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“All it takes is one good person to restore hope” (LS 71).

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BIBLICAL MEDITATION

All Things Were Made Through Him and For Him (Col 1:15–20).

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth: everything visible and everything invisible, thrones, ruling force, sovereignties, powers – all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷He exists before all things and in him all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸He is the Head of the body, that is the Church. He is the Beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he himself might be preeminent. ¹⁹For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through him to reconcile all things for him, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Biblical revelation emphasizes the distinction between the Creator and the creature. The Christian understanding of the creation of “Man”¹ in the image of God underpins his dignity and freedom, two inter-related concepts with which he is equipped. And though considered as the pinnacle of creation, the undeniable reality is that Man cannot be cogitated in isolation; he is part of creation and thereby understood as a creature in the broader scheme of the created order. The prologue of the Gospel according to John reveals the creative work of Christ as the Logos, the Divine Word (John 1:1–18). It further indicates the incarnation of one of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, which ultimately had a divine purpose. The act of creation, deductively, is Christocentric – not only from the order of creation but also the order of redemption²; “All things were created through him and for him.” That notwithstanding, the understanding of Jesus as God connecting him to creation is given an unequivocal theological accent in the so-called Christ-hymn in St. Paul’s letter to the Colossians (Col 1:15–20).

As a free-standing hymn (Col 1:15–20), it finds its thematic flow from verses 13–14, where there is a rescue and transfer from the grips of a non-divine dominion to the divine domain inaugurated through the paschal mystery of Christ, the risen Son of the Father³. The phrase “he [who] is the image of the invisible God” (v. 15) is the first descriptor of Christ used in the hymn. The noun, image, *eikon* has a basic and concrete meaning of a statue of a god or person⁴, a representation that stands in the tension between the presence

¹ The term “man” is used sparingly in this text in the generic sense to refer to the human species or humankind in general.

² Cf. Dennis HAMM, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, Grand Rapids 2013, 181.

³ Cf. Douglas J. MOO, The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon, Grand Rapids – Nottingham 2008, 111.

⁴ Cf. Matthew E. GORDLEY, The Colossian Hymn in Context. An Exegesis in Light of Jewish and Greco-Roman Hymnic and Epistolary Conventions, vol. 2 (WUNT 228), Tübingen 2007, 211.

and the absence of the reality represented by it. Nonetheless, in this hymn it moves beyond this motionless representation to contextually posit Christ as the exact, concrete and full representation of the living Father and that it is only through and in him, the incarnate Son, that God, who remains invisible to the world is perfectly manifested, a picture that resembled the Prototype in everything.

This is a clear departure from the claim in Gen 1:27 that human beings were created in/according to the image of God. In Genesis, the use of *eikon* lays a foundation for a connection between God and Man, and at the same time reinforces the fact that the divinity present in Man does not make him identical with God. Man is indeed the image of God on earth but he is not equal to God in everything, accentuating a fundamental difference between the creator (God) and the creature (Man). Christ, however, is not in/according to image of God rather he is the original image of Gods; he was not created like Man but is exclusively part of the divine reality that thought out and fashioned creation. The face of the Father, the Creator of the universe, thus becomes accessible in Christ, through his participation in the act of creation⁶. In Christian theology, Christ as the “immanent mediator of the transcendent God”⁷ expresses the singularity, intimate and inseparable relationship between the Father and the Son, affirming the biblical viewpoint that the symbol is the reality. Jesus is not just a symbol which points to the reality, he himself is the reality.

Interestingly, the expression, image of the invisible God, is used purposefully to make the fact of Christ as First-born enunciate; firstly as “First-born of all creation” and at the end of the hymn as “First-born from the dead”, an indication of the inseparable connection between the twin categories of creation and redemption⁸. The designation “First-born” in the Old Testament as a legal term meant basically and chronologically the first issue of the Father’s strength and from the maternal dimension, as the first offspring, which opens the womb, and hence prioritizing the relationship with the parents⁹. Besides, it has a deeper connotation. In the Jewish’s tradition, the firstborn is thought of as sacred to YHWH and needs to be redeemed as the principal heir in the family. The primogeniture

⁵ Cf. MOO, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 119.

⁶ Cf. GORDLEY, *The Colossian Hymn in Context*, 215.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁸ Cf. MOO, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 111.

⁹ Cf. B. R. BRINKMAN, *The First-Born of All Creation*, in: *The Way* 2/4 (1962) 261–271, here: 262.

of the first-born gives him a kind of *potesta* over the family¹⁰. It portrays a kind of subjection of the siblings, which according to tradition is an intrinsic right and remains non-transferable (Dt. 21:15).

Jesus as the Firstborn is the Begotten before every being, affirming his eternal transcendence of space and time. Together with the Father, he is the “source and sustainer”¹¹ of creation. Eduard Lohse elucidates that the point of the phrase in Col 1:15 is not a temporal advantage but rather the superiority which is due him as the agent of creation who is before creation¹². Christ as First-born underlines his solidarity with humanity. But he is not just First-born of humanity, though true in every respect in accord with the principle of the incarnation, but more decisively he is First-born “of all creation” (v. 15), extending his primogeniture to the universe and excluding nothing. It expresses a tremendous force of a fraternity comprising every creature, which means it would be impossible not to understand the Firstborn as first of a series of brethren¹³.

Intrinsically imbedded in the term Firstborn as related to Jesus is his status as agent of all creation from the beginning because “for in him all things were created” (v. 16). St. Paul describes the complexity of the universe with its dynamic movement and defines “all things” to include what is in heaven (all heavenly entities like the stars, moon, sun, etc.,) and on earth (which embraces everything) and as such encapsulates the totality of what exist spatially¹⁴. The usage of “Visible and Invisible” unlike the above combination of heaven and earth captures the whole of creation by distinguishing sensible objects; perceptible things and persons, from all spiritual entities. Together with thrones and dominions, the whole created order is subjected to him, a reminder to those inclined towards the worship of these principalities.

A re-emphasis of Jesus as the instrument or agency of creation in v.16 is made demonstrating his unique role in the work of creation. This however, is indicated with a decisive twist or perhaps with an important addition: “All things were created through

¹⁰ Cf. BRINKMAN, *The First-Born of All Creation*, 263.

¹¹ HAMM, *Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture*.173.

¹² Cf. Eduard LOHSE, *Colossians and Philemon. Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*, Philadelphia 1988, 49.

¹³ Cf. J. BONSIRVEN, *L’Evangeli de Paul*, Paris 1948, 86–87.

¹⁴ Cf. HAMM, *Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture*, 173.

him and *for him*". Christ is just not an agency, a channel and a vessel for the creation of the universe but unequivocally he is the goal and end of all creation. Creation in this sense is geared towards him and finds its fulfilment and meaning in him. He actually stands at the beginning of the universe as the exclusive one through whom it came into being and he stands at the end as the exclusive goal of the universe¹⁵.

The primacy of Christ, which is divinely anchored in him being the First Principle makes him the sphere in which all creation exists, the agent through which they came into being and the one for whom they were made. Relying on the Aristotelian theory of causes, Jesus in reference to creation is primary cause (he planned), instrumental cause (he produced it) and final cause (he did it for his own pleasure)¹⁶. According to Hann, "for him" expresses creation as gift of the father to him¹⁷. Christ does have the responsibility to give order to the universe and maintain the structure of the order of creation handed over to him by the Father. The ontological primacy of Christ is brought to the fore within the entire framework of the continuous creative process that points to the preeminent honour conferred on him by the Father – "exists before all things" (v.17a) – and the responsibility to nurture and preserve what has been entrusted to him – "in him all things hold together" (v.17b). Thus, the honour and the continuous cohesion of universe is ground in the person of Christ.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned, the correlational dimensional breaks down when one considers the strophe in the original hymn in v.18a, where Christ is exalted as the head of the church. The metaphorical relationship of a head to the body points to antiquity, where this was used to describe the relationship of God to creation¹⁸. The fact that he is the head of the body and not his body remains interesting as it expresses a fixed and recognized formula, widely known outside of Pauline corpus¹⁹. Both the Old and New Testaments usage of the term "head" is not an organic connection or similarity of substances but "on the preeminent position of the Lord"²⁰.

¹⁵ Cf. MOO, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 124.

¹⁶ Cf. Warren W. WIERSBE, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary. New Testament*, Colorado Springs 2007, 669.

¹⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁸ GORDLEY, *The Colossian Hymn in Context*, 219.

¹⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*

²⁰ Eduard SHWEIZER, *The Letter to the Colossians. A Commentary*, Minneapolis 1982, 64.

The twist at the end of the first strophe transferred the image of body and head from the cosmic realm to the human realm. Christ's superiority over all things outside the remit of the false perception of Domination is given particular emphasis in the church, which loses nothing of the unity between the head and body but rather establishes Christ as a guiding and supportive principle that holds and preserves the *ekklesia*. Like the image of the invisible God, who is the agency and the goal of creation, the church as the body of Christ, of which he is the head, in a similar but subordinate manner assumes the visible role of Christ by becoming the face of Jesus on earth and charged with the divine duty to maintain the order of creation.

The second stanza accentuates the primacy of Christ by making reference to the Genesis 1:1. "He is the beginning" probably has the double meaning of him being the first in a series and in rank as first in power or dominion. It however, could have philosophical nuance of First Principle or element as found in Aristotle. The Greek word for beginning, *arche*, has the additional meaning of the "origin and the active cause of the rest"²¹. "He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead" (v. 18) sets the scene for a historic-theological basis that gives credence to the incarnation and resurrection. That God entered into the history of humanity in a precise manner, is neither a wild theory nor a baseless assumption but has a temporal basis.

In much the same way and closely linked to the incarnation, Jesus as firstborn from the dead is indicative of the significance of the resurrection as the beginning of the new creation, which still underlies his supremacy. He is and remains the "First" to take on human character and conquer death, the aim of which is to still entrench his supremacy and preeminence status (v.18c). This is not just relative to the cosmic principalities but also the power of death caused by sin that had distorted and broken the harmony between the creator and the creature and subsequently among the creation. Jesus as firstborn refers to the whole of creation and the further reference to him as firstborn from the dead unveils the contextual linkage of the theology of creation and redemption.

It becomes apparently clear that the pre-eminent Word cannot be distinguished in its relation to creation and the incarnation. Christ's role in creation and redemption affect all

²¹ HAMM, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture, 177.

things in the universe in their individuality and totality, a movement that transcends the human plane to embrace all creation. All things were created in him, because Jesus is the Pleroma of God, the complete set of divine attributes that are incarnated in Christ (v.19). With his divine fullness and the vulnerability of the cross (v. 20), Jesus reconciles all realities, heavenly and earthly and restores the broken harmony in creation. He thus returns them to their original state, recreating the fullness of well-being and the primitive harmony, willed by God to his plan of love and life.

It is not only humans who share a relationship with Christ, predating creation, but the whole universe. The relation of the firstborn to his brethren, that is all creation, is however, at its most effective and vivid peak in our participation in the resurrection, for he is the firstborn from the dead. Christ death opens a divine channel for the reconciliation for the created order. It becomes imperative therefore, for humanity – and most essentially the church – to re-examine not just its relationship with Christ, the Firstborn and Head but also and equally important its divine and inseparable bond with the other components of creation. Just as Man had the responsible to maintain and preserve the order of creation from the Beginning in Genesis, so also the church in this new Beginning after the resurrection has a renewed mandate to care for her other brother and sisters.

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1.0. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

“We have failed because, we have not been decisive enough to challenge the political and economic systems, [...] which exploit the natural resources of the world only for personal benefits and perpetuate poverty and marginalisation”²². These words form part of the self-critique and final declaration of the European Economic Assembly, which handled the theme *Frieden in Gerechtigkeit*, literally, “Peace in Justice” in 1989 in Basel, where there was a recognisable agreement that the theme of ecological world order had played a secondary role in their deliberations. This resounding admittance of the insufficient will power to deal with the issues confronting the climate system of the earth, notwithstanding the enormous attention that has been given to ecological issues in the last couple of years, accentuates and reflects not just a contextual European challenge but reveals a world-wide phenomenon that poses a threat not only to the human species but the world order as a whole.

This ferocious urgency of a crisis the world is currently confronted with, links not only today and tomorrow but undermines the international effort to combat poverty. It demands urgent action to address a threat to two fragile constituents with a weak political voice: “the world’s poor and the future generation”²³. That notwithstanding, the current ecological crisis provides a potent reminder of one thing that we share in common, the earth, making the efforts at addressing this challenge very critical to human development prospects. In the wake of the much talked-about ecological crisis, the encyclical *Laudato Si’* provides a refreshing theological field to investigate the progressive destruction of the eco-systems. Without overemphasising the global dimension of this crisis, though very essential, situating the challenge in and reading this church document from peculiar and local lenses has become more exigent. The reason being that it is steadily “increasing the exposure of humanity especially the poor and vulnerable households to climate-shocks

²² *Wir haben versagt, weil wir nicht entschieden genug die politischen und wirtschaftlichen Systeme in Frage gestellt haben, [...] die die natürlichen Ressourcen der Welt nur zum eigenen Nutzen ausbeuten und Armut und Marginalisierung verewigen.* As cited in Han DIEENBACHER, Die Verantwortung der Christen für Natur und Umwelt, in: Severin J. LEDERHILGER (ed.), Gärten in der Wüste. Schöpfungsethik zwischen Wunsch und Wirklichkeit, Regensburg 2018, 15–29, here: 24.

²³ HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2007/2008, Fighting Climate Change. Human Solidarity in a Divided World, p. 8. URL: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr_20072008_summary_english.pdf [Accessed: 8 June 2018].

and placing increased pressure on coping strategies, which over time, could steadily erode human capabilities”²⁴.

Taking inspiration from St. Francis, the patron saint of his pontificate for efforts towards the conservation of creation, Pope Francis outlines courageously and makes *Laudato Si'* the very first ecclesiastical document that focusses on environmental issues with a global character. Divided into six chapters, the first section “What is happening to our common home”, unwraps the present environmental challenges, which treats environmental pollution, the threat of climate change, the fast-growing water shortage and the loss of biodiversity, which ultimately causes a lot of havoc on the poor, who has an intimate relationship with fragile earth (LS 16). Chapter two, “the Gospel of Creation”, reveals an essential agenda of Pope Francis and a biblical theological appreciation of humanity’s relationship with creation especially with the responsibility to preserve its order. He maintains that notwithstanding the global character of the problem, Christianity has something unique to offer in the understanding of nature as a tremendous gift of God.

In the third and fourth chapters, he traces “The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis” with the evidential proof of the adoption of a technocratic paradigm which has affected our relation with mother earth and with one another and a such proposes an “Integral Ecology”. Closely read, the second, third and fourth chapters essentially form the heart of the encyclical and sets forth the fundamental principles of the church’s understanding of God, nature and humanity by describing how everything is connected and what it means to be human in the universe. Pope Francis ends the encyclical with two chapters on the “Line of Approach and Action” and on “Ecological Education and Spirituality”, by calling for a radical *metanoia* in our approach towards the environment through an effective and pragmatic human dialogue. This beautifully brings our attention to God’s sacramental presence in His Creation, especially in the Eucharist.

This encyclical mirrors the worsening environmental challenges that Ghana has been battling with and despite numerous interventions made by governments and organisations, these mediations have not yielded the desired results. Given the fact that

²⁴ HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2007/2008, Fighting Climate Change. Human Solidarity in a Divided World, p. 17. URL: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr_20072008_summary_english.pdf [Accessed: 8 June 2018].

contextual enculturation in theology has become inevitably and unavoidably a “theological imperative”²⁵ as designated by Stephen Bevans, *Laudato Si’* provides a theological field to contextualise the document making its significance have a bearing on the local dimensions of the ecological crisis. *Laudato Si’* reflects and thinks globally and Ghana must act decisively and locally. In discussions regarding the environment, one cannot be oblivious to the indiscriminate discarding of solid wastes and its corresponding ineffective collection, transport and final disposal. Strikingly and as if not enough, the growing phenomenon of an obsession with illegal mining for mineral resources, traditionally called *Galamsey*²⁶ championed by both locals and expatriates, has become a bane and a bad omen and no longer a blessing as held in the past. Precisely, the indescribable impacts of these activities on the land and water bodies, mostly the direct source of water for rural folks, coupled with the health challenges they pose can no longer be countenanced. Compounded to the above, the issue of timber lumbering and overgrazing by animals and its aftermath of erosion and the loss of top soil are nerve-racking due to the its untold consequences on food production and the loss of livelihood in deprived areas.

In the Strategy for Conservation and Development, scientists mostly from the developing nations stressed quite plainly that the future of the developing countries lies precisely in their capacity to save their ecosystems²⁷. The ecosystems are the common denominator for life on this planet, our earthly paradise and hence their destruction, in the name of the so-called profit-making agenda, would have long-term repercussions on all the species of the earth. It therefore, becomes a theological imperative to question the Ghanaian self-understanding and her/his way of perceiving the natural world. What relationship does she/he have with the earth? Is the earth perceived only as an instrument or object and as such a means to an end? Or is the Ghanaian really at an ecological crossroad relative to her/his existence on this planet? If the answer is in the affirmative, then one must further

²⁵ Stephen B. BEVANS, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Maryknoll 2002, 1.

²⁶ This is a term traditionally coined to describe the illegal mineral mining activities in Ghana. It is actually derived from the pidgin phrase “gather am and sell” that is, “gather them and sell”, fundamentally connected to unlicensed small-scale mining to refer to sieving, gathering and selling of gold particles from sand debris. It has become a mainstay of those living in these mining areas since it provides employment and is considered a source of livelihood for many. It, however, reveals a concept of entitlement, that has engulfed the society where people, once, they inherit and acquire plots of lands think it must serve their needs even though the law frowns upon it.

²⁷ Cf. Thomas BERRY – Thomas CLARKE, *Befriending the Earth. A Theology of Reconciliation Between Humans and the Earth*, Stephen DUNN – Anne LONERGAN (eds.), Connecticut 1991, 44.

enquire the fundamental causes that have led to an extreme difficulty in finding solutions to the obvious ecological challenges in the country since in the long run, the vulnerable poor are negatively impacted by the choices being made.

Against the backdrop of the above-highlighted contextual ecological problems this study employs in the first Chapter a fundamental theological approach in the context of systematic theology to make a strong case for a Fraternity of Creation in Ghana. Due to the contextualised nature of this study, a hermeneutical reflection of the Ghanaian experience in the light of *Laudato Si'* in this Chapter will seek to demystify the erroneous anthropological understanding of domination by substituting empty rhetoric for concrete hard-edge reflection. It will also reflect on desired appropriate actions in the midst of poverty, injustice and the deterioration of the environment. Within the framework of socio-ecological justice an analytical look at the possible correlation between the exploitation of the environment and the unfortunate marginalisation of women in the Ghanaian society would be done to assess how the socio-cultural appropriation of women would be comprehensively approached for a holistic appreciation of womanhood.

The second Chapter constituting the decisive and central reference point of the work hermeneutically reflect major aspects of *Laudato Si'*: Technocratic Paradigm, Integral Ecology and Dialogue in Politics, with the aim to examining how the encyclical can contribute to developing a theology of Fraternity in the Ghanaian context. The hermeneutical evaluation will further bring out how from the Ghanaian perspective new approaches towards *Laudato Si'* could be derived. In this vain, this Chapter therefore, will interrogate and highlight solidarity and fraternity, concepts that are grounded in the created order by making a case for a responsible and transformative education towards the urgent preservation of the ecology on which humans are dependent.

By situating the work in context, it will provide a platform to investigate the ecological vulnerability, which recognises that human beings are vulnerable not just because we are finite but because we are connected and dependent on other macro- and micro-ecologies. This acknowledgment ultimately opens a space for a theological discussion on justice, God's option for the marginalised and the poor, and how Christianity and especially the Catholic Church in Ghana can contribute significantly to support the clarion call by Pope Francis to pay attention to our common home. A healthy dialogue and a new cultural

synthesis will constitute a profound preference to building pragmatic systems and interventions in favour of an integral ecology.

CHAPTER ONE

2.0. The Critical Contextual Issues at Stake in Ghana

The rapidity of urbanisation in Ghana and the huge gap of unfulfilled expectation have had unspeakable consequences on many cities and urban populations, especially the vulnerable whose lives and survival are dependent on inexcusable working conditions threatening their health and undermining their human dignity²⁸. The task of ensuring a healthy urban and rural environment and the preservation of the ecology has become a delicate issue that needs urgent attention. The ecological vulnerability at the heart of this contextualised work and the further acknowledgement that life must be treated in an integral manner is an opportunity for a discussion on the responsibility of communities in the face of the environmental and ecological exploitation that has a foreseeable brunt on life on earth. Treating this, however, demands that effort is made to highlight the challenges that underpin this ecological vulnerability. The section of this work deals with two contextual environmental challenges namely, the Improper Waste Management of Solid Waste and Illegal Mining (*Galamsey*) with its effects on water bodies and land. These would be treated in tandem with the gender and environmental dynamics to ascertain how society can elevate the discourse on the escalating environmental degradation and its link to gender imbalances in the country.

2.1. Improper Waste Management

One of the greatest concerns that find expression in environmental discussions in Ghana is the uncontrolled, haphazard disposal of solid waste materials, without regard to its lasting effects on both the individual and the society as a whole, in spite of the unambiguous signs and factual evidence that proves that a section of the society is engulfed in filth. According to Alan Gilpin, waste management generally concerns the “purposeful, systematic control of generation, storage, collection, transportation, separation, processing, recycling, recovery and disposal of waste in a sanitary, aesthetically acceptable and economic manner”²⁹. Focusing on municipal solid waste

²⁸ Cf. PROJECTFACULTY.COM, The Impact of Environmental Sanitation Policy. A Case Study of F.C.T. Abuja, URL: <http://www.projectfaculty.com/resources/resource-sociology-soc149.htm> [Accessed: 18 July 2019].

²⁹ Alan GILPIN, Dictionary of Environment and Development, Chester – New York 1996, 201.

management, Schubeller and others explain that it is “the collection, transfer, treatment, recycling, resource recovery and disposal of solid waste in urban areas”³⁰.

The underlying current flowing through these attempted definitions reveals a positive outlook on waste not only because it prevents avoidable environmental pollution and its consequential health risk but also and more importantly how best these “wastes” could further be transformed and be useful to the generators of these same wastes. Cointreau and others point to the value deeply-rooted in solid waste, when they describe it as the organic and inorganic waste materials, produced by households, commercial, institutional and industrial activities, which have lost their value in the eyes of the first owner³¹. The generators of wastes have the penchant for discarding unwanted materials perceiving them as undesired and useless materials that have no inherent value and mostly remain indifferent to their outcomes and end stations. In much the same way, waste management, closely analysed has an inherent aim of promoting environmental awareness, which properly executed could contribute substantially in saving the environment and ecosystems from such unprecedented human abuse and exploitation, in which sense certain health risk associated with the contamination of the environment could be prevented.

The generated solid wastes, degradable and non-degradable, evident in urban and rural Ghana and covering a wide section of the society namely; individual and household refuse, agricultural waste, institutional and industrial waste as well as construction and demolition debris have however, not been dealt with as expected. In the last couples of decades efforts from both governmental and non-governmental agencies have been projected and implemented as short- and medium-term interventions to help address this societal menace³². Unfortunately, the implementation of these mediations has yielded

³⁰ P. SCHUBELLER – K. WEHRLE – J. CHRISTEN, *Urban Management and Infrastructure. Conceptual Framework for Municipal Solid Waste Management in Low-Income Countries*, St. Gallen 1996, 9.

³¹ Cf. Sandra J. COINTREAU, *Recycling from Municipal Refuse. A State-of-the Art Review and Annotated Bibliography*, p. 1–3, URL: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/907271467997294000/pdf/WTP30000Recycl0notated0bibliography.pdf> [Accessed: 5 September 2018].

³² Cf. There have been attempts in the form of mediations in appropriating an outright ban of plastic products and the promotion of alternative bags, house to house and communal central collection of wastes, which come with some financial commitments on the part of the generators, all in the effort at combating and managing waste. In 1997, Zoomlion, a private company working in collaboration with the government for the management of waste began its operations across the country but has been entangled in a web of challenges that have made it difficult to attain its target. Through the company, the country adopted the Chinese technology in addressing waste management in 2012 and yet the fundamentals remain not confronted.

little or perhaps no results precisely because on the one hand, waste management has been considered for years as the sole responsibility of governments and quite recently waste management operators, overlooking the significance of all the relevant stakeholders. On the other hand, but more essentially because it fails to take the peculiar needs of the situation they seek to address into consideration.

2.1.1. Littering and Plastic Waste

In the context of waste production, the question of littering, the indiscriminate discarding of garbage in the open private or public places untidily, remains an underlying element that cannot be overemphasised. Caused by pedestrians dropping refuse on the streets and in the gutters, motorists throwing rubbish out of moving vehicles and the inappropriate disposal of refuse at unapproved places mostly dislodged by the wind, the menace of littering has become a herculean environmental challenge in Ghana. It is generally the responsibility of district or municipal assemblies to provide house to house waste-collection services and to keep roads and public spaces clean, although the collections, contractually are wholly or partially given out to private companies. Where public authorities are unable to provide house to house alternative collection of waste, they often resort to providing communal skips to which households have to transport and dispose their wastes³³.

A combination of these two systems – the house to house collection and communal skips – is evident in both urban and rural Ghana respectively, even though the latter is dominant. Nonetheless, the absence of sufficient garbage bins at vantage points in villages, towns and cities coupled with the inability and commitment of the part contracted agencies for timely collections and subsequent disposal of refuse, mostly inhibited by inadequate personnel and equipment constitute some major factors impeding efforts at protecting and keeping the environment clean. As a result, individual households and some companies dump their waste indiscriminately in nearby gullies and bushes or in lakes or rivers or simply along streets, which generate unpleasant odour, disease vectors and pests attracted by refuse including rodents and flies.

³³ Cf. Jorge E. HARDOY – Diana MITLIN – David SATTERWAITE, *Environmental Problems in an Urbanising World, Finding Solutions for Cities in Africa, Asia and Latin America*, London – Sterling 1992, 79.

Paradoxically, in areas where there are visible garbage bins and timely collections of waste, in the case of campuses, educational institutions and in some residential areas, one is still confronted with littered environments. Thus, the expectation to see a clean environment in environs where provision of garbage bins is made, is ironically not met. This, obviously put the issue of littering and management of refuse beyond the inadequate availability of funds and garbage bins, as indicated above. There is indeed more to it.

One common commodity that has not been given adequate attention in the broader frame of environmental issues is the impact of the wholesale undiscerning disposal of solid waste and exposure of littered environment on tourism. Littering causes visual pollution that negatively affect the quest to boost the tourism sector. It gives an impression of the attitude of the citizenry towards their environment and betrays their lack of environmental awareness. The contribution of “Travel and Tourism to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Ghana in 2016 was GHC 11,542.0mn (7.1% of GDP) and was estimated to experience a growth of 5.2 percent in 2017”³⁴. Although, Ghana has a real potential to develop and boost its tourism industry, the sector experiences a slow pace of growth despite the monumental edifices and tourist sites she boasts of. A clean environment would definitely add colour and attracts tourists to enjoy their stay in the country without the fear of the exposure to the health-related consequences associated with untidy environments.

The growing consumer market, rising urbanisation coupled with changing consumerist lifestyles over the last few years is rapidly leading to an increased waste generation. Products are being packed in cans, aluminium foils, plastics and non-biodegradable items that are causing harm to the environment³⁵. Here one can easily single out the usage of plastics products for discussion, as they form a very crucial element in the discourse of waste production. With the passage of time, Ghana unpreparedly developed and shaped a plastic convenient lifestyle, a culture where every citizen uses plastic products either directly or indirectly and yet the aftermath of these practices has been detrimental to the environment. The revolutionary modification from the traditionally known methods like

³⁴ Michael Evans ATUAHENE, *An Investigation of Factors Affecting Internal Customer Perception of Service Quality Delivery. The Case of Indigenous Small Hospitality Enterprises in Ghana* [unpublished diss. University of Salford, Salford], 2018, 21.

³⁵ Cf. Dewki LIMBU, *Solid Waste Management in the Town of Darjeeling. Environmental Concern*, in: *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention* 3/6 (2014) 26–34, here: 29.

leaf wrappers, brown/white papers and metallic cups and plates in favour of hygienic plastic packaging of food items, beverages, water and other products initiated a drastic process in the country's development, an advancement that J. N. Fobil and J. Hogarh describe as a radical progress without corresponding regulatory policies³⁶. The emerging perception and option for sachet and plastic bottled mineral water as safer than the accustomed pipe borne water, though not tragic is a typical example. The aftermath of littering the environment with these plastic products, an astonishing eyesore and a clear environmental abuse, reinforces the views of Fobil and Hogarh.

The magnanimity of plastic waste production calamitously linked to the throw away culture, eventually find themselves in poorly constructed drainage system consisting of open and shallow drains hindering the flow of water and eventually triggering avoidable flooding. "The recent rains in Accra exposed the havoc being caused by plastic waste"³⁷ is an apt description of the unregulated and compromised usage of plastic products captured as a headline in the Daily Graphic's publications on March 15, 2005, which sought to communicate its improper disposal just after "a two-hour down pour". Another case in point is the unprecedented flooding that led to the displacement of about 9,255 people and the death toll of over 152 people in the nation's capital, Accra in June 2015³⁸. The precarious aspect of this situation is that the high volumes of these wastes find themselves by the run-off water into rivers, lakes and seas – the direct the source of water for some towns and villages in the case of rivers – affecting profoundly such ecosystems.

The strange substances including other waste materials cause havoc to aquatic wildlife when they are fed on mistakenly as food. These human actions in many cases have led to the spread of water-borne diseases like cholera and typhoid, a repetitive phenomenon especially in the capital city, Accra. The recurrence of these tragedies over the years, said to be rooted in the improper management of wastes, divulges a typical attitudinal character of substituting hard-edge reflection and appropriate action for unacceptable

³⁶ Cf. Julius. N. FOBIL – Jonathan HORGAAH, The Dilemmas of Plastic Wastes in Developing Economy. Proposal for a Sustainable Management Approach for Ghana, in: West Africa Journal of Applied Ecology 10/1 (2006) [Online Edition, URL: <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/wajae/article/view/45716> (Accessed: 21 December 2018)].

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Cf. Samuel ASUMADU-SARKODIE – Phebe Asantewaa OWUSU – Patrick RUFANGURA, Impact Analysis of Floods in Accra, in: Advances in Applied Science Research 6/9 (2015) 53–79, here: 54.

rhetoric just for the cameras, where the impression is created by authorities as if much is being done only to appease the masses, which nevertheless, is antithetical to the reality.

Referencing Sandra Cointreau and others, Jorge E. Hordoy and his colleagues indicate the health-related hazards connected to littering in its wide terms as unwholesome practices for children playing in and outside their homes and for many in search of items that can be reused or recycled by sorting through rubbish³⁹. Additionally, flies, insects and cockroaches, who feed on these wastes could become transitional agents for water and food contamination. The justifiable concern in this regard is that for a developing country making efforts to reconstruct and improve her health system, it becomes untenable for authorities and the populace to look on and rather spend resources to combat the resultant effects of these actions, when these could have been prevented.

Against the backdrop of efforts channelled into researching the obvious exterior factors – including the laxity on the part of governments and the citizenry in prioritising environmental consciousness and cleanliness, the ever-increasing population, rapid urbanisation, lack of political will to allocate enough financial aid in this enterprise, the inadequate proper planning of town and cities, an almost absent recycling industry and engineered final disposal sites – that have escalated this dreadful situation, for the purpose of this work it is also necessary to acknowledge a very fundamental dimension of this discourse, which remain opaque in many a discussion on the environment. The crux of this challenge is a deeply rooted misunderstanding of the Ghanaian's relation to his/her environment, a long-cultivated habit that perceives the environment as exterior to man and as such can be maltreated, abused and ill-treated because it has no capacity to voice out its grievances.

Stephen B. Kendie could not have put it more rightly when he argues that the recent upsurge in waste disposal stems from the fact that “attitudes and perceptions towards wastes and the rating of waste disposal issues in people's mind and in the scheme of official development plans have not been adequately considered”⁴⁰. Relative to this

³⁹ Cf. HARDOY – MITLIN – SATTERWAITE, *Environmental Problems in an Urbanising World*, London – Sterling 1992, 79.

⁴⁰ As cited in Steve AMPOFO – Evans KUMI – Boateng AMPADU, *Investigating Solid Waste Management in the Bolgatanga Municipality of the Upper East Region, Ghana*, in: *Environment and Pollution* 4/3 (2015) 27–41, here: 38.

unfortunate human attitude towards the environment, E. F. Schumacher postulates that “modern man does not experience himself as a part of nature but as an outside force destined to dominate and conquer. He even talks of a battle with nature, forgetting that, if he won the battle, he would find himself on the losing side”⁴¹ .

This machoism of a hypothesis though encompasses macro ecological concerns in Ghana such as deforestation, desertification, mining and its impacts, depletion of marine resources, pollution in all its forms, advanced technology, etc., reveals the micro dimension of the Ghanaian traditional attitude towards the environment, which is fundamental to the preservation of the ecosystems. Many Ghanaians sees themselves as superior and exterior components of the world and a such have an unbridled power to exploit any non-human element even when they stand to lose in the long run. What the country is confronted with is a socio-psychological misconception of the inherent relationship between humans and their environment. It is an attitudinal clothing that has been worn for centuries with without deep reflection, a kind of fashion that metamorphoses from bad to worse without end and a such resonates a culture of “I don’t care” that should be addressed.

2.1.2. The Importation of Electronic Waste

Towards the end of the 20th century, the world witnessed a radical rise in the production of electronic and electrical equipment (EEE) currently identified as one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world,⁴² mainly due to its astronomical consumption facilitated by globalisation, rapid urbanisation and its influence on economic activities around the globe. This progress, despite the many advantages it offers humanity and the world at large, has come with its own obnoxious and seemingly unsurmountable challenges. The electronic debris, now known as E-waste “encompasses a broad and growing range of electronic devices ranging from large household appliances such as refrigerators, air conditioners, hand-held cellular phones, personal stereos, and consumer electronics to computers”⁴³. Its managerial aspect has become a global concern due its

⁴¹ E. F. SCHUMACHER, *Small is Beautiful. Economic as if People Mattered*, London 1973, 14.

⁴² Cf. Jim PUCKETT et al., *Exporting Harm. The High Tech Trashing of Asia*, Seattle 2002, 1.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 5.

two basic characteristics namely; it is hazardous and it is generated at alarming rates due to obsolescence⁴⁴.

In Ghana, the advent and influx of e-waste, like television and radio sets, computers, smart phones, microwaves, washing machines, domestic ventilators, etc., often exported illegally from developed countries, with the exception of the importation of used fridges, on which a ban has been placed recently, is an emerging threat to an already exploited environment. The complexity regarding dialogues on e-waste is the economic interest that seeks to outweigh and promote this industry in Ghana because of the economic gap it seemingly bridges and yet the acceptance of this practice, in the context of the known difficulties connected to the management of normal domestic wastes, makes it impossible to ignore the potential health risks and ecological concerns these may generate.

This phenomenon is largely evident in *Agbogbloshie*⁴⁵, the Ghanaian hub of e-waste activities, where every electronic material that finds its way there is considered valuable because of the available opportunity to create and add value to these used products⁴⁶. Certainly, the e-waste has emerged as a huge business breakthrough, supporting many who rely on it as a source of livelihood. Considered as a very influential socio-economic catalyst, creating jobs and reducing poverty levels, e-waste has been labelled as part of the informal sector driven by the search of copper through open burning. In spite of the unpleasant narrative about e-waste, studies have shown that it contains valuable metals like gold, copper, and silver that are lost if not properly recovered leading ultimately to severe sustainability impacts⁴⁷. The *Agbogbloshie* recycling industry “exhibits a highly stratified system, comprising collection, recycling, refurbishing and reuse activities and eventually the disposal of the residuals”⁴⁸. As a business centre, trading on computers and other electronic products brought from across the length and breadth of the country

⁴⁴ Cf. Jim PUCKETT et al., *Exporting Harm*, 5.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Agbogbloshie* is a suburb in the Accra Metropolis and located in the heart of the capital city. Northwest of the main business district of Accra, it is located on the shores of the *Korle* Lagoon and covers an area size of about 16km². It has become symbol of the illegal trading of electronic and electrical equipment exported from the developed world. In 2013, it was chosen as one of the contaminated places in the world. The ugly side of this is that it provides accommodation for families and employers who have become addicted to the environment and for new comers in search of a better standard of living.

⁴⁶ Cf. Martin OTENG-ABABIO, *Electronic Waste Management in Ghana. Issues and Practices*, in: Sime CURKOVIC (ed.), *Sustainable, Authoritative and Leading Edge Content for Environment Management*, 2012, 149–166, here: 153.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 149.

⁴⁸ *Id.*, 157.

are done on regular basis as these items are sold, assembled, disassembled and reassembled.

Supporting the business dimension to this phenomenon, Larry Summers, a former Economist of the World Bank in 1991, rationalises the exportation of these products to developing countries, when he says:

“the less developing countries especially those in Africa, are seriously under polluted and thus can stand to benefit from pollution trading schemes as they have air and water to spare; environmental protection for health and aesthetic reasons is essentially a luxury of the rich, as mortality is such a great problem in these developing countries that the relative minimal effects of increased pollution would pale in comparison to the problems these areas already face”⁴⁹.

This assertion, however, has certain fundamental principles of inequality that makes it untenable. Clearly, Africa and other developing economies are condemned and discounted by other constituents of the world in such paradigms. Considering the many socio-economic and political hurdles in Africa for instance, and even if these were non-realities, it would be unsustainable to postulate that they are under polluted and therefore must be infested with the waste from other parts of the world or that they have air and water to spare and that environmental consciousness is the exclusive privilege of the rich. In the quest for economic boom, all stakeholders should be mindful of the looming environmental doom such statements and option could trigger, so that developing nations are not tagged as and in reality, become dumping sites for the developed world.

The former Toxic Director of Greenpeace, Jim Puckett gives a better insight into the *Agbogbloshie* e-waste industry when he writes:

“It [Agbogbloshie] is a place where the developed world’s old techno-crash waste has been tossed up by the hidden eddy currents of today’s consumerism and commerce, and has found a strange resting place... In these global waysides that we might only know as ‘away’, as in ‘we threw it--away’, questions beg for answers from each of us, ... the cry out ghoulishly from the bone yards where these fallen icons of our proud information age lie as rotting fruit the progeny of centuries of technological advancement.... Machines that could, just month before, process a billion instructions per second, send a message clear around the world with the stroke of a key, ... have found their end as metals and plastic

⁴⁹ PUCKETT, A Place Called Away, URL: <http://archive.ban.org/library/AwayIsAPlaceEssayFINAL.pdf> [Accessed: 29 May 2018].

skeletons, in the world's most sorrowful poor communities to be subjected to hammer and fire, emitting deadly smoke and fume. Shouldn't there be a law?"⁵⁰

Puckett's contention echoes a well thought through concern that refuses to hide behind the naïve profit-making agenda of a few to the detriment of the many who suffer from the polluted air from the unbelievable fumes generated from the burnings, the sad ends of these products and the exploitation of the children and youth involved. Albeit the health-related risks, the contamination of the land, the production of carbon monoxide through the burning of automobile tyres that pollutes the air and infection with illnesses from the unhygienic handling of these waste and recycling, the question of human dignity and the option for the poor is central and key in this ecological discourse. Generally, waste picking especially in the city, seems to be the preserved of a particular ethnic group and is often conducted by youth who have dropped out of school or students, who despite access to education still make time for such ventures⁵¹. As a male dominated industry, research has proven that participants in this industry involve children and youth who engage in the collection of the products at their leisure time mostly after school hours or truants,⁵² manipulated and exploited by agents/middle men to go in search these items for "handsome rewards". The young ones are exploited as agents for the self-aggrandisement of their pay masters, who are fixated and fascinated with wealth as against the total developments of these vulnerable ones.

The exportation of e-waste, whether legal or illegal, reveals a further wrong perception and false world view of the Ghanaian that pay little attention to home-made goods for a questionable obsession with almost everything that is exported from abroad, by putting premium on the quality, though important, as against patriotism. It is such mind-set that provides fertile grounds for the acceptance of waste into a country for the consumption by its citizenry. A ban on the exportation or importation of e-waste, though could be a major step to ending this complexity, cannot be justified since dysfunctional electronic products in the country would still find their way to *Agbogbloshie*. Moreover, suggestions of shutting the place down may only means relocation and a further spread of this

⁵⁰ PUCKETT, A Place Called Away, URL: <http://archive.ban.org/library/AwayIsAPlaceEssayFINAL.pdf> [Accessed: 29 May 2018].

⁵¹ Cf. Martin OTENG-ABABIO – Ebenezer Forkuo AMANKWAA, The E-Waste Conundrum. Balancing Evidence from the North and on-the-Ground Developing Countries' Realities for Improved Management, in: *Africa Review of Economies and Finance*, 6/1 (2014) 181–204, here: 188.

⁵² Cf. *Ibid.*

activities across the country. This ultimately, indicates a weak national appreciation of human dignity especially of the younger generation and an attitudinal environmental consciousness, that do not prioritise the protection of the environment and the ecosystems in spite of the well-known repercussions of such activities.

2.2. Illegal Mining and its Effects

Mineral exploration and extraction in Ghana predate the colonial times and as a sector, it has been a major source of income particularly in areas where it is undertaken. Substantially, it offers additional employment avenues and offer good remuneration to people engaged in it⁵³. In furtherance to the direct jobs it creates, it has facilitated the establishment of associated enterprises and industries, such as security and catering agencies, laboratories as well as equipment leasing and sales consultancies⁵⁴. The sector accounted for about twenty percent of the formal sector employment in 1995, with large-scale mining companies employing about 20,000 whilst the small-scale mining sector including illegal mining employed more than 200,000 people⁵⁵. Foreign direct investments into the mining sector reached an appreciably level of over US\$3 billion by close of the late 1990s, accounting for a third of (thirty percent) the gross foreign exchange earnings⁵⁶.

Generally, mining in Ghana is categorised into two; large-scale and small-scale mining. The large-scale mining, employing the deep-pit method, necessitates huge investment capitals due to its complexity and related sophisticated technology. It is predominantly dominated by foreign firms. The small-scale mining, on the other hand, engages in surface mining because it is a less capital-intensive enterprise and statutorily restricted to only Ghanaians. Strictly, both mining activities required governmental approval through licensing⁵⁷. Despite the potential to produce variety of minerals including limestone,

⁵³ Cf. As cited in Divine Odame APPIAH – Juliet Nana BUABEN, Is Gold Mining a Bane or a Blessing in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Case of Ghana, in: *International Journal of Development and Sustainability* 1/3 (2012) 1033–1048, here: 1034.

⁵⁴ Cf. M. N. LARSEN – P. YANKSON – N. FOLD, Does Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Create Linkages in Mining? The Case of Gold Mining in Ghana, in: A. SUMNER – D. SANCHEZ-ANCOCHEA – E. RUGRAFF, (eds.), *Transnational Corporations and Development Policy. Critical Perspectives*, London 2009, 247–273, here: 266.

⁵⁵ Cf. APPIAH – BUABEN, Is Gold Mining a Bane or a Blessing in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1034.

⁵⁶ Cf. Ibid.

⁵⁷ Cf. Albert K. MENSAH et al., Environmental Impacts of Mining. A Study of Mining Communities in Ghana, in: *Applied Ecology and Environmental Science* 3/3 (2015) 81–94, here: 82.

manganese, silica sand, kaolin, mica, quartz, salt, chrome, etc.,⁵⁸ the main sought-after minerals are gold, diamond, bauxite and manganese. Gold, however, among these is the most produced mineral and contribute about ninety percent of the total value of minerals in the country, attracting both large- and small-scale miners⁵⁹. As the country major export commodity, Gold provides approximately fifty percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP),⁶⁰ underlying its relevance to the country's socio-economic growth.

The above notwithstanding, the touted benefits and opportunities; improved livelihood, adequate housing, educational and health facilities, road infrastructure, etc., connected to mining remain elusive to majority of local communities in Ghana who continue to languish in poverty and have to even pay the bitter price of environmental degradation and other social cost⁶¹. Undoubtedly, both categories of mining, large- and small-scale, employ a number of people, and though it has the potential to reducing poverty levels by creating direct and indirect jobs for many, it often perpetuates poverty through unmeasurable exposure to illness, physical hazards, accidents and untimely death. The requirement by law for registration to operate as either large- or small-scale miners are by far ignored mostly by the small-scale miners and as such underlies the huge number of miners working illegally and acting in contravention of the regulations of the two main institutions, with direct oversight responsibilities over the mining sector in Ghana, that is, the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources and the Mineral Commission. The inability to deal with this has contributed to an overwhelming upsurge in “illegal mining”⁶² activities in the country.

Illegal mining involves “rudimentary techniques of mineral extraction, highly manual processes, hazardous working condition and frequently negative human and

⁵⁸ Cf. K. A. DOMFE, Compliance and Enforcement in Environmental Management. A Case of Mining in Ghana, in: *Environmental Practices* 5/2 (2003) 154–165, here: 159.

⁵⁹ Cf. T. AKABZAA, African Mining Codes. A Race to the Bottom, in: *African Agenda* 7/3 (2001) 62–63, here: 63.

⁶⁰ Cf. Samuel ADJEI – N. K OLADEJO – I. A. ADETUNDE, The Impact and Effect of Illegal Mining (*Galamsey*) Towards the Socio-Economic Development of Mining Communities: A Case Study of Kenyasi in the Brong Ahafo Region, in: *International Journal of Modern Social Science* 1/1 (2012) 39–55, here: 39.

⁶¹ Cf. Emmanuel Ofori-Mensah ABABIO, Gold Mining and the Development of Obuasi in Adanse, p. 2. URL: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262725434_Gold_Mining_and_the_Development_of_Obuasi_in_Adanse/link/00463538916a5d0575000000/download [Accessed: 20 June 2018].

⁶² This term illegal mining describes the unapproved and unlicensed mining activities in Ghana and is used interchangeably with the term *Galamsey* in this work.

environmental health impacts”⁶³, which in recent years have had dire consequences on many sectors of the society. *Galamsey* as an unregulated mining activity readily employs all category of persons; children, youth, women and men, willing to be part of this enterprise, notwithstanding the aggressive and forceful methodologies employed. The inability to raise enough funds coupled with the aversion to work within the remit of the laws of the country leads to the crude methods employed by *Galamsey* operators without recourse to its unfavourable effects on humanity and other important ecosystems.

The Chinese invasion of the industry has also contributed tremendously to the worsening of the situation. The Chinese and other nationals inject a lot of capital, providing mining equipment and financial aid and even though they are not permitted by law to engage in small-scale mining not to mention *Galamsey*, in collaboration with locals, they are deeply engrossed in this illegality. Attempts to stop the activities of these nationals engaged in *Galamsey* have been met with resistance and in some cases, has led to some recorded deaths because these foreign nationals with impunity deploy sophisticated guns and weapons to ward off hostile elements in order to safe guard the concession of lands they are operating on and their perpetrated illegality. It is mind boggling to notice the proliferation of weapons among these foreign *Galamsey* operators, who are ready to kill citizens of their host countries all in name of money. The unfortunate dimension to this is the unfathomable collaboration of locals, who also in pursuit of their personal quest for wealth without hesitation betray patriotism by perpetrating this act on their own country women and men, who want to protect the environment.

Almost two years on after the government of Ghana placed a ban on small-scale mining in its broader scope,⁶⁴ an anti-*Galamsey* taskforce recently arrested 16 Chinese and 13 locals in the forest reserve of the Amansie Central District of the Ashanti Region, who wielded 14 pump-action guns, one M16 assault rifle, 200 live cartridges and five cutlasses

⁶³ Petra TSCHAKERT – Nicole LALIBERTE, Contaminated Identities. Understanding Human and Environmental Risks and Livelihood Options Among Small-Scale Gold-Miners in Ghana, in: Isaac N. LUGINAAH – Ernest K. YANFUL (eds.), Environment and Health in Sub-Saharan African. Managing an Emerging Crisis, Dordrecht et al. 2009, 65–72, here: 66.

⁶⁴ Cf. Rebecca PEIN, The Fight Against Galamsey: How Ghana’s Ban on Small-Scale Mining has Discriminated Against Legal Small-Scale Mining Activities, URL: <http://www.mlia.uct.ac.za/news/fight-against-galamsey-how-ghana’s-ban-small-scale-mining-has-discriminated-against-legal-small> [Accessed: 9 September 2018].

to protect themselves⁶⁵. But this is just one of such numerous cases. The questions begging for answers are; at whom are/were these weapons potentially targeted? Assuming without admitting that only the foreign nationals were to use these guns, would these Ghanaians have looked on and watched their own sisters and brothers wiped out? What has happened to the much talked about solidarity and fraternity underpinning the Ghanaian society? Why would the Ghanaian help other foreign nationals to kill their own and degrade their landscape only to leave for their respective countries after enriching themselves with minerals from Ghana? Is he/she not mindful of the impact of *Galamsey* on human life and the ecosystems? At the end of their activities, in whose hands would these weapons land? Is it not already a security threat?

Another scary aspect of the unregulated illegal mining is the underground pits, labelled as ghettos. These mining pits constructed for their operations are haphazardly done and supported with fragile logs and branches,⁶⁶ making the *Galamsey* operators themselves prone to various dangers such as pit collapse and landslides. On Wednesday, November 11, 2017, an estimated 30 illegal miners lost their lives as a result of a landslide in the Wassa Amenfi East District of the Western Region. Out of the 18 retrieved corpses 14 were women⁶⁷. A similar and worse case was recorded in Dunkwa On-Offin in the Central Region where an estimated 100 people were buried alive in a single tragedy when the *Galamsey* pit caved in⁶⁸. These recorded repetitive tragedies often witnessed periodically across the country is no deterrent to those involved as the activity keep rising. Strangely, not even the death of a foreign national, involved in this crude activity has ever been recorded in the event of any pit collapse, affirming the fact that these dangerous underground pits are constructed by the locals who worked in them under the supervision of their foreign employers. The risk associated with *Galamsey* is indescribably gruesome and too dear to entertain.

⁶⁵ Cf. Ernest Kofi ADU, 16 Chinese Galamsey Operators Busted with Guns, URL: <http://dailyguideafrica.com/16-chinese-galamsey-operators-busted-with-guns/> [Accessed: 8 December 2018].

⁶⁶ Cf. MENSAH, ENVIRONMENTAL Impacts of Mining, 89.

⁶⁷ Cf. ADJEI – OLADEJO – ADETUNDE, The Impact and Effect of Illegal Mining (*Galamsey*) Towards the Socio-economic Development of Mining Communities., 42.

⁶⁸ Cf. Ibid.

2.2.1. Impact on Water

Studies on small scale mining and the illegal unregulated *Galamsey* activities have awakened the conscience of the nation due to its extremely negative impact on water bodies in the last couple of years. The awesome rivers and lakes of Mother Ghana, water bodies Ghanaians prided themselves with have been destroyed and left to their fate by human actions. The increasing incidences of contamination of water sources have become a common place in almost all the legal and illegal small-scale mining areas⁶⁹, phenomena attributed to the use and subsequent disposal of chemicals and effluents such as mercury, arsenic and solid suspension into nearby rivers and lakes.

G. Hilson in a research indicates that approximately 5 tonnes of mercury emission are released yearly into various water bodies by small-scale mining artisans leading to siltation and coloration⁷⁰. Besides these, he further revealed that the secretion of mercury leads to de-oxygenation, death and destruction of aquatic organism and their habitat, thus hindering growth and ultimately decreasing their population⁷¹. It, therefore, came with little surprise that in the Dumasi Township in the Western Region, high levels of mercury contamination with large concentration were discovered not only in aquatic species like fishes but ground water and river sediments⁷². Rivers in such areas serving as water sources for domestic purposes in villages and some towns not yet connected to the national water grid and also as sources of income for local fishermen are dangerously polluted to the extent that they no longer qualify to be described as rivers but as muddy flowing waters. The sudden transformation of the colours and coloration of these rivers leave much to be desired as a country. One therefore does not need a rocket scientist to prove and conclude at the sight of these natural water bodies that something has really gone wrong.

The misery of this national disaster is the fixated quest for wealth to the detriment of people's wellbeing and the protection of the environment. Local dwellers, who hitherto

⁶⁹ Cf. Marian ANSAH, *Galamsey, Pollution Destroying Water Bodies in Ghana*. Ghana Water Company, URL: <http://citifmonline.com/2017/03/galamsey-pollution-destroying-water-bodies-in-ghana-water-company/> [Accessed: 8 January 2018].

⁷⁰ Cf. Gavin HILSON, *The Environmental Impact of Small-Scale Mining Industries in Ghana. Identifying Problems and Possible Solutions*, in: *The Geographical Journal* 168/1 (2002) 57–72, here: 62.

⁷¹ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁷² Cf. Robin BLOCH – George OWUSU, *Linkages in Ghana's Gold Mining Industry. Challenging the Enclave Thesis*, in: *Resources Policy* 37/4 (2012) 434–442, here: 440.

relied on these sources of water resort to purchasing sachet water and as described already, this comes with its own devastating impacts on the environment. Why would one destroy what hitherto could have been gotten for free and then mobilise funds to purchase that same commodity? The dreadfulness of this reaches its unbelievable levels, when the poor and the vulnerable without any better alternative water sources are compelled to rely on the polluted water sources for domestic (by sieving and boiling) and unknowingly consume the contaminated fishes harvested from them.

In the wake of these illegal mining activities that have propelled the turbidity of raw water extracted from rivers for treatment to untreatable levels, the government of Ghana declared a “war”, placing an indefinite ban on all forms of small-scale mining. A year after the release of the Operation Vanguard, a battalion of army personnel to fight these illegal miners and which initially witnessed a drastic reduction of Galamsey activities,⁷³ the managing director of the Ghana Water Company, Mr. Clifford Abdallah expressed his dissatisfaction with the outcomes. He gave an apt description when he said “our water bodies are under threat”⁷⁴ because instead of three bags of Aluminium Sulphate generally used for treatment water from these water bodies, the company has resorted to 12 bags, a clear sign that Ghana is losing the battle against illegal mining⁷⁵. Quite recently, the Bunso Water Treatment Processing Plant in the Eastern Region, had to be shut down because the pollution of the Birim River had led to an increased and worsened water turbidity from 6,750 to about 11,000 Nephelometric Turbidity Units (NTU) from September 4 - September 5, 2018, crippling its ability to reach its daily 100, 000 gallons production target⁷⁶.

In effect water treatment has become expensive for this companies and the resultant cost definitely would be passed onto customers who would have usually paid less if not for the pollution and the high cost of the water processing. Additionally, most farmers rely on rivers to supplement rain water for agricultural production. In the absence of rain water

⁷³ Betty ACQUAH, The Dynamics of Illegal Activities and Internal Security of the State. The Case of Ghana, in: African Journal for the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism 6/1 (2017) 21–53, here: 38.

⁷⁴ AQUANEWS, Ghana Losing *Galamsey* War. Ghana Water Boss Suggests, URL: <http://aquanewsghana.com/ghana-losing-galamsey-war-ghana-water-boss-suggests/> [Accessed: 5 December 2018].

⁷⁵ Cf. Ibid.

⁷⁶ TODAY. TRUTH AND ENLIGHTENMENT, GWCL Shuts Down Bonsu Water Treatment Plant Over Upsurge of *Galamsey*, URL: <https://www.todaygh.com/gwcl-shuts-bonso-water-treatment-plant-upsurge-galamsey/> [Accessed: 5 December 2018].

largely relied on for agricultural production, farmers will have little alternatives when the complexity of polluted river bodies is not resolved. It would be disastrous and a national catastrophe when these farmers go ahead to use water from such polluted source without treatment in the unlikely event of drought.

2.2.2. Impact on Land

It is common knowledge that mining activities irrespective of its category and the method of operation have consequential damage on the landscape if not properly regulated by the enforcement agencies. Large portions of the accessible rainforest in Ghana are shrinking due to a combination of factors including forest fires, logging, mining activities and other developmental projects⁷⁷. It is reported that from the country's original forest cover of 8.2 million hectares at the beginning of the 20th century only an estimated 1.6 million hectares remain⁷⁸ and the above factors have together played a massive role in current situation.

The destruction of forest, loss of habitats and biodiversity on the account of mining activities are well documented⁷⁹. The loss of tree and shrubs species due to the clearing of large tracts of vegetation has resulted in serious land and forest degradation and deforestation⁸⁰. The occurrences of desertification and land degradation are two closely interrelated outcomes of mining activities in Ghana. Explaining these two processes, Gyasi et al. describe land degradation as the progressive loss of the intrinsic and natural quality of land and maintains that if this process occurs in arid or semi-arid areas, it is called desertification⁸¹. Substantial concession of lands and vegetation have been cleared to pave way for surface mining in many communities where gold deposits have been discovered⁸². Surface mining, a characteristic of small-scale mining, is responsible for

⁷⁷ Cf. C. P. HANSEN – J. F. LUND – T. TREUE, Neither Fast, Nor Easy. The Prospect of Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) in Ghana, in: *International Forest Review* 11/4 (2009) 439–455, here: 432.

⁷⁸ Cf. Samuel BOADI et al, An Analysis of Illegal mining in the Offin Shelterbelt Forest Reserve, Ghana. Implication of Community Livelihood, in: *Journal of Sustainable Mining*, 15 (2016) 115–119, here:116.

⁷⁹ Cf. M. MAYER, The Practice of Mining Companies Building Relationship with Local Communities in the Context of CRS formula, in: *Journal of Sustainable Mining*, 12/3 (2013) 38–47, here: 43.

⁸⁰ Cf. D. TOM-DERY – Z. J. DAGBEN – S. J. COBBINA, Effects of Illegal Small-Scale Mining Operations on Vegetation Cover of Arid Northern Ghana, in: *Research Journal of Environmental and Earth Science* 4/6 (2012) 674–679, here: 677.

⁸¹ Cf. E. A. GYASI et al., Study of Climatic Change Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment Relative to Land Management in Ghana. Report of the Members of the Study Team, Accra 2006, 91.

⁸² Cf. MENSAH, Environmental Impacts of Mining, 89.

the removal of the top soil in large quantities rendering the land first and foremost incapable of supporting crop farming and subsequently susceptible to erosion. In a World Bank report as cited by Albert K. Mensah et al, Ghana by the end of 1995 had lost about 150,000 hectares of land, destroyed through small-scale mining⁸³. “The Upper East Region of Ghana is highly degraded with the resultant loss of vegetation, cover and fertile top soil and wild faunal species as a result of adverse climatic trends and negative factors influencing environmental degradation such as small-scale gold mining”⁸⁴. The intensity of the degradation means that lands earmarked for the agricultural purposes especially arable, subsistence and plantation farming are rendered unproductive.

Strikingly, many land owners and farmers willingly or perhaps reluctantly give up their farmlands in exchange for “huge financial” rewards from small-scale or illegal miners principally due to the amount these *Galamsey* operators readily offer. Many cocoa trees and other cash crops, are even pulled down in the peak periods of their growth. Essentially, the quest for money and better living conditions linked to poverty is exploited for the selfish and personal gains of a few without reference to the need to preserve the environment and encourage food production.

Another cause for apprehension is the unclaimed abandoned mining pits, left uncovered after mining operations. As a country confronted with and championing the campaign against malaria, such acts cannot be condoned and should be frowned upon. In the event of run-off water and rains, the mining pits eventually become repositories for stagnant water that in turn facilitates breeding grounds for malaria-infected mosquitoes affecting the very poor people who leased their lands for the such adventures. Illegal mining, through the creation of standing water pools, contributes in its own way to the widespread nature of malaria, a disease which accounted for the 53 percent of all reported diseases at the outpatient facilities across the country in 1998 and is the leading cause of morbidity in Accra⁸⁵.

⁸³ Cf. MENSAH, Environmental Impacts of Mining, 89

⁸⁴ As cited in TOM-DERRY – DAGBEN – COBBINA, Effects of Illegal Small-Scale Mining Operations on Vegetation Cover of Arid Northern Ghana, 678.

⁸⁵ Cf. GHANA’S CLIMATE CHANGE TECHNOLOGY NEEDS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT, URL: http://www.un-gsp.org/sites/default/files/documents/ghana_tna.pdf [Accessed: 10 June 2018].

Galamsey despite its inherent favourable opportunities can by no means be compared with the indescribable and hard truth of the unstoppable rate of deforestation and the destruction of vegetation which impact not only on human existence but equally on plant and animal species. The pursuit of better livelihood, closely related to the question of human dignity, should not be overemphasised as against the interconnectedness between humanity and nature. Human beings are dependent on other ecologies and sufficient efforts must be made to safeguard mother earth since life on earth without these would come with its difficulties.

2.3. The Gender-Environment Dynamics

The impact of the above-elucidated environmental issues on the livelihood and social opportunities in the Ghanaian society expresses distinctly the interplay between the plight of women and their reliance on nature for survival. The destruction of waters bodies through illegal mining, the waning of soil fertility, deforestation, pollution in its varied forms and health implications, and the changing rainfall pattern in the country has untold hardship on women; widow, single mothers and female heads of families. Workineh Kelbessa has identified a correlation on the basis of the feminine values of nurturing, reciprocity and cooperation between the domination of nature and women by men⁸⁶. In this section, I explore the marginalisation of women in Ghana in so far as their circumstances reflect the exploitation of the environment.

2.3.1. Socio-Cultural Appropriation of Women

The socio-cultural elements: illiteracy, poverty and the whole complex of attitude of male-dominance and their exacerbated impact on women call for a rethinking of the gender imbalances in Ghana. Gender equality – not sameness of female-male roles – as equilibrium of power between the genders, built mainly on the different spheres of activity of women and men⁸⁷ is still yet to be realised. The female role in the Ghanaian society has long been established on the life-production process and food-gathering depriving and excluded her from public opportunities. It is rooted in the socio-cultural

⁸⁶ Workineh KELBESSA, *Women and the Environment in African*, in: Jonathan O. CHIMAKONAM (ed.), *African Philosophy and Environmental Conservation*, London – New York 2018, 83–102, here: 83.

⁸⁷ Cf. Rosemary Radford REUTHER, *Gaia and God. A Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, New York 1994, 166.

structure of the society that considers women to be the weakest of the two genders and for that reason their acknowledged dependence on their husbands and men in general. According to Regina S. Oboler, in comparison with women, men are traditionally conceived to be more intelligent. This is a categorisation of women as species who are short-sighted and having deficiencies in making and carrying out realistic plans⁸⁸. The male dominance of the Ghanaian culture expressive in the various ethnic groups establishes a fundamental relation of power and undermines the intellectual prowess of women. As a country situated in a continent that employs proverbs for traditional, philosophical and religious purposes, they are used to preserve and perpetuate the dominance of men over women. Proverbs, according to T. Balogun, “have served as a major avenue for the continuous perpetration of gender discrimination among the African”⁸⁹. This exclusion initiated by men for the purposes of differentiating roles between the two gender leaves women no choice than to settle for lower positions in the socio-cultural setup. Consider these *Akan*⁹⁰ proverbs:

“The hen knows when it is morning, but she looks at the mouth of the cock”⁹¹.

“When a woman buys a gun, it is kept in a man’s room.”

“A woman is a flower in a garden, her husband is the fence around it.”

These, among many others, classify women as very dependent on their male counterparts for protection, progress and success in life. In this vein, women’s inefficiency is illumined and pegged against the super might of men. The outcome is a subtle denial and the mounting of barriers for women in assuming leadership roles through their subjugation. This is not just in contradiction to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls but is in fact an entrenched negation of the “isness” of womanhood.

The notion of subjugation finds its classical expression in the female genital mutilation mainly practised in the northern part of the country. At the background is the idea to deny the woman of sexual pleasure by subjecting innocent girls to this custom with the view

⁸⁸ Cf. Regina S. OBOLER, *Women, Power and Economic Change. The Nandi of Kenya*, Stanford 1985, 60.

⁸⁹ T. BALOGUN, *A Semantic Enquiry into Yoruba Proverbs and Gender Discrimination*, in: *Journal of Arts and Literature* 2/1 (2005) 39–43, here: 39.

⁹⁰ The *Akan* is a *Kwa* spoken by the *Ashantis*, *Akuapems* and *Fantes* in the southern part Ghana. It is, however, spoken in the south-eastern part of Côte D’Ivoire.

⁹¹ As cited in KELBESSA, *Women and the Environment in African*, 91.

to jettison any futuristic tendency of them engaging in extra marital affair. It is founded first and foremost on the false assumption that women are insincere, deceitful, emotionally weak and may dishonour the marital bed, which in itself undermines their integrity and personhood. Moreover, the custom assumes that every woman must embrace the marriage institution eliminating their freedom to choose. Due to the male-characterisation of women with features such as the aforementioned, the male ought to find means of controlling and suppressing these tendencies. In this sense, it promotes an eloquent silence on the possible misdemeanour of the male partner by whitewashing and justifying in advance the wrongs of men. The underlying element, however, is the conception of women as objects of men's pleasure and therefore instruments for enhancing the realisation of men's sexual pleasure. Unfortunately, no government including those administered by leaders from the northern part of Ghana has had the courage and demonstrated the will power to legislate laws prohibiting this custom.

In connection with the demanded fidelity by this male-dominant thought is the phenomenon of widowhood rites performed in quite a number of ethnic groups in Ghana. The widowhood rite is "a set of rules or patterns of behaviour observed by a widow or widower with the assistance and guidance from some elders who instruct such bereaved spouses about how to behave in their state of condition to comply with societal norms"⁹². In the praxis, the reason for the ritual is to austere the marital bond between the widow and her deceased husband and as a process condition the woman to be independent in fending for herself and her children⁹³. With particular reference to the *Akan* traditional rite, no uniform format is given though it is commonly the widows who undergo these rites. It is locally argued that "widowers do not have this rite simply because it is a man who marries a woman and not the other way round"⁹⁴. Hinging on the unbreakable bond of marriage, the presupposition is for the woman to remain faithful to the man even after his demise until the completion of the ritual because the spirit of the deceased possesses strong powers to either have sexual intercourse or harm the surviving partner. The local

⁹² Martin Q. AMLOR – Xornam Atta OWUSU, Widowhood Practise in the *Gbi* Northern Ewe of Ghana. A Curse or Blessing for African Womanhood, in: African Research Review. An International Multi-Disciplinary Journal 10/5 (2016) 64–83, here: 69–70.

⁹³Cf. Ibid., 70.

⁹⁴ Peter SARPONG, *Odd Customs. Stereotypes and Prejudices*, Accra 2013, 15.

logic is that it is the adherence to this rite that breaks the bond between the man and the wife⁹⁵.

Besides the question of injustice begging to be addressed, the inhuman treatment widows are subjected to in the hands of their in-laws is worth speaking to. According to Peter Sarpong, these rites “consist in locking up the woman in a room, in a solitary confinement, and treating her in awkward ways”⁹⁶. Writing on this topic, Andrew Kwame Takya notes that some of the widows are compelled to sleep on bare floor with a stone as pillow in the company of other women over a forty-day period⁹⁷. The abuse of the human right and the unacceptable treatment of these women contain not just the overriding marginalisation of these women but elevates the discourse to one of illiteracy and the non-enforcement of laws for the elimination of dehumanising and humiliating cultural customs. Without strict adherence to laws in this regard, the domination of women is passed on and manifest itself in the general maltreatment of women in the country.

In what is fast becoming a niche in the Ghanaian/African thought are the effects of colonialization and the role Christianity has played in the domination of women. The English translation of the creation account (of the woman) that designate her has a helper or helpmate in Genesis 2:18 is awkwardly interpreted in favour of men as the dominant figure who wields power in the marriage. The fundamentalist interpretation of this verse supplemented with a text from the Pauline letter to the community in Ephesus elevates men over and above women. Paul writes: “Wives should be subject to their husbands as to the Lord, since as Christ is head of the Church and save the whole body, so is the husband the head of his wife; and as the Church is subject to Christ, so should wives be to their husbands” (Eph. 5:22–25). In a country hugely dominated by Christians and characterised by the proliferation of churches, the fundamentalist approach to the Bible and especially in reference to the female-male relationship undermines and stunt the development of women.

⁹⁵ Andrew Kwame TAKYIA, *The Reception of the Liturgical Reform of Vatican II. A Critical-Constructive Study of the Development of Catholic Liturgical Books in the Ecclesiastical Province of Kumasi (Ghana)* [unpublished diss. University of Vienna, Vienna], 2018, 265–266.

⁹⁶ SARPONG, *Odd Customs. Stereotypes and Prejudices*, 14.

⁹⁷ Cf. TAKYIA, *The Reception of the Liturgical Reform of Vatican II*, 265.

The quick reference to the submissiveness of the woman and the eloquent obliviousness to the self-sacrificing love the man like Christ should exhibit, demonstrate a massive disregard for women and the unabated renege on male responsibility. Already inclined towards the one-side domination by men, the society has easily succumbed to this fundamentalist reading of these passages without hesitation. Due to the overriding respect for the Bible as the “Word of God”, it has become the reference point for the submissiveness of women in their dealings with their male counterparts.

The real issue is, however, grounded in the socio-cultural appropriation of women and their bodies, the instrumental use of the bodies of women as tools by the governing mind (men)⁹⁸. The marginalisation of women calls for new provocations and new questions, not simply questions of inclusion because they have been side-lined at the peripherals. The issues we are confronted with go beyond the mere recognition of women as a theme having escaped our attention. It is not just widening the net to cover grey areas that culture, philosophy and theology and religion have till now failed to cover. Otherwise, this would in principle mean rationally becoming proficient in and mastering new places – for instance, children, women and the environment – with seasoned philosophical and theological methods and tools⁹⁹. Instead of looking for abstract principles that would allow us to extend our tentacles to new areas, for Bruce B. Janz finding new ways that reason in its comprehensive sense would be worked out beyond the immediate sphere of attention has become necessary¹⁰⁰. The way forward will be to ask, what it would mean to question the very foundation of the Ghanaian thought? And what informs the Ghanaian understanding of the world and women? These questions could lead to a possible reconstruction of the Ghanaian thinking.

2.3.2. The Ghanaian Women and the Environment

The environmental narrative from the ongoing discussion fundamentally supports the presupposing that the crisis is a self-inflicted one. Human beings and our actions largely underpin the widespread destruction of the ecology threatening our natural habitat. The quest towards a holistic environmental care and ethics resonate with the ubiquitous

⁹⁸ Cf. REUTHER, *Gaia and God*, 183–184.

⁹⁹ Cf. Bruce B. JANZ, *Peripherality and Non-Philosophy in African Philosophy*, in: Jonathan O. CHIMAKONAM (ed.), *African Philosophy and Environmental Conservation*, London – New York 2018, 9–23, here: 11.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*

muzzling and marginalisation of women, with the Ghanaian woman not being an exception. An immediate wholesale connection and transfer of the exploitation of women unto the abuse of nature in the hands of men on the basis of the so-called feminine features of fragility, frailty and feebleness is not intended. Such prognosis would suffer a deficit as it does not justify any direct female-nature similarities and their subjugation by the human male. This is because a woman, as S. B. Oluwole contends rightly, “can be strong or weak; she can be gentle or harsh; she can be moral or immoral just as her male counterparts can equally be”¹⁰¹ in their approach to life and issues confronting her.

That notwithstanding, the eco-crisis underscores a feminist-theological dimension of a dual domination of women by men and nature by humans. Making reference to Rosemary R. Ruether, Franz Gruber contends that the subjugation of women by men should be understood as a social and symbolic link of the exploitation of the nature¹⁰². Hesitating here to treat the Ghanaian situation in isolation and in order not to annihilate this connection, it echoes two revealing mind-boggling issues. On the one hand is the low presence of women (gender gap) in African environmental ethics and on the other hand is their waning visible presence, role and linkage to the environment. Ademola K. Fayemi and Oladele A. Balogun, for instance have suggested that the sub-Saharan African culture largely patriarchal in nature fosters an unwitting underrepresentation of women in the environmental narrative in Africa. The option to curtail this through the upping of the voices, activism and works of women is still in the dreamland¹⁰³.

Far from a feminist bias and instead of instigating a rivalry between the two genders, active male voices in the sphere of environmental ethics have not collaborated enough with their female counterparts to encourage and project women advocacy in this field. Ghanaian women in the midst of the socio-cultural hindrances have not in unison demonstrated enough will to make a case for themselves through affirmative actions. Feminist environmental advocacies are quite missing in the line of chain. A concerted feminist effort that embraces individual female contributions and which invigorate the

¹⁰¹ S. B. OLUWOLE, *Socrates and Orunmila. Two Patron Saints in Classical Philosophy*, Lagos 2014, 201.

¹⁰² Cf. Franz GRUBER, *Der Bedrohte Garten. Was uns der Schöpfungsglaube zu Denken und zu tun Gibt*, in: Severin J. Lederhilger (ed.), *Gärten in der Wüste. Schöpfungsethik zwischen Wunsch und Wirklichkeit*, Regensburg 2018, 100–118, here: 116.

¹⁰³ Cf. Ademola K. FAYEMI – Oladele A. BALOGUN, *Women’s Identities in African Environmental Ethics*, in: Jonathan O. CHIMAKONAM (ed.), *African Philosophy and Environmental Conservation*, London – New York 2018, 101–119, here 115.

society to pay attention to the voices of women in their overall environmental advocacies is yet to be seen. The absence of this feeds the already entrenched and/or unintentional marginalisation of women¹⁰⁴.

Besides the mentioned gap in the academic arena, the environmental setting in the praxis has also overlooked the role of women towards ecological conservation. The farm image of the Ghanaian woman carrying heavy loads of firewood with a baby at her back, while the man looks on with a machete in the hand is evident of the everyday life experience of a struggling mother and her reliance on the environment. It reflects the handling of a human entity as an instrument and a means to an end that robs the exploited entity of its innate values. Nature and Women are valued as useful only on the basis of what they can be used for and the benefits to be derived from them. So long as their exploitation satisfy the egoistic, inside-looking male, women and nature are classified as valuable.

Wangari Maathai has argued that the environment “is the place of women farmers with deeply grounded knowledge of ecology and agriculture”¹⁰⁵. This reflects Vandana Shiva’s assertion that in “Africa, basic food production continues to be in the hands of women, even as their control over agriculture is increasingly being eroded through green revolution and cash-crop farming”¹⁰⁶. Due to their appreciable dependence on the environment, the Ghanaian women over the years have exhibited their unflinching efforts in the promotion and preservation of biodiversity through their unique management of energy, water, livestock, farming and the forest. The low feminine voices in the African academic field and the practically visible disregard for the plight of women weakens their physical presence in protecting the environment and wanes commitments made towards that.

While it is apt to note the irrefutability of the natural physiological differences between the sexes, the structure of nature itself does not justify absolute equality between female and male¹⁰⁷. These differences, though are not tantamount to female subordination, are

¹⁰⁴ The point here does by no means underrates the successes and gains made by some notable Ghanaian women like Ama Ata Aidoo, Mercy Amba Oduyeye, Dorcas Ama Frema Coker-Appiah, Efua Sutherland just to mention a few.

¹⁰⁵ Wangari MAATHAI, *Unbowed. A Memoir*, New York 2007, 24.

¹⁰⁶ Vandana SHIVA, *Staying Alive. Women, Ecology and Survival in India*, New Delhi 1995, 108.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. S. B. OLUWOLE, *Culture, Gender and Development Theories in Africa*, in: *Africa Development* 22/1 (1997) 91–121, here: 112.

played on by men to manipulate women. The inadequate presence of women in environmental ethics mirrors the overlooked necessity of girl child education within the comprehensive environmental educational vision to be centred on traditional Ghanaian/African ethical values.

CHAPTER TWO

3.0. *Laudato Si'* In Perspective

Divided into two major parts, this Chapter focusses firstly on *Laudato Si'* by treating three major aspects of the documents: Technocratic Paradigm, Integral Ecology and Dialogue in Politics, with the view to appreciating the overall agenda of Pope Francis. It analyses the suggested fundamental ecological challenges, recommended solution and the approach towards achieving this set-goals from a local perspective. The second part pays attention to essential categories in the encyclical that reflect and could reshape the Ghanaian experience and eventually help produce new approaches to the encyclical.

3.1. Technocratic Paradigm

In the history of the catholic social teachings, *Laudato Si'* has been a unique papal document that for the first time has dealt with technology as the basis of modern development from an ethical and moral point of view¹⁰⁸. Pope Francis in this document estimates that the ecological crisis finds its deep roots in the ambivalence of modernity's attempt to create innovative possibilities to control nature. This, however, is by no means an underestimation of the evidential relevance of technology to the world. On the contrary and following John Paul II who insisted on "the nobility of human vocation to participate responsibly in God's creative action"¹⁰⁹ as evident through science and technology, Pope Francis reckons that science and technology are wonderful products of a God given creativity that has contributed to the unprecedented accelerated development undoubtedly evidential within the broader framework of human innovation and well-being in the last centuries and should not be suppressed (LS 102,131). Humanity is indebted to technoscience considering the positive advancement recorded in the fields of medicine, communications, engineering, architecture, etc.

That notwithstanding, it is also imperative to shed light on the anti-creation side of this paradigm sweeping its way through the universe without regard to the reality of creation: human dignity, the environment and most especially the interconnectedness and harmony

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Ingeborg GABRIEL, Die Enzyklika *Laudato Si'*. Ein Meilenstein in der lehramtlichen Sozialverkündigung, in: *Communio. Internationale katholische Zeitschrift* 44 (2015) 639–646, here: 640.

¹⁰⁹ JOHN PAUL II, Message of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II for the Celebration of World Day of Peace, 1990, URL: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jpii_mes_19891208_xxiii-world-day-for-peace.html [Accessed: 20 May 2019].

in creation. As the assigned reason competing against a complete ecology, its form of approach to the universe is given attention here because it “has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience” (LS 105).

3.1.1. A Deceitful Approach to the World

The remarkable progress in history attributed to the new age technology does not whitewash the evidential proof of the negative consequences of the obsession with scientific and technological evolution. Following Guardini’s often cited “The End of the Modern World” in the third chapter of *Laudato Si’*, the difficulty with modernity is cogitated as “humankind denial of the expanded opportunities for power and its associated denial of responsibility”¹¹⁰. Technological progress has been alienated from its complementary human responsibility and values. Notwithstanding its relevance, it has contributed to a massive destruction of the environment: environmental pollution in all its forms and an unhealthy competition and extreme shortage of natural resources. The unfortunate aspect of this disturbing development is the lack of political will to enact policies and laws that could reduce if not curb the destruction of the environment mostly in name of profit¹¹¹. Consequential of the industrial revolution and the associated rise in economic activities, the earth is stressed with an unprecedented pressure that accounts for the serious environmental degradation injurious to our common home¹¹².

Closely connected to the scare of the environmental crisis is the social crisis – the immense poverty, social exclusion and the attack on human dignity – unfortunately in a world of great plenty and promise. It has augmented the socio-economic challenges of unimaginable magnitude in the world. But since in the mind Pope Francis, “everything is connected”, “we are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental” (LS 139). This twin relentless catastrophe of the desolation of the earth and the degradation of human dignity originate from a deceitful approach that seeks “conquest over care,

¹¹⁰ Ottmar EDENHOFFER – Christian FLACHLAN, *Laudato Si’*. Concerns for our Global Commons, in: Vincent J. MILLER (ed.), *The Theological and Ecological Vision of Laudato Si’*. Everything is Connected, London et al. 2017, 177–191, here:185.

¹¹¹ Cf. Ibid.

¹¹² Cf. Anthony ANNETT, *The Economic Vision of Pope Francis*, in: Vincent J. MILLER (ed.), *The Theological and Ecological Vision of Laudato Si’*. Everything is Connected, London et al. 2017, 160–174, here:161.

competition over cooperation and selfishness over solidarity”¹¹³. In the candid view of the Pope Francis, the fundamental challenge we are confronted with is:

“the way that humanity has taken up technology and its development according to an undifferentiated and one-dimensional paradigm. This paradigm exalts the concept of a subject who, using logical and rational procedures, progressively approaches and gains control over an external object. This subject makes every effort to establish the scientific and experimental method, which in itself is already a technique of possession, mastery and transformation. It is as if the subject were to find itself in the presence of something formless, completely open to manipulation. Men and women have constantly intervened in nature, but for a long time this meant being in tune with and respecting the possibilities offered by the things themselves. It was a matter of receiving what nature itself allowed, as if from its own hand. Now, by contrast, we are the ones to lay our hands on things, attempting to extract everything possible from them while frequently ignoring or forgetting the reality in front of us” (LS 106).

In its diagnosis of the problem, the document emphasises modern anthropocentrism with its two-fold pillars that emanated from the Enlightenment as the basis for the global technological paradigm. On the one hand is the turn away from the community and the common good towards the sovereign individual. On the other hand, is the over reliance on science to gain knowledge and control over the natural world with the aim of enhancing human well-being¹¹⁴. Though the repudiation of individualism dates back to *Rerum Novarum* and Pope Pius XI famously inveighed “twin rocks of shipwreck” (QA 46), collectivism and individualism in 1931, in *Laudato Si’* rambling individualism is comprehensively appraised because it promotes a self-centred culture that puts human at centre of the world alienating him/her from the other components of nature, a phenomenon that undermines nature’s very structure.

The Ghanaian Cardinal, Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, a key architect of the encyclical is right when he elucidates that the technocratic paradigm promotes a tendency that takes efficacy and productivity as the yardstick of success and perceives nature as something to be manipulated¹¹⁵. It is a temptation that seeks unlimited growth, a predisposition to place individual interest ahead of the common good and define economic success from the profit margins perspective, which is a reflection of the disordered desire for instant

¹¹³ ANNETT, *The Economic Vision of Pope Francis*, 162

¹¹⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Cf. Peter Kodwo APPIAH TURKSON, *Cardinal Turkson’s Address to Global Responsibility 2030*, URL: <https://zenit.org/articles/cardinal-turks-sons-address-to-global-responsibility-2030/> [Accessed: 20 December 2018].

indulgence¹¹⁶. This sub-culture reveals a blinkered narrow appreciation of the self that extinguishes responsibility towards the other segments of creation and stands in contradistinction to the principle of stewardship with its dynamics of solidarity and justice.

Already in 1967, the historian of science and technology, Lynn White in “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis” had argued quite strongly that Christian anthropocentrism and the belief in human dominion over creation were at the heart of the ecological crisis¹¹⁷. He maintained that this Christian belief had informed the modern-day perception of nature as object in science and technology and as such is the ultimate source of the beginning of the environmental destruction in the West¹¹⁸. In his criticism of the second pillar of modern anthropocentrism, the use of human prowess to control nature, Pope Francis bemoans the modern view and use of technology, which is quite new in the catholic social teaching because in the early stages of the industrial revolution, environmental destruction was still limited and localized¹¹⁹. He points to the dominance of modern technology – the technocratic paradigm – which has assigned unimaginable power to human beings, a power that is irresponsibly been over utilised at the detriment of nature. These two pillars lead people to take advantage of others and the bounty of nature by treating everybody and everything as mere means to the satisfaction of their personal ends. When human beings place themselves at the centre, they give absolute priority to their immediate convenience and all else become relative.

The current ecological crisis, however, does not only have its roots in the modern conception of anthropology but also connected to it is the inappropriate theological understanding of God’s relationship to the world. Jürgen Moltmann argues that the ecological crisis is a mutually theological and anthropological crisis, centred on the problem of power and domination. Far from a critique of *Laudato Si’*, Moltmann affirms the destruction of the environment through the unfortunate domination of human action through technology but nevertheless turns our attention to the power and dominion driven

¹¹⁶ Cf. Peter Kodwo APPIAH TURKSON, Cardinal Turkson’s Address to Global Responsibility 2030, URL: <https://zenit.org/articles/cardinal-turks-sons-address-to-global-responsibility-2030/> [Accessed: 20 December 2018].

¹¹⁷ Cf. Lynn WHITE, The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis, in: *Science* 155/3767 (1967) 1203–1207.

¹¹⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Cf. GABRIEL, Die Enzyklika *Laudato Si’*, 640.

notion of God as an absolute subject of power in sharp contrast to creation as mere object of his actions¹²⁰.

Clearly, when the world is understood as object of domination, it creates a theological fantasy that presents human as the goal of creation and no longer as stewards with the responsibility of preserving the order of creation. In this self-satisfying imagination, creation is presented as the code for the arbitrary action of God in the other of himself, which would mean a jeopardised use of freedom¹²¹. Quite contrary, creation is the self-communicating love of the Trinity, a messianic indwelling of God in his own house, which comes to its end in the vision of the cosmic Sabbath. The Sabbath, then is the crown of creation, a day that brings a moment of festive appendix, a feast that expresses YHWH itself in its openness and non-representability.

The foreseeable threat of this anthropological and theological crisis is the growing relativism that informs and shapes our ideology and way of life. Hinted already in *Evangelii Gaudium*, it relieves God of his central position in the lives of humanity and dismisses entirely his existence in the world (EG 80). Decisions borne out of this risk of relativity are made without the interest of the poor and weak, creating an illusory condition perpetuating the non-existence of these constituents of society purposely geared towards the promotion of the self, as the centre of the universe. The imaginary wiping out of our fellow creatures evident in decisions and praxis is linked to the omnipresent technocratic paradigm and the cult of unlimited human power because it considers everything as irrelevant unless it is connected to one's own immediate and self-seeking agenda (LS 122). It is this risk that finds expression in the massive environmental degradation world over and has inevitably raised legitimate concerns among many ecologists and people of good will. This is true because in the profit quest of humanity, we have failed to protect and preserve the very environment which supports human life and rather are projecting an inordinate attachment to financial security that swells in us the desire for human power and glory.

¹²⁰ Jürgen MOLTSMANN, *Gott in der Schöpfung. Eine ökologische Schöpfungslehre*, München 1985, 11–84.

¹²¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 88.

3.1.2. A New Form of Reductionism

The aforementioned approach to the world sets an intertwined crisis within the parameters of a moral and ethical failing. In fact, the document itself employs adjectives like “tyrannical”, “distorted”, “excessive” or “misguided” in describing modern anthropocentrism as the moral disorder, rooted in avarice. (cf. LS 68,69,115,119,122). However, a profound philosophical assessment of this paradigm alluded to in paragraph 115 demonstrates that there is more to it. Pope Francis says;

“Modern anthropocentrism has paradoxically ended up prizing technical thought over reality, since the technological mind sees nature as an insensate order, as a cold body of facts, as a mere ‘given’, as an object of utility, as raw material to be hammered into useful shape; It views the cosmos similarly as a mere ‘space’ into which objects can be thrown with complete indifference” (LS 115).

As an all-encompassing mind-set of extraction in the service of self-interest, the technocratic paradigm regards creation as an external object to be manipulated, mastered and controlled with no concern for its inherent values or limits¹²². The infiltration of this paradigm into the economic and political space first and foremost leads to a coup d’état of human freedom, which is “handed over to the blind forces of the unconscious, of immediate needs, of self-interest and of violence” (LS 105). In this sense, human freedom cannot escape the cause-effect relationship and regrettably has become the birthplace of a certain reductionism that downgrades the human person to a controller of reality, igniting in him the quest to dominate nature and as such makes him oblivious of the principle of stewardship.

According to Hans Jonas, technology as a way of perceiving the world has been endemic to modern science and the scientific conception of nature since its inception in the seventeenth century and this precedes any real technological products, the ordinary instrumental sense of technology, generated from the new science¹²³. This new mode of knowing surpasses the old peculiarity between contemplation and action, effectively bringing the former to an end by jettisoning its objects, subordinating it and refashioning it in the image of the latter,¹²⁴ letting “the active tendency itself mark and set bounds to

¹²² Cf. ANNETT, *The Economic Vision of Pope Francis*, 163.

¹²³ Cf. Hans JONAS, *Seventeenth Century and After. The Meaning of Scientific and Technological Revolution*, in: *Philosophy Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man*, New York 2010, 46–82.

¹²⁴ Cf. Michael HANBY, *The Gospel of Creation and the Technocratic Paradigm. Reflections on a Central Teaching of *Laudato Si'**, in: *Communio. International Catholic Review* 42/4 (2015) 724–747, here: 728.

the contemplative part”¹²⁵. The technological manner of knowing is an action oriented system that “takes experience apart and analyses it”¹²⁶. It annihilates in thought and experiment the unity of experience and the intelligible wholes that constitute it to condense these objects to their meekest modules and reconstruct them as the entirety of those abstract components and their interactions¹²⁷.

Clearly, a dualism between the “reduced” object and a subject necessarily resisting immunizing himself from his reduction,¹²⁸ and eventually exalting the concept of subject is in view (LS 106). Such a position raises the debate from just avarice rooted in an egocentric agenda of the individual - a moral failing of a disordered desire to consume more than essentially needed – by distinguishing it from this particular form of reduction with the qualifier “modernism”. The question whose answer remains debatable is whether this form of anthropocentrism is in the real sense anthropocentric. The available facts negate any argument in favour of this as a genuine anthropocentrism since it has no regard and places no authentic value on human life but rather leads to “a constant schizophrenia, wherein a technocracy which sees no intrinsic value in lesser beings coexists with other extreme, which sees no special value in human beings” (LS 118). In effect, technology constructs a system in which the objectification and exploitation of nature is taken for granted and as such a conception of nature, which trains humanity in a naive and exploitative perception of the world becomes prevalent¹²⁹. This phenomenon underscores the epistemological element of this paradigm because the basic point of reference of man to reality has become confrontational and exploitative of the very thing, on which we are dependent.

This new, technological way of thinking reflects an excessive character of the new age, a misguided anthropocentrism, which unfortunately appeals to an intrinsic need to wield power that has shaped our choices. This view sees human no longer as a responsible steward but rather as a powerful dominator over reality and points to the one-sided image

¹²⁵ Francis BACON, *The New Organon*, Lisa JARDINE – Michael SILVERTHORNE (eds.), Cambridge 2000, 103.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹²⁷ Cf. HANBY, *The Gospel of Creation and the Technocratic Paradigm*, 728.

¹²⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 731.

¹²⁹ Cf. Vincent MILLER, *Integral Ecology. Francis’ Spiritual and Moral Vision of Interconnectedness*, in: Vincent J. MILLER (ed.), *The Theological and Ecological Vision of *Laudato Si’*. Everything is Connected*, London et al. 2017, 21.

of human that enables a separation between him as subject and nature as unlimitedly available object for human manipulation. The danger with regard to this technocratic paradigm – as mentioned earlier on – is its firm grounds in the naturalistic worldview that denies the existence of God and considers man only as a part of nature who can be explained away when subjected to analysis. Although such tendencies put less value on human, they contend that the ultimate purpose of other beings are found in man, putting him in a very awkward position to exploit nature.

3.2. Integral Ecology

Very central to *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis proposes the theme of Integral Ecology as a counter theory to the technocratic paradigm by which he seeks to unlock and analyse the inability of humans to pay attention to the interrelatedness in our world. Drawing heavily from his predecessors on this subject, Pope Francis moves a step away from the traditional biblical concept of domination and calls for new way of perceiving nature that acknowledges the interdependence of the social and natural systems. This new approach considers the relationship between social and ecological justice encompassing the vulnerability of people and our common home, the earth. This new approach of perception designated as “integral ecology” by the Pontiff would be treated here as a theologically pragmatic alternative to the technoscience that sees the “ultimate purpose of other creatures to be found in [human beings]”, dismissing the unity in diversity fundamental to the integrity of all creation by limiting the value of all non-human subjects to human, who unfortunately “sees no intrinsic value in lesser beings” (LS 83, 117).

3.2.1. The Cultural Web of Isolation

With the question of vulnerability at the centre of his pontificate, Pope Francis expresses his deepest concern with the destruction of the eco-systems that principally accentuates the cry of the earth, which simultaneously is the cry of the poor (LS 49). A very fundamental category and virtue which runs through the section of the encyclical dedicated to Integral ecology is solidarity, which is a social dimension of love. The effort to combat injustices, exploitations, violence and loss of freedom could be realised when solidarity becomes the basis upon which strong social institutions are built in any society.

Citing his predecessor Benedict XVI, Pope Francis underlies the importance of this virtue when he agrees that “every violation of Solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment” (CA 51). Pope John Paul II had expounded, earlier during his pontificate, this point when he described solidarity as the “firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good. That is to say to the good of all and each individual, because we are all responsible for all” (SRS 38). According to him, solidarity is based of human interdependence. No one is born self-sufficient; we are born into families, communities and need the provision of shelter, food, education to survive. All of us depend on others not only for our survival, but for our flourishing¹³⁰. Pope Francis takes this up and carves a new vision of solidarity that is not only limited to the human plane but extended and reaches out to all creation. It is basically this interrelatedness, the quest for the common good, where every creature has a peculiar identity and makes a unique contribution to the rest of creation that becomes the springboard on which the encyclical thrives (LS 158).

Unfortunately, the human obliviousness to this interrelatedness and interdependence in the world and the drive by both external and internal factors to ignore and think of humans as isolated individuals undermines the project of a holistic and integrated ecological awareness. The issue confronting the world currently is a certain form of autism; a developmental disorder, behaviourally described, that affects our social communication and our interaction with the world. It is an isolation process that makes human beings so “locked up in themselves that no one and nothing else can get in”¹³¹. This is a disordered language hinders genuine interaction in the human community by promoting a monologue that fails to address not only humans but also animals, rivers and ocean, plants and trees, etc., and listen to them. Humans are caught up in the cultural web of isolation that does not only eliminate the value of the divine interaction among creatures but hinders mutual dialogue with the rest of creation, an analytic failure grounded on the inability to appreciate “the universe as a community of subjects”¹³² but rather as “collection of objects”¹³³. The treatment of the universe as assembly of objects devalues the importance of our interconnectedness in the family of God and exposes our

¹³⁰ Cf. Vincent MILLER, *Integral Ecology*, 21.

¹³¹ Thomas BERRY – Thomas CLARKE, *Befriending the Earth*, 20.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Id.* 20.

inattentiveness to the voices and cries of the rivers, forests, trees, birds, fishes and mountains.

Referring to the two modes of being that is, the “microphase mode and macrophase”¹³⁴ mode, often consider as particular mode and universal mode, Thomas Barry maintains that human beings are not ourselves without everything else because we have many selves: personal self, our family self and our community self. Every decision and executed action are not only for the self but for all those persons and things around us. We exist not just for the self, but also for our community self, the earth self and the universe self¹³⁵. Humans are not simply genetically cousins to everything else, as Barry puts it, but rather they have a certain identity with everything else¹³⁶ and their dependence on other organisms is a key to being true to themselves. The recognition and appreciation of all that we are surrounded with, coupled with the comprehensive context we find ourselves in making the bid to save ourselves not excluded from the effort to save everything and everybody in the universe.

The Hegelian principle of Recognition in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* provides a substantial platform to consolidate this discussion. Hegel, describes recognition as an active relation between multiple individuals in one process where those who recognise are constituted and maintained by this very relationship of mutual recognition¹³⁷. As a reflected social activity and a universal unity in which those recognised and recognising are differentiated as part of a process and identified as one through partaking in the process, recognition reveals two subjects of consciousness that hold each other as objects of their awareness, which is the structure of consciousness itself. This is not, however, to suggest that all non-human agents have the same consciousness as humans but rather and

¹³⁴ Thomas Berry contends that to every being there are two basic dimensions; the particular, that is the small self and the universal, that is the Great self. According to him, the universe is in our context the Great self that accounts for the awe, admiration and inspiration we experience for our presence in the natural world. It is the context for experiencing the sound of the birds, rays of the sun, watching the colour of flowers and flow of rivers, etc. The particular attains fulfilment through the source of our inspiration, the universal. A drink of water, for instance taken from a river takes care of you spiritually and physical and hence, the destruction of the rivers would mean the obliteration of spiritual and physical dimension of the self. Cf. Derrick JENSEN, *Singing to the Dawn*. Thomas Berry on our Broken Connection to the Natural World, URL: <https://www.thesunmagazine.org/issues/317/singing-to-the-dawn> [Accessed: 15 August 2019].

¹³⁵ Cf. BERRY – CLARKE, *Befriending the Earth*, 22.

¹³⁶ Cf. *Ibid*.

¹³⁷ Cf. G. W. F. HEGEL, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Arnold V. MILLER – J. N. FINDLAY, Oxford 1977, 178–185.

since recognition actually precedes love – which is necessary for the integral solidification of any relationship – recognition becomes here the anchor without which the acknowledgement of the other subject for the discovery of the truths and values imbedded in him/her is impossible.

In much the same vain, Pope Francis invites us to rediscover the truth and meaning of each and every creature and its importance for the rest of creation, since every single creature has its own value and significance in God’s loving plan (LS 76). In beholding the poor in the world, the next generation and nature like ourselves, we come to self-consciousness and reject any self-delusion that rejects paying attention to our treatment of everything around us. Pope reminds us when he divulges:

“It follows that our indifference or cruelty towards fellow creatures of this world sooner or later affects the treatment we mete out to other human beings. We have only one heart, and the same wretchedness which leads us to mistreat an animal will not be long in showing itself in our relationship with the other people” (LS 92).

Our minds are turned towards respect for human dignity often jeopardised in the midst of poverty where conditions of life, the right to live and the hope for a more dignified life are rarely guaranteed (LS 154). It is a call for a new orientation of love that demands to a certain extent that one adopts the other’s interest and projects it as one’s own, an expansion of the self that uncovers one’s vulnerability. Craig B. Matarrese maintains that the lover and the loved will form a unity which will recursively condition how each think about the self and the other in this context¹³⁸. Any case made in favour of the poor out of genuine love and the concern for their plight will definitely listen to the cry of the earth calling for the preservation of the environment; the two remain interwoven in God’s plan for salvation and effort must be made to maintain this structure of the universe if the common good is to become a reality.

3.2.2. A New Transformative Perception of the World

The previous section dealt with the opposing culture to integral ecology, the culture of indifference, which Pope Francis describes as “sin” (LS 246). The affirmation of this unhealthy ethos of disharmonising a unified universe leads to the necessity for a

¹³⁸ Cf. Craig B. MATARRESE, *Starting with Hegel*, London – New York 2010, 36.

discussion on a new way of perceiving the world. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis introduces Jesus as the personification of a true loving gaze that looks out for the interrelatedness in creation and complements it with the character of Saint Francis who echoes the fraternity in creation by his designation of non-human creatures such as Mother Earth, Brother Ant and Sister Fire¹³⁹. For the Pontiff;

“Jesus taught us this attitude when he invited us to contemplate the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, or when seeing the rich young man and knowing his restlessness, ‘he looked at him with Love’ (Mk 10:21). He was completely present to everyone and everything, and in this way, he showed us the way to overcome that unhealthy anxiety which makes us superficial, aggressive and compulsive consumers” (LS 226).

The clarion calls here is for a better perception of the universe; a perception that engages all the human senses, an invitation to a patient openness, a sober attentiveness and an unconditional readiness to look deeper and comprehend the interconnection among the creatures of the world. It is more of looking into the eyes of the other, hearing the sound of its joy and pain, touching and caressing it with the hands of love and smelling it by staying close to it especially in the most vulnerable and marginalised state regardless of what one personally stands to gain. In his encounter with people, Jesus led them to overcome the superficial assessment of things and opened their eyes to the deeper meaning of reality. It is against this backdrop that one reaches the realisation that there is more to world, to someone or something than meet the eye. There is more to a human being than we can comprehend, so also is the river more than just a flowing water.

As indicated already in chapter 1, a river then is more than a hidden treasury of minerals awaiting exploration and extraction; it is in fact an excellent habitat and source of water and food production for numerous organism, plants, animals and humans; a reliable transport route for commerce and recreation and a source of energy for hydroelectric plants and their water turbines. The deeper realisation of the necessity of an integral ecology evokes a new attitude towards creation shaped by the understanding that there is more to reality than the human mind can grasp. It is not just for Christian gratification that Pope Francis puts premium on the gazes of Jesus and Saint Francis in their own unique relationships with nature and recommends that more than a “naïve romanticism”,

¹³⁹ Cf. As cited in FRANCIS, Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, 24 May 2015, 1.

a genuine attitude of love and attentiveness affects what we see, the meaning and value we attached to them, a priority informed by an inspired awareness and search for the fullness of reality.

Projecting his views on the issue at stake, Vincent Miller defines integral ecology as “a way of seeing that opens our eyes to the myriad creatures with whom we are interrelated. It helps us to understand our interdependence and thus to value the rest of creation”¹⁴⁰. He avows that this central theme could be understood “as an understanding that interconnectedness is the essence of reality, as a way of seeing that can perceive interconnections among humans and rest of creation and as moral principle for acting in harmony with them”¹⁴¹. Integral ecology, then becomes a vision arousing a new way of perceiving and understanding the interconnectedness among all things without exception, a realistic imagination that takes humanity back to the fundamentals of the divine project of creation.

Theologically considered, it is first and foremost, a reflection of the perfect community of the Holy Trinity, a principle rooted in the doctrine of creation that endorses the idea that all creatures belong to the one and same family of God (LS 240). Creation, the dynamic and fecund self-expression of the God here is a communicative sign of the “Trinity’s free, loving relationship with a world of creatures”¹⁴². The Triune God as “Persons-in-Mutual-Relationship”¹⁴³ radiates a communion of love that has implication for a theology of human existence. It emphasises the point of this work that the ultimate reality of existence is relationality and that human beings are not substantially solitary beings but “persons-in-relationship, as persons who are both self-possessed and self-giving I communion”¹⁴⁴. The unity in diversity in the created order portrays the goodness of God and calls for a solemn thoughtfulness to this multiple relation in its intertwined nature (LS 86). Consequently, this insight underlines the triad relationship constitutive of humanity, namely; his/her relationship with the triune God, his/her human co-creatures and lastly the relationship to the creation, encompassing nature and everything around us. This serene gaze at nature requires time to develop skills of attention and perception of

¹⁴⁰ MILLER, *Integral Ecology*, 17.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*,15.

¹⁴² Denis EDWARDS, *Jesus the Wisdom of God. An Ecological Theology*, Maryknoll 1995, 113.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*.

¹⁴⁴ *Id.*,117.

reality that ultimately enable us to take keen interest in other creatures and life processes¹⁴⁵.

Considering the massive destruction of the earth over the centuries, humanity finds itself in a new phase of life that demands a radical reversal of our erstwhile hasty and instrumentalist assessment of natural entities and a new aesthetic perception of reality. This aesthetic does not have the usual connotation of design or style, often considered inappropriate in the environmental discourse, but rather the arrangements of perceptions and feelings. It raises the questions; how do we perceive what we recognise and whether we do feel alienated from the patterns that connects all living beings? Such reasoning enables us to discover aesthetics in both the Subject and even in the so-called Object. This shift, bearing in mind the socio-cultural tendencies that has negatively clouded and influenced our relationship with the earth, calls for a patient contemplative appraisal of the natural world that respectfully acknowledges nature for what it is, as in what God meant it to be, and not what the human mind in its limited structure wants us to believe. This may not be achieved concretely in the next ten or twenty years. Nonetheless, the exigency of protecting the planet means that instead of giving up, we unflinchingly take a stand for mother earth and make efforts at sensitizing one another for the preservation and protection of the biodiversity, irrespective of its importance and otherwise to human beings.

3.3. Dialogue in Politics

From the beginning of the encyclical Pope Francis demonstrates his profound fondness for an inclusive discussion on the issue he is speaking to. His desire is to address every person on earth and that unlike in *Evangelii Gaudium*, where he had the members of the Church in mind, he in *Laudato Si'* “would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home” (LS 3). Due to the exigencies of a new cultural lifestyle aimed at confronting the ecological challenges of the world, he sets the tone by urgently appealing for a new dialogue for promoting an inclusive conversation geared towards discovering the human roots and finding practical solutions to the ecological crisis (LS 14).

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Edward O. WILSON, *Biophilia*, Cambridge 1984, 23.

Pope Francis adopts this tradition and proposes as his line of action two complementary approaches of international and local politics as indispensable instruments for translucent decision processes (LS 160–180). Due to the earnestness of finding answers even if not lasting solutions to the issues confronting our common home, he does not shy away from the weight and role of politics in precipitating the decisions to be taken. On the contrary, he draws politics into the discourse on nature as a response to the obliteration of the ecosystems through the rationalisation of egotistic economic interest and the concerns of social sciences. Dialogue for him is the way forward. It is, therefore, not surprising that stemming from his initial invitation for a new dialogue, Pope Francis at the onset of the document courageously sets the stage for dialogues between unfamiliar allies: religious bodies, scientist, politicians, economics, environmental activist and victims of the eco-crisis (LS 164–201).

What the Pope seeks to do with this bold statement is to ameliorate any antipathy between and among these stakeholders by provides rules of engagement for relating so that the world may witness a re-energised desire for dialogue that concerns our common home. For the purposes of this work a treatment of the need for national and local dialogue inherent with autochthonous elements will be treated and how interreligious dialogue could solidify the efforts been made to protect the environment.

3.3.1. Localised Multi-Dimensional Dialogue

The concrete conditions of our lived experience establish a fine chemistry between two very essential factors that gives credence to any ecological discourse. On the one hand is the Material factors which comprise the consumption and throw away culture, the technocratic paradigm, the obsession with accelerated development (here I include Population), which for Pope Francis remain conditions that shape the world's narrative on ecology. On the other hand, he underscores the importance of the Ideal factors: indigenous cultural values, ideologies and social experience and how they stimulate our thinking and attitude towards the ecosystem (LS 21,105, 106,143,144). Far from any simplistic reasoning, there is a substantial and consistent interdependence between these factors. The material circumstances of our lives shape our ideals of life and the reverse is equally true. Our ability to execute a task is determined by these factors underlying the ideals (what we know, believe and value). Similarly, what defines our material conditions

substantially are dependent on the aforementioned elements¹⁴⁶. Hence, one would be right to argue that the children in Accra who in the quest for survival find themselves in already cited *Agbogbloshie*, for instance, have a different societal value of hygiene and health which keep them constantly in this lethal environment. It is an interplay between what they know and value and the material conditions of their lives, it is a conversation and in fact a constant unending dialogue, that influences each other.

The interaction of the Material and Ideal in the praxis could be expressive in the decisive local intervention we generate towards the emancipation and well-being of local indigenes. And therefore, underlying the common good and towards prioritising the elimination of poverty in poor and developing countries, Pope Francis highlights the essence of forming local cooperatives. He argues that these groups have the sole objective of taking their own fate and that of the entire community into their hands by embarking on affirmative actions that will not indict their integrity as responsible citizens. With his undulating interest for the two constituents of the world: the poor and the next generation, he writes:

“[The formation and aim of such cooperatives] shows that, while the existing world order proves powerless to assume its responsibilities, local individuals and groups can make a real difference. They are able to instil a greater *sense of responsibility*, a strong sense of *community*, a readiness to *protect others*, a spirit of creativity and a *deep love for the land*. They are also concerned about what they will eventually *leave* to their children and grandchildren” (LS 179).

This statement gravid with a sense of belongingness alludes to the unreliability of the outcomes of international negotiations due to the interest of some countries and the need for local nationals to work towards the attainment of achievable objectives relative to the eco-dynamics peculiar to their geographical and socio-cultural needs. Incontrovertibly, it is this *we* and *our* feeling implied in the sense of responsibility and community that stir a passionate desire for a dialogue where the plight and stories of people are heard and appreciated. The strong affection for their own and the aspiration to provide for both the current and future generations call for national and local policies feasible through the sharing of ideas. It necessitates a certain form of dialogue – leaping from the Material-Ideal conversation – that would be the starting point but indubitably not the last step; it

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Michael M. BELL, *An Invitation to Environmental Sociology*, Los Angeles et al. 3 2009, 35.

generates the awakening of consciousness geared at involving everyone, a process that carries everyone along most essentially because we share a common environment.

Protecting and preserving the shared environment for our own sake and sake of the generation to come, when evaluated within the structure of love and responsibility, invigorate everyone so that in the context of unity in diversity unfamiliar collaborators setting aside their differences would start a conversation concerning our common home. Cautiously, Pope Francis makes a directive for action that commences with a directive of policies woven within the setting of dialogue that is open to debate and discussion. In this regard, he acknowledges that:

“there is no one path to a solution. This makes a variety of proposals possible, all capable of entering into dialogue with a view to developing comprehensive solutions. On many concrete questions, the Church has no reason to offer a definitive opinion; she knows that honest debate must be encouraged among experts, while respecting divergent views” (LS 60–61).

While recognising the Church’s limitation in science and politics, he encourages an open debate that will not compromise the common good (LS 188). In this connection, the converging of two of the most renowned and influential forces in modern society: science and religion on the national and local scene could be a united common ground of ecological conversation that would spearhead the effort at finding answers to the eco-crisis. Since what we are dealing with is a self-inflicted, Hans Bethe contends that the magnitude of the problem hunting for answers from broader perspectives must be recognised as having scientific and religious dimensions¹⁴⁷. Interestingly, the perception of the natural world with awe and reverence and as sacred by local scientists and religious bodies (theologians) respectively, could amalgamate thought and generate a well thought through interdisciplinary concept of the relationship between humanity and nature. The doors of this localised dialogue should remain open to others outside the ambit of these two groups.

Within the multi-cultural dimension of society especially in developing countries where there is still an attachment to the myths and symbols, the perception of the world can

¹⁴⁷ Cf. as cited in Russel A. BUKTUS – Steven A. KOLMES, *Environmental Science and Theology Dialogue*, Maryknoll 2011, 6.

longer be defined by and limited to only scientific worldview. The traditional belief systems, cultural sentiments and values – far from any notion of pantheism – which have respect for nature cannot be segregated from the thought processes that would emerge from any dialogue on the environment. Through contextualisation of the ecological challenges, geographically and culturally defined, this dialogue would address the throw away culture, the unabated consumptive hunger for power, mineral and energy resources, the quest for rapid development and its long-term impacts of socio-ecological injustice.

For an effective realisation and implementation of the outcome of these dialogues, Pope Francis proposes an authoritative source of oversight and coordination through the enactment of laws that does not only set parameters for the exploitation of the environment and but also have the common good in mind (LS 177). The politics of this ecological engagement must promote the best of practices by enhancing freedom, innovation and creativity in finding solutions through pragmatic easily appreciable – not necessarily acceptable – policies that is mindful of the cultural milieu of the people. The fear and anguish of losing the polls during elections often preconditioning the implementation of policies must be resisted for the sake of the commons: the common good and our common home. When governmental institutions and non-governmental organisations join hands in educating and conscientising the citizenry on laws and policies aimed at modifying our consumption lifestyle, improving the waste collection practices, preserving natural resources, protecting wildlife and enforcing best eco-agricultural practices, then the will power for building a healthy nation in all sectors and not the hankering for power becomes a priority.

3.3.2. The Need for Interreligious Faith Dialogue on Ecology

Allusion has already been made to Lynn White's 1967 influential article and the acknowledgement that there is the need for a holistic discourse on the environment that is open to religious inputs. Despite his strong views on the human-natural world relationship in the Abrahamic traditions with its elements of control and dominion as very operative in the environmental exploitation, White still thinks religion is the game changer. According to him, these notable elements do not hinder religion from making valuable interventions in the ecological narrative: "More science and technology are not going to get us out of the present ecological crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink

our old one”¹⁴⁸. Since then, new religions have not surfaced, although spiritual leaders have made pronouncements and have engaged experts on the need to engage one another on the ecological destruction¹⁴⁹.

The publication of the *Laudato Si'* with its global character forty-eight years following the aforementioned article inserts a unique interreligious element that is oriented not just towards interreligious/ecumenical dialogue but has an action oriented oddity. Clearly, the references to Patriarch Bartholomew I in the prologue (LS 8–9), Judaism (LS 15, 67, 76, 237), Islam (LS 233), autochthonous spirituality (LS 146,179) and the “prayer for our earth” (LS 246) at the tail end of the document, notwithstanding the eloquent silence on the Eastern religions, constitute and carve an interreligious/ecumenical path for the world. Pope Francis recognises that solutions to the complexity and multiple causes of the eco-crisis would likewise emerge from multiple sectors that demands an overarching inclusivity of all the branches of the sciences and religion (LS 64).

The numerous declarations the world witnessed in 2015, before and following the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) in Paris and during the formulation process of Agenda 2030 in New York have sparked off an interreligious dialogue and ecological advocacy campaign mainly centred on climate change¹⁵⁰. This progress undergirds the common notion that the world and environment belongs to all and such as “matter to all religions because it is the context where human life and religious experience takes effect”¹⁵¹. Taking advantage of freedom of religion and association and the urgent need to prevent a complete eco-destruction, an interreligious dialogue has become imperative because “what is at stake now – the death of the ecological conditions that permitted humankind to flourish – calls for a higher level of honesty, directedness, and spiritual wisdom sufficient to shift the perceptions, loyalties and behaviour of an entire nation”¹⁵².

It lies no longer in the domain of the environmental advocates to still keep religion at a distance. Instead, the burden now lies on us to take inspiration from the incredible stories

¹⁴⁸ WHITE, The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis, 1203–1207.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Jaime TATAY – Catherine DEVITT, Sustainability and Interreligious Dialogue, in: *Islamochristiana* 43 (2017) 123–139, here: 124.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. TATAY – DEVITT, Sustainability and Interreligious Dialogue, 127.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² David W. ORR, *Down to the Wire. Confronting Climate Collapse*, New York 2012, 133.

of those missionaries who identified themselves with locals and their culture and succeeded in shaping and reshaping the worldview through their encounter. Situating the need for an ecological dialogue in local political contexts does not shut the doors of participation on religious contributions. The question, however, is whether a universal ethic for ecology or the improvement of the ecological security of the world should be the objective of any inter-religious gathering. Without depriving the former of its possible realisation, the latter appears to be realistic in view of its ultimate goal of reaching consensus for protecting the natural world from this self-inflicted tragedy because in the long run there would be one winner, the world. The defining character of interreligious dialogue; listening and respect would not pursue a single cohesive ethic but rather an action oriented transformative agenda that would through dialogue give locals, national and the world a renewed contemplative perception of the world born out of fraternal solidarity with the rest of the non-human world.

The document has provided a *kairos* moment for the realisation of an interreligious dialogue. The Church at the national and local levels now has the mandate to spearhead this agenda of Pope Francis by calling on other religious groupings not to speak on what divides us but the need to protect the environment. Jettison any fear and prejudice against other religious bodies, in this sense, is paramount because the church can no longer remain in the pews. It has the onus to turn her clout meaningfully by collaborating with her sisters on the other side in shaping the behavioural lifestyle that has had disturbing impact on the environments.

3.4 The Vulnerability of Creation

3.4.1. The Fascination with Domination

In the early section of this chapter, specific mention was made of the two pillars of modern anthropocentrism as the catalyst enhancing technoscience and eventually promoting a malicious relationship between humans and the earth. It is not for any theological fluke that the second chapter of the encyclical “The Gospel of Creation” offers a catechesis on the creation account with emphasis on the goodness of creation by expounding the relationship between the divine and creation in Jesus Christ through the principle of the incarnation. However, Genesis 1:28 – in the English translation –, where man is instructed “[...] to subdue the earth [...] [and] be masters of the fish of the sea, the

birds of the heavens and all living creatures that move on earth”, has injected an incongruous mind-set of domination in humans turning them into unleashed beings capacitated to act without reflecting on the untold consequences of their activities on other citizens of the universe. Beginning with the Western cultural appreciation of this text since the sixteenth century, the notion of domination has been exported to the rest of the world through globalisation¹⁵³ and has unfortunately become the prevailing backbone for justifying human exploitation of the earth.

3.4.1.1. Reshaping the Human Relationship to the Universe

The broader framework of the discussion so far has been situated on the human-earth and by extension the human-universe relationship, with the view to relabelling humans categorised as aliens to creation who receive “orders from above” explicating how to handle and treat the universe. In this time and age, a sober assessment of the growing dishonest culture boosting and justifying an exaltation of human (labour), in the face of a vulnerable and exploited natural world, that has failed drastically in spite of his/her endowed potentials to transform the world into a better *oikos* for all creation, is what is needed. Pope Francis laments this trend in his vehement disagreement with the common notion of the command in Genesis 1:28 as a certified license to dominate the earth. He calls for a renewed understanding of the text when he says that “this is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Church [...]. We must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God’s image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other created things” (LS 67).

By this statement, the Pope proposes a rejection of an empowerment of humanity arrayed with a calamitous anthropological obsession with domination that transforms them into catastrophic agents threatening nature, living beings that for the first time (since the twentieth century) can with or without deeper contemplation ravage their natural habitat after the long period of techno-scientific progress beginning from approximately the thirteenth century. This is a totally different world view from the earlier thinking that considered nature rather as a threat to human life¹⁵⁴. This fascination springs from a

¹⁵³Cf. Ingeborg GABRIEL, *Fascinated with Domination. The Dark Side of Modernity, Its Ecological Consequence and How to Deal with Them Ethically and Spiritually* in: Geiko MÜLLER-FAHRENHOLZ (ed.), *Peace on Earth and Peace with the Earth. Serving the Goodness of God’s Creation*, Geneva 2008, 113–134, here: 123.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. *Ibid*, 114.

universal human disposition to subdue the “Other”, human as well as nature, often designated as “Objects” with the sole purpose of manipulating them towards the self-aggrandisement of the human subject and the satisfaction of his/her needs¹⁵⁵. Poignantly, but consequentially, it craves in humans an unhindered nostalgia to subjugate a “world out there”, a quest whose realisation is possible only through the wielding and exertion of power without recourse to the dire inevitable effects on other constituents of the universe.

This hapless appetite eventually turns her/him into a commander-in-chief of an Arm Force, a military dictator who deviates from her/his initial plan of rectifying the infiltrated injustices in society to become a perpetrator of the very injustices she/he set out to purge. Instead of interdependence, we have exaggeratedly become sole beneficiaries of the produce of the earth and no longer friends with genuine benefits. The result is an unwavering antipathy that vitiates wittingly the existential fraternity foundational to creation by creating unbridled systems that impugns against the harmonious living with our sisters and brothers and the rest of creation.

Besides, the use of *uti* and *frui*, as employed by Saint Augustine and cited as one of the divergent motives at the commencement of the Western Culture’s thought of humankind’s opposition to nature makes God in this discourse the sole aim in whom Christians may find joy and peace (*frui*) whereas the rest of creation, the things on earth are to serve and be utilised in their interest (*uti*) ¹⁵⁶. This Augustinian, stoic distinction between what should be used and what must be enjoyed constituted a major step towards an instrumental world view as well as an utilitarian approach towards earthly things. As an approach to the world, it opposes the intrinsic value of human and non-human agents by setting aside all others from the self as tools to be engaged for the gratification of this egoistic self. Everything is seen from its usefulness and this reinforces a one-sided consideration that ignores existential beauty inherent in these so-called “Others”.

It is, however, fair to note that Saint Augustine with the unity of creation in view compensated the flaw in this attitude by a human appreciation of the *vestigia Dei* with awe, admiration and inspiration. He writes; “it is not with respect to our convenience or

¹⁵⁵ Cf. GABRIEL, *Fascinated with Domination*, 114.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. As cited in *Ibid*, 121–122.

discomfort, but with respect to their own nature that the creatures are glorifying their artificer”¹⁵⁷. It is no longer admissible to hold unto the thesis labelling the rest of creation as inferior objects who only find their worth in humans instead of the creator. The structure of the world consisting of contexts, that is, of subjects makes “each organism as a creature of God admirable and good in itself” (LS 140). The non-human creatures possess a God-given innate value proper to them and this puts them beyond the unfortunate thinking that they are materials existing endlessly and solely made for human use¹⁵⁸.

Of significance to the idea of domination is the principle of human freewill. The creation account in the book of Genesis with references spread throughout scriptures puts humans created in the image of God – and not in his likeness¹⁵⁹ – at the centre of the narrative. In the Christian tradition, human beings are endowed with specific traits especially freedom connected to the fundamental openness that the never representable subject has. The theology of creation provides the setting for the reception of human free will to encounter their creator within the context of responsibility and obedience. This unique quality, according to Max Weber, constitutes a precondition of humans and a basic distinction between the creator (God) and creation (the world), an attribute that found expression first in the Judaism and later in the other monotheistic religions like Christianity and Islam¹⁶⁰.

But belonging to a very specific sphere of human freedom is the question of sin with the possibility to either enhance or stifle life. In this arena, needless victimisation of the “Other” is nurtured with a passive acquiescence that enriches humans to extend their

¹⁵⁷ Cf. As cited in GABRIEL, *Fascinated with Domination*, 121–122.

¹⁵⁸ The distinction between *uti* and *frui* may favour such thinking that Augustine himself could have hardly imagined and would hardly have advocated a limitless exploitation of nature for individual’s comfort and satisfaction. The goodness and sanctity of creation are enough reasons for him to have opted for the conservation of natural resources for the common good and not for personal aggrandisement.

¹⁵⁹ The word “image” *sālām* in Genesis 1:26 is supplemented by another concept *demut* (likeness), with the two often regarded as synonymous. A case is made of a specific intent and purpose of the author’s insertion of *demut* to avoid the misunderstanding of showcasing man as identical with God. Thus, though man represent his creator, he is not his duplicate and hence cannot be acknowledged as a God walking on earth. If *sālām* and *demut* are seen as synonymous, then the omission in verse 27 constitutes no problem. But if they are distinct – which is my position – then it must be noted that the announcement in verse 26 does not correspond with the execution in verse 27. The transcendence of God is here emphasised on the one hand but the intimate relationship between God and man on the other hand is not downplayed. Though the intention is to delimit the extent of power man wields, it must be stated, however, that *demut* even if it was added in verse 27 would not have given unlimited power to man.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Max WEBER, *Gesammelte Schriften zur Religionssoziologie*, Band 111, Tübingen 1988, 77.

power over all things¹⁶¹. It sparks off a misuse of freedom that witnesses the exploitation of humans and the earth producing unredeemable cracks and damage in the principle of relationality that guides and holds the world in harmony. The exaltation of humans at the expense of the other constituents of the world has endangered not just other forms of lives but also the lives of other humans whose well-being are overlooked.

The rendition of the Hebrew word *rādāh* in Genesis 1:26-28 often translated as to “have dominion over” is mostly formulated with the modifier “with harshness” or “in wrath” in some biblical passages (Cf. Lev. 25:42,46,53; Isa 14:16). These interpretation, however, contradicts the entire plan of creation that projects the earth as an *oikos* for all¹⁶². Historically linked to the Akkadian word *redū* translated as guide, lead and to rule, the use of *rādāh* in Genesis empowers humans to protect and preserve the order in creation for the benefit of all abiding in that living house, in contrast to the power of chaos threatening to destroy the order designed by God and which humans must keep at bay¹⁶³.

Humans are designated in accordance with this interpretation as physical representatives of God on earth and therefore, in the name of God their creator must execute the task of having “dominion care” of this world. In this sense, a fascination with domination with its brutalist and destructive notion flies in the face of the entire goodness of creation and hence, calls for a responsible attitude towards the created order. The recognition of the human being as the image of God is inseparable from his responsibility towards creation in so far as she/he is the representative of God on earth. Indeed, as Walter Groß puts it “the human being is, therefore, an image of God to the extent that [she/] he acts responsibly in relation to [her/] his living space including the living things within it, and not because of the way [she/] he behaves towards [only] God”¹⁶⁴.

3.4.1.2. The Missing Threat of Androcentrism to the “Other” Human

Modern anthropocentrism, as cited in our reference document, has been demonstrated as one of the roots of the ecological crisis because of the overreliance on the technoscience

¹⁶¹ Cf. REUTHER, *Gaia and God*, 141.

¹⁶² Cf. Karl LÖNIG – Erich ZENGER, *To begin with. God Created. Biblical Theologies of Creation*, (trans. Omar KASTE), Minnesota 2000, 112.

¹⁶³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 110–112.

¹⁶⁴ Walter GROß, *Die Erschaffung des Menschen als Bild Gottes*, in: Rainer KOLTERMANN (ed.), *Universum – Mensch – Gott. Der Mensch vor den Fragen der Zeit*, Graz et al. 1997, 157–164, here: 161.

as a core approach to nature. It constitutes a great obstacle to the much-extolled integral ecology, with its leitmotiv that everything and phenomenon is interrelated (LS 115). This anthropocentrism according to Pope Francis, devaluates both human and non-human beings and broaches forms of practical relativism that “see everything as irrelevant unless it serves one’s own immediate interest” (LS 122). His assertion that there can be “no ecology without an adequate anthropology” necessitates the mending of “all fundamental human relationships” (LS 118,119), even though the document overlooks the ecological impacts of this anthropocentrism on women. The inconspicuousness of women in the document¹⁶⁵, as victims (half the human population) ¹⁶⁶ of specific impacts of the ecological crisis represents a major dark spot in this path-breaking document’s cultural revolutionary agenda.

The United Nation’s findings that women and girls “represent half of the poor in developing regions and slightly more than half in developed regions”¹⁶⁷ call into question the ardent recognition of poor countries as major victims of the effects of technoscience in the document without specific reference to the plight of women. The hefty reference to the theology of Creation and Christian anthropology as the power house of anthropocentrism and the eloquent silence on androcentrism, “the belief that male or masculine view is normative”¹⁶⁸, leaves little space in the document for a critical approach to the world of male domination.

There is a dead silence, in Michael Schuck’s words, on the “incomparable and disproportionate suffering of women all around the world because of the ecological crisis of water and food scarcity, of contamination with environmental pollution and climate changes.”¹⁶⁹ This clearly is a missed opportunity and perhaps a whitewashing of the pattern of domination, whereby male elites in power refute their interdependency with

¹⁶⁵ Relying on the English version of *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis uses the inclusive expressions of “humanity” 46 times, “men and women” 11 times and the word “poor” 61 times. In respect to the word “woman” it surfaces 5 times in its singular form; thrice within the context of the theology of Creation of man and woman and once in reference to Mary, the Mother of God and once in the refugee discourse.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Teresa TOLDY, Someone is Missing in the Common House. The Empty Place of Women in the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si’*, in: Journal of the European Society of Women in Theological Research 25 (2017), 167–189, here: 167.

¹⁶⁷ UNITED NATIONS, The World’s Women 2015. Trends and Statistics, URL: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/worldswomen.html> [Accessed: 22 October 2019].

¹⁶⁸ Rebecca MOORE, Women in Christian Traditions, New York – London 2015, 3.

¹⁶⁹ As cited in TOLDY, Someone is Missing in the Common House, 169.

women, exploiting human labour and the biotic community around them¹⁷⁰. The document fails to address the attempt to exalt male power infinitely that drains the lives of these other humans and non-human sources on which they depend. In this case, a culture of deceit that justifies this exploitation is created through a conscious negation of the value in those they use¹⁷¹.

Tracing the Christian scapegoating phenomenon of women for both sin and death from the Jewish and Greek traditions, Rosemary R. Reuther avows that the egalitarian view of male-female relations in early Christianity was stunned by a woman-blaming tradition that witnessed not just a justification of a “natural” subjugation of women but a never-ending victimization of women as the originators of sin and death due to their insubordination¹⁷². The result of this is a weird form of dualism, a separation of the sacred from the profane, instigated by a male-dominated negation of women who can be controlled only through subjugation. Herewith, the line between domination and subjugation is visibly drawn for the construction of sovereign mind that arrogates the bodies of others as tools for their whims and caprices, endangering the conviviality that must exist between the two genders. On the basis of the “umbilical cord” that naturally connects women and children (female and male) right from the moment of conception, subjugation becomes an absolute contradiction to the natural relationship between children and their mothers. The culture of subjugation is inherited without question and children who would otherwise have demonstrated unadulterated love and affection toward their “mothers” find no wrong exploiting and contributing to the absurd woes of women as if womanhood (being feminine) and motherhood are isolated categories.

Regrettably, not even Saints Augustine and Thomas Aquinas could escape this one-sided anthropology and Christian theology of Creation. Despite conceding to the equal resemblance of women and men based on the non-gender specification of their spiritual souls, for Augustine, the body of men synchronises with their soul as human beings (*vir* has the same connotation as *homo*) whereas women are identified through their body (*femina*) and their soul(*homo*). As a response to the question of the creation of a female counterpart for the male, Augustine settles for the reproductive role of the former¹⁷³. Here

¹⁷⁰ Cf. REUTHER, *Gaia and God*, 200.

¹⁷¹ Cf. *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Cf. *Id.*, 140.

¹⁷³ Cf. AUGUSTINE, *Gen. ad litt.* IX, 2,3; *Civ. Dei*, IXX, 24.

again, a form of active and passive dualism is highlighted portraying the woman as a flaccid helpmate, whose specific role is only anchored in the availability of the feminine body for the active reception of male semen. Besides, in his doctrine of the fall of “man”, Augustine demonstrated his belief that women by nature are under male subjugation and unlike man who possesses the image of God, woman is related to the divine image under the male head¹⁷⁴.

Much in the same vein, Thomas Aquinas on his part notes as accidental and based on corporeity (*femina, vir*) the sexual difference of women and men¹⁷⁵. Despite the sameness of the essential formal principle (*forma substantialis*) in both women and men, he maintains that women are considered as underdeveloped and shortcoming of men (*aliquid deficiencie et occassionatum*). Like Augustine, he maintains that it is the male semen that gives shape to the child whiles the woman in her biological functioning provides a passive and receptive material for the child. He further intimates an organic inferiority of women that is crucial for their labelling as helpmates of men, making them the origin and aim of women just like God who is the aim and origin of creation¹⁷⁶.

The missing link in the Christian anthropological discourse towards the emancipation of women (also curiously missing in *Laudato Si'*) has contributed to an unfortunate sociological ideology that keeps women in the private sphere while men are visibly active in the public space where decisions, including ones regarding women, are taken without their input¹⁷⁷. This notion of women's roles as mothers and wives did not vanish with the advent of modernity and rather contributed to characterisation of men as beings with reason whiles women are endowed with emotions as their feature. For Teresa Toldy, it is the glorification and universalisation of the male features as bases of modernity concept of reason that has culminated not only in the domination of nature but also women, the non-normative “other” human beings in need of male control¹⁷⁸.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. AUGUSTINE, *The City of God*, XIV, 26.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *De ente et essential* II, 11–13; VI,5.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica* I, I, 93,4 ad 1.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. TOLDY, *Someone is Missing in the Common House. The Empty Place of Women in the Encyclical Letter Laudato Si'*, 167–189, here: 186.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. *Ibid*.

Pope Francis' passionate concern that we, and rightly so, are all responsible for the happenings in our world provides inadequate attention to the interrelatedness of the destruction of the eco-systems and the exploitation of women by turning blind to the fact of androcentrism as a major form anthropocentrism and patriarchal attitude especially in developing countries. Here, it is fair and commendable to emphasise the consistent reference to the universe in feminine terms so far as *Laudato Si'* is concern. By employing the terms "our Sister", "Mother Earth" and the preposition "her" in describing the universe as that which sustains our life and whose cry due to the harm been caused her, must be heard, it displays the feminine side of the Pope for the vulnerable.

Nonetheless, much as the issue confronting us is "one complex crisis which is both social and environmental" (LS 139), we are also faced with a fascination with domination with a double face; one being the domination of nature and the other the domination of women, who represent the face of the poor. Addressing the former without speaking to the latter leaves a huge vacuum to be filled because without these specifics, we would be engaged in illusionary discussions regarding the excluded and exploited and thereby missing the point of what it truly means to harm nature. When women (and all related constituents) remain faceless entities in our ecological interactions, the whole narrative will be devoid of the link between gender injustice and ecological subjugation. In effect, it would strip women of the essence and the right to their existence, as majority of those abuses in the socio-economic and environmental sphere are women related.

3.5. The Preferential Option and Justice for Poor

A holistic appraisal of the phrase "everything is connected" in *Laudato Si'* has the magnanimous meaning for communities especially the vulnerable and racially marginalised. It brings to the fore the issue of human dignity, a God-given special value as against any ontology that seeks to equate the intrinsic value of the non-human creation to humans. For a meaningful reading and practical application of the Catholic Social teaching, Pope Francis deploys, in both *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Laudato Si'*, as its hermeneutical key, the preferential option for the poor. Through the Church's threefold understanding of poverty as "(1) the lack of material and social goods needed for human life to be sustained and to thrive, (2) radical openness to the will of God and (3) solidarity with the poor and marginalised as we work together in the struggle against injustice and

oppression”¹⁷⁹, the option of the poor offers a comprehensive insight into the church’s mission of being agents of hope and love in a world darkly clouded by hate, abuses, and indifference to the less privileged.

The interdependence in creation broadens the environmental discourse by integrating and highlighting eco-justice as an expression that genuinely evaluates the mistreatment of the earth and its effects on the people. This is evident in Pope Francis’ image of (sister) earth as another facet of the poor who cries for justice. This lamentation for him is simultaneously the cry of the poor (LS 49). In his often tagged “theology of encounter” deduced from *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Laudato Si’*, he expresses a pragmatic appreciation of liberation theology and the core element of Catholic Social teaching, the preferential option of the poor, which underlies his ethics and theology for human community and the earth by calling for both social and earth justice as intimately related¹⁸⁰.

3.5.1. The Pro-Poor Choice in Pope Francis’ Teaching

In tandem with his earlier apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, where mention is made seven times of the “option for the poor”, Pope Francis in *Laudato Si’* employs the “option for the poor” once but with the adjective “preferential” as a hermeneutical key in projecting his thought. (EG 195,198,199,200; LS 158). Unlike earlier papal writings with their concentration on the human poor, he from a new perspective broadens the subject to embrace all citizens of the earth, humans as well as nonhumans, who without any foreseeable end are swimming in the sea of poverty, a tragedy that overlooks the significance of human dignity and the common good.

In *Evangelii Gaudium* under the section “The Inclusion of the Poor in Society”, he promotes a form of the solidarity that “demands that we be docile and attentive to the cry of the poor and to come to their aid” (EG 187). For a comprehensive understanding of the plight of the poor, he invites all Christians and every community to share the fate of these

¹⁷⁹ María Teresa DÁVILLA, The Option for the Poor in *Laudato Si’*. Connecting Care of the Creation with Care of the Poor, in: Vincent J. MILLER (ed.), The Theological and Ecological Vision of *Laudato Si’*. Everything is Connected, London et al. 2017, 145–159, here:154.

¹⁸⁰ Since his election and subsequent choice of his papal name, Pope Francis right from the onset outlined a programmatic vision in which he shows a deeper appreciation of the dynamics of liberation theology in the wider humanity’s approach to nature. He through the option for the poor which is very fundamental to the Social Teachings of the Church, makes it very central to his Pontificate around which most of his actions and decisions revolves.

vulnerable constituents because it is only in this intimate connection that our eyes are illumined for a radical insight into their woes. This is the only way to overcome the sin of indifference.

Without downplaying the role of a gospel of consolation in the lives of the poor, their excruciating yoke and harrowing experiences call for a new way of reaching out to them, an action-oriented strategic plan that frowns on paying lip services to them but rather that which erupts in us a passionate engagement with the aim to eradicating abject poverty and its related causes. The Christian faith and theology would be a shadow of itself if we are caught in the web of secluded reflection without engaging the victims of human exploitation in order to offer new approaches and perspective to perceiving the world. In this regard, the whole human community as instruments of God has the responsibility to championing the course of the poor through pragmatic liberation and promotion of the poor with the aim of fully integrating them as part the society (EG 187).

Emerging from a region where liberation theology had been developed and gained much prominence with its emphasis on material privation under the influence of the Marxist theory, Pope Francis has his own share of the experience of poverty. He exhibits signs of the originality of Liberation Theology in his “readiness to intervene concretely on behalf of the poor and oppressed”¹⁸¹, a zeal inherently linked to social justice that aims at demolishing man-made structures that nurture scandalous imbalances in favour of the few privileged. Like all the other pro-poor encyclicals, he sees the option of the poor as God’s option, a bias in favour of the vulnerable, a reaffirmation of the dignity of poor that deserves emulation. God is the personal patron and the protector of the vulnerable and his representative, human beings are called to exhibit the same passionate affection towards them.

Pope Francis’ interest is, however, not just about humankind. Actually, he is “speaking of creation as a whole” – which will later be the central focus in *Laudato Si’* – and our apathy and unresponsiveness to the environmental issues that has engulfed us. In his address at the Participation at the Second World Meeting of Popular Movements 2015 in Santa Cruz de la Sierra (Bolivia), Pope Francis articulates without trepidation what the

¹⁸¹ Ikenna U. OKAFOR, *Toward an African Theology of Fraternal Solidarity*. Ube Nwanne, Eugene 2014, 19.

world needs; a “change, real change, structural change”¹⁸² and adds that “this system is by now intolerable”¹⁸³. What is at stake here is a carefully thought-out, man-made structure in pursuit of profit that inevitably endangers the fundamental dignity of the poor and threatens God’s integrity among the victims of these forms of exclusion. In the light of the existing global relationship of exploitation, exclusion, violent and the destruction of the earth lies the need for a new beginning, an “ecological conversion” (LS 217), a redemptive change because:

“once capital becomes an idol and guides people’s decision, once greed for money presides over the entire socioeconomic system, it ruins society, it condemns and enslaves men and women, it destroys human fraternity, it sets people against one another and, as we clearly see, it even puts at risk our common home sister and mother earth”¹⁸⁴.

The pontiff demonstrates his programmatic aversion for systemic structures that leads not just to material privation of the poor but one that debases human dignity by robbing her/him off self-respect. Poverty in its two forms¹⁸⁵ is the Pope’s concern. He emphasises how the scandalous poverty on the human plane has been excluded from the ecological challenges. For him, the unabated destruction of water bodies for mineral resources, contributing to the high cost of water production and in some cases water shortages affecting terrestrial and aquatic eco-systems, constitute an infringement of the fundamental right of the poor to life consistent with their inalienable dignity (LS 30). The continuous pollution of the environment in all its forms and the effects of climate change is no longer tolerable and must be the concern of everyone under the planet. It suffices to say that this interest of Pope Francis emanates patently from the tenets of liberation theology, which undeniably uses Marxism¹⁸⁶ as “instrument” but nonetheless leans on

¹⁸² Pope FRANCIS, Address of the Holy Father. Participation at the Second World Meeting of Popular Movements, URL: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/july/documents/papafrancesco_20150709_bolivia-movimenti-popolari.html [Accessed: 1 October 2019].

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Id.

¹⁸⁵ Ikenna U. Okafor suggests two notions of being poor distinguishable in Scripture. There is the Poor in Socio-Economic sense, which is inclusive of material privation but more tilted towards the degeneration of human dignity and therefore demanding of social actions that are decisive in engendering equity essential for the elimination or alleviation of poverty. Additionally, there is the Poor in the sense of the Gospel that is the interior disposition which stemming from fraternal solidarity makes people more humane towards others. Cf. OKAFOR, *Toward an African Theology of Fraternal Solidarity*, 54–58.

¹⁸⁶ Due to the eruption of mayhem, anarchy and the revolutionary tendencies associated with this theory, Liberation Theology is criticised strongly as a sheep (a Christian Theology) dressed in wolves clothing (Marxism), mainly for the reason of the latter’s ability to incite the less privileged in society violently against the perceived few elites who exploit the poor to enhance their quest for riches and dominance in society. Liberation theologians, have on their part, conceded to their reliance on the principles of Marxism but contend that it is only used as a means to achieve their intended results. They subsequently incline

the historical Jesus and his attentive response to the poor in society as its point of departure.

Due to its own prospect of generating violence, the Pontiff calls for new ways of perception that jettisons exclusions and segregations, a new language of fraternity that seeks to restore harmony in creation and simultaneously sensitises us on our responsibility towards the earth. This is Pope Francis's departure away from the Church's social teaching that remonstrated man-made economic machinations fostering social injustice but unfortunately has turned blind to the issues of the natural world. Instead of social injustice, he calls for eco-justice that lays the burden on us to see the plight of the vulnerable as interrelated.

3.5.2. The Quest for an Uncompromised Socio-Ecological Justice

In his text "The Ecologies of Grace", Willis Jenkins sets a typology of what he deems to be the dominant ethical patterns and strategies that Christians have employed in the environmental discourse and ethical behaviour¹⁸⁷. Among the ethical strategies – the practice of eco-spirituality and the call of Stewardship, he put forth the pursuit of eco-justice with its key characteristics first as the reappropriation of and a renewed biblical theology of creation meant to restore the ecological integrity of creation (earth). The other trait based on relationality highlights first and foremost humanity's relationship with the creator God, coherent with the tenets of the theology of creation and secondly, the relationship with the natural world¹⁸⁸. This approach very edifying in nature focusses on an inclusive quest for justice for human beings and the well-being of all inhabitants of the earth.

The aim of this strategy is also taken up by Pope Francis in his analysis of the intrinsic connection between social justice (based on the inalienable human dignity necessary for the promotion of equity and fairness in human society, notwithstanding gender, race, colour, etc.) and environmental justice that upholds both human and non-human interests in vital decisions by promoting an equitable distribution and preservation of the

towards the historical Jesus and his ardent approach towards poverty related issues at his time. Cf. OKAFOR, *Toward an African Theology of Fraternal Solidarity*, 48–49.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Willis JENKINS, *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology*, New York 2008, 31.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*

environmental goods. Undoubtedly, the already discussed integral ecology, as opposed to its obstacle, the technocratic paradigm, is projected as the new paradigm of justice, an eco-justice that is founded on the leitmotiv “everything is connected”.

The principle of relationality leads us into the sphere of reflection, a moment of self-confrontation that provides the context for a truthful contemplation geared towards a clear paradigm and cultural shift in our own attitude and relationship to environment, our common home. Indeed, without this any socio-political intervention in the form of ecological policies will risk perpetuating injustice because of the dearth of a decisive bridge that stimulates mythological separation between humans and nature. This forms an incontrovertible requirement for the provision of a favourable atmosphere for nurturing and fostering human life and the ecosystems. Springing from an attitude of gratitude and a genuine but sober recognition of the world as a gift to us, it brings into sharp focus a complementary principle of restorative justice that promotes concurrently a mending and healing of the fractured and broken harmonious interdependent relationship between humanity and nature.

Within its structure, restorative justice, according to Tony F. Marshall, brings together parties with a stake in a particular offence to resolve collectively by dealing with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future¹⁸⁹. It calls for accountability and responsibility on the part of offenders by providing better insight into the outcomes of their actions and behaviours and consequently makes room for pacification not of the goods but of human victims of socio-ecological injustices. Due to its inherent healing and transformative value, the disempowered victims are empowered through their involvement in key decisions making as a sign of respect and an avenue to making amends. This is certainly the foundation on which eco-justice works, a reversal of what most contemporary minds are familiar with and the offering of the opportunity for victims (the vulnerable) to tell their own stories from their own perspectives and not from the feigned belvederes of the perpetrators.

These two complementary principles, relationality and restorative Justice; promote the basic idea behind sustainable development contrary to any paradigm instigated by the

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Tony F. MARSHALL, *The Evolution of Restorative Justice in Britain*, in: *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* 4/4 (1996) 21–43, here: 37.

expedition for affluence and the short sightedness of valuing economic and unlimited growth over the common good. These principles inveigh against the “might is right” ideology – “a principle that entrenches violence and manipulation as the vices of success”¹⁹⁰. Such efforts provide enabling platforms for the poor to voice out their innermost sentiments which for Ikenna U. Okafor is crucial for the poor and defenceless who are forced to accept this principle of “might is right” like a “bitter cup of vinegar down their throat”¹⁹¹. This atmosphere in the long run begets reconciliation not only among human beings but in the view of Pope Francis, reconcile human beings to the earth, from which we were created.

Hence, in the wake of the ecological crisis, which is a crisis of inequity, Pope Francis draws our attention to the common goods, “the sum of those conditions of social life which allows social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment”. In his estimation, this has been overlooked even though these conditions: water, air, vegetation, and biodiversity inclusive, are freely given to us as transient trustees and remain central to human security and development (LS 156). He writes:

“Whether believers or not, we [...] agreed today that the earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone. [...]. God created the world for everyone Hence every ecological approach needs to incorporate social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and underprivileged” (LS 93).

The pontiff insists here on the common destination of material goods as the basis for eco-justice. These created goods considered within the framework of natural environment as a collective good and resource meant for all, however, is consumed by twenty percent of the world’s population, a phenomenon that robs poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive¹⁹². What is thought-provoking about the contemporary eco-crisis is Pope’s resolve to underscore its “connectedness” to the poor’s reliance on the increasingly depleted natural resources in favour of super powers. The trajectory concern of these people for success is juxtaposed with the consistent failure of recognising the pains and woes of children and women as huge segments of the society. With these

¹⁹⁰ OKAFOR, Toward an African Theology of Fraternal Solidarity, 22.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Ibid.

¹⁹² NEW ZEALAND CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE, Statement on Environmental Issues, (1Sept. 2006).

disparities in view, the argument is made today that rich countries like Canada, the United States of America, and those in Western Europe and in Asia emit more greenhouse gases per capital than poor countries and yet ironically, they will experience much less of the upshot. Sadly, poor countries and innocent citizens will have to grapple with the effects and impact of such actions by developed countries¹⁹³.

For Thomas Clarke, the fulcrum of this question of poverty is a cultural disparagement by which one human group strongly projects its superiority above another human group because the latter have no worth¹⁹⁴. What is at stake is not just material deprivation but also racial and gender injustice. Unfortunately, there seems to be a growing ethical hypocrisy in this ecological discussion. America and the West, for instance are alarmed with the huge presence of the Chinese in Africa for manifest economic considerations, though validly this latent form of colonialization in the form of market ideologies “rapes” Africa of her mineral resources. Ironically, these developed countries in their discontentment about this development are oblivious of their own contribution to racial injustice of having turned these poor and developing countries into end stations and dumping sites for used and outmoded electrical gadgets without analysing their adverse environmental risks and toxicity on human health. An enlightened truth about the meaning of genuine fraternal solidarity that has the ability to really see the suffering other and transform her/his affliction into the observer’s own suffering would consolidate the projected gains made over the years in our socio-environmental agenda.

3.6. A Worldview of Decisive Solidarity with Creation

In the excessive exaltation of humans sometimes perceived as not belonging to the inherent processes of the natural world, a new vision of eliminating the false ideological alienation of humans from the natural world has become an undeniable exigent response to the eco-crisis. Instead of a ferocious approach to the current crisis that may result in lawlessness and disorder and further disrupting and causing peace and loss of lives respectively, a new form of fraternity that acknowledges the world as a family house harbouring sisters and brothers from a common origin has become crucial.

¹⁹³ Cf. Julie SZE – J.K. LONDON, Environmental Justice at the Crossroad, in: *Sociology Compass* 2/4 (2008) 1331–1354, here: 1342–1343.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. BERRY – CLARKE, *Befriending the Earth*, 61.

3.6.1. The Exigency of a New Language of Fraternal Solidarity

The denunciation of the modern anthropocentrism and the preference for an integral ecology fertilises the already mentioned theology of encounter of Pope Francis, which makes the body as a healthy source of hope and the place of encounter (EG 88). It demands recognising Jesus in the face of others in their joy and suffering (EG 91) and “of seeing the sacred grandeur of our neighbour [and the rest of creation], of finding God in every human being, of tolerating the nuisances of life in common by clinging to the love of God, of opening the heart to divine love and seeking the happiness of others just as their heavenly Father does” (EG 92).

This would, however, remain an abstract wish if it does not find any concrete expression in the harrowing experience of those vanquishing in abject poverty. Pope Leo XIII contends that the Church’s contribution to society lies in “the very fact that she calls men [and women] to and trains them in virtue” (RN 42). Exigent for ameliorating the human yoke and burden is the virtue of solidarity with its motive of self-giving expressed in total and unconditional gratitude, empathy, forgiveness and reconciliation. Without contention, it stems from our understanding of our common Fatherhood (in the Godhead) which makes us sisters and brothers ready to demonstrate in pragmatic terms our intolerance for “unbridled cupidity, religious bigotry, chauvinism, racism, ethnicity and all the malignant “isms” that pollute harmonious coexistence”¹⁹⁵.

It could be realised by totally annihilating the concept of the “Other” and all other man-made structures that end up denigrating human dignity and positioning the rest of creation as instruments deployed towards the pleasure of the human subject. Rooted in the incarnation, of becoming vulnerable, solidarity calls on everyone to take unflinching interest in the experiences of others, recognising and sharing their pains and suffering with a bias drive of mounting unwavering defence on their behalf. Pope Francis in this line of thought has adopted as an expansion of this virtue, integral ecology extending its fulcrum of inter-relatedness and -independence not only among humans but with creation as a whole.

¹⁹⁵ OKAFOR, *Toward an African Theology of Fraternal Solidarity*, 62.

Our human development and progress cannot be discussed in isolated categories without referencing our reliance on both human and non-human agents in the world. Pope Francis calls for an enlightened perception that grimaces first and foremost at the “anti-fraternal distance” from everything, a distance that obstructs efforts geared towards the alleviation of the poor and marginalised by its obscurity of the socio-ecological issues the world is wrestling with and the inauspicious apathy towards structural injustice as a whole. Since this distance leaves out many especially the downtrodden deteriorating their already despicable circumstances, the world awaits a common language that is familiar with and underpins the structured plurality of our relationships: relationship to God, to ourselves, to the other, and to the earth. The language of fraternal solidarity will stand in opposition to the often divisive, conflict-ridden and acrimonious language the world has experience till now. It is a unifying language that exhibits respect for our common descent and make us aspire towards the welfare of all.

It is not surprising that Christoph Theobald in his *Mystik der Fraternité* contends that Pope Francis’ usage of “our sister, Mother Earth” (LS 1) has no connotation of sentimentalist romanticism but rather a revolution of tender love that takes the casual link between our injured fraternity and the destruction of the ecosystems very seriously ¹⁹⁶. It is a call for a new paradigm shift, an urgent transition from human fraternity to a universal fraternity (LS 228) that makes all who otherwise might have strutted themselves as having answers to all religious, political and socio-ecological issues confronting the world develop a new abstemious attitude of listening. This ability to listening gives credibility to the possibility of personalising the suffering of the others because it inspires close encounter and proximity as against remoteness that is engraved in a sadistic indifference towards others.

The significance of the language of fraternal solidarity lies substantially in the shared origin we have with everyone and everything in the natural world, it is a unifying language that seeks not just the well-being of the natural world but more so deepens in a generous fashion our relationship with God. Okafor in the African context notes that by the language of fraternal solidarity it is virtually an impossibility to talk about sisterhood

¹⁹⁶ Christoph THEOBALD, *Mystik der Fraternité*. Kirche und Theologie in neuem Stil, in: Kurt APPEL – Jakob Helmut DEIBL (ed.), *Barmherzigkeit und zärtliche Liebe. Das theologische Programm von Papst Franziskus*, Feriburg – Basel – Wien 2016, 21–38, here: 26–27.

and brotherhood without at the same time pointing to filiation that is the common denominator in the relationship. The allocated reason is that the severance of the fraternal relationship necessarily injures maternal or paternal relationship jeopardising the bond of the family and one's own existential root¹⁹⁷.

To overcome this obstacle to human well-being, nature and sustainable development and avert human indifference that may swell up hate and violence, Pope Francis takes a stand against the aberrant perception of the world and argues for a heuristic universal perception, an unorthodox discernment of the ontological values in everything under sun. The new language that upholds the autochthonous values in the family: unconditional love, tender care, truthfulness, reverence for life, forgiveness and reconciliation, would be vital in breaking the barrier of distance, upholding our common origin and protecting one another (nature included) as the basis of the language of fraternal solidarity.

3.6.2. Stewardship As The Option Towards the Tender Care of Creation

The analyses made so far would be incomplete without reverting to a very significant idea emanating from the Genesis narrative about the task of humans in this world. The point has been noted about the chaos, the power of death which humans, the *Stellvertreter Gottes* must hold in check in order not to disrupt the order in creation. The reality on earth, however, suggest misgivings about human ability and readiness to live up to this task emitting questions on the care of creation. Are humans really called to take care of the earth? Can the earth take care of itself or perhaps better stated does the earth take care of us? Following the current ecological thinking, the rejection of the concept of domination and the type of exclusivity that has shaped the human-earth relationship, these questions fed into the broader discussion on the environment in the last thirty years with the prognosis that human beings are the greatest risk factor responsible for the destruction of the world¹⁹⁸.

Even though it is still debatable whether the irresponsibility exhibited over the years by humans may bring the world on her knees and eventually to her end, one thing is certain;

¹⁹⁷ Cf. OKAFOR, Toward an African Theology of Fraternal Solidarity, 161.

¹⁹⁸ Hans DIEFENBACHER, Die Verantwortung der Christen für Natur und Umwelt, in: Severin J. LEDERHILGER (ed.), Gärten in der Wüste. Schöpfungsethik zwischen Wunsch und Wirklichkeit, Regensburg 2018, 15–29, here: 25.

the destruction of the ecosystems would bring about unbearable suffering on this planet making not just human and non-human lives extremely agonizing but also dangerously affecting the earth's fertility. Discarding the notion of nature as a mere reservoir of resources meant for the selfish and irresponsible exploitation of humans without checks, but rather a house in which humans understand themselves as administrators and not the property owners,¹⁹⁹ leads us to the realm of responsible stewardship. Distinguished from domination, stewardship, according Catholic Bishop Conference in the north-western United State, "is the traditional expression of the role of people in relation to creation. Stewards, as caretakers for things of God, are called to use wisely and distribute justly the goods of God's earth to meet the needs of God's children"²⁰⁰.

In the statement above, the task of humanity is situated in the responsible administration of everything entrusted to him. It places the normative force of stewardship not as radiating from the essence of nature but from the extrinsic command of God underpinning the actions of humanity²⁰¹. This by no means modulates the integrity of nature. In contrast, as the physical representative of the divine on earth participating in the continuous salvific project of God, women and men have the sacred mission of protecting and sustaining the earth (environment) in her fragility and delicateness. Humans are put in the position of trust of something belonging to a higher authority (God) and are accountable to him. In their conscious self-reflection, therefore, it would be a trajectory tragedy if humans disregard the three basic dimensions underlying their existence namely; God-Human, Human-Human and Human-Earth relationship. This comprehensive relationship shapes not just our present but equally important our futuristic vision of the world that has the welfare of the future generation in mind.

What is now required is a conscious systematic ecological education that is integrated in the world's educational system with the view to sensitising people right from the onset of their educational journey. It will demand the sincere political will of governments and the good will of policy makers in framing educational policies and curriculum that admit the

¹⁹⁹ Andrej ČILERDZIC, Schöpfungsethik – Ein Gemeinsamer Lernweg. Der Beitrag der Orthodoxen Theologie zur Ökologische Verantwortung, in: Severin J. Lederhilger (ed.), Gärten in der Wüste. Schöpfungsethik zwischen Wunsch und Wirklichkeit, Regensburg 2018, 93–99, here: 93.

²⁰⁰ CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE IN NORTHWESTERN UNITED STATES, The Columbia River Watershed. Caring for Creation and The Common Good, 8. January 2001, 7.

²⁰¹ Cf. JENKINS, Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology, New York 2008, 81.

seriousness of the socio-ecological problems confronting the world. It will mean inculcating into the beneficiaries of these policies the need to befriend the earth and protect her because the destruction of the earth is synonymous to the destruction of all forms of life. This endeavour would necessitate the localisation of these socio-environmental policies that takes cognisance of the culture and indigenous values of the people in order to make it appreciable. The Church in this sense has a huge task of provoking and arousing an environmental awareness in society and, like the physical head, promote this new language of universal fraternal solidarity in the local, national and regional levels.

CONCLUSION

4.0. A New Cultural Paradigm in Ghana

In the light of the ground breaking encyclical *Laudato Si'*, the foregoing has been a study on the socio-ecological challenges in Ghana with special emphasis on the Ghanaian conception of nature with its damming consequences on our human fraternity. The fundamental loss of the sense of axiology and the artificial estrangement from nature evident in the indecorous waste management and the destruction of land and water bodies through illegal mining resonates a new holistic approach to reality. At the centre of the problem is the question of human dignity with its dynamics of injustice, poverty and the subjugation of women that the continuous destruction of the environment has for the country. The desire to embrace anything European or American, even their E-waste smacks of a negative self-worth of Ghanaians. With fraternity in the Ghanaian family as foundational to our socio-cultural experience, the timely publication of *Laudato Si'* has uniquely unveiled and shed light expansively on the ecological crisis that had been kept in the shadows of the Catholic Social Teachings.

The proposal of Integral Ecology in rediscovering the truth and authentic meaning of every creature imbedded in the serene and aesthetic gaze of the world as a community of Subjects stands in opposition to the Technocratic Paradigm approach to reality that perceives the human person as a mind-body machine. The idea of modern human development as fashioned out of the mentality that we are Lords of the earth certified to plunder her at will has blinded us to our dependence on other existing realities as an aspect of human vulnerability (LS 2). To heal the stone-deafness and indifference to the cries of our sisters and brothers and mother earth a reversal of the disregard for the common good will demand an ecological conversion that goes back to what it truly means to live in solidarity with others (human and non-human).

A comprehensive consideration of pricing human and non-human life over any self-centred profit schema will be the way forward. It will demand a revisit and restructure of the Ghanaian educational system to pay attention to the sacredness of creation and how best to treat one another especially nature and women with respect and love. The Church in Ghana must prophetically speak against the exploitation of the environment through dialogue with stakeholders. This will mean supporting the call for a transformative

ecological education through a language that appreciate our interconnectedness with the rest of creation.

4.1. A Culture of Solidarity, Encounter and Relation

The ecological challenges elucidated in the first Chapter reveal a sham and deceptive fraternity that could be akin to paying lip services to our own sisters and brothers. Until now, our Ghanaian fraternity has been characterised by an untoward superficiality, in fact a moral indifference and distance which thunder strikes our interconnectedness leaving many and the earth in shambolic states. The destruction of water bodies – the source of water and fish for humans, animals and plants – through indiscriminate littering and especially *Galamsey* cannot be justified on the basis of its drive towards the alleviation of poverty. The colossal health implication and the destruction of livelihood through these activities are enough grounds to reasonably grimace on these activities. This is because they reveal visible cracks and in fact throw into disarray the much-touted fraternal solidarity the Ghanaian society thrives on. The culture of deifying money and the market economy indicates our indifference to the vulnerable and makes the pursue for better life opportunities a jeopardy for the very lives we seek to enhance.

Instead of succumbing to the inclination to put profit maximisation over the common good, self-centeredness over fraternal solidarity and materialism over human dignity, the Ghanaian has a responsibility to see her/himself in the other person. In order not to disconnect ourselves from the sufferings of others, there is the urgent need to become painfully aware of the happenings around us, which have eluded us through the “culture of recklessness”²⁰² and “the globalisation of superficiality”²⁰³. This globalised superficiality as a subcultural phenomenon undermining the possibility for interaction with others and promoting a fixation with digitisation²⁰⁴ can no longer escape our gaze²⁰⁵. It demands a new worldview that approaches reality not just from our own individualistic

²⁰² Douglas E. CHRISTIE, *Becoming Painfully Aware. Spirituality and Solidarity in Laudato Si'*, in: Vincent J. MILLER (ed.), *The Theological and Ecological Vision of Laudato Si'*. Everything is Connected, London et al. 2017, 107–126, here: 116.

²⁰³ Adolfo NICHOLAS, *Depth, Universality and Learned Ministry. Challenges to Jesuit Higher Education*, p. 3. URL: http://www.sjweb.info/documents/ansj/100423_Mexico%20City_Higher%20Education%20Today_ENG.pdf [Accessed: 23 August 2019].

²⁰⁴ Cf. Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Together with the culture of recklessness, the globalisation of superficiality nurtures a certain detachment from the concerns of others by leaning unto ideologies and thoughts that avoids any reflection on the causes of suffering. It is an escapist mechanism that promotes a naïve and egoistic perception of reality and eventually kills the feeling of compassion towards others by treating them as objects.

terms but from the point of view of others especially victims of the ecological injustices as a genuine sign of our solidarity. By recognising our existence as dependent on other realities and their irreplaceable contribution to the world, an awakened consciousness emerges that contemplates the impact of our actions, whether wholesome or loathsome, on other people. This recognition stands in contrast to the one-sided action oriented lifestyle springing out of a non-contemplative approach to reality that leaves little room for a loving awareness critical to discovering our own intimacy with everything in the world.

Considering this from the lenses of Pope Francis, the realisation of our unawareness to reality stems from the absence of a practical theology of encounter and physical contact with those living on the peripherals and the victims of our own self-inflicted environmental disaster. To forestall this, it calls for a going out of ourselves that initiates a listening encounter with the vulnerable such as the victims of floods in Accra and our destroyed water bodies, the children and people in the polluted environment of *Agbogbloshie*, the cocoa farmers who have lost their farmlands to illegal miners, and our marginalised women whose terrible situations have become an abstraction. Without any shred of doubt, the encounter with these excluded will stimulate solution-oriented discussions on environmental related issues that have escaped our attention, because until we step into their mess and encounter them in their vulnerable states we may be embarking on an unrealistic agenda.

Towards a true encounter among Ghanaians, a relook at our loving awareness has become exigent. This awareness, when embraced will, “point[s] to our capacity for taking into our consciousness the full range and texture of reality and to responding to that reality from the deepest centre of our being”²⁰⁶. As a call for new perspectives and a renewed sense of responsibility, this awareness reveals itself in our ability to suffuse the crisis of the world in our own personal suffering (LS 19). It is a contemplative exercise that patiently but deliberately pays attention to, senses and appreciates the presence of and takes responsibility for the suffering of other living beings²⁰⁷ through the incorporation of their suffering into ours.

²⁰⁶ Cf. CHRISTIE, *Becoming Painfully Aware*, 112.

²⁰⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*

Without underestimating the overarching claim of overcoming poverty, the coalition between economy and technology can no longer sidestep the poor and the next generation because it is outside the remit of their immediate interest (LS 54). The distance that has remained a feature of both our relation to our fellow humans and nature could be erased through a new form of recognition that enables sincere encounter in the community of subjects. This decisive socio-cultural turn disintegrates any obsession to dominate the “Other” and rather pays attention to our common origin and identity as Ghanaians within the broader context of a desired universal fraternal solidarity. The strength inherent in fraternal solidarity through genuine encounter with others especially the marginalised, exploited and forgotten resists inimical dualism that shapes our relationship with one another. The resultant effect would be the reshaping and formation of *Lebensbilder* that radiates creativity, new integral perspectives and an all-inclusive thought process radically opposed to *Todesbilder* that is preoccupied with repeating assimilated thoughts through the socio-cultural structure of life.

4.2. Respect for Mother Earth (*Asaase Yaa*) and the Sanctity of Creation

As portrayed in the Christ-hymn in Col 1:15–20, the exclusive role of Christ in creation and redemption as the image of the invisible God underpins the irrefutable difference between Jesus as creator and human as creature. Important as this clarity is, it does not undermine Christ’s fraternal solidarity with humanity and the rest of creation. It is in fact that which stirs his redemptive act in reconciling creation with his Father. As agent and goal of creation and most especially as superior head of his many brethren, the further understanding of creation as a gift from the Father to him beholds on us to examine the dignity and sanctity of creation. Determined by God, it remains the common thread that runs through life issues. It is biblically correct that human was the only creature created by God in his image (Gen. 1: 27). That said, it does not make him the centrality of creation. Rather, that Christ is presented to us in the letter to the Colossians (1: 15–20) as the First-born of all creation: in him, through him and for all him all things were made points to his centrality in creation. The fullness given him by his Father does not only make him the centre of creation but also the midpoint of reconciliation (redemption).

The recognition of this two aspects of Christ’s centrality in our day has become ever more vital in discarding any pseudo-human idea that positions humans at the centre of creation

and apportions her/him an unrestrained power over creation. Indeed, through his resurrection, Jesus has opened a new chapter for a renewal of the divine's relation to creation. The resurrection should, therefore, rekindle humanity's own responsibility towards their brethren, the rest of creation. The solidarity of Christ to the rest of creation is enough motivation to revisit the original understanding of our stewardship towards the preservation of the sanctity of creation, a move that does not deflate the essence of treating others(everything) as an immediate you.

In line with this, Pope Francis' designation of the earth as Mother and Sister (LS 1) echoes the traditional Ghanaian designation of the earth as *Asaase Yaa* and the desired attitude toward her. *Asaase Yaa* (also called *Abrewa* that is old woman) is a combination of two names: *Asaase* means earth whiles *Yaa* is the name for a female born on Thursday. *Asaase*, personified as a woman born on a Thursday is traditionally the female counterpart of *Onyankopɔn* (God). During traditional sacrifices and libation, her importance in the divine hierarchy is acknowledged as the great female spirit of earth and the second in the chain of authority after *Onyankopɔn*. Because she is believed to have been created on a Thursday by the Akans, it is forbidden to work on farmlands, bury the dead and engage in any act of desecration on the land. Thursdays are, therefore, constituted as the day of rest for *Asaase Yaa* even though different days in other ethnic groups are set aside for this same purpose.

Her significance to humanity and the rest of creation is beautifully presented in this popular traditional drum language: *Asaase Yaa*, whether we live or die, we rely on you²⁰⁸. It portrays the reverence and respect *Akans* (and Ghanaians in general) have for the earth and her inherent characteristics of fertility and ability to bring forth life. She is regarded as a mother who sustains the lives of her children, both human and non-human alike. Towards the traditional conservation of the earth, taboos and totems were established restricting the exploitation of rivers, plant and animals and thereby fostering the preservation of their sanctity and these life-supporting systems. These taboos and totemic relationships were designed based on the cultural belief that humans and tribes are

²⁰⁸ Teresa N. WASHINGTON, *Our Mothers, Our Powers, Our Texts. Manifestations Of Àjé in Africana Literature*, Bloomington 2015, 61.

naturally connected to particular plants and animals. This connectedness prohibited the indiscriminate lumbering and killing of certain trees and animals respectively²⁰⁹.

Stemming from its prominence and inherent significance to Ghanaians, it conveys in no uncertain terms the non-negotiability of the conservation of the earth as a reliable resource for the sustenance of life. It makes our survival on the planet inseparable from and in fact connected to the durability of the earth to resist further exploitation. Unfortunately, the total disregard for the common good of Ghanaians in favour of current individualistic trends and the pursuit of accelerated development have extinguished this well-thought through wisdom and values for conserving our natural habitat. The sidestepping of these traditional conservative customs all in the name of development and the necessity of alleviating poverty must be reviewed. Since these poverty alleviation drives can never be aggregated substitutes for the socio-ecological injustices the poor and the next generation would have to deal with, a scientific consideration of these taboos and totems could produce new ways of enforcing them.

Ghanaians have the option, like Pope Francis recommends, to end the wrong perception of the earth as our entitled raw material instead of our common home. A new perception of nature is needed to reverse the distorted *status quo* of human progress through the arbitrary plundering of the earth. Since the eco-crisis is partly an issue of human interference in the natural processes, it demands a re-thinking of our attitude, a new cultural paradigm shift that allows everything: plants, animals, mountains, rocks, water, air etc., to be what they really are. Until the earth is seen as a gift with its own unique inherent values, the exploitation of the environment will shred into pieces the interconnectedness in creation. (LS 75–76). When a consensus for a cultural paradigm shift is reached, Lary Summers and like-minded people as indicted already would hesitate to demean our people and land as a continent that still have space to contain pollution²¹⁰.

This is the Kairos moment to act and find possible ways of communally increasing awareness of the need to protect the earth, which in essence is an effort at securing our communal interest against food insecurity, water crisis, the outbreak of diseases like

²⁰⁹ L. P. VIDYARTHI – B. K. RAI, *The Tribal Culture of India*, New Dehli 1976, 243.

²¹⁰ PUCKETT, *A Place Called Away*, URL: <http://archive.ban.org/library/AwayIsAPlaceEssayFINAL.pdf> [Accessed: 29 May 2018].

cholera and climate change. It definitely calls for a radical change in attitude and lifestyle. It makes developing of a new lifestyle and disposition towards the natural world as alternative to the destruction of waterbodies and forests through *Galamsey*, the littering and throwaway culture evermore imperative. The point being emphasised is the understanding that humans and nature have an inseparable naturally designed relationship that is neither structured nor arranged by any of the two parties. As mentioned, Christ is the aim and goal of creation and his attitude towards both human and nature is a principle that needs to undergird our relationship with the rest of creation.

4.3. A Comprehensive and Integral Educational Reform

An immediate reaction to the ecological issues in Ghana would be the improvement of the waste management system through cohesive policies and regulations. In this sense, the provision and timely collection of waste bins and the building of more recycling plants as necessary interventions would demand the recovery, sorting and separation of waste as done in most developed countries. Besides, an immediate ban on the importation of E-waste and a strict enforcement of all the existing Minerals and Mining laws that establish the legislative structure for mining activities in Ghana would be complementary efforts towards the overall campaign against the destruction of the environment. However, important as these interventions are and having been espoused unsuccessfully over the period, there is now enough reason to strive for a concerted effort towards an ecological re-sensitisation of the society. An integrated ecological consciousness that emphasises a profound perception of ecological issues and a reflection on the domination of women through the modification of individual and communal lifestyles have become necessary.

To achieve this, we must embrace the significance of an ecological education which will first and foremost come with the recognition and a shift away from the often human-centred ecological approach that underemphasise the connectedness of humanity to nature. It will help avoid any superficial assessment of the eco-crisis and bring to the fore the fundamental option of good stewardship as a turn away from the artificial disconnect of humanity from nature. Towards a more comprehensive ecological education, effort must be made to augment the teaching of values not only regarding the environment but also with respect to the common good. The interconnectivity, hence, of the school, the family, the community and culture within the educational framework has become

indispensable in addressing the ecological quagmire that impacts negatively on both today and the next generation.

Since “every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment” (CA 51), the recognition of the above concerns would provoke the elimination of socio-ecological injustice by shedding light on victims especially the many women who have to travel long distance on foot in search of water and firewood. The stark evidence of women responsible for household chores and basic production of food within the Ghanaian socio-cultural milieu puts undue pressure on them to meet these obligations notwithstanding the physical and psychological energies involved. Arousing the conscience of the society to the blindness to these realities and the unfortunate elevation of men as “Lords of the House” that gives them undue advantage over women who are treated as instruments is a major step toward the realisation of gender equality. This is one sure way to resisting the threat to the cohesion in the Ghanaian society by treating the victims including women as Subjects.

A sensitisation of the interconnectedness of human and nature through new approaches of education could highlight the dignity and value inherent in creation without leaving anyone out. In overcoming the blind spot of the marginalisation of women, for instance, the formation of the right mind-set and a reshaping of our socio-cultural experience atrophied by androcentrism must be neutralised. It demands launching a search into the very essence of the human person and our overall anthropological understanding in today’s world. For Pope Francis, the way forward lies in a cultural revolution (LS 114) that nurtures an adequate anthropology radically opposed to any misguided anthropocentrism (LS 118).

To shore up this agenda, providing scientific educational information (LS 210) about the environment to learners and students might not yield the desired fruits in addressing the ecological challenges until it is broadened and supplemented with a transformational dimension that focusses more on changing attitudes and behaviours. This will help instil attitudinal change, good habits and virtues necessary for the campaign to protect the earth (LS 211). Such a step will provide students with enough faculties necessary for “a critique of the ‘myths’ of modernity grounded in utilitarian mindset” (LS 210) through the passionate engagement of students in radical transformative ecological attitude and

behaviour²¹¹. Ecological education will hence not be limited only to the transfer of knowledge but more importantly it will emphasise the generation of “more esoteric attributes of wisdom, value inquiry and critical thinking engaged in community action”²¹². The emphasis here would be empowering students to become ecological agents who through their actions and inactions could stimulate new ecological attitudes and behavioural changes in the society.

Moreover, the use of education could be a significant instrument in redefining the cultural ideals that fail to accommodate women and set up anti-systems that do not just overlook the plight of women but serve as catalyst for their subjugation. It is one solidest means in bridging the educational gap between women and men. A validation of the inalienable and unconditionally inherent dignity of women (and of humans) in the educational voyage could sensitise people with time and could purge the society of elements that retard the development of women and plays them second fiddle to men. This means to a large extent recovering and reinforcing the known Ghanaian cultural elements of hospitality, tolerance, accommodation, respect, reverence and the inalienable connectedness of human beings to nature as part of the educational programme.

Such dynamism vivifies the acquisition of skills for a positive attitude to nature and women by providing more importantly the niche for a comprehensive perception and understanding of the interconnectedness between humanity and nature. This choice, as mentioned earlier, would reject with time the monologue that has characterised our relationship with nature and women by providing individuals from the onset of their educational journey with ecological wisdom that puts value on our interrelatedness with the natural world. Additionally, through major stakeholders like the family, traditional rulers and the media, it could shape society and culture which erstwhile would have taken minimum interest in the ecological destruction to ask deep and profound questions about human existence that moves beyond our immediate parameters to include the next generation. It calls into question the creeping culture of technology that relinquishes the true worth of other creatures and eventually threatens human dignity and the sanctity of creation (LS 118).

²¹¹ E. J. WESING – Carlos A. TORRE, *The Ecology of Education. Knowledge Systems for Sustainable Development and Sustainability*, in: *Journal for Teacher Education for Sustainability* 11/1 (2009) 3–17, here: 5.

²¹² Ibid.

Instead of just a move away from modern anthropocentrism with its disregard for the value in nature and in human life, a transformative aesthetic education rooted in a new holistic perception of reality, of human existence and our connectedness to nature will constitute a major step to achieving this goal. What remains to be achieved is the individual and communal effort aimed at keeping intact the ontological designation of the earth and everything in it. When nature is treated in an all-inclusive connectedness to other aspects without diminishing its interactive dimension, reductionism of the nature (universe) and human beings as controllers of reality would crumble in the face of a universal fraternal solidarity.

4.4. The Church in Ecological Dialogue

The very structure of the second chapter of *Laudato Si'*, the Gospel of Creation opens up the role of Christianity to the ecological discourse. Christianity has the responsibility of catechising people on the gift of creation and the importance of seeing ourselves as stewards of the goods of the earth. To keep the encyclical from just resting on the bookshelf and rendering it meaningless, the complexity of this challenge threatening the common good and endangering the earth calls for genuine approach to reality. David W. Orr is right when he writes that “what is at stake now – the death of the ecological conditions that permitted humankind to flourish – calls for a higher level of honest, directness, and spiritual wisdom sufficient to shift the perceptions, loyalties and behaviour of an entire nation”²¹³. Speaking truth to power and the often-superficial technocratic narrative that trivialises socio-ecological injustices in Ghana then becomes central in shaping our behaviour towards sanitation and the environment in general.

The usage of Dialogue twenty-five times in *Laudato Si'* and the dedication of a whole chapter to the importance of dialogue among unfamiliar collaborators open new doors and more so provide an appreciable reference point for a thorough discussion on the local dynamics of the environmental crisis. The Catholic Church in Ghana has an option which at the same time is a huge task to unfold and roll out an ecological agenda through an unflinching passionate commitment for an ecological encounter through an engagement with all interested stakeholders. Without distancing herself from discussions on the enormous ecological challenges, the Church could take advantage of the current religious

²¹³ D. W. ORR, *Down to the Wire. Confronting Climate Collapse*, New York 2012, 133.

and political tolerance in the country to initiate a dialogue in this regard. With reference to her prophetic ministry, the Church has a mandate to add her voice to the numerous environmental advocacies in speaking against the total disregard for the interrelatedness in creation and the environmental destruction. This could arouse alternative solutions from her interaction with other groups to stimulate ecological awareness like Pope Francis.

In collaborating with familiar allies, interreligious dialogue could be a solid route that seeks common grounds by focussing on a gradual if not a radical reversal of the destruction of the ecosystems, a process quite remote from theological and doctrinal issues, which often set Christians and other religious groups apart. Such initiatives must be focused on a common ground towards a national environmental project based on the necessity to save what is common to all Ghanaians, the earth. To this, the point of departure and how we progress in the socio-ecological discussion becomes very crucial. With each religious tradition probably having its own religious earth or creation story²¹⁴, the focus should be enhancing a growing concern of caring for our common home. This should not be limited to finding common environmental ethics as the only way forward. The recognition of the universal and peculiar environmental challenges and its impacts on the vulnerable, and the need for a national consensus to act swiftly in this regard must be given enough attention.

Whereas doctrinal issues cut us sometimes sharply from one another, such collaboration in responding to the environmental problems gives us the opportunity within this religious setting to revisit our national identity as sisters and brothers in a shared home. The quest to protect the environment should focus on generating a “national language” with the target of prioritising a new sense of responsibility towards nature. This language must be designed as an all-inclusive one with emphasis on the ecosystem and the victims of environmental degradation. In this sense, the forum avoids being populated with only religious leaders but rather remains open to the poor and victims of the environmental degradation whose cries are yearning to be heard. When their stories are heard in a genuine sense of encounter, the discussion will promote a true sense of restorative justice. Perpetrators of socio-ecological injustice against affected persons would have a better

²¹⁴ Paul KNITTER, A Common Creation Story? Interreligious Dialogue and Ecology, in: *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 37/3–4 (2000) 288.

appreciation of the effects of the actions on others and eventually enhance reconciliation among humans and their relationship with nature. It is a better way of reaching an appreciable cognition of the dignity of all lives, human and non-human and what could be done in making the preferential option of the poor not just God's option but also a human option.

Considering the major role played by Cardinal Turkson in putting together *Laudato Si'*, his expertise and experience as President for the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace provides an opportune time for localising the encyclical in Ghana. His contribution in addressing these challenges as a Ghanaian national and as one of the pillars behind the document cannot be underrated. He remains a vital supplement to the collaboration between religious bodies that could make access to the corridors of political powers more viable. With this common agenda, it will forge and provoke a national interaction with political leadership in taking steps to developing pragmatic ecological policies. Here the Church together with her allies could initiate discussions by taking a stand against environmental injustice and suffering as a clear option of having become aware of and the willingness to share in the pain of victims of ecological destruction. This becomes a reliable platform arousing relevant socio-ecological elements with the aim of igniting in the society not just the essence and reverence for creation as whole but our responsibility of being good stewards as a principle underlining the fraternity in creation.

ABBREVIATIONS

LS	=	<i>Laudato Si'</i>
EG	=	<i>Evangelii Gaudium</i>
CA	=	<i>Caritas in Veritate</i>
SRS	=	<i>Sollitudo rei Sociallis</i>
QA	=	Quadragesimo Anno
RE	=	Rerum Novarum

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ABSTRACT

In the face of the environmental issues confronting Ghana, this master thesis gives an insight into their socio-ecological impacts on the lives of Ghanaians. Employing a fundamental theological approach, the study reflected hermeneutically the Ghanaian experience in the light of the Pope Francis encyclical *Laudato Si'*. In the first part of the work, improper waste management and illegal mining are treated as two major ecological challenges that reflects human domination of nature. The subjugation of women by men is subsequently analysed as a symbolic and social link to the exploitation of the earth. The second part divided into two parts is devoted to *Laudato Si'*. The first aspect focuses on modern anthropology – the basis of technocratic paradigm – as responsible for the pseudo-idea that make humans perceives nature as a readily available Object to be exploited without recourse to our connectedness to it. This, however, undermines integral ecology that provides an aesthetic perception of reality and an opportunity to rediscover the authentic meaning of every creature. The second aspect of this chapter treated significant categories of stewardship, socio-ecological justice, fraternal solidarity, the option of the poor and critically examined the silence of Pope Francis's on the domination of women within the ecological narrative. Towards a reversal of this fascination with domination, the study in conclusion relied on the Christ-hymn in Colossians 1:15–20 (prelude to the work) to emphasise the centrality of Christ in creation, which is openly at variance with the position that humans are at the centre creation and have unrestrained power over nature. The Church in Ghana has the option to call for an integral transformative ecological education that is rooted in a new holistic perception of reality, of human existence and our connectedness to nature.

ABSTRACT (DEUTSCH)

Angesichts der Umweltprobleme, mit denen Ghana konfrontiert ist, gibt diese vorliegende Masterarbeit einen Einblick in die sozioökologischen Auswirkungen auf das Leben der Ghanaer. Mit einem fundamental theologischen Ansatz spiegelte die Studie hermeneutisch die ghanaischen Erfahrungen im Lichte der Enzyklika *Laudato Si'* von Papst Franziskus wider. Im ersten Teil der Arbeit werden unsachgemäße Abfallbewirtschaftung und illegaler Bergbau als zwei große ökologische Herausforderungen behandelt, die die menschliche Herrschaft über die Natur spiegeln. Die Unterwerfung von Frauen durch Männer wird anschließend als symbolische und soziale Verbindung zur Ausbeutung der Erde analysiert. Der zweite Teil, der in zwei Teile unterteilt ist, ist *Laudato Si* gewidmet. Der erste Aspekt konzentriert sich auf die moderne Anthropologie - die Grundlage des technokratischen Paradigmas - als verantwortlich für die Pseudo-Idee, die den Menschen dazu bringt, die Natur als leicht verfügbares Objekt wahrzunehmen, das ohne Rückgriff auf unsere Verbundenheit mit ihr genutzt werden kann. Dies untergräbt jedoch die integrale Ökologie, die eine ästhetische Wahrnehmung der Realität und die Möglichkeit bietet, die authentische Bedeutung jeder Kreatur wiederzuentdecken. Der zweite Aspekt dieses Kapitels behandelte wichtige Kategorien von Herrschaft, sozioökologischer Gerechtigkeit, brüderlicher Solidarität, Option der Armen und untersuchte kritisch das Schweigen von Papst Franziskus über die Beherrschung von Frauen innerhalb der ökologischen Erzählung. Um diese Faszination für die Herrschaft umzukehren, stützte sich die Studie auf die Christus-Hymne in Kolosser 1: 15–20 (Auftakt zum Werk), um die Zentralität Christi in der Schöpfung zu betonen, die die Darstellung der Menschen im Zentrum der Schöpfung und ungezügelter Macht über die Natur abweicht. Die Kirche in Ghana hat die Möglichkeit, eine integrale transformative ökologische Bildung zu fordern, die auf einer neuen ganzheitlichen Wahrnehmung der Realität, der menschlichen Existenz und unserer Verbundenheit mit der Natur behandelt.

