Towards A Christian Ecological Theology from an African Christian Perspective

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Abstract

This paper proceeds from the assumption that climate change is real. Furthermore, it holds that climate change primarily arises from the human moral- theological view of creation. This is the view that creation serves the interest of humanity, hence the greedy exploitation of creation. More importantly, while the effects of climate change have been global, the most affected are those who have done the least to cause it, especially from Africa. In Africa, many people have lost their livelihoods due to climate change. Thus, there is a need to develop a theology of climate change or ecological theology. Whereas more theologians from the global North have written on this subject, there is missing a Christian theology that speaks to the environmental concerns of the African People. Christian ecological theology that engages the Holy Scripture, African traditional wisdom, and the contemporary problems of the African people is required to establish a paradigm for understanding and to tackle climate change in Africa. Therefore, through a socio-cultural analysis and theological approach, this paper seeks to sketch a discourse on the environmental crisis within the categories of African cosmology and contemporary realities. Central to this task is a contribution towards a Christian ecological theology from an African perspective.

Keywords: Christian theology, Ecology, Climate change, African worldview, Creation/Environment.

Introduction

This article proposes the development of Christian ecological theology as a way of tackling climate change. The suggestion for a Christian environmental theology ascends from an

understanding that climate change is not primarily due to human activities but our moral-theological view of creation. From an African theological standpoint, I argue that the conversation of adapting and mitigating climate change in the context of ecological theology demands a framing of the conversation within the categories of African cosmology and contemporary realities. A Christian theology of ecology ought to engage the Holy Scripture, the African traditional wisdom, and the current concerns of the African people to establish a paradigm for the understanding and tackling of climate change in Africa. Consequently, I begin by discussing the impact of climate change in Africa while locating the church's role in Africa in the discourse on climate change before concluding with a sketch of the discourse on the environmental crisis within the contextual experiences of the African people.

Climate Change in Africa

Climate change has left devastating effects on Africa primarily because, for the most part, African economies are nature-based, and the nations are less equipped to deal with or adapt to climate change than other continents. This is further compounded by the fact that Africa has contributed the least in inducing climate change, thus making the circumstance unjust treatment to the continent. Joshua W. Busby & Todd G. Smith *et al*. explain:

> Africa's vulnerability is partly driven by unfortunate geography, where the physical effects of climate change are likely to be among the most severe on the planet. It is also largely the result of the low adaptive capacity of many African states, which is a product of problems in their economies, healthcare and education systems, infrastructure, and governance.[1]

Kenya, for instance, faces impacts on food, water, and livelihoods. Its five major water towers are on the brink of collapse, and the snowy caps of mountains: Kilimanjaro, and Kenya are melting at a rate never recorded before in history.[2] Based on experts' predictions, Jessica Leber warns that climate change will add a strain on Kenya's already tough food security challenges. Its small-scale farmers feed most of the country and make up most of its increasing poor population. As a result, farmers are the most affected in the country. She goes on to observe that

[1] Joshua W. Busby & Todd G. Smith et al, "Locating Climate Insecurity "Locating Climate Insecurity: Where Are the Most Vulnerable Places in Africa?" In *Climate Change, Human Security and Violent Conflict. Hexagon Series on Human and Environmental Security and Peace,* Vol. 8., (ed. Scheffran & J., Brzoska M. et al. Berlin Heidelberg; Springer, 2012), 23.

[2] Patrick Luganda, "Africa and Climate Change: Bringing Science and Development together through Original News and Analysis." *SciDev.Net:* (2008, August). https://www.scidev.net/global/food-security /feature /africa-and-climate-change-adapt-survive-thrive.html Accessed on 4/17/2019.

the "rising global temperatures are ending what little predictability farmers could count on in the past… Farmers only have one chance to time the planting right. If the rains fail to arrive on time, the crop dies, and with it, so does the bulk of their annual income."[3]

The above discussion, therefore, accentuates that environmental protection and human development initiatives are linked.[4] Put differently, the impact of climate change has led to human suffering and poverty, and especially to people who are not primarily responsible for this change.[5] Yugar, while locating the problem in the "industrialized" West, is quick to show that climate change is due to human activities. She observes that;

> The statistical reality is that the rational, logical, capitalist, consumerist, industrial, and "enlightened" West is the main cause of climate change. Western first-world nations emit significantly more carbon dioxide, thus draining wells and destroying gardens, farms, forests, and coral reefs. Their profit-driven, extractive, and exploitative multinational corporations displace millions of individuals who are without secure access to water or food.[6]

Whereas Yugar sees climate change as anthropogenic, it is proper to emphasize that its destruction of the creation demonstrates a moral crisis. A crisis that has led us into a theological emergency; thus, it is incumbent upon the church to initiate a moral intervention. Lynn White has suggested that more science and more technology will not deliver us from the present ecological crisis until we find a new religion or rethink our old one.[7] For the Church in Africa, such an undertaking will mean that the church moves to a new era that honours and sustains God's gift of creation. This move, I suggest, is towards a Christian ecological theology. To achieve this goal, therefore, the conversation of adapting and mitigating climate change in the context of ecological theology needs to be framed within the categories of African cosmology and contemporary realities. This persuasion is the central argument of this paper.

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[3] Jessica Leber, "How Farmers in Kenya Might Adapt to Climate Change." SCIEN: Scientific American, 2010. https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/farmers-in-kenya-adapt-to-climate-change/ Accessed on 4/17/2019.

[4] See also _____United Nations Development Program, "Human Development Reports" 2018 http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev Accessed on 4/17/2019.

[5] In locating the problem of Climate change as arising from the developed West, Pope Francis in his recent encyclical, *Laudato Si'* insisted that, "the West has an ecological debt to repay." Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Francis on Care for Our Common Home* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015), 36, http:// w2.vatican.va/content /francesco/en/encyclicals /documents/ papa- francesco_20150524_ enciclica-laudato-si.html Accessed on 4/21/2019.

[6] Theresa A. Yugar et al, "The Enlightened West and the Origins of Climate Change," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 33.2 (2017): 167–170, 168.

[7] Lynn T. White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science 155* (1967), 1206.

Church and Climate Change in Africa

In this endeavour, we must locate the African Church. To do so, we need to probe the existing suppositions on the role of Christianity in the whole context of climate change. The conversation on climate change is not a recent issue. It began as early as the 1850s when John Tyndall first proposed that carbon dioxide emissions would create a greenhouse effect.[8] By the mid-twentieth century, Lynn White emphasized a connection between climate change and Christianity. In his *Historical Roots of Ecological Crisis*, he claimed that Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt for the ecological crisis. He wrote,

> What did Christianity tell people about their relations with the environment? (that) God had created Adam… Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes… But, as we now recognize, somewhat over a century ago science and technology-hitherto quite separate activities-joined to give mankind powers which, to judge by many of the ecologic effects, are out of control. If so, Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt… Our science and technology have grown out of Christian attitudes toward man's relation to nature which are almost universally held not only by Christians and neo-Christians but also by those who fondly regard themselves as post- Christians… We are superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our slightest whim.[9]

Whereas some may not fully agree with Lynn on the effect of Christianity's teaching on human dominion over creation, it can still be argued that, by association, Christianity is still guilty. Indeed, a discussion on climate change historically has been associated with the "Christian West," which has also been responsible for the high emission of greenhouse gas. So, rather than deny Christianity's role in climate change, we instead need to ask ourselves; how has the Bible, the sacred book of Christians, been used to promote ecological destruction or prohibit it? Or how has Christianity been used to legitimize the destruction? Recognizably, in entering this conversation, the church is coming in as part of the problem and the solution. Therefore, I

[8] Jim Antal, *Climate Church Climate World* (Lanham: Rowman& Littlefield Publishers, 2018), 14.

[9] White Jr., "The Historical Roots," 1205-1206. White was a medieval historian, specializing in technological advancement in Medieval Europe. His work on environmental ethics and modern environmental woes was influenced also by the environmentally sensitive work of St. Francis of Assisi. Furthermore, it is argued that his argument that modern technological advancement was to blame for environmental woes was inspired by Heidegger's views on technology. Asked about his thoughts on the impact of technology in modern West, Heidegger replied, "Only a god can save us." This comment proved prescient for White's paper a year later. For more see, Martin Heidegger, "Only a God can Save Us" in *Der Speigel Interview* in 1966 (Translated by William J. Richardson, March 2008) https://archive.org/details/MartinHeidegger-DerSpiegelInterviewenglishTranslationonlyAGodCan. Accessed on 27/12/2020.

agree with James Nash's suggestion that Christians need to pursue an ecological reformation of Christianity rather than engage in denial.[10]

While it is true that climate change affects all of us, it is imperative to recognize that its effects continue to intensify every system of injustice, discrimination, and disadvantage among the people of the developing world. To experience such an impact daily is as though the earth is revenging for its continued destruction. Close to the end of his letter to his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates laments this reality. He writes that;

> This is not a belief in prophecy but in the seductiveness of the cheap gasoline. Once the Dream's parameters were caged by technology and by the limits of horsepower and wind. But the Dreamers have improved themselves, and the damming of seas for voltage, the extraction of the coal, the transmitting of oil into food, have enabled an expansion in plunder, not just the bodies of humans but the body of earth itself. The earth is not our creation. It has no respect for us. It has no use for us. And its vengeance is not the fire in the cities but the fire in the sky.[11]

For many people experiencing rising temperatures daily in Africa, it appears that this vengeance has found a settlement in Africa.

I mention the reality of this "vengeance" because it helps introduce a dimension to this conversation relating to the African Church. Like the church in the West, the Church in Africa similarly shares the "burden of guilt" – as articulated by Lynn White. This is because of the historical relations between these churches. However, in the context of the discourse on Climate change, Africa happens to be the principal victim. For instance, most of those attending Church in Africa are poor farmers whose crops fail to yield due to erratic rains, their children drop out of school due to lack of school fees, amidst failing economic means occasioned by droughts and famine. How this reality will shape the conversation at the table of climate change, I do not know. What I do know, however, is that this reality deserves critical consideration. It is a reality that our Christian brothers and sisters in the affluent West need to have in mind. How they engage their members who own multinationals and industries responsible for greenhouse gas emissions tells a lot about whether they care about the impact of climate change on citizens of Africa.[12]

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[10] James A. Nash, "Toward the Ecological Reformation of Christianity," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 50.1 (1996): 5–15.
[11] Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (New York: Random House, 2015), 150.
[12] "Their profit-driven, extractive, and exploitative multinational corporations displace millions of individuals who are without secure access to water or food." See Yugar et al, "The Enlightened West and the Origins of Climate

The implication, therefore, suggests an astronomical task for the Church in Africa on this issue. For in a single moment, she bears the guilt of climate change, she is looked upon to provide a solution; she is a victim but also supposed to bear hope and help her people. In other words, she is not just thinking about ecological theological reformation, but the faces of her suffering people. Conradie captures the tension of the moment when he writes that,

> Clearly, this situation aggravates the dilemma of speaking about Climate change from a Christian perspective. How can one still speak with any integrity and authenticity about the common good? Who has the right to speak? To whom is such discourse addressed? Who might overhear the conversation? Will the target audience listen? Will they even receive the many documents that are produced, let alone open the attachments, read the contents, and respond appropriately? And what will they expect Christians to be saying?[13]

In demonstrating this complex situation facing the African Church, I aim at stressing the unique place or the locus upon which this church's "doing" of ecological theology happens. Therefore, we now analyze some aspects of Christian ecological theology while highlighting its contextual challenges.

Analysis of Some Aspects of Christian Ecological Theology

The devastating effects of climate change on the majority of poor masses in the early 20th century made it apparent that the world was experiencing environmental injustice. This evoked the need for a theological reflection on this issue among Christians and Christian theologians. It was, however, not until the seventies and eighties that serious theological engagements on environmental injustice started to take a critical shape. The result was the development of ecological theology. Within the protestant circles, Jürgen Moltmann became a key proponent towards taking the natural world seriously with a significant contribution to the discussion in *God in Creation: An Ecological Theology.*[14] Ecological theology, therefore, focuses on the

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Change," 168. One way the Church in the West can help is by resourcing the Church in Africa as she seeks to mitigate climate change.

[13] Ernst M. Conradie "Climate Change and the Church: Some Reflections from the South African Context," The *Ecumenical Review* 62. 2 (2010): 159-169, 160.

[14] Jurgen Moltmann, *God in Creation; An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (Trans., Margaret Kohl, Gifford Lectures 1984-1986; London: SCM, 1985).

response of the Christian faith to the environmental challenges that confront people in every locale and the planet.[15]

The success of this theological task implies that any ecological theological conclusions arrived at ought to be contextual. As such, responsible Christian theological reflection and communication on environmental needs in Africa ought to be from within an African perspective. And since it is a Christian reflection drawing from Christian teachings and traditions, it needs to be faithful to the Holy Scriptures.

The current ecological theology locates the problem of environmental injustice on human activities. It argues that God placed humanity in the Garden to have dominion over it. As such humanity related to nature/environment in a separatist way while using it for his own good. The result of which was the degradation and destruction of the environment. In the opening pages of *A Theology of Liberation*, Gustavo Gutierrez underscores this fundamental reality when citing Karl Barth, saying, "the God of Christian revelation is a God made man, hence the famous comment of Karl Barth regarding Christian anthropocentrism—Man is the measure of all things, since God became man."[16] As the center of all things, humanity ended up exploiting nature for its own good. Therefore, this existing ecological theology argues for a theology that identifies human beings as part of the creation, that is inter-related with all other creatures yet called to act responsibly before God within creation. In other words, this kind of ecological theology takes environmental concerns and places them on equal breadth with humanity.

While this view is well articulated, and human attitude towards nature is rightly blamed for environmental injustice, it must be properly appropriated within Africa's present challenges. As a continent, Africa continues to experience human suffering. Some of these sufferings are self-inflicted and others originate from outside the continent. Therefore, any Christian ethical articulation on the continent of Africa must commence from the damaging effects of political oppression and brutality, epidemics, gender-based violence, over-taxation, corruption, and burgling of assets, among others. This is what challenges Africa daily and "this is what demands the attention of the Church and all people of faith, for good theology is born in suffering."[17]This

[15] Dieter T. Hessel, "Eco-Justice Theology After Nature's Revolt," *After Nature's Revolt* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 2.
[16] Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1973), 13.
[17] Steve De Gruchy, "Environment and Ethics in Africa" *Media Development 2* (2009), 1.

argument is crucial as it shapes the discourse on ethical views in environmental injustice, for it is not something "immediate" that is felt amidst much suffering.[18]

Additionally, any attempt to articulate an ecological theology that places creation on equal breadth with humanity must engage with the problematic connotation of such a theology for the African people. The African experience of colonialism and slavery was a profound experience of being treated as "animals" —part of the "natural" world— not as human beings. It was a period and experience where African humanity was not only denied but intentionally abused. Therefore, the fight for independence was not just about a fight for socio-political and economic emancipation but a fight to be human. Hence, to have a Christian theology that suggests Africans should not think of themselves higher than the creation[19] evokes bad memories. It is especially viewed as offensive when this theology is propounded by people coming from the nations that colonized and enslaved the African people.

Nevertheless, the cultural practices of the African people point to a positive view and relationship towards the environment. It has been argued that Africans fought for their independence from colonialists in order to get back their land as "land," not as "earth."[20] But, while a distinction between "Land" and "Earth" can be made, African traditional worldview does not necessitate such a distinction. According to Africans, the land is viewed and functions as a symbol, a storied space, and a symbol of ethnic/cultural identity.[21] The idea of tying land to the identity of the African people is telling not only of its social nature but also of how African people viewed land as relating to them. On land grows not only food crops but herbal medicine, land hosts sacred spaces (shrines are mainly in the forests), provides a place to perform rites of passage, and places to train their warriors. For some, a forest is a place where dead bodies were (are) left to rot hence enriching the plants (since the spirit would have joined the 'other' world of the living dead).

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[18] Ibid.

[19] The Norwegian Philosopher Arne Naess, for instance, introduced the concept of "deep ecology", which he sees as undermining the dominant paradigm privileging the place of humans in the biosphere. Such views have found their way in the discussion on some form of ecological theology. See Anne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long Range Ecology Movement; A Summary," *Inquiry* 16 (1973): 95-100; Dennis Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2006), 21.

[20] De Gruchy, "Environment and Ethics in Africa, 1.

[21] Lucy Claridge, "Victory for Kenya's Ogiek as African Court sets Major Precedent for Indigenous people's land rights" *Briefing; Minority Rights Group*, (2017), 1-2 https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/ uploads/ 2017 /08/ MRG Brief Ogiek.pdf Accessed on 4/20/2019.

Arguably, the fight against colonialism was not just aimed at getting back their land, but their whole life. For in losing their land and all in it to the colonialists, Africans lost their being. Thabo Mbeki, former South African president, in his famous speech *I am an African*, elucidates on this point. In this speech, Mbeki defines "Africanness" as a consciousness of shared history and identity with the created nature. A shared identity that is distinct yet connected in a myriad of ways. He asserts that as an African,

> I owe my being *and life* (emphasis added) to the hills and the valleys, the mountains and the glades, the rivers, the deserts, the trees, the flowers, the seas, and the ever-changing seasons that define the face of our native land. My body has frozen in our frosts and our latter-day snows. It has thawed in the warmth of our sunshine and melted in heat of our mid-day sun. The crack and the rumble of the summer thunders, lashed by startling lightening, have a been a cause both trembling and of hope…all have been panels set on the natural stage on which we act out the 'foolish' deeds of the theater of the day…I have wondered at times…whether I should concede equal citizenship of our country to the Leopard and the Lion, the Elephant…the Hyena, the black Mamba, and the pestilential Mosquito. A human presence among all of these, a feature on the face of our native land just defined, I know that non-dare challenge me when I say – I am an African. [22]

Mbeki shows that "Africanness" conceives land as this "thing" that gives and makes their lives flourish. Africans view(ed) the survival of the environment as inextricably connected to their survival. Thus, they protected it. They devised ways of doing so through the system of totems.[23] A family totem could range from a type of tree, a wild animal, fire, thunder and lightning, rain, and so forth. Each family protected its totem from any form of destruction. It is believed that they can speak to it, and it listens. In the end, therefore, collectively, they care for the environment.[24] Accordingly, one can infer that environmental concern is deeply rooted in the African consciousness.

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[22] Thabo Mbeki, "I am an African" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lmKFTadTk8 accessed on 4/20/2019. Mbeki, then the first black vice-president, gave this speech as he contributed to the debate on *the South African constitutional bill* in 1996. The question of citizenship was a part of this debate.

[23] For more on African religious practices, see John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophies* (Oxford: Heinemann Publishers, 1999).

[24] For instance, the "Ogiek" sub-tribe of the Kalenjin people of Kenya. Traditionally honey-gatherers, "they survive mainly on wild fruits and roots, game hunting and traditional bee-keeping. The Ogiek have lived since time immemorial in Kenya's Mau Forest, and are the custodians of the environment on which they depend. They have a unique way of life well-adapted to the forest. To them, the Mau Forest is a home, school, cultural identity, and way of life that provides the community with an essential sense of pride and destiny. The term 'Ogiek' literally means 'caretaker of all plants and wild animals.' Unsurprisingly, the survival of the ancient Mau Forest is therefore inextricably linked with the survival of the Ogiek". See Claridge, "Victory for Kenya's Ogiek," 1.

The argument above differs from the earlier invitation that for Africans to think of themselves in equal breadth with creation might be offensive, granted the colonial history of Africa. Whereas the possibility of such a contradiction is not denied, the intention is preserved. That is, when framing the discourse on climate change in Africa, one must tread cautiously upon the complexity and contrarieties that exist. Chinua Achebe once reminded us of this feature of Africa. He warned, "Africa is not simple. People want to simplify it. Africa is very complex."[25] Therefore, I suggest that success can largely be experienced by creatively navigating through these contextual complexities involved.

In identifying these contextual features and complexities, I intend not to celebrate these concerns but rather to provide a touchstone that will consequently guide the process forward. More importantly, even with these concerns highlighted, the environmental concerns still are not negated. We still need to deal with them. The church or the Christian theologians and various actors need to settle on a creative engagement mode to address the main issue. It is towards this objective that this study now turns to. Here, I provide what I think is a sketch towards framing the discourse on the environmental crisis within the contemporary realities of the African people.

Sketching an African Christian Theology of Ecology

In thinking of creative ways concerning this "Earth" crisis as Christians, I suggest that it should start with prayer for healing offered to God. That God may heal the environment by restoring it to its wholeness. Whereas we often think of the environment in a material sense, it is essentially spiritual as embedded and revealed in its creation purpose; to declare the glory of God.[26] On the contrary, Africans are notoriously religious and charismatic. And so, every situation of a physical or material crisis invites a spiritual stance as a fundamental starting point to address the problem. During such times, particularly in churches, people would "cry to God" as a way of interacting and connecting with the supernatural power to find practical solutions to any disaster or social ill. Swazi theologian Sonene Nyawo observes that "while some Swazis accept the scientific explanations and potential solutions to these scenarios, others turn to prayer. They believe they cannot resolve the depletion of the ozone layer; it is a problem for God … he created it, and he

[25] Katie Bacon, "An Africa Voice, Interview with Chinua Achebe" in *Atlantic Monthly,* August 2, 2000. Atlantic Online https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2000/08/an-african-voice/306020/ Accessed on 4/20/2019.
[26] Col.1:16; Psa.96:11-12, 8:1, 3-4, 96:11-12; John 1:1, Psa.19:1.

can mend it when it is torn."[27] While this may suggest a resignation to the crisis, it underscores the weight of the crisis and a reason why they should bring it to God in the first place. They trust it is God who will guide them to solutions and agreements that will fix this problem. And after all, there is nothing we should not pray for. Therefore, we ought to feel free to tell God exactly how we feel about this crisis. There is no need to dress it up or sanitize it. We can say whatever frustrations we feel concerning this crisis to the omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent God known by God's people.

We should not only pray but play. Here, I am proposing that we find ways of integrating and framing the broader environmental concerns onto the daily lived realities of the common people so that they can make connections between human activities and their impact on the environmental crisis currently experienced.

First, African Christianity strongly demands that any conversation must draw from the Bible. I would suggest that the language of a "home" forms very important imagery in both the Bible and African people's worldview. To think, therefore, of the protection of the earth as caring, for "our common home" is critical.[28] This home is given to us by God, and it is our duty to make sure that our habitation is harmonious with its sustenance, hence demands our protection (Gen.1:26-28; 2: 15). Thinking of the earth as our shared home reminds us that the way we structure our human economy in terms of our production, consumption, and waste must be in harmony with the ecological logic of the earth.[29]

Second,[30] I suggest that the conversation on environmental protection can be framed as a food security issue. Food forms the interlink between human dignity, people, and nations on the one hand and climate, land, and nature on the other hand. People ought to be invited to see that protecting the environment will lead to our living as we shall receive enough food for ourselves. I suggest that this will ring a connection to human suffering in Africa as it will speak into the issues of hunger occasioned by famine, drought, and floods (impact of *El-Nino* rains will always

[27] Sonene Nyawo "Are Prayers a Panacea for Climate Uncertainties: An African Traditional Perspective from Swaziland," *Ecumenical Review* 69.3 (2017): 362-374, 364.
[28] This imagery was also employed by Pope Francis in his recent encyclical on climate change. See Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* (2015).
[29] Celia Deane-Drummond, *A Primer in Ecotheology; Theology for a Fragile Earth* (Oregon: Cascades books, 2017), 55.
[30] On this succeeding discussion, I am indebted to the work of De Gruchy, in his pioneering contribution on how to concretely contextualize climate change discourse within the Africa context. For more see De Gruchy, "Environment."

be fresh in the minds of many in Africa). Furthermore, without food, we cannot provide nutritious supplements to those living with HIV/AIDS and other diseases. This pandemic turned epidemic is responsible for taking away our farmers and breadwinners. Food is what brings us together during social events and religious functions. By caring for the environment, we are then assured of a constant food supply.

Besides, this Earth crisis can also be presented as a water and sanitation concern. Water is life. We know that if we do not care for our environment and restore the broken water towers, then our access to water will be damaged. As a sanitation issue, it means we are called to deal with environmental pollution and sewage management. If we do not care for our environment, it means that our water access and sanitation will collapse, and the impact on all people will be devastating.

Last, if we do not deal with sanitation issues, we are at risk of contracting diseases such as cholera. What this means is that public health is impacted by our failure to care for the environment. At the heart of the African Church and society is the focus on healing. Church/Mission hospitals and health promotion is an area that the church has invested relatively in Africa as it seeks to restore broken relationships (sickness and diseases illustrate brokenness). But this broken relationship does not exclude the material world. Land and natural resources experience broken relationships as well, and it demands that we work towards healing and making it whole again. For in so doing, even our cows, sheep and goats will experience this healing too. De Gruchy echoes a similar thought when he observes that, "Often the thinking about health focuses on curative interventions, but a responsible Christian engagement would point to the wider dimensions of *public health* (emphasis added), indicating the links between the environment and ecological systems and human wellbeing."[31] He rightly points to the fact that even where there is a strong element of anthropocentrism, as shown in the example of the African context, the links to the environment still can and have to be made clear.

Conclusion

In conclusion, climate change is a global issue transcending national boundaries. It results from human activities in exploiting nature, especially with the application of science and technology. This human attitude towards the environment has mostly been arising out of the Christian

[31] De Gruchy, "Environment," 18.

teaching of humanity as possessing dominion over the creation. Therefore, the result of this crisis has visited untold suffering upon the People of Africa who are least able and prepared to cope and adapt to the vagaries of these climatic changes. While scientific solutions have been propounded as measures to mitigate this crisis, Christian ecological theology has also been developed to tackle this environmental pandemic. A contribution of this theology for the people of Africa, towards the discourse on Climate change, must seek to orient itself to the local realities of the people. For if Christian ecological theology desires to address the heart of the environmental injustice in Africa, it must do so by speaking to the heart and mind of the African People.

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