

**AFRICAN ECOLOGICAL THEOLOGY: PEDAGOGICAL  
PATHWAYS TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

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**Abstract**

*African theology recognizes the sacred quality of the ecological system because it serves as the dwelling place for divinities, deities, spirits as well as the medium through which the sovereign or Supreme Being can be reached. It has been discovered that the influence of modernism and secularism has created an irrevocable havoc and devastation to the ecological system and unspeakable catastrophe to African Theology. The objective of this paper is to examine the traditional African ecological theology as a practice and ideology of resolving the present world ecological problem. This article adopts phenomenological approach. The work recommends a couple of pedagogical measures to check the wanton destruction of the ecological system.*

**Keywords:** Ecological, Theology, Pedagogical, Environmental, African, Conservation

**Introduction**

Ecological crisis is perhaps the most pressing challenge the world grapples with at present. The projected rate of climate change this century is far greater than anything experienced by the earth in the last 10,000 years, mostly caused by human activity through the burning of fossil fuels (Deane-Drummond Web). Scientists believe that human's unregulated exploitation of nature in the name of scientific and technological advancement is the cause of this crisis. In most parts of the world, deforestation, gas flaring, oil exploration and spillage, industrialization, unhealthy agricultural activities and others take place unchecked. These result in environmental degradation and pollution, depletion of the Ozone layer and the attendant change in climate resulting in global warming and cooling. Many attempts have been made, many conferences organized and suggestions proffer on what to do to control global warming so that the world can be a conducive place to live. However, it needs to be pointed out that the exploitation of the environment that results in global warming is an attitudinal issue and it is a change of attitude that can ameliorate the challenge. In this paper, it

is suggested that a combination of African theological attitude to nature can serve as a model for the control of global warming.

As one reads through the creation story in Genesis, discovers how God relates to us. As a result, we need not to be told the need to protect the environment. It is for our own good. God could have done it anyway He wanted it. Anyhow we see it, we need to cherish it, protect it and leave it to the generation to come. For us to understand the theology of nature, we need to accept this from onset that God is the Creator as been told about in the sacred doctrine of creation. Seeing and accepting God as a creator will help us to deal with some questions and how to answer them. Even if we fail to provide answer at all, it calls for rethinking about our attitude towards nature.

### **An Overview of Ecology and Theology**

The African understanding of the world is life-centered. In sub-Saharan Africa highlights, people mostly lived a subsistent livelihood which has the land a very important source of all that they have. The land and soil and everything in it are always considered a gift of the Supreme Being and have a sacred character of their own. The provident earth is also considered the ultimate leveler, which is required and needed by all. So, rather than approaching the earth with the aim to subdue it negatively, the African would seek to tend it and make it more productive (367-8). In a sense, for the African, life is the primary category for self-understanding and provides the basic framework for any interpretation of the world, persons, nature, or divinity. Being a Christian or not, the understanding of the world and relationship with nature have a religious foundation and a theological base. As for Monotheist religions, humankind is the center of the world. After creating human beings according to his own likeness, God placed them outside the common nature and gave them the power to dominate it as a whole. But Polytheist religions consider humankind as a product of nature; while, religions called “primitive” and oriental religions consider humankind as a form of life among many others. Therefore, different theological world views emerge. Theologically, the arrangements of the world and the relationship with nature have a theological base because it is God who is the creator of anything, and humanity is in the center of all. Theologically, after creating human beings after his own similarity, God placed them above the common nature and gave them the capacity and the authority to dominate the whole of his creation. The dominion and protection of the creation of God, holistically, imply all the sectors of the

human life including environment. The interdependence of all the creatures under the sun is a crucial personal discipline. Accordingly, Kyomo affirms “life is worthy of life when this discipline becomes the currency for each human being” (57-63). This interdependence which exists between human being and nature has a great consideration in the African design because the African regards nature as part of his existence according to the will of God to whom he/she attributes everything.

Thus, the African will easily live according to the vision of God, the creator of all good things for the blooming of humanity. Each African will, therefore, understand the value of nature and the relationship, which exists between God, nature and human beings. Unfortunately, today, humanity is still dangerously able to destroy the good creation of God through various destructive means: massive weapon, pollution, and wars. Nuclear irresponsible engineering, industrialization and globalization also contribute to an unrestrained destruction of normal ecosystem.

### **African Traditional Perspective of the Environment**

Traditionally, religion plays an integral role in linking people to the natural world, imbuing them with the knowledge and values that make caring for the environment a priority (Kanu 35). In African cosmology, God is seen as the agent of creation. Creation does not arise from a mechanistic interpretation of science, but from a deep faith in the Supreme Being. This reveals that African concepts, understanding and interaction with the environment is largely religious based. They believe that human beings live in a religious universe, so that natural phenomena and objects are intimately associated with the divine being, God (Mbiti 48). As such religion occupies a unique place in ascertaining environmental friendliness and at the same time, it is a major instrument that has been used to cause environmental problems. However, among Africans or the indigenous people, religion has been a source of environmental preservation and protection even though, abuses also exist. The Indigenous people recognize and understand their place in the local environment bearing in mind that nature or the environment has a spiritual dimension attached to it. By virtue of the fact that the African recognize that spirits inhabit nature, there is the tendency to nurture and take care of it. According to Grim, in indigenous beliefs, to analyze religion as a separate system of beliefs and ritual practices apart from subsistence, kinship, language,

governance, and landscape is to misunderstand indigenous religion. Therefore, the respect for the environment still subsists among the African people. Hence, Grim claims that “what is evident, however, is wherever indigenous peoples have endured, they have maintained a loving experience of place and an understanding that spiritual forces capable of leading humans into both utilitarian and self-understandings abide in all of these places” (Obasola 203).

Prior to the advent of Europeans, Africans had a balanced and a harmonious relationship with their environment. Their beliefs and practices enabled them to preserve their environment. These beliefs and practices could be found in their norms, folklores, proverbs, taboos and myths, which are reflections of their cosmology. In African cosmology observes Awajuisuk, “there is symbiotic relationship between the visible and the invisible world. Africans believe in three worlds which are linked together: the heaven above, the earth and the earth beneath” (103). Africans see themselves as part of other creatures of God. They also believe that all things biotic and abiotic have souls. Hence, they treat them as sacred. Alokwu confirms this view when he records that in traditional African society, both the visible and invisible elements of nature are linked together. Human life is inseparably bound with nature and both human life and the life of other creatures are one with the divine. He states further that it is this view of cosmic oneness that led to the belief that deities inhabit natural phenomena and that they are associated with mountains, rivers, forests, sky or sun. This oneness makes Africans to always strive to live in harmony with nature, deities and their fellow humans both living and dead (39). Among the Igbo, certain trees believed to be the abode of deities like Iroko are left to grow for years without anyone cutting them down. Awajiusuk also confirms that Iroko or certain trees are left uncultivated in Africa.

Consequently, desertification, quarry and deforestation were rare practices in traditional Africa (103). The practice of medicine was another way traditional Africans preserve nature. Certain trees were preserved due to their medicinal significance. Hence, such trees could last for many years without extinction. There were taboos that guarded against desecration of land. The land is seen as ‘mother’, believed in Africa to be a deity. The earth is called Ama in Kilba and Ile among the Yoruba communities. Any desecration done to the earth could incur her wrath (Mbiti, Christianity 31). Ikenga Metuh for instance asserts that among the Igbos 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. Considering it as a taboo, such anomalies are considered to have capacity of inflicting harm on the entire community until sacrifices are offered to appease the gods (244). Traditional Africa's agricultural practices also helped to preserve the land. When a land was cleared for farming, the bushes were burnt on the land and the ashes would serve as fertilizer. Different types of crops would be planted on the same spot. In some part, shifting cultivation applied. After about three years of cultivation on a land, the farmer would move to another piece of land while the portion would remain fallow to regenerate. The regeneration process might take up to ten years. Though the system was only relevant when there was low population density, which helped to preserve the land.

In another dimension, some lands are purposely left to grow trees as a forest of various sizes with embargo that people cannot trespass nor fell them down for any reason without attracting the wrath of the gods. Likewise, various communities have one totem or the other which is protected from any kind of harmful overture from the local communities. By such observance, lives of many habitats have been saved over the years until recently that the custodians of this practices have abandoned their cultures. Again, Africans believe order and cohesion can only be achieved when there is good relationship between them and all the powers which perceived in the environment. These include, God, fellow men and women, priests, ancestors, established institutions and ritual animals, plants, non-living object and special places (Okwokwo 427-8).

### **Ecological Theology in African Ethical and Moral Philosophy**

Ecological theology says Nwaigbo Ferdinand “is a reflective theology of social responsibility with a view to save the earth and the universe from further destruction” (353). Hence, ecological theology has green theology as its synonym. Ecological theology finds its bedrock on the human nature that is modelled after the image of God. As a result, in whatever the creation account, humanity witnesses and enjoys a wonderful forestation. God in creation saw that everything was good. With the creation of man and woman as the summit of creation, God gave them a mandate to increase, multiply and subdue or care for the earth. At that first instance, God bequeathed to humanity a wonderful blessing that carries grave responsibility unto fecundity for procreation and stewardship of the entire creation. God entrusts to humanity the

care of the earth although in a participatory form since He remains the absolute creator and guide unto environment.

Ecology underlines the interdependence of all creatures: Plants, animals (including human beings) as well as micro-organisms of which without the support of the other organisms within the same system, life would not survive. Such interdependence implies that predators and prey, fire and water, food and shelter, etc., remain in balance with each other and with the environment around them. This is confirmed by the positive stand of Pope Benedict XVI referred to as the Green Pope when he said that:

One must first of all, learn 'to see in creation something more than a mere source of wealth and exploitation in human hands/ to see it truly as it really is, that is, as 'expression of a project of love and truth that speaks to us of the Creator and His love for humanity (Barga 123).

Nature or environment in African context is God's disclosure for it discloses God as the giver of the environment for human and non-human sustenance. The concept nature shapes the African worldview, philosophy and their response to natural realities. The universe for the African is a spiritual and material home. The universe exists in unity with its creator and the community realizes itself in God through His providence in the universe. The natural phenomena and objects in African mentality bear witness to God. John Mbiti for instance stresses this fact that, "Africans find God disclosed to them through animals, plants, spiritual beings, heavenly beings and earthly objects" (Mbiti 91-3). Through nature, human beings receive God's love, charity and consonance which enhances a holistic development in human life and growth. God, the Lord of nature sustained human life and growth and there was a relationship with the rest of creation. To neglect the wonders of creation or nature like water conservation, maintenance of climate and physical conditions was to neglect the spiritual nature of human beings and this affected the human relationship and wholeness.

The spirit of sharing of common sacramental natural resources among Africans have a formative influence on the lives of the individual and society. Either its resources or the environment is disposed at other's needs. These resources were understood as generosity from God who is perceived as Father because of his generative providence. These gifts of life were shared communally because common good was more

treasured than individual interests. The gifts were given by the creator as natural resources to be shared by all in the community. Therefore, observes Klauder Francis, environment meant much to the people's identity and their interrelationship, and was an expression of themselves to God and to the wider society. The sacredness of nature and its formative role is clear in African philosophy, tradition, culture and religion "the universe is a revelation of God, and the world cannot be understood without God for He is the centre and end of creation" (34). For this reason, the created world is seen as the *locus* in and through which God touches His people. To destroy or diminish anything in nature is to destroy or diminish the modes of the divine presence, and the consequence is deprivation.

People must learn to live effectively and efficiently in and with their environment and be taught how to use it. The attitude that the earth is all ours is wrong and is informed and influenced by practical materialism, greed and selfishness. More emphasis should be laid on the fact that God exists within the created world and consequently the earth is not to be exploited with impunity. Human beings are only custodians or stewards and must be convinced that God exists within the created world, and therefore the earth is a source of inspiration and awe. To believe that God exists within the created world is to retain close ties with nature and affirm the sacredness of life in all its forms on this earth. This anthropological understanding of cosmology serves as the hedge of African care for the mother earth as a sacramental common. As a thesis to this background, Veli-Matti Karakkainen avers that "a constructive Christian theology should be able to hold in a dynamic tension an attitude of reverent admiration for the beauty of creation in its endless diversity and creativity, and a deepening concern for nature's vulnerability and suffering from the current global economic-industrial rape" (219).

God maintains and guides his creation through our conscience. This is why Hans Schwarz said that in the natural process God's continuous creative activity is dominant; however, in the moral process God's preserving creative activity rules supreme. God endows humanity with certain guidelines within which it can unfold itself and which may aid it in finding its proper place within creation. If we want to take care of nature then we need to approach it with a clear and good conscience especially, if we want to take proper care of the environment. Not that we want to please people, but we should see it as a moral duty to

control not to destroy or exploit it. Preserving nature through more conduct, we should be guided by everyday doings and thinking. By doing that it forms a judgement about what is right and wrong.

### **Divine Preservation of the Doctrine of Creation**

The creation of the world was for a purpose. It has not been set without purpose or divine direction. If the creation was done with an intention, then humankind must do all that they can to preserve the things that God created. The purpose of creation is for God to express his love to the other than himself. God gives his love in freedom and expects it to be rendered back in freedom. Creation exists because God wills it in freedom and love. Pieter Smulders advances this perspective thus:

Creation is to be considered as the free act of God whereby he gives the world and man entirely to man, as a gift of his goodness and as a task to be carried on to a fulfilment in which man responds to this word of his creator with the fulness of his own being and of his world (23).

If Christians or humanity cherished the things created by God, then there is something that must be done. What we have to know is that God himself know how to preserve it. God's providence is a Trinitarian activity. The Lord who exercises providence is none other than the Lord and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that providence is none other the Lord within the word. Even though we don't see God living with us, He is always controlling our activities so that the world will continue to be a better place for us to live. The Biblical doctrine of providence is demonstrated in the concrete experiences of Israel and her neighboring communities. There are so many of them when you read through the Bible in the Old Testament and in the life of Jesus Christ and the development of the Church in the New Testament. As such, divine providence is a sign of God's steadfast covenant love with his people.

The history of the Jews in the Old Testament exists as a powerful witness and a sign of God's interviewing covenant love – a love ultimately revealed on the cross. The Holy Scripture says: "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col. 1:17). This means that nothing in creation is self-sufficient. God is responsible for both the origin and the preservation of all creation. Hans Schwarz assumed that "without God's continuing preservation of the creation, the Cosmos will cease to exist. No atom of the universe is self-sufficient, all is utterly



dependent upon God's gracious sustenance" (187). He went on to say that to affirm providence as divine preserving is to acknowledge that creation has limits and that these limits do not rule the creature. It is due to God's acting preservation. To him this is not a passive divine activity. God enters into world occurrence and ordains that it should exist. This is not to suggest that God creates the world anew each moment, as has been suggested by some theologians. Hans Schwarz in his book *creation* said that: "when we talk about divine providence, however, we do not turn to the past. Our attention is directed towards the present. The convictions are uttered that, God has the present in his hands here and now and therefore our future is decided too" (Kwadwo 79).

Hans further made the claim that the future will not open itself in any possible way. It will open only in the manner which is sanctioned by God. With this assertion we do not just focus on the cosmos but also humanity and its conduct and history. He added that Divine providence, therefore, extends to nature. We remember that natural processes presuppose nature and matter. Yet these presuppositions cannot be taken for granted, because there is insufficient reason to suppose that an initial singularity occurred. He ended his submission by saying that Divine providence, therefore, asserts first of all that God continues to preserve his creation (185). Martin Luther, for instance, was much more impressed by the continuous preservation of God's creation than by initial creative act. He remarked that many people start something, but most do not have the energy to continue it.

Preservation of nature is very essential because it serves as the foundations of human existence. It is said almost everywhere that when the last tree dies, the last person will die. It is true because nature provides us with varying degrees of dependability which can be understood as a result of God caring for humankind. If nature is well preserved, it will help us to maintain and sustain the environment in which we live. For example, adequate water supplies of high quality is necessary both for community use and local ecosystems. Communities as well as other creation require proper care to be able to fulfil the purpose for which they were created. For this reason, we need to work hard to preserve nature so long as we continue to live in this world without knowing the very day this beautiful, well planned nature will be destroyed as indicated in the Bible. As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and Heat, summer and winter, day and

night, shall not cease (Gen 8:22). How nature or the environment will look at for 50 years to come will depend on us.

Our land has a beautiful and varied landscape with many distinct ecosystems. If we desire nature to always look better with running streams, clean water, clean air and want to live something better for our generation, then we need to invest now. For the sake of the future it is not incumbent upon us to complete the work, but neither are we at liberty to desist from it. God has created nature to the extent that the nature preserves itself. Things work naturally like that and it is very wonderful. Hans Schwarz called it degrees of dependability which can be understood as the result of the caring activity of God. According to him, the first kind of dependability is represented in the rising and setting of the sun and in the cycles of seasons. He stated that they provide the foundation for the development of life on earth, as far as we know, is fully reliable.

The second reliability asserted by Hans is a different kind which arises when several alternatives and large numbers of repeated incidences are involved. To him we encounter this, for example, in chemical reactions when wood or other fuel is burnt (189). If these natural dependencies failed us, we will be in big mess because our very lives solely depend on them Everything is in the total control of God, without his care and permission we are nothing. The Bible confirms that: Are not two Sparrow sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore, yet are of more value than many sparrows. (Matt 10:30-33).

### **Pedagogical Pathways for Ecological Sustainability**

Africa has been suffering serious degradation through recent decades. Various causes are at the origin of this environmental destruction, namely, several wars due to selfish interests by leaders supported directly or indirectly by Westerners, bad strategies of industrialization adopted by many African countries, deforestation, desertification, pollution of water, air, land, climate change, bad governance and unplanned development strategies and mismanagement of natural resources etc.

Therefore, Ecological theology is a theology of social responsibility with a view to save the future generations, to save the mother earth and the universe, the air, water and the soil from further degradation. The task

of theology in ecological matters is crucial. It would be hypocritical to criticize industrial development which exists to supply or enhance our demands at the minimum price asserts Elsdon (21). This is because there is nothing inherently wrong with the human aspirations for a higher living standard rather than living in an abject poverty and inhuman standard of life. The indispensable pedagogy is that African needs a higher standard of living to lift herself from poverty, unemployment and illiteracy.

Ecological theology has the powerful voice to protect the environment. This theology is in the form of prophetic voice crying for the protection and preservation of the life of human beings, their environment and the entire cosmos. Ecological theology has a great concern on the human person, who is created in the image of God, the source and end of all economic activities. The picture of a human person formed in the image of God opens the anthropological dimension of the theology of ecology. During creation, observes Nwaigbo God made a human person in His own image and likeness, and endowed him/her with his own characteristics, communion and fellowship (360).

African intellectuals and researchers should, therefore, conscientize the African people to protect Africa against all forms of the destruction of nature and any form of ecological crisis because by protecting the environment, they protect themselves. Also, African theologians, through the Christian mission, can valuably accomplish this task because Christian mission has the power to attack all cause which destroys the environment and climate change challenges if it is well understood and contextualized according to the need of the moment, especially by putting Christ at the center of all. African missiology has the mission to awaken Africans and to point out their responsibility towards God and the nature created by God.

Ecology is the interrelationship between living organisms and the interaction between them and the environment. The way in which human beings relate to each other will be influenced by memory of the image of God in them. The image of God in people continues to prevent every assault, humiliation, destruction and even extermination. The implication here says Mwayuli is that:

God wanted man and woman to have a balanced interrelationship with the environment. To subdue, the creator put man and woman in-charge of the earth to manage and not to destroy. Human beings depend on the earth for food and other

livelihoods, which means that the emphasis is on the interdependence of all things that is people, animals, vegetation, atmosphere and social pressures (537).

Another pedagogical measure is that local community should as matter of urgency embark on ecological projects. This can come in form of tree planting campaign with young people, waste management and environmental sanitation within the neighborhood and beyond. There is a deep connection between wastefulness and waste management. The community must lead the way in providing an alternative to an attitude of wastefulness by undertaking projects that recycle used materials for reuse. Environmental stewardship corroborates Chukwemeba entails the ability to economize the earth's resources in order to avoid the unnecessary production of new materials (162).

Omorovie Mark Ikeke has argued for an eradication of environmental predicaments in Africa through the teaching of philosophical consciencism (12). According to this school of thought, the eradication of the environmental predicament in Africa requires that people cannot conscientiously apply themselves to viable and healthy practices that will protect the environment unless they are convinced of those practices. In African environmental philosophy the preachers are the philosophers of our time. It behooves philosophy as a field that is totally concerned with the search for knowledge in a critical manner to engage in that work of conscientization. What this school of African environmental philosophy is talking about, is that environmental sustainability requires right conscience. To combat African environmental challenges successfully, we need a systematic and progressive indigenous framework. It is time that the 21st century Africans should acquire the right mental status which will equip them with pure and clean conscience to make moral choices about their environment. Africans have the right philosophical tools and systems to achieve this aim. The human conscience must be liberated through education to know that "...whatever has head or tail end is not only a missing link but serves a missing link all at the same time, in the sense of Ibuanyidanda" (226). The implication of Asouzu's claim is that when I pay less attention to oil spill and it destroys a farm land, I am in turn destroying myself. When I destroy our oil pipelines for person gain, I am in turn destroying myself too. We should learn and rise up to defend our continent.

African spirituality seeks to link the African person to God by means of African patterns of life or culture as its starting point. African spirituality gives great *respect to creatures*. Some trees and rivers are considered sacred in their relationship to humans. Orobator writes: "In our natural environment there was hardly a thing that did not command some measure of respect. The ancestral tree was an object of reverence in fact, it was the sacred place of worship and ritual performances" (1). Nature has then its sacredness that calls for reverence because as Wangari Maathai points out, "this or other trees are understood by their communities as nodal points that connect the world above with the world below ... places where one's ancestors and/or their spirits reside" (97).

The dynamics is that in African traditional beliefs we find spiritual resources and an imagination that can contribute creatively to caring for our common planet. Since nature gives assurance of sustenance to humanity, then our understanding of life must be "expansive and inclusive" of all reality in order to encompass nature, including animals, plants, and geo-ecological life such as "land, rain, and crops" (Wangari 132). This implies that the whole created order must be protected, not only because of what people get from it but as a matter of religious commitment and conviction.

The umbilical cord is significant and can be used to foster humanity's mutual dependence on nature. The umbilical links a baby to its mother in her womb. The growing fetus cannot survive in its mother's womb without the umbilical cord. "In many African cultures, when it is cut after the birth of a child, the umbilical cord is buried in a special place in the homestead, to signify the belonging of the new-born not only to the clan and its spirits, but also to the ancestral soil from which it should normally not be alienated" (Megasa 122). Just as a woman carefully carries the fetus linked to her through the umbilical cord, we are linked to this world, the ruin of which entails our own destruction.

Most African cultures have the umbilical cord buried in the ancestral land in order to signify that both the mother and the new baby are inalienably and inseparably linked to the "living-dead," the ancestors. If the umbilical cord is carelessly thrown away, this suggests disregard of this link. Therefore, when Africans say, "there is no place like home," this is not a simple statement from one who misses one's relatives or native food. Instead, most Africans refer to this link to the land of their

ancestors and their community. It is what is missed most! It is what makes "home" special.

The connection of the umbilical cord to one's land has an ecological dimension. It connotes humanity's connection with the universe. For Magesa, it "implies the death of humanity in the long run. By destroying nature, humanity slowly loses belonging. It has nowhere to belong to, no other place to call home, and no ambiance to deeply and meaningfully connect with in life and with which to enter into communion after death" (122-23). Indeed, this is an invitation not to throw a stone where we have placed our umbilical cord, like where we place our treasured milk, or by analogy it is an invitation not to worsen the cracks within our "common home."

### **Conclusion**

The foregoing has shown that African theology is eco-friendly. It is, therefore believed that African theology of environment will help in the effort to reduce global ecological abuse. Appropriate elements in African worldview will include African idea of the unity of reality, the interconnectedness between God, humanity and the cosmos and the African view of community involving both humans and inanimate objects (Ukpong 24).

Religion and the environment are intertwined in that they have had a history and will continue to have a role together in the future. This may be one area where science and religion can find a common ground both have the environment in their best interest and can work together to find a solution to the current environmental crisis. As religious traditions and beliefs have shaped human values and behaviors towards the environment in the past, this is one possibility for working toward positive environmental attitudes for the future.

Nature is part of the created order and is related to man, hence should be cared for. As co-tenant on earth, nature should not be plundered, exploited or use for one's selfish end, but for the good of all. It is alarming to note that the major cause of global warming is man's plundering of nature to satisfy his selfish material ambition without considering the effects of such actions on nature and his fellow human. Man and woman must be seen not just as part of creation, but also a steward of the environment. God is the owner of nature. In traditional Africa, deities are believed to reside in nature, hence, its exploitation can incur the anger of the gods. Therefore stewards, man must not only

avoid exploiting nature, but also lend his prophetic voice against the injustice done to nature by fellow human beings. To this effect eschatological views of African tradition will help in preserving nature. African traditional eschatological view is cyclic: There is no end to this world. Man moves from birth to puberty, to adulthood, he marries and when he is old, he dies. If he lives a good life, on earth, he becomes an ancestor.

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