mountains, seas, islands, etc.) were the result of the Flood³⁷. The positive side of this publication or argument by Burnet was that it opened the Bible to scientific explanations on creation and environment."

Pursuant to the above, "the second book on the topic was Newton's *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* in 1687, which set the agenda for the Enlightenment and science. It was followed by the third publication of John Ray's *Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation*, which appeared in 1691³⁸. Ray, like Darwin two centuries after him, was essentially naturalist. His writings were based on observation and he extended the same discipline to theology. He captured the growing acceptance of his time that God had other concerns for humanity and stated as follows;

"It is a generally received opinion that this entire visible world was created for Man and that Man is the end of creation, as if there were no end of any creature, but some way or other to be serviceable to man. But though this is vulgarly received, yet wise men nowadays think otherwise." (Ray, 1691).

³⁷ Keith Thomson (2005:142) calls the book "a combination of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Ussher's biblical literalism, with shades of Blakean mysticism".

³⁸ It consisted of, as recorded by Ray (1691) in his preface, "the Substance of some Common Places (so in Cambridge they call their Morning Divinity Exercises) delivered in Trinity-College Chappel, when I was a Fellow of that Society".

5.2 Introduction

Through the development of ideologies on earth and environment, as alluded to above, many scholars came to the fore with various explanations, until in 1954 when the era of theological interest in environmental morality through the work of Sittler (1954) on *The Theology of the Earth* surfaced. Unfortunately, his work remained largely unrecognised due to its opaque nature. In 1967 a massive review by Clarence Glacken, on human attitudes to nature through time, appeared and followed by Montefiore (1969), with a presentation prepared for the 1970 *European Year of the Environment* about the sustainability of the way of life.

Two secular incidents then occurred, raising awareness about environmental matters, neither of which sprang from theological enquiry. The first was the book *Silent Spring*, by Rachel Carson (1962), and the second was the saga of the oil tanker *Torrey Canyon* wrecked off Land's End in 1967 that leaked oil onto many of the holiday beaches of Devon and Cornwall. This culminated in Schaeffer publishing his *Pollution and the Death of Man* in 1970, drawing the attention of his readers to Lynn White's (1967) indictment of Christian attitudes to the natural world and alerting Christians to their myopia on the subject. It did not however yield much to advance environmental awareness. Many rejected White's argument, according to Horell and Davis (2014:80), but it provided an interesting and provocative place to begin discussions of the Genesis.

The study asserts, in view of the above historical account, God's plan and intent would be difficult to comprehend without a true understanding of God's creation as described in Gen.. Such lack of understanding culminates in a distortion of the creation narrative and, as repeatedly indicated in this study, leads to the earth or creation being seen as an object to be exploited and dominated by man instead of preserved. The mandate to rule over the earth is one of responsibility. This responsibility of preservation is encapsulated in God's ultimate plan; *missio Dei* for his creation.

5.3 *Missio Dei* and creation

The term "image of God" has been variously interpreted. Regardless of the conclusions reached, it is clear that God and human beings have a bond different to any other between God and the rest of creation. Humanity is entrusted with a special task. Westermann (1987:10) puts it as follows; "By virtue of being created, it bears a responsibility; human dignity and responsibility are inseparable." Westermann (1987:10) adds that although "humanity exercises sovereignty

over the rest of creation”, human beings are reminded that “there is no suggestion of exploitation”. Just like the king, whose rule responsibly serves the well-being of his subjects, so humans are to care responsibly for creation. The caring is characterised by responsibilities embedded in stewardship specific to the environment that God may have a representative for his own creation, who will display God’s image embedded in man from creation (Gen.1).

The creation narratives clearly states that mankind was part of the creation and in doing so animals and plants were also created. However, mankind was distinct from animals and plants even if they were other similarities like e.g. dying and growing. The only thing that made mankind exceptional is that man was created in the image of God and the holiness of God was embedded in humanity. This can be aligned to what Arand (2014:139) who stated that “God created man from the earth, along with all the other creatures, to be unique in two distinct ways. Man was made in God’s image (*imago Dei*) and, secondly, God gave man the capacity to care for other creatures, a capacity that extends beyond human concerns and embrace the needs of the non-human world as well, but sin came in.”

Albeit the above, God’s plan for his creation was thwart away by sin, but was never cancelled. After the Fall God still cared for his creation and wanted to recreate it so as to bring glorification to his creation. This is complemented by Rhoads (2009:338) who affirms “that God’s purpose after the Fall was to restore all creation to his intended plan before the Fall. This action was not an escape from Earth but a movement toward embodiment of creation and was divine in nature. Jesus became flesh to bring “new creation” (Gal 6:15). Furthermore, Paul in Rom. 8:18-25 testifies to this vocation when he claims that “the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains” ready to “be set free from its bondage to decay,” as it “waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God” who will care for each other and for Earth. Therefore, humanity is called now to be those children of God who exercise stewardship in relation to all creation. The recreation and caring for the earth clearly illustrates *missio Dei*.”

The above is complemented by Yong (2011:364) “on how God’s desires of re-creating the earth through the Spirit and how the *missio Dei* is evident in all God’s endeavours to save his creation even eschatologically.” Yong (2011:364) argues that “beyond the resurrection of dead bodies, this final eschatological revelation of the Spirit signals the completion of the divine work begun when the world was created, bringing to fruition what was set in motion as the *ruah Elohim* (a Spirit from God swept over the face of the waters) hovered over the primordial waters.”

All of creation is destined to be reconciled to the Creator, not only humanity but also the entire cosmic order. This is so that all things may be reconciled to God in Christ (Col. 1:15–20) and that “God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28b); “For from him and through him” (Rom. 11:36). However, the dynamic “engine” driving this eschatological reconciliation is the Spirit. Meaning that the Spirit of creation and redemption is also the coming Spirit, who enables the renewal and restoration of all things to the image of God in Christ. So if in Act of Apostles Chapter 2 the redemptive work of the Spirit enables her to inhabit human flesh – first, the flesh of Jesus and then, of all flesh – then in Act 3, the eschatological work of the Spirit transforms and transfigures all creation as the dwelling place of the Spirit of the living God. As part of *missio Dei*, God will redeem all that belongs to him, creation inclusive.

From the above discussions by different scholars it is evident that being made in the image of God, bestowed upon humanity the dignity of being called the sons and daughters of God in God’s glory. This glorification can only be reality if humanity served God diligently and honourably and obeyed the Eden’s instruction- “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat. but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen 2:16-17), but humanity failed to obey the command and God was not glorified. However, that did not hamper or thwart away God’s plan about his creation because sin only dented *missio Dei*, not removed it. The discussions further showcase that even after the Fall, God of glory was desirous in having his glory retained by his creation that is why the new creation will be eschatologically restored and glorification of God will be evident to all.

In the glorification humanity was made royal and given a status of a king and priest. According to Wyatt (2014:24) “the making of the man explicitly out of dust is another royal metaphor, as discerned by Walter Brueggemann (1972:2); It is terminology used to speak of the elevation of a man to royal office. Behind the creation formula lies a royal formula of enthronement,” he observed. Brueggemann (1972) further adds that; “Dust” is used to describe his pre-royal status, which apparently means he is a “nothing”, without identity or importance. The antithesis of “dust” in this text “kingship” (*nagîd*) - a position of power and importance. His pre-royal status which has been described as “dust” is clearly explained in Gen. 2:7.”

Therefore, the formation of man from the dust by God and the return of man to dust by God reflect the total reliance of man on God for existence. Thus human persons are dependent,

vulnerable, and precarious, relying in each moment on the gracious gift of breath which makes human life possible. Moreover, this precarious condition is definitional for human existence, marking the human person from the very first moment of existence.

5.3.1 Man as king and priest of creation

As discussed above the creation narrative in Gen 1:26-28 brings forth how humanity was created. The apex of that is “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness; let them reign....” In creating humanity in God’ likeness showcase that humanity is made in the image of God (*imago Dei*). For the fact that was humanity created in this fashion by God himself who is the owner of creation means that humanity was given the status of kingship. And for the fact that humanity was given “dominion” over all the creatures that dwelt on earth means that humanity was given the priesthood and royalty to oversee the earth as a steward or God’s representative.

The above can be linked to what Van Seters (1989:341) alludes to; when he argues that “the creation of humanity has a royal flair or a royal ideology.” Van Seters argues that “concerning Gen 1; 26-28 and Psalm 8 it has been clear for some time that the presentation of the creation of humanity in these texts is dominated by royal ideology. He refers to the Babylonian tradition that all of the deities together lend their aid in the creation of the king and not just a single deity. He links this to the plural “Lets Us” which means other deities had a part to play in the creation of humanity.”

Wright 2010; 50-51 confirms the above. He states that “being made in God’s image or likeness, man was made the king of creation. Being made in the image of God does not constitute dominion.” According to Wright (2010:50-51), “being made in God’s image means God’s image was imprinted on humanity and humanity could represent God. This representation entrusted to human beings not to any other species. God passed into human hands a delegated form of God’s own kingly authority over the whole of creation. This was similarly the practice in ancient times for emperors to erect images of themselves in the far-flung corners of their realms, which would proclaim their sovereignty over the territory and its people. The image of God represented the authority of the king. Similarly, God installs the human species as his image within creation and authorises humans to exercise authority. However, it is the authority that ultimately belongs to God, the creator and owner of the earth.”

Consequently, Wright (2006:164) argues that “being made in the image of God (*imago Dei*) also suggests that God gave man the ability to create as a reflection of his creativity.” Arand (2014:139) complement Wright (2006) that “mankind cannot create out of nothing. Instead, man reworks that which has already been made. Humankind uses the materials that has already being made available by God. Mankind cannot claim any right or ownership of creation. Everything that is ready for mankind to create whatever his heart desires.” Arand (2014) further adds that for example; “Adam cultivates the garden from the soil that he finds on earth. In this cultivating process mankind does not bring something new or extraordinary, but uses what is there at his disposal. All that is within nature and is dependent upon nature, thereby making man a servant of creation not a creator.”

From the above notions by different scholars, it can be understood that the image of God is a given fact and compels humanity to be one of the partakers in the kingdom of God. In order to monitor the dominion humanity cannot be confined to one area as a place of abode. Humanity must look after God’ creation because humanity has kingship and priesthood embedded in them through being made in the image of God. Thus the creation of humans in the “image and likeness” of God in Gen 1; 26-27 ideologically bestows in humans that which is necessary to take up dominion over the earth. Taking up dominion can only be done by humanity of kings and priests. Doing God's will is a matter of establishing the right precedent on earth as it is in heaven.

5.3.2 Man as servant of creation

When God put man in the Garden of Eden, man was given the simple mandate “to serve and to keep”. The basis of this mandate, the study concludes, is for human beings to do both concurrently and that they should be the terms of reference why human beings were in the Garden of Eden. Man cannot heed the one and disregard the other, both are paramount for preserving the environment.

Consequently, “the putting of the man in the Garden of Eden (royal garden- the abode for kings and priests) is another royal ideological motif. Humanity is placed in the garden to till it and care for it. Not only is this transparently a figure for the king’s general duty of care for his realm, but it alludes quite directly to his cultic duties too. Humanity is to perform *cobdâ*- the cultivation of the garden, but also the cult in the garden, for he is Yahweh’s *ebed*, his “servant.” The title *cebed Yahweh*, familiar to us from the servant songs of Deutero-Isaiah (Isaiah 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-11

and 52:13-53), means not simply “Yahweh’s servant,” but more specifically “Yahweh’s gardener,” where “gardener” is a royal title of ancient pedigree.” (Wyatt 2014:24).

The above was earlier resonated by Wright (2010:51) who argues “that “to serve” is accompanied by a deep emphasis on working hard at serving. Human beings are servants of creation and that is the way they are to exercise their kingship. Kingship is being a servant. “To keep” means to protect, care in a watchful manner. And Wright (2010:51) watchfulness is the sign of carefulness, one cannot be watchful and be clumsy or neglect the task, watchfulness has a bearing in giving uttermost devoted attention at all times. It further implies that one should keep what is bestowed to him in a manner that when the owner wants it back, the owner should find that in a condition that it was when he gave it at the initial stage.” Therefore, humanity are to work hard, in a way that will care for creation and protect its best interest at all times. This mandate was given to man and has not been withdrawn to date.

Furthermore, Wright’s (2010:52) asserted and equated the creation mandate with the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. He explains that in “Gen. 1 God’s very first words to human beings are about ruling over and caring for creation (the fish, the birds and all other living creatures) for God’s sake. For survival of the earth and its environment, mankind should be in a position to serve the environment as a good steward. This task when done properly brings glorification to God. Stewardship again bear the fruits of worship and service to God, the Creator.”

From the study’s perspective, humans are placed on earth as kings and servants to care and represent other living creatures that have no voice. Humanity as kings and servants, are to ensure that creation is preserved according to God’s will. It is a mandate that is to be carried out diligently and faithfully to the glory of God, the Creator. Glorification of God is part of creation and if human beings are made in the image of God, then they should reflect that glorification expressed by the rest of creation in response to God’s glory. Psalm 150:6 makes it clear and simple; “Let every living creature praise the Lord.” Another form of praising, worshipping and glorification is stewardship.

5.3.3 *Missio Dei* and stewardship

Gnanakhan (2006:114) resonates that “humanity are believed to be of a totally different order of being than anything else in creation. Humanity alone bore the image of God and that image is

the mark that separates them from any other species. Humanity really belong to the realm of God above, not the domain of dumb creatures.” Schaab (2011:59) complements Gnanakhan (2006) and explains that “the image of God in humanity needs to be seen in terms of responsibility as well as privilege. Humanity are given the privilege of possessing a rational, moral and spiritual dimension that enables them to act creatively and responsibly towards the whole of creation, as already alluded to above. Being made in God's image bears the duty to protect the environment in accountability towards God and responsibility towards all creatures and the rest of creation.”

Hiebert (1996:65-66) refers to stewardship regarding the creation narrative. “He outlines the responsibilities that God gives to human beings, namely to “till and keep” the garden. The Hebrew word which is translated as “to till” or “to cultivate” is “*abad*³⁹”, a word often translated as “to serve” - such as when a subject “serves” his/her ruler. In this passage God places humans in the garden to serve nature. Thus, reading Gen. 1 and 2 together describes a servant-steward vision of human relationship with nature. This is radically different than the misinterpretation of human beings having a divine right to exploit and manipulate the environment as they please.”

Consequently, the meaning of the words for “*abad*” brought different interpretations and is the reason Horrell (2010:35) argues that “it is also important to point out that the words for “steward” and “stewardship” do not appear in the texts. Such terms are an interpretation of what “subdue” (*kabash* in the Hebrew) and “have dominion” (*radah*) might be taken to mean, generated largely in response to the context of contemporary environmental concern. This naturally leads questions about the actual meaning of Gen. 1 and 2 in their original historical setting – pre-industrial, agrarian, iron-age society – when their authors had no possible conception of humanity’s eventual domination of the planet, nor of the threats that such domination now poses and also of the history of the interpretation of the texts up to the present day.”

According to DeLashmutt (2011:77), “the stewardship ethic is clearly embodied in the language of the various Anglican Lambeth Conferences of 1968⁴⁰ (Resolution 6), 1978 (Resolutions 1 and

³⁹ “Be worked, be tilled (of land) to make oneself a servant.” The Hebrew lexicon is Brown, Driver, Briggs, and Gesenius. Lexicon. Access 2nd October 2015.

⁴⁰ “Amongst the Christian churches that are involved in pro-environmental action, the churches which make up the Anglican Communion - one of the largest Christian groups in the world with 80 million members in 44 regional and national churches in 160 countries - have made environmental stewardship a central and defining facet of their mission. For the past 40 years, the churches of the Anglican Communion, and specifically the Church of England, have produced a considerable body of material on

2) and 1988 (Resolution 40). Stewardship is moreover in keeping with the trajectory in the writings of the Anglican Lambeth Conference that frame technology and science as a gift of God (1920), the wise use of which can remediate human suffering (1988). As stewardship goes out of favour, an eco-justice ethic becomes central to the Anglican framing of the doctrine of creation.”

The above approach seems to be reflected most clearly in the resolutions from the Lambeth Conference (1998) (Sections 1.8 and 1.9), the work of the Anglican Environment Network and in Jones’ (2003) *Jesus and the Earth*⁴¹, which expressly opposes “stewardship” models by constructing a Christological environmentalism that is modelled on the life and teachings of Christ. The departure from “stewardship” metaphors from the Anglican Lambeth Conference (1998), gives rise to the encouragement of pro-environmental actions for more effective caring for all global “neighbours” and as a way to promote a just and equitable society in partnership with those within and outside the church.

In agreement with the stances of the Anglican Church, the study concurs with DeLashmutt (2011) and endorses that the earth was intended to be a steward-pad of humans. Humans were given God’s mandate to look after the earth, in essence based on Jesus’ teachings (Luke 16:2) and the Old Testament historical narratives. Man is called upon to account for his deeds before God who is the creator and owner. Man is given a position of trust and authority to look after any possession entrusted to him to care for, not exploit and dominate.

“The Word of God starts with the glorious account of God's creation. God promised the best of the created things to the people He made to be his own and the prophets looked forward to a new creation. Jesus was positive to everything around him. There is not much direct reference to such concerns in the New Testament, but Paul's reference to creation's groaning must be underlined to grasp the wider implications of redemption.” (Gnanakhan, 2006:111).

Gnanakhan (2006:112) further argues that “human beings need and must start with the powerful truth that there is an on-going relationship between God and his creation. Saying God is Creator is affirming that it is God who is Lord and that it is God who is the Initiator and the Sustainer, who continues to graciously relate to a creation of which man is but a part. Scripture claims that it is through creation that even God may be known; The heavens proclaim his righteousness and

the theology of the creation, the aim of which has been to foster a Church Communion in which positive social change is possible within the mission of the worldwide and local church.”

⁴¹Jones *Jesus and the Earth*

all the peoples see his glory” (Ps. 97:6; Ps.19). They bear testimony to God's glorious manifestation through creation.

Brueggemann (1977:6) adds that “God does not lose his distance from creation. He is both transcendent and immanent, i.e. the Creator upholds a bond with creation. Brueggemann (1977:6) explains this in terms of “closeness” and a “distance”. While closeness signifies a constant care between creator and creation, distance underlines the individual identity and the respect shown to others. This applies to both creation and the Creator. Each has its place of honour and purpose, each is related to the other through this inextricable bond.”

Similar to the above sentiment of Brueggemann (1977:6), Gnanakhan (2006:112) draws a comparison between Christianity and other faiths. Gnanakhan (2006) argues that “This kind of a relationship avoids any confusion caused by pantheism or dualism, the former of which avers that God is everywhere and in everything. Some environmentalists sound the praises of Hinduism, claiming that it evokes a sense of respect for creation lacking in the Christian religion. Monistic Hinduism (pantheistic in essence) confuses the Creator with creation, making even human beings equal to with God.”

There is, in fact, no opposition between God and creation. God alone, who is Lord and the source of everything, is responsible for all that is created and must not be confused with his creation. This teaching comes through the concept of *creatio ex nihilo* (out of nothing); which is a dominant element in the Biblical account of God's creative work (Gen. 1-2). This doctrine refutes any pantheism that confuses the creator with creation or a dualism that claims a confrontation between God and evil. Furthermore, God called everything “good” and therefore there is no opposition between God and creation. Any implication of conflict is because of Satan and sin as well as the constant ambition of sinful human beings to independently take charge.

5.4 Biblical stewardship

The above analysis assumes that responsibility and accountability are entrusted to an individual and that individual is, in this case, a human. “Humans have thus being given the task to look after God’s creation and that task is called stewardship.” (Hall, 1990b:26). The study finds the following characteristics to be inherent to stewardship.

In the Old Testament a steward is a man who is placed in charge “over a house” (Gen. 43:19; 44:4; Is. 22:15, etc.). In the New Testament two words are translated as steward; *epitropos*⁴² (Matt. 20:8; Gal. 4:2); one to whose care or honour has been entrusted, i.e. a curator or a guardian, and this could appropriately describe his role in the world. Another word is *oikonomos*⁴³ (Luke 16:2-3; 1 Cor. 4:1-2; Tit. 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:10), i.e. a manager or superintendent. Taken from the word *oikos* (house) and *nemo* (to dispense or to manage) as reference to the relationship within the home, an ownership with which this responsibility must be performed. However, the words are used to describe the function of delegated responsibility, as in the powerful parables of the labourers and the unjust steward. All things are Christ's and Christians are his executors or stewards (1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25)⁴⁴.

This study also finds that the earth was in need of a steward, who would bring forth God’s glorification and this by looking after his creation, not as dominator who sees the skies, the waters and the lands as means of enrichment or exploitation. God's love as well as God's authority must be demonstrated through human beings to all other creatures. On the one side there is caring love and responsibility, but on the other is creative power. This power is not an unquestioned autocratic rule over creation, but a productive force that empowers other fellow creatures to have, create, recreate, regenerate and fulfil their purposes here on earth. Yet, after all God’s efforts, humanity did the opposite and failed to stand in solidarity with God on environmental aspects. Greediness, selfishness and sin contributed towards what environment is experiencing today. Environment is facing imminent destruction and God who recreates will make the world anew. But what is paramount is that humanity should repent, ask for forgiveness and the merciful and gracious God will hear their prayers and surely God will answer as promised in the Scriptures.

5.4.1 Stewardship in Psalm 104

In Psalm 104, *missio Dei* on the environment is clearly expressed. God’s creation is filled with stunning variety, revealing the rich creativity, goodness and wisdom of our loving God. God’s creation is unique, with unique people that all have special talents, abilities and gifts. One of these gifts is stewardship and what permeates from all God created, as it is described in the creation narrative, are reasons to praise God - God’s act of creation deserves the praise of all people, because it is God’s kingdom.

⁴² “One to whose care something is committed.” See gospelhall.org/bible/bible.php?search=epitropos&dict=vine

⁴³ “The manager of household or of household affairs.” Greek lexicon based on Thayer's and Smith's Bible Dictionary.

⁴⁴ Steward New Bible Dictionary 1145.

The earth is built on God's foundation and He guarantees its permanence - "It can never be moved" (Ps. 104:5) by anyone other than God. This is clearly illustrated in Psalm 105, which expresses God's sovereignty in history and over all creation. God has supreme, unlimited power over the entire universe. He creates, He preserves and He governs. Even though one day the heavens and earth will be destroyed, as stated in 2 Peter 3:10, God will re-create a new heaven and earth that will last forever (Is. 65:17; Rev. 21:1). The new earth will not suffer humanity's selfish exploitation and abuse and self-centred desires.

The above stance is clearly articulated by Adams (2010:171-172) as follows;

"Several observations can be made about the 'new heavens and new earth' expectation as we find it in this passage that are environmentally significant. Firstly, it involves an earthly future, rather than a purely heavenly one. The eternal state is not an immaterial realm of spirit; there will be an earthly environment for the redeemed people of God to inhabit. One could argue that such a view of the future ought to promote a certain level of environmental awareness in the present."

Adams (2010:172) further argues "that the expectation is not bound up with a radical cosmological dualism that negates and disparages this creation. Adams speaks approvingly of God's creation of the existing world (Gen. 3:5). He concludes that creation was not, as in some later "Gnostic"⁴⁵ sources (e.g. the *Nag Hammadi*⁴⁶ tractate, *On the Origin of the World*), an unfortunate accident or a stupid mistake. Counteracting this heresy, Adams (2010) refers to God's creation in Gen. 1 as follows; "that God's creation is intrinsically good, which is the main biblical stimulus for environmental concern. The hope does not involve absolute cosmic destruction and recreation, i.e., the reduction of the world into nothing and the creation of a completely new world out of nothing. Such a concept belongs to a later period of cosmological speculation." (Adams, 2007:21). Material continuity between the outgoing cosmos and the new eschatological creation is presumed on the analogy of the continuity that existed between the

⁴⁵ "Esoteric mystical knowledge from the Christian heretic of the 1st-3rd century."

⁴⁶ The Nag Hammadi Library, "a collection of thirteen ancient codices containing over fifty texts, was discovered in Upper Egypt in 1945. This immensely important discovery includes a large number of primary Gnostic scriptures - texts once thought to have been entirely destroyed during the early Christian struggle to define 'orthodoxy' - scriptures such as the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, and the Gospel of Truth." See www.bibliotecapleyades.net/nag_hammadi/contents.htm

ante-diluvian⁴⁷ and post-diluvian⁴⁸ worlds as well as on the basis of the Stoic doctrine of *ekpurosis*⁴⁹

In lieu of Peter 13-14, Adams (2007:124) asks “about the call to “wait” for new heavens and a new earth does not this imply neglect and lack of action, and so effectively environment apathy? Adams (2007:124) clarifies that “waiting” does not mean idleness and passivity. He states in 3.14 that “while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish”. The verb “strive” points to strenuous moral activity and effort. Waiting is thus to be accompanied by unceasing ethical practice.”

Adams (2007) would thus not have regarded pro-environmental activity as an unethical obligation. However, if “peace” (2 Peter 3:14) is understood as *shalom* in its broadest sense, as an ideal involving harmony with and within nature (Isa 32:15-20; 61:17-22) as well as peace with others and with God, it might not be too much of a departure from Adams’s intention to see striving for peace as having an environmental dimension that will make human stewards.

Adams (2007), like Limburg (1994:342), explores Psalm 104 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Earth Summit (a sequel to the conference in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), which was sponsored by the World Council of Churches. The purpose of the gathering was to focus the energies of world leaders and non-governmental groups on the task of “protecting the earth and providing a sustainable and just future for all people”. In concluding their work, these participants wrote a letter addressed to churches around the world, dated Pentecost, 1992. The letter begins with a reference to Psalm 104.

Limburg (1994:343) starts off with the canonical context of Psalm 104, describing God as the God of creation. Psalm 104 is the second in a series of four hymns that conclude Book IV of the Psalter. Psalms 103 and 104 are formally linked with beginnings and endings that occur only here in the Bible, namely “Bless the Lord, O my soul”. “The contents of the two Psalms,

⁴⁷ “Antediluvian civilizations’ are civilizations believed to have existed before the Great flood of Noah. If the fossil record is indeed the result of the Biblical flood as described in the Bible, then it is somewhat expected for evidence of antediluvian (pre-flood) civilizations to exist.” See <http://genesis.allenaustin.net/antediluvian.htm>

⁴⁸ “Existing or occurring after the biblical Flood.” See <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/postdiluvian>

⁴⁹ “The Ekpyrosis (from ancient Greek, ἐκπύρωσις, Ekpyrosis, conflagration, derived from the word πῦρ, fire, and light) is a concept Stoic that the cosmos is cyclically destroyed by a universal conflagration, every Great Year. The cosmos is then recreated again to be destroyed at the end of the new cycle. If the notion of Ekpurosis is specific to Stoic thought, the idea of a periodic destruction of the world is common to many philosophies and many civilizations. Notably found in the Timaeus of Plato.” <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ekpyrosis>

however, are quite different. Psalm 103 (verses 4, 8, 11 and 17) centres on the steadfast love (*hesed*) and mercy/compassion (verses 4 and 13) of the Lord, described in terms of motherly affection (verses 4 and 13) and also a father's love (verse 13). As it concludes, Psalm 103 describes the Lord as heavenly king and calls upon all the works of the LORD to join in praise (verse 22), thus anticipating the theme of Psalm 104, namely “works” (verse 4). Psalm 104 picks up the picture of the Lord as king in heaven (verses 1-4), but then moves quickly to describe the Lord’s involvement with the earth and its creatures (verses 5-30).

Summarily, Limburg (1994:340-342) indicates the complementary connection between Psalms 103 and 104 in their message about God. Psalm 103:19-22 portrays the Lord “as the parent - compassionate and healing, merciful and forgiving - and, in the concluding section, also the king.” In dogmatic terms, Psalm 103 is a second-article Psalm, describing the saving acts of God toward the individual and toward people. Psalm 104:27-28, however, “depicts God as the king, the creator and also the sustainer of all life on the earth, including human life. God is even portrayed as a farmer, feeding animals by hand. Psalm 104 is a first-article Psalm, dealing with the Lord’s creating and sustaining work. Its talk about “your spirit” that “renews the face of the ground” also makes it a third-article Psalm, as the churches have recognised by assigning a portion of it as the reading for the Day of Pentecost.”

Taken together, these two Psalms describe a God active in the lives of people and also involved in the processes and works of nature. James Barr (1993:84) contends that Psalm 104 indeed presents “a theology of nature, but is also to be considered as evidence for natural theology, in focusing on the existing cosmos as evidence and manifestation of the divine beneficence.” No other biblical passage so strongly emphasizes that it was the beneficent effects of divine sustenance for animals and for humanity that signify the nature of God.

In reference to the above, the structure of Psalm 104 can be seen in a broad pattern. The broad pattern of Psalm 104:1a & 35b is that of a hymn, consisting of a call to praise in the imperative introduction and conclusion and reasons for praise in the main section.

Steck (1978:173-191) calls attention to a number of Biblical passages that divide creation into heaven, earth and sea, such as Psalm 136:6, Psalm 146:6 and Nehemiah 9:6. If such a division lies behind this Psalm 104, then its structure may be seen as follows;

- 1a-b “Call to praise and thematic statement
- 1c-4 God in the heavens
- 5-24 God and the earth
- 25-26 God and the sea
- 27-30 LORD, these all depend on you
- 31-35a-b I will praise God!
- 35c Call to Praise”

The arrangements of the verses and the canonical context of the Psalm 104 leads Limburg (1994:342) to the conclusion that Psalm 104 has relevance to the creation narrative and brings forth the presence of God in his dominion and the care God exerts on his dominion. The Psalm in fact complements Gen. 1 and emphasises the description Gen. 1 provides about God and his creation. Limburg (1994) explains the ecological meaning of the Psalm in the following manner; “The Lord places the waters over the earth as one would place a blanket on a bed.” The section verse 5-9 concludes with a word of comfort to all creatures inhabiting the earth; never again will there be a world-wide flood (Gen. 6-9). The statement seals the covenant that God made in Gen. that the world will never be destroyed by water/flood again. The earth is the abode of all who live in it; creatures and humans must complement each other in preserving the earth. None should dominate each other.

Hence, Rüdiger Bartelmus (1993), the poet remarks as follows; “It is worth noting, first of all, that the poet describes the beauty of creation and the usefulness of all that it includes for 13 verses, without a single syllable making reference to human beings. Mountains, valleys and the water that flows through them, appear to be created primarily for the animals (10-12a). When the poet finally speaks of humans in v. 14, there is no talk of the ‘crown of creation’ but rather of an equal among equals, as the synthetic parallelism indicates; ‘You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use...’ In sum, Yahweh's on-going care is for all creatures-whether human or animals (27-28).”

The arguments and inferences of Limburg (1994) and Adams (2007) do not go unchallenged or modified. Horell and Davis (2014:81) provide another dimension on the recreation of the earth and the Genesis creation narratives. They argue that “placing the “stewardship” interpretation of Gen. 1-2 in the context of the contemporary situation and contrasting it with earlier readings, thus helps to problematise any simplistic sense that these texts teach humans to be good stewards

of the earth or that “Christians”, as a generic and unhistoricised category, unquestioningly so believe. Opening up the diverse history of interpretation also creates space for students to discuss their possible interpretation of the text and to consider whether they find its ideas (e.g. about humanity made in the image of God) to be valuable or damaging ones, given the current environmental challenges.”

This study concludes that, in reference to and support of the arguments of Limburg (1994) and Adams (2007), firstly that the earth is a dominion model - this means the earth has someone who is in control and that it was created by that particularly someone to please him. God could have lived without the earth, but chose to create it out of love and to demonstrate his mercy to all that inhabit the earth and this is why Limburg (1994) and Adams (2007) refer to it as a dominion model, because the earth cannot save itself, it depends on God to be saved. God’s first utterance to the human being in Gen. 1 is a charge to “have dominion” over the earth and its creatures (Gen. 1:26-28).

Secondly, the theme of human responsibility for nature is developed in Gen. 1-11 (Gen. 2:15, 19-20; 6:19-20; 8:15-19), in Psalm 8 and continues through all the way to the Wisdom of Solomon 9:1-2. Properly understood, the command to “have dominion” portrays humans as royalty, responsible for earth’s care. The language is royal language, used when kings are charged to care for those over whom they rule (Ps. 72; 8:2-4, 12-14; Ezek. 24:2-4). Very often, however, this “dominion” model has been misunderstood and distorted in a radically anthropocentric manner.

This notion was what McHarg (1969:26) alluded to the above as follows; “the charge to have dominion has been taken as a charge to exploit the earth, as providing license for those who would increase radioactivity, create canals and harbours with atomic bombs, employ poisons without constraint, or give consent to the bulldozer mentality”

In contrast to this dominion model, for the relationship between human beings and the earth, Psalm 104 presents us with an integration model⁵⁰ The orientation of this Psalm is not anthropocentric, but rather geocentric or earth-centred. The study has seen that the thematic word is “earth”, occurring seven times in the Psalm. If there were to be “Psalm for the earth,” this would be a good candidate.

⁵⁰ “For the dominion/integration model terminology as well as a most helpful discussion,” (Ps 8 and 104).

Johann Gottfried Herder (1771:77-78) comments, in his treatise on Hebrew poetry, on the earthiness of the language of Psalm 104; "...this poetry is full of natural feeling, full of the universal providence and goodness of God in his wide empire." It was nourished in the bosom of nature and cherished in the lap of our Mother Earth (Parrish 1989:1).

This integration model, emphasising that which humans and other creatures have in common, runs alongside the dominion model from the start. In Gen. 1 human beings and animals are both creatures of the sixth day of creation. Both are "referred to the same table for food," as Barth (1949:166) once put it (Gen 1:29-30). According to Gen. 2, all living things - plants, animals, humans - are made of the same raw material (Gen. 2:7-9, 19). Humans and animals are animated by the same God-given breath of life (Gen. 2:7, 19).

An adequate presentation of the Biblical notion of the relationship between humans and the earth and its creatures will bring both the dominion and the integration models together. To "have dominion over the earth" does not mean to bulldoze and exploit, but to act as responsible royalty, caring for the earth and its creatures. Being one of the company of creatures that the Lord has created does not mean that the Bible views all these creatures as of equal worth. "You are of more value than many sparrows," said Jesus to his human followers (Matt. 10:31). Psalm 104 hints at the human position of superiority, pointing to human agricultural accomplishments (Ps. 104:14) and technological achievements (the ships of verse 26) and, of course, the Psalm itself was written by a human being in order to give praise to the Lord!

Finally, "the linking of Psalms 103 and 104 in the canon is a signal that the two should be read together. This linking serves as a reminder that the God who creates and cares for the earth and its creatures is also the God who has shown special concern for humans, delivering and caring for the individual (Ps. 103:2-5), the people (Ps. 103:6-9), and the worshipping community (Ps. 103:10-14)." (Limburg, 1994:346).

The study as it aligns itself with the discussion and its conclusion, consequently, adds as follows; God in Gen. gave human a mandate to "reign over", meaning to have absolute authority and control over something. However, God has the ultimate rule over the earth and he exercises his authority with loving care. When God delegated some authority to the human race, He expected humans to take responsibility for the environment and the other creatures that share planet earth. Humans cannot, therefore, be careless and wasteful while fulfilling the mandate. God was

Careful in how He made the earth and God saw that his work was good. God was impressed with his creation to the extent of being jealous of his creation that is why He sought a steward and man was the only choice. So man is called upon in the dominion of God to be a steward, not to be a dominator or exploiter of the environment.

5.4.2 Stewardship in John 1

“The Word” in John 1 was a term used by theologians and philosophers, both Greek and Jews, in a variety of different ways. In Hebrew Scripture, the Word was an agent of creation (Ps. 33:6). The Word was another expression for God, hence the Word was God, which was blasphemous for the Jews readers and unthinkable for the Greeks (“How can the Word be flesh?”). However, what is paramount in the Gospel of John is that “The Word” was the source of creation. When God created, He made something out of nothing. Being a created being, man has no basis for pride. Man exists because God deemed it fit, it was not man’s choice. Man must, therefore, carry out the mandate God has given to the ultimate.

In reference to the Gospel of John, it can thus be concluded that the Word of God makes creation and through the Word, creation belongs to God. This can be seen in John 1:1-3; “In the beginning there was the one who was called the Word. The Word was with God and was truly God. From the very beginning the Word was with God. The Word express the mind of God from the beginning. From the beginning the mind of God was that creation should be looked after. That is why humanity was elected as a steward to look after creation. This same Word brought heavens, earth and all the creatures into being God’s domain, termed the environment and through that Word, man was declared a steward to “care” for God’s domain and not to dominate it (Gen. 1:15). Thus in Psalm 104 the Psalmist praises God’s creation and appreciates God that way. God does not only care for his creation, but upholds his creation.

5.4.3 Stewardship in 2 Peter 3:10-13

Horell and Davis (2014) and Adams (2007) further argue that “a text that opens up questions about eschatology (i.e. views of the end times) and its influence on Christian ethics, specifically regarding the environment. Addressing concern among the early Christians about the apparent and extended delay in the return of Christ, it reveals the imminent expectation that characterised earliest Christianity and that continues to pervade some forms of fundamentalism and evangelicalism today. In this way, such texts can initiate discussion about Christian beliefs to do

with life after death and the role of humans on earth, together with their associated implications for attitudes to the environment.”

If some Christians believe (as they do) that Jesus will soon return, they will be taken to heaven and that the earth will be destroyed, does this inevitably mean that they devalue the environment and have no motivation to preserve it. This charge is levelled at evangelical Christians by the conservation biologist Orr (200:291), who argues that “belief in the imminence of the end times tends to make evangelicals careless stewards of our forests, soils, wildlife, air, water, seas and climate.”

Horell and Davis (2014) and Adams (2007) further contend that “many Christians, including many evangelicals, would reject such a charge and insist that a proper understanding of the Bible should lead Christians to be good environmental stewards, not careless ones (cf. e.g. Granberg-Michaelson, 1987). Those concerned to foster environmental care are inclined to argue that texts like 2 Peter 3 do not envisage the destruction of the earth, but rather its transformation – an interpretation inspired by texts such as Revelation 21:5 with its message “see, I am making all things new.” If God is engaged in the process of renewing the earth, so the argument goes, this is a task to which God’s people are also called and one that may be expressed in action to preserve and care for the environment.”

It would seem that Horell and Davis (2014) and Adams (2007) are in complete agreement on this premise, deeming environmental conservation an act and mandate of God to mankind to preserve the earth for the coming generations. Humans are to consider this act as a responsibility that God will take over upon recreating his earth and making everything new. God is aware that sin has caused human to divert from the initial mission and mandate, which has corrupted the earth to the extent of environmental decay. That is why Galli (2011:47) contend that “God, through his love for his creation, can make everything new and recreate the new earth and new heavens that human may live in peace (*shalom*). God has set up an enduring community of peaceful coexistence”

The study furthermore concludes from Scripture that the saving redemptive action of *missio Dei* takes the upper hand. God redeems all that belongs to him and will save it from further destruction by dominancy, corruption, selfishness and self-centredness characteristic of human

sin. The creation narratives as well as the eschatology clearly show the mercy and love of God at all times for the environment.

Even technology experts acknowledge their fallibility and see God as the Creator who creates without assistance from anybody, because of his love and mercy. They further contend that technology is not there to destroy the environment, but to augment what God has created. Hence, De Vries (2012:18) concludes the following;

“We have to keep in mind that in spite of all our efforts, what we accomplish is not his perfect future world. For that, we await his coming in glory. In the meantime, we set up imperfect and temporary signs of the eternal and perfect world that he will inaugurate at the end of history. The Bible begins with a perfect garden and ends with a perfect city. It is not the garden that will return, but, rather, a city which comes down from heaven.”

It would be good for man to aspire to be like Calvin who had a high appreciation for the culture developed by both Christians and non-Christians (McGrath, 1990). He did, however, emphasise that culture does not restore a lost paradise. Only God can and will bring into being the new perfect city that will replace the old perfect garden. Until then, talents and capabilities must be gratefully employed to develop responsible technologies that weed the imperfect garden and build imperfect cities.

The above analyses and premises are supported by this study. It is quite clearly that man is fallible and cannot save himself. All that God has done is for his glorification and in his love. God is looking forward to restoring what has been lost through human negligence, pride and selfishness in unbridled love for his creation. God seeks to return it all to its original form (Rom. 8:22).

5.5 God's love for the environment (creation)

God did not create man to be exactly like him, God after all does not have a physical form/body, and instead humanity are reflections of God's glory. Humanity will never become like God, because God is the Supreme Creator. Being created in God's image mankind will reflect God's character in love; patience, care for his creation, kindness and faithfulness. Despite everything God has done for mankind, mankind still fell into sin. In his sinfulness, God still loves mankind.

Gnanakhan (200:112) indicates that the Biblical concepts of “image of God” and “dominion” have been topics of endless debate, within discussions of environmental exploitation. “Being made in God’s image implies that humans have been created to responsibly represent God in creation and in this sense exercise “dominion”, not “domination”, over creation. Humans are the climax of creation, implying God’s special love for man over all other life forms. Critics show the concept of the image of God to be part of the idea of dominion and both stem from the anthropocentric approach to creation that has led to the exploitation and abuse of nature.”

Consequently, the desert fathers⁵¹ equate the love of God for the environment with the love of one’s neighbour, as alluded to in Scripture. In reference to that love, Skerdos (2011:261) indicates that “the harmonious encounter with nature, especially wild animals, is common in the writings by and about the desert ascetics. This and other stories serve to illustrate that the saint is capable of participating in a restored natural relationship between fallen humanity and the created cosmos. Yet, this does not occur magically. It is the result of a focused commitment of love for God and his creation, self-sacrifice and an ascetic way of living. These three elements illustrate how the desert fathers responded to environment and how they influenced the Orthodox Church.”

Skerdos (2011:262) further argues that “in the ascetical writings of the Orthodox Church, especially those coming out of the tradition of the desert fathers, means the deep ascetic impulse for communion and union with God at the heart of the monastic enterprise in the Christian East resounds in these ascetical writings. Yet even in these writings, the love of God - that intense desire for union with the divine that is a universal aspect of mystical writings, be they from the Orthodox East, the Christian West, or even the Islamic Sufi mystical tradition - is never divorced from the love of God’s creation.”

This is demonstrated in what His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew (2008:92) refers to as the love that is based on the relationship, not on power. It was on this fundamental belief that the world was created by a loving God. Bartholomew (2008:92) explains that “from this premise, the world contains “seed and traces” of God and as such “the material and natural

⁵¹ “In the early Middle Ages, there lived a group of hermits in the wilderness areas of the Middle East. They were known to history as the desert fathers. “They dwelt in small isolated communities for the purpose of devoting their lives completely to God without distraction. The contemplative movement traces its roots back to these monks. They were the ones who first promoted the mantra as a prayer tool. One meditation scholar made this connection when he said; “The meditation practices and rules for living of these earliest Christian monks bear strong similarity to those of their Hindu and Buddhist renunciate brethren several kingdoms to the East...the meditative techniques they adopted for finding their God suggest either a borrowing from the East or a spontaneous rediscovery.” See www.lighthousestrailsresearch.com/desertfathers.htm

creation was granted by God to humanity as a gift” with the command to ‘serve and preserve the earth’ (Gen. 2:15), not to dominate and destroy.”

The above argument is supported by Randolph (2011:74-75) and Van Dyke (2006:50) who contend that White’s (1967) stance that man has made earth a platform for destruction and the arrogance of some Christians towards nature is invalid. Randolph (2011) maintains that White (1967) misread Gen. on the creation narratives. Randolph’s (2011:74-75) argument is based on Greenway (2011:30) who highlights that “in Gen. 1 God seeks not just the flourishing of humans, but of all living organisms. He blesses and encourages them to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28) and God calls humans to a specific type of “dominion”. Just as God loves and cares for all of creation and seeks its prosperity, so humans are also to mirror God’s intentions in their “dominion”. Humans cannot do whatever they please with creation - even to the point of abusing or destroying nature - as White (1967) assumed.

From the above, the study adds that it is exciting to know that God has a plan and purpose for everyone and everything, including the past, present and future. The biblical verses in especially Genesis verses tell us that this plan has its source in God’s wisdom and kindness. This wisdom and kindness could not be contemplated by mankind that is why humanity cannot save himself from the sin he did, humanity needs to be saved. The plan and kindness is further extended, and all can see its mercy on the cross of Golgotha and the aftermath which is present in our lives today. We wait in anticipation for God to recreate and bring back the glorification which He intended for his creation. During the trials which we go through in life, the kindness and mercy of God is upon us through his prevenient grace which is a favour from God. Despite our sinfulness in the eyes of God we are “good”.

Pertaining to the above the study refers to Van Dyke (2006:54) who explains God’s purpose for his creation as follows; “our first insight into God’s purposes for his creation is found early in his revelation to us. ‘Be fruitful and multiply...’ He suspects that when you read these words, you are culturally conditioned to complete them with the words of Gen. 1:28; “and fill the Earth, and subdue it.” Van Dyke (2006:54) quoting Gen. 1:22 “God blessed them saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the Earth implies that before the blessing of fruitfulness is spoken to men and women, it is first spoken to fish and birds and its blessing extends to all creatures created by God. Rightly so, because God sees and admires what He has made and calls it “good” (Gen. 1:1–25).” Thus it is important to understand that God’s first stated objective in creation is to bless the life He has made that it may make more life.

The study aligns itself and adds to what Van Dyke (2006:55) alluded to above as follows; in Gen. 2 humanity and animals are all living beings. Meaning that all created creatures are fellow creatures living on earth which is their abode and that they have equal claim to be on earth. No one is superior, all received the same grace and blessing of ‘be fruitful and multiply.’ There is no value distinction among them, and no hierarchy which can serve as a base of domination of other creatures. Animals are not objects, they are living creatures created by God. So they deserve respect at all times. This is imperative and important because animals are fellow inhabitants of the earth and partners in the fabric of creation. This is possible and true because, they are also blessed by God and they also bring glorification to God.

Randolph (2011:75) draws from Van Dyke (2006) when he insists that “human use of creation is closely circumscribed when acting as God’s agent, keeping in mind that God values all of creation and sees it as good.” He further argues that Christians need to believe and also read Gen. 1 alongside the second creation story in Gen. 2; “And the Lord God planted a Garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it” (Gen 2:8-9a).

From the above the study concludes and draws from Farrelly, (2010:28). that the above serves to reflect how God loved his creation so much that He appointed a steward to look after it and represent him. God established a covenant with creation to uphold his relationship with man and to entrust man with caring for God’s dominion and be a steward of the environment forever and ever. This was not a piece-meal arrangement, but was meant to be eternal and bring glorification to God This eternal relationship is clearly described in the Bible. Thence stewardship is not a must or a favour but an expression of God’s love to humanity.

5.5.1 Stewardship as the love of God

According to Cassell (1998:28), stewardship is an intrinsic part of human nature. Thence, “the practice of stewardship emerges only after an individual experiences first-hand the nurturing aspects of God. God’s nurturing activity permeates the universe, and thus people are in contact with it in many ways and in many places. Despite the fact that people are frequently in contact with God’s nurturing love, they are often unaware of it. If people are to embody stewardship by mirroring God’s nurturing actions in their lives, they must first be able to recognize what God’s nurturing actions are and what they entail. It is only when people have a clear understanding of

the nature of God's nurturing actions that they will be able to choose consciously to act in a similar fashion."

According to Van Dyke (2006:54-55); "God has the supreme power over all creatures on earth inclusive of humanity. God controls and look after his creation. Mankind as a steward must demonstrate the love of God to God's creatures. In demonstrating this love Van Dyke uses the analogy of the Leviathan⁵² in the Book of Job. In there, God tells Job regarding the monster Leviathan; how strong and powerful is the monster and that no one can dare do something to it. That is why the following words are used; "the sword that reaches him cannot avail, nor the spear, the dart, or the javelin. He regards iron as straw, bronze as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee; sling-stones are turned into stubble for him." In addition to the strongest part of the creature, the creature was created by God."

In Job, God revealed his creative wisdom in all that he had made, in the manifold forces of nature, and he subjected Job to a penetrating examination on natural subjects. But, Job was not able to answer a single question as mentioned above. God also showed Job his providential care over the animal world, and asked him if he could handle that. Job ended that account with his hand on his mouth, silenced. Job could not appreciate and comprehend God's love for his creation by creating a powerful monster- Leviathan. How can God love a "monster" over him?

According to Van Dyke (2006); "Job was concerned about his suffering and could not appreciate God's love for his creation. God add as follows when describing Leviathan; "He is without fear. He looks on everything that is high. He is king over all the sons of pride (Job 41:26-28, 33-34). Job asks God to explain his suffering, but God praises his creature, Leviathan. Did God not hear the question? No. In his answer, God repeatedly hurls back the question, "Where were you..." when I performed all my mighty acts of creation? God's cross-examination of Job takes him from an imaginary world centred on Job to a real world that is not - a world that existed long before Job, does not know Job and is filled with magnificent creatures that have no regard for Job."

⁵² Sea monster referenced in the Tanakah, or the Old Testament (Psalm 104:24)

The word has become synonymous with any large sea monster or creature. In literature (e.g., Herman Melville's Moby-Dick) it refers to great whales, and in Modern Hebrew, it simply means "whale." It is described extensively in Job 41 and mentioned in Psalm 104:26 and Isaiah 27:1. wikipedia.org/wiki/leviathan

As Job was in despair and find himself vulnerable and hopeless. His faith was fading away and that made him doubt the love of God. The process Job was going through was the nurturing action of the love of God as explained above. God was making Job a faithful, strong steward who could stand the test of time. That is why God asks Job the question about the mighty deeds of creation. God was reminding Job that stewardship is love from God, and God nurture you to be good-steward. When going through tribulations being a steward is not that God hates you, but God is preparing one to be able to face Leviathan- a monster who destroys.

In concurring with the above, O'Donovan (2000:9) resonates that "God's love is important for all creatures. God's love is not based on personal wants and favours. But it is based on loving the creation and appreciating God's love for his creation. Leviathan was created to bring glory to God and showcase its powerfulness to other creatures. Showing this powerfulness was a way that God wanted other creatures to see and acknowledge that they are not powerful enough, they need to love creation and appreciate their situation at all times. Appreciating the love and the creation is tantamount to stewardship which is embedded in creation. We cannot have creation alone- creation goes hand in hand with stewardship as the love of God."

The answer to "Why did you make Leviathan, God?" is found in the words of Psalm 104; "O Lord how many are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your possessions. There is the sea great and broad, in which are swarms without number (just as God blessed them to be), animals both small and great. There the ships move along, and Leviathan, which you have formed to sport in it" (Ps. 104:24–26).

What can be inferred from Van Dyke and O'Donovan is that the duty of the steward is to show love as God has shown love and nurtured humanity. Leviathan is a creature created by God and is entitled to swim in the ocean created by God. Whether the creature is "devil" in the eyes of Job, Job mandate as a steward is to love that because God also loved him and the creature. Therefore it is essential that cognisance should be taken that responsibility and love goes hand in hand. One is expected to be a responsible steward and a loving one for that matter. That is why God loves and demand to be loved in return. If one loves God, one should love God's creation also as a steward.

The study concurs with the above debate and reaches the conclusion that humanity has failed in the mandate of stewardship. Instead humans see the earth as something to be dominated and

abused for self-enrichment and self-satisfaction. Humans treat the resources and inhabitants of the earth, including the animal and plant life, as outcasts on earth. They have claimed the earth as their own, in which they dominate over its creatures – against the Biblical teaching of stewardship over the earth.

5.5.2 God’s response to man’s uncaring attitude

Izunna (2011:419) argues that “a lack of caring for the environment is contrary to *missio Dei*, which is tantamount to breaking the covenant between God and man (Gen. 1:15), and is the result of man shirking the precious responsibility God placed in human hands. Instead of looking after the earth and executing the *missio Dei*, man does the opposite. Man’s treatment of the earth disobeys God’s mandate, a sin before God. Sin has turned man away from his responsibility and made him negligent.”

Man lives in a state of sin, as Boloz (2008:15) asserts, “the cause of his disobedience and exploitation of the earth. This exploitation has led to a steady decline in the production potential of the earth. Proper and loving cultivation of the land would restore the yields obtained from the earth, but man has abandoned his priestly and kingly responsibilities” – i.e. stewardship of creation.

According to Farrelly (2010:29); “man was designed to function as God’s representative, and was given the kingly and priestly status by God. Gen. 2:15 says; “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” In the Old Testament the priests and the Levites duties in the tabernacle (Num. 3:7-8; 18:7) was that of taking care and making sure that the sacrifice was carried out in an orderly prescribed manner. That is the same to humanity who has been given a priestly and kingly status to look after the earth. Humanity should ensure that the earth is looked after in a way that the Creator being God will look after. In a profound way, to be a human is to be a priest. Humanity have been placed within creation to represent God, embody God’s image and implement God’s mandate and purposes on the earth to offer creation back to God like priests.

As earlier alluded the kingly and the priestly functions were embedded in stewardship. That meant humanity was God’s representative on earth and was supposed to carry out God’s mandate to the fullest. Hence Farrelly (2010:28) highlighted that; “So humanity is placed in a relationship to the earth that combines the function of king and priest; to rule and to serve. That

is a consequential Biblical combination that is perfectly modelled in a range of meaning to Christ, as human priest and king. It is also the picture that humans see of their restored role in the new creation. This is illustrated in the New Testament that the saving act on the cross was not only for humanity, but it was inclusive of the earth, the environment and all that dwells in it. God's redemptive action is not selective but embraces all creation. This is done so that God's glory is re-instated and that *missio Dei* is realised."

The above could be aligned to what Wright (2006:415) rightfully pointed out when he links the redemptive work of God with the Lamb of God on the cross that does not only saves man, but restores man's dignity- "restoring his kingly and priestly function on earth under God." Wright, support his claim by mentioning Revelation 5:10; "You have been made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God and they will reign on earth." But humanity has disregarded their responsibility to be priests and kings of the earth/environment.

The above notion corresponds to other teachings, included in doctrine, such as *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* that teaches that "God created heaven and earth and placed man above all other creatures. This may suggest an arrogation of power to control and treat other beings in creation without much regard, thereby ignoring that all of creation (human and non-human) have intrinsic values, purposes and integrity. It further mentions that some groups prefer to be eco-centric, whereby they attribute to plants and animals features which personalize or even sacralise nature while, at the same time, human beings are denied the status of a person".

The study asserts that when humanity ignored to carry the mandate as instructed by God. Humanity was driven out of the Garden of Eden. The expulsion from the garden did not take away the image of God and "likeness" of God from humanity. The image was obliterated and humanity was in sin. Despite that, God maintains that sin is punishable. So humanity deserves to be punished. "It is your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he turned away and will not listen" (Isa. 59:2). So humanity needs salvation because humanity cannot save humanity, they need God to save them from His wrath.

Due to the foregoing, Wright (2006:415) maintained that "God took a decision to restore and recreate His creation and make it anew. God is always and will always ready to give back to the earth the dignity that humanity has taken away. God is prepared to recreate the earth and restore

it.” That is why in Rev 5:10 it is mentioned that; “besides, sin and disobedience God is still of the contention that humanity should be given the priestly and kingly status back.”

This notion is evident in what Turvey (2013:301) linked to what Pope John Paul II emphasised the above doctrine in his 1990 World Day of Peace message as follows;

“Faced with the widespread destruction of the environment, people everywhere are coming to understand that we cannot continue to use the goods of the earth as we have in the past. Though a genuine environmental theology needs an anthropology that reclaims the dignity of human life, care should be taken to see that such a venture does not give humans an inordinate right to dominate creatures and lavish the resources of the Earth for themselves alone.”

This world-wide destruction of the earth is so evident and needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. *Missio Dei* (God’s mission) should be instilled in all, because God calls some Christians to ecological “missions” as their primary field of ministry in God’s world. Wright (2010:267) remarks as follows in this regard;

“Just as medicine, education, community development, and many other forms of service are viewed as God’s calling on different people, which they can put at his disposal as intentionally missional, so there are many ecological functions that Christians can take up as their specific missional calling - scientific research, habitat conservation, political advocacy etc. The work of A Rocha International⁵³ has been a pioneering and prophetic initiative of *missio Dei*.”

A Rocha International is a Christian conservation organisation implementing community-based projects in Europe, the US and many developing countries like Ghana in Africa. Its residential field study centres, site-based projects and wider advocacy;

- “carries out ecological surveillance, monitoring and research in areas of high biodiversity and nature value;
- spearheads and promotes practical measures and policies for conserving and restoring habitats and their fauna and flora; and
- encourages appreciation of nature and participation in its conservation, through environmental education and community outreach.”

⁵³ “A Rocha, an international Christian conservation organization, founded in 1982, and now working in an increasing number of countries. A Rocha’s distinctive inclusive Christian basis is explored in describing the original Portuguese project, and three more recent ones, in Lebanon, Kenya and an urban UK context. Some of the theological and missiological issues A Rocha’s work touches upon are considered, including the biblical basis for practical conservation work, and the possibility of mission in a multi faith environment using creation as a starting point.” (info/en/org/o0376) access 12.07.2015).

A Rocha recognises the inextricable links between the impoverishment of the natural world and poverty in human communities. Conversely, long-lasting solutions to the crisis of biodiversity loss across the globe have to involve local populations. A Rocha works with people in situations of extreme poverty to achieve restoration of ecosystems, and bring hope to their communities.”

It is through the entities like the A Rocha International that a creational and eschatological understanding portrays ecological care and action as a dimension of man’s mission, in as much as it is a dimension of restoring the proper status and responsibility of humanity. It is thus to behave responsibly, as originally created, for complete redemption one day. The earth awaits the full revealing of its appointed king, servants and priests who are a redeemed humanity under the headship of Christ to partake in *missio Dei*. Man’s action in the present age anticipates and points prophetically towards the final goal, embedded in God’s love and redemption.

Furthermore, A Rocha International fosters repentance by revisiting God’s mandate at creation. For forgiveness and acceptance from God to be possible, humanity should be in a position to accept their inequities and seek salvation from God. Showing God’s love for his creation and responding to His love, Christians must surely ask God to respond to such abuse of his creation and seek to align their mission objectives to his will. If God cares about his creation to the level of knowing when a sparrow falls on earth, as Jesus says, what kind of care is required of humans with their level of knowledge? Granted Jesus made that point in order to compare it with the even greater care God has for his own children (Matt. 10:29), but it would be an utter distortion of Scripture to argue that because God cares for humans more than for the sparrows, humans need not care for the sparrow at all or that because humans are of greater value than they are, they have no value at all.

Humanity should be involved in a holistic mission, as a sign and response to God’s love, because this earth was saved through the shedding of blood (Col. 1:20). Wright (2010:269) emphasises that “those Christians who have responded to God’s call to serve him, by serving his non-human creatures in ecological projects, are engaged in a specialised form of mission that has its rightful place within the broad framework of all that God’s mission has as its goal. Their motivation flows from an awareness of God’s own heart for his creation and a desire to respond.”

It can be concluded then that the priestly and kingly functions was given to man in the Garden of Eden and man misused the position of trust inherent to priesthood. Even if through sin man

neglected his duties and opted to dominate, instead of stewarding for the environment, God in his love for his own creation instituted the *missio Dei*. The purpose of the *missio Dei* on environment is to restore the environment to its state before the Fall and man's degradation of the earth. The love of God for his creation can thus even be seen in the midst of a sinful world.

5.6 Conclusion

It would seem that humanity have a choice to either seek control or seek communication with the other-than-humanity world. Man can allow the birds to disappear into silence, preaching good news to them as they preach the same. Job says to "ask the animals and speak to the earth", he says to "ask the fish and to speak to the birds" (Job 12: 7-8). The whales express a word about forgiveness. St. Francis and the birds relate that gratitude is the beginning of wisdom and that praise is the best response to this reality of grace.

"Since God's call and mercy are so basic to the life of this people, it becomes rather obvious that human beings are not the ones to trace out who does and who does not belong to it. The Messiah himself determines the boundaries, and in doing so, he is guided by grace." (Verkuyl 1979; 172).

CHAPTER SIX

MISSIONAL PARADIGM ON EARTH PRESERVATION

“For a genuine dialogue in Africa, especially between Christianity and ATR, it is absolutely important for the participants to recognise and accept the fact that Christians and ATR are part of God’s activity in the world and share common future” (Ariarajah 1976:3-4). One has to take the partnership seriously and seek to learn from their religious experience. There should be a clear understanding of the nature of the community we seek to dialogue with, because dialogue has to do with the question of the relationship of the Christian community to the human community of which it is a part. A genuine dialogue should therefore take the human community as the locus of God’s activity.

6.1 Background

The study has thus far expounded the worldviews of Christianity and African religion on environmental issues. The study has sought to establish points that could serve as a strategy for developing a missional paradigm that would contribute positively to earth preservation. Conclusions have also been reached that leads to the belief that an environmental paradigm is possible through dialogue between the two religions to formulate contacts points for constructive communication on earth preservation.

The study found that there are common contact points that are fundamental to its own domain and form part of the other domain. These contact points, as basis for dialogue, have not been given the necessary attention even though they were discussed at different forums as mentioned in the study. It can thus be inferred that if the contact points were properly employed or well understood by both African traditional religion and Christianity, they may well form the basis of a missional paradigm on earth preservation. This paradigm could make a valuable contribution to earth preservation for the next generation. Essential to the objective of the study is the dissemination of the cultural and worldview behaviour as well as their contribution to influencing perceptions towards environmental issues.

Underlying culture is the worldview as the hermeneutic device that interprets the creative pattern of human conduct. Kalu (2002:117) describes it as the “the cultural lens through which human

experience is viewed. Various anthropologists have sought to capture the character of worldview as “mind-world” the unconscious patterning of behaviour in society; the way a people characteristically looks outward on the universe; the patterns of thought, attitude toward life, concept of time, a mental picture of what ought to be, and the order of things, and their view of self and others all are included in a people's worldview.”

Worldview assist in getting the right perception and being on the appropriate track of doing things. One cannot be concerned about environment and use a scientific worldview to seek solution to address the environmental aspect. However, cognisance should be taken that different fields of study can serve as attributors to other domain of study, then if they complement each other, then one can draw from them. This notion is applicable to worldviews.

According to Ruse (2005), “the different worldviews of religious groups and conservationists often make religion and conservation incompatible. Darwin's theory of evolution was interpreted by some as a challenge to religious beliefs about God’s creation of the world and the superiority of humans over other forms of life, differences in worldview not only arise between religious and secular groups, but also between religions. An example of this are how many religions consider the sacred to be above or beyond the earth, which leads to differences between religions that consider the earth sacred in some way and those that do not.”

Bhagwat *et al* (2011:45) substantiates the above argument by asserting that “the modernisation paradigm of the 20th century, which assume that with assistance poor countries could be developed in the same manner as rich countries, has been a key development strategy. Most development interventions aim to promote economic growth, while side-lining cultural values in society. Furthermore, many secular development organisations do not want to be seen working with a religious organisation regardless of the influence faith groups have on local culture. This has marginalised religion, despite being an important force within many cultures.” Contrary, Ver Beek (2002:65) explains this marginalisation as “the dichotomisation between sacred and secular in socio-political, and often religious, thought.”

In addition to the marginalisation of culture, Nwaigbo (2013:157-158) maintains that “all living things on earth have the right to life and the denial of this right leads to injustice. The cardinal tenet of African existence is that of community - not only of individual human beings, but the whole of the community of God’s creation. In African cosmology, all of creation is intertwined

and all are dependent on the other. Every creature relies on the welfare of other species.” Mbiti (1990) summarises this with powerful philosophical language at his command, the whole idea of interrelatedness of humanity and nature in a popular slogan of the modern African community; “I am because you are. You are because I am.” It reflects the interdependence, interrelationship and interconnectivity of all creations. The church in Africa is endeavouring to recapture the sensitivity of the medieval mystics and spirituality.

“Traditional theological reflection on the meaning of being made in the image of God has centred on traits ascribed to individuals, such as “rational thought”. This tradition is now in dialogue with a minority tradition that identifies being in the image of God with being created for relationship.” (Hall, 1990:124). Nature is not a neutral backdrop in this relatedness, instead God, humanity, and nature are inextricably bound up with one another in dialogue that is presently side-lined.

Dialogue can bring forth results that may address the environmental skirmish the world is facing. Rottenberg (2000:419) avers that dialogue can be effective and can address the language differences or “terms” not explicit to ordinary people or the dialoguers themselves. He explains it by means of the Christian/Jewish analogy as follows;

“Can Christian-Jewish dialogue lead us to a language of faith, derived from the Jewish and Christian traditions, and incorporating key elements of the Christian “*kerygma-model*⁵⁴” and the Jewish “*halakhah-model*⁵⁵” that will enable us to address issues that truly matter in terms that are meaningful to contemporary society? And, if so, will the world listen? Language and the development of a faith-based public philosophy are key concerns in the Jewish-Christian dialogue that was published in *Jews in Unsecular America*.”

Consequently, Rottenberg (2000:420) argues the need for “some kind of mediating language in which you move from the theological-metaphysical to meta-historical faith statement to the public arena and find a way in which you can share a vocabulary with people who do not share your presuppositions theologically”. The notion can be applicable to formulating a Biblical stewardship paradigm that may assist in preserving the earth for future generations, due to different pre-suppositions different world powers hold on the environment.

⁵⁴ “The original, oral gospel preached by the apostles. The preaching of the Christian gospel, especially the activity of the earliest Christian missionaries.” — See Kerygmatic, adj. dictionary.reference.com/browse/kerygma

⁵⁵ “Halakhah is rabbinic law and legal rulings. Their present making is a bear-garden. Hundreds of rabbis issue rulings — each on his own judgement, each to his own flock - which state laws to flout, what commands soldiers are to disobey.” See www.come-and-hear.com/supplement/free-judaism-cohen.html

The above deliberations and ideological interactions leads to the conclusion that dialogue is an essential factor and need among different religious domains, including African traditional religion and Christianity, especially on environmental issues. Such dialogue will enable addressing the ecological mayhem that the earth and its inhabitants are experiencing.

The study draws from Curry (2008:161) who contends that a growing dialogue within the Christian community holds some promise for overcoming the American individualism that paralyses it in responding to the need for constraint and restraint applicable between Christianity and African traditional religion. The above deliberations and ideological interactions leads to the conclusion that dialogue is an essential factor and need among different religious domains, including ATR and Christianity, especially on environmental issues. Such dialogue will enable addressing the ecological mayhem that the earth and its inhabitants are experiencing. The study contends that a growing dialogue within the Christian community holds some promise for overcoming the American individualism that paralyses it in responding to the need for constraint and restraint applicable between Christianity and African traditional religion.

The study can clearly demonstrate, in reference to the above notions, the need for the earth and its creatures to be protected by the people that inhabit it. Dialogue is imperative to accomplish this, wherein “comfort zones” are abandoned for a reality where all forms of life are embraced. It should not be about the domination of earth’s creatures, but about loving care and responsibility. This is only feasible if there is dialogue and an understanding of God’s creation and God’s intentions for his creation. In order to achieve this, this study focuses on the formulation of an environmental paradigm, embedded in *missio Dei* and based on establishing dialogue between Christianity and African traditional religion, as indicated in previous chapters. This missional paradigm is based on the similarities drawn from the contact points identified that may contribute towards an ecological future for Africa to cultivate and guard the earth.

6.2 Contact points between African traditional religion and Christianity

The study now describes the important contact points that it deems vital to contribute towards the preservation of earth for future generations. The study accordingly expounds on how an ecological missional paradigm can be formulated.

6.2.1 Mother-earth and Communalism

African traditional religion views the earth as Mother Earth who offers protection, food and security, while some Christians consider it an object to be explored and exploited for its wealth. Both African traditional religion and Christianity, however, contend that the earth is there to be used and protected against misuse – a mother that provides protection, food and security. This notion is common among both and both maintains that the earth is there as a habitat for humans. This habitat to them produces food, crops and animals for human benefit. Earth, as the mother, needs to be looked after and be fruitful for humans in all respects. Both the religious groups acknowledge that exploration and exploitation, for minerals and the like by members of Christianity and overgrazing and deforestation by members of African traditional religion, have depleted the earth and turned it into a burden for humanity, no longer an asset.

The doctrines or rituals of both these groups have place enormous pressure on earth when they are not well monitored. Rituals contribute towards pollution of the river and its banks, creating both a health as well an environmental hazard. On the other hand, Christians exploit the earth for exploration of minerals in the name of God-given wealth. The findings of the study have led to the conclusion that earth - as the Mother - is not only African, but is inclusive of both African and Christian. The common denominator, as already outlined for both African traditional religion and Christianity, is the earth, regardless of their differing perspectives. Both parties are deeply concerned about earth and agree that its exploitation needs to be addressed. It is this common understanding that serves as the launching pad for dialogue and for the formulation of an environmental paradigm on the preservation of the earth for future generations.

The formation of this launching pad will ensure that humanity once again reflects on its relationship with the earth and thereby come to see earth as something to protect from harm and to preserve for future generations, i.e. a relationship based on love and affection. It is a sentiment illustrated in the *ubuntu* (“we are one”) principle. If properly applied to the environment, it could inspire care for both the earth and its inhabitants. The same can be said of the Biblical tenet to “love your neighbour as you love yourself”, advocated by Christians. The “neighbour” here does not refer to the earth, but caring for it shows love towards God and fellow man by safeguarding the future of the earth and all who dwell on it. The principle of communalism or relationship, evident in both African traditional religion and in Christianity (*koinonia*) could be a tool to spearhead the preservation of earth.

6.2.2 Creation and Religion

Both religions believe in the existence of a Supreme Being, who is transcendent and immanent in the lives of both African and Christian. Regardless of the different names used by tribes and denominations to address this particular power, all believe in this higher power that is in charge. African traditional religion maintains that even if called by different names and even if far off, the Supreme Being can be contacted through intermediaries or divinities. It is from this understanding that the study demonstrates that the common belief that the Supreme Being is accessible, in African traditional religion through intermediaries and in Christianity through an intimate relationship with God, then the concept of preservation through stewardship is in accordance to Gen. 1:28; “Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish and the sea, the birds in the sky, and all animals that scurry along the ground.”

There are a range of myths and theories on how man came into being from the African understanding of creation. Whatever the myth, the end-product was man. This leads to the conclusion that man is a product of something, man did not simply appear on his own. It is the same belief found in the Christian creation narrative that God, the Creator, created man out of nothing. The contact point in this instance is that man is the product of something, acknowledged by both ideologies and the essence of the creation man. If this common belief on the creation of man is articulated well by both sides, it will result in agreement that man was created by one Creator. Neither ideologies can be scientifically proven, but are based on organic experience.

This study shows, as illustrated by LenkaBula (2008) in chapter 3 and the above analysis, that Africans relate to animals and assign meaning to totems according to their tribal affiliations and names. LenkaBula maintains that “naming is associated with how Africans relate to the environment and that in itself is preservation of earth. A tribe obtains its name from a certain animal and it is then taboo to kill that animal. Refraining from killing that particular species contributes enormously to its preservation. This is also the case when a certain belief is held about a particular creature, such as the owl being a sign of bad luck, and killing it is prohibited, thus preserving that species.”

6.2.3 Western Development

Africans believe that the development brought by the Western world should be initiatives that function on the principle of; “from inwards to outwards.” It is the notion that development

should not be imposed on Africans, but that they must be part of development. They must be consulted on development initiatives that aim to improve their lives or empower them. Imposing development that is not supported or a buy-in or inclusive of the indigenous people often fails to inspire enthusiasm and results resistance and negativity, even if such development will be of real benefit. Without collaboration, all those good intentions will come to nought. It is also the reason that the resistance to development leads to humans taking out their anger and frustration on the environment, to its detriment.

Christians similarly maintain that Western development that is not inclusive has been damaging, because of the lack of consideration of the worldview in which development was taking place. In this way technology has been imposed and exploitation of the earth taken place in the name of globalisation, empowerment and progress. Instead it has brought about instability in the lives of the inhabitants. Migratory labour has split up families, leaving the rearing of children solely to women, whilst the men work in the mines to enhance the economy of the Westerner.

Both ideologies agree that development summarily imposed has contributed towards the degradation of the earth, because of its failure to address the preservation of earth. They further agree that if development is inclusive, it will ensure that the elements crucial for a stable society (such as healthy family life) are in place and that such development is to the glory of God. It is from this premise that the study illustrates that development that is not inclusive leads to environmental decay, a conclusion both ideologies support. Therefore, for the earth to be preserved African traditional religion and Christianity should seek the means to fulfil their duty and address the situation as a matter of priority. African traditional religion and Christianity should monitor development, so as to tackle its damage to the environment head on and be stewards to the environment as mandated by God.

6.2.4 Stewardship

The Bible describes how God give humanity a mandate of being a steward who looks after his creation. Humanity has been given the power and clear mandate to ensure that no harm comes to creation, thereby keeping it the way God intended it to be (Gen. 1;28). The sin of man however led to the distortion of God's mandate and became a failure in the hands of man. Sin has made man an enemy of the environment, something to be exploited for his own gain and profit. This is why man is experiencing climate change and other radical changes that he cannot comprehend or explain. Sin has brought disaster and chaos.

The notion is in line with Kloosterman (1993;138) assertion “that humanity was created to be a partner in covenant with God, humanity is called to exercise lordship as stewards entrusted with the cultivation and protection of created things in terms of their natures. This kind of covenant ecology avoids the extreme errors of viewing nature independently, alongside God and the human race, and of personalizing nature as “brother” or “sister.” Between people and creation stands God the Maker, Owner and Lawgiver. Stewardship turned into despotism only when people attempted to break away from God by asserting their illusory autonomy. The remedy for environmental despotism lies, consequently, in restoring human beings to submission under divine sovereignty.”

It demonstrates both the shortfall of man, due to sin, and also the mechanisms man have in place to cover that shortfall through preservation of certain land thereby saving the environment. If agreement could possibly be reached wherein both religion must have respect for the way both want to manage/preserve environment and work together to adopt the way Africans manage the environment, perhaps Christians may also follow this method of preserving the environment. This contact point could serve as a Biblical instruction that will provide direction and advice on how the two ideologies could collaborate to bring forth an environmental missional paradigm that will save the earth for future generations.

These contact points reflect that African traditional religion and Christianity recognise the other’s worldview, misuse/use of the earth preservation and environmental issues.

6.3 Ecological Missional Paradigm Formation

Schaab (201:62) interprets Psalm 139:13-15 as follows;

“The Psalmist explores...the intricate mysteries of human embryos...being delicately created in our human mother. As we read, we discover that there is another dimension, a deeper womb - Mother Earth. Within the earthly dimension of this experience, however, dwells the spirit of God, ‘the hidden divine presence (that) penetrates into even the most hidden crevices of the cosmos...present when the embryo is formed. The spirit knows the impulse to give birth that lies deep in Earth and every mother.”

That means there is a relationship and that relationship is like a communal relationship. Because of this common source and relationship with God, a profound kinship exists among all members of creation. Kingship refers to those with whom we are related...Kingship has a common nature,

origin, ancestor, spirit or quality. The relationship of kingship is a given, implying specific ties and obligations. Such kinship has the capacity to engender in humanity a spirit of humility and interdependence toward the environment. Moreover, humanity's inherent kinship with and God's integral relation to the environment accentuates the intrinsic rather than instrumental value of the cosmos and makes plain that God's creative relation and intention extends not simply to the full flourishing of humanity, but also to the natural environment itself.

In sum, a relational paradigm suggests an environmental vision that regards the environment as an interactive space which creatures of the same creator God inhabit and enjoy; environmental inhabitants as evocative, revealing and inviting new possibilities for mutual engagement based on recognition of intrinsic value of all creation and its inhabitants. The ecological relationships in a relational paradigm tend toward a pastoral approach in which human persons exercise care for those with whom they share a common Source and End, in a dynamic movement life, growth, and convergence toward unity in and with the Creator.

The study concludes that from the above hermeneutic approach, wherein the Psalmist sees the earth as the “mother” who keeps its children in the womb to nurture them, reflects the African Traditional Religion notion on Mother Earth as the giver of life and the provider of minerals and sustenance. This notion serves as contact point between African Traditional Religion and Christianity. Sight should, however, not be lost of the destruction sin wrought in both cases, despite the good intention of fulfilling God’s mandate. Sin brought with it the selfishness and self-centredness that overshadow love and care of creation. This contact point, if wisely applied, could form the basis of dialogue between African Traditional Religion and Christianity for the ecological future of Africa.

Another approach of fostering contact as well as dialogue between African Traditional Religion and Christianity, pertaining to ecological issues, is to draw strength from the incarnational model (Schaab, 2011;64); “this model, when seen within the context of the Genesis creation account and the prologue of John, which proclaims God's Word that calls all creation into being and affirms God's Word “through whom all things were made”, as metaphor of the universe as God's Word-made-matter results in a radical reinterpretation of the God-world relationship. When the Scriptures concerning God's engagement with the history of the cosmos and humanity through creation and incarnation are broadly yet faithfully construed in this way, the cosmos is understood as having such illimitable value to God the Creator. God participates in the fullness

of life with all its certainties and vagaries; its progress and regress; its development and decline; its growth and decay.”

This understanding of incarnation refutes a view of the universe centred on humanity according to (Nash, 1999:109) it counters “the hierarchy of the spirit over the body and rejects human dominion over creation. Incarnation confers dignity not only on humanity, but on everything and everyone, past and present, with which humanity is united in interdependence - corporeality, materiality, indeed, the whole of the earthly and heavenly. It sanctifies the biophysical world, making all things meaningful and worthy and valuable in the divine scheme. It justifies “*biophiia*”- the affirmation with and affection for the diversity of life forms.”

The study believes that besides diversity based on worldview, culture ethnicity, race, gender, race, etc. humans are made new in Christ and are clothed with God’s grace. Relationship with God grows strong, because they realise that they belong to God and thereby experience God’s love and affection, which they can pass on to others and creation. The incarnational model motivates Christians to live in a right relationship with the larger whole; to care for the community of life with understanding, compassion and love; and to protect and restore the integrity of earth's ecological systems.

Moreover, humanity does so with an expanded understanding of the teaching of the Matthean Jesus; “whatever you do to the least of mine you do to me” (Matt. 25:40). In short, an incarnational paradigm suggests an environmental vision that is embodied in the fullest sense of the organic materiality in which the Divine Word became flesh. This incarnational paradigm recognises the shared splendour and fragility that the mystery of the incarnation implies for the creation, which became the dwelling of God's very Self. Hence, (Schaab 2011:64) accedes that in the incarnational paradigm, ecological relationships are reciprocal in a mutual exchange of gifts that are the body and blood of Christ for the life of the world.

This relationship, which is grounded in Christ and depicts the love of God, can be viewed as a bond (*koinonia*) that sees people and creation as one thing sharing one Creator. It can be affirmed through African traditional religion, which propagates *ubuntu* (“I am, because we are”) in their worldview. This relationship of oneness could be a tool that if prudently utilised, may facilitate the formulation of a missional paradigm that could contribute to an ecological future for Africa. This is possible because of the attributes inherent to *ubuntu* that are hugely

conducive to communication and dialogue like communalism, neighbourhood and respect for each other and culture.

To augment the above VanderLeest (2012) refer to Van Poolen (2004;371) who argues that “dialogue and relationships have a connection based on love and respect, where meaning is found more in relationships between and within things than in the things themselves. From this type arrangements or cohesion, humans can experience worshipping of God. Such worshipping can be seen through appreciation, stewardship and development. Humans cannot speak of stewardship, unless they appreciate what is before them and from that premise, humans see the unfolding developments and the wonders of God in his creation. As humans become equal partners, domination disappears.”

VanderLeest (2012:27) expounds on the following three worship stance that God expects from humans as follows;

1. “Human worship by appreciation; Scientific discoveries extend our understanding of the natural creation, which can lead us to better value its beauty and complexity, which in turn lead us to appreciate the Creator. Upon discovery of a new space object or a new chemical or a new species, we worship. When we discover new elements of creation, we are unwrapping the gift of creation a bit further, providing new opportunities to give God the glory for the wonder of the world He created. Forman (2007:4) may claim that science for its own sake in pursuit of knowledge has become depreciated, but Christians can in their faith redeem the scientific pursuit of pure knowledge, restoring a sense of wonder and awe of God’s creation.”

Both ATR and Christianity should be in a position to acknowledge that all is from God who is the Creator. In addition, they should appreciate that wisdom, knowledge and invention are part of creation. For the fact that they exercise their innovation whether scientific or natural they do not use new materials or invented materials, all what they using is found on earth and is part of creation, implies that creation supplies their needs. In worshipping in thanksgiving and appreciating that they are short to be like God, they need to give glory to the owner of creation.

2. “Human worship through stewardship; Called to care for creation, we are the protectors and preservers of the natural world around us. Knowing how to be stewards of natural

resources requires appreciation, understanding and judgement. This understanding comes largely from science, but passive knowledge is not sufficient. We are not called to keep creation in a static, untouched, state. As stewards, we are called to cultivate the creation, to develop a culture that thoughtfully and appropriately uses the gift of creation. Creation is sometimes like the gift of a beautiful painting that we are free to observe, but should not touch. More often it is like the gift of an Erector Set⁵⁶ or Lincoln Logs⁵⁷ that we appreciate not only by reading the instructions, but also by building new and interesting designs from the basic elements it provides.”

Humanity in showing appreciation should be jealous of the heritage that God has offered to them through His prevenient grace. God was not obliged by any circumstances or forced to do what He has done, but it was through the mercies and grace from him that humanity occupied a kingly and priestly position on earth of being stewards. Humanity as it look after the earth and subduing it as mandate brings worship and praise to the Creator. By being true stewards before the eyes of God, God becomes glorified and the mission of God is not impeded. Stewardship requires patience, virtue, caring and adoption. When humanity adopt the earth as their own, they will ensure that the earth is saved from degradation and that God must be glorified by their deeds of preservation.

3. “Human worship through development; Technical development is part of God’s mandate to develop culture (Gen. 1:28). When discovery turns to development of features that do not occur naturally, then science has morphed into engineering and the results are not simply the understanding of an existing aspect of creation, but a wholly new invention. Rather than take credit, we should give God glory for providing the raw materials that can be combined in new ways. This, too, is an unwrapping of the gift of creation. From the simplest cultivation of a garden on a hillside to the most complex genetic engineering; from the crudest hammer made with stone tied to wood to the most sophisticated medical instrument; man unfolds the creation through invention. The human ability to create is a reflection of our Creator. Man is made in his image and has been given a special gift to participate in creating, though limited to reworking existing matter and energy rather than creation *ex nihilo* – i.e. creation of the earth out of nothing.”

⁵⁶Set of toys invented. See www.inventors.about.com

⁵⁷Lincoln autobiography which is an interesting reading for some. See www.coins.about.com

Every mankind is born with inherent qualities and talents. These talents are manifested in humanity as the sign of gifts that mankind receives from God. Through these talents God expects that mankind should utilise them to the betterment of the environment as well as Self. Humanity should not sit on their talents but they must utilise them. In utilising the God-given talents and qualities God is glorified and worshipped. When other people see the manifestation of God on someone through the talents and qualities, the onlooker start to worship God because he/she has seen the mighty deeds of God through someone. When you use your qualities and talents effective God in turn rewards. The answer will like the one Jesus gave to the two servants whom were entrusted with talents. “Well done good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over few things. I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord” (Matt. 25:23).

This leads to the conclusion that humans are not just creatures, but made in the image of God and in essence made pure. Man has become his own “god”, disobeying the task entrusted to him in the Garden of Eden and the subsequent covenants. It has led to the exploitation and abuse of the creatures of the earth. Man needs to repent and return to God through *leitourgia* (worship).

Worship from the above is also applicable and evident in ATR, they worship in all occasions- in funerals, in weddings, in rituals when asking God to give them rain, when going to plough and reaping the fields and what is most important to them is that worshipping and singing is seen as the cornerstone of their belief. Everything in the life of ATR is based on worshipping and from that notion they derive strength and faith in what they doing or intends to do. VanderLeest (2012) is correct in showcasing the effect of worshipping which is applicable to Africans in their own worldview. Therefore, the study asserts that worship is both common in ATR and Christianity.

The Church as the base of worship, it is comparative that the Church should note the worldviews which prevails between Christianity and ATR and that will assists the spreading of earth preservation to be embraced by all. Embracing the “placing all on the same pedestal of recognition and accepting their worldview” will make earth preservation to be acceptable to all and leituorgia will be welcomed by both Christianity and ATR. Thence, Adu-Gyamfi (2011:153) argues that “the church should learn about the indigenous beliefs and practices to find out the wisdom behind them, rather than dismissing them as devilish. This means it should become involved in festivals and other traditional events to understand the social implications of various

rituals and taboos. The church should know that although some taboos may be a consequence of the symbolical or mythological qualities that the indigenous ascribe to animals, water bodies and plants, conservation motives behind such taboos should not be ruled out.”

Furthermore, the church should help to preserve and utilize indigenous knowledge to protect fish stocks and coastal habitats, and animals and land habitats. This can be done by helping to collect, disseminate and systematize indigenous knowledge, taking into account the specific context in which it developed and exists and by working closely with traditional leaders. In order to make indigenous knowledge on natural resource management sustainable, the church should draw up strategies to support the use of indigenous knowledge in natural resources management. This should include incorporating indigenous knowledge systems into their Junior and Senior High schools, Seminary and Bible College programmes and church preaching, leitourgia and teaching activities.

6.4 Earth care and Leitourgia (worship)

The word *leitourgia* is found in the New Testament and means “a service to the benefit of all people” (Deddens, 1993:15). Okonkwo (2011:34) explains that “the word liturgy, which is also used in connection with the worship service, is derived from the Greek. This word stands for the position and work of Christ as the Redeemer, in and through which He has brought the Old Testament cultus to its culmination by offering the true sacrifice and by completing his highly priestly work in the true sanctuary (Hebrews 8:2-6; 10:11-13).” *Ubuntu*, which is embedded in African Traditional Religion, directs veneration and adoration towards the ancestors as the bearers of harmony to lives and environment. Worship is thus common to African traditional religion and Christianity.

This is further supported by Letsosa (2005:1) who maintains that “the place of worship is an act of worship. The worship service in the church is of paramount importance, because it is where contact with the living God is experienced and where all people are invited to join in this *koinonial* presence with the living God. It draws worshippers near to God, conversing with him through Psalms, hymns and prayer. It is through liturgy that thanksgiving, praise, worship and prayer are brought to God the Creator.”

In order to contribute towards an environmental missional paradigm, all who meet together in worship should participate in addressing environmental issues. This is made possible by instilling the duty of earth preservation through the church that could then serve as vehicle for

implementing earth preservation strategies. This is brought about by inculcating this responsibility in all who are gathered together in the name of the church of Christ, in accordance with how Jesus would care for the environment. The promise of “wherever one or two are met in my name, I will be third one” (Matthew 18:20) reflects that God is present in every worship service. Also when the environment is the topic, God is there to provide the wisdom and reveal the strategies his people can implement. So, it is important that earth preservation should be proclaimed in churches, gatherings, meetings and even at social events. It will enable man to understand God’s will and address the consequences of sin, described as follows;

- The sinfulness of humanity is clearly illustrated in a service like the Ash Wednesday. This service provides a symbolic understanding of the “ash”, where the cruciform sign on the forehead with ash depicts the relationship between humanity and the earth. Alm (2011:182) argues that “Ash Wednesday is the reconciliation of humanity to the earth, from which it came. Creation and fall and burial and murder and wrath are wrapped in that sign of baptism. The burial and resurrection of Christ become the restoration of the connection between the earth and humanity. It marks the soil's return into the scheme of God's giving to humanity. The earth once more serves humanity as mother, as giver of life, as it disgorges Christ. Ash Wednesday marks the reconciliation of creation and humanity. In the death and resurrection of Christ, in the baptism, humanity is bound together in fruitfulness to the earth, receiving her harvest for life.” The following is an example of how gracious and important environment is to humanity especially when worship plays a role

Celebrating/receiving the Eucharist, according to Okonkwo (2011:35), challenges the worshipping community “to live in such a way that what they experience in the liturgy can be carried into the larger world. One of the ways of doing so is to ensure that the fruitfulness of the earth and the lives of other creatures will be safeguarded through their lives.” This is how the environment, its present inhabitants and future generations will be saved from disaster. Benedict XVI (2009:48) puts it more eloquently as follows; “The environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole.” However, this is very difficult to realise if there is a disconnection between liturgy/worship and real life. The fathers of the Second Vatican Council called this a

severe misconception of the norm - the dichotomy between the faith which they (Christians) profess and their daily lives.

Okonkwo (2011:36) further adds that “it is in the liturgy, more than elsewhere, where harmony between humanity, God and environment is realised, because it (liturgy) brings into the midst of the community the risen Lord, the Lord of creation, with all his compassion and self-giving. Worship can in no way be alienated from the concrete life of the people, otherwise environmental damage already inflicted on nature by technological advancement will not be remedied. This remedy may, however, not be possible if human beings fail to appreciate nature as graced and sanctified.”

Notwithstanding the restoration between us and God, humanity still struggles to find it in his heart to preserve the earth. Liturgy can be used as a vehicle for destruction, not for reconciling man with God and creation.

- Funeral services where the body is embalmed contribute to earth degradation, because the chemicals required for the process of embalming are harmful to the environment. Besides embalment, the smoke from cremation is also detrimental to the environment. The smoke causes enormous air pollution, which leads to climate change and other factors that threaten the biosphere. According to Stewart (2012:62), “it would be advisable to follow the example of naturalists. Naturalists believe that natural burial saves environment, because there are no smoke or chemicals involved. The body should be buried covered in shrouds.”
- Hymns selected for church services have moved away from praising the earth or environment. Such praise also rarely features in sermons and dogma. There is a lack of creation hymnals that refer to creation and extol the earth in both the mainline hymn collections and African traditional religion. This concern is voiced by Witt (2012:17) who argues that “our singing helped focus our eyes upwards and away from the earth. We learned that life on earth means exile for us until our deaths when Jesus takes us safely away from here”.

Furthermore, Witt (2012:18) demonstrates his concern on how liturgy does not play a prominent part in environmental issues as follows;

“What seems to be a harmless omission of hymn texts honouring the earth is much more damaging than that. At least part of the function of music in our churches has been to actively sing ourselves off the earth, purposely seeking to escape this home for another. At best, this world-denying repertoire has been a diversion. At worst, it has been a drug numbing us to the importance of God’s work and our work alongside God and the rest of creation.”

Witt (2012:19) asserts “the church is running away from its responsibility as a steward of the environment. He perceives the church, which is supposed to inculcate a spirit of preservation of the earth, as the church that is doing the opposite. The church has lost its purpose and intention as Christ’s ambassador, instead the church has become an enemy of preservation of earth.” Witt (2012) explains as follows;

“Of course, the body of songs we sing is constantly changing. Consequently, some earth-denying hymns are no longer around (e.g., it is difficult to find “I’m But a Stranger Here, Heaven Is My Home” in a modern mainline hymnal). Nearly all recent hymnals and songbooks have some new thematic section related to creation. When we gather for worship now, there are songs that acknowledge the physical place where we are as a place of salvation; God meets us here on earth, in this place. There are songs in ‘Christian Hope’ sections of our hymnals that point us to earth as well as heaven. There are new hymns for the Eucharist that emphasize it as a meal with real food, served for all, and there are closing hymns that clearly send us back to the earth to join God’s work. Still, those who want to explore a more ecologically rooted repertoire need to be intentional about searching for it, both within and outside their own denominational resources.”

Worship brings glorification to God. God must be worship all the time. The reasons being; we are made in God’s image from the soil so we a part of the earth. What we eat and cloth comes from earth so without the earth we could not survive or sustain ourselves. So it is imperative that glory and gratitude must be directed to God the creator, who is the maker of heaven and earth.

Witt (2012) is thus demonstrating that the church is intent on “saving souls” and bringing people before God in worship, but failing to share in the preservation of the earth and disregarding God’s will about his creation. The church needs to take cognisance of God’s relationship with creation, his love for his creation, and that He will punish whoever does not care for his creation.

- Because of the characterisation of ritualism, embedded in African worship in many traditional African rituals, people worship with their bodies as well as their minds (Nürnberg, 2007:43) and worshipping can go on for some time. Services can last for the whole day or even the whole night. Time is not important, according to Oduro *et al.* (200:92), because God's work is not subject to time. The Holy Spirit guides African Traditional Religion and changes lives for the better. The Spirit is not restricted by people, hence Oshun (1992:191) writes that the African traditional religion worship is "spirit-directed, salvation affirming, joy-arousing and blessing assuring."
- "The ceremony or worship starts off with a presentation of snuff and beer to the land's guardian, i.e. the ancestors. While addressing the ancestors, the ritual officiant will pour the ancestral beer from the calabash down the sides of the beer pots and the seedlings or as the occasion requires. Snuff is also presented to the ancestors and snuff-horns are passed around amongst the tribal elders, symbolising communion with the spirit world." (Daneel, 1998:131).

It is evident from the above discussion that liturgy plays an important role when it comes to symbolism. Earth preservation relies on maintaining the relationship between the ancestors, the guardians of the earth, and the living at all times. A paramount aspect of liturgy/worship, in both African traditional religion and Christianity, is that it is not a solitary event, but includes all and is done by all at a gathering. How people respond when gathering together is thus crucial to establish devotion and cooperation amongst them. Moreover the purpose is one and the mission of the gathering is one; therefore, liturgy/worship or gathering can serve as vehicle to aid in earth preservation.

If liturgy in worship is genuinely understood and given its proper place, human beings will be more concerned with "affirming, cherishing and enabling to promote earth preservation at all times." "Since created in God's image and likeness, human beings have been set apart from other beings in nature. This is not a licence to dominate or treat with cruelty, but to deal with them responsibly and benefit from all they offer. God entrusted the whole of creation to man and woman that they may share in his unfolding plan for creation. Worshipping God raises the awareness of fallibility and sinfulness, but also deepens the relationship with God to enable and inspire sharing in God's plan. Acting against this plan has its consequences; when humanity

turns away from God's plan who is the Creator, humanity provokes a disorder which has inevitable repercussions on the rest of the created order." (Carroll, 1991; Okonkwo, 2011) Simply put, humanity need to obey the mandate of stewardship which was during the induction in the Garden of Eden. Observing and revisiting that will bring glorification to God.

In support of the above, Benedict XVI (2009) states the following in *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth);

"The Church has a responsibility towards creation and she asserts this responsibility in the public sphere. In so doing, she must defend not only earth, water and air as gifts of creation that belong to everyone. She must above all protect humanity from self-destruction."

Imbedded in this exhortation is a call for a positive attitude towards all creatures. All religions can do so through the instrument of ritual/liturgy, but rituals/liturgy also be rescued from an ideological and doctrinal vacuum. It is, therefore, important that theologians and religious scholars explore (more) avenues through which it can constantly be brought to the consciousness of the worshipping community (and entire humanity) that they have a relevant role to play in salvaging the environment from further deterioration. The extent to which this call is hearkened will go a long way in addressing some of the world's problems, the greatest of which is hunger.

The time is ripe for various religions, especially African traditional religion and Christianity, to be actively involved in discourses, campaigns and treatises on how best to save the environment. Christianity and ATR should furthermore compose hymns that speak of the environment and pertinent passages in the Bible should be used to raise awareness about the sin connected to failing to preserve the earth as God, the Creator, intended. The church should be prominent in matters that affect the environment and voice their concerns as a collective, demonstrating its part in *missio Dei* and fulfil its duty as God's agent in environmental issues.

Facing the present catastrophe of earth destruction, climate change, global warming, drought, etc. the church should start engaging with other stakeholders who share their vision of saving the earth. The church must do everything in its power to use the "pulpit" as the platform to bring the good news of peace with the earth, thereby inculcating the "spirit" of saving the environment.

The Church has not been silent on environmental issues, thence, cognisance should be taken sequel to "Accra Confession the Church in Southern and Central Africa has also been concerned

with environmental issues, especially the question of global warming. The need to preserve natural resources and protect the environment from degradation has been one of the top priorities in theological education. The idea behind all this is to ensure that natural resources are used at a rate that is balanced and sustainable for future generations. With this in mind, deliberate efforts are made to integrate environmental issues in the curriculum. Issues that are frequently debated in theological circles include, among others, global warming, the problems of over-grazing, the erosion of the soil due to poor agricultural practices that lead to wind and water damage to the land, the pollution of water, air and even the soil by human activities, deforestation, destruction of wildlife and urban and rural pollution. In order to address this problem workshops and conferences are organized in order to conscientize ministerial candidates to be environmentally aware.” (Amanze 2009:129).

From the above earth preservation developments which are evident in both the African traditional religion and Christianity the atmosphere is conducive for dialogue and launching pad for the identification of contact points. Developing the contact points between African traditional religion and Christianity this study identified, in the spirit of saving the earth, can have good results. African traditional religion and Christianity should utilise the God-given opportunity to serve God by contributing positively towards saving God’s creation from imminent destruction.

African traditional religion and Christianity can achieve this as follows;

- African traditional religion and Christianity must first exploit the contact points identified, to establish a platform for dialogue and pave the way for developing an action plan. Dialogue means talking, listening and accepting each other’s views.
- African traditional religion and Christianity should engage in on-going dialogue to seek out the strongest points for obtaining a better understanding of the other’s worldview, to offer constructive input and not to dominate each other.
- The dialogue should be mutual; neither party should impose on the other party and create the sense that its views have more merit, since both parties have contributed to earth degradation and the affect it has had on the environment. It is from that perspective that the parties should address the misuse of the earth and seek ways to aid in remedying the damage.

- The parties should base their discourse on the creation mandate and make “look after and subdue the earth” the compass that will direct dialogue. In this dialogue *missio Dei* must be the priority and the glorification of God must be foremost.
- When God is glorified and everything is focused on him, liturgy as a form of worship will emerge as the winner. If God is the winner, man will be able to realise his priestly and kingly duty towards the earth.
- The members of both African traditional religion and Christianity should repent of their sins and seek forgiveness from God for the way his precious gift called “earth” has been treated and how greed and selfishness have led to untold abuse, nearly making the earth uninhabitable.
- African traditional religion and Christianity can enhance their dialogue by seeking out the services of pro-environmental bodies and partnering with them. This will assist provide and provide a valuable advice and show how African traditional religion and Christianity are aiding in this endeavour. The interaction between the parties will cascade from the work environment, from the church environment to the community/congregations.
- Small community groups/volunteers/concerned entities could be formed and continuously seek to discuss with the relevant stakeholders a way forward in how contributions from both African traditional religion and Christianity can be appropriate. These small groups can be instrumental in promoting dialogue and commitment from both African traditional religion and Christianity

6.4 Daneel and earth-keeping

In line with the above missional paradigm, the efficacy of liturgy and the contact points that will aid Christians and African traditional religion in contributing to earth preservation, it was deemed prudent to incorporate Daneel’s (1999:324) paradigm into this study for its great benefit to the objectives of the research and its aid in providing a better understanding of African culture, embedded in African traditional religion.

Daneel (1999:324) maintains that “in order to have an effective missional paradigm on earth preservation for the future generation, there must be an environmental liberation which makes room for all to participate and be acknowledged from their different worldviews. Hence, he

refers to theologising within churches and keeping track of developments to provide necessary guidance.” Daneel add the following;

“African Enculturation theology - popularly known as African theology - refers to the dialogue between European Christian and African religious thought, aimed at conveying the Christian message in a contextually relevant form and integrating Christianity and African life and culture.

- South African black theology - following American black theology - spreads the good news as a message of political and socio-economic liberation from oppression and segregation.
- African liberation theology, moulded on either the indigenous socio-economic structure or Latin American theology or both, preaches the gospel as a message of liberation in the African context of poverty, hunger and political powerlessness.”

This task requires comprehensive and ongoing interaction between Christian earth-keepers, peasants, villagers, urban workers as well as academic theologians (Daneel, 1999:327). He advocates that “the designers of new eco-theologies, because of their dedication to the struggle in the field, and those who reach the outside world through their publications should join forces in the green revolution in Africa, if its Christian manifestation is to escalate to a point where the earth is truly valued and humanity is obedient to the commands of God. Then new fellowship in mission, in earth-keeping ministries of compassion will emerge.”

It has to be acknowledged that the agenda for Christianity appears to be more complex, because it has to include self-critical confession of complicity in today’s rampant exploitation of natural resources by human beings if the Biblical imperatives for responsible stewardship are to be convincingly extolled and practised (Daneel, 1999:335). Erstwhile McDaniel (1994:80) brought in a “Christian approach to ecology that involves (1) an acceptance of lost innocence; (2) a recognition of the limitless love of God; and (3) an openness to the healing powers of this God as they well up from within the very depths of existence. Accepting this lost innocence requires recognising the alienation between human beings and the inclination to evaluate other creatures only or mainly by their usefulness.”

McDaniel (1994:81) further adds that “from within the urban-industrial context we must confess that we partake from “anthropocentric consciousness”. This is part of our sinful existence. That will change our attitude towards environment and we will become vessels of God’s limitless love

and experience the living Christ at the core of our beings. Our own “dominion” will be tempered by a deeper recognition of the sheer goodness, the sheer loyalty, of each and every living being we influence. As Paul, in Philippians 2:5, puts it; “We will have put on the mind of Christ.”

Daneel (1999:337) emphatically appeals to all that “finding the answers to these questions and going forward is not going to be an easy task, but it is achievable through team work and involvement and sacrifice. The inter-disciplinary academic, inter-institutional, inter-religious and inter-cultural levels should come together and work as a team with the sole aim of preserving the earth for further generations. This will have to happen wherever new communities of concerned earth-keepers take shape to confront problems, formulate strategies and develop a new solidarity in action - in lieu of isolating individualism- aimed at the liberation of a beleaguered creation.”

The study has shown from Chapter One that one crucial contribution of the earth is the destruction of the ecosystem. Ecosystem is not only destroyed by chopping away trees and vegetation in the name of development, but by humanity neglect.

Another applicable practice is not to ignore that some species are distinct and cannot be replaced. The only thing that must happen is that those species should be preserved. This can be possible if inculcation of nature conservation is done at roots level meaning to the youth. Hence, Maathai (2011) resonates that; “you cannot protect the environment unless you empower the people, you inform them, and you help them understand that these resources (environment) are their own and must protect”

In bringing environmental awareness, environment preservation must be part of the Church Sunday School syllabus wherein environment awareness is instilled to the children at that stage. Tree planting campaign could be included in the syllabus. This campaign should be seen as an on-going process. Rakocsy (2013:65) alludes to Wangari Maathai the founder of Green Belt Movement who planted more than 1000 trees to save the environment. She promoted women involvement in earth preservation and maintained that earth is there to be preserved at all cost. Hence she referred to the following; she used the stories of creation in Genesis in her teaching, asking people to contrast God’s response “it is good” with what they see around them in the degradation of the environment. The book of Leviticus and the Psalms, especially Psalm 23, were also important. She found in Jesus’ parable of the mustard seed (Mt. 13:31-32)

encouragement to persevere; “The climate for an idea’s reception may be inhospitable, and it may require time for the idea to bury itself in the soil of the community to germinate and spread its roots. But, finally, the idea springs to life and begins to grow.” (Rakocsy 2013:86).

In so doing, practical solutions will be found to the extent that love, compassion and commitment to the earth community enable these emerging fellowships to transcend the boundaries of ethnicity, culture, race, class, nationality and geographical distance, without violating the pluriform historical and cultural heritages of local societies. In addition, planting of trees will preserve the earth and return the earth to what God intended for His creation. Therefore it is important that replenishing of the trees should be replaced and that will restore life back and glorification will be bestowed to God and earth preservation will be realised.

6.5 Earth preservation

When African traditional religion and Christianity complement each other, drawing from each strengths, both accepting that they are facing a common “enemy” who is destruction of the earth, and advocating environment preservation, other organisations that are eager to do the same will be prepared to accept them as one family. The Christian and African religions could draw from those entities to enhance or fortify their missional paradigm of preserving the environment.

- “The Green Matter organisation in South Africa has contributed immensely towards environmental preservation. This was initiated by developing graduate skills and leaders for biodiversity. The Green Matter network of partners aspires to unlock the environmental, social and economic potential of South Africa. Green Matter engages cross-sectoral, bringing together African traditional religion and Christianity in dialogue, institutions and agencies to implement solutions that address the challenges around developing relevant and quality biodiversity skills.
- The Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA), previously known as the Wildlife Society of Southern Africa and still earlier as Wild Life Protection, is concerned about the environmental crisis that its facing, directly ascribed to how humans live on this planet. This human-centred crisis requires a human-centred response and is possible through human capacity development. WESSA is seeking ways of training and engaging in public awareness campaigns that will instil in the public the crisis the earth is facing, a venture African traditional religion and Christianity should join.

- BirdLife South Africa aims to offer programmes to the youth, who are at the critical stage where more developmental support is required to nurture and work with these young leaders, between the ages 18-30 and even up to 40. They plan to touch the hearts and souls of society to help make those connections and conserve biodiversity that is disappearing at an increasing rate. They will, for this reason, be creating a generation that can bridge the gap and provide a better understanding on how to preserve environment for the coming generations as well as ensure dialogue that can contribute positively towards environmental awareness.
- Fundisa for Change (Teaching for Change) aims to bring environmental awareness to schools and higher learning institutions by expanding, transforming and strengthening the environmental education offered by local teacher education institutions located in South Africa's universities and also ensures sound and relevant environmental content in the national curriculum and teaching and learning materials.

The above are just a few of the initiatives that are being explored by organisations and institutions, all of which are concerned about the welfare and the state of the environment in South Africa. Drawing from their expertise can add value to the missional paradigm that has been devised by the study.

6.6 Conclusion

Dialogue between Christians and African traditional religion will set an example to other agencies that it is possible to dialogue with one aim. In so doing, it will reach a lot of people by teaching environmental issue to root level e.g. Grade R. The agencies in return will make environmental issues their agenda. Obtaining such expertise will encourage other institutions to join the venture, thereby making participation in the envisaged missional paradigm a success. It will also create the opportunity to offer these agencies insight into the underlying worldview, crucial for changing attitudes toward the environment. It would also be prudent to always bear in mind that these strategies will be implemented into a secular world.

As the study nears its end, it draws from Cooperrider's (2014:46-47) visit to the San Ignacio lagoons to illustrate the relationship between creatures and humans. Lagoons were important as the winter and spring harbour for these whales, where they gave birth to and nurse their young for a few months before heading north again towards the Bering Sea. This yearly pattern meant

that these lagoons used to be prime whale-hunting grounds, so productive in fact that as recently as 75 years ago, the gray whale was nearly hunted out of existence. These whales never accepted the hunt without a fight, such that the grays once earned themselves the Leviathan-like nickname “hardened devil fish”. In 1937 an international ban was placed on hunting the gray whale. These mammals can live as long as 100 years, however, and thus there are still whales swimming those waters with harpoon scars marking their backs, bearing a history of violence on their bodies. It turns out that it’s these very same whales with the harpoon scars that are now doing something new and quite extraordinary.

Contrary to the treatment and abuse the whales went through, these whales have not only stopped attacking human vessels, but are in fact seeking out connection with humanity, turning the tables and pursuing with curiosity the human onlookers with spectacular breaching displays; sending their impossibly huge bodies careening from water into the sky with such gravity-defying grace; even shepherding their young ones and vulnerable calves right up next to the whale watchers; and even gently holding their massive, harpoon-scared heads inches from these boats or inviting humans to extend a hand and touch them, a type of blessing from one creature of extraordinary intelligence to another

Cooperrider (2014) concludes that it would seem the word from the whales is that for us humans, something like ecological forgiveness is possible. Apparently, the word from the whales is that if we change our tune, if we relent from our attack on the things of nature, the things of nature will respond in turn and even those places left most scarred will forgive us. Apparently, the word from the whales is that creation waits with eager longing for the day when we’ll seek communication and relationship with it rather than control and manipulation. Apparently, the word from the whales confirms the wisdom of Job when he says; “Ask the animals and they will teach you-the fish of the sea, and they will declare to you, ask the birds of the air, and they will tell you...that the hand of the Lord has done all this.”

Callicot (2011:516) maintains that when humans see land as a community to which we all belong, “we may begin to use it with love and respect...” (Leopold 2011:516). That land is a community, is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics.

Callicot (2011:516) further adds as follows;

“I contend that A Sand County Almanac, at first blush a mere hodgepodge of charming but disparate vignettes, has a single overarching and unifying theme and purpose- the exposition and promulgation of an evolutionary-ecological worldview (consilient with a neo-Copernican cosmological worldview) and its axiological (moral and aesthetic) and normative (practical ethical) implications”.

Callicot (2011:517) asserts that God declaring the plants and animals that He created to be “good”, God might plausibly be understood to have declared them to be intrinsically valuable. God gave to Adam, the archetypal first man, the job of dressing the Garden of Eden and keeping it. Thus human dominion over nature might well be understood to be not that of a despot, but that of a steward or caretaker.

If the relationship between man and all other life that inhabit the earth is one of love, respect and care, God’s mandate for creation will be fulfilled and bring glory to God. It will also preserve the earth for future generations that they may enjoy the fruits of creation as God intended.

Upon conclusion it should be mentioned that although the focus of this study centres on African traditional religion and Christianity, it does not exonerate other ideologies from environmental mismanagement or exempt them from contributing to the preservation of the earth. There will be opportunity in future research to address other ideologies in this regard.

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