

**DEFORESTATION IN NIGERIA: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE CHURCH OF
CHRIST IN NATIONS' (COCIN) COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
(CCDP) ON ECOLOGY IN PANYAM DISTRICT, MANGU LOCAL GOVERNMENT
COUNCIL, PLATEAU STATE.**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own original work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters of Theology and Development in the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, Faculty of Humanities, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. I have not previously submitted it in its entirety or in part at any university for a degree.



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As the Supervisor, I hereby approve this thesis for submission.



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ABSTRACT

This research has investigated the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) Community Development Programme (CCDP's) theology on ecology. The reason for doing this research was that ecological problems pose a global danger to humanity and the environment. In Nigeria, where the research is situated, one of the common ecological problems is deforestation. Nigeria is critically affected by deforestation as a result of the negative human impacts on the ecosystem, such as relying on firewood as one of the major sources of energy in many rural and urban areas. This research starts with the argument that anthropogenic activities, such as mining, urban development, slash and burn agricultural practices and the felling of trees for the production of charcoal as a source of energy, are the main causes of deforestation in Nigeria. These human activities have resulted in other environmental crises such as soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, the extinction of some indigenous and medicinal plant species and even desertification in some regions in the country.

The research found that the COCIN, as one of the main church denominations in Nigeria, does not have any specific document that contains its beliefs and teachings on ecology. However, a careful study of the church's liturgy on the dedication of the farming season and the thanksgiving service in the COCIN Service Handbook indicates that both human and non-human creation belong to God. From this stand point, it was deduced that one of the beliefs of COCIN on ecology is that God has given to humankind the mandate to care for other creatures.

In order to further investigate the issue of deforestation in Nigeria, the research applied Nick Spencer's theory on "The Biblical Vision of Care for the Environment" as a justifiable framework. Through the application of Nick Spencer's theory, this research assessed the activities of COCIN's Community Development Programme (CCDP) as a development arm of the COCIN. This was to ascertain whether their activities, such as raising tree seedlings and organising workshops in some schools and communities and to COCIN's pastors, help in reducing deforestation in Panyam district and its environs. The research discovered that, despite the awareness created by CCDP for the COCIN's

pastors on climate change and the importance of tree planting, virtually all the sermon notes examined during this study did not reflect any theme on ecology or environmental degradation. To this end, Sallie McFague's "Planetary Theology" was used to show that humankind needs to embrace the ecological worldview. This idea is based on sustainability, distributive justice and the fair allocation of resources among people in the community. Following the investigation, it is suggested that ecology as a course should be introduced into the curriculum of the Bible Schools and Seminaries that are owned and controlled by COCIN and by so doing, the church will fulfil its prophetic role to the environment.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
CCDP	Church of Christ in Nations Community Development Programme
CEED	Centre for Environmental Education and Development
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
COCIN	Church of Christ in Nations
CSNAC	Civil Society Network Against Corruption
EYN	Ekkilisiyar Yanuwa a Nigeria
ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
FAN	Forestry Association of Nigeria
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
FBO	Faith Based Organisation
FEPA	Federal Environmental Protection Agency
GGW	Great Green Wall
ITF	International Tree Foundation
LCCN	Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria
LADA	Land Development Authority
MOSOP	Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People
NAGGW	National Agency for Great Green Wall
NCF	Nigerian Conservation Federation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NYSC	National Youth Service Corps
RDP	Rural Development Programme
SUM	Sudan United Mission
UN	United Nations
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
WWF	World Wildlife Fund
WIDE	Women in Development and Environment
TOW	Theology of Work

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCING THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The problem of deforestation is both environmental and developmental; and it is an issue that is being discussed globally (Rinkesh 2009; Brunner, Butler, and Swoboda, 2014; Sleeth 2006). Deforestation in Nigeria is one of the ecological challenges confronting the country. A lot of research has been done in environmental science on the problem of deforestation as an ecological issue threatening the biodiversity and the ecosystems in Nigeria (Mmom and Mbee 2013; Maton 2015; Usman and Adefalu 2010). However, in the Church of Christ in the Nations (COCIN), little or nothing has been researched on deforestation as an ecological problem. Ecology has also not been included in the curriculum of the theological training in the COCIN church as revealed in the Gindiri Theological Seminary Information Handbook (GTS 2013).

Therefore, this research examines the theology of the COCIN church on ecology and the contribution of the COCIN Community Development Programme (CCDP) as the development arm of the church in reducing deforestation in Panyam district and the surrounding communities. Furthermore, some causes and effects of deforestation in Nigeria will be explored. The study will also advocate for the COCIN church to introduce ecological study as part of the theological training in Seminaries and Bible Schools where the pastors of the church receive their training. This is recommended because the pastors have greater opportunities to teach church members about the ecological issues that are threatening the social cohesion of the people in several communities in Nigeria.

1.2 Background to the Research Problem

The United Nations has a department which deals with ecological issues called the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). In a recent UNEP annual report, the international community pledged to support Africa's renewable energy initiative to minimise excessive reliance on firewood for domestic use (UNEP 2016). A sub-section of UNEP known as the United Nations Reducing Emission from Deforestation and

Degradation (UN-REDD) deals specifically with issues of deforestation and afforestation programmes, of which Nigeria is a partner (Daily Trust 2016).

Most of the scholars from Christian religious backgrounds who have especially written on environmental issues (Deane-Drummond 2008; Horrel et al. 2010; Hessel and Rasmussen 2001; Robert 2011; Collinson and Davies 2015), have done so in response to Lynn White's seminal article which was published in Science Journal in 1967, titled *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis* (MacKinnon and McIntyre 1995; Case-Winters 2007). In this article, which indicted Christianity for aiding the exploitation of the natural resource and destroying the environment, White claimed that the dominance, mastery and exploitation of the environment are rooted in the Christian theology of creation. Since then, quite a lot of literature has emerged with Christian theologians responding by publishing works with different themes relating to Christianity and its response to ecological issues (Hessel and Rasmussen 2001; Kungzig and Broecker 2009; Jenkins 2008; McFague 2001).

Some theologians and thinkers focus on the Bible and creation by locating several texts in the Bible that support creation care (Habel and Wurst 2000; Bouma-Prediger 2001; Effa 2008; Spencer et al. 2009; Bauckham 2010; Horrel et al. 2010). According to Bauckham, "creation is an interconnected and interdependent whole in which humans integrally belong" (2010: 15). On his part, Grudem (1994) claims that the purpose of creation is to glorify God. Other scholars focus their study on Christology and ecology; the Holy Spirit and ecology and Christian Liturgy on ecology (Bergmann 2005; Atkinson 2008; Deane-Drummond 2008; Jenkins 2008; Robert 2011). The works of these protagonists give a broad view on the need for Christians to be active advocates of care for creation.

Marlow (2009), Northcott (2007), Ray et al. (2006), and Godoy et al. (2012) advocate for Christian ethics and morality in ecological concerns in order for humankind to show restraint in using the earth's resources. Northcott points out that it is a moral harm to store up nature's wealth in banks instead of promoting welfare (2007: 14). Furthermore,

some scholars address the ecological concerns with the lens of eco-justice (Conradie and Field 2000; Hessel and Rasmussen 2001; McFague 2000; Collinson and Davies 2015). From this perspective, the proponents call for accountability for the injustice done to the nature's resources by those extracting them for personal economic gain. McFague puts it "... nature deserves justice; other life-forms have rights that must be acknowledged" (2000: 30). According to them, non-human creatures have an intrinsic value in themselves and have the right to co-exist with humankind. Here the scholars have given the general ethos as it relates to extracting and using natural resources globally.

Other researchers pay attention to the causes and effects of climate change and global warming (Bergant et al. 2010; Marler 2013; Ledger 2015). Their research revealed that the burning of fossil fuels releases a lot of greenhouse gases also known as chlorofluorocarbons into the atmosphere. It is also noted that carbon dioxide also comes from aerosols and refrigeration. This has resulted in different effects globally which include acid rain, drought, flooding, rises in temperature and air pollution (Conradie 2008; Kungzig and Broecker 2009; Richardson et al. 2011; Nordhaus 2013; Sorley 2011; Ciplet et al. 2015). Nordhaus believes that activities exacerbating climate change are economically driven: "Economic growth is producing unintended but perilous changes in the climate and earth systems" (2013: 3). Most of these economic endeavours are found in rich or developed countries with detrimental effects on the poor ones. Kungzig is right when he says that "rich countries which have been lifted out of misery have an imbalance on the poor countries" (2009: 15). This then indicates that climate change is a global problem which requires an adequate global solution (Ciplet et al. 2015).

The voices from the liberation theology perspective have also resonated in the support of freeing nature from human domination. Prominent among them is Leonardo Boff. Boff (1995) observes that there is domination for the sake of wealth for which nature is exploited. He asserts that "... systematic assault on the Earth breaks down the balance of the planet" (Boff 2002: 104). He attributed this to the power of technology being used

as a tool of the domination of non-human creatures which need to be set free. Boff and Hathaway (2009) and Wesson and Carruthers (2015) opine that for ecological challenges to be solved successfully, it requires a change of values and strong political will.

Still other scholars see environmental care as a way of empowering communities and liberating them from all deprivations due to ecological degradation (Maathai 2008, 2010). These views contribute to the understanding of how humankind exerts power which is destructive of the earth's natural resources. This study seeks to assess the destructive nature of deforestation in Nigeria, with particular reference to the Panyam community within the context of COCIN Community Development Programme theology on ecology.

Feminists and ecofeminist theologians have contributed immensely to the discourse on ecology. Sallie McFague in her book *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* suggests that humans should see themselves and everything else as an embodiment of the living God. According to her, "... the model of the universe as God's body is a way of expressing both radical transcendence and immanence" (McFague 1993: 133). In another piece of work, McFague (1997, 2001) is of the view that Christians' love for God and neighbour should also be extended to nature. She suggests an alternative theology called "Planetary Theology" which supports sustainability, frugality and distributive justice. Kapya Kaoma has a similar opinion by saying "... we are not only our brothers' and sisters' keepers, but also nature's keepers" (Kaoma 2015: 8).

On the other hand, ecofeminism challenges the worldview of classical religions, including Christianity, which are shaped by patriarchy and hierarchy. Therefore, it seeks to investigate the interconnection between the domination of women and the domination of nature by men (Reuther 2000: 97). The view of the feminists and ecofeminist theologians help in understanding the plight of women when it comes to environmentally related issues.

Many church denominations are not left behind in adding their voices to the ecological predicament facing the world today. For example, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) in its 2004 General Council meeting in Ghana (The Accra Confession), recognised that there had been an increase of "... global economic injustice and ecological destruction". These injustices had been well defended and protected by the political and military might of the world powers of the West. *The Accra Confession* (WARC, 2004) further maintained that "global economic justice is essential to the integrity of our faith in God and our discipleship as Christians". It rejected in totality the rampant consumerism, competitive greed and selfishness in all forms within humanity. However, the Confession supported any economic policies and sustainable use of the earth resources that includes the poor and cares for the rest of creation. After the Accra Confession was made public there were several responses to its content by some African theologians. For example, Puleng LenkaBula (2007) argued that the commoditisation of life is a threat to God's creation. She affirmed that several practices and ideologies were posing threats to life and these included climate change, pollution, loss of biodiversity and the depletion of natural resources. These had been aggravated by decisions made about earth's resources and policies that guide stewardship. Hewitt (2008) concurred with *The Accra Confession* that the Christian faith should affirm God's sovereignty over all creation in order to resist any economic idolatry which is at work in our world.

Jesse Mugambi (2009), a Kenyan theologian who is well known for his theology of reconstruction, also affirmed that economic reasons have been the main causes for the current adverse changes in the ecology of the earth. He maintained that there has been excessive emission of greenhouse gases as a result of industrial production, especially in the developed countries. So, he recommended a shift from non-renewable to renewable technology. Chammah Kaunda articulated support for creation care when he said, "Human beings cannot exist without each other and without other creation" (2016a: 271). He stressed that human beings are sustained and preserved by other forms of life. That is to say, when human beings fail in their responsibility to care for

other fellow human and non-human creatures, then life would soon be destroyed or become stagnant.

In the Nigerian context, several authors especially from the environmental sciences have contributed immensely to the discourse on ecological problems facing Nigeria, such as soil erosion, oil spillage and deforestation (Mba et al. 2004; Toulmin 2009; Usman and Adefalu 2010; Ejidike and Ajayi 2013; Okeke 2016; Aminu 2016). These scholars saw changes in economic development, political and social structures affecting the natural state of forest reserves in Nigeria. Other factors leading to the destruction of forests in Nigeria have included bush burning, over-grazing, agriculture and mining activities, among others. Usman and Adefalu (2010) observed that Nigeria has had a policy on wildlife, forestry and protected areas, but that the implementation of the policy has not yielded the desired results because deforestation was still occurring in the country. Ejidike and Ajayi (2013) on the other hand, advocated for forest and game reserves to be created and maintained for national development to avoid unsustainable ecological practices by several communities in Nigeria. The magnitude of deforestation in Nigeria has necessitated a partnership with United Nations Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD) to mitigate the phenomenon (Okeke 2016). From the above evidence one can infer that deforestation in Nigeria is a problem which requires urgent attention.

1.3 Defining Deforestation

Deforestation is the complete removal of forests so that the land is used for other purposes. An alarming increase in deforestation in Nigeria is posing a life-denying challenge to many communities (Aminu 2016; Okeke 2016). The common reason for such deforestation in most communities generally appears to be the shortage and high cost of gas and kerosene which has resulted in a high demand for firewood as a source of domestic energy. There are also those who may be able to afford the gas and kerosene, but still want to use firewood. (Broch-Due and Schroeder 2000; USAID 2008; Abiodun et al. 2013; Ejidike and Ajayi 2013).

COCIN, since its inception in 1904 (COCIN Constitution, 2013: 2-3; Maxwell n.d,) has been involved in social services to meet the holistic needs of its members. Despite efforts by CCDP to create awareness of climate change and the importance of tree planting, the menace of deforestation appears to have persisted, resulting in negative consequences such as soil erosion and flooding which usually wash off crops from the farms each year (Mba et al. 2004). CCDP as a way of supporting the rural communities raises tree seedlings and distributes them to communities each year as part of curtailing the high rate of deforestation (Goshit et al. 2013: 193). In Nigeria, several studies have revealed that deforestation poses a danger to the lives of both human and non-human creatures as well (Mmom and Mbee 2013; Mfon et al. 2014). Desertification, loss of biodiversity, conflicts and migration are some of the effects of deforestation which have been felt in Nigeria (USID 2008; Toulmin 2009; Usman and Adefalu 2010; UNEP 2016; Okeke 2016a; Aminu 2016).

It is within this context that this research seeks to assess critically the theology of CCDP on ecology and also to explore how CCDP's workshops with schools, communities and the COCIN pastors on climate change and the tree planting campaign are contributing in curbing deforestation in Panyam and the surrounding communities.

1.4 Rationale of the Study

The researcher was motivated for this research by long years of growing up in a rural area where the common lifestyle was subsistence agriculture. As a young person, I observed that my parents planted a great variety of trees which included mangoes, oranges, guavas, olives, avocados, and cashews. I and my contemporaries also used to enjoy blackberries, cherries and figs along the local streams or rivers in our villages. But about two decades ago, deforestation had taken place and had changed the landscape of the environment leading to the disappearance of many of these naturally occurring fruit trees. I happened to come from the Provincial Church Council (PCC) Panyam in which I had worked as a pastor for some time. I had observed the gradual appearance of a large assorted tree plantation in Ndai along Mangu road in Panyam district. I had

also observed how two separate tree plantations within the parameter of the Bokkos Farm Project had been plundered without any replacement taking place.

Most of the rivers in Panyam district dry up as from January each year. Therefore, many farmers have resorted to buying water pumps and any source of water remaining has become a source of conflict between some of these farmers. Over time it has been a concern for me that our traditional rulers have not even been actively talking about the impact of deforestation. Similarly, with my pastoral experience, I have not heard pastors in the COCIN church preaching or teaching their church members about the dangers and or effects of deforestation in Panyam district.

I am further motivated to undertake this research because of my study in the United Kingdom at Redcliffe College in 2009. I studied and obtained a Master's Degree in "Global Issues in Contemporary Mission" in which one of the modules was "Greening of Mission". In the Greening of Mission module, I learnt that environmental degradation and climate change globally has been affecting the mission of the church in this century. I also learnt that in some countries, especially in Africa and in other developing countries, many people have become environmental refugees (Olagunju 2015; Toulmin 2009). In other words, people have been displaced from their ancestral lands because the resources can no longer sustain them. Therefore, there is a lot of migration around the world because of this (UNEP Frontiers 2016; Tindan 2013). I have also attended several workshops organised by Christian Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) where climate change and environmental degradation were taught and how these problems were affecting the social lives of people.

My study at UKZN has also influenced and expanded my understanding of ecological problems and their effects on the environment such as deforestation, desertification, loss of biodiversity, and pollution in Africa, particularly my home country Nigeria. The link between poverty and ecological problems has triggered my interest to research further on ecological issues as a theologian and pastor.

1.5 Location of the Research

This research is located in Panyam District of Mangu Local Government Area, which is one of the seventeen Local Government Areas that make up the constituent state of Plateau State, Nigeria. Panyam also happens to be one of the earliest missionary stations or settlements (Gutip 1998; Goshit 2013). Church of Christ in Nations Community Development Programme (CCDP) as COCIN's development department is also located here and reaches out to serve the rural communities.

Nigeria is located in the West African region; it lies between longitudes 30E and 150E and latitudes 40N and 140N with a land mass of 923,768 sq.km (Mba et al. 2004; Ladan 2014; Fifth National Biodiversity Report 2015: 15). Nigeria shares borders north with the Republics of Niger and Chad, in the west with the Republic of Benin, and in the east with the Republic of Cameroon which extends right down to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean that forms the southern limits of Nigerian Territory.

1.6 Key Research Question and Objectives

The investigation of the problem of deforestation in Nigeria and the theology of the COCIN Community Development Programme on ecology will be anchored on the main research question: How is the COCIN Community Development Programme contributing to solving the ecological problems such as deforestation in Panyam district?

The following sub-questions are considered to serve as a guide to carrying out the investigation of this research.

1. What are some of the factors driving deforestation and their corresponding effects on Panyam community and its environs?
2. What is COCIN Community Development Programme theology on ecology?
3. How is CCDP conducting its entire programme to overcome deforestation in Panyam district and its environs?

Therefore, the following objectives have been formulated.

The main objective of this research is to critically assess how CCDP is contributing to solving ecological problem such as deforestation in Panyam district and its surrounding communities. Other objectives of this research are:

1. To assess some of the factors driving deforestation and their effects on Panyam community and its environs.
2. To explore the COCIN Community Development Programme theology on ecology.
3. To examine ways in which CCDP is conducting its entire programme in order to overcome deforestation in Panyam district and its environs.

1.7 Theoretical Frameworks upon which the Research Project is Constructed

This research uses two theories. The first one is the Biblical Vision of Care for the Environment theory proposed by Nick Spencer. The theory teaches that God is the Creator of the universe and God cares for both human and non-human creatures by sustaining it. The theory also points out that Christians should care for the environment because God cares for it as well. Nick Spencer (2009: 81) uses the lens of the Bible to ask a critical question “Why Care?” in relation to caring for the environment. In addition, humankind is to imitate this godly characteristic by taking care of creation. There is the need for humankind to show commitment to care for creation because the Creator made human beings in God’s image and commanded them to care for other non-human creation both living and non-living creation alike (Gen. 1:26-28; 2: 15).

According to Spencer (2009: 89), the dualism “stressing people’s spiritual needs at the expense of their material needs” must be avoided. In this context he believes that environmental problems affecting our physical well-being must be treated with equal importance as the spiritual ones. He points out further that we care for creation because of our hope for the future. The eternal destiny of creation is important and humankind should care because of God’s plan “to reconcile to himself all things” (Col. 1:20).

Spencer (2009: 92) adds that the restoration and flourishing of creation are seen as part of our work for the kingdom of God to see God's will be "done on earth as it is in heaven". It is within this framework that this research seeks to assess the theology of the CCDP on ecology with regards to caring for God's creation.

Secondly, this research will also make use of Sallie McFague's "Planetary Theology" as a complement to Spencer's theory. Sallie McFague (2001) in her theory uses an ethical lens to articulate how humans should live and care for other non-human creation on the planet earth. The focus of this theory is the well-being of the community of which humankind is part (2001:99). This ethical lens is informed by the theological analysis which highlights the interconnectedness of creation. Humankind has benefit when the whole system is healthy. The benefit is not in amassing wealth but sharing in the basics of a good life. Good life here means when money is used to enable people to afford "...adequate food, clothing, shelter, education, medical care, creative and spiritual opportunities, fellowship and leisure time and space" (McFague 2001: 111). Planetary theology critiques capitalism which sees all resources both material and human as a means of value exchange for profit (McFague 2001; Bouma-Prediger 2001).

Planetary theology has the following components: sustainability, frugality and justice. It sees to it that the "human need is more basic than human greed" (McFague 2001:99). It also frowns at the allocation of resources among competing individuals. As regards this, McFague argues that the viability of a community and its members (both human and non-human alike) to thrive both now and in the future must be the main priority. Planetary theology is a vision "of how human beings ought to live on the planet Earth in the light of perceived reality of where and how we live" (McFague 2001: 100). This theory also seeks to achieve a balance of individual and community without preference; because when the health of nature is destroyed it undermines that of humans as well.

Planetary theology therefore advances the theology of enough which aims at putting a limit to inequality. This ethical perspective advances a model which humankind requires embracing so as to be able to care for other creatures.

1.8 Research Methodology

This research is non-empirical and relies on literature analyses with a bibliographic research in Pietermaritzburg focused in Nigerian reality. The reason is the short duration of one year for this research. Using interviews or questionnaires and travelling to Nigeria to gather data would have taken quite a large portion of this time. However, some of the documents and the pictures were sent to the researcher by email from CCDP with a consent letter (see Appendix D). Full approval was granted by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal on 30 March 2017, protocol reference number HSS/0262/017M (see Appendix A). The researcher also contacted some COCIN pastors through telephone calls and requested for their sermon notes; they consented and sent them through their various emails (see Appendix E).

To achieve the objectives successfully, this research has used secondary sources such as books, journals, articles in magazines and newspapers, sermon notes from some pastors in Panyam district, and unpublished sources such as seminars and archival materials. Past dissertations related to the subject of ecology published or unpublished were also used. Policy documents establishing CCDP, its mid-term or annual reports and some pictures of their workshops conducted in communities and schools were used as well. The five-year reports of CCDP's activities were used for the assessment in this research. The COCIN Constitution, By-laws and Service Handbook as key policy documents of the church were also utilised for the purpose of this research.

A social analysis will also be used to give a clearer perspective on the current situation which has led to deforestation in Panyam district. The social analysis of a particular community analyses the historical, social, political, economic and religious circumstances of a people in that community or geographical area (Henriot and Holland 1980). This will be achieved through the descriptive method which describes "... the state of affairs as it exists at present" (Kothari 2004:15). A general description of the rate at which deforestation has been taking place and how it has been affecting Nigeria is discussed. This method "... uses facts or information already available, and analyzes

these to make a critical evaluation of the material” (Kothari 2004: 16). So, documents obtained from CCDP and from other sources that are relevant to this research will be analysed critically, to ascertain how CCDP is contributing to solving the ecological problems in Panyam district and its environs, in order to mitigate the effects of deforestation on the communities.

Theological analysis will also be used in this research to see to what extent priority has been given to ecological studies in pastoral training in COCIN. Materials from UKZN's library and the library of the Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN) have been used to access relevant resources for this research.

1.9 Anticipated Problems, Limitations and Scope of the Research

The major limitation of this research was acquiring the limited written materials on deforestation within the COCIN context in Nigeria particularly on Panyam district. There have not been many written documents by Christian theologians in COCIN on ecology and particularly on deforestation. However, Timothy Dafer a COCIN pastor and theologian from Nigeria have made significant contribution on environmental problems facing humanity in recent times (Dafer 2018: 97-105). He identified deforestation as one of the main ecological challenges that humankind struggles with in our present dispensation. Dafer then drawn from biblical texts that relates to care for the environment as a basis for true Christian stewardship. A creative reading of texts using social and theological analyses will also help to unpack very useful information with regards to deforestation as it relates to the theology of ecology in COCIN.

The other limitations included the lack of accurate and inadequate data and the commitment from CCDP in providing their annual reports and evaluations of their projects. Regardless of these obstacles, a meaningful and successful research was still possible. This has been achieved because of the motivation I have in the area of my interest; and to developing this topic from the works I have researched in relation to ecology with special reference to deforestation in Nigeria. In addition, as a COCIN pastor I have developed a passion to understand the theology of COCIN on ecology.

The scope of the research revolved around deforestation as an ecological problem in Nigeria with special reference on how it has affected Panyam district and its environs, in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State of Nigeria.

1.10 Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter One gives a brief introduction to the research and incorporates background to the research problem, rationale, key research questions and sub-questions, objectives of the research, theoretical framework, research methodology, anticipated problems of the research, and lastly the structure of the research.

Chapter Two reviews the relevant literature of some causes and effects of deforestation in Nigeria and particularly in Panyam district. The review investigates how deforestation affected the socio-economic life of the people.

In Chapter Three the COCIN's theology on ecology is explored using the COCIN Constitution, By-Laws, and Service Handbook as key policy documents of the church; to ascertain the nature and the extent of the church's engagement in the discourse on ecological issues in its theological training. The Biblical Vision of Care for the Environment theory proposed by Nick Spencer is used as a theoretical framework, in order to elaborate how COCIN as a denomination is educating church members on current ecological challenges with particular reference to deforestation.

Chapter Four examines how CCDP is conducting its developmental programme especially on climate change and in its tree planting campaign, to reduce the effects of deforestation in Panyam district. This will be supported by Sallie McFague's Planetary Theology theory that uses an ethical lens to prescribe how Christians ought to live and care for God's creation.

Finally, Chapter Five draws this research to a conclusion basing its claims on the research findings. Recommendations for further research are suggested.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW – SETTING THE CONTEXT: SOME CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF DEFORESTATION IN NIGERIA

2.1 Introduction

Climate change is one of the ecological problems widely discussed and debated globally. The key issue in this debate, especially from both religious and scientific points of view, is that human activities within the environment or on the planet earth are gradually influencing the climate system causing its rise in global air and ocean temperatures, and the melting of snow and ice with an increase in the sea level. Other environmental problems include deforestation, desertification, pollution and land degradation (Moltmann 1985; Bouma-Prediger 2001; Bookless 2008; Toulmin 2009; O'Brien et al. 2010: 3; Pope Francis 2015).

This chapter aims at discussing some of the causes and effects of deforestation in the Nigerian context. It describes how deforestation has been degrading the environment and affecting the available forest resources and the livelihood of people in the country. Other leading factors that have effects on the environment are desertification, population growth, pollution and conflict induced by migration which is discussed as a form of cause and effect in this research. This chapter also points to the fact that anthropogenic activities (arising from the activities of humankind) are causing deforestation all over Nigeria with enormous effects. Such activities are road construction; the clearing of forests for commercial purposes which may include farming and ranching; and urban housing (Bouma-Prediger 2001: 47).

Skye (2015) defines deforestation as the net loss of forests which happens when more forest cover is removed than is replanted which alters a particular landscape greatly. In a similar vein, deforestation can be seen as the removal of forests leading to many imbalances ecologically and environmentally, which brings decline to habitat and biodiversity (Rinkesh 2009; Spencer et al. 2009). Forests are removed in order to make land available for other purposes such as housing and urban development, soy bean cultivation, palm oil plantation and cattle ranching (Williams and Phan n. d; The Nigerian Observer 2015). The term “deforestation” is associated with, for example, logging for

commercial purposes, felling of trees for firewood and for making charcoal, removing forest cover for agricultural purposes such as slash-and-burn for shifting cultivation by farmers. Slash-and-burn in agriculture is a practice whereby trees and shrubs are cleared and burnt completely to make space for other uses such as grazing and ranching (Mfon et al. 2014a: 81; Anyanwu 2016; Wildlife Conservation Society 2016). In this research, deforestation will mean complete removal of forest in a particular geographical location without any corresponding effort for replacement.

2.2 The Prevalence of Deforestation in Nigeria

Deforestation is a global ecological problem which has attracted the attention of the United Nations. The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP 2016) calls for “zero net deforestation” by calling on companies dealing with forest products to offset the impact they are making on existing forests by replanting the deforested areas. To achieve maximum desired results in curbing deforestation, the United Nations created another agency called United Nations Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD). This agency is responsible for building the capacity of countries through man-power development and supporting with funding to enable countries to protect and improve their forested areas and to mitigate the effects of deforestation.

Nigeria is a partner with UN-REDD (Daily Trust, April 2016). The UN-REDD Report (2016) reveals that between 2000 and 2015, Nigeria’s forested area has reduced from 12 000ha to 8 000ha. The report claims that deforestation seems to be taking place in the country at an alarming and uncontrollable rate which requires an urgent attention of government. Butler (2014) in a research conducted on the Nigerian forests resources pointed out that forests in Nigeria are among some of the most threatened in the world due to a number of variables such as high population growth rates and the conversion of land for agricultural purposes and logging. Authorities in Nigeria have also acknowledged that deforestation is a visible problem, which the country is experiencing (Aliyu 2016). To confirm this claim, the Minister of Environment concurred with Aliyu (2016) in broadening the scope of the problem by acknowledging that more people are

entering the wood business. There has been an increase in the number of requests for permits for wood business and export. On most Nigerian roads trucks can be seen on highways with containers of wood from the existing forests of the country (Okeke 2016b). That is why some experts have expressed fear that both economic and medicinal trees have been gradually disappearing with some already extinct (Aminu 2016; Okeke 2016c).

Adeyinka (2012) who conducted research on biodiversity in Nigeria, found that the country is richly endowed with numerous plants and animal species. The research claimed however that over the previous 30 years some of these plants and animal species had been progressively decreasing due to human activities. The increase in population and deforestation were identified as potential threats to the environment and the research recommended the use of alternative cheap sources of energy like biogas to reduce over-dependence on the use of firewood. Ejidike and Ajayi (2013) attributed deforestation to unemployment as a factor that has been threatening Nigeria's protected areas making the game reserves vulnerable to deforestation. The reason for this is that the people living around such protected areas see the forests as God's gift which provides them with wildlife and other natural resources such as firewood, herbs, nuts and fruits for their survival. Furthermore, Ospina (2017) and Adekunle et al. (2013) in their research identified the poor policies, laws and regulations guiding forestry in Nigeria as major reasons driving the deforestation process in the country. Updating those laws that have direct positive impacts on the protected areas to prevent further depletion of the forests, becomes a necessity.

In addition, other factors responsible for deforestation in Nigeria range from agriculture, mining, fuel wood, charcoal making, commercial logging, infrastructural development, over-grazing, ranching, and illegal hunting (Usman and Adefalu 2010; Ihuma et al. 2011; Dagba and Sambe 2013; Mmom and Mbee 2013; Mfon et al. 2014a; Mfon et al. 2014b; Maton 2015). A recent study shows that the lack of practicing agro-forestry in many developing countries is another factor causing deforestation (Ospina 2017). Agro-

forestry is a form of agriculture where trees and crops are cultivated on the same piece of land.

2.3 Causes of deforestation

2.3.1 Agriculture

Food and Agricultural Organisation Report 2016 acknowledges that globally woodlands are converted to agriculture and for other purposes. The report shows that Africa has the highest net annual loss, with 2 million hectares. It means that forest cover is being removed. However, the report does not give the specific hectares Nigeria loses. Meyer (1991) also identified agriculture as a factor which degrades the earth especially with slash-and-burn by many farmers. Meyer states, “in many countries the best land is used by wealthy landowners for cash or export cropping. The poor are forced into the rain forests to farm for survival” (1991: 116). This indicates that the wealthy commercial farmers contribute to deforestation to a large extent. Mfon et al. (2014a) identified agriculture as a leading factor that has been responsible for massive deforestation in Nigeria. Sean McDonagh adds to this that agriculture is a major cause of deforestation, in his words “the continual expansion of agriculture to wetlands, mountains, forests ... tends to degrade that habitat for other species, endanger their survival” (McDonagh 1990: 47).

Setting intentional fires destroys vital parts of forests: “When fire spreads to unintended areas, the protective forest canopy is destroyed” (Bennett 2017: 2). In Nigeria, slash-and-burn activity is rampant in most communities as the country depends heavily on subsistence agriculture in which shifting cultivation is a common practice (Toulmin 2009; Maton 2015). In similar situations hunters also set fire to forests to drive out wild animals. This has resulted in the permanent destruction of the rainforests and damage to the vegetation in the savannah (Ejidike and Ajayi 2013; Mfon et al. 2014a: 83). Drawing from the above, unsustainable agricultural practices can be injurious to the forests and the rich vegetation that Nigeria has.

2.3.2 Population Growth and Urbanisation

Scholars have attributed the rate of deforestation in Nigeria to the high rate of population growth (Mmom and Mbee 2013; Naik 2016). According to Naik, “population growth is directly related to increase in the demand for food” (Naik 2016: 2). This means more land is required for the cultivation of food. The encroachment upon land covered with forests becomes the only option, where trees are cleared so as to turn vast tracts of green forests into fields.

Nigeria’s population is estimated to have reached 182 million in 2016 with more than half its people under 30 years of age (Population and Development Review 2007; Mbachu and Alake 2016). This latest estimate is based on the population recorded in the last census a decade ago and using an annual growth rate of 3.5 percent taking into account rising life expectancy and with a reduction in the infant mortality rate in the country. According to World Population Review of 2017, the figure collected based on the projected population in 2012 by the Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics indicated that the total population of citizens in Nigeria was around 166.2 million people. Affirming to the population growth, Country Meters (2017) projected that in 2017, Nigeria’s population will increase by 5 055 552 people and reach 194 615 054 in the beginning of 2018. The implication of this rapid growth of the population means more demand for food and other natural resources.

Mmom and Mbee (2013), in a study on the impact of population pressure on forest resources in Nigeria, discovered that the growing population puts a lot of pressure on government reserved areas. They claim that “forest clearance in the country is put at an average of 400 000ha per annum, while afforestation has only 32,000ha annually” (Mmom and Mbee 2013: 32). This implies that an increase in population potentially leads to the depletion of the forests and other natural resources in the country. If the submission above is correct, it means that the human population has a strong relationship with environmental degradation, to such an extent that any effort to conserve the forest can only be made possible if the issue of population growth is adequately addressed.

Urbanisation and industrialisation are other factors contributing to deforestation (Deane-Drummond 2008; Babayemi 2011; Bennett 2017). Developing new housing sometimes called “urban sprawl” is one of the most difficult deforestation-related problems to be tackled because urban sprawl is driven by overpopulation. Bennett (2017: 6) states that “overpopulation is one of the most complex and pressing issues at the base of many environmental problems”.

Environmentalists and architects alike have come up with several designs of housing which can house a large number of people with minimal environmental impact. One concept in architecture of such an infrastructure change is called “compact cities or sustainable cities” (Bennett 2017: 6). A compact city utilises a smaller area of land than a traditional city. These designs are achievable by constructing tall buildings in a small area of land. In these sustainable cities there are shopping malls, offices, doctors’ offices and other services that can be found within a short distance and within the same complex. This minimises even the use of vehicles and making everyday business simple (Bennett 2017: 7).

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has been experiencing urbanisation which has claimed a lot of forest areas for housing development. Urbanisation is visible in growing cities in Nigeria such as Abuja, Lagos and Port Harcourt (Aikhionbare 2015). Mfon et al. (2014a) cited the University of Calabar and other second generation universities in Nigeria as an example of development occupying areas that were densely forested before. Other examples are the Nigerian Defence Academy, the Army School of Artillery and the Mobile Police Training Schools all in Kaduna State which have used approximately 7 420ha of forested reserves. The construction of road networks, railways and airports has caused considerable deforestation in the Federal Capital Territory Abuja. Industrial development such as the Ajaokuta steel industry in Kogi state, the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas project in Rivers state, the Gindiri Dam project in Mangu Plateau state and many others in the country have led to a large amount of forest loss (Bisala 2008; Chakravarty et al. 2012; Mfon et al. 2014a). Research has also shown that the construction of oil and gas pipelines have led to forest fragmentation in

the southern part of Nigeria especially in the oil-rich Niger Delta (Agbagwa and Ndukwu 2014).

2.3.3 Logging

Logging is also one of the common causes of deforestation in Nigeria as trees are cut down for different purposes. The most harmful type of logging is called “clear cutting” (Bennett 2017: 5). Clear cutting occurs when an area of forest is completely removed leaving no trees in that particular area. In recent times Nigeria seems to have lost a lot of trees due to logging. For example, Rainforest Rescue (2017) raised the alarm and drew the attention of Nigeria’s Environment Minister to the massive illegal logging taking place in Gashaka Gumti National Park in Taraba state. The organisation claims that “loggers are plundering Nigeria’s Taraba State for rosewood for the Chinese market” (2017: 1). According to the report, these loggers, most of whom are Chinese, are penetrating farther into the bush and ignoring the protected status of African rosewood which is potentially turning swaths of Nigeria almost into a desert. Maynard (2016) corroborates with Rainforest Rescue (2017) on the Chinese trade in the wood market in other countries. Michigan State University conducted research on China’s demand for wood and it revealed that the Chinese forests are regenerating after a long period of decline. The research further claims that the regeneration may be coming at the expense of forests and woodlands being harvested in other countries. It concludes that “any gains for environment seen in China likely resulted in degradation of woodland elsewhere” (Maynard 2016: 2).

Similarly, in Plateau state Nigeria, it was reported that a Chinese company had been granted a permit by the state government to log a protected area (Pandam Game Reserve) located in Qua’an Pan local government area (Nanlong 2016; Rainforest Rescue 2017). Rainforest Rescue (2017) concurred with the Federal Government of Nigeria that logging has been greatly on the increase in the country when the Minister of Environment acknowledged that: “More than ever before, there is a torrential increase in the number of people entering the wood export business, this can be testified by the

inflow of requests for letter of support and CITES permit for wood export in recent times” (Okeke 2016a: 1).

To corroborate the above claims, states like Cross Rivers have decided to ban logging and have opted for the importation of timber instead. This action aims at cushioning the effect of logging on the forest resources in the state (Daily Trust April 2016; Charles 2017). Akpan (2017) adds that the same state is the first in Nigeria to partner with REDD to protect forests in the state. REDD is an UN arm which gives financial support to any country that partners with it in order to protect existing forests by using other alternative sources of energy.

The Nigerian National Assembly has lamented the effects of deforestation on many Nigerians; for instance, the Speaker of the House of Representatives notes that “... uncontrolled logging that had led to deforestation in different states in the country, had impoverished millions of Nigerians in the rural areas” (Ovuakporie and Agbakwuru 2016: 1). If those highly placed in government recognise the effect of deforestation in the country, it implies that it is a reality that requires a combined effort of both the states and federal governments to overcome it.

2.3.4 Conflict and Grazing

In Nigeria especially in the north, violent conflicts between farmers and herdsman have been increasing pressure on land resources. Akintunde and Jambol (2014) in a study on Plateau state identified that conflict induced migration is one of the factors responsible for environmental degradation. Sometimes when these conflicts occur, some people migrate to other communities for safety. As a result, forest products such as trees are in high demand to meet immediate energy needs. Akintunde and Jambol (2014: 44) state:

The movement and resettlements that have been the outcome of the conflicts in Jos have led to the unprecedented erection of residential structures and the emergence of new settlements at the study area. This mobility of persons, establishments of settlements and growth of communities have led to the modification of the immediate environment. Gradually, deforestation turned thick vegetation into bare fields and residential homes, houses were erected on former farmlands and animals inhabiting these areas were killed while others escaped farther into the yet to be colonized wild for temporary safety.

Akintunde and Jambol have presented how conflict can lead to depleting the environment. However, their research failed to point out the number of hectares of land affected and what specific areas in Jos have been experiencing such urban sprawl as a result of conflict.

Several states in the country have experienced politically induced violence and other forms of violence such as clashes between Fulani herdsmen and local farmers (Ladan 2014; Yesuf 2016; Adepegba 2017; Emmanuel 2017). Normally in such situations houses and forests are set ablaze leading to the wanton destruction of both human and non-human resources (Adepegba 2017). Yesufu (2016) claims that some of these conflicts can be attributed to the effects of climate change that are being experienced in Nigeria. The Fulani herders are now moving to areas that were initially not meant for grazing. In the course of this, they are forced to trespass farmlands which on many occasions has sparked clashes leading to violence between them and local farmers in some communities. The Forestry Association of Nigeria (FAN) affirms that conflicts have affected the activities of forestry in the country. As a result of this, the chairman of the organisation alleged that “forestry activities have been stalled in most of north-eastern Nigeria and much of the south-south zone as a result of insecurity and conflicts” (Orondo 2016).

Grazing also changes the vegetation of a particular area gradually. Animals feed on the young tree seedlings and branches of matured trees especially in the dry season when there is little grass to feed on. At other times the herdsmen set fire to the vegetation to enable fresh shoots of grass and plants for their animals (Mba et al. 2004; Mfon et al. 2014a). It has been argued that grazing has some benefits for the forests by encouraging the growth of some plants species whose seeds are carried in the animals’ guts. However, over-grazing through excessive trampling of the surface of the soil by the animals can kill some plants or cause a reduction in their ability to photosynthesis (Mba et al. 2004).

2.3.5 Fuel Wood Collection

Firewood is a major source of energy in Nigeria as earlier noted in the background above (1.2) of this research. The collection of wood contributes to the depletion of forest cover especially in localities which trees are scanty (Debjani 2012; Butler 2012; Terminski 2012; Naik 2016; Patatunda 2016; Alkassim 2017). Trees are cut down for firewood or turned into charcoal as a major source of fuel or energy, especially for domestic use (Putatunda 2016). Charcoal-making has become a way of generating income. The high cost of kerosene and cooking gas appears to put more pressure on forests in Nigeria (Okoromadu 2017). When people cannot afford kerosene or cooking gas, the cheaper alternative becomes the only option. According to some energy experts, Nigeria is endowed with abundant gas reserves but instead of packaging it and selling it at affordable prices to its citizens, much of it is being flared into the atmosphere (Mfon et al. 2014a; Yesufu and Orji 2017).

As a result of high demand and pressure on the Nigeria's forest resources, some state governments have introduced different initiatives to reduce over-dependency on the use of firewood. For example, the Cross Rivers government temporarily banned felling of trees and resolved to import timber from the neighbouring Cameroon Republic (Charles 2017). This action by government may be well intended to protect forest reserve, but the question is, if many local people cannot afford kerosene how can they afford imported timber?

Unlike Cross Rivers state that banned the felling of trees, Akannam (2013) reports that Jigawa State government provides an alternative source for cooking by distributing free of charge fabricated stoves fuelled by kerosene to thousands of households. The Women Affairs Commissioner reveals that the "distribution of the fabricated stove is a deliberate move to control indiscriminate cutting of trees for firewood in the state" (2013:1). This plan by the government is commendable but it is not known how long it will take for that state to provide this stove to the remaining households. Although as good is this development may be though, one wonders how the citizens would be able to buy kerosene in a country where kerosene to power the stove is a priced commodity.

On the other hand, in Bauchi state, communities in Ganjuwa Local Government Area are being sensitised to the danger of felling trees (Alkassim 2017). The Caretaker Chairman Alhaji Alqassim Ibrahim warned the people from the locality and explained that cutting down trees indiscriminately for charcoal production facilitates environmental degradation and deforestation. He informed them that the vigilante have arrested five people to serve as deterrent for those contemplating on the same business. In addition, other strategies to minimise deforestation are being sought. The Niger state government for example proposes a jail term and heavy fine for persons found guilty of the indiscriminate felling of trees (Ajobe 2017). Often some of these legislators who enact and promulgate these laws are not aware of the plight of their people. It would possibly have been more effective if they had passed into law an environmental education programme which would encourage people in the state to plant more trees.

Recently during the 2017 International Day of Forests, the Environment Minister of Nigeria evaluated forest use in the country, acknowledged that the consumption of firewood was greatly on the increase and pointed out "... the high rate of consumption of fuel wood, which is estimated at about 87 percent with daily consumption rate put at 27.5 million kilogrammes per day" (Okeke 2017a: 1). This evidence from NGOs, states and the federal government in Nigeria proves that there has been an increase in deforestation which has been depleting the forests in the country.

2.3.6 Mining Activities

Mining activities around the world have many consequences for the natural environment. Menter (2015) strongly suggests that the mining of gold and other mineral resources is leading to the degradation of natural habitat. Menter further points out that mining usually begins by clearing a portion of land leading to deforestation, which destroys wildlife and plant species and their habitats.

In Nigeria, several areas where mining activities take place appear to cause various environmental problems. Oyewole (2017) has identified an increase in the construction industry in Nigeria as one of the major factors that has provoked a high demand for

sand mining. According to him, this has left many communities to battle with erosion-related challenges. In some cases, deforestation and the loss of biodiversity become the effects of such mining activities (The Nation, 14th March 2017). In Plateau state and specifically in the Wase local government council area, mining activities which have taken place in some villages have had negative consequences for the people. This is because individual farmlands have been taken over by miners with little or no compensation (Viewpoint Nigeria 2015). As a result of the mining activities, scanty trees and shrubs that most people were depending on for fuel have been cleared by the Chinese company operating the mines. Furthermore, roads have become deplorable due to the movement of heavy trucks and equipment making mobility difficult especially in the rainy season. Mining activities have been causing an alteration in the ecosystem and threatening the biodiversity of the area where these activities are taking place (Fifth National Biodiversity Report 2015). In fact, it would not be wrong to say that mining activities disturb the ecosystem and cause an ecological imbalance within the environment. It might be interesting to refer to the devastating impact of mining activities in human beings not only in their health but also in socio-economic terms. There is a documentary called the “Marikana Massacre” that alludes to the social problem in South Africa. This leads to a more inclusive agenda of development discourse, what Steve de Gruchy called Olive Agenda (Haddad 2015:216). Not only green, that is, ecology is a problem, but also, brown, referring to poverty, violence and social exclusion that result from mining activities in a neo-colonial phase of neoliberal capitalism: re-establishing colonial extractive economy.

2.3.7 Pollution

The Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) Act of 1999 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria No. 59 defines pollution as “Man-made or man-aided alteration of chemical, physical or biological quality of the environment to the extent that is detrimental to that environment or beyond acceptable limits” (1999: 59). The same Act also defines environment as that which “includes water, air, land and all plants and human beings or animals living therein and the inter-relationships which exist among these or any of them” (FEPA 1999:59).

Available statistics have shown that pollution globally is one of the hazards threatening human health and changing the aesthetic nature of the environment (Lynas 2011; Ogunyemi 2017). All forms of pollution are mostly anthropogenic. Mark Lynas maintains that, “humans have now devised countless thousands of novel substances, never before seen on Earth, and released them into the natural environment” (2011: 157). Deane-Drummond (2008) argues that over-consumption which depends on the production of more goods by different industries is putting strain on the environment. She claims cardiovascular diseases and cancers are health challenges associated with pollutants which have caused death in recent times. Some chemicals and toxic wastes are highly mobile and can affect people and species far away from where they originated (Lynas 2011).

In Nigeria, oil spillage is one of the major man-made problems leading to the pollution of the environment especially in the southern part of the country where a lot of oil exploration activities have been taking place in the oil-rich Niger Delta (Parke 2016; Ross 2016; Daily Trust 26 January 2017; Kent 2017). Ross (2016) reported that several hectares of land have been degraded, local fish ponds and some lakes poisoned by oil spillage from the Royal Dutch Shell Company (Ross 2016). In the Bodo and Bonga fishing communities, there were two major leakages of crude oil which destroyed vast areas of vegetation and polluted fishing ponds and lakes within these communities. This led the communities to seek arbitration from the International Court in The Hague. The court ruled in favour of the community and ordered Shell Company to compensate for the damage caused by the spill (Simire 2014; BBC News 30 January 2017). Aikhionbare corroborates that oil spillage has left many communities with environmental problems since oil exploration began: “The mangrove forests in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria have been devastated since the discovery of oil” (2015: 1). The spillages usually occur as a result of pipeline vandalism, old rusted pipelines and tanker accidents found in various parts of the country.

Apart from oil spillage in the Niger Delta, gas flaring is another pollutant that is causing havoc in areas which oil exploration activities have been taking place. Gas flaring is the burning of natural gas into the atmosphere during the drilling of crude oil. This menace

poses environmental, economic and health challenges, more especially to the inhabitants of such areas (Echewofun and Okeke 2017). Some negative impacts of gas flaring include contamination of surface and ground water, increased deforestation and contamination of the soil.

In some instances, environmental pollution in Nigeria has resulted in agitation. For example, in 1990 the late Ken Saro-Wiwa founded the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni people (MOSOP) in the Niger Delta region. Among others, the demands of the organisation were for Ogoniland to receive a bigger share of Nigeria's oil revenue. The Movement challenged the military government of that time about the continuous oil exploration by Royal Dutch Shell Petroleum and other companies in the region which had been destroying the environment with large scale pollution-related problems such as the contamination of water, land degradation and destruction of their habitat. The group also accused the oil companies, especially the Royal Dutch Shell Company, of supporting the military suppression of the Niger Delta people (Onishi 2000; BBC News 2013). There were growing protests and several cases of vandalism and this resulted in the killing of four Ogoni Chiefs (Traditional Rulers). The late Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others were arrested and indicted for murder. The then military regime under General Sani Abacha ordered their execution in November 1995, and this led to the suspension of Nigeria from the Commonwealth of nations for three years (Onishi 2000; Sher 1996).

Poor sanitary conditions and the inappropriate dumping of refuse are other factors of pollution in Nigeria (Ogunyemi 2017). The improper disposal of harmful industrial waste affects the landscape of some communities in Nigeria. Ogundele (2017) notes in his study on toxic waste management that some of these toxic wastes are buried in land and they normally deplete the land and destroy the vegetation, which is the habitat of many plants and animals. The discharge of untreated industrial and domestic wastes into waterways, the spewing of several tons of particulates and airborne gases into the atmosphere, and the use of newly developed chemicals without considering their potential destructive tendency to the ecosystem have occasioned many environmental disasters (Coker n. d: 1; Butler 2012). Unfortunately, the hazard of environmental

pollution is not relenting in Nigeria; the country still faces the danger of pollution that leads to harmful effects on the environment, human and non-human creatures.

2.3.8 Desertification in Nigeria

Desertification and drought have been identified also as factors that contribute to the disappearance of forests in Nigeria (Terminski 2012; Olagunju 2015). The United Nations Climate Change and Deforestation (UNCCD), ascends that “Desertification refers to land degradation in arid, semi-arid and sub-humid areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities” (UNCCD 2017: 1). It is characterised by images of sand dunes which blow across abandoned lands in some irresistible manner, resulting in changing fertile fields into inhospitable wasteland. When there is land degradation, the biological cycles upon which life depends are disrupted. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification further stresses that desertification can occur anywhere but it occurs more frequently in the dry lands with severe consequences for the environment. Human activities such as over-cultivation, over-grazing, poorly organised irrigation systems and deforestation cause desertification. Weather conditions that are extreme, for example floods and droughts, can accelerate the process as well (LADA 2007; UNCCD 2017).

The impacts of desertification in Nigeria are worrisome for some communities. For example, it alters the geo-chemical composition of soil; and it contributes to water scarcity, a reduction in agricultural yield which leads to food insecurity, and a reduction in economic growth (Odiogor 2010; Okeke 2016c; Effiong 2017). In most cases, desertification is irreversible when the environment becomes drier and the soil becomes further degraded through soil erosion (Maton 2015).

In Nigeria, research has shown that the impact of desertification is felt more in the northern part of the country. Some states in the North that are affected include Adamawa, Borno, Bauchi, Gombe, Katsina, Jigawa, Kano, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara (Odiogor 2010; Okeke 2017a). Odiogor observes that the North has a huge expanse of arable land and it is vital for agriculture and other economic activities. On the other hand, Odiogor raises the alarm on the danger that is facing Northern Nigeria

when he warns: “But the Sahara desert is advancing south-wards at the rate of 6.0 percent every year. Consequently, Nigeria loses about 350,000 hectares of land every year to desert encroachment” (2010: 1). Similarly, another recent report indicates that “out of a total landmass of 923,768 sq.km, there is an indication that Nigeria is losing about 105,000 sq.km to 136,500 sq.km annually to drought and desertification” (Okeke 2017b: 1). The evidence above shows that desertification has every potential to displace communities and change the demography of most communities in the northern part of Nigeria. As the soil deteriorates and becomes infertile, it poses threats to food production. As a result, there is tendency for an increasing risk of unfavourable conditions for human and animal habitation which results in mounting unnecessary pressure on scarce resources. According to Okeke (2017a), desertification hampers agricultural production and leads to the indiscriminate exploitation of the available vegetation, especially trees and shrubs.

Nigeria is not the only country that is affected by desertification and desert encroachment. Some African countries in the Sahel region such as Niger, Libya, the Gambia, Burkina Faso, Tunisia, Morocco, Sudan, Mauritania, Cote D’ Voire, Namibia and South Africa are also experiencing various degrees of desertification (Odiogor 2010; UNCCD 2017).

In an effort to combat desertification and its impact on Nigeria and other African countries, the Great Green Wall (GGW) was launched in 2013 by African leaders through the African Union (AU) to address the challenges of land degradation and desertification in the Sahel-Saharan region (Leadership 30th October 2016; Okeke 2016b). The GGW is an AU initiative that is aimed at improving the resilience of human systems, ecosystems and natural resources, such as water, soil, vegetation and flora. The Director General of the National Agency for the Great Green Wall (NAGGW), Goni Ahmed revealed recently that;

Since the initiative commenced in 2013, Nigeria has been able to provide sources of clean water to over one million people in the affected areas by constructing 157 boreholes with reticulation facilities, animal drinking troughs along the GGW passage, ... the target is to rehabilitate about 22,500 square kilometres of degraded land in the dry region of the country and develop the livelihoods and boost climate change mitigation and adaptation (Essen 2017: 4).

The states in northern Nigeria affected by desertification as mentioned above are expected to embark on planting of trees for “shelter belts” that will serve as wind breaks to minimise the destructive effect of land degradation. During the recent International Day of Forest celebration, the South Korean government through its Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr Noh Kyu-duk, announced a donation of US\$130 000 to support Nigeria’s tree planting campaign (The Guardian 27 March 2017). This will reduce to a large extent the damaging effect of the economic, social and environmental impact of land degradation and desertification in these states. Having discussed some of the causes of deforestation in Nigeria, it will be pertinent at this point to also discuss some of the effects as well.

2.4 Effects of Deforestation

2.4.1 Loss of Biodiversity

The World Wildlife Fund defines biodiversity as a huge variety of animals and plants on our planet living and depending on each other in the place they are found. Nigeria is endowed with rich biodiversity which provides a source of food, raw materials, medicines, commercial and domestic products, aesthetics and cultural value (Usman and Adefalu 2010; Mfon et al. 2014a; Fifth National Biodiversity Report 2015). The biodiversity is contained in the different forests, coastal mangroves and savannah woodlands in the country. Since Nigeria depends on agriculture, biodiversity supports 70-80% of the food requirements of 70% of the rural population, while 30-50% of the urban communities depend on biodiversity for their nutritional need (Babayemi 2011; Fifth National Biodiversity Report 2015: 2).

Mmom and Mbee (2013) and Mfon (2014a) have shown that the biodiversity in the coastal area of Niger Delta provides a variety of sea-food sources and several rich mangrove ecosystems that are productive. Some swamps provide vegetables, wild nuts

and fruits. Furthermore, the Guinea savannah woodlands of Nigeria are still rich in wildlife with fruit trees and vegetables of various types, while the Sudan savannah on the other hand provides food and fodder for grazing livestock (Fifth National Biodiversity Report 2015). With this rich biodiversity in Nigeria, research has revealed that human activities are altering and impacting negatively on biodiversity. (Adeyinka 2012; Ejidike and Ajayi 2013; Anyanwu 2016).

The Fifth National Biodiversity Report (2015:5) states: “Biodiversity therefore forms an integral link between poverty reduction, provision of employment, and sustainable livelihood” (2015: 5). Changes in the function and structure of any given ecosystem lead to biodiversity depletion and the loss can affect the availability of some services which may be detrimental to the aesthetic, ethical, socio-economic and socio-cultural values of human communities. Consequently, the poor are then pushed to destroying their own source of livelihoods for a meagre amount of money because they cannot secure an alternative source for their long-term survival (Boff 1994; Conradie and Field 2000; Fifth National Biodiversity Report 2015). For example, over-harvesting, agricultural encroachment, increased pressures from hunters and poachers, and unregulated burning are believed to have been contributing to the decline of many species in the wild (Miller 2010; Schaefer 2010). The Fifth National Biodiversity Report (2015: 17) concurs with Mfon et al. (2014a) and states that “Nigeria’s wildlife is rapidly declining due to habitat loss and increased pressure from hunters, poachers and bush burning”. The Report specifically gives the names of some of the endangered species that have disappeared in Nigeria as a result of biodiversity loss, to include Giant Eland (*Taurotragus derbianus*), Giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*), Black Rhino (*Diceros bicornis*), Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) and the Pygmy hippopotamus (*Choeropsis liberiensis*).

The Nigerian Conservation Federation (NCF) on its part affirms and decries the decline in the population of pangolins in the biodiversity in Nigeria. In the words of the chairperson of NCF, “Our environment is in danger; a lot of wild animals like pangolins are at the risk of going into extinction and there is over-exploitation of these animals” (Daily Trust, Saturday 18 February 2017). To further confirm this loss of biodiversity,

Aikhionbare (2015: 2) estimates that “In Nigeria, it has been estimated that 899 species of birds, 274 mammals, 154 reptiles, 53 amphibians and 4 715 species of higher plants will be strongly affected by deforestation”. Based on this assertion, deforestation is an environmental problem which is degrading the land and depleting habitats leading to the huge loss of biodiversity in Nigeria.

2.4.2 Increase in Carbon dioxide

Deforestation reduces the number of trees available in a particular area and leads to an increase in carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere (Meyer 1991; Deane-Drummond 2008; Mfon et al. 2014a; Aikhionbare 2015). This enhances the Greenhouse Effect, which contributes largely to global warming. In a similar manner, Mfon (2014a) observed that carbon dioxide is injurious to the health of both humans and animals when it gets into the atmosphere. Reduction in the number of trees in an environment leads to an increase in the amount of carbon dioxide that is emitted into the atmosphere and that results in the death of plants and animals.

2.4.3 Water cycle disruption

Another negative effect of deforestation is the disruption of the water cycle. Regarding this, Aikhionbare (2015) argues that trees play an important role in the water cycle by absorbing the rain water as well as releasing water vapour into the atmosphere. The statistics available have shown that the Sahara desert which is common in the northern parts of Nigeria has already encroached into the southern parts because of deforestation (Mmom and Mbee 2013; Mfon et al. 2014a; Mfon et al. 2014b). If there is torrential rainfall in the north, there is incessant flooding along the coastal areas of the south because the roots of the trees that would have reduced the strength of the water are no longer available for that purpose as a result of deforestation (Mfon et al. 2014a; Putatunda 2016). Therefore, the National Geographic (2016) notes that without trees to maintain the water cycle many former forest lands can quickly become barren deserts.

2.4.4 Soil depletion

Forest soils are moist, but without protection from sun-blocking tree cover, they quickly dry out. Roots normally can hold soils together especially on slopes and may prevent

the possibility of landslides in particular areas (Skye 2015). Deforestation and poor land management can lead also to infertility of the soil and soil erosion. In addition, Putatunda (2016) concurs with Skye (2015) that, when it rains the soil nutrients are washed away with the rainwater into the waterways leaving the top soil not fit for crop cultivation. Here one can infer that depletion of the forest and degradation of the land endangers the soil and renders it infertile for agriculture. This further pushes the poor into harsh economic realities, since they depend on the land for their subsistence crop production.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has made a contribution to this research by describing the Nigerian context of environmental degradation, particularly deforestation. It has explained some of the main causes of deforestation such as agriculture, logging, conflict and grazing, urbanisation and industrialisation, pollution, population growth, mining and desertification. The effects of deforestation include loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, the disruption of the water cycle, and the production of carbon dioxide.

The next chapter will investigate the theology of COCIN on ecology alongside the Biblical Vision of Care for the Environment as proposed by Nick Spencer and Sallie McFague's Planetary Theology as theoretical frameworks of this research.

CHAPTER 3: COCIN'S THEOLOGY ON ECOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a brief history of COCIN and then goes to unpack COCIN's theology on ecology. In order to do this, the chapter relies heavily on the COCIN Service Handbook which contains liturgies on various functions of the church, the COCIN's Constitution and the Hausa hymnal (also known as "Littafin Wakoki"). Hausa is one of the local languages spoken in Nigeria that COCIN uses. Sub-themes will be drawn from the above documents such as 1) creation as gift from God, 2) land grab, 3) environmental degradation, and 4) lack of honouring God with our farm produce such as crops and fruits. Although COCIN does not have a specific document which clearly spells out its theology on ecology, COCIN's beliefs and teachings reflect ecological themes more especially in the COCIN Service Handbook. Also, in this chapter, the Nick Spencer's Biblical Vision of Care for the Environment and Sallie McFague's Planetary Theology will be used as theoretical framework. Therefore, the focus of this chapter is to answer the second research question: What is the theology of COCIN on ecology? All Bible quotations used in this research are all from the New International Version (NIV) translation except where otherwise stated.

3.2 A Brief History of COCIN

What is known today as Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) was founded by the Sudan United Mission (SUM) British branch in 1904 (Maxwell, n.d.: 13; Gutip, 1998). The mission was led by Dr Karl H. Kumm with the first mission station situated in Wase Local Government Council of Plateau State. From the mission station at Wase, the work was extended to the present-day Taraba, Adamawa, Benue and Nassarawa States (Tett n.d: 8; Gutip, 1998: 25). To keep this work in its context, the focus is based on the work of SUM in COCIN only. The reason is because SUM as an organisation is a conglomeration of other denominations. Some of these denominations that were founded by SUM are Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN), Church of the Brethren (also known as EYN), United Methodist church, Evangelical Reform Church of

Christ in Nigeria and many others located in the above-named states (Action Partners 2004: 4; Gutip, 1998: 25).

On a doctrinal basis as an evangelical church, COCIN “accepts the infallibility of the Holy Bible as its final authority in matters pertaining to faith and conduct” (COCIN Constitution, 2008: 3). Based on the biblical instruction to spread the gospel and following the legacy of the founding fathers of COCIN, the church still engages actively in Christian mission and evangelism within Nigeria and abroad.

3.2.1 Vision and Mission of COCIN

The Church of Christ in Nations has a Vision and Mission that guides its operational principles. The Vision states:

COCIN envisions a church (leadership and membership) that is maturing in Christ, united and committed to worshipping God and spreading the wholistic gospel, thereby impacting the world as salt and light to the glory of God, till the return of Jesus Christ (COCIN Diary 2010; Goshit et al. 2013: xiv).

The Mission states:

COCIN exists to glorify God, evangelise the world, equip and edify believers for wholistic Christian life and service. Administer the sacrament of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, thus; COCIN shall continue to be self-propagating, self-supporting and self-governing (COCIN Diary 2010; Goshit et al. 2013: xiv).

The “wholistic gospel” referred to in the Vision of COCIN means the approaches or methods the missionaries used when they first arrived. For example, the pioneer missionaries established schools in various mission stations to educate people; hospitals were also established to care for the physical needs of the people; the rural development programme (RDP) which is now known as the COCIN Community Development Programme (CCDP) was introduced to empower the people economically and to improve food production through the “Faith and Farm” programme (Goshit et al. 2013). To date, COCIN still uses this approach or model in mission “to ensure that the whole gospel is presented to the whole person” (Kohon, 2010: 14). Jakawa (2014) also notes that in some mission stations in the rural communities in Nigeria one would likely find a church, a school and a clinic all established by the church.

The COCIN'S notion of "wholistic gospel" can further be explained thus: the word of God is what brings salvation both spiritual and physical transformation to humankind when it is preached (Goshit et al. 2013: 10). People are taught how to read and write through the establishment of schools and adult education aimed at enabling them to read and interpret the Bible by themselves. The clinics help with the physical needs of seeking healing from various ailments, while the COCIN community development programme empowers the people in various communities with skills that will help them gain economic power so that they would not lack the basic necessities of life.

It is also important to note that the Vision of COCIN focuses only on raising membership and leadership and on the preaching of the gospel to save human souls (Goshit et al. 2013: xiv). Therefore, it appears there is no room for ecological issues in the Vision and Mission of the church. All efforts are geared towards saving the souls of people while the ecological concerns are neglected.

In the theological institutions where pastors are trained, the "wholistic gospel" is not completely reflected in the curriculum. Take Gindiri Theological Seminary (GTS) for example – which is the highest degree awarding institution of the church up to the level of a Master's Degree – does not have a course on ecology (GTS Information Handbook 2013; Jakawa 2014). Ecological discourse is a global discourse in theological circle, and therefore, if in the 21st century COCIN is yet to engage actively with this important issue, then the denomination is missing out on an important theological issue. Rahila Jakawa who is a theological instructor also concurs that the curriculums are designed to cover only the traditional theological courses which are Biblical Studies, Church History, Systematic Theology, and Pastoral Studies (Jakawa 2014: 121).

In addition, the Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN) that is owned by 15 different denominations including COCIN and awards degrees up to PhD, from the year 2000 up to 2015, did not have even an article written on ecology or any related themes such as climate change, environmental degradation, deforestation or ecofeminism in its Research Bulletin (<http://www.tcnn.ng/bulletin.php>). If a prestigious institution like TCNN

does not have a publication in recent years on ecological related themes, then this further points to the fact that COCIN is still far behind in the discourse on matters such as deforestation. For any theology to be relevant, it has to pay attention to addressing societal problems within their context.

3.3 COCIN Theology of Creation as a Gift from God

One of the concepts COCIN recognises within the framework of its theology is that the creation is a gift from God (COCIN Service Handbook 2010). Normally at the beginning of the farming season each year, several COCIN's congregations have a special Sunday service where farmers are encouraged to bring their seeds to be prayed for by a pastor. The officiating pastor will then explain the purpose of the dedication service to the rest of the congregants. The explanation goes thus, "brothers and sisters, the purpose of this service is to give thanks to God, to re-affirm our trust in Him and to ask for His help during the coming farming season" (COCIN Service Handbook 2010: 134). This is grounded in the belief of the church which is found in biblical teaching that "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Ps.24:1). After the explanation by the pastor, the representatives of the farmers carrying different varieties of seeds, hoes and other implements will come forward and stand in front of the officiating pastor before the congregation. The representative of the farmers will then speak on behalf of others by saying;

We have come today rejoicing on behalf of all farmers to present to God our farming implements, our seeds and the work of our hands for this coming farming season to God. We have come to seek his help, blessings and his leadership in the work of farming this year (COCIN Service Handbook 2010: 134).

The church teaches that God the Creator of all things is the one who blesses God's people in whatever they undertake for their survival, especially in agriculture. This is obvious in the response of the pastor "The Lord bless your seeds with enough rainfall and abundant yield" (COCIN Service Handbook 2010: 134). This is done in faith that God will protect the seed planted for it to grow and to produce crops.

The COCIN also believes and teaches that the whole of creation is a gift from God which must be appreciated. The Service Handbook further states “Oh God, we know that we are thankless people; we forget that the rain and the sun are gifts from you. We have forgotten about this gift that you give freely and willingly” (2010: 135).

Habel et al. (2011) note that Christians acknowledge that God is the Creator and Giver of all of life. “Our own fullness of life depends upon our relationship with God as Creator. We came from the Earth and we cannot survive without all the Earth provides” (Habel et al. 2011: 5). Birch (1990), in agreement with Habel et al. (2011), claims that humankind is expected to respond to creation in gratitude and receive it as a gift of grace, fully aware that God sustains all life through creation’s resources such as plants, water, land and energy (Birch 1990: 33). Birch further stresses that humanity has treated creation as an object of our possession and subjugate it to destruction and ruin instead of relating with it in praise.

3.4 COCIN and the Issue of Injustice on Land Matters

The confession from the COCIN Service Handbook continues, “Often we do not respect our brothers and sisters by seizing their farms, taking them to courts, buying and selling lands not in the right way. We fail to recognize that the people we do these things to are your children and our brothers and sisters” (2010:136). The confession above indicates that issues related to land are challenges facing many communities in Nigeria. From personal experience I have observed that some people from the same church congregation have taken each other to court because of land disputes. In some instances, members from the same family are involved in litigation because one of them has sold some inherited land without the consent of other family members.

The limitation in the Service Handbook is that the programme for seed dedication is done only once a year. The themes of justice and land matters are not frequently used for preaching or teaching members on how to honour God and one another, when it comes to issues of justice and land matters in their communities.

Similarly, there is land grab among some powerful people in some communities which normally leads to disharmony among those who have stayed together for long time in these communities (Badejo 2015; Vanguard 16 June 2017). Constance Bansikiza, a Ugandan Catholic priest, admits that some people think they are powerful either by virtue of wealth or connection to have rights to everything and no other person should claim the same right (2004: 107). This attitude and behaviour according to him is hurtful and detrimental to African societies which believe in communal living instead of individualism. So, when land is taken by others who see themselves as stronger as and more powerful than others, peace and unity are jeopardised. Bansikiza adds: “Individuals and communities need an atmosphere that allows them to work without fear for their lives and property” (2004: 108). The confession in COCIN liturgy is a call for repentance from such attitudes and behaviour that are capable of undermining peaceful co-existence which most often leads to perpetual violent conflicts among church members who are from the same community.

Habel et al. (2011: 63) claim that social justice is integral to ecological justice and that abuse of the earth is inseparable from the abuse of humans against humans: “When there is injustice among humans in the land, the Earth withers and does not produce crops; when the future is secured by God, the land will produce abundantly year-round so no one is hungry” (Habel et al. 2011: 64). Christians are admonished not to look at their own interest alone, but also to the interests of others as well (Sleeth 2006: 176-177; Phil. 2:4). Therefore, it is imperative for justice to thrive among people living with each other in various communities as the Prophet Micah points out; what God demands from his followers is for them to act justly and to love mercy and conduct themselves in manner acceptable to God (Mic. 6: 8; Hescox and Douglas 2016: 151-152).

In Nigeria where COCIN is situated, advocacy for equity and justice is required for communities to co-exist harmoniously when it comes to land issues. World Council of Churches correctly puts it: “We are called to live in just and sustainable relationships with each other for the benefit of all including future life on planet earth” (WCC 2005: 41). Social justice therefore must not be compromised for whatever reason in various

communities. God's mission on earth cannot be separated from the reign of God; so ecological injustices are matters of critical importance to the church (Kim and Anderson 2011: 298). COCIN therefore cannot sit on the fence and watch communities being unjustly robbed of their heritage by forces that do not care about the welfare of the people but only their profit.

3.5 Biblical and COCIN Theology of Land

The COCIN Service Handbook states that “often, we do not respect our brothers and sisters by seizing their farms, taking them to courts, buying and selling lands not in the right way” (COCIN, 2010: 136). In relation to land, the liturgy points out the need for humans to respect each other when it comes to the sharing, buying and selling of land. The teaching of the church discourages land grab and other practices that land may be expropriated against the will of the owners. The Old Testament teaching shows that land belongs to God (Ps. 24:1). The covenant of God with Israel cannot be examined without making reference to land. The creation story in Genesis Chapters 1–2 point out how the relationship between God, people and the earth developed. God is the Creator who made everything from nothing and has ownership rights over everything created (Blazanor 2015). God affirmed that what was created was good. Humankind was formed out of the dust of the earth in the image of God; and they were given the responsibility to care for the rest of creation (Gen.1: 26–28; 2: 15).

Joshua Chapters 13–19 attest to the fact that land is an inheritance given to the people of God. This gift is to be transferred from one generation to another generation. Therefore, the issue of land has theological and sociological significance (Blazanor 2015). Land in Israel was not seen as private property instead it is taken as a trust; land was an inheritance of the community and it was allotted to the families according to their descendants. “Each family enjoyed lasting rights to the use of the land, but never a commodity that could be bought or sold for private gain. Their portion was family property and they managed it on behalf of the entire tribe” (Blazanor 2015: 1). The story of King Ahab and Naboth in 1 Kings 21 is a good example. King Ahab wanted to use his purchasing power and his influence as a leader to buy the vineyard of Naboth which

was close to his palace. But Naboth in response said: “The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers” (1 Kg.21: 3). This confirmed that it was forbidden for an Israelite to sell his inheritance (land) indiscriminately.

In the OT in an instance where someone sold an allotted piece of land to another person for whatever reason, that land would be returned to its original owner in the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25). In the year of Jubilee, the Law of Moses stipulated that an Israelite is to pardon his/her fellow Israelite all debts, and a Hebrew slave be set free also in the year of Jubilee (Deut. 15: 1–3). “Managing the land involved social justice so that ancient Israel could stay united” (Cobb 1990; Fung 2009; Blazanor 2015: 2). For an Israelite the land is the means by which other promises of God are also to be achieved and fulfilled in the life of a Jew, because every aspect of material and economic life is attached to this (Deut.8:17–18). So, depriving any Hebrew of the right to land by whatsoever means was like fighting against the will of God. That was why God acted immediately against Ahab who unjustly ceased Naboth’s family heritage.

No Israelite was denied the right to the gift of land. There was also no gender barrier when it came to apportioning land. The biblical story of the five daughters of Zelophehad in Numbers 27 points out that the distribution of land in Israel was not gender biased. When their father died without a son the daughters were left out without a portion of land as inheritance but they protested against such discrimination and demanded their right to their father’s portion of land which was immediately allotted to them. This became a law in Israel, not only to these five daughters but also to any female whose father may die without a male child; the land he owned before will be given to his daughter(s).

In contrast, Alice Kabugumila argues that in many societies in Africa women have been denied the right to land ownership (2001: 72). Edmore Mufeme (1999) and Nancy Kireu (1999) corroborate that African women have had no legal right to ownership of family farms or lands in a communal area. But Mufeme (1999:1) observes that there has been significant progress in the post-colonial era with respect to land and gender equality. In some African cultures the perspective on land is similar to that of the Jews. The

understanding of land is connected to being and identity and is seen as a gift from God (Tafira 2015; Mufeme, Nkosi, Karyongi, Kireu 1999).

But from the American and European perspective, land is seen as private property which is central to capitalist thought (Mufeme 1999). This is in contrast with the African perspective on land: “Land is neither a commodity nor an individual possession. Land is understood as embracing the ecological, cultural, cosmological, social and the spiritual” (Tafira 2015: 1). Similarly, Nkosi accentuates that “Land is a birth-right of every African Indigenous person; it has a communal dimension whereby all members of the community share its resources” (1999: 1). In contrast, the colonial powers subjugated the African communities with military might and expropriated their land (Hambira, Mufeme and Karyongi 1999). The manner in which lands were acquired by the colonisers was in total disregard of the dignity, identity, languages, cultures, and spiritualities of the indigenous people (Hambira and Nkosi 1999). Rupert Hambira argues that it is dehumanising to strip someone of his/her land, in his words:

I cannot imagine how anyone can be human in a situation in which he/she is denied free access, use and life on a piece of land that he/she deems their own ancestral home. . . denying people access and custody of the land is destroying the image and likeness of God in which they are created (1999: 2).

Karyongi (1999: 1) gives an example of the Maasai people of Kenya who the colonial government and white settlers dispossessed of their ancestral land in the 1940s before independence. They are now left at the margin of lands that cannot cater for their nomadic life. Similarly, Nkosi (1999: 1) cites the example of the Zulu-Anglo war of 1879 and claims that land was the motivation behind the war. Nkosi laments the situation that after Africans were dispossessed of their land, the colonisers commercialised and inflated the price beyond the purchasing power of the original owners. A predicament he acknowledges as a process where “we soon found ourselves in exile in our own country” (1999: 1). This experience has made many South Africans landless today, even after democracy in 1994 (Hambira and Nkosi 1999).

In Nigeria in recent years, there has been evidence which indicates that land expropriation with little or no compensation to the indigenous owners by the government

with their foreign collaborators is greatly on the increase, in the name of investment and job creation (Onoja and Achike 2011; Abdulatif 2012; Mwesigire 2014; Ojo and Omojuwa 2015; CEED 2015; Olofinji and Adoga 2016; CSNAC 2017; Tukur 2017). This action constitutes what is called 'land grab'. Land grab, according to Akachi Odoemene is defined "as a forced acquisition of land without valid consent and reasonable commitment to the future survival of the dispossessed" (2015: 7). Odoemene adds that land is not grabbed if some requirements are met, for instance, if the acquisition deal has consideration for the local or indigenous peoples, a valid consent and non-coercion. It is further stressed that the drivers of land grab are;

1. Many developed countries want to shift from fossil fuel to biofuel which is cheaper, cleaner and renewable in consumption.
2. To ensure the food security of a country.
3. Land on a large-scale is acquired purposely for profit and high returns so that land values are increased (Onoja and Achike 2011; Odoemene 2015).

One case in point is a piece of research conducted by a non-governmental organisation called the Centre for Environmental Education and Development (CEED). This research indicates that some farmers in the Gassol Local Government Council area of Taraba State, Nigeria have been forced out of their ancestral lands which they had been farming for generations. This was to give way for Dominion Farms, an American company, to establish a 30 000 ha rice plantation (CEED 2015; Odoemene 2015). The research further notes that the farmers were left in the dark, since from the beginning, they were not involved in the negotiation and plans for compensation and resettlement even though their farmlands were being occupied by Dominion Farms. This land grab was met with stiff opposition from the indigenous land owners (Odoemene 2015: 5).

A similar situation was found in Jigawa State in Nigeria where a Chinese firm Messrs Lee was brought into the spotlight because it got entangled in a large-scale land acquisition that would have dispossessed over 10 000 local farmers of their land if such a plan had been allowed to be carried out. The plan to grow sugar cane against the will of the majority of the land owners was halted (Premium Times 2016; Tukur 2017). Such

arrangements constitute land grab which the COCIN church condemns in its totality (COCIN Service Handbook 2010: 136).

An issue of land grab was also reported from Kwara State of Nigeria where 2 771 local farmers in Shonga were removed from their land to pave the way for Shonga Farm Holdings (Odoemene 2015: 24). As usual, the local farmers were not consulted to take part in any negotiation. As a result, not all of them were compensated and no adequate plans were made for their resettlement. This is a common experience in almost all African countries. For instance, President Robert Mugabe brought untold displeasure to the local farmers in Zimbabwe through his land reform scheme that took lands from local farmers (Odoemene 2015). In another development, Wilmar International Ltd, a global giant in palm oil trade, has been failing in its obligation to provide infrastructural development to communities affected by a large-scale acquisition programme in Cross Rivers State for palm oil plantations (Ojo 2017). Apart from the land grab saga in some communities in Nigeria as noted above, there are court cases either between individuals or between one community and another in the country (Badejo 2015; Vanguard 2017), which COCIN as a denomination is not in support of.

While COCIN is against land grabbing and land violent conflicts, the COCIN church teaches that land is a gift from God and debunks any inappropriate and fraudulent means of acquiring land. The church further decries how Christians take each other to court about seizing their farms. The COCIN Service Handbook states:

Often, we do not respect our brothers and sisters by seizing their farms, taking them to courts, buying and selling lands not in the right way. We fail to recognize that the people we do these things to are your children and our brothers and sisters (2010: 136).

The expression above is well articulated in the liturgy, but it does not provide any mechanism through which land disputes may be resolved among church members or communities. The confession above calls for fairness and justice and for a harmonious relationship among members living in communities. However, it can be argued that to have access to a neutral justice is a human right. Preventing people from having access to justice when they feel their rights were violated is a way to cover social conflicts that exist in societies. The church should rather help those marginalised to have access to

proper legal assistance so that Christian love and solidarity cannot be seen as a substitute for regular justice. This would only tend to support the violators.

However, it is pertinent to note further that this confession is made only once a year in a Sunday worship service and probably not all congregations and congregants may observe this ritual in their services at the beginning of the farming season. What the liturgy conveys is the message of fairness and justice as corroborated by a statement issued by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) on caring for the creation which sustains humanity, as follows:

Caring, serving, keeping, loving, and living by wisdom – these translate into justice, in political, economic, social, and environmental relationships. Justice in these means honoring the integrity of creation, and striving for fairness within the human family (ELCA 1993: 6).

Although Kareem, Sunkanmi and Kehinde claim that the more land is acquired and cultivated, the more “the standard of living of the people will increase through increased income for farmers” (2016: 1). This claim may be true, but the increase of income only favours the perpetrators of land grab. However, the social, economic and cultural values of the affected farmers and their communities have been ignored (Onoja and Achike 2011; CEED 2015; Odoemene 2015). Therefore, COCIN teachings and beliefs about land encourage justice, fair play and harmonious interaction between individuals and communities for peaceful living.

3.6 COCIN and Land Degradation

In the liturgy there is also a confession of the inability of humanity to maintain the fertility of the land which has led to land degradation. The statement notes

Often, we have not been careful to care for the land by reducing its fertility instead of improving on the fertility of the land. By claiming the land to be ours, we have done what we please with it. We have forgotten that the land is your creation and that it should be improved upon so as to bring glory to you (COCIN Service Handbook 2010: 136).

Land degradation is the gradual decline of soil quality caused through misuse by humans which results in the deterioration of soil's life support to produce food, feed, fibre and fuel (Maiangwa 2007; Jimoh et al. 2011). Experts in the field of environmental

science have identified some of the factors which have led to land degradation in Nigeria; instances of this are the burning of vegetation, over-grazing, fuel-wood extraction, agricultural expansion, population pressure, increase in development projects, pollution, erosion, oil production and fallow land unavailable for agricultural activities (Apiah 2011; Oyekale 2012; Omar et al. 2013; Amao et al. 2013; Macaulay 2014; Shehu and Molyneux 2014; Olofinji 2016). In the light of this, COCIN recognises and teaches that the fertility of the land needs to be improved upon instead of being degraded. One can say that land is degraded by some people because they are not fully aware that the land is part of God's gift to humanity which has to be cared for instead of "claiming the land to be ours" (COCIN Service Handbook 2010: 136). The effort of COCIN through the development arm CCDP teaching pastors and local farmers about the impact of climate change and how they can improve the soil fertility is commendable (Mawash 2015). The ritual confession of the COCIN church acknowledges the tendency that land can lose its fertility and as such, human beings have a responsibility to improve land's fertility. How to improve on land's fertility is not mentioned in the handbook. It is possible to infer that since the majority of the members are agrarians, one expects that the knowledge of how to improve soil fertility through mulching, the planting of trees, the use of organic manure, the capping and selective cutting of trees would all be familiar to the congregation. Through this ritual action that takes place once a year, the church has thus taught its members of the need of caring and improving on the land as a free gift from God.

3.7 Ingratitude by Humankind for God's Provision

One of the themes that can be derived from COCIN's teaching on creation is the failure of humanity to glorify God with what the land produces. This teaching has its basis in the Old Testament where the people of God refused to recognise that God is the one who gave them abundance from their agricultural produce and the wages they earned for which they refused to offer thanksgiving (Mal. 3: 6–10). The liturgy of COCIN says "Lord, we have not glorified you with our crops, the produce of the land, in terms of tithes and first fruits, animals, and our market commodities, based on your word" (COCIN Service Handbook 2010:136). The church teaches that not honouring God with

our substances for example crops, wages and proceeds from trading, is likely to end with impoverishment. For instance, in the Book of Haggai, the Prophet warns that since people neglected God's temple, when they plant their crops and expect a bountiful harvest, they will only get very little and even the little brought home will be blown away by God. When they receive their wages, it will be as if they put it in pockets with holes (Hag.1:10–11). Malachi also fiercely rebuked the people of Israel for not paying their tithes by bringing it into the temple of the Lord and this amount to robbing God (Mal.3: 6–11). According to the Prophet, since God is the Provider of all things and if they obey and honour God with thanksgiving and offerings, God will bless them beyond their imagination.

One of the Hausa hymns (No. 3) used by the COCIN church teaches that humankind is required to praise and honour the Lord by giving offering from our crops, animals and any proceeds from the work of our hands including earned wages. The hymnal reads in the Hausa language, with the translation thereafter, thus:

1. *Abu duk a duniya Ubanmu ne ya yi,
Sai mu yi ta yabonsa, Allah Mahalicci.*

Chorus
*Shi ya kan ba mu ruwa a loton shukawa,
Har amfani gonaki ba za mu rasa ba.*
2. *Ya ba mu hasken rana, mu kama aikinmu.
Duhun dare kyautarsa, mu rika hutawa.*
3. *Duk masu rain a duniya, yak an ciyad da su.
Kifaye da tsuntsaye, ya san bukatarsu.*
4. *Mu kuma Masu Binsa aikin hannunsa ne.
Ubanmu mai kauna mahaliccinmu ne.*

The translation is as follows;

1. All things in the world our Father made them,
Let us keep praising him, God the Creator.

Chorus
He gives us rain in season for us to plant.
We will not lack crops from our farms.

2. He gives us sun shine, for us to work.
The night is his gift, to enable us rest.
3. All the living in the world, he feeds them.
Fishes and birds, he meets their needs.
4. We his followers are the work of his hands.
He is our Father who loves and created us.

The hymn further affirms the belief of COCIN that God is the Creator of everything in the world including humankind. The hymn also affirms that God blesses the people with rain, sun, and crops in due season to meet the needs of humankind; and that God cares for the fishes and other sea animals and the birds of the air by providing them with food. COCIN teaches therefore that people of faith are to praise the Lord as a way of acknowledging that human life depends on what God provides. In addition, I think that another way of showing gratitude is for humanity to take care of the land and seas since God has position us to do so. Failure to do this amounts to ingratitude on our part.

Showing gratitude serves as a form of worship as Habel et al. (2011: 5) note: “we came from the Earth and we cannot survive without all that Earth provides. We have to express awareness of and gratitude for our dependence upon Earth and our relationship with other creatures”. Gratitude to our Creator is fundamental as humans, this is because “prayers of thanksgiving are critical, because they prevent us from taking for granted what has been provided by God” (Habel et al. 2011: 41). Expressing gratitude to God by humankind is a sign of dependence and proves that we are not lords over the created order. Expressing gratitude in other words means participating in the creation order of God by planting trees and caring for what God has created. Having discussed the COCIN’s theology on ecology, the framework proposed by Nick Spencer on why Christians care for the environment is discussed below.

3.8 Nick Spencer’s Biblical Vision of Care for the Environment

The Biblical Vision of Care for the Environment is proposed by Nick Spencer as a distinctive model for Christian response to climate change issues. It forms the basis of why Christians should care for the environment. The main argument of Nick Spencer is

that God cares about all God has created both human and non-human alike and that God sustains it (2009: 79). According to him, this forms the basis of which humankind should as a matter of priority cares for what God has created. He argues that God values creation independent of human existence and Christians who believe in Gods act of creation are called to imitate God by maintaining and caring for the creation. According to Spencer, “human flourishing is deeply bound up with our attitude towards creation, and part of becoming fully human is to take responsibility for the physical world in which we live and to which we belong” (2009: 79). Caring for creation entails obeying the command of Jesus to love our neighbour and to be conscious of how our actions can affect their welfare. In this research, our immediate neighbour is our environment and we have the responsibility of caring for it.

The Biblical Vision of Care for the Environment elaborates further reasons why Christians should care for the creation. Spencer maintains that the creation “will be redeemed and transformed along with our bodies in the new creation, and the work we do now to shape and to care for the world is of eternal significance” (2009: 79). Some main themes from the framework are discussed in more detail below.

3.8.1 Some Biblical Texts Supporting Creation Care

Nick Spencer compares the creation story in Genesis Chapter 1 and John Chapter 1 to buttress the fact that God chose to create the universe out of God’s own free will and for God’s purpose. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen.1: 1). Similarly, the Gospel of John in the first verses echoes the fact that God is the Creator of all things “Through him [Jesus] all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (Jn.1:3). It is because of Christ that all things hold together (Col.1: 16–17). It means without him the world would fall apart and be chaotic. From the first chapter of Genesis, it is affirmed that “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good” (Gen. 1: 31). This shows that God is glorified in God’s creation and reciprocally God’s creation reflected something of God’s character too. That is why the Psalmist says: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (Ps.19:1). According to Spencer; “God created a world that is good and beautiful,

independent of our presence in it. The goodness of the Earth does not drive solely from the presence of people in it” (2009: 82). To support this further, Psalm 148 points out that the animals, birds, vegetation, mountains, hills, weather, water, and sea creatures all offer praise to God in their own right as God’s creatures.

God caring for creation is expressed in the Book of Job, when the Lord asks Job a series of rhetorical questions. “Who cuts a channel for the torrent of rain, and a path for the thunderstorm, to water a land where no man lives, a desert with no-one in it, to satisfy a desolate wasteland and make it sprout with grass?” (Job 38: 25–27). Specifically, in Chapters 38–39, he listed ways in which God cares for and displays God’s sovereignty over creation in the universe. It ranges from God’s dominion from the foundation of the Earth to the stars; inanimate creatures are not left out which include the sea, lighting, hail, snow, and the light; to care also for animals such as the wild donkey, oxen, the raven, the lioness, horse, ostrich and the hawks. It is astonishing to know that the eagle soars at God’s command.

In addition, Psalm 65: 9–13 gives a description of how God is intimately involved in caring for all creation. “You are for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. . . You drench its furrows and level its ridges; you soften it with showers and bless its crops. You crown the year with your bounty, and your carts overflow with abundance”. In the light of the above, God’s loving kindness is not limited to humankind only, but also to non-human as well. Nick Spencer captures it well and it is worth quoting substantially.

The language of blessing the Earth, of richness and abundance portray God not as merely maintaining the created world, but as lavishing his goodness upon it, caring for it . . . The language here of God’s loving care for the Earth, and the Earth’s joyful response, suggests that God’s sustenance of creation is more than a mechanical exercise to provide a habitat for humanity. Rather it implies that God delights in the world he has created and loves to pour out his goodness upon it (2009: 83).

When God took human form and came to the Earth in the person of Jesus, he expressed the same concern for what he had created. He told his hearers that God places value even on creatures that may seem lowliest in their sight. For example, “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from

the will of your Father” (Matt. 10: 29). When Jesus’ disciples were out there in the raging sea and were afraid that their boat would sink, he exercised his authority over the wind and he calmed the sea with a word (Mark 4:41). Nick Spencer maintains that “from the environmental perspective, by caring for the non-human created order we are worshipping God by allowing it to give glory to God as he intended it to” (2009: 83). This further supports the liturgy of COCIN which explains how sometimes “we are thankless people; we forget that the rain and the sun are gifts from you” (COCIN Service Handbook 2010: 135). This is to say that when we acknowledge and appreciate what God has created then we should not take it for granted. Spencer argues “To love Jesus and to grow to be like him is to care for the things that he cares for, to take care of the things he has created and has blessed us with” (2009: 84). According to Edward Brown the problems humanity faces today whether political, economic, social and most of all environmental “are due to human failure to choose God’s goals” (Brown 2016: 27). Therefore, if the Bible shows clearly that God cares for what he has created both human and non-human, humankind is obliged to do same. Our goals should be the same as that of God’s, that is, to love, care and value his creation.

3.8.2 Responsibility towards Nonhuman Creation

Having discussed God’s relationship to creation one can go further to examine what the bible teaches about humankind’s relationship to the rest of other creatures. Humans, animals and birds were formed from the ground according to Genesis 2. God formed humans specifically from the dust of the ground. Genesis 1: 29–30 indicates that humankind shares in common the same food as other animals. Psalm 104: 10–30 describes God as the one who provides in abundance for both humans and animals at the same time. “To care for creation is therefore to care for a system of which we are a part and upon which we can utterly depend” (Spencer 2009: 86). Rabbi Lawrence Troster agrees with Spencer that humans have a deep connection with the earth, for everything we eat, drink and use all comes from the earth. “So we really come from the earth and we will really go back to it when we die” (Troster 2011: 3).

It is pertinent to note therefore that the flourishing of humans and the well-being of the rest of creation are inseparable in the biblical narrative (Spencer 2009:86). On the other hand, it is argued that when humans did not meet God's requirements and rebelled against God the Creator, it resulted in consequences that were harmful both to the physical environment and their well-being (Kornblith 2007; Garver and Brown 2009; Spencer 2009). As a result, the formerly harmonious relationships between humans themselves and between animals and humans became hostile (Gen. 3: 15; 4:14). In the Old Testament there is a connection between the fertility of the land and obedience to God (Gen. 26: 12; Deut. 11: 13–15); and conversely when humans disobey God's instructions, it has a resultant effect on the land which become infertile and unproductive (Deut. 11: 16–17; Hos. 4:1–3; Hag. 7: 1–11). This shows that the well-being of humanity is tied up with the health of the environment. Bery is right when he says that for humankind to have responsibility towards creation the following principles should guide such motivation: 1) respect and care for the community of life, 2) ecological integrity, 3) social and economic justice, 4) democracy, nonviolence and peace (2016: 114). Base on this creation is to be treated with integrity and with every sense of responsibility by humans. We are to live as members of the community of life who will resist any movement or attempt "against all that would destroy God's creation, trusting in his grace for the future" (Moo 2016: 29).

3.8.3 Privilege given to Humans to Rule Creation

Although humans are part of God's creation, there is an assertion in the Bible that makes them special. God created mankind "in his own image" (Gen. 1: 17) and they are given the privilege and a command by God to rule over and take care of other creatures (Gen. 1:28; 2:15). The context of *Imago Dei* implies that humans relate to the natural environment. Apart from giving humankind opportunity to rule and have dominion over the earth, God blessed humanity and other creatures and commanded them to be fruitful (Gen. 1: 28). In Genesis 2: 15, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it". Spencer points out that the word translated as "work" is *abad*, which carries the sense of "to serve"; and the word translated as "take care of" is *shamar*, which means "to keep, guard, protect". He

stresses that “The dominion that humanity is given over nature is not to be one of exploitative and selfish rule, but rather one of careful and just service” (2009: 87). Sleeth concurs that “We were given permission to use the earth, but not to abuse it” (2006: 35). Our dominion is expected to be modelled after God’s dominion which by loving what was created. But humanity’s dominion is characterised by exploitation leading to huge ecological problems. Brown (2016: 21) puts it “God seeks our best, and those God cares for blossom and flourish under his care; we, by contrast, seek from creation what is best for ourselves, while creation withers and dies under our hands”. Therefore, even if the dominion from the Book of Genesis is to be taken literally, it means godly dominion which promotes life and not destruction (Sleeth 2006: 36). So, from the Christian perspective, humanity’s rule has limits. According to the Psalmist: “The highest heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth he has given to mankind” (Ps. 115:16). God is sovereign and humankind is answerable to God with its responsibility to care for creation. Stewardship as a concept has some elements of human responsibility to care for creation, as strongly argued by John Hall (see Hall 1991).

According to Spencer, “in Jesus we find both the model of perfected humanity and the means by which we may begin to live in a way that is pleasing to him” (2009: 89). The expectation is that Christians are to partake of Christ perfected humanity and are called to work within the framework of exercising the servant rulership over the whole of what God has created. It is expected that humans should not take the earth as a resource to be exploited but something that needs to be cared for and protected. Spencer (2009: 89) then maintains that “we are called to this servant rule as one of the means by which we may become fully human and flourish as we were originally intended to”. Therefore, humankind is to care for and protect the environment from any harmful effect. This is the reason that humankind is called as “servant” (Spencer 2009: 89). This is well articulated by Sleeth when he says:

When we exterminate a species, we forever lose dominion over it. We cancel God’s blessings on a species when we destroy it. Furthermore, God placed these creatures at the service of humans, which is to say they are meant to aid and sustain us. When we kill off a species we go against God’s dual blessings: We cancel the life God gave to the species, and we forever lose the benefits of that species to humanity” (2006: 36).

In other words, the success of humanity is directly proportional to how much it cares for the environment. One can conclude here that caring for other non-human creatures and the environment is not optional for humankind. It is a necessity which guarantees humanity survival.

3.8.4 Command to Love our Neighbours

It will be mistakenly interpreted if we subject the word “neighbour” only to one human’s relations to another. The words of Jesus in Mark 12: 30–31 is very important when viewed holistically. My understanding of Jesus’ statement in Mark 12: 30–31 “love your neighbour as yourself” translates the realm of humanity into that of the environment. Here Spencer caution that we need to beware of overemphasising human’s “spiritual needs at the expense of their material needs” (2009: 89). Our immediate neighbour in the context of this research includes also our environment.

Spencer (2009: 91) contends “Our neighbors include all those of different beliefs and different cultures ... the love of neighbors quite obviously includes caring for their physical needs and their safety”. From the ecological point of view, it means that whatever happens to those far from or near us, irrespective of their culture or geographic location, should be our concern. Because ecology is living in harmony with nature, it is a genuine outcome of reverence, love and concern for God’s creation (Chetti 1996: 61). For Spencer, even the unborn can inherit from us the consequences of our actions, either by suffering or flourishing accordingly (2009: 91).

3.8.5 Eschatological Hope

Eschatology simply means the study or doctrine of the last things (Sleeth 2006: 37). It deals with the questions regarding the “consummation of history and the completion of God’s work in the world” (Chia and Katongole 2008). Nick Spencer argues that the theme of eschatology should be the reason for Christians to care for the environment. In his words:

We care about creation because of its eternal destiny, because God plans 'to reconcile to himself all things' (Col.1: 20) really does include all things. We ought to work for the restoration and flourishing of creation as part of our work for the kingdom of God, to see God's will 'done on earth as it is in heaven', and to work in this world in confidence that what we build that is trustworthy and true will not be rendered futile by the future coming of Christ and judgment, but will be taken up into Christ and fulfilled in the new heaven and new Earth (2009: 92).

Rand (2000: 146), in agreement with Spencer (2009) maintains that "creation matters because God made it, God sustains it, and God will redeem it; if we love God with all we have, then we will share his concerns". When humankind is conscious that God will redeem creation in the future, then the stewardship of other creatures will become a matter of concern. Chia and Katongole suggest that the church is the representation of the people of God and is the symbol of the future that is anticipating the "new human community in the new heavens and the new earth" (2008: 280).

Christian's response to the present environmental problems should therefore come from the conviction about the end time. Chetti (1996: 60) admits that "total salvation of man is possible not only with man himself but all creatures are redeemed". This redemption could be present and future as well. Regarding the restoration of the earth, Sleeth also admits that "Knowledge of an end time reminds believers to double their efforts to do the will of God. Knowing that God promises to restore the earth is a reminder for us to do our part every day to help" (Sleeth 2006: 37–38).

Campbell (2010: 151) on his part asserts that it will be "A future era of peace and justice under the reign of God" (2010: 151). He adds that our environmental context is characterised by numerous challenges. As the church becomes prophetic in its critique to the injustice that is done to the environment, a voice of promise is also required to assure that change is possible when humanity takes responsibility of renewing their relationships with one another and the environment (Campbell 2010: 152).

3.9 Sallie McFague's Planetary Theology: An Introduction

Theology that is relevant is the theology that takes its context into consideration. According Sallie McFague: "Theology takes place within a context, a worldview of who

we are and where we fit” (McFague 2001: 71). She claims that our worldview about God and the world, and where we human beings are, can give us a sense of proportion. Reflecting on the American culture she claims that the right of the individual to financial and personal fulfilment is what counts most. According to this, our culture also plays a role in shaping our attitude. She contends that in our present dispensation, society seems to lose the sense of proportion when “too much” is still not enough. McFague then opines that: “There is no religion that elevates the proud, the vain, and the greedy” (2001: 71). Because of the ecological problems being experienced globally, the call for a critical and sober reflection on our position on earth in relation to human beings and nature is emphasised.

Sallie McFague’s Planetary Theology interprets two worldviews. One worldview is based on economics while the second is based on the ecological worldview. The economic worldview deals with how we live together in the “household called Earth” (2001: 72). It is worthy to note at this juncture that Sallie McFague does not support the economic worldview, rather she argues in support of the ecological worldview. Economics, ecology and ecumenicity have the same root “oikos” in Greek. So, if the universal household called Earth is to survive and flourish, there are certain house rules that must be kept and obeyed. The house rules are ecological, economic ones, and are responsible for the just division of basic resources among all the members of the family of life (McFague 2001: 72; Hadad 2015: 195–196).

McFague explains that the economic worldview sees the planet as a corporation, as a group of individuals drawn together to benefit its members by the use of natural resources. On the other hand, the ecological worldview sees the planet more like a community or an organism that survives, prospers and flourishes through “the interrelationship and interdependence of its many parts, both human and nonhuman” (McFague 2001: 72). In comparison, McFague explains that the economic worldview which sees the planet as a corporation leads to exploitation and is injurious to nature and to poor people. The ecological worldview that sees the planet as a community or

like an organism is healthier for the planet and its inhabitants. I shall now examine these two worldviews in a more detail and offer a critique afterwards.

3.9.1 Planetary Theology: The Economic Worldview

Economics is based on dividing up whatever resource that is scarce, among competing uses and users. Therefore, to make decisions based on economically related issues, money is there to decide the economic value of something (McFague 2001:75). Other values that are supposed to be considered according to McFague are the health of a community, recreational opportunities, beauty of other life-forms and concern for their well-being, the desire to see our children clothed and fed well, and our sense of responsibility for the future generations. She contends that economics cannot claim to be neutral, but it serves the interest of some people possibly those making these economic decisions. She argues that the butcher, brewer, and baker are not producing their goods only to meet our needs, “but from their regard for their own self-interest” (2001: 77). So, the argument is this: economics is not value-free but its chief intention and value is the gratification of individuals who are competing for scarce resources or commodities. Regarding who benefits from the economic system and whether the planet earth can bear the burden is not part of the concern of economics (McFague 2001: 77).

McFague stresses the assumption of the economic worldview that human beings are self-interested individuals and will always create a syndicate, even a global one to achieve profit. McFague then claims that the goal of human effort from the economic worldview of human nature is individualism and the goal is growth (2001: 78). She adds that the growth may appear to benefit all but it is not possible. Hadad (2015: 219) concurs that “the current economic system is not going to solve poverty”. This calls for an economic model that takes cognisance of all aspects of life without satisfying only the few at the expense of the majority. God’s economy is proposed as an alternative that will deal with the imbalance. “God’s economy is simply God’s rules for ensuring that the earth sustains human life, and that human life respects the sustaining power of the earth” (Hadad 2015: 220).

With her American background, McFague argues that gratifying individuals and the value of growth is already problematic and is not possible to sustain, since not all people on earth may enjoy the type of Western middle-class lifestyle. She further states that considering Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a growth indicator leaves out many other values. For instance, “The GDP counts “harmful” activities the same as “beneficial” ones, the clear-cutting of an old-growth forest as well as crime and social decay – whatever brings money into the pockets of some individuals counts” (McFague 2001: 80). But activities that do not involve money are often neglected such as volunteer work, care for the elderly and children at home, and unpaid housework. In summary the economic worldview values the individual and growth: that is, the satisfaction of the desires of individuals by means of constant growth. Within this context human beings are seen as separate from one another and living in isolation from the earth. They can only enter into contract with other human beings for financial benefit and “... vying for the possession of scarce natural resources, which, whether animals, vegetables, or mineral, are seen as objects for our use” (McFague 2001: 81).

3.9.2 Who are we? We are Consumers

McFague traced from the American context that history, religion, political science and economics combined and created an image of human life and our position in the world which is focused more on personal acquisition (2001: 82). Based on the assumption that many Americans have lost the sense of the individual in community, human life, its rights and responsibilities no longer start with a strong sense of solidarity towards other people. However, people live in communities such as families, towns, cities, countries as well as religious and social communities, but “the image we have of human life is not fundamentally relational” (McFague 2001: 82). Reflecting on the American culture she claims that the right of the individual to financial and personal fulfilment is what counts most. Buttressing this point further, McFague explains that individual rights and not their responsibilities for the welfare of others are first when many Americans express pride in their country.

According to Sallie McFague, the supremacy of the economic worldview is shaped by consumerism. Consumerism is the belief that it is good for an individual person or a society to purchase and use large quantity of goods and services. She laments that the North American lifestyle is characterised by consumerism and many people from different parts of the world are imitating this kind of lifestyle. It is generally accepted as “the good life” and it seems no one is ready to question and/or challenge it. This, however, is having a huge impact on the environment and the natural resources. The goal of consumerism which is motivated by economic worldview is happiness and it promotes the ownership of things and activities that require spending money as a means by which one will derive happiness. Consumerism defines and interprets who we are and the tendency is that it becomes natural, inevitable and conventional (McFague 2001: 84; Jacobs 2016). Greentumble (2016) concurs that consumerism has become so natural that many people no longer realise that it is a problem. That is why so many people can devote themselves to working long hours to get the reward; others turn to debt to keep up the good life and happiness. McFague argues further that consumerism is a systemic phenomenon which is deeply soaked in all political and economic structures of the world; and the culture of the world today is shaped hugely as a “trade market” (2001:84). The trade market has five key players and these are producers, advertisers, the media, national governments, and transnational corporations (McFague 2001: 84–85). The chief goal of advertising is to create and mobilise customers for the commodities or goods manufactured by producers while government gives support through tax subsidies and regulations, and the transnational corporations move the goods across the planet with the assistance of free-trade agreements. The aim of all these arrangements is to make profit for the owners of production.

Consumerism has effects on the environment which impact both humans and non-humans alike. Economists and ecologists confirm that excessive consumerism causes environmental degradation, pollution, global inequality, obesity, deforestation and climate change (Chilongo 2010; Phillips 2015; Greentumble 2016; Jacobs 2016). It is opined that we are consuming the earth resources at the rate which our planet is unable to replenish (Greentumble 2016). The idea is that, as the demand for consumption

risers, more space for agriculture is needed for food production and in many cases vast areas of forests are cleared for such purposes resulting in deforestation. Hadad (2015: 204) asserts: “Human agency, human interaction in community and upon the earth, human labour, and thus human economy is the fundamental cause of the earth crisis”. Therefore, Phillips (2015) suggests that the choices people make can hugely mitigate the effects of climate change on the environment. Therefore moderation, contentment and sustainability are essential for people’s well-being on the earth; as continuous consumerism has a great potential for having negative consequences on people’s well-being.

Therefore, the argument here is that consumerism is leaving a huge deficit on the Nigerian environment. For instance, a recent report shows that illegal logs of rosewood worth millions of United States dollars have been smuggled into China from Nigeria (Agbota 2017). This has denuded several forests in some parts of Nigeria destroying the biodiversity in these areas. There is a claim that Nigeria’s forest cover has been depleted to the extent that only about 7% now remains (Aliyu and Onuorji 2017). If these reports are something to go by, one can say that consumerism in whatever form whether using wood, oil and gas, gold, platinum, the production of agricultural food items often leaves a destructive impact on the ecological make-up of the environment.

3.9.3 The Ecological Worldview

Ecology is the study of relationships that work well in community (McFague 2001; Bauckham 2010). Therefore, ecological economics supports the allocation of scarce resources to enable the community to work together in harmonious relationship. The focus of the ecological worldview is not entirely on humankind, but human beings can also benefit from the whole system. The benefit is not through acquiring wealth for ourselves by the exchange of value but through sharing in the basics of a good life which is the use of value (McFague 2001: 99). McFague adds that this economics is called “economics for community”. This is how the household is managed to increase the use value to all members of the household over long periods of time. The main concern of ecological economics is community, justice and sustainability (McFague

2001: 99). Ecological economics suggests that people cannot survive and flourish unless they accept their complete dependence on one another on the planet. In addition, this worldview stresses that human need is more basic than human greed because humans are relational beings. What is critical to the interpretation of 'who we are' and 'where we fit in the world' from both the economic and ecological worldviews is the allocation of resources, distributive justice, and sustainability (McFague 2001: 100).

The ecological worldview is also ethically inclined. It has a vision of how humankind ought to live on earth in relation to the perceived reality of where and how humankind lives (McFague 2001: 100). Although resources may be owned by an individual, however: "The individual exists only within the community and the community is composed entirely of these individuals" (McFague 2001: 104). This means that there is no conflict between the individual and the community, they depend on one another. The earth is not just simply seen as an environment where human activities take place; instead, "it is what has made us who we are and what sustains our every second of existence" (McFague 2001: 101). McFague further claims that if humankind refuses to acknowledge who we are, where and how we live, then it means that we are destroying the very foundation of our existence. Therefore, the goal of the ecological worldview is to balance individual freedom with the integrity of the community. The idea is that community must be able to survive and thrive first (sustainability), and this will be possible only if all members have access to its resources (distributive justice). The ecological worldview begins with sustainability and then distributive justice and not with the allocation of resources among competing persons. When sustainability and the sense of community are taken into consideration, then the allocation of resources among people in the community can take place fairness and equity (McFague 2001: 102).

Sustainability means to nurture, save and support whatever people depend on as a source of livelihood. Sustainability is the foundation of the good life for all and this includes not only a basic living standard but opportunities for cultural, technological, educational, social, and spiritual development (McFague 2001: 105). Eluu (2015: 128)

claims that there has been a rise in religious activities and many people have become influenced by religious ideologies. Therefore, if religious leaders advocate for environmental care, it will instil values in their adherents to take responsibility for ecological issues because they relate to their faith. Ngome attributes the inability of humankind to sustain non-human creatures to the corrupt tendencies of human nature (Ngome 2015: 13–14). To deal with such a situation, it is important for humans to know that “God is calling us not to violate the earth” (Uka 2014: 257). Ogboru and Anga (2015: 12) are of the view that in Nigeria there exists an unsustainable use of forest resources and recommended that government should introduce charges and taxes on the extraction of natural resources to discourage people from plundering them.

For the planet earth and its life-forms to remain in a healthy state, individuals must have access to the earth’s resources upon which survival and flourishing depend. McFague points out that both poverty and excessive wealth cause harm to nature; for instance, the poor people use the environment especially for firewood as a source of energy for cooking while the rich pollute the air with greenhouse gases in the course of production (McFague 2001:109). Distributive justice does not mean that all people must have the same or equal income. However, sustainability is not possible if humankind destroys nature either through excessive wealth or excessive poverty (McFague 2001: 109–110). The implication of this for sustainability according to McFague is, “Our joy and sorrow, our gain and loss, our ‘for better or worse’, are tied to our need and responsibility for one another” (2001: 111). It is argued that God created humankind and gave the mandate of sustaining other creatures under their care including plants, animals, fish of the sea, and birds of the air (TOW 2014).

McFague explains further that in an ecological society “the good life is defined not by the individual accumulation of money, but by the use of money to help people to have decent, fulfilling lives. The good life is not having ‘more and more’, but ‘enough’” (McFague 2001: 111). Here money is being redefined in terms of its use value and not acquisition. Money is not the end here but a means to an end. The aim is for us to have the healthy development of humankind on a sustainable earth. This is contrary to the

economic worldview which assumes that happiness is derived from the accumulation of material wealth. From the ecological worldview, happiness is not derived from the possession of things far more than for the basic needs of life, “but from community, nurture, friendship, love, and dedication to higher purposes” (McFague 2001: 115). In the light of the above, the concept of frugality is adopted as a lifestyle that will foster the good life in a community. Frugality here means using food or money only as much as is necessary, and it also means the efficient usage of any given resources in moderation. McFague states that frugality is having a “sense of enough and the willingness to live within material limitations so that others may also have enough” (2001: 116).

3.9.4 Critique of McFague’s Planetary Theology

Having discussed the economic and ecological worldviews of Sallie McFague’s Planetary Theology, at this juncture it is important to offer some critique. It was noted that the economic worldview has shaped our culture and how we interpreted life. The economic worldview influences our lifestyle leading to consumerism seeing earth’s resources and commodities for personal aggrandisement. Consumerism is not sustainable with regards to the planet earth and its resources. On the other hand, the ecological worldview is based on relationships that work well. It promotes community, interdependence and sharing. This worldview believes in distributive justice in the community. Its goal is to ensure all citizens have access to basic human needs such as food, shelter, clothing, quality education, and the security or safety of lives and property.

The first thing to critique is the idea of the good life proposed by Sallie McFague; which means having basic needs such as food, clothing, education, shelter and healthcare. From the American context this may be achieved, but from the African context and especially Nigeria this is far from being achievable. This is because the majority of the population are poor (Jacobs 2016; Adedayo et al. 2017). People depend so much on the available resources to survive. For instance, in Nigeria there is no stable electricity supply which people may use for cooking and not many can afford cooking gas for domestic use. This has put a lot of pressure on the trees in some forests leading to deforestation (Ajibade, Sunday and Okeke 2017d). Secondly, Nigeria is a rich country in

terms of its oil, but the wealth of the nation is in the hands of a few individuals. Corruption is like a canker worm eating deep into the economic and political fabric of the country. This is evident in the amount of money being retrieved from some past government officials and some business moguls by the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (Eyoboka and Latona 2017; Ononchie and Onyekwere 2017; Prinewill 2017 and Shiklam 2017). Having the “good life” and having “enough” therefore may not be attainable in Nigeria at the moment because the government does not give any social grants as a welfare package to its citizens.

Having a good life with all its ramifications in Nigeria could be a nightmare. An example of this problem is the lack of healthcare. The President of the country himself had to travel to the United Kingdom for his medical treatment where he spent three months, which is something the ordinary citizen would not be able to do (Ehikioya 2017; Mojeed 2017). This proved that the public healthcare sector in the country cannot handle referral cases such as that of President Muhammadu Buhari (Sotunde 2017). If the number one citizen of the country had to travel overseas for treatment, I wonder what would take for an ordinary citizen to have access to a good health care delivery in Nigeria. I will insist on the premise above that the idea of good life proposed by McFague may not be achievable in the Nigerian context. This is because Nigeria and other southern countries are trapped in poverty and inequality because of the way the global economic system works. Coloniality and capitalism created an imbalanced geopolitical organisation in which southern countries have their riches exploited for the well-being of those in the centre of capitalism system (Haddad 2015: 106).

Another key theme in McFague’s Planetary Theology is sustainability. If someone for instance does not have money to buy food and the only commodity available is a tree which could be felled for firewood or to make charcoal for sale, how can that person live sustainably without utilising what seems to be the only option? If the elephants and the rhinos are the only potential commodities available that the person can poach and exchange their ivory for financial benefit, how can such a person resist such an opportunity? This can be compared to a biblical story which in Israel there was a time

when they were under a siege for a long time and it resulted in a severe famine; and the elderly people resorted to killing their babies for food (2 Kings 6: 24–33). The Nigerian forestry laws are weak, leaving room for citizens to be involved in the illegal trade of timber (Nweke 2017, Ijaiya and Joseph 2014; Odoma et al. 2017). From the above premise, living sustainably in Nigeria is still far from reality, except if a strong political will is put in place for a radical re-orientation on its values with regards to ecological issues.

Furthermore, Sallie McFague states that the good life is not having “more and more” but it is an idea of having “enough” (2001: 111). According to John Fox (2009) the “theology of enough” emerged in the 1970s from two publications: 1) *Enough is Enough* by John Taylor and 2) *Habitat for Humanity* by Millard and Linda Fuller. The former is built on the concept of shalom in Israel where every member of the community is expected to enjoy safety of mind, body and estate (Hershey 2017: 1). It portrays completeness or a sense of wholeness that encourages every Israeli to give back generously something in some way so that his/her fellow Israeli will not lack. The latter publication is based on the Christian understanding of needs and wants. Fox (2009: 1) notes “there are sufficient resources in the world for the needs of everybody, but not enough for the greed of even a significant minority”. From the Christian perspective, believers are not supposed to have people among them who lack because they are expected to share with others so that all will have enough of their basic needs met. However, David Waters (2009) noted that many people in the world today have put their wants above their needs, so, they are unable to meet their own wants and neither are they able to support others. Ksarant (2017: 1) concurs and states: “We live in a time of unbridled greed. There seems to be no limit to how rich a rich person wants to be”.

Therefore, in the Nigerian context, the idea of the “theology of enough” may be realised only if Christians adheres to Paul’s teaching on contentment (Philippians 4: 10-13). But substantial reports filtering from Nigeria indicates that poverty, corruption, human trafficking, poor nutrition, kidnapping, unemployment, and the selling of human parts seems to be on the increase (Obi 2017; Mudashir and Krishi 2017; Ajayi 2017; Shittu

2017; Ewepu 2017; Aliyu 2017; Ramon 2017; Atoyebi 2017). The recent case of human trafficking in Libya where several Nigerians are perpetrators and victims is a good example that speaks about the situation in the country (Joseph 2017; Ojeme and UNICEF 2017; Mba 2015). Therefore, proposing a “theology of enough” for the Nigerian context may be a matter of theory but in practical terms, I conclude that Nigeria is still far from it. The church in Nigeria especially COCIN, in order to make more impact in the context of environmental degradation with special reference to deforestation, will have to re-examine its approach to ecological issues affecting its members in various locations in the country. To achieve this, a radical re-orientation of the wealthy in the church towards the need of sharing their wealth with those who are in need, would be necessary. Amy McGloughlin maintains that if things are shared in common, then “it means everything changes. Our sense of what is ours changes. Our sense of what is enough changes” (McGloughlin 2015:3).

3.10 Summary

This chapter has contributed to the research by shedding light on the theology of COCIN on ecology. It discussed a brief history of COCIN and the Vision and Mission of COCIN. It emphasised that the COCIN theology on ecology believes that creation is a gift from God and by so doing, condemns the injustice that many Nigerians have done to the land. This research also treated subthemes such as the COCIN theology of land, the ingratitude of humanity and land degradation. It was discovered that COCIN as a denomination acknowledges that every member of the church should act responsibly towards the issue of land, so as to renew its fertility.

It was also identified that COCIN does not have a specific theology on ecology, but it was revealed that its Service Handbook contains teachings that show some level of awareness on how the members should care for the creation. While the Service Handbook says very little on ecology, it was also found out that COCIN pastoral training curriculum in its theological institutions does not have any provision for the study of ecology or its related disciplines.

Lastly the Nick Spencer's Biblical Vision of Care for the Environment was used as a theoretical framework to explain the reasons why Christians should be involved in the care of God's creation. Sallie McFague's Planetary Theology was also used as a framework in this chapter as well. This framework has two worldviews which are the economic worldview and the ecological worldview. The economic worldview has the notion of making profit and it is undergirded by the capitalist ideology and manifested by individualistic lifestyle. This ideology is also driven by profit which is harmful and injurious to the planet earth since resources are exploited for profit. On the other hand, the ecological worldview is driven by community, sharing, distributive justice, sustainability and frugality for the well-being of all people. This model is concerned with the interconnectedness of creation in which one part depends on the other. If one part is inflicted with harm, there will be a resultant impact on the other. The ecological worldview recognises that there is a value exchange within its scope. However, it is not for the personal interest of an individual but for the well-being of the community.

The next chapter is devoted to assessing ways in which the COCIN Community Development Programme (CCDP) is conducting its development programme and how it is contributing to overcoming deforestation in Panyam district and its environs.

CHAPTER FOUR: CCDP AND REDUCING DEFORESTATION

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter Three of this research the theology of COCIN on ecology was discussed. The concentration was based on the church service handbook and other relevant documents of the church. The common observation was that even the hymnal (The Hausa Hymnal (Littafin Wakoki)) used by the COCIN church also contains songs related to creation and some of these songs were examined. The findings in Chapter Three of this research revealed that COCIN theological institutions do not have a place for theology of ecology and conservation.

The focus of this chapter is to answer the third research question: How is the CCDP conducting its programme in an effort to overcome deforestation in Panyam district and its environs? This will achieve the third and final objective of this research which is to examine the contribution of CCDP as the development arm of COCIN and its contribution to reducing ecological problems such as deforestation in Panyam district and its environs.

In order to achieve this successfully, the chapter will provide a brief historical background of CCDP and why the SUM missionaries included rural development as one of their missionary endeavours. Furthermore, the vision and mission, objectives, identity, core values and programme areas of the CCDP will also be examined. The chapter will further discuss CCDP sensitisation workshops for schools and communities and to COCIN pastors; and how these efforts are helping to curb deforestation. Finally, the chapter will examine some sermon notes obtained from some pastors in COCIN to assess whether their preaching reflects awareness of ecological problems or not.

4.2 Brief Historical Background of CCDP

The COCIN Community Development Programme (CCDP) is under the department of health and social services of COCIN. It is the development arm of COCIN which started in 1997 (CCDP Profile n. d: 1). It is pertinent to go back to see how the CCDP

developed from when the missionaries first came. From 1904 onward when the mission work was progressing, the missionaries were committed “to deliver community-based Integrated Wholistic development services to communities” (CCDP Profile n. d: 1). As they were sharing the gospel in the rural areas, they saw various needs there, such as health problems and poor yields of crops (Goshit et al. 2013: 191–192). As a result, the Rural Development Programme (RDP) was established in 1957 by Peter Batchelor, an expatriate missionary, who was an agriculturalist from Britain. The Rural Development Programme was called “Faith and Farm” and in Hausa “Kyautata Zaman Kyauye”, meaning “improving the rural life” (Goshit et al. 2013: 191–192). In 1977, the Rural Health Programme (RHP) was founded by Normal A. Hohl, a medical doctor from Germany (CCDP Profile n. d: 1).

According to Goshit et al., as the SUM missionaries evangelised the natives, they were able to identify some basic needs that required urgent attention in various communities in northern Nigeria. One of such needs was for medication. After careful consideration, they decided to make use of medicine as a means of evangelism. As the natives were benefiting from the medical services, it was further observed by the missionaries that “many of them, the native people, went hungry for days for lack of food” (Goshit et al. 2013: 190). This need warranted agriculture to become a priority in order to bring succour to the native people and meet the challenge of lack of food. In view of the above, the missionaries developed a policy to improve the development of rural communities as they continued with evangelism. Goshit et al. (2013: 191) explains further that the missionaries observed the poverty level of the natives and this further necessitated the incorporation of farming techniques into the curriculum of the training of evangelists and teachers in Gindiri Bible School. The aim was for the mission to train young people that would earn their living in farming instead of engaging in white collar jobs. While this idea was commendable, it could said to be one-sided in the sense that it was the missionaries that determined what these young Christians would engage in as their professions. The young Christians were not allowed to choose which professional training they wanted to engage in but they were trained according to needs identified by the missionaries (Goshit et al. 2013: 192).

The pioneer missionaries then adopted a holistic approach to evangelism among several communities as they continued to reach out to the natives. Their desire was to meet both the spiritual and physical needs of the people. That was why Peter Batchelor the founder of RDP (also known as Faith and Farm) said in his report to one of the committee that “we wanted to show that the means whereby a man and his family live are of concern to God whom we serve” (CCDP Newsletter 2007: 4). This reveals that the missionaries were able to meet the needs of the people by recognising both their spiritual and physical needs. The challenges people faced during the earlier time of mission work may not necessarily have been the same challenges that are facing the church today. The CCDP observed that “you can never take for granted that something you think has been understood will continue to be understood as the years go on” (CCDP Newsletter 2007: 5). The missionaries envisioned that things they had identified to be challenges in their time may not necessarily have continued to be the same problems in years to come. In the 21st century the challenges that are affecting humanity seem to be ecological in nature (Odiogor 2010; Okeke 2017a). The missionaries concentrated on improving health-care, education, food production, nutrition, and to empowering communities to reduce poverty as they were being evangelised (Tang'an 2013: 137–152; Zamani 2013: 266–276). At present, the major challenge that humanity faces is that of climate change and environmental and other ecological challenges.

In Nigeria, ecological problems like deforestation, environmental degradation, shortage of water, and soil erosion are affecting the social relationships and livelihoods in the country (Odiogor 2010; Nalong 2016; Okeke 2017a; CCDP Report 2014–2015; CCDP Report 2016). As a way of solving some of the problems in the past, the missionaries incorporated farming techniques into the curriculum of Bible School in order to meet the needs of that time in making sure that the need for food was taken care of. In more modern times, engaging with ecological related courses in theological and pastoral training is of great importance since people are faced with environmental problems both locally and globally (Gnanakan 2008; Hallman 2000; DeWitt 2000).

4.2.1 Vision and Mission of CCDP

Like many other organisations, CCDP has a Vision and a Mission that drive and guide its operation. The Vision states that “CCDP envisions empowered communities championing their development sustainably”. This Vision is anchored on a Mission which states “to empower the less privileged communities for wholistic and sustainable development to reduce poverty” (CCDP Profile n. d: 1). A careful observation of the Vision and Mission shows that the primary focus of CCDP is empowering less privileged communities on poverty reduction and not on reducing ecological problems.

The organisation works with communities to identify their felt needs. Felt needs here refer to problems facing a particular community that require an immediate remedial approach to overcome them. After a need assessment has been carried out and the needs identified, then the necessary support is provided to these communities: for example, the building of schools, culverts, roads, clinics and dispensaries depending on the priority of each community (Gwaivangmin 2007: 15; Goshit et al. 2013: 194). In the projects listed in the example above, it will be observed that issues that are related to ecological problems such as deforestation, desertification, soil erosion, pollution and environmental degradation are not mentioned. The COCIN church now has the opportunity to key in and engage with these issues.

4.2.2 CCDP’s Identity, Goal and Core Values

Identity: The CCDP identity states that “CCDP is a Christian Wholistic Development arm of COCIN that empowers less privilege communities for secured livelihoods and peaceful co-existence as a demonstration of the love of Jesus Christ”. The goal of the organisation is “To contribute to the reduction of poverty among communities for improved livelihoods; a foretaste of God’s Kingdom on earth”. (CCDP Profile n. d: 2).

The CCDP is a faith based Christian organisation which ensures that the sources of livelihoods in communities are secured for a harmonious and peaceful living. The identity and goal of the organisation are underpinned by the biblical principles founded on Jesus’ demonstration of love, caring for both the physical and spiritual needs of the

people. For instance, when Jesus preached to the people and it was evening, his disciples asked him to send the people home so that they could go and find some food to eat, but he refused and fed them instead (Mark 6: 30–44). The COCIN church established CCDP in order to have a balance in the propagation of the gospel by meeting both the spiritual needs and the physical needs. However, it appears that the focus of CCDP is poverty reduction as stated in the goal of the organisation. The problem of deforestation and other ecological problems are not taken into consideration to be dealt with.

4.2.3 CCDP Programme Areas

The CCDP has a framework within which it operates as outlined below in the CCDP Profile (n.d: 2–3) as follows:

- 1. Community Mobilisation:** this is carried out through
 - a) Sensitisation of communities on development issues,
 - b) Helping form or strengthening Community Development Associations,
 - c) Conducting needs assessment by using the Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) tool,
 - d) Training communities on Income Generating Activities (IGA), Village Savings, and Loan Association (VSLA), and Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security,
 - e) Health education and nutrition, maternal and child health care, medical outreaches, water and sanitation,
 - f) Community exchange learning and linkages and
 - g) Giving material support to less privileged communities.
- 2. Environmental sustainability:** this activity is carried out through
 - a) Creating awareness on climate change adaptation as well as environmental changes that affect crops production and yield, as well as human,
 - b) Training on disaster preparedness, (prevention and management) and
 - c) Raising of a tree nursery and tree planting campaign.
- 3. Networking and Collaboration:** the organisation partners with other related development organisations through

- a) Partnering with other organisations for experience sharing and learning,
- b) Production of prayer bulletins, activity calendars and newsletters, and
- c) Learning visits.
- d) CCDP also collaborates with partners such as Bread for the World in Germany, and Tearfund and OXFAM both in the UK.

4. Capacity Development: this is done through

- a) Training and re-training of staff,
- b) In-house and external workshops and seminars,
- c) Availability and utilisation of ICT equipment, and
- d) Availability of mobility for easy access to communities.

5. Church and Community Mobilisation Process (CCMP): they do this by using a methodology for envisioning and training using Bible studies which helps in awakening the church on her mandate of integral ministry to her immediate community. The process continues with church and/or community description using PRA tools, information gathering, analysis of gathered information and decision making stage.

6. Fund Mobilisation: they mobilise funds through various means such as;

- a) Raising funds from COCIN during CCDP week,
- b) Proposal writing to Development Agencies,
- c) Advocating for grants from government and philanthropist,
- d) Investment in profitable service areas such as: CCDP Guest house, poultry, Agricultural chemicals, Conference Hall and catering services, and
- e) Grain storage.

7. Peace building: this is done through

- a) Sensitisation and awareness creation on peaceful co-existence,
- b) Training and workshops/seminars, and
- c) Production and distribution of fliers, handbills or posters with peace messages and the effects of violence.

The main focus of this research is on ecological problems facing Nigeria especially deforestation. Therefore, the analysis here is on environmental sustainability. This will cover the following: awareness in some schools in Panyam, workshops for communities

and COCIN Pastors on climate change and tree planting and the analysis of sermon notes obtained from some COCIN Pastors.

4.3 Workshops in Schools within Panyam

One of the ways CCDP conducts its activities is by visiting some selected schools within Panyam and its surrounding communities to sensitise both teachers and students to climate change and to encourage environmental sustainability. Areas mostly covered by this kind of exercise are on climate change and its consequences for the environment and for both human and non-human creatures (CCDP Profile n. d: 3; Mahwash n.d: 1; Mahwash 2015). The sensitisation workshop in most cases is accompanied with tree planting in these selected schools using tree seedlings from CCDP's tree nursery as a donation to these schools (CCDP Profile n.d: 3). The action is to help the teachers and the students to learn about the danger of climate change. They also learn about some techniques of adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. Kapya Kaoma advocates that instilling ecological consciousness in the younger generation may help in overcoming environmental challenges in the future when he adduces that:

Christian mission ought to instil environmental consciousness in young people and children. Youth groups, Sunday School children, baptism and confirmation candidates should be instructed to value and treat the natural world as a Sacramental Commons. Changing the theological paradigms at the church school level will aid the formation and the nurturing of ecologically conscious disciples (2015: 292).

The CCDP's awareness training for schools has been aimed at helping the schools to take precautionary measures to safeguard the natural resources within their location. CCDP also carried out sensitisation workshops at schools on disaster preparedness, both prevention and management (CCDP Profile n.d: 3). Environmental education in schools has great potential for shaping the understanding of both the younger and older generations on ecological problems affecting the planet earth. It enables students to be aware and engaged with real world experiences beyond classroom walls. Sensitising students to be familiar with the current environmental problems empowers them to act to take care of the present and future environmental problems (Conserve Energy Future 2009; Project Learning Tree 2017).

Obasoro et al. (2013) claim that unless humankind understands itself and its environment well, solving its problems and contributing to national development will still be a challenge. This is why some education experts see the lack of enshrining environmental education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of learning in Nigeria as a factor which prevents many from having the basic knowledge about the ecological facts of life (Bosah, Moyinoluwa and Robinson 2013; Agbor and Norris 2016). Therefore, according to Robinson “Most people do not care unless directly affected” (2013: 3).

In order to train students further in the knowledge of the environment, education becomes the hallmark. Based on this, Bosah (2013: 167) claims that “accurate and carefully designed educational courses in schools and colleges are needed for an increase in the overall awareness by the public of the environment through learning about basic natural resources”. This effort will ensure that the present and upcoming generations understand the value of ecology related problems and seek for ways to control and conserve natural resources for sustainable living. The Nigerian Conservation Foundation (2015) outlines some of the important factors of environmental education to include:

- Increased student engagement in science,
- Helping address nature deficit disorder,
- Producing lifelong learners, effective workers and problem solvers, thoughtful community leaders and individuals who care about the people and the environment in which they live, and
- Reaching out to all audiences and promoting social equity.

The Nigerian Conservation Foundation’s ideas resonate with the biblical education on child training: “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Prov. 22: 6). When environmental consciousness is impressed on young learners’ minds they may be likely to grow with it. The reason is because today’s child is a future leader and that requires that adequate education be given to young people which will help brighten their future. They are the future civil servants, politicians and

policy makers, religious leaders, architects, lawyers, farmers and community leaders just to mention a few. Growing with ecological understanding will enable them in the future to make laws and take decisions that take into consideration ecological issues where they work and live. Anongo (2012) concurs that incorporating subjects and courses on environmental issues in the curriculum of the Nigerian schools “could imbibe the love of the environment into the minds of the Nigerian pupils and students” (Anongo 2012: 1430).

Anijah et al. (2013: 14) identify that Nigeria has not sufficiently accepted the “Green Curriculum”. They say that the green curriculum addresses ecological problems from the grassroots, aiming at inculcating in the younger generation environmental ethics, developing their interest in nature, and promoting a better understanding of the environment and sustainable development. Therefore, education practitioners in Nigeria should see the training of teachers as vital and strategic in reducing the environmental challenges facing the country (Moyinoluwa 2013; Amanchukwu 2015; Agbor 2016). This shows that leaving this task to FBOs alone may not make adequate impact and achieve the desired result without the policy makers in the educational sector revising the curriculum. The need for environmental education in Nigeria therefore is one of the tasks that CCDP is sensitising the general public on.

Below are some pictures showing CCDP staff conducting workshops at various schools within the Panyam community in Plateau State. The source of all the pictures is from the communication department of CCDP Panyam.



Fig. 1: CCDP staff making a presentation during the sensitisation workshop on deforestation at Bidol Community Secondary School



Fig. 2: Distribution of tree seedlings to students for planting after the workshop



Fig. 3: CCDDP staff and teachers during one of the workshops



Fig. 4(a)



Fig. 4(b)

Fig. 4(a–b): A workshop at Pushit Community Secondary School and tree planting

The pictures above show how the staff of CCDDP are conducting sensitisation workshops on the environment, after which they distributed assorted tree seedlings to the schools as part of fulfilling their vision, mission and goal. The essence of the workshops is to create a permanent imprint in the lives of the students that will later translate to good behaviour towards their environment. Thus, by participating in environmental education and the sensitisation of some Nigerians students, it can be said that CCDDP have contributed greatly in reducing deforestation in Panyam district.

4.4 Workshops for Communities and Tree Planting

Apart from conducting campaigns to sensitise students in various schools in Panyam in Plateau State, CCDP also sensitises different communities by conducting workshops in villages on environmental care. In order to adequately implement its objectives, CCDP further embarks on the “sensitization of communities on development issues” (CCDP Profile n.d: 2). The organisation also raises tree seedlings from its nursery and distribute some to schools and communities free of charge during sensitisation. By carrying out this campaign, CCDP has proved that deforestation is a prevalent ecological problem in Nigeria as discussed in Chapter Two of this research. The CCDP has also identified that raising seedlings and tree planting have the potential to remedy the problem of deforestation to a large extent. This is because CCDP usually conduct needs assessments by going to the communities using the Participatory Rapid Appraisals (PRA) tool to find out what these communities actually need (CCDP Profile n. d: 2). This reveals that deforestation is a challenge that requires urgent attention in Panyam and its neighbouring communities.

A careful examination of the CCDP’s report shows that the pilot tree nursery programmes were established in a bid to help communities to reduce the scourge of deforestation (CCDP Report 2016: 7). Pilot tree nursery are tree nurseries established by government or NGOs in some communities with varieties of tree seedlings donated to community members as a motivation for the replacement of felled trees.

Significantly, the pilot tree nursery takes into consideration how to propagate indigenous trees which are adapted to the climatic condition of each community. Rosoman (1994) and Hofstede et al (2002) have a similar view when they argue that tree species which are foreign to a particular area like the eucalyptus and acacia, exhaust the soil, water and nutrients thereby preventing other native vegetation from growing resulting in decreased biodiversity, soil erosion and loss of fertility. On the basis of this, Timberwatch (2016: 2) notes that; “Tree plantations kill the native vegetation within their direct footprint, damage ecosystems, and their rapid growth also depletes soil nutrients”.

Therefore, considering which type of tree that will suit each community is commendable because it will help maintain the soil fertility.

Another factor that drives CCDP's environmental education is "to increase the resilience of communities to climate change" (CCDP Report 2016: 11). Umar Dahiru the Director of the African Desertification Control Initiative admits that global warming is responsible for many current environmental problems in Nigeria such as drought, decrease in crop yield, forced migration and loss of biodiversity (Cotthem 2008: 1). Food and Agricultural Organisation confirms the decrease in crop yield in Africa generally and in Nigeria in particular, is as a result of climate change. (Daily Trust, 7 September 2017). Creating awareness on tree planting therefore will strengthen the capacity of the communities to have the resilience to reduce the impact of such challenges.

The CCDP's report has indicated that the tree planting campaign was carried out in 15 communities and 3 500 tree seedlings were distributed as well. The report further states that the organisation was able to reach out to 1 721 people, with a gender distribution of 817 women and 904 men (CCDP Report 2016: 11). Below are some pictures showing CCDP engaging various communities in town hall meetings in Panyam district and other surrounding communities on the significance of tree planting.



Fig. 5(a)



Fig. 5(b)



Fig. 5(c)



Fig. 5(d)



Fig. 5(e)



Fig. 5(f)



Fig. 5(g)



Fig. 5(h)

Fig. 5(a–d): Workshop and distribution of tree seedlings to Kinat community for planting after the sensitisation workshop and (e–h) the process repeated in the Hurum community.

These photographs confirm that CCDP is contributing to reducing deforestation. Because the organisation not only gives theoretical education, but also makes donations and does the planting of trees, these activities always follow after all the workshops whether in schools or in the communities.

Apart from the sensitisation to communities by CCDP in Panyam district and its environs, other studies reveal that other non-governmental organisations in Nigeria are involved in similar projects of tree planting, which is an indication that deforestation is a strong environmental problem facing Nigeria (Anongo 2012; ITF 2014; Afolabi et al. 2015; Christon-Quao and Uangbaoje, 2016; BSWP, Abdulwahab, Adegun and Morakinyo, 2017). Awareness of tree planting is potentially achieving the desired impact in some of these communities. For example, in Awgu a suburb in Enugu State in the South East of Nigeria, an International NGO, International Tree Foundation (ITF), partnered with a local NGO, Women in Development and Environment (WIDE) to train

specifically women with skills in grafting and tree propagation (ITF 2014). The project raised awareness about the value of the conservation of indigenous forests. The Coordinator of WIDE is determined in saying: “I will teach other grassroots women in my community to propagate and plant fruit trees” (ITF 2014: 1). While this project is commendable, the problem with it is that it places emphasis only on fruit trees without considering planting other trees for the sake of the environment. Furthermore, many Nigerians depend on firewood for cooking, so if priority is placed more on fruit trees, then in the near future this community may be faced with the unavailability of firewood. Another thing to note again is that the project excludes men and focuses on empowering women only. In most Nigerian communities from my experience, men are the ones who own land. Therefore, if they do not involve them in the programme of such magnitude then it may fail to succeed.

Similarly, in Kaduna State in the North West of Nigeria, another NGO, GreenAid, donates thousands of different species of tree seedlings to Unguwar Kudu (Uangbaoje 2016). The Christian Reformed World Relief Committees (CRWRC), a Christian NGO, undertook a tree planting awareness campaign and planted trees in Saya village in Plateau State (Pam 2011). Also, in Adamawa state in North East Nigeria, projects by NGOs on tree planting in some communities in the state have great potential for curbing some of the effects of climate change and deforestation in the country (Christon-Quao 2016; Omorogiuwa 2017; Dickson 2017).

The Federal Government of Nigeria also supports the project of tree planting as a way of combating deforestation and climate change. The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme is being used for such a purpose. NYSC is a one-year compulsory service by young graduates from Nigerian universities (Abdulwahab 2017: 1). These young people after graduating from different Nigerian universities, are posted to different states away from their home states to serve for a period of one year. In the course of their service year, they normally have one day a week for community service. The scheme in recent years has been collaborating with the Federal Government so that these graduates will plant trees in their respective locations where they are serving

the nation. This is to make them tree planting ambassadors to their host communities (Abdulwahab 2017: 2). This project fosters and promotes afforestation in the country as one way of mitigating the problem of deforestation.

The above is evidence that the Federal Government, NGOs and FBOs are contributing in creating awareness in communities in Nigeria so as to minimise deforestation. Adegun and Morakinyo (2017) propose the Federal Government allow the following points:

- ❖ State and local governments should have the main responsibility of introducing policies that would lead to more greening in Nigeria's cities, of which urban tree planting projects should be promoted on streets and beyond.
- ❖ There should be programmes to plant trees in neighbourhoods and to create vegetated play parks, community gardens and other forms of green open spaces.
- ❖ There should also be a push for gardens to be created – for food as well as aesthetic reasons – including inside houses, on the roof or on the walls.

4.5 The COCIN Pastors and Preaching on Ecological Problems

In the preceding sections 4.3 and 4.4, the CCDP's workshops at some schools and communities on deforestation and tree planting campaigns were examined. This section will examine some sermon notes obtained from some pastors within the COCIN church to ascertain their level of awareness on ecological issues such as deforestation. These pastors were contacted of my research interest and they were randomly selected to provide me with any two of their sermon notes. These sermon notes are then analysed with the aim of verifying whether or not they are utilising the awareness provided by CCDP on deforestation, to teach church members on how to care for the environment.

Toma Abungyak (2017), in a sermon preached at the Gindiri Theological Seminary titled "*No Short Cut*", gives an overview of the Book of Matthew and moves on to emphasise

the kingdom of God. He claims that the kingdom of God is the rule of God and is transcendent, that is, beyond the earth. Eternity is the focus of his sermon with no reference to any ecological problem. The sermon actually aims at encouraging his listeners to give priority to things that are eternal more than things that are here on earth.

Another similar sermon with a text taken from Matthew 6: 33 is titled “*Making the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness First in your Life*”. Yusuf Luxman (n. d), the preacher of the sermon, admonishes Christians to allow God to rule their lives to enable them to live righteously on earth. Furthermore, Luxman (2017) in another sermon titled “*Seeking first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*”, stresses the need for Christians to pursue their goal with heaven in mind. The emphasis of these sermons is on seeking the rule of God in one’s life and living righteously in the world. However, how to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness in the light of the ecological problems facing the Nigerian communities and how people should protect and care for other non-human creatures was not mentioned in these sermons. This appears to mean that human salvation is given priority over care for creation. It could also imply that many pastors understand the meaning of salvation in relation to humankind only.

“*You are our Glory*” is a title of a sermon preached by Sylvester Dachomo with a text taken from 1Thess. 2: 17–20. The preaching is a call for Christians to share with other believers as a demonstration of Christ’s love. In his words: “Take care of your brother or sister for what you do is what you will share in glory” (Dachomo 2010b: 1). Here the focus is on charity and not ecological problems. Dachomo (2010a) in another sermon titled “*Serving God with a Purpose*”, emphasised how humankind can serve God with the aim of making it to heaven at the end. Our goal is heaven as Christians. The messages of the cleric are centred on human beings, while climate change and other environment related problems like deforestation are not referred to.

Iliya Kachalla (n. d. a), another COCIN pastor, in a sermon titled “*An Offering Worthy of Remembrance*” called for Christians to support the work of God with money or material

wealth. Kachalla (n. d. c: 1) in another homily with the topic “*Ministering the Gospel in the face of Crisis/attacks/trouble/suffering*”, admonishes that Christian should not to give up their faith in the face of persecution. This is likely to be informed by the renewed violence and persecution of the church in Nigeria by the Boko Haram, a militant or terrorist Islamic group. The emphases here by the preacher are on how persecution affects Nigerians Christians and how they should act when faced with persecution. However, no reference was made to ecological problems like drought, pollution, climate change, deforestation and desertification that are affecting the social and economic life in Nigeria.

Patrick Atokor (n. d. b) on his part admonishes Christians to accept, embrace and follow Jesus who is the way and the truth. His sermon with the theme “*Jesus is the Way, the Truth and Life*”, centres more on the person of Christ without any reference made to climate change or the problem of deforestation in Nigeria. Delivering another sermon “*Lose to win: Prescription for a Superb Marriage*”, Atokor (n. d. a) suggests that, for a Christian marriage to be successful, couples must learn to avoid cultural practices that undermine Christian marriage and adapt to the Christian culture which the Bible prescribes for a successful marriage.

In comparing these sermon notes, the themes such as salvation, the kingdom of God, marriage, Christian giving, and persecution, emerged. This shows how diverse these sermons can be without taking ecological issues into consideration. This proves that although many COCIN pastors attended workshops organised by CCDP on climate change, their sermons are far from the reality of ecological concerns. It is pertinent to suggest here that either the pastors are focusing on what they think is more important to their congregations or that many are struggling with the problem of dualism, which is separating the spiritual from the physical (Boer 1989). The heavy emphasis on the salvation of humankind may be another probability as it can be observed how COCIN has given priority to evangelism, mission and discipleship (COCIN Service Handbook 2010: 22; COCIN Today 2016: 12–14). This then makes saving the soul of humankind a

priority. However, saving creation from destructive human tendencies seems to be completely neglected from sermons obtained from the COCIN Pastors.

Teachings on crises or persecution are no doubt relevant to Nigeria in recent times because of the attack of the Boko Haram insurgency, political agitations and farmers and herdsmen conflicts which are affecting the social, political, and religious life of people in the country (Bassey, Dada, Omonobi and Erunke, WCC, 2005). It is believed that one of the major reasons that the pastors are not preaching on ecological issues in COCIN is because it is not included in the curriculum of theological training as a course. A careful observation of the curriculum of Gindiri Theological Seminary confirms there is no course on ecology (GTS Information Handbook 2013). As a former lecturer in the same institution some few years back, I have observed that environmental issues are taught only as part of Christian ethics but not as a course. In order to overcome some of this dualistic approach to social issues, Kaoma (2015: 293) suggests that:

Immediate attention needs to be paid to reforming our theological seminaries into eco-friendly learning institutions. ... Christian theology, ethics and spirituality must be taught with the Earth in mind – all theological disciplines ought to enhance ecological responsibilities and action.

In agreement with Kaoma, those who are trained theologically, such as pastors, have the responsibility of interpreting the Bible accurately. But if they are not well informed about ecological problems and do not see them as theological matters of importance, then they will be treated with less consideration. Corroborating with Kaoma, Andrew (2014: 16) notes “If people are not concerned about issues that impact their society they will withdraw from the civic world”. One could say that, if COCIN Pastors were aware of the dangers and impact of ecological problems, especially deforestation, on their immediate communities, this understanding would enable them to use their preaching platforms to teach the congregants on how to care for God’s creation. In addition, Kaoma then suggests that the Christian mission should take Earth’s care needs as important because it is our present dwelling place. He then advocates for the re-reading of the Bible with the lens of the earth: “We were created to serve the natural world just as the natural world serves us” (Kaoma 2015: 293). If we are to go by this, it means that our biblical proclamation of the goodness and sacredness of God’s creation may

potentially inform and reform humankind's attitudes on ecological problems affecting the earth.

Similarly, Lugwig (1957) quoted in Bouma-Prediger (2001: 67) opines that “nature, the world, has no value, no interest for Christians. The Christian thinks only – of himself and the salvation of his soul”. This kind of thinking was embedded in the proclamation of the gospel when the missionaries first brought it to Nigeria, especially the Sudan United Mission who founded COCIN in 1904 (Facing the Challenge 2004; Goshit et al. 2013). The emphasis on human salvation in the COCIN theological institution is informed by this understanding. However, the World Council of Churches (WCC) (2005: 5) notes that churches “... are called to be non-conformist and transformative communities”. This is a call for action and not just paying lip service to ecological challenges. The document *Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth* (AGAPE) published by the WCC which the COCIN church is a member stresses that churches should create space for, and act as, agents of transformation, even when they are trapped in “and complicit with the very system we are called to change” (WCC 2006: 5). In the light of the above, the argument here is, if Pastors are engaged in discussion in Bible Schools and Seminaries where they are trained on any issue, it may have significant influence on their approach in dealing with the problems around them. Awojobi (2015) is of the opinion that, if the church in Nigeria would make pastors see development issues as part of the ministry entrusted to them, they would work towards solving them. He claims that “many churches in Nigeria have failed to do justice to the holistic gospel of spiritual, material and social empowerment of a total person” (Awojobi 2015: 9–10).

However, churches in the USA and other Western nations have gone far with advocacy on ecological problems like deforestation, lamenting the destructive tendency of humankind on the natural resources. The National Association of Evangelicals (2015) cited in Hescox and Douglas (2016:109) states: “We lament over the widespread abuse and destruction of the earth's resources, including its bio-diversity. World poverty and climate change need to be addressed together and with equal urgency”. The church in Nigeria needs to address this issue in order to make a contribution to and an impact on

the current issues. The church has to rise to its prophetic duty to add a voice in addressing some ecological problems now facing the Nigeria.

4.6 Role of the Church in Community Development

David Bosch a South African missiologist says, “The mission of the church includes both the proclamation of the gospel and its demonstration. We must therefore evangelize, respond to immediate human needs, and press for social transformation” (1991: 407). It is not the salvation of the soul that matters only but equally important is the transformation of social systems that affects the lives of people in communities negatively. In line with this the Church of Christ in Nations carved out a development arm to take care of the social needs of communities. Ovbiebo (2013: 16–17) argues that both institutions of the church and pastors are revered by the membership and those loyal to any congregation accept the authority of the church. This suggests that when communities have identified their needs, the church through its development agencies, will step in to assist them. The church as salt and light of the world should not neglect the needs of the marginalised in our communities and find the best way possible of meeting these needs (Baptist Care SA n. d.: 2).

The aim of the church should be to empower and equip individuals to mobilise their own gifts, experiences and assets so as to bring transformation to society. In Nigeria several church denominations have embarked on projects that have brought social transformation to communities, such as investment in the education sector, hospitals, economic empowerment through micro-finance banks and environmental education (Omotoye and Opoola 2012; Monroe 2012; Ovbiebo 2013; Ottuh 2014; Mawash 2015). The high rate of unemployment in the country is reduced by such interventions of the church by changing the socio-economic lives of many people. The falling standard of education has gotten a boost since most of these faith-based schools maintain a high standard compared to public schools (Ottuh 2014). Furthermore, those who may not get admission into the public universities are being admitted into the private universities and colleges owned by Christian churches (Omotoye and Opoola 2012). Regarding this, Mbachirin (2006: 2) argues: “The Nigerian church and its organisations are pragmatic in

their activities and approaches to socio-economic, political, and religious issues". CCDP therefore as a church development organisation, has the potential to influence and make some changes in peoples' attitudes and practices as regards the use of natural resources. The workshops on climate change and the tree planting have no doubt increased the level of awareness of church members on ecological problems affecting them.

4.7 Summary

This chapter discussed how CCDP is contributing to reducing deforestation in Panyam district and its environs. It was revealed that CCDP, as part of its effort to reduce deforestation, organised workshops in schools, communities and for COCIN pastors on climate change and tree planting. It was further gathered that these workshops have had some positive impacts on reducing deforestation. It was however noted that only a few schools and communities have benefited from such workshops.

In addition, this chapter examined some sermon notes obtained from COCIN Pastors with the aim of ascertaining whether or not their sermons reflected knowledge gained from CCDP on climate change and deforestation. It was revealed that none of the sermons which were available to the researcher was related to any ecological problems facing Nigeria, such as climate change, deforestation, pollution, loss of biodiversity and drought.

It was also discovered that the COCIN church as a denomination is yet to include ecological related courses in the curriculum of its pastoral training. Even the Theological Institution at Gindiri, which is the highest degree awarding institution of the church, has no provision for the theology of ecology. These sermon notes covered themes such as Christian marriage, Christian giving, conflict and persecution, and the kingdom of God without any reference to the ecological problems facing Nigeria and its relationship to human salvation.

Finally, the role of the church in community development in Nigeria was discussed. It was revealed that the COCIN church has contributed in improving the lives of communities in Panyam district and its environs through its developmental activities. Some of the projects executed by CCDP include the raising and distribution of tree seedlings to communities and schools as a way of reducing the effects of deforestation. Others include investment in education where the church is still sustaining the missionary legacies by building new schools. It was also revealed that through the establishments of the church, several people have gained employment.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

This research is non-empirical and has used two methodological approaches. These include social analysis and theological analysis. The first chapter outlined the background to the research problem, the rationale of the research, the location of the research, research questions and objectives, the theoretical framework, the research methodology, anticipated problems/limitation/scope of the research, and the structure of the research.

A social analysis was used in Chapter Two to set the context of the research. This chapter gave a brief description of the context of environmental degradation in Nigeria. Some of the major aspects of the ecological problems and their effects on the country are deforestation, desertification, pollution, population growth, logging, conflict and grazing, mining activities, agriculture, poverty and loss of biodiversity. The chapter pointed out that most of the environmental problems in Nigeria are anthropogenic in nature. It was ascertained that deforestation normally occurs when people in various communities cut down trees in the forests for domestic purposes, agriculture, hunting, and for urban development and housing. It was also discovered that the natural resources have been used in an unsustainable manner leading to the destruction of the natural habitat and the distorting of the beauty of the natural landscape of many communities. Furthermore, the research found out that many people cut down trees in their communities without replacement. Therefore, in order for Nigerians to take environmental care seriously, community and church leaders should use their positions to sensitise their followers on the dangers of the ecological problems facing the nation. The leaders should provide the framework within which the replacement and replanting of trees would be part of community service and the responsibility of the people.

After setting the context of the research in Chapter Two, a theological analysis was utilised in the Chapter Three to explore the theology of COCIN on ecology. A brief history of the COCIN church as a denomination was given. It was discovered that the

COCIN church has no document or statement that clearly states categorically its belief and position on ecology and the care for the creation or the environment. This means that the church is far behind in the theological discourse on ecological issues which has been going on globally for several decades in theological circles.

However, the COCIN Service Handbook which contains the liturgy of the church shows that the creation is a gift from God. It frowns at injustice on land matters, land degradation and the inability of humankind to show gratitude to God for the blessing of resources God has bestowed on humans. In addition, Nick Spencer's *Biblical Vision of Care for the Environment* as a theoretical framework was discussed in this chapter. Spencer's argument is that Christians must care for the creation and the environment because the Creator (God) cares for all that God created. This evidence is found from the scripture that God is the creator of heaven and earth (Gen. 1: 1; Jn. 1: 3). The earth and everything that lives in it belongs to God. God feeds both humans and animals alike with the natural resources God provides (Ps.24: 1; 69: 9–13; Job 38–39; Mt. 10:29; Mk. 4: 41; Col. 1:16–17). Spencer maintains that Christians should care for the environment because human well-being depends on the well-being of the environment and that God has given humankind the privilege to rule creation through accountable stewardship, and not by mastery (Spencer 2009: 85–86). When humans care for creation they are obeying the command to love our neighbours as ourselves. Finally, one of the reasons Christians should care for the environment is because of our future hope still depends on it, as postulated by Spencer: "We care about creation because of its eternal destiny, because God plan to reconcile to himself all things" (Spencer 2009: 92). In addition, Sallie McFague's *Planetary Theology* was used in which McFague argued that economic worldview (capitalist ideology) causes harm to the environment in a quest for profit, while the ecological worldview supports community and seeks for the welfare of the environment where all that humankind need to support life are found (McFague 2001: 10–105).

In Chapter Three, the research also revealed that the COCIN theological institutions have not provided any platform to enable its students to engage prophetically with ecological studies. It was also revealed through the sermon notes obtained from some

pastors in COCIN that their preaching does not reflect teaching on care for creation or care for the environment. This may be because their training did not take into consideration the need to deal with impending ecological problems that faced humanity. Pastors are key stakeholders in COCIN and they occupy positions of influence. If they advocate for care for the environment through their preaching and teaching, it may influence many church members to practice what they are being taught. The chapter concluded with the role and contribution of some churches in Nigeria to community development. It was concluded that COCIN is contributing in many capacities to community development, for example, the establishment of schools, a university, hospitals and clinics; the empowering of communities economically through the establishment of micro-finance bank credit to alleviate poverty; and the construction of culverts and community roads.

Chapter Four discussed the contribution of CCDP on care for the environment. Reports and other policy documents obtained from CCDP revealed that as the development arm of the church, the organisation is actively involved in sensitisation campaigns in schools, communities and to COCIN pastors on climate change and the effects of deforestation. CCDP is noted for distributing different types of tree seedlings to schools and communities as part of its effort to reduce deforestation. However, it was observed that only a few communities and schools benefited from the programme compared to the number of schools and communities that are located in and around Panyam district. It was discovered that the lack of an adequate financial base and limited staff which would enable them to reach out to more schools and communities still remains a big challenge for the organisation.

In Nigeria and within the COCIN church context, there is a need to develop a notion of the theology of ecology in the theological institutions. Andrew (2014: 172) claims that “individuals may be influenced by what they perceived to be the main religious goal of their congregation”. So, if the pastors include ecological issues such as deforestation, desertification, climate change, pollution and waste management in their preaching and teaching, it may foster an environmental ethic in the country. Unfortunately, as revealed

from the findings in this research in Chapter Four the sermons obtained from some COCIN pastors, their sermons do not refer to issues related to the environment and other social issues like HIV/AIDS. Instead, a considerable number of these pastors focused only on human salvation.

Therefore, I think there is need to revisit COCIN's theology on salvation to include the theology of ecology. If this happens and is implemented it will go a long way to shaping the attitudes, behaviours and practices of many Nigerian Christians in relation to their natural environment thereby reducing ecological problems and degradation. The words of Andrew (2014: 12) seem pertinent in this respect when he suggests: "Congregational activity is strongly shaped by the traditions and institutions in which the churches are embedded". The need for the church to include the theology of ecology in the curriculum of Bible Schools and Seminaries and in the liturgy, has become crucial if the church wants to play its prophetic role in correcting the problems that are associated with ecological issues.

5.2 Recommendation

There is the need to research further on the theology of salvation in the COCIN church beyond the emphasis on human salvation to include deeper theological reflection on the natural world. Secondly, I recommend that research be carried out theologically on the relationship between humankind and the non-human creation. Thirdly, during this research I discovered that there is link between ecological problems and conflict in many communities in Nigeria, especially between the Fulani herders and the Indigenous people who are mostly local farmers. Therefore, I also recommend that this can be explored further. This may help humankind to see how dependent they are on other non-human creation, and thus the need to care for creation instead of exploiting creation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethical approval certificate



30 March 2017

Rev. Habila Solomon Kohon 216056696
School of Religion, Philosophy & Classics
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Rev. Kohon

Protocol reference number: HSS/0262/017M

Project title: Deforestation in Nigeria? An investigation into Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) Community Development Programme (CCDP) on Ecology in Panyam District, Mangu Local Government Council Plateau State

Full Approval – No Risk Application

In response to your application received on 24 March 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Dr Clint Le Bruyns
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P Denis
Cc School Administrator: Ms Catherine Murugan

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

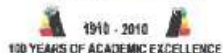
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

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Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4957 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4809 Email: ximbep@ukzn.ac.za / snymam@ukzn.ac.za / mphunp@ukzn.ac.za

Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

Appendix B: Turnitin Report

Habila dissertation			
ORIGINALITY REPORT			
5%	5%	3%	0%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
PRIMARY SOURCES:			
1	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source	<1%	
2	icla.org.ph Internet Source	<1%	
3	kzncc.org.za Internet Source	<1%	
4	www.chm-cbd.com.ng Internet Source	<1%	
5	climate.org Internet Source	<1%	
6	forumonpublicpolicy.com Internet Source	<1%	
7	scholar.sun.ac.za Internet Source	<1%	
8	allafrica.com Internet Source	<1%	
9	McFague, Sallie. "New House Rules: Christianity, Economics, and Planetary Living.",	<1%	

Appendix C: Confirmation of document editing

 LANGUAGE INSTITUTE	<u>Editing</u> <u>Confirmation</u>	<p>33 Alan Paton Avenue Scottsville Pietermaritzburg 3201 Tel: 033 345 6844 Email: admin@kznlanguageinstitute.com Website: www.kznlanguageinstitute.com</p>
		<p>Registration number: 131 804 NPO</p>
		<p>19/01/2018</p>
<p><u>Report on dissertation by:</u> Habila Solomon Kohon</p>		
<p><u>Dissertation title:</u> Deforestation in Nigeria: a critical assessment of the Church of Christ in Nations' (COCIN) community development programme (CCDP) on ecology in Panyam district, Mangu local government council, Plateau state.</p>		
<p>This serves to confirm that the above dissertation was language edited by a member of the KZN Language Institute's professional English language editing team. The document was returned to the author with tracked changes and suggestions for improvement. It was the author's responsibility to attend to these. The final corrected version of the dissertation <u>was not proofread</u> by a KLI editor.</p>		
<p> Ms G. Coertze <i>MSocSc (Culture, Communication and Media Studies)</i> Communications Manager geri@kznlanguageinstitute.com</p>		
<p> Ms J. Kerchhoff <i>BEd (Hons), MA (Applied Language Studies), CELTA</i> Director jenny@kznlanguageinstitute.com</p>		
<p>KWAZULU-NATAL LANGUAGE INSTITUTE (REG. NO: 131-804 NPO) 23 CORDONATION ROAD, SCOTTSVILLE PIETERMARITZBURG 3201 KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA TEL: +27 (0) 33 345 6844</p>		
<p><i>KZN Language Institute – Transforming Words</i></p>		

Appendix D: Consent Letter from CCDP



CHURCH OF CHRIST IN NATIONS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

PMB 2127, Jos Plateau State

Website: www.ccdp-ng.org

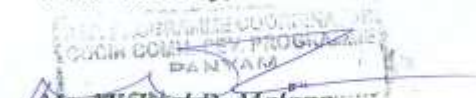
Email: ccdppanyam2@gmail.com

Head Office: Fish Farm Road, Panyam, Mangu L.G.A

LETTER OF CONSENT

The management of CCDP hereby write to authorise Habila Solomon Kohon to use some of her reports and pictorial activities for his research; and that no part of the said document should be use for commercial purposes without due approval

Yours sincerely,


Mr. Michael D. Malann
For: Programme Coordinator

COCIN was founded by the British Branch of the then Sudan United Mission (SUM) who arrived Nigeria in 1904
Faith and Farm (CRDP) Founded 1957, Rural Health Programme, (RHP) Founded 1976
Integrated in 1997 as COCIN Community Development Programme (CCDP)

Appendix E: Sermon notes from some COCIN pastors

GINDIRI THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

COCIN THEME: SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD

GTS: NO SHORT CUTS Presented by Rev. Toma H. Abungyak, Ph.D at the GTS Devotion, at the College Assembly Hall 8/1/2017.

Introduction:

'No short cuts': is phrase I first heard emphasised by my Professor (Danny McCain) at the University. He told me that if you must have a Ph.D from UJ you must work for it; it will not be different from any other University in the world.

I know students/staff love short cuts. Generally, in our culture we love short cuts. We love quick answers to our questions.

I think, no short cuts: is a relevant theme and a timely theme that fits within the context of the COCIN theme for the year.

God does not take short cuts. There are no short cuts to **salvation**. There are no short cuts to **righteousness**.

Right from the fall of humanity God took thousands of years to save humanity.

Jesus did not take short cuts to be **born**

To prepare for **ministry**, **tempted** like anyone of us

He taught and had quite some **challenges** with his **disciples**

The way to his **glorification** and **exaltation**: he did not take a short cut (he took the way of the cross).

I have been asked to introduce the book of Matthew: I am glad I am speaking to theologians who must have done some studies in Matthew in one way or the other. I will use a devotional approach.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW

Author: The early church fathers believed that the book was written by the apostle Mathew whose other name is called Levi. Both of his names are in Hebrew and he was a Jew.

Not all scholars believe today that it was written by Matthew, the disciple of Jesus, because of the so-called **synoptic problem**. Suffice it to mention that critical scholars believe that Matthew copied the Gospel According to Mark, and of Mark's 662 verses ca. 600 appear in Mathew. Matthew adds his to make up 1, 069 verses in this Gospel (which make up **28 chapters of the Gospel**). Those who reject Mathew's authorship are on the grounds of over dependence on Mark.

The Gospel according to Matthew: is called "the Gospel of Christ the ruling king". The kingdom of heaven (God) is the great theme of Matthew's Gospel, for Matthew its importance rest on the identity of Jesus. Jesus is the king, who is king by his birth, by his baptism, by his calling and teaching of the disciples by the works of power and mercy, and supremely by his death and resurrection, has made the kingdom of heaven both a present experience to be enjoyed and a future hope to be expected (Scott 29).

The Kingdom of God/Heaven is one of the central themes in Matthew. The Kingdom of God appears 32 times, while Kingdom of heaven appears 32 times, kingdom appears 13 times in Matthew totalling 50 times (Caragounis: Dictionary of Jesus). The kingdom

of God is God's rule of grace in the world. It is His sovereignty. The scope of his rule is transcendent, that is, not only does it include the entire physical universe, but exceeds it. It encompasses all that it is. The Jews saw it as a future period foretold in the OT. It was understood as a period of happiness, peace and joy. Therefore, to "Seek the kingdom of God" is to desire that God should **drive, rule, and control** our lives. It is to **recognise** the **authority** of **God** over our lives. This command is an invitation to continue to seek it does not matter whether you are in the kingdom or outside the kingdom. It is a life-long command to keep on seeking God's kingdom; a kingdom that belongs to God. God's kingdom must be our priority. As a believer you must settle the question of priorities in the midst of life challenges. We must be different from unbelievers whose priorities are comfort, security, and fashion, human rights (gay marriage is promoted on the basis of human rights) etc.

God's righteousness means what God requires, that which is his will.

Do not worry about tomorrow because what we worry about may not happen we may end up just hurting ourselves. Doing so is a lack of trust in God; it is a lack of faith.

John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus announced and preached: Repent for the kingdom of heaven was at hand (3:2); Jesus repeated the same sermon inviting people to repent for the kingdom of heaven was in their midst (4:17 cf. 12:28). The whole teachings of Jesus must be understood in the context of kingdom values. Matthew devotes lots of chapters on the Sermon on the Mount which deals with kingdom values. Jesus' miracles, parables, death and resurrection and second coming must also be read in the context of the kingdom of God.

George Eldon Ladd in his book titled A Theology of the NT clarifies the relationship between the church and the kingdom of God as below:

- The church is not the kingdom of God
- The church is the instrument of the kingdom
- The church is the custodian of the kingdom
- The kingdom creates the church.

The kingdom of God can:

- draw near to people (3:2, 4:17)
- come (6:10)
- arrive (12:28)
- be active (11:12)
- God can give the kingdom to people (21:43)
- Humans cannot take it away from one another except God by himself (21:43)
- People can enter and can prevent others from entering (5:20; 7:21)
- Humans cannot build or erect the kingdom of God
- Inherit it (25:34)
- Possess it but can never establish it
- Cannot destroy it
- Can look for it
- We can be in the kingdom (5:19, 8:11)

- It does not grow even though we can do things for the sake of the kingdom (19:12)
- We can preach in the kingdom (10:7) but only God can give it to humans (Lk 12:32).
- God's kingdom has come in the person of Christ and we await his final return.

WHO WAS MATTHEW?

The author keeps silent about his own identity. But we can identify him as a gifted teacher.

He focused his attention on Jesus not on himself.

Matthew was a Jew. He wrote to persuade fellow Jews to believe in Jesus Christ, the son of God.

Matthew was a tax-collector: Jesus called him while he was sitting at the tax-collector's booth: follow me (9:9)

He calls himself Matthew the tax-collector (10:3)

What did it mean to be a tax-collector?

Tax-collectors worked with the Roman Rulers, collected levies from:

- All Adults
- on land

They were not respected; they were seen as traitors, exploiters because they used their positions to collect more than was required of them by the government. They also bribed their way to higher positions to take advantage of people in order to enrich themselves.

For a Jew to take up the position of a tax-collector it meant he loved money more than his national heritage. No wonder our theme for the year is picked from the context of materialism: 'you cannot serve both God and money'. The rabbis had no respect for tax-collectors; they equated tax-collectors to prostitutes.

Matthew's conversion: His encounter with Jesus changed his life completely. He gave up his profession

One who was not respected, a sinner, a publican became a disciple of Jesus. Tradition has it that he preached for about 14 years in: Ethiopia, Persia, Parthia

Original Language that Matthew was written: probably it was written in Hebrew (Aramaic) and translated into Greek.

DATE OF WRITING

Possibly before or after A.D 70. I will prefer to debate for an earlier date than A.D 70 because the Gospel does not mention the destruction of Jerusalem.

PLACE OF COMPOSITION

Eusebius, church historian writing between 303 and 337, states that Matthew wrote the Gospel to leave behind when he was preparing to leave Palestine and travel abroad. Perhaps it was written in Judea or in Syrian Antioch.

PURPOSE OF WRITING

Matthew intends to prove to the Jews that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah. More than any other Gospel, the Gospel of Matthew quotes the Old Testament to show how Jesus fulfilled the words of the Jewish prophets. Matthew describes in detail the lineage of Jesus from David, and uses many forms of speech that Jews would have been

comfortable with. Matthew's love and concern for his people is apparent through his meticulous approach to telling the gospel story.

KEY VERSES IN MATTHEW

[Matthew 5:17](#): "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them."

[Matthew 5:43-44](#): "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

[Matthew 6:9-13](#): "This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'"

[Matthew 16:26](#): "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"

[Matthew 22:37-40](#): "Jesus replied, '"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'" This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two."

[Matthew 27:31](#): "After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him."

[Matthew 28:5-6](#): "The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.'"

[Matthew 28:19-20](#): "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Brief Summary: The Gospel of Matthew discusses the lineage, birth, and early life of Christ in the first two chapters. From there, the book discusses the ministry of Jesus. The descriptions of Christ's teachings are arranged around "discourses" such as the Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5 through 7. Chapter 10 involves the mission and purpose of the disciples; chapter 13 is a collection of parables; chapter 18 discusses the church; chapter 23 begins a discourse about hypocrisy and the future. Chapters 21 through 27 discuss the arrest, torture, and execution of Jesus. The final chapter describes the Resurrection and the Great Commission.

CONCLUSION: I pray the good Lord will grant us the grace to study the Gospel according to St. Matthew carefully and thoughtfully. It was the favourite Gospel of the Early Church. I hope you will not miss any of our devotions this Semester in order to learn from this great Gospel.

Thank you all.

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Rev Dr Iliya Kachalla

TEXT: JAMES 2:24-26

THEME: **GENUINE FAITH**

INTRODUCTION

We live in a time of counterfeits, era of fakes. The quest for true or genuineness cut across all especially where, when it matters most. The Nigeria case- is so pathetic.

- Our Christian life has been influenced by things that we may compromise with sin or retaliate when being persecuted for being righteous. Such results often leave people in doubt as to what really is the faith we claim.

- Faith is like (breadth of life) oxygen, you cannot see it but you can always see its results (Marks) characteristic situation was like in James time. Some Christians claim to have faith but had no evidence, results, marks and works that validate such claim.

- James in writing to the believers argues his position on the matter well. For us to understand James, we need to look at what **Paul and James say on faith alone and faith and works (James 2:24)cf.14-26**

- James- A man is justified by works, not by faith alone

Paul- A man is justified by faith apart from the works of the Law. Our understanding is to save us from unnecessary error.

Thus, Paul and James had the following differences.

1. **Different emphasis:** Paul stresses the root of salvation which is faith in Christ plus nothing. James call, attention to the fruit after salvation- that every believer rooted in Christ by faith bears fruit, like branches of a vine (John 15:4-5). So Paul talks about the root, James talks about the fruit.

2. **Different perspective:** Paul looks at life from God's perspective, which James looks at life from a human perspective- Paul sees the fire in the fire place while James eyes the smoke coming out of the chimney. To James, the world should be able to tell that a faith burns in our hearts by the work they see coming out in our lives.

3. **Difference in terms:** Paul and James use the same word but different form "**Justified**" but with two different meanings".

Paul mentions justification to mean the act of God at salvation whereby he declares the believing sinner righteous while still in a sinning state. Justification of the soul before God...Rom.3:28, 4:2-5, Gal.2:16, 3:11

James, on the other hand, uses it to mean "validate or evidence". So, a believing sinner proofs his or her faith by his or her works.

Justification of our faith before men James2:24. James speaks of good works as an effect flowing from the faith and showing the sincerity of faith.

Paul and James could be considered as 2 soldiers of the same army fighting back to back against enemies coming from opposite directions. Paul warns the legalists and self-righteous who sought acceptance by works and James warns the libertines and worldly who sought acceptance by empty profession of faith that had no regard for holiness and good works. *Paul's doctrine of justification by faith and James doctrine of*

justification by works are supplementary not contradictory. Neither was one opposing the teaching of the other. Thus, James, if understood properly is as solidly Biblical and practical.

In our passage this morning, James continues building on what he had in opening of his letter. He introduces the passage by asking 2 rhetorical questions (v. 14).

First, “what use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works (v. 14a). It is like asking what good is it to have a driver’s license if you don’t drive. Answer? None, so also is with faith that does not produce works. He points out here the worthlessness of a worthless faith.

Secondly, he went deeper “can that faith saves him”? v. 14b. The answer is of course ‘No’.

The great leaders of the reformation used to say we are justified by faith alone, but not by faith which is alone. Therefore, Genuine, saving faith is accompanied by fruit; it is not found in the empty wastes of hollow words.

Genuine faith has these marks: Genuine marks of faith in the believer

Prop: Marks of Genuine faith: James in this passage illustrates them to include the following:

I: Genuine faith is not indifferent.... But involved (15-16)

This illustration is easy to understand because is one way or another. Most of us have been that needy person and can still remember the empty platitudes we received instead of real help.

Listen to how one commentator translates the emotionally detached response given in verse 16. *“Keep up your spirit, do not become discouraged, someone will yet come to your relief, go away from any presence comforted” v. 16.*

APPLICATION: What is missing here?

What is missing- James says is the proof of genuine faith- real food and real clothes.

Apostle John echoes it better in 1 John 3:17-18. *But whoever has the world’s goods and behold his brother in need and chooses his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. ‘Kauna ba da baki ba sai da zuciya’*

II: Genuine Faith is not independent.... but in partnership (2:17/26. even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being itself.

It is true that love and marriage’ go together as a horse and carriage. You cannot have one without the other.

Faith and works goes together like a horse and carriage also. You cannot have one without the other.

If you dissolve the partnership- faith dies, for faith was never designed to dwell alone, separate from the partner that proves its existence.

Faith- where there is separation there is death. It is true physically when the soil separates from the body and its true spirituality when faith is separated from works.

Without works, faith is nothing but a curse, void of vitality and useless to everybody but the undertaken.

Therefore, as the body when the spirit, breath and life are gone out of it, it is dead and useless. ***So faith without works is a vain, useless, unprofitable thing that neither justifies, save nor give any reasons or comfort that a man will be saved.***

III: Genuine faith is not invisible... But on display (2:18/21-25) James illustrates this by creating an imaginary conversation between two people. 'But someone may say, you have faith, and I have works, show me your faith, faith without the works, and I will show you my faith but works'. The word 'show' means to bring to light, to display or exhibit.

The imaginary friend of James is talking about demonstrating genuine faith. ***Do your best to show me your faith without using works and will demonstrate my faith by my works.*** We will see which one of us really has the genuine item.

**Illustration: Vs21-25. Abraham...life of devotion to God
mind/heart...Rahab...life of love/kindness to others**

Genuine faith proves that our works prove our faith. James pick opposite example in the Old Testament:

Abraham was the father of the Jews, was moral, and admired, a Jewish patriarch.

Rahab- was a pagan prostitute, was a harlot, look on with disdain, considered insignificant.

And yet both evidenced the same kind of faith. Abraham justified, proved his faith by offering his own son (Gen. 22)

Rahab demonstrated her faith when she risked her life to protect two Israelites (Josh.2, 6:22-23, Heb11:31)

APPLICATION: There are odd kinds of Christians. Some have the gift of works; others are quite, never displaying their faith. It is like saying some have the gift of breathing while others do not have. We only delude ourselves if we think it does not matter whether we evidence our faith or not. Thus, James says, if your faith does not show, it means you do not give it.

What you retain for yourself, God will ask you to release to Him.

What you release to God, he will replace something better

Whenever God replaces, he also reward.

Therefore, it is in vain and foolish for anyone who lays claim to faith, boast of favour with God and looks upon godliness and works as unnecessary.

IV: Genuine faith is not intellectual...But from the heart (2:19-20).

- James points on the other imaginary partner in the conversation; someone may call a religious intellectual. You believe that God is one' (19a).

□ This person's defence against not having any works is to hide behind an impressive knowledge of God's word. I believe God is one 'Deut. 6:4'. James says, join bands with the demons 'you do well the demons also believe.

□ The demons have their religious facts straight and shudder but they are still demons.

So, we can know all the religious facts we want, but still we believe in Christ, were no more Christian than the demons.

One difference between our intellectual friend and demons- James says that the demonic tribes tremble at the thought of God. But the dead faith of the religious intellectual does not produce even that much a reaction.

James is not ridiculing having an intelligent faith, rather, he is mocking these religious intellectual who love to debate religious truth but have not plans whatever to commit themselves and following Jesus Christ.

James now call his imaginary religious intellectual learn a hard fact about his faith.

Vs.20- but are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless.

If you take away the element of application, you are left only with mere intellectual assent, which neither glorifies God nor helps the person who possesses it.

CONCLUSION

☐ Genuine faith is not indifferent but involved... Genuine faith is involved- is yours?

☐ Genuine faith is not independent but in partnership... Genuine faith is a partnership... is yours?

☐ Genuine faith is not invisible but on display... Genuine faith is displayed... is yours?

☐ Genuine faith is not intellectual but from the heart... Genuine faith is from heart exemplified (vs. 21-25)... is yours?

Faith is like breadth, cannot be seen, but James says you can see always its results. What results do others see in your life?

☐ Are you are a Christian but do not show it in the way you live and relate to other people? James word is here to help you.

REMEMBER: James is a good teacher; he uses repetition, saying the same thing more than once, each in a slightly different way. James also uses illustration, for he will not stop at a general principle but shows what he means by a clear illustration.

James is not saying that our salvation is dependent on works. Nor is he trying to make us produce more works out of guilt or fear.

He is only questioning those who claim to believe in Christ but whose lives never show any evidence of that faith. If you say that you are saved, why does not your faith show it? It is a fair question and a penetration one. James says you would better think about it, your faith may not have a heavenly pulse.

COCIN ALMASIHU GINDIRI

“SERVING GOD WITH A PURPOSE”

17TH JANUARY 2010

TEXT: MARK 12:28-34

SD DACHOMO

INTRODUCTION: Living on purpose is the only way to really live. Everything else is just existing.

Most people struggle with three issues in life:

- The first is identity: Who am I?
- The second is importance: Do I really matter?
- The third is impact: What is my place in this life?

WORSHIP THAT PLEASES GOD

God wants all of you. God does not want part of your life. He asks for all your heart, all of your soul, all of your mind and all of your strength.

God is not interested in halfhearted commitment, partial obedience, and the leftovers of your time and money. He desires your full devotion and not little bits of your time.

People need more than bread for their life, they must feed on every word of God. The truth transformed us. Spiritual growth is a process of replacing lies with truth on a daily basis, Jesus said, *“Sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth” John 17:17.*

Sanctification requires revelation. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to make us like the Son of God.

To become like Jesus, we must fill our lives with his Word. The Bible says, *“Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us” 2 Timothy 3:17.*

God’s Word is unlike any other word. It is alive. Jesus said, *“The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life” John 6:63.*

When God speaks things change. Everything around you – all of creation exist because “God said it.” He spoke it all into existence.

FOUR IMPORTANT THINGS IN OUR WORSHIP THAT PLEASES THE LORD

1. God is pleased when our worship is accurate: worship must be based on the truth of scripture, not our opinions about God. Jesus told the Samaritan woman that “True worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.”

- To worship in truth means to worship God as he is truly revealed in the Bible.
- 2. God is pleased when our worship is authentic: when Jesus said you must 'worship in spirit', he was not referring to Holy Spirit, but to your spirit. Made in God's image, you are a spirit that resides in a body, and God designed your spirit to communicate with him. Worship is your spirit responding to God's Spirit.
- 3. God is pleased when our worship is thoughtful: Jesus' command to love God with all your mind is repeated four times in the New Testament. God is not pleased with thoughtless singing of hymns, careless exclamations of 'Praise the Lord', because we can't think of anything else to say at that moment. If worship is mindless, it is meaningless. You must engage your mind.
Jesus called thoughtless worship 'vain repetitions.' Worship should be done in an orderly manner and in fitting with God.
- 4. God is pleased when our worship is practical: the Bible says, 'offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God- this is your spiritual act of worship.'
-Why does God want your bodies? Because your spirit lives in your bodies, you cannot do anything without your body.
-When Jesus said, 'Love the Lord with all your strength' he pointed out that worship takes effort and energy. It is not always convenient and comfortable, and sometimes worship is a sheer act of the will- a willing sacrifice.
- When you get out of bed and you don't feel like praying or worshipping God but you had to.
-When you had to help someone even when you are tired.
-THAT PLEASES GOD.

CONCLUSION: God want all of you!!! One thing worship costs us is self-centeredness. You cannot exalt God and yourself at the same time. Your must deliberately shift the focus off yourself.

RECEIVING THE PROPHET OF GOD

Rev Patrick Atokor

NEHEMIAH 13: 10-13

Introduction

All protocols duly observed.

Today is one of the days that pastors within RCC MANGU are going to experience how spiritual farmers are going to work on their farms. And these farms are going to be cultivated by several people with different sizes of farm implements. I count myself fortunate to be a witness and a participant to this great event that is taking place today. Their recognition is anchored on the fact that, they are God's workmen. And as workmen, they need to be sustained, appreciated so that they could work the more. I am sure that this is not a time for compulsion but willingness to be used for God's purpose.

The pastors' farm as the name implies, is a derogative terminology. Because from the biblical studies those who had farms were disengaged from farming so their attentions could be focused on the ministry at hand. The pastors are supposed to eat from the plenty that people bring to the church. If the name pastors' farm becomes residential in the church it is suggestive that, the name has been smuggled in for lack of faithfulness.

For a pastor to preach on a designated day like this is very challenging. There are challenges on ground today. One of those challenges is that, the church has been secularized and commercialization of the gospel is on the increase. This pitfall has made some Christians to ignore the sound teaching of the Bible. On the other hand, there are pastors who have refused to commercialize from the pulpit. They have chosen to be authentic and biblical.

I remember in the Nigerian covenant it is written, "We believe the church is the united body of Christ and that it has a sacred duty to provide the moral foundation and be the conscience of the nation. Therefore, we reject sectarianism, extravagant lifestyles, neglect of the needy and all other evils that weaken the testimony and purpose of the church". It is therefore, incumbent that, every person as a church committed member must eschew all forms of principles that imprison the church from exercising what is biblical.

A well known adage or proverb says, "The only thing needed for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing". It is irresponsible for Christians to neglect Socio Christian obligation in the name of some societal challenges.

The story of Eli the Priest is a living testimony of some kind of priests we have today. In spite of the ethical and religious life of the children of Eli, the people did not fail to bring to the house of the lord what belonged to him (2Sam. 2: 12-17).

Our reading today, is a reminder about what happened in the days of Nehemiah, "I also learned that the portions assigned to the Levites had not been given to them and that all the Levites and the Singers responsible for the service had gone back to their own

fields. So I rebuked the officials and asked them, why is the house of the Lord neglected? Then I called them together and stationed them at their posts.”

What is the implication of this verse to us today?

Nehemiah's next task pertains to why Tobiah was able to occupy one of the temple store rooms. They were empty because the people had failed in their commitment to bring their tithes and offerings to the Levites. As a result, the Levites and others who were to live off these offerings as they performed spiritual services for the people had to work in the fields caring for their livestock (35:1-5). The implication is that, these leaders had less time to work in the temple. Nehemiah had to reprimand the Jewish officials for neglecting this aspect of work in the temple (v4, 7, 9-10)(Malachi 3:8-10). In the church today, there could be Tobiah who are causing dissension in the church. This narration shows two things:

1. The Levites had been wronged.

The name Levite is derived from Levi the 3rd son of Jacob. Levi has a ruthless, pitiless, mercilessness zeal in fighting against what he thought was wrong and this characteristic passed on to his descendents (Gen.29:31-34, 34:25-26). In some places people are attracted to the pastorate because of what the ministry gives. They are attracted in the honor and they themselves are not honorable.

These were people set aside as ministers and servants of God who ministered in Israel. Although the Levites had general duties in the Tabernacle and Temples' ceremonies, only those of the tribe of Aaron were designated as Priests. The priests alone carried out the blood rituals of the sacrifices and priests alone entered the inner shrine of the tabernacle. Because they do not have any inheritance that they can fall back at, the Lord directed that, they must be cared for so that they can work.

They had been wronged because they people neglected their obligation for selfish reasons. For example Tobiah seized the store room and converted them for his usage V. 10. You see, the complain is not that, it was not collected from the people but it was not given to the right people at the right time. Therefore, Nehemiah asked, where are the priest? Where are the singers? They have gone for search of livelihood because their profession could not maintain them.

Message: a scandalous maintenance makes a scandalous ministry. That is why the ministry is commercialized. For example, contemporary pastors have fashioned out how they could have some financial benefits by inciting their members: **it is farewell to poverty, they also admonished their adherents to give seed offerings, covenant offerings. Some pastors encouraged the sale of break through handkerchiefs, anointing oil, classified dangerous prayer pamphlets. You may inquire, why is the church going worldly?**

The preaching of a Christian message that directly addresses contemporary concerns of upward mobility is centered on: seizing social, political and economic opportunities; and the application of certain social and biblical principles for the realization of success in this life. Believers identify their beliefs with church sponsored stickers as : I am a stranger to failure, Unstoppable achiever, your success is determined by your faith, my year of dominion, my year of enlargement, my glory, my year of impact. These stickers are becoming virtually omnipresent. You may further inquire as to the spirituality of these Christians and your conclusion may be that there is no solid foundation to their Christian commitment of supporting those who minister.

2. Nehemiah obliged the people to bring in their tithes V. 12

His zeal provoked the Levites to work and the people to work honestly and cheerfully. Listen, the better church work is done the better will church dues be paid. Grudgingly, Christianity has just become a hiding place for all crimes. Name them.

The situation during Nehemiah's day

A committed political leader who was zealous for the emancipation of his people. A deeply religious leader who was committed to change in attitude. The church needs new orientation of pastoral development that does not need to use some sort of commercial gimmicks that will motivate people before they give. First and famous, the church should be dedicated to teaching and preaching the word of God. There are indications to show that people receive pastors. Receiving prophet's reward entails that what is due to prophets is also due to you, "Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward (Mtt. 10:41).which means that whatever you do in the name of religious affection would be rewarded. Here this: anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with the instructor (Gal. 6:6). The word also shows that there is no exception or boundary to doing good. Just as you invite pastors to share in your moments of grief or sorrow so it is with your moments of joy.

CONCLUSION

Brethren your loyalty, commitment, obedience, love, religious affection, impact to God is attested today by your commitment to the pastor's farm. I remind you of one truth that, he who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward (proverbs 11:18). Paul also admonished that; whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly (antonym is liberally), and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

I want to urge you to faithfully, and regularly sow into the life of the man or woman of God who ministers to you the word of the Lord. And God shall reward you greatly (Philippians 4: 15-19). I have observed over the years that any local church that takes good care of its pastor enjoys a special blessing from heaven. Likewise local churches that do not take care of their pastors suffer greatly. In like manner individuals and

families that take time to give to and bless a true man of God prosper greatly. Begin today to sow into the life of your pastor, and you will prosper greatly as it is written believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper (2Chronicles 20: 20).