

Beyond Eco-Pneumatology: An Examination of Scripture with ‘Green Eyes’ Towards the Development of an African Pentecostal Ecotheology¹

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Abstract

Historically, the role of religious communities in ecological discourse and responses to environmental crises has been significantly underwhelming. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that any comprehensive ecological dialogue must incorporate these communities. Recent research indicates that the Pentecostal tradition, in particular, has largely remained passive with respect to eco-care and eco-mission. This community tend to prioritise evangelistic endeavours, often relegating creation care to a secondary concern associated with a niche group. This paper argues that such oversight stems from a deficient ecotheological framework within the Pentecostal tradition. The primary objective of this study is to explore the underlying factors contributing to this inadequacy of ecotheology among African Pentecostals and to propose viable responses. The research is grounded in empirical data collected through fieldwork involving four classical Pentecostal churches and four Indigenous African Churches. The goal is to extract valuable insights from established paradigms within the Indigenous communities and from scriptural interpretations to inform the development of an African Pentecostal Ecotheology. This article elucidates that the prevalent inactivity of Pentecostals in ecological initiatives is fundamentally linked to their anthropocentric interpretation of Scripture. By analysing the doctrinal frameworks of the four classical Pentecostal churches, the paper offers reinterpretations aimed at fostering a more profound engagement with ecological issues. It further outlines strategic approaches to transition eco-care from a peripheral aspect of theology to a central component of mission, advocating for the integration of ecological principles into practical theological discourse. This shift is essential for cultivating eco-conscious cultures within the African church context.

Keywords: Classical African Pentecostal Churches, Eco-mission, Ecotheology, Indigenous African Churches

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Introduction

The 20th and 21st centuries have seen the emergence of numerous epidemics, including the Spanish Flu, SARS, MERS, Bird Flu, H1N1, Lassa fever, Ebola, and the recent outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19). The zoonotic nature of these emerging epidemics and pandemics highlights the inequitable treatment of both animals and plants. Consequently, the ongoing destruction of forest resources and the introduction of toxins into the food chain have significant implications for the planet and its inhabitants. Howell and Koroma highlight that prior to the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in 2014, extensive deforestation had occurred, severely impacting wildlife habitats in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.² They argue that before the EVD outbreak, the loss of dense forests in these regions caused fruit bats to move closer to human habitations.³ These West African countries experienced substantial infrastructure loss over many years of conflict and war before the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak in the region. Similarly, a group of researchers concluded in a study, “Conflict and its aftermath are among the factors that increase the opportunity for the Ebola virus to transmit from a forest animal to a human by disrupting livelihoods and living arrangements.”⁴ Therefore, there is a correlation between the destruction of forest resources, the disruption of the food web during these conflicts, and the outbreak of EVD.

Eco-violence by the human species has significantly contributed to the world’s ecological crises. These crises include global warming, ozone layer depletion, soil erosion, poisoning of food webs and chains, overconsumption of non-renewable resources, radioactive contamination, high carbon emissions, deforestation, desertification, habitat loss,⁵ and other forms of ecocide that threaten the lives of both humans and non-human species. In addition to consuming more natural resources than the planet can regenerate in a year, humanity is producing more waste than the Earth can decompose. The World Bank estimated that the world generated 2.24 billion tonnes of solid waste in 2020, which equates to 0.79 kilograms per person per day. They anticipate this figure will rise to 3.88 billion tonnes by 2050,⁶ representing a 73

² Allison M. Howell and Karim Kelvin Koroma, “The West African Ebola Virus Outbreak: Context, Response and Christian Responsibility – The Experience of the Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone”, *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (June 2015), 6-7.

³ Howell and Koroma, “The West African Ebola Virus Outbreak”, 7.

⁴ Barbara McPake, Sophie Witter, Sarah Ssali, Haja Wurie, Justine Namakula and Freddie Ssengooba, “Ebola in the Context of Conflict Affected States and Health Systems: Case Studies of Northern Uganda and Sierra Leone”, *Conflict and Health* (August 2015), Accessed 10 November 2022, <https://conflictandhealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.118/s13031-015-0052-7>

⁵ Mark Wallace, “The Wounded Spirit’ as the Basis for Hope in an Age of Radical Ecology”, in Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether (eds.), *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans* (Harvard: CSWR, 2000), 52.

⁶ World Bank, “Solid Waste Management”, (February 2022), Accessed 3 December 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/brief/solid-waste-management>

percent increase from 2020. Humans have effectively transformed the oceans into convenient sewers. These realities must motivate all Christian traditions to re-evaluate how they practice their faith.⁷ Thus, in recent times, Pentecostals have begun a search for an appropriate theology that will shape the worldviews of their adherents about the natural world.

The Inadequacy of Eco-Pneumatology

The overarching problem this paper investigates is the lack of a comprehensive Pentecostal response to ecological crises. Ecotheology among African Pentecostals is inadequate and contributes to their indifference towards ecological issues.⁸ In other words, Classical African Pentecostal theology has yet to fully embrace eco-theology, though some Pentecostal churches occasionally organise clean-up and tree-planting activities.

From the early stages of the movement until now, Pentecostals have carried the mandate of the Great Commission with urgency but with little or no theological reflection on science and technology.⁹ Though their understanding of the imminent return of Christ has motivated them to undertake missions, it has also somewhat blurred their vision for engaging in actions that improve life on earth, as they believe that the earth and its inhabitants will soon give way to a new heaven and earth.¹⁰ They view recent ecological crises as the fulfilment of certain end-time prophecies, suggesting that nothing can be done to rescue the situation.¹¹ This has created some blind spots in their mission practices. Their focus, therefore, has always been on proclaiming the Good News, baptising and nurturing new believers, with little or no emphasis on saving the life of the groaning earth.

The lack of pragmatic biblical responses to ecological crises among African Pentecostals primarily stems from an absence of comprehensive and integrative biblical insights regarding eco-care and eco-mission.¹² Their mission practice has yet

⁷ Solomon Victus, *Eco-Theology and the Scriptures; A Revisit of Christian Response* (Bali Nagar, New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2014), 5.

⁸ See also Awudi, "Looking at Scripture with", 52.

⁹ Amos Young, "Pentecostal Voices in Theology – Science Conversation", *Zygon* Vol. 43, No. 4 (December 2008), 875-877 (876). Though, occasionally, some articles are written, especially in the West for Pentecostals to incorporate ecological issues in their missions' paradigm.

¹⁰ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Pentecostal Mission: A Theological Appraisal", in Lord Elorm Donkor and Clifton R. Clarke (eds.), *African Pentecostal Mission Maturing: Essays in Honour of Apostle Opoku Onyinah* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018), 28-49 (32). See also, Ben-Willie Kwaku Golo, "Redeemed from the Earth? Environmental Change and Salvation Theology in African Christianity", *Scriptura* Vol. 111 (2012), 348-361 (349), Accessed 16 May 2017, <http://www.scriptura.journals.ac.za/pup/article/> See also Awudi, "Looking at Scripture with", 51.

¹¹ Shane Clifton, "Preaching the 'Full Gospel' in the Context of Global Environmental Crises", in Amos Yong (ed.), *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Ground: Pentecostal Forays in Science and Theology of Creation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009), 117-134 (117).

¹² Awudi, "Looking at Scripture with 'Green Eyes'", 80.

to incorporate eco-mission as a fundamental aspect of their mission to the marginalised. As previously noted, African Pentecostal doctrines have not fully acknowledged ecotheology, although certain Christian traditions in Africa, such as the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) and other African Instituted Churches (AICs), have successfully integrated biblical perspectives with traditional ecological concepts. However, the accelerating degradation of the Earth requires that all Christian traditions, including Pentecostalism—which is the fastest-growing church tradition in both Africa and world Christianity—pay significant attention to addressing this issue.¹³

Notwithstanding this, some Pentecostal scholars have begun researching the relationship between Pentecostal theology and ecology. Scholars like Amos Young¹⁴, Steven M. Studebaker¹⁵, Andrew Ray Williams¹⁶, and Aaron Jason Swoboda¹⁷ have analysed the compatibility between ecology and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit (pneumatology) to develop a Pentecostal eco-theology. After Williams reviewed Swoboda's 'Tongues and Trees', and Clark Pinnock's 'Cosmic Pneumatology', he proposed eco-pneumatology as the way forward for a Pentecostal ecotheology.¹⁸ Similarly, Swoboda suggests that Pentecostals can develop eco-theology from Pneumatology, which he refers to as Eco-Glossolalia,¹⁹ or Tongues and Trees²⁰ in two separate publications.

However, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen has critiqued efforts to portray pneumatology as the central focus of Pentecostalism. He asserts, "Against the assumption of uninformed outside observers, pneumatology does not necessarily represent the center of Pentecostal Spirituality."²¹ He argues that Christology is, in fact, the heart of Pentecostal spirituality. Consequently, while the works of Williams and Swoboda primarily reflect Western perspectives on pneumatology, limiting ecological discussions to its connection with pneumatology creates the impression that pneumatology encompasses the entirety of Pentecostal theology. Although it has the

¹³ Allan Heaton Anderson, *Spirit-Filled World: Religious Dis/Continuity in African Pentecostalism* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 3.

¹⁴ Yong, "Pentecostal Voices in the Theology-Science Conversation", 875-877.

¹⁵ Steven M. Studebaker, "The Spirit in Creation: A Unified Theology of Grace and Creation Care", *Zygon*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (December 2008), 943-959.

¹⁶ Andrew Ray Williams, "Flame of Creation: Pentecostal Ecotheology in Dialogue with Clark Pinnock's Pneumatology", *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* Vol. 26, (2017), 272-285, Accessed 20 January 2020, <https://brill.com/downloadpdf/journal/pent/26/2/article-pdf>

¹⁷ Aaron Jason Swoboda, "Tongues and Trees: Towards a Green Pentecostal Pneumatology" (Unpublished PhD Thesis, College of Arts and Law, the University of Birmingham, 2011).

¹⁸ Williams, "Flame of Creation", 272-285.

¹⁹ A. J. Swoboda, "Eco-Glossolalia: Emerging Twenty-First Century Pentecostal and Charismatic Ecotheology", *Rural Theology*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2011), Accessed 21 July 2020 <https://doi.org/10.1558/ruth.v9i2.101>.

²⁰ Swoboda, "Tongues and Trees".

²¹ See also Kärkkäinen, "Pentecostal Mission", 32.

potential to articulate the Spirit's role in creation and its enlivening aspects, it falls short of addressing the biblical understanding of the earth's deterioration, which is rooted in the breakdown of relationships resulting from humanity's fall. Thus, it does not fully encompass discussions on the reconciliation and redemption of all creation through the finished work of Christ, nor does it consider how all creation will be impacted by the second coming of Christ.

Similarly, calls for contextualisation of the "Full Gospel" to make it environment-friendly are commendable,²² but aside from the fact that expatiations of the "Full Gospel" usually exclude the doctrine of God, they also neglect Christ's role in the *creatio ex nihilo*. Thus, any response to ecological crises developed from just the four or five elements of the "Full Gospel" or pneumatology not only renders such an eco-praxis narrow and inadequate but also does not represent a holistic Pentecostal theology. Therefore, African Pentecostals need to develop a comprehensive response that embraces major Christian doctrines with an integrated view of nature from *creatio* to *nova creatio*.

Sources of Data

This research forms part of my doctoral dissertation and employs a qualitative methodology, integrating both secondary and primary data sources. Adopting an "indigenizing approach," the study examines the eco-management practices of four indigenous churches across Africa: The Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC) and the OSSA-Madih Church (OMC) in Ghana, along with the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) and the African Apostolic Church (AAEC) in Zimbabwe, as documented by Marthinus L. Daneel.²³

Secondary data, consisting of literary resources related to the AAEC's efforts in combating environmental degradation and reclaiming degraded lands in Zimbabwe, were sourced from the Johannes Zimmermann Library at the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture. To gather information pertinent to the EOTC, the researcher engaged with Aemere Asherbir Alemayehu, a Research and Administration Officer at the Centre for Ancient Christianity and Ethiopian Studies (CACES) at the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology (EGST), as well as Yared Kibret, a Council Member at the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Patriarchate Head

²² See Shane Clifton, "Preaching the 'Full Gospel' in the Context of Global Environmental Crises", in Amos Yong (ed.), *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Ground: Pentecostal Forays in Science and Theology of Creation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009), 117-134. See also Jeffrey S. Lamp, "Jesus as Sanctifier: Creation Care and the Fivefold Gospel", in A. J. Swoboda (ed.), *Blood Cries Out: Pentecostals, Ecology and the Groans of Creation* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014), 152-168.

²³ The indigenizing process relates to drawing upon traditions of indigenous people and making use of them. See Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People*, Second Edition (London: Zed Books, 2012), 146.

Office. Their contributions were vital in obtaining literary materials concerning the historical significance of the EOTC's 'church forests.'

This research utilised an approach that primarily leveraged qualitative data sourced from in-depth interviews, complemented by personal observations. The initial phase involved interviews with two clergy members from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC), Aemere Asherbir Alemayehu and Yared Kibret, focusing on the historical context and theological foundations underpinning the conservation practices of extensive wetland areas in Ethiopia.

Subsequently, a combination of both random and purposive sampling techniques was employed to select a sample of eight (8) clergymen and fourteen (14) church members from the Motse Womb of God's Church (MDCC). The selected clergymen, comprising church leaders including the senior prophet and the general overseer, were all based in Gomoa Muzano, the MDCC's administrative headquarters. The fourteen respondents included three (3) lay leaders responsible for overseeing the sacred forest at Gomoa Oguan, in addition to eleven (11) church members residing in the same area.

Regarding the OMC, this research intentionally selected and conducted interviews with four (4) of its leaders. Additionally, four (4) scholars from the four classical Pentecostal Churches in Ghana (Assemblies of God, Christ Apostolic Church, The Apostolic Church, and the Church of Pentecost) were also purposively sampled and interviewed. Furthermore, through random sampling, I interviewed ninety-six (96) ministers from these four Ghanaian Classical Pentecostal churches using open-ended interview guides. The ministers were selected from all regions in Ghana, with twenty-four (24) representatives from each church. This sampling was organized by dividing the country into eight regions: Northern, Brong-Ahafo, Ashanti, Volta, Eastern, Central, Western, and Greater Accra.²⁴

The researcher categorized the data according to various denominations and organizations, employing a 'thematic analytic framework' for analysis. This methodology facilitated the identification of underlying themes, patterns, and relational dynamics across the responses derived from the selected doctrines.²⁵ In addition to examining the original Hebrew and Greek texts that inform these doctrines, the researcher also utilised the Akuapem Twi translation of the Bible to enhance certain interpretative aspects. Finally, insights drawn from Akan and Ewe

²⁴ The leaders of the Ossa-Madih church did not allow me to interview the members of the church except the leaders. Part of their reservations was that the church was misrepresented in previous research. Thus, the three leaders of the church were keenly interested in whatever information the other leaders were communicating. They agreed to grant the interview based on the assurance that access to the data collected in both its raw and final forms would be given to them.

²⁵ Uwe Flick (ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Data Analysis* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publication Ltd., 2014), 147.

primal eco-praxes were integrated, allowing for a contextualisation of the developing ecotheology.

Interpretive Framework

The theocentric model guided the selection of materials, interpretations, and the offering of alternative explanations for the selected doctrines. I chose the theocentric model as an alternative approach to address the weaknesses inherent in the stewardship, biocentric, and ecocentric models, which are the commonly used frameworks in the field of ecology. The eco-stewardship model has some potential in addressing environmental concerns and remains the most prevalent model within the church. However, as early as 1992, Clare Palmer contends that “It is this very destruction that brings me to question another associated belief: that man is ultimately in control of the natural world – or, to phrase it another way, that man can be a steward.”²⁶ The challenge with the model lies in the recurring depiction of the human species at the heart of stewardship. It illustrates an absentee Creator who has left everything in the hands of humans.²⁷ Thus, the stewardship model appears not to recognise the immanence of the Creator and his active role in the management of the universe.

Biocentrism, on the other hand, makes a case for eco-valuing based on the importance of all lives (biotic), while the ecocentric model values all creation, whether biotic or abiotic.²⁸ According to Patrick Curry, “Ecocentric ethics, like biocentrism, is non-anthropocentric. However, it differs from biocentrism in that ecocentric or green ethics are taken as objects of ethical concern as holistic entities, and those entities include integral components as animate.”²⁹ The ecocentric framework's weakness lies in its attempt to value all creation, both animate and inanimate, while omitting the God factor, from which all life originates, rendering the model theologically deficient. Consequently, the biocentric, ecocentric, or stewardship models are unable to reconcile creation with the Creator adequately.³⁰

The theocentric model, which forms the interpretive framework of this work, according to Richard Young, “... teaches that God is the centre of the universe and

²⁶ Clare Palmer, ‘Stewardship: A Case Study in Environmental Ethics’, in Ian Ball, Margaret Goodall and Clare Palmer and John Reader (eds.), *The Earth Beneath: A Critical Guide to Green Theology* (London: SPCK, 1992), 67-86 (80).

²⁷ Ernst Conradie, *An Ecological Christian Anthropology: At Home on Earth?* (Burlington, England: Ashgate, 2005), 215.

²⁸ Victorinus, *Eco-Theology and the Scriptures*, 117.

²⁹ Patrick Curry, *Ecological Ethics: An Introduction (2nd Edition)* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2011), 92.

³⁰ Andrew J. Hoffman and Lloyd E. Sandelands, “Getting Right with Nature: Anthropocentrism, Ecocentrism and Theocentrism”, *Organisation & Environment* (October 2004), 1-22, Accessed 27 March 2020, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/.251378575_Getting_Right_with_Nature_Anthropocentrism_Ecocentrism_and_Theocentrism

that he alone is the Source and Upholder of meaning, purpose, values, and ethics, as well as the unifying principle of the cosmos.”³¹ With this model, every creature, whether biotic or abiotic, exists and discovers its purpose in God. Similarly, Ebenezer Y. Blasus asserts that in the theocentric worldview, Christians’ love for God and concern for His creation serve as the motivation for creation care.³² He argues, “Motivation for Christians to care for creation is inferable from the teaching that Christians are to obey and please God as well as seek his righteousness as their love for God in all their relationships in the ecosystem.”³³ Francis A. Schaeffer’s tree analogy demonstrates this clearly:

Secular man may say he cares for the tree because if he cuts it down his cities will not be able to breathe. ... But the Christian stands in front of the tree, and has an emotional reaction towards it, because the tree has a real value in itself, being a creature made by God. I have this in common with the tree: we were made by God and not just cast up by chance.³⁴

Thus, theocentrism explains the relationship between nature, humanity, and God. It does not recognize humanity as the zenith of creation and has more biblical support than other models cited earlier.³⁵ Hoffman and Sandelands add that within the theocentric framework, “Man and nature are related in God. Sharing the same Father, they relate as siblings in love and mutual respect. There are no grounds to suppose one excludes or dominates the other. Man does not lord over nature, and nature does not lord over man. God lords over both.”³⁶ The merit of this model is that, aside from addressing the dichotomy between human and other-than-human creation created by the Western enlightenment,³⁷ theocentrism connects with the idea of kinship with nature,³⁸ attesting that one cannot delineate the reconciliation of humanity to God from the other-than-human creation.

³¹ Richard A. Young, *Healing the Earth: A Theocentric Perspective on Environmental Problems and their Solutions* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 128.

³² Ebenezer Yaw Blasus, “The Bible and Caring for the Land: African Theology as Christian Impulsion for Creation Care”, in Benjamin Abotchie Ntseh, Mark S. Aidoo, and Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh (eds.), *Essays on the Land, Ecotheology, and Traditions in Africa* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publications, 2019), 70-93 (77).

³³ Blasus, “The Bible and Caring for the Land”, 76.

³⁴ Francis A. Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1970), 77-78.

³⁵ See the book of Job chapters 38 to 40, Psalm 41:1 and Revelation 4:11. In Revelation 4:11, the twenty-four elders sing the purpose for which all things were created, “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created” (ESV).

³⁶ Hoffman and Sandelands, “Getting Right with Nature”, 18-19.

³⁷ Sallie McFague, *Super, Natural Christians: How we Should Love Nature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 46.

³⁸ Blasus, “The Bible and Caring for the Land”, 79. See also Harold Turner, “The Primal Religion of the World and their Study”, in *Australian Essays in World Religions* (Bedford Park: Australian Association for the Study of Religion, 1997), 27-37 (32).

This model enables the African Christian to understand that, just as sin impacts both the land and its inhabitants, salvation and any doctrine designed to draw humanity closer to the Creator cannot be separated from the other-than-human creation. Moreover, it follows that every Christian doctrine aimed at reconciling creation with the Creator must be guided by God's love, as expressed in the theocentric model. The doctrine of God serves as the foundation for all Christian teachings. Consequently, this model shaped the interpretation of data from the African Independent Churches (AICs) and the reimagining of selected doctrines from the four Classical Pentecostal churches.

Reasons for a Dearth of Ecotheology among Pentecostals

First, the study found that, among Pentecostals, eco-care is regarded as secondary to activities focused on winning souls. While some Pentecostal and Charismatic churches participate in creation care campaigns, as previously discussed, they tend to view these annual events as subordinate to evangelistic efforts, which diminishes their overall impact. In essence, the majority of Pentecostals and Charismatics prioritise evangelistic activities over initiatives aimed at addressing environmental concerns.³⁹ The inadequacies in Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology can be primarily attributed to two factors: the established dichotomy between the sacred and the secular realms, and the anthropocentric inclinations prevalent in their core theological doctrines.

Second, the analysis of the content of Pentecostals' Christology regarding the 'Full Gospel' reveals a notable lack of ecological ethos in its formulation. According to Steven Jack Land, the 'Full Gospel' encompasses five elements: salvation, sanctification, healing, Holy Spirit baptism, and eschatology.⁴⁰ However, this tradition often conflates the elements of sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, presenting the 'Full Gospel' as portraying Jesus as the Saviour, the Healer, the Baptizer of the Holy Spirit, and the Soon-Coming King. As a result, it is sometimes referred to as the 'Four-Square Gospel.' Despite this, there is a significant absence of a component addressing the *creatio* (creation) role of Christ, leading to an anthropocentric focus in the 'Full Gospel.' This perspective is a primary reason for the inadequacy of ecotheology within the classical Pentecostal tradition. Consequently, both Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals tend to view other activities, including social actions aimed at environmental preservation, as pre-evangelistic rather than integral to the gospel message.

Third, in a substantial portion of soteriological literature, Pentecostal-Charismatic theologians and preachers primarily concentrate on the theme of human reconciliation with the Divine. This focus was also distinctly reflected in the findings from the

³⁹ Awudi, "Beyond Eco-Pneumatology", 179.

⁴⁰ Steven Jack Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2010), 7.

interviews that were conducted. Interviewee 1 posited, “If you talk about the redemption of all creation, it makes it difficult because redemption has to do with only human beings. However, when human beings are redeemed, they should be able to take good care of all creation. The love a person has for God helps the person to take care of all creation.”⁴¹ The predominant understanding of salvation is often shaped by anthropocentric interpretations of the doctrine of sin. Nonetheless, theologians such as Daniel L. Brunner, Jennifer L. Butler, and A. J. Swoboda, alongside various eco-theologians, contend that the scope of salvation extends beyond mere delineations of life and death.⁴² They argue, “To limit salvation to humans alone is to short-change both Scripture and our theological traditions.”⁴³ The scholars assert that “Even as both humanity and other creatures are recipients of divine judgment in Genesis 3, so both are recipients of a divine covenantal promise in Genesis 9.”⁴⁴ They further argue that salvation encompasses two dimensions: the salvation of the soul, which relates to our fate after death, and the salvation of creation beyond humanity, which involves realising God’s kingdom in the present. If the sin of the first couple caused a rift between God and the universe, then the salvation of the soul is inherently connected to the salvation of the entire cosmos.

Fourth, The doctrine of divine healing, much like the doctrine of salvation, is fundamentally anthropocentric and restricts the application of any other means beyond prayer for its efficacy. The Church of Pentecost (CoP) articulates its stance on healing as follows: “The healing of sicknesses and diseases is provided for God’s people in the atoning death of Christ. The church is, however, not opposed to soliciting the help of qualified medical practitioners (2 Ki. 20:7; Mk. 9:12; Lk. 10:34; Col. 4:14).”⁴⁵ This explanation excludes the healing of the other-than-human species. Opoku Onyinah, in expounding the doctrine of divine healing, explains it as “...the healing of a physical or psychosomatic disease or condition through prayer.”⁴⁶ Onyinah’s definition encapsulates the dominant perspective on healing within Classical Ghanaian Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. This interpretation notably delineates the scope of divine healing, specifically omitting the restorative aspects concerning other-than-human creation. As such, the framework focuses predominantly on healing as it pertains to human beings, thereby excluding ecological or broader cosmological considerations from its understanding of divine intervention.

⁴¹ Interviewee 10 of the CoP, Interview by Emmanuel Awudi, June 30 2022.

⁴² Daniel L. Brunner, Jennifer L. Butler and A. J. Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology: Foundations in Scripture, Theology, History, and Praxis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 131.

⁴³ Brunner, Butler and Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology*, 131.

⁴⁴ Brunner, Butler, and Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology*, 132.

⁴⁵ The Church of Pentecost, *The Constitution of the Church of Pentecost* (Accra: Pentecost Press Limited, 2016), 9.

⁴⁶ Opoku Onyinah, “Faith, Healing and Mission: Perspectives from the Bible”, in J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (Ed.) *Christian Missions Ecumenism in Ghana: Essays in Honor of Robert K. Aboagye-Mensah* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 2009), 213.

Fifth, Pentecostals' conception of Holy Spirit baptism, as evident in the tenets of the four Classical Ghanaian Pentecostal churches, is that Jesus gives the believer power to evangelise and to cast out demons.⁴⁷ They assert that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is available to all believers and encourage every member to passionately pursue this experience, with speaking in tongues as evidence. This perspective led early African Pentecostals to label the traditions, rules, rituals, and regulations that preserved sacred forests and water bodies as demonic, believing they should be exorcised through the power of the Holy Spirit. Rather than embracing or adapting these primal environmental practices, they condemned them without offering any viable alternatives.

Lastly, while eschatological beliefs significantly drive the evangelistic efforts of numerous Pentecostal congregations, they also influence the degree of commitment these communities exhibit towards creation care. Within the Pentecostal-Charismatic circles, the dominant understanding of eschatology is the "salvation of the souls of the righteous from the torment of hell, followed by a total destruction of the present heaven and earth."⁴⁸ For instance, the Apostolic Hymn 297 clearly expresses the notion of eschatology as a flight to heaven.

<i>Akwantu bi wɔ hɔ a ye betu enye, wiase ha akwantu no bi Soro hɔ akwantu na yeretwen</i>	There is a journey we shall make It is not an earthly journey It is the journey to heaven that we await
<i>Anigye ben na saa da no beye</i>	What a joy would that day be
<i>Se sum hye kabii ma apranaa bobom, Ma Kristo mu awufu sɔre kan,</i>	When darkness appears and thunder strikes For the dead in Christ to arise first
<i>Na se yene wɔn bom kɔhyia Kristo a Anigye ben na saa da no beye⁴⁹</i>	And we together with them meet Christ What a joy would that day be

⁴⁷ See Assemblies of God, Ghana, *Constitution and Bye-Laws* (Accra, Ghana: The Assemblies of God Literature Centre Ltd., 2013), 14. The Church of Pentecost, *The Constitution of the Church of Pentecost* (Accra: The General Council of the Church of Pentecost, 2016), 9. The Apostolic Church-Ghana, *Constitution* (Accra, Ghana: The Apostolic Church-Ghana General Headquarters, 2020), 4. Christ Apostolic Church International, *Constitution* (Accra, Ghana: Christ Apostolic Church International, 2019), 7.

⁴⁸ Awudi, "Beyond Eco-Pneumatology", 189.

⁴⁹ The Apostolic Church - Ghana, *Apostolic Twi Hymnal*, (Accra: The Apostolic Church - Ghana, 2008), 117.

Similarly, Ben-Willie Golo argues that this understanding of eschatology makes Pentecostals pre-occupied with the winning of souls and preparing them for heaven.⁵⁰ However, “An understanding of salvation as a flight from the earth and its inhabitants potentially leads to the exploitation of creation or less interest in what happens to them.”⁵¹ One aspect of eschatology that affects Pentecostals’ zeal for eco-care is where humanity will spend eternity. The dominant view among Pentecostals and Charismatics is that believers will spend eternity in heaven. This perspective on eschatology has also created several blind spots in Pentecostal-Charismatic ecclesiology and has influenced how they relate to earthly matters.

Conclusion: Emerging African Pentecostal Ecotheology

In my thesis, I concluded that for meaningful and lasting environmental change, it is essential for creation care to transcend mere actions such as campaigns and clean-up initiatives; it must evolve into a lifestyle commitment. A pivotal strategy for achieving this transformation lies in integrating eco-theology within the core tenets and doctrinal frameworks of diverse church traditions. Embracing eco-theology can fundamentally alter the ethical and theological discourse surrounding environmental stewardship, fostering a holistic approach to sustainability that aligns spiritual beliefs with ecological responsibility.⁵² In the succeeding paragraphs, I shall propose strategies for maximising the impact of Classical Pentecostal ecclesiology on creation care.

First, the ‘Full Gospel’ of Pentecostals requires a reinterpretation. The exclusion of ecological framework in the ‘Full Gospel’ renders it a ‘Half-Gospel.’⁵³ To make the Full Gospel more ecological, I argue for a sixth component: Christ the Creator. Instead of viewing the Full Gospel as simply pentagonal or four-square, I propose a new paradigm – the Hexagonal Gospel. This includes Jesus as the Creator, Saviour, Healer, Baptizer of the Holy Spirit, Sanctifier, and Soon-Coming King.⁵⁴ Christ the Creator has several biblical backings (Prov. 8:22-31; Jn. 1:1-3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15-16; Eph. 1:10; Heb. 1:2) and cannot be ignored as a component of the Full Gospel.

Second, the elimination of anthropocentric tendencies in the major doctrines of the Pentecostal tradition. The paragraphs below suggest ways other doctrines could be reimagined:

⁵⁰ Ben-Willie Kweku Golo, “The Groaning Earth and the Greening of Neo-Pentecostalism in Twenty-First-Century Ghana”, *PentecoStudies*, 197-216 (201). Accessed 20 January 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1558/ptcs.v13i2.197>.

⁵¹ Awudi, “Beyond Eco-Pneumatology”, 177.

⁵² Awudi, “Beyond Eco-Pneumatology”, 195.

⁵³ Awudi, “Beyond Eco-Pneumatology”, 97.

⁵⁴ Awudi, “Beyond Eco-Pneumatology”, 184.

Theo-Ecology: Theo-Ecology suggests that God is the Creator and Owner of the universe and all its inhabitants as attested to in the scriptures (Gen.1:1-30; 2:-1-15; Deut. 10:14; Job 38-40:34 and Ps. 24:1). The creation narrative which begins with *Bereshit Elohim* (in the beginning God) is pointing to God as the originator of everything in the universe. Claus Westermann's observation that this phrase answers several puzzles in the narrative is true, as the intention of the narrator was not to give a vivid description of what took place but to draw attention to the fact that everything began with God.⁵⁵ It highlights the attributes of God and how they inform creation care. God is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. These show that the all-powerful Creator is capable of providing for all his creation. He is present within his creation, providing for and guarding each of them. The Omniscient God knows every single creation, regardless of its location. This also prompts accountability in the mind of the individual. His omnipresence shows that he has not absconded from his creation but is immanent within it and caring for each one of his creatures. His communicable attributes include loving, merciful, kindness, compassionate, gracious, and slow to anger (Ps. 145:8-11). He shares these attributes with humanity, which shows that humanity, as viceroys, must reign over the rest of creation with the same attributes.

Eco-Harmatology: Eco-Harmatology defines sin as trespassing, missing the mark, or failing to measure up to God's ethical or moral standards that govern his household (*oikos*).⁵⁶ These moral and ethical standards include God's revealed laws and prohibitions that govern the ecosystem. Thus, *eco-hamartia* (eco-sin) relates to humanity's failure to live up to God's expectations in tilling and guarding the earth or upsetting the equilibrium in the ecosystem. It also shows that there is a communal impact of sin that extends to the other-than-human community. The sin of Adam had ripple effects on the relationships between God and humanity; God and all creation; human being and fellow human beings; human beings and their inner selves; the human species and the other-than-human species; and lastly, the relationships that existed among the other-than-human species within the ecosystem.⁵⁷ It shows that sin affects nature, as seen in God's words to Solomon on how he intends to punish their disobedience (2 Chr. 7:13-14).

The text suggests that plagues, the emergence of unusual and infectious diseases, locust infestations, floods, droughts, and consequently, famine and reduced agricultural output, can be interpreted as consequences of moral transgressions.

⁵⁵ Claus Westermann, *Genesis*, (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 7.

⁵⁶ Awudi, "Beyond Eco-pneumatology", 182.

⁵⁷ See Allison Howell, "The Bible and Care Creation", in Jonathan Pauline Hoggarth, Fergus Macdonald, Bill Mitchell and Knud Jørgensen (eds), *Bible in Mission* (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2013), 168-177 (176). See also Eric B. Antwi, *Human Creation in the Image of God: The Asante Perspective* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2018), 66-69.

Within a biblical framework, instances like the Great Flood during Noah's era and the annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrah exemplify how sin can disrupt entire ecosystems, adversely affecting other-than-human species alongside human communities. Furthermore, the biblical account of a three-and-a-half-year drought in Samaria illustrates the profound and multifaceted impacts of sin on environmental conditions (1 Kgs. 16-17).

Similarly, the plagues that descended upon Egypt served to impact not only human beings but also the land, water bodies, and livestock. This illustrates that whenever God pronounces judgment due to sin, both the land and its inhabitants suffer. However, just as sin adversely affects the land and its ecological community, forgiveness brings about healing for all. The process of forgiveness begins with the confession of sin, and it is essential to include the acknowledgement of ecological sins or transgressions against the inhabitants of the ecosystem. Consequently, reconciliation in Christ is inherently tied to our reconciliation with all of creation, with Christ as the head of this restoration.

Eco-Christology: The rupture of relationships resulted in the expectation of a Messiah to mend all the affected relationships. The emphasis has always been, "Christ came to save sinners, and not Christ came to save the world."⁵⁸ In other words, the church has always presented Christ as the Saviour of the fallen human community and not the fallen cosmos. Christ is the Creator of the universe (Pro. 8:22-31; Jn. 1:1-3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15-16; Eph. 1:10; Heb. 1:2). Christ demonstrated this through the several miracles he performed, including calming the storm, (Mk. 4:35-41), walking on the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 14:22-36), and the cursing of the fig tree (Matt. 21:18-22, cf. Mk. 11:12-25). He demonstrated his love for all creation through his unique relationship with the natural world. This relationship is evident in his use of natural objects in his parables and teachings, and there were occasions when he explained how the triune God cares for the birds and the lilies. (Matt. 6:26-28). On other occasions, he went into solitude on mountaintops (Matt. 5:1-7:27; 17:1-12) and beaches (Matt. 13:1-25; Lk. 5:4, 5; Mk. 1:4). He also lived with the wild in the wilderness (Mk. 1:12, 13). His incarnation is a lesson for humanity to humble themselves and live in peace with the other-than-human species. His incarnation shows how he shared in the suffering of all creation.

Eco-Soteriology: Eco-Soteriology focuses on how the redemption of humanity is intertwined and inseparably linked to the redemption of the suffering creation. The salvation of humans has always been connected to that of the non-human community; they are intimately bound together. The two major events that as the typology of salvation in Christ are the flood in Gen. 7:1-5 and the liberation of Israel from Egypt (Ex. 12:38). In both cases, human beings were saved alongside other living organisms.

⁵⁸ Awudi, "Beyond Eco-Pneumatology", 183.

Eco-Therapeutology: Healing through either prayer or medication can be perceived as divine. The Greek adjective, *theikós* (divine), used to describe healing, presupposes that divine healing encompasses any form of healing in which God is actively involved. Thus, whether through surgery, medication, diet, or prayer, it is divine because the entire healing process relies on God. I assert that divine healing involves utilising all spiritual and medical procedures to achieve restoration. Consequently, if all healing processes are viewed as God's intervention, then any form of healing – miraculous or medicinal – is divine. The ill health of the ecosystem results from humanity's sins (including both actions and inactions). Not only does 2 Chr. 7:13-14 indicate that the consequences of sin include plagues, droughts, and locust invasions, but it also highlights that sin impacts all creation. The healing of the land and its inhabitants, whether through prayer or by means of organic or scientific methods, is divine. Therefore, divine healing is not restricted to the human community. Finally, healing may also encompass the restoration of broken relationships. In both the Old Testament and traditional African worldviews, ill health can be perceived as a consequence of fractured relationships.

Eco-Pneumatology: Although Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit empowers believers for service, the service's scope is confined to the human community. This article argues that this scope of service should extend to all members of the ecosystem, recognising that serving all of creation is serving God. Pentecostal churches also regard the Spirit's empowerment as 'fuel' for the mission, but the whole mission enterprise is limited to saving the lost and transforming lives. The Holy Spirit is the Creator of the universe. He was intricately involved in the creation of the universe and everything within it. This role began with the plurality in the Godhead (*Elohim*), indicating the Spirit's involvement in creation (Gen. 1:1). Thus, for Julie C. Ma and Wonsuk Ma, the Word and the Spirit were with God as the creator, the Trinity.⁵⁹ The Spirit hovered over the chaotic universe to bring order and harmony (Gen. 1:2). The Holy Spirit transformed the desolation (*tohuw*), vacuity (*bohuw*), and total darkness (*choshek*) and brought order to the surface of the earth. Eco-Pneumatology emphasises the Spirit's role in giving life to all creation (Gen. 6:1, Job 33:4). The Spirit also saves life as he receded the floodwaters to save Noah and other creation on earth (Gen. 8:1). In the NT, the Apostle John explains that the *Pneuma* gives life (Jn. 6:63), which is reaffirmed by the Paul, the apostle in 2 Corinthians 3:6 (cf. Rom. 8:11). The Spirit of God sustains, renews, vivifies, and keeps creation thriving (Ps. 104:29-30). Creation ceases to exist when the Spirit of God departs (Job 34:14, 15; cf. 27:3). The Spirit is, therefore, present in the world to help creation bloom, flourish, and thrive while sustaining it (Is. 32:15-20).

⁵⁹ Julie C. Ma and Wonsuk Ma, *Mission in the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal/Charismatic Missiology* (Oxford : Regnum Books International, 2010), 24.

Eco-Eschatology: The doctrine of eschatology influences how Christians live their lives on earth, as it addresses several questions about the meaning of life here and in the afterlife.⁶⁰ It is a major motivation for evangelistic activities within many churches, including the four selected classical Pentecostal churches in Ghana. From the creation story and the typologies of the second coming, Scripture does not envision a world where humans would exist without other-than-human species. Thus, eco-eschatology incorporates the whole cosmos into the *nova creatio*. The return of Christ will be 'impromptu' rather than 'soon', as explained earlier. This is supported by Jesus' two major parables in response to a question on his return (Matt. 25:1-13; 14-30). Juxtaposing these parables with the analogy of the event as the coming of the thief in 2 Pet. 3:10a and the Greek word *tachu* used in Rev. 22:12 implies that Christ's second coming will be unannounced, impromptu, and neither quick nor soon.

The second coming of Christ will result in the refinement or renewal of creation rather than total annihilation. The events include fire burning up the earth. This has more to do with refinement/purification than destruction (see Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:1-3; 4:1). Humanity will spend eternity with creation. In the event of Christ's *parousia* (1 Thess. 4:13-16; 1 Cor. 15:51-54), believers will meet the Lord in the skies (Matt. 24:31) and return with him to rule the earth. Since eschatology is time for accountability (Rev. 22:12), there is a need to understand that this accountability may cover how humanity cares for creation. The second coming of Christ is not about pronouncing a destructive judgment on earth but a creative judgment that would purge the world of evil for righteousness to reign in the universe.

Recent scholarship increasingly recognises that the epicentre of Christian vitality is shifting to the Global South, particularly within the majority world. This shift underscores the imperative for Southern theologians to contextualise the Gospel and articulate indigenous theologies that resonate with local experiences and socio-cultural dynamics. While Pentecostals have made strides in this area, there is still considerable scope for development, particularly in African Pentecostal Ecotheology.

Pentecostalism significantly contributes to Christian vitality in Africa, and with its growing numbers and influence, it is well positioned to lead the development of appropriate and holistic ecological missiologies for eco-mission. Although the Pentecostal tradition is known for its ability to thrive consistently on continuities from the primal faith, much work still needs to be done on African primal eco-values and biblical injunctions.

⁶⁰ John Polkinghorne, *The God of Hope and the End of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 140.

To transition eco-mission from the fringes to the mainstream of Pentecostal mission, the core doctrines of the tradition must fully embrace ecology, as discussed in this thesis. My thesis has sought to address this gap and develop pertinent theologies within the African Pentecostal tradition as responses to eco-crises, guiding eco-mission across the continent. It is crucial for assisting Pentecostals in Africa to draw from their own resources and satisfy their needs for a more robust environmental theology within the tradition.

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