

Sallie McFague's Kenosis: Reinterpreting the Dominion Mandate in
Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries' Environmental Ethics in
Nigeria.

By

Olufemi Adeolu Alade

Student ID: 2200147

A Master Thesis in Ethics of Dignity

Protestant Theological University, Utrecht

June 2025

Supervisor: Dr. Rob Compaijen

Assessor: Professor Theo Boer

DECLARATION

This study is principally my own intellectual endeavor, and in instances where any segment of this study is not entirely my own creation, I have duly acknowledged the origin of such segments. I affirm that this study has not been presented, partially or entirely, either to any other academic institution or to degree conferring body.

Signature & Date _____

Dr. Rob Compaijen

Signature & Date: _____

Supervisor

Professor Theo Boer

Signature & Date: _____

Assessor

TABLE OF CONTENT

DECLARATION	i
TABLE OF CONTENT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
DEDICATION	vii
ABSTRACT	viii
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION	
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Problem Definition	2
1.2 Research Question	3
1.2.1 Main Research Question	3
1.2.2 Research Sub-questions	3
1.3 Objectives and Justification	4
1.4 State of the Art of the Research	5
1.4.1 Environmental Theology within Pentecostalism	5
1.4.2 Dominion Theology in Pentecostalism	5
1.4.3 Kenotic Theology and Environmental Ethics	6
1.5 Methodology	7
1.5.1 Theological and Historical Retrieval Method	7
1.5.2 Contextual Analysis of MFM	8
1.5.3 Constructive Theological Synthesis	9
1.6 Structure of the Study	10
CHAPTER 2	11
THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS IN NIGERIA AND ITS THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS	

2.0 Introduction	11
2.1 An Overview of the Ecological Crisis in Nigeria	12
2.2 Theological Perspectives on Environmental Degradation	16
2.3 Theological Imperatives for Ecological Preservation and Creation Care	24
2.3.1 The Foundational Imperative: Recognizing God as Creator and Humanity as Stewards	24
2.3.2 The Imperative of Reverence: Acknowledging the Intrinsic Value and Interconnectedness of Creation	25
2.3.3 The Imperative of Justice: Addressing Ecological Degradation as a Moral and Social Wrong	26
2.3.4 The Imperative of Transformation: Moving Beyond Anthropocentrism and Spiritualized Inaction	27
2.3.5 The Imperative of Witness: Integrating African Eco-Theology and Indigenous	28
2.4 Conclusion	29
CHAPTER 3	31
THE MFM’S INTERPRETATION OF THE DOMINION MANDATE: A THEOLOGICAL AND ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT	
3.0 Introduction	31
3.1 Contextual Profile of MFM within Nigerian Pentecostalism	31
3.1.1 Historical Emergence and Doctrinal Foundations	31
3.1.2 Core Beliefs and Theological Identity	33
3.1.3 Worship Praxis and Organizational Structure	34
3.2 Theology of Dominion in MFM’s Framework	35
3.3 Theological Implications for Creation and Ecology	42

3.4 Discourse and Rhetorical Analysis of Olukoya's Writings	44
3.4.1 Militarized Spiritual Language	44
3.4.2 Spatial Theology and Territorial Dominion	45
3.4.3 The Church as Dominion Agent	46
3.4.4 Eschatological Undertones and Ecological Neglect	47
3.5 Theological-Ecological Appraisals and Reframing	48
3.6 Conclusion	48
CHAPTER 4	50
SALLIE MCFAGUE'S KENOTIC THEOLOGY AND ITS ECOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS	
4.0 Introduction	50
4.1 Sallie McFague's Contribution to Contemporary Ecological Theology	51
4.2 The Concept of Kenosis in McFague's Theology	53
4.2.1 Sallie McFague's Conceptualization of Kenosis Grounded in Philippians 2:5-8	53
4.2.2 Christ's Kenosis as a Paradigm for Relationality and Interconnectedness with Creation	56
4.2.3 Critique of the Anthropocentric Theologies and Emphasis on the Intrinsic Value of Nature	58
4.3 Ethical Implications of McFague's Kenotic Theology for Ecological Thought	60
4.3.1 Kenotic Ethics: Self-Giving Love and Voluntary Restraint	60
4.3.2 Interdependence as Ontological and Ethical Reality	61
4.3.3 Befriending Nature: From Dominion to Compassionate Partnership	61
4.4 Conclusion	62

CHAPTER 5	63
A KENOTIC CRITIQUE OF DOMINION THEOLOGY IN MFM AND THEOLOGICAL- ECOLOGICAL REORIENTATION	
5.0 Introduction	63
5.1 A Comparative Theological-Ethical Analysis: McFague’s Kenosis and MFM’s Dominion Mandate	64
5.1.1 Theology of God and Creation	64
5.1.2 Anthropology and Human Vocation	65
5.1.3 Ethical Frameworks	66
5.1.4 Implications for Ecological Engagement	67
5.2 Ethical Tension: Dominion-based and Kenotic Stewardship	69
5.3 Confessing from Within: A Pentecostal Theologian’s Reflection	72
5.4 Conclusion and Recommendations	73
5.4.1 Conclusion	73
5.4.2 Recommendations	75
BIBLIOGRAPHY	77

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Lord is faithful! It has been proven in his mercy and grace towards me. I want to first thank God for His love and kindness over my family and me. I thank God for divinely connecting me to Protestant Theological University (PThU) Utrecht; I was exposed to different theological perspectives and thinking. I would say that my theological and ethical awareness have been reshaped and sharpened. This thesis would not have been possible without God's wisdom, strength, and grace. Coming to PThU I have been introduced to pure kindness, humility, and love. Therefore, I will love to extend my gratitude to some people whose lives have challenged and made me a better Christian theologian.

Professor Theo Boer, Professor Dorottya Nagy, Dr. Theo Pleizier, Dr. Klaas Bom, and Dr. Bosco Bangura I would like to thank the entire PThU faculty, the staff, and the Rector.

Special thanks go to my supervisor, Dr. Rob Compaijen for his genuine love and interest in my thesis. His contributions during our discussions really shaped my theological thinking and writings. Rob's comments, suggestions, prompt responses, and inputs have brought this thesis to the state it is now. His supervision has introduced me to new skills, especially, critical thinking.

A big thank you goes to my wife, Modupe Alade and our two sons: EriOluwanimi Enoch Alade and MojeriOluwa Emmanuel Alade for their encouragements, moral, emotional, and prayers support all through the period of my studies and writing of this thesis. I thank you all for believing in me. It is important to mention my brother from another mother, and his wife: Obayemi & Olayinka Oladipo who are in Nigeria for their genuine love, care, and prayers. Thank you so much. A very big thanks to all my brethren and their families from Nigeria here in the Netherlands. In addition, to all those who in one way or another have contributed to my academic journey and success, I am grateful for your prayers and advices. You have all been a great blessing.

DEDICATION

To the Olufemi Alade family: Modupe Alade – my wife

EriOluwanimi Alade – son

MojeriOluwa Alade – son

ABSTRACT

The ecological crisis confronting Nigeria and the world at large constitutes a profound moral and spiritual dilemma necessitating a theological-ethical intervention. Within the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, dominion theology is construed in a manner that accentuates authority and control, thereby fostering passive or apathetic attitudes towards ecological stewardship. This thesis posits Sallie McFague's notion of kenosis (self-emptying) as a viable theological-ethical paradigm for confronting ecological issues within the African Pentecostal context, specifically within MFM. Kenosis is deeply rooted in Philippians 2:5–8, which highlights Christ's humility and self-sacrifice, thereby providing a framework for re-conceptualizing environmental stewardship as an acknowledgment of the relational and interconnected nature of all creation, including non-human entities. This research adopts an interdisciplinary methodology, merging systematic theology, Pentecostal spirituality, and African theological ethics. The inquiry investigates how McFague's kenotic relationality can serve as a critique of MFM's ecological theology and creation care while proposing an alternative interpretation of dominion theology that stresses self-emptying humility and sacrificial stewardship, in contrast to a dominion approach. This study will utilize interdisciplinary methodologies encompassing textual analysis of MFM literature and sermons, theological retrieval of kenotic theology, and constructive theological synthesis to explore how McFague's kenotic concept can present an alternative framework to the dominion mandate in MFM theology. This research holds significance in bridging the divide between faith and ecological accountability, providing a biblically grounded, theologically robust, and culturally pertinent approach to environmental ethics. It contributes to the ongoing discourse surrounding Pentecostal and environmental ethics both in Africa and on a global scale.

KEYWORDS: Kenosis (self-emptying humility, self-sacrifice), relationality, interconnectedness, creation, ecological crisis, dominion mandate, Christian environmental ethics, Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM).

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Nigeria is confronted with substantial environmental issues such as deforestation, pollution, droughts, and the repercussions of resource extraction, especially in areas like the Niger Delta (Ahiamadu, 2010 & Barga, 2021). Religious convictions significantly influence cultural perceptions regarding the environment (Ahiamadu, 2010). Within the sphere of Nigerian Christianity, Pentecostalism, particularly represented by the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM), holds considerable prominence (Adedibu et al., 2025). MFM is recognized for its focus on spiritual warfare, deliverance, and a literal interpretation of biblical texts, which may shape its views on ecological matters, potentially contextualizing these issues within a framework of spiritual entities and divine action (Adedibu et al., 2025). The biblical “dominion mandate” (Genesis 1:26-28) has emerged as a pivotal reference point in Christian discourse concerning humanity’s relationship with the natural world. The notion that humanity possesses “dominion” over the created order has been interpreted by various scholars as a fundamental element in establishing an “instrumentalist” perspective on nature in Western thought, wherein the natural environment is perceived primarily as a resource to fulfill human requirements (Moo and Moo 2018). Certain environmental historians contend that the Christian worldview, especially the principle of human “dominion”, has inadvertently contributed to ecological degradation by promoting a sense of neglect or contempt for the natural environment (Moo and Moo 2018; Balcomb, 2019). However, an excessively literal and uncritical interpretation of this mandate has faced criticism for rationalizing environmental degradation and promoting a notion of human superiority (Ahiamadu, 2010, Alokwu, 2011; Balcomb, 2019). In light of escalating ecological challenges, theologians such as Sallie McFague have proposed alternative theological paradigms, including kenotic

theology, which underscores the self-giving love of God in Christ and the interdependence of all creation (McFague, 2021). McFague argues for a kenotic ethic characterized by restraint and relationality as an essential response to the environmental crisis (McFague, 2021; Robinson & Wotochek, 2021).

This thesis aims to investigate the convergence of these themes by analyzing the environmental ethics of MFM in Nigeria through the prism of McFague's kenotic theology. Considering MFM's theological framework and the ecological landscape of Nigeria, this research will explore how McFague's kenotic model can offer a constructive theological ethical approach for reevaluating the dominion mandate within this particular Nigerian Pentecostal context, potentially nurturing a more vigorous and responsible environmental ethic. The proposed kenotic framework, while centered on MFM and Nigeria, is also relevant for addressing similar ecological challenges in other religious contexts, as its focus on interconnectedness and self-emptying humility could enrich discussions on faith-based environmental initiatives by presenting a theologically grounded alternative to anthropocentric perspectives.

1.2 Problem Definition

The prevailing interpretation of the dominion mandate has played a significant role in worsening environmental deterioration, thereby highlighting the necessity for theological frameworks that advocate for ecological stewardship, especially among prominent religious organizations such as MFM in ecologically precarious regions like Nigeria. It is essential to comprehend MFM's environmental ethics and to investigate alternative theological-ethical paradigms that support a more sustainable approach.

1.2 Research Question

1.2.1 Main Research Question

How can Sallie McFague's concept of kenosis help to critique the dominion mandate as it is interpreted by the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries' General Overseer, in light of the ecological challenges that Nigeria is currently facing?

My research question is so formulated in order to integrate various scholarly fields related to the topic: First, comprehending McFague's concept of kenosis will necessitate an engagement with systematic theology and possibly philosophical theology. Second, investigating the dominion mandate and its ramifications for environmental ethics resides within the realm of Christian ethics and biblical hermeneutics. Third, analyzing the interpretation of MFM's General Overseer requires familiarity with Pentecostal spirituality and potentially the sociology of religion within an African framework. Fourth, confronting the ecological dilemmas in Nigeria necessitates an incorporation of ecological theology alongside an understanding of the socio-political and cultural ambiance pertaining to environmental matters in Nigeria. Last, articulating the response within the context of African Pentecostalism requires an engagement with African theological frameworks. The research addresses a significant gap in scholarly discourse by offering a novel intersection of kenotic theology and MFM's environmental ethics in Nigeria, hence underscoring its originality.

1.2.2 Research Sub-questions

1. What ecological challenges is Nigeria currently facing, and what are the theological implications for ecological preservation and creation care within this context?
2. What are the key doctrines of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministry's (MFM) General Overseer's interpretation of the dominion mandate (Genesis 1:26-28) as articulated in his literature and what do they imply for ecological preservation and creation care?

3. What are the core elements of Sallie McFague's concept of kenosis as presented in *A New Climate for Christology* (2021) and *Blessed are the Consumers* (2013) particularly concerning interconnectedness, self-emptying love, and the relationship between God, humanity, and creation?

1.3 Objectives and Justification

The research objectives and their justifications are:

1. To examine the theological and cultural factors influencing MFM's Christian perspectives on environmental stewardship in Nigeria, particularly in relation to their understanding of the dominion mandate. Analyzing these factors will aid in identifying significant doctrinal elements relevant to engaging with McFague's kenotic relationality.
2. To articulate Sallie McFague's kenotic theological framework of relationality for environmental ethics, highlighting its contrast with dominion-centric views. This objective seeks to establish a theological basis for re-conceptualizing stewardship as an expression of divine obedience rooted in relationality rather than superiority and control.
3. To critically assess the impact of the dominion mandate, as understood within MFM, on its approach to ecological ethics, considering the potential tension with prosperity gospel, eschatological beliefs and the possibility of redirecting eschatological hope towards present ecological responsibility in light of McFague's kenotic relationality.
4. To suggest potential theological avenues, informed by McFague's work, for enhancing environmental accountability among MFM Christians by integrating kenotic relationality into their theological discourse.
5. To connect faith and ecological responsibility within the MFM context through the theological-ethical lens of McFague's kenotic relationality, emphasizing their interconnectedness as aspects of Christian discipleship.

1.4 State of the Art of the Research

1.4.1 Environmental Theology within Pentecostalism

The realm of environmental theology, which seeks to understand the relationship between religious beliefs and ecological concerns, has been markedly underexplored within the broader framework of Pentecostal thought and practice. Esteemed scholars in this field, such as Golo (2013) and Nche et al. (2017), contend that the eschatological orientation that characterizes much of Pentecostal belief often engenders a sense of detachment from the imperative of ecological stewardship and responsibility that is increasingly necessary in our contemporary context. In a significant contribution to this discourse, Conradie (2021) meticulously examines the concept of ecological pneumatology and underscores the potential for reorienting Pentecostal spirituality towards a more proactive engagement with environmental care, particularly by accentuating the sustaining and nurturing presence of the Holy Spirit that permeates all of creation. Nevertheless, despite the importance of this dialogue, there remains a conspicuous lack of scholarly inquiry that directly engages with the ways in which Pentecostal spiritual warfare theology may inadvertently contribute to ecological neglect, thereby creating a significant gap in the literature that this study aims to thoroughly explore and address. The shortage of scholarly inquiry on Pentecostal spiritual warfare and ecological neglect justifies the subsequent discourse analysis focusing on MFM's specific teachings to address this gap.

1.4.2 Dominion Theology in Pentecostalism

The pervasive influence of prosperity theology coupled with a warfare-based interpretation of dominion theology within the Nigerian Pentecostal context - most prominently exemplified by the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM) has played a pivotal role in shaping the environmental attitudes and behaviors of its adherents. Outstandingly, Moo and Moo (2018) articulate the critical perspective that the dominion mandate, as articulated in the

Scriptures, has often been historically misconstrued and misapplied, resulting in an endorsement of human supremacy over the natural world rather than an ethical call to stewardship and responsible caretaking of creation. In a thought-provoking critique, Balcomb (2019) addresses the anthropocentric theological orientation that is prevalent within African Christianity, which frequently leads to the exploitation and instrumentalization of nature primarily for human benefit and gain. However, despite the relevance of these discussions, there exists a significant paucity in the academic literature regarding how MFM's particular interpretation of dominion theology shapes its approach to pressing environmental issues, thereby creating a substantial opportunity for this research to provide original insights and contributions to the field of study. The discussed misinterpretations of the dominion mandate within Nigerian Pentecostalism, particularly MFM, necessitate the contextual analysis of Pastor D.K Olukoya's interpretation through his literature and sermons.

1.4.3 Kenotic Theology and Environmental Ethics

The theological framework of kenotic theology, which emphasizes a Christ-centered approach to ethical considerations, offers a profound corrective to the dominion-based theological ethics that have been prevalent in many Christian circles. McFague (2021) interestingly argues that the ideal of self-emptying humility, as exemplified in Philippians 2:5-8, serves as a powerful model for ecological stewardship that is fundamentally rooted in relationality and interconnectedness, rather than in exploitation and domination of the natural world. Lefsrud (2020) further suggests that the principles of kenotic ethics have the potential to fundamentally reshape the understanding and practice of Christian ecological responsibility by promoting a paradigm of self-giving and sacrificial love, as opposed to a dominion theological framework that often prioritizes material gain. Despite these significant contributions to the field, there has yet to be a comprehensive study that specifically applies the principles of kenotic theology to the context of Nigerian Pentecostal environmental

ethics, thereby rendering this research a novel and valuable contribution to the discourse on environmental theology. Evidently, McFague's proposal of kenosis as a relational ecological ethic directly informs the constructive theological synthesis phase, where her work will serve as a primary source for developing an alternative framework for MFM.

1.5 Methodology

This research adopts an interdisciplinary theological framework that integrates systematic theology, Christian ethics, Pentecostal spirituality, African theological paradigms, and ecological theology. The methodological contributions of each discipline and navigation potential limitations are highlighted.¹ It is important to clarify the extent of the research's engagement with MFM practitioners. This research will be purely theological, doctrinal, and textual analysis.

The study is structured in three phases, each with distinct methodologies tailored to the research questions and objectives.

1.5.1 Theological and Historical Retrieval Method

This phase investigates the doctrine of kenosis within the historical and theological contexts of Pentecostal and African theology. The methodology includes:

- i. Doctrinal Analysis: A thorough examination of kenotic theology with an emphasis on Philippians 2:5–8, will be made by assessing its interpretations across contemporary theological traditions. My primary sources are the Bible text in Philippians 2:5-8 (The 21st Century King James Version, KJ21), the central scriptural text on kenosis. This will be directly analyzed hermeneutically in my research.

¹ Systematic theology will delineate kenosis in accordance with biblical references (Phil. 2:5-8) and theological perspectives (McFague, 2013), Christian ethics will scrutinize MFM's environmental ethics in light of Christian doctrines, Pentecostal spirituality will contextualize MFM's distinctive views on spiritual warfare and creation, African theological paradigms will furnish cultural insights into MFM's worldview, while ecological theology will offer frameworks for the critique and re-conceptualization of environmental ethics. Furthermore, limitations like potential overgeneralization of African contexts and interpreting MFM without prejudice will be navigated through rigorous textual analysis of MFM sources, engaging diverse scholarly perspectives, and maintaining contextual sensitivity.

- ii. Historical and Theological Retrieval: Applying retrieval theology to reinterpret kenotic concepts for contemporary ethical considerations, in line with Sarisky's (2019) assertion that historical theological resources remain relevant today. Sallie McFague's theological writings on kenosis will serve as primary source – her original works on kenosis are crucial for this theological retrieval. This theological retrieval will prioritize contemporary African Pentecostal and ecological theologians. I acknowledge the limitations of historical and theological retrieval² on kenotic theology.³
- iii. Comparative Analysis: Evaluating kenotic interpretations across diverse Christian traditions (Protestant, and Pentecostal) to identify theological plurality.

1.5.2 Contextual Analysis of Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM)

This phase will investigate the theological, cultural, and ethical dimensions of MFM's General Overseer's perspectives on ecology and creation care. The following methodologies will be implemented:

- i. Discourse Analysis – Scrutinizing Pastor D.K Olukoya theological and hermeneutical interpretation relating to creation and humanity's role environmental care through the lens of his sermons, books such as "Dealing with Local Satanic Technology", and its repercussions on ecological attitudes. The lack of direct scholarly engagement with MFM's environmental

² It is pertinent to investigate the philosophical foundations of the constraints that are intrinsic to historical and theological retrieval. The presence of potential biases in interpretation constitutes a significant issue, as our modern frameworks, informed by contemporary knowledge and cultural contexts may inadvertently shape our comprehension of historical texts and concepts (Allen, 2019). This resembles the issue of anachronism that has been examined within the history of ideas (Beiser, 2016).

From the perspective of the philosophy of science, the application of historical theological concepts to contemporary ecological dilemmas, for instance, encounters the difficulty of conceptual transfer between disparate worldviews and knowledge systems. What was deemed a legitimate explanation or ethical framework within a previous theological context may not correspond with current scientific insights regarding ecological systems and causality (Beiser, 2016). Furthermore, the process of selecting historical resources entails prioritization, which may result in an uneven representation of historical viewpoints and an oversight of marginalized perspectives. Consequently, while retrieval may prove advantageous, it necessitates a stringent self-awareness of these inherent philosophical constraints.

³ Limitations of Doctrinal and Theological Retrieval: In examining kenotic theology, I am aware that it is essential to recognize the diverse and often contentious interpretations of biblical texts, such as Philippians 2:5-8, across various theological frameworks, including within Pentecostalism. The selection of theologians from different historical contexts necessitates prioritization, which may inadvertently lead to an unbalanced representation of perspectives. To address this, a commitment to acknowledging potential omissions while striving for inclusivity will be crucial.

ethics necessitates a discourse analysis of their primary texts. There are also inherent challenges and potential blind spots in the use of discourse analysis.⁴

1.5.3 Constructive Theological Synthesis

The concluding phase will construct a kenotic theological-ethical framework for ecological stewardship in MFM, focusing on theological reconstruction rather than practical application. I will employ a theoretical and theological reflection by combining kenotic theology, African theological ethics centering on interconnectedness and sacredness of creation, and ecological theology into a cohesive ethical paradigm. Sallie McFague's *A New Climate for Christology: Kenosis, Climate Change, and Befriending Nature* (2021) and *Blessed are the consumers: Climate Change and the Practice of Restraint* (2013) will serve as my primary sources as she proposes relational kenosis as an ecological model, aligning with my theological view and arguments. Additionally, Ernst M. Conradie's article on "Pneumatology and Ecology: Reassessing the State of the Debate" will provide a systematic analysis of pneumatology in eco-theology; this is relevant for kenosis and creation care in articulating a kenotic theological ethic.

One methodological limitation is the potential subjectivity in constructing a theoretical - theological synthesis.⁵ My methodological framework engages in doctrinal retrieval, discourse analysis, and theological synthesis. While remaining aware of my background in evangelicalism, Pentecostalism, and within the mainline churches in Nigeria, I maintain a dedication to methodological rigor and interdisciplinary collaboration. I recognize the

⁴ Difficulties in Discourse Analysis: Analyzing Pentecostal rhetoric related to the dominion mandate requires careful interpretation of language and its implicit assumptions, acknowledging the risk of misrepresentation of the multiplicity of views within MFM. I recognize that the potential for diverse interpretations is essential for a comprehensive analysis. Ultimately, the synthesis of kenotic theology, African theological ethics, and ecological theology will reflect a subjective interpretative process, warranting recognition of its provisional nature amidst other possible paradigms.

⁵ The integration of kenotic theology, African ethical frameworks, and ecological perspectives is intrinsically interpretive, yielding a singular ethical paradigm that may mirror the interpreter's theological biases. The scope and generalizability of this investigation is confined to the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries in Nigeria, implying that the derived kenotic framework may not be universally applicable to other Pentecostal groups or Christian traditions without additional research.

challenges inherent in interpreting Pentecostal and particularly MFM environmental perspectives without prejudice and strive to uphold objectivity in my analysis of MFM's theology, ensuring that kenotic ethics is formulated in a contextually and theologically sound manner.

1.6 Structure of the Study

This research is structured in five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the work: background to the study, problem definition, state of the art of the research, and the methodology of the study. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the ecological crisis in Nigeria, theological perspectives on environmental degradation, and theological imperatives of ecological preservation and creation care. Chapter 3 reviews the interpretative framework employed by a prominent faction of Nigerian Pentecostalism, specifically the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM), regarding the biblical dominion mandate articulated in Genesis 1. In addition, the chapter examines the theological foundations of MFM's viewpoint concerning human dominion over the created order, subsequently assessing the potential implications for their engagement with ecological issues in Nigeria. Chapter 4 discusses Sallie McFague's theological perspectives on kenosis - a theological, ecological, and ethical dimension of this study in the context of reinterpreting the dominion mandate particularly in MFM. It highlights McFague's significant contributions to contemporary theological thought, particularly her synthesis of ecological consciousness and innovative Christological perspectives. Lastly, chapter 5 presents the concluding section of this study, employing McFague's kenotic theology to critique MFM's dominion mandate viewed largely from spiritual dominance over certain non-human elements of nature, which are seen as conduits through which evil forces attack human destinies. This chapter also enumerates some recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 2

THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS IN NIGERIA AND ITS THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

2.0 Introduction

A personal experiential story may be apt in commencing this chapter, looking back with my firsthand encounter with ecological challenges in my country, Nigeria. I was raised in Ilorin, Kwara State; a State bordering the northern and southern parts of Nigeria. Lagos State, located in the south west is a coastal city and regarded as the commercial capital of Nigeria and by extension Africa. In 1999, I decided to move to Lagos; attracted by its reputation as Nigeria's commercial hub and a city renowned for its aspirational opportunities and lifestyle. However, my daily traversing along the Lagos-Ibadan expressway to Lagos Island, the epicenter for numerous national and international corporations, including major financial institutions, has become a continual source of anxiety for me. I particularly loathe navigating the Ojota segment due to an open refuse site located there, which has developed into a substantial mound over the years. This site perpetually smolders, releasing harmful fumes that induce significant discomfort and present considerable health risks. The situation is exacerbated during the early morning and late evening hours as the smoke consistently impairs visibility and renders respiration difficult. Evidently, the Punch Newspaper reports that; "From the air, the 100-acre Olusosun dumpsite in Ojota, Lagos looks innocent. From the ground, however, the site is a malodorous, contaminated world of its own with towering hills of waste. This landfill is the fourth largest in the world whilst retaining notoriety as Africa's largest landfill. Olusosun receives up to 10,000 tons of garbage per day. Toxic fumes are released from the site and chemicals are absorbed into the ground. Around a thousand homes exist near the site." (Punch Newspaper, 5th November 2018).

In addition, I reside in a modest suburb bordering Lagos and Ogun States. The adjacent community experiences flood every biennium. I distinctly recall one such calamitous flood

when my family and I provided shelter for a family of four who had been displaced for duration of two months. They could only return to their residence once the floodwaters had subsided. These interrelated experiences; the toxic emissions and health dangers stemming from the Ojota landfill that I encounter routinely, and the direct consequences of the recurrent flooding on a neighboring community, which even resulted in our accommodating displaced families, constitute my personal encounters with the environmental challenges we confront as a nation. These lived realities emphasize the pressing necessity to confront the overarching ecological crisis.

In this chapter, I endeavor to contextualize the ecological predicament in Nigeria within a more expansive socio-environmental paradigm. The objective is to highlight the alarming deterioration of ecosystems and the subsequent ramifications for social and theological contemplation. I anchor this examination with evidence from Eche and Amadi, Gwamna and other scholars to illustrate how rampant deforestation, pollution, and unsustainable resource extraction have exacerbated Nigeria's environmental challenges. The purpose extends beyond mere dissemination of information; it aims to incite theological reflection regarding these circumstances.

2.1 An Overview of the Ecological Crisis in Nigeria

In this section, I present the assertions made by Eche and Amadi (2020), who contend that Nigeria is positioned among the lowest globally in terms of environmental stewardship. This depiction serves to intensify the ethical implications of the crisis, pinpointing deforestation as a primary indicator of ecological deterioration. Gwamna's (2016) expression of sorrow regarding the vanishing forests, alongside the exacerbating factors of land degradation and flooding, contributes to the urgency of the ethical discourse. Ityavyar and Tyav (2012) offer hydrological perspectives, associating deforestation with heightened surface runoff and flooding further solidifying the ecological and theological ramifications.

In 2002, a detailed assessment of Nigeria's environmental condition was conducted by USAID, which provided an in-depth analysis of Nigeria's ecological framework alongside a systematic investigation of potential threats and opportunities for strategic advancement. The nation's abundant natural resource base, encompassing air, water, and soil quality, is significantly pressured by factors such as poverty, rapid population growth, urban migration, and institutional limitations. Particularly, the Niger Delta region contains Africa's largest mangrove forest, ranking as the third largest globally. Nevertheless, these essential ecosystems are encountering increasing dangers and necessitate urgent intervention and protection. Additionally, a considerable portion of Nigeria's land has been transformed for agricultural purposes, resulting in desertification, soil erosion, water scarcity, and degradation. Urban waste, industrial activities, overfishing, and logging further jeopardize biodiversity; however, sustainable resource management holds promise for the conservation of Nigeria's natural environment (USAID Report 2002, 1-3).

Eche and Amadi (2020:120-136), articulate that Nigeria is recognized as having one of the most abysmal environmental records globally, attributable to reckless exploitation. These challenges encompass extensive pollution, deforestation, desertification, and the adverse effects of resource extraction. They assert that deforestation represents a critical ecological concern in Nigeria. The nation has experienced a reduction of over 50 percent in its forest cover since 1990, with a projected annual deforestation rate of 3.7 percent, one of the highest rates worldwide. Contributing factors include agricultural expansion, population growth, developmental initiatives, mining activities, bush burning, logging, and the collection of fuelwood. Gwamna (2016) argued that it is increasingly disheartening to witness regions once categorized as savannah or dense forest rapidly vanishing. The repercussions of deforestation are severe, resulting in soil erosion, heightened frequency, and intensity of flooding, biodiversity loss, and land degradation. As observed by Ityavyar and Tyav

(2012:92-105), deforestation enhances water flow across the land surface, as precipitation falls directly to the ground, no longer obstructed by vegetative cover. This will likely exacerbate the magnitude and frequency of flooding. These viewpoints collectively serve as a diagnostic framework for theologians to grasp the empirical severity of creation's disintegration. They facilitate a transition into theological contemplation by demonstrating the necessity for Christian ethics to address the anguish inflicted by ecological irresponsibility. Therefore, these insights ground the theological investigation in a credible ecological context. At this juncture, it is important to ask whether the theological interpretation of environmental degradation might risk overstating the causal responsibility of the church, especially within Nigerian Pentecostalism. While the church's silence or negligence may amount to complicity by omission, we must distinguish this from deliberate theological endorsement of ecological harm. This calls for a more precise understanding of responsibility, not in terms of direct causation, but through the absence of countervailing ethical formation.

I have engaged the following voices to enhance the ecological critique by directing focus toward pollution. Ikeke (2011) and Idialu (2021) underscore the devastation caused by oil spills and chemical discharges in the Niger Delta, whereas Agagu (2009) and Bob-Manuel (2017) illuminate issues of urban waste mismanagement and atmospheric contamination. The persistent theme is that anthropogenic pollutants are contaminating both terrestrial environments and living organisms, resulting in significant health hazards and existential uncertainty. Ikeke (2011) characterized the unprecedented danger to human lives, property, and the environment of the Niger Delta stemming from oil and gas extraction. This has resulted in the contamination of water sources, destruction of agricultural lands, and loss of biodiversity. Idialu (2021) asserted that the anthropogenic release of greenhouse gases and chemical pollutants such as carbon monoxide and other flammable substances, along with the

disposal of lubricating oils from machinery into rivers, crude oil exploration, and pipeline vandalism, all contribute to environmental degradation and exacerbate global warming. Pollution from industrial and municipal waste is also widespread, with numerous Nigerian cities lacking adequate solid waste management and ineffective monitoring of industrial effluents. Agagu (2009) highlighted that despite a low level of industrialization, industrial waste pollution remains a significant threat to the Nigerian environment due to the infiltration of effluents into aquatic ecosystems. Air pollution is yet another pressing issue, with Bob-Manuel (2017) noting that many Nigerians, particularly in the Niger Delta, experience health problems related to the operations of oil extractors, including respiratory illnesses. The extensive activities associated with oil exploration and extraction in the region of Ogoniland have culminated in a profoundly negative impact on both the environment and the socio-economic fabric of the community, leading to significant environmental degradation, financial distress, and a multitude of socio-political conflicts that are both complex and deeply entrenched. In their scholarly contributions, Legborsi Saro Pyagbara (2003) and the collaborative work of Oluwole Ojewale and Alize le Roux (2022) provide a rigorous and insightful examination of the catastrophic repercussions that oil exploration has inflicted upon Ogoniland, highlighting the multifaceted nature of the crisis. They contend that the relentless pursuit of oil extraction has not only precipitated severe environmental degradation but has also engendered considerable economic hardship and an atmosphere rife with socio-political turmoil that affects all strata of society.

The environmental calamities that have arisen as a consequence of oil spills, routine gas flaring, and both water and air pollution have tragically resulted in the irrevocable loss of arable farmland, a decline in fish stocks vital for local communities, and a scarcity of clean, potable water, all of which have devastatingly undermined the livelihoods of the local populations, as articulated by Pyagbara (2003:7). The United Nations Environment

Programme (UNEP) estimates that approximately 600,000 individuals die annually in Africa as a result of air pollution. Global warming continues to disrupt the planet with its consequences, particularly evident in tropical regions (Idowu et al., 2011; Williams et al., 2018). This results in palpable terrestrial and biological alterations, adversely impacting agriculture, humanity, and the surrounding ecosystem. Nigeria ranks among the top ten nations most affected by climate change, with approximately 6% of its area vulnerable to extreme weather events (World Bank, 2019). Climate change will affect the ability of ecological systems to provide a range of essential ecological goods and services (Dogara, 2017). Ultimately, tackling these challenges necessitates interdisciplinary cooperation and a dedication to stewardship, viewed as a spiritual, theological, and missional obligation. This collective of scholars indicates that ecological challenges are not isolated phenomena; they traverse industrial, political, and ethical domains. By concluding this section with the UNEP's sobering mortality statistic, these heighten the urgency and prepare the ground for theological perspectives to engage in the discourse with moral precision and prophetic urgency.

This crucial overview lays the groundwork for the theological discourse that ensues, thereby establishing a framework of pressing urgency. It enables later sections to interpret environmental degradation not solely as a civic or ecological issue but also as a profound theological dilemma. The precision of these environmental data empowers the readership to comprehend the significance of religious perspectives in addressing ecological devastation.

2.2 Theological Perspectives on Environmental Degradation

As mentioned earlier, Nigeria is currently experiencing a profound and nuanced ecological crisis. Within the context of Nigerian Christianity, various theological paradigms attempt to interpret and respond to this environmental degradation. This section investigates the existing theological responses, examines how different Christian traditions, extending beyond the

initial Pentecostal emphasis, might address these challenges, and specifically evaluates the engagement of Pentecostal theology in Nigeria with environmental issues.

Ngele (2009:171) asserts that for over one hundred and fifty years, there has been a notable absence of substantive focus on sustainability within the ecological discourse of Nigerian Christian churches. This observation indicates a historical deficit in targeted theological involvement concerning environmental issues within the context of Nigerian Christianity. Furthermore, Ngele argues that the Nigerian Churches, as an integral part of the global landscape, have participated in this widespread trend of an anthropocentric worldview that has exacerbated the ecological crisis. This suggests that Nigerian Christianity, akin to other segments of global Christianity, has been affected by theological frameworks that have not prioritized ecological responsibility. Indeed, Ngele's (2009:172) aim in the study is to enlighten the church regarding the ethics of ecology and eco-theology and to inspire it to affirm its role as a faithful steward of the earth. This aim highlights the author's belief that the church, including presumably those in Nigeria, requires considerable motivation and education to theologically confront the ecological crisis. It appears that the predominant theological response within Nigerian Christianity to the ecological crisis, up to that time (2009), was a notable absence of significant and concentrated engagement. Ngele's work sought to illuminate this deficiency and promote a more comprehensive theological framework for eco-stewardship within the Nigerian ecclesiastical context. The analysis presented by Ngele reveals how a prevailing anthropocentric worldview contributed to the ecological crisis and calls for the church to be enlightened on ecological ethics and embrace its role as earth's steward. His work essentially diagnoses the foundational problem of inadequate theological engagement. Does the theological shortfall observed in Nigerian churches reflect an active theological misreading, or rather a passive failure to engage with environmental ethics? The distinction matters. It allows us to frame the issue not as

theological malevolence but as a moral and hermeneutical void, which can be constructively addressed through theological re-education and contextual engagement.

Oderinde and Akerele (2020) and Nche et al. (2016) then illuminate the contemporary situation, revealing that while engagement is increasing, it remains inadequate. They detail specific current deficiencies: Oderinde and Akerele point to the tendency to spiritualize environmental issues without addressing socio-political/ethical dimensions, while Nche et al. identify liturgical apathy and problematic eschatological interpretations leading to inaction, thereby providing concrete examples of the theological barriers currently hindering effective response.

Oderinde and Akerele (2020) in an extensive examination of the theological responses of Nigerian Christianity to the prevailing ecological crisis depict an increasing yet inadequate engagement with environmental concerns within Nigerian Christian theology and practice, pinpointing both theological assets and structural deficiencies in the current ecclesiastical involvement. They assert that the ecological crisis, particularly in the Nigerian context characterized by deforestation, oil contamination, desertification, and the mismanagement of waste, necessitates a vigorous theological response. They argue that the ecological crisis is essentially a theological issue because it raises questions about the relationship between God, humanity, and creation. This theological perspective is rooted in the *imago Dei* and stewardship themes present in Genesis, while simultaneously critiquing anthropocentric interpretations that have sanctioned ecological exploitation. A principal assertion in their analysis is that, although Nigerian Christianity, especially its Pentecostal and evangelical segments recognize the environmental crisis, it frequently spiritualizes the issue without confronting its socio-political or ethical aspects. They state: “Many Nigerian churches relegate environmental issues to the background, preferring to focus on prosperity,

deliverance, and end-time teachings” (Oderinde & Akerele, 2020:50). This spiritual abstraction leads to a deficiency of sustained ecological ethics within ecclesiastical practices. Nevertheless, the authors also acknowledge promising theological frameworks. They emphasize indigenous cosmologies, the African communal ethos, and the biblical notion of shalom as fertile grounds for a contextual eco-theology. Oderinde and Akerele advocate an urgent theological reorientation that prioritizes ecological justice as a form of Christian witness (Oderinde & Akerele, 2020:55). Their research emphasizes that any substantive theological response must address environmental degradation not merely as a secondary issue but as integral to Christian discipleship and public theology.

Nche et al, (2016) elucidate various theological responses, or the lack thereof, within Nigerian Christianity in light of the ecological crisis: First, the liturgical apathy and absence of “ecological spirituality”: They argue that a profound theological engagement with the ecological crisis is markedly lacking in the conventional worship and liturgical practices of numerous Nigerian churches, suggesting that ecological matters receive insufficient emphasis during worship, sermons, and prayers. They highlight the notable dearth of what is referred to as “ecological spirituality” referencing Bianchi (1998) and Pope Francis (2015) within this discussion. Even when nature is referenced in hymns and prayers, it is predominantly portrayed as a reflection of divine glory to emphasize human virtues, rather than being appreciated for its intrinsic value (Nche et al, 2016:173). This deficiency in the inclusion of ecological issues within the fundamental practices of faith indicates a theological stance that has yet to fully acknowledge the urgency of the environmental crisis within its spiritual paradigm. Second, the eschatological perspectives resulting in inaction: Nche et al (2016:170) argue that certain Christians in Nigeria interpret climate change and its catastrophic impacts through an eschatological framework, perceiving them as indicators of the “end times” or the imminent “return of Christ”. They posit that this theological viewpoint

may account for the inactivity of some churches in participating in ecologically sustainable endeavors, as they might regard environmental concerns as components of a divinely preordained eschatological narrative rather than matters necessitating human engagement. Third, the emerging eco-theology and ecological liturgy (predominantly within the Catholic Church): The research underscores an incipient theological response within the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria. It should be noted that the mention of the Catholic Church is to underscore the emerging eco-theological response; however, the Catholic Church is not the focus of this study. Nche et al (2016:170) recognize that the Catholic Church, through its educational institutions, has convened conferences and disseminated academic journals that focus on climate change. They specifically cite the proceedings of the 22nd CIWA Theology Week (2011) and the African Journal of Contextual Theology. Moreover, the text references the Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA), which asserted the essential role of eco-theology in addressing the ecological crisis, urging theologians to contemplate the cosmos from a faith-based perspective, highlighting God as creator, redeemer, and sustainer. This eco-theology aspires to cultivate ecologically conscious congregations. Likewise, the notion of ecological liturgy is introduced, which advocates for the reverence of creation in worship, referencing Chibuko (2011). The authors encourage churches to incorporate ecological considerations into their liturgical practices and homilies, contending that liturgy play a crucial role in shaping Christian comprehension, referencing Bianchi (1998). Summarily, while the study identifies a prevalent liturgical apathy and the impact of eschatological interpretations as barriers to a vigorous theological response to the ecological crisis within Nigerian Christianity, it concurrently points to a growing eco-theology and ecological liturgy, especially within the Catholic tradition. Furthermore, the study articulates a distinct theological imperative for church engagement grounded in fundamental Christian convictions

regarding creation, stewardship, and the interrelation of humanity, salvation, and the environment.

This gap in theological engagement, as outlined by Ngele (2009), Oderinde & Akerele (2020), and Nche et al (2016), finds a corrective in Okopido (2010), who introduces a foundational biblical concept of stewardship, which frames ecological care as a divine commission. His perspective serves as a theological anchor for addressing both historical apathy and contemporary inaction.

The theological responses emerging from Nigerian Christianity are increasingly informed by the expanding discipline of African eco-theology. This theological perspective aims to confront environmental issues from an African vantage point, frequently utilizing indigenous concepts in conjunction with biblical teachings. A significant theological notion employed is stewardship, which underscores humanity's divinely mandated obligation to care for creation. As articulated by Okopido (2010) during a seminar of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), religious leaders and the Christian populace are "stewards of God" and have a duty to tackle the environmental crisis. This stewardship ethic asserts that the earth is God's possession, and humans are responsible for its welfare. Scholars such as Agbiji (2015) then enhance Okopido's stewardship model by proposing the crucial addition of value for community, suggesting that a focus solely on stewardship is insufficient and must incorporate the interdependence of human and environmental welfare, thus refining the proposed theological response.

Timothy Barga's (2021) work serves to offer a robust alternative that addresses the shortcomings (apathy, spiritualization, anthropocentrism) identified by the earlier scholars and grounds ecological action in a rich theological and cultural context. Barga's propositions present a complex array of theological responses within Nigerian Christianity and the wider spectrum of African Christianity in relation to the ecological crisis. These responses are

deeply rooted in indigenous African cosmologies, Christian doctrinal tenets, and a moral-philosophical framework that emphasizes stewardship, communal ethics, and a sacramental understanding of creation. A brief discussion of the most salient theological themes and responses elucidated in his work is significant to this study because Barga provides a contextually grounded African theological framework that addresses ecological degradation using indigenous cosmologies and sacramental views of creation. This aligns with the study's goal to develop an alternative Christian environmental ethic rooted in African Pentecostal contexts, particularly in contrast to dominion theology.

One, creation as sacred and sacramental: African theology perceives the earth as a hallowed abode, populated by deities and spirits, ultimately serving as a conduit to the Supreme Being. Nature transcends mere utility; it embodies a sacramental essence - an articulation of the divine presence (Barga, 2021:51). Second, the interdependence of life and theological ecology: A pivotal theological assertion is the interconnectedness of all creation, mirroring the theological notion that all life is interlinked. Barga cites Pope Benedict XVI, who frames creation as a manifestation of divine love, meriting reverence (58). The third response is the traditional African theology and environmental harmony: African traditional religious beliefs regard nature as spiritually vibrant and interwoven with the divine reality. This perspective fosters reverence for nature and mitigates exploitation through prohibitions against desecrating land or cutting down sacred trees such as the Iroko (55). In addition, the veneration of earth deities like "Ama" (Kilba) and "Ile" (Yoruba), wherein desecration invites divine retribution (56). The fourth theological response is the Christian mandate of stewardship: The creation narrative in Genesis serves as a cornerstone for ecological theology within Nigerian Christianity. It impels humanity to nurture the earth rather than to dominate it in a destructive manner: "God bestowed upon them a mandate to... care for the earth... in a

participatory manner since He remains the ultimate creator” (58). This reflects a covenantal theology; humans as caretakers and collaborators with God, rather than exploiters.

Fifth, moral, and pedagogical formation: Barga advocates for pedagogical pathways - educational reforms that underscore moral accountability and ecological awareness. He contends that theology must stimulate moral consciousness: “What this institution... is advocating is that environmental sustainability necessitates a proper conscience” (66). Sixth, eschatological, and communal dimensions: Barga argues that African ecological theology is profoundly influenced by a cyclical conception of time and existence, which reveres ancestors and imposes stewardship responsibilities for future generations: “If the umbilical cord is carelessly discarded, it signifies a disregard for this connection... it symbolizes humanity’s bond with the universe” (69). Consequently, ecological stewardship becomes an expression of relational fidelity to the land, ancestors, and descendants. Seventh, divine providence and sustenance: Barga posits that the Divine not only initiates creation but also maintains it through divine providence. Hans Schwarz is referenced: “Without God’s continuing preservation of the creation, the Cosmos will cease to exist... all is utterly dependent upon God’s gracious sustenance” (62). Eighth, prophetic, and missional imperative: The Church embodies a prophetic responsibility in challenging exploitation and cultivating societal awareness. This theological stance transcends mere academic discourse and engages in active mission: “Christian mission possesses the capacity to confront all factors that undermine the environment... when properly comprehended and contextualized” (65). Lastly, philosophical consciencism: African environmental theology converges with philosophical inquiry. Philosophical consciencism, as articulated by Ikeke, asserts that ethical actions emerge from accurate comprehension; individuals must be persuaded of nature’s intrinsic worth to safeguard it (66). Evidently, Barga characterizes African theology as fundamentally eco-centric, integrative, and ethically vigorous: religion and the environment

are inextricably linked. Nature constitutes a component of the created order and is interconnected with humanity; thus, it warrants stewardship.

2.3 Theological Imperatives for Ecological Preservation and Creation Care

Expanding upon the analysis of the ecological crisis in Nigeria and the myriad theological viewpoints striving to comprehend this situation, this section describes the theological imperatives that must urgently inform Christian involvement in ecological preservation and the holistic stewardship of creation within the Nigerian ambience. Drawing from both traditional Christian tenets and the emergent domain of African eco-theology, these imperatives furnish a normative framework for ethical conduct and responsible management of Nigeria's rich, yet endangered, natural heritage.

2.3.1 The Foundational Imperative: Recognizing God as Creator and Humanity as Stewards

Central to any substantive Christian theology concerning the environment is the fundamental acknowledgment of God as the exclusive Creator and ultimate proprietor of all existence. The declaration in Genesis affirms God's sovereign dominion over the universe and all that it encompasses. This foundational reality has significant ramifications for how humanity perceives and engages with the natural environment. The earth, with its complex ecosystems and plentiful resources, should not be viewed merely as a collection of assets for human exploitation, but as divinely designed embroidery, that reflects God's majesty and intricate craftsmanship. Consequently, humanity's position within this created framework is not one of unqualified domination in the manner of unrestrained authority, but rather one of responsible stewardship. As Okopido (2010) effectively articulated at a seminar organized by the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), religious leaders and the Christian community are "stewards of God" with a clear obligation to confront the environmental crisis. This charge, rooted in the creation narrative, compels humans to nurture, cultivate, and safeguard the

earth. Barga (2021) corroborates this notion, asserting, “God entrusted them with a mandate to... care for the earth... in a collaborative manner since He remains the ultimate creator”. This stewardship necessitates active and engaged participation in God’s continuous care for creation rather than mere passive oversight. Agbiji (2015) posits that this stewardship concept can be further enriched by accentuating the “value for community”, thereby emphasizing the interdependence of human welfare with the health of the environment. The alarming decline of Nigeria’s ecosystems due to deforestation, pollution, and unsustainable resource extraction directly contradicts this essential theological imperative of responsible stewardship.

While this section affirms stewardship as a foundational theological imperative, it is important to note that this concept will be revisited and critically evaluated in later chapter in light of kenotic ethics. There, I will investigate whether the traditional stewardship paradigms sufficiently challenge anthropocentrism or whether a kenotic reorientation offers a more transformative ecological ethic.

2.3.2 The Imperative of Reverence: Acknowledging the Intrinsic Value and Interconnectedness of Creation.

Transcending a solely utilitarian perspective of nature is a vital theological imperative, which advocate for reverence and acknowledgment of the intrinsic worth of creation. African theology, as articulated by Barga (2021), frequently regards the earth as a “sacred dwelling” with a “sacramental essence”, that embodies the divine presence. This viewpoint transcends the notion of nature merely as a resource for human requirements and recognizes its inherent value as an integral component of God’s good creation. Even when nature is invoked in acts of worship, as observed by Nche et al. (2016), it should be esteemed for its intrinsic worth, not solely for divine splendor or underscore human virtues. Furthermore, theological discourse emphasizes the significant interdependence inherent in all creation. Barga (2021) references Pope Benedict XVI, who conceptualizes creation as an embodiment of divine love

deserving of reverence, thereby accentuating this interconnection. The environmental crisis in Nigeria, illustrated by oil spills contaminating water supplies, deforestation resulting in soil degradation and increased flooding, along with air pollution leading to respiratory ailments, disrupts this fragile ecosystem. Pollutants produced by human activity that contaminate terrestrial habitats and living organisms contravene this theological perspective of interdependence and the intrinsic worth of every element within God's creation. The degradation of cultivable land, the reduction of fish populations, and the dwindling availability of potable water, stemming from ecological deterioration, adversely affect human communities and signify a rupture of the divinely established balance of creation. This raises a pertinent theological and ethical question: Can African traditional cosmologies and Christian doctrines be harmonized without veering into theological syncretism? This concern challenges theologians to find a constructive synthesis, where kenotic theology serves as a bridge, affirming both Christian distinctiveness and African respect for creation's sacredness.

2.3.3 The Imperative of Justice: Addressing Ecological Degradation as a Moral and Social Wrong.

The theological mandates for ecological conservation extend beyond individual accountability to include the essential aspect of justice, particularly ecological justice. The ecological crisis in Nigeria transcends mere environmental concerns; it is intricately linked with matters of social equity and human welfare. As articulated by Pyagbara (2003), the catastrophic repercussions of oil extraction, such as the loss of arable land and the reduction of fish stocks, have profoundly jeopardized the livelihoods of local communities. Oderinde and Akerele (2020) advocate for a theological shift that emphasizes ecological justice as a core component of Christian testimony. This viewpoint acknowledges that environmental degradation disproportionately impacts the marginalized and vulnerable, thereby exacerbating pre-existing inequalities. The reckless exploitation of Nigeria's natural

resources, the pollution afflicting the Niger Delta, and the mismanagement of urban waste are not only ecologically detrimental but also constitute profound injustices against communities whose health, livelihoods, and very survival are imperiled. The theological mandate of justice compels the church to confront these injustices actively, advocate for the rights of those most adversely affected by environmental degradation, and promote sustainable practices that ensure a viable environment for all. This entails a prophetic condemnation of environmentally harmful practices and a commitment to striving for a more just and sustainable future.

2.3.4 The Imperative of Transformation: Moving Beyond Anthropocentrism and Spiritualized Inaction.

An essential theological imperative necessitates a conscious and intentional transition away from anthropocentric ideologies that have historically rationalized ecological exploitation. Ngele (2009) observed the historical lack of significant emphasis on sustainability within the ecological discussions of Nigerian Christian congregations, indicating a dominant anthropocentric orientation. Furthermore, Oderinde and Akerele (2022) critique the propensity within certain Nigerian churches to spiritualize environmental concerns without addressing their socio-political and ethical implications. They observe that many congregations prioritize prosperity, deliverance, and apocalyptic teachings over enduring ecological ethics. Similarly, Nche et al. (2016) underscore how eschatological viewpoints can lead to inaction concerning environmental issues, as some Christians interpret environmental degradation solely as an indication of the “end times”. The theological mandate for transformation necessitates a profound alteration in viewpoint, acknowledging humanity as an essential component of creation, rather than its ultimate aim. It requires a departure from a strictly utilitarian perspective of nature towards recognition of its inherent worth and interrelatedness. Additionally, it compels a negation of spiritually disengaged passivity and

the adoption of a comprehensive theology that considers the material and social aspects of the ecological crisis. This transformation entails proactive involvement in tackling the fundamental causes of environmental degradation, which includes advocating for legislative reforms, endorsing sustainable practices, and cultivating ecological consciousness within ecclesiastical communities. Is Pentecostal eschatology intrinsically at odd with ecological responsibility, or can they be redirected toward a more creation-affirming vision of the end times? A Pentecostal theology of new creation could affirm both urgency and hope, a call to anticipate God's redemptive renewal by caring for creation today.

2.3.5 The Imperative of Witness: Integrating African Eco-Theology and Indigenous Knowledge for Action.

Finally, the theological demands for ecological sustainability in Nigeria must actively engage with the abundant insights of African eco-theology and local wisdom. As Oderinde and Akerele (2022) assert, indigenous worldviews and the African communal spirit provide a rich foundation for a contextual eco-theology. Barga (2021) expands on this by emphasizing traditional African spiritual beliefs that nurture reverence for nature and discourage exploitation through prohibitions against desecration and the honoring of terrestrial deities. The cyclical understanding of time and existence in African philosophy, which venerates ancestors and assigns stewardship responsibilities to future generations, as highlighted by Barga (2021), offers a robust ethical framework for enduring ecological stewardship.

The call to witness urges the Nigerian church to merge these invaluable indigenous insights with biblical principles to formulate a genuinely contextual and efficacious response to the ecological crisis. This process involves not only assimilating traditional ecological knowledge but also empowering local communities in conservation initiatives and advocating for policies that uphold both ecological integrity and cultural heritage. By incorporating the wisdom inherent in African traditions and situating it within a solid theological framework,

the Nigerian church can present a distinctive and persuasive testimony to the global community regarding the pressing necessity for ecological conservation and the diligent stewardship of God's creation. This witness encompasses moral and educational development within ecclesiastical communities, as well as the incorporation of ecological issues into liturgical and spiritual practices, nurturing an "ecological spirituality" that influences every facet of Christian life and mission.

2.4 Conclusion

Grounded on the examination of Nigeria's complex ecological predicament, this chapter has diligently cataloged the declining ecosystems through both primary testimonies and academic research. We have observed how deforestation, pollution stemming from industrial and petroleum activities, and unsustainable extraction of resources present severe risks to the environment and human health, as evidenced by the noxious emissions in Lagos, persistent flooding, and the devastation experienced in the Niger Delta. Moreover, the chapter critically assessed the responses from Nigerian Christianity, highlighting a historical deficiency in substantial engagement with environmental sustainability and a propensity for anthropocentric perspectives and spiritualized passivity.

However, the discourse also underscored a growing consciousness and the rise of eco-theological viewpoints, particularly within the Catholic denomination, in conjunction with the enriching insights offered by African eco-theology. Essential theological mandates for ecological conservation have been articulated, underscoring God's role as Creator and humanity's duty as caretakers, the inherent worth and interdependence of creation, the call for ecological justice, the imperative for a transformative shift away from anthropocentrism, and the vital incorporation of African wisdom within Christian theology as a form of testimony. The urgent supposition is that the ecological crisis in Nigeria transcends mere

environmental or socio-political concerns; it represents a significant theological challenge necessitating a holistic and ethically informed response from the Christian community.

The next chapter engages rigorously with the theological construct of the Dominion Mandate as it is expressed within the Nigerian setting. This fundamental doctrine, rooted in Genesis 1:26-28, assigns to humanity the divine obligation of exercising dominion over the earth. In light of Nigeria's worsening ecological crises and the diverse array of theological interpretations prevalent among Nigerian Christians, the writer critically examines how the mandate is perceived and operationalized. Particular emphasis is placed on the General Overseer of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM), whose theological perspectives and ministerial endeavors significantly influence congregants' attitudes towards environmental stewardship. This analysis is crucial for uncovering the ethical and theological ramifications of these interpretations.

CHAPTER 3

THE MFM'S INTERPRETATION OF THE DOMINION MANDATE: A THEOLOGICAL AND ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

3.0 Introduction

This chapter investigates the mode in which the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries interprets the dominion mandate as articulated in Genesis 1:26–28. It delves into the theological ramifications of MFM's doctrinal teachings, particularly those conveyed through the writings of its General Overseer, Dr. Daniel Kolawole Olukoya and the inherent implication regarding ecological ethics and stewardship of creation. Through the application of discourse analysis, this chapter critically assesses MFM's dominion theology within the context of its spiritual warfare framework and the consequent ecological perceptions among its followers. Following the introduction to this chapter, which delineates the objective of analyzing MFM's interpretation of the dominion mandate, it is imperative to first investigate the movement's historical and doctrinal antecedents. This contextual profile situates MFM within the broader framework of Nigerian Pentecostalism and establishes a foundation for comprehending the evolution of its theology of dominion within particular socio-cultural and spiritual contexts.

3.1 Contextual Profile of MFM within Nigerian Pentecostalism

In order to fully understand MFM's theological orientation, it is essential to trace its inception and doctrinal genealogy. This aspect explains how MFM arose in response to spiritual and socio-economic discontent, and how these formative influences shaped its deliverance-centric ecclesiology.

3.1.1 Historical Emergence and Doctrinal Foundations

Aigbadumah (2011) and Ajani (2013) affirmed that MFM began in July 1989 as a modest prayer assembly consisting of approximately twenty-five members at the residence of Dr.

Daniel K. Olukoya in Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria. This congregation was formed by individuals who were fervently engaged in spiritual warfare prayers due to the perceived omnipresence of evil in Nigerian society. The fellowship swiftly expanded, and was fully established church in 1994 when it commenced regular Sunday services and officially adopted the name Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries. Ayegboyin (2005:33-64) asserts the significance of the name, “the name was selected to signify that the Church is perceived as superior more powerful than any challenges faced by its members”. Dr. Olukoya, a scholar with a PhD in Molecular Genetics from the University of Reading in the United Kingdom, did not undergo formal theological training. Markedly, Olukoya was affiliated with the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) prior to his departure in 1988. The CAC, an African Initiated Church with Pentecostal inclinations, has profoundly influenced MFM’s theological framework, particularly in regard to its focus on the Holy Spirit (Ajani, 2013). Indeed, the church holds doctrinal beliefs akin to those of the CAC and shares a similar ministry emphasis on prayer and healing.

Aigbadumah (2011), and Peter, A., & Peter, Dorcas (2023) observed that the socio-economic landscape of Nigeria at the time of the emergence of MFM, characterized by economic decline, high unemployment rates, and societal disintegration, created a fertile ground for its propagation. Within this context, MFM provided interpretations of these adversities through the prism of malevolent forces and proposed a pathway to surmount them via deliverance (Peter & Peter, 2023). Having situated MFM’s emergence within its historical and cultural backdrop, the subsequent step is to outline the core beliefs that invigorate its spiritual existence. This encompasses a synthesis of its core doctrinal foundations, particularly its cosmology concerning spiritual warfare and its focus on holiness, which significantly affect its interpretation of dominion.

3.1.2 Core Beliefs and Theological Identity

A fundamental aspect of MFM's theological framework is the acknowledgment of the existence and widespread impact of wicked spirits and demonic entities (Ajani, 2013). Integrating elements from both Christian doctrinal tenets and local cultural beliefs, MFM accentuates a cosmic battle against such forces (Peter & Peter, 2023). Adalakun (2017) posits that the cosmology of MFM is likely shaped by Olukoya's Yoruba heritage, which underscores the notion of malevolence and its concomitant actions within society. This perspective resonates with numerous Nigerians who conventionally attribute adversities to supernatural influences (Ajani, 2013). In this context, liberation from demonic enslavement and activities constitutes the essence of MFM's mission. Ajani further asserts that the church is frequently classified as a "Deliverance Ministry" due to its pronounced focus on and practice of exorcism and spiritual warfare. This according to Adogame (2017) sets MFM apart from other Pentecostal congregations in Nigeria that may prioritize the prosperity gospel. He argues that while some Pentecostal leaders advocated for the prosperity gospel, MFM on the other hand, though recognizing divine blessings, primarily focuses on the confrontation and defeat of evil. Other doctrinal convictions of the church are; affirmation of the doctrine of the Triune God - comprising the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and acknowledges humanity's fall from grace, which necessitates redemption through the sacrificial blood of Christ and the transformative work of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, it highlights the doctrines of salvation, sanctification, baptism of the Holy Spirit, restitution, ecclesiastical ordinances, and both the visible and invisible manifestations of the Church. It posits that the ministry is instituted by divine authority, and that healing is granted through Christ. Additionally, it expounds upon the rapture, the second advent of Christ, the Millennial

Kingdom, the Final Judgment, and ultimately the New Heaven and New Earth as the fulfillment of God's redemptive narrative.⁶

The mission statement outlines MFM's dedication to international evangelism, the revival of apostolic manifestations and wonders, as well as the liberation of believers from spiritually barren congregations. It underscores the importance of equipping Christians in spiritual warfare, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and fostering daily communion with the Divine. Deliverance ministry is central, aimed at turning enemies' joy to sorrow. MFM aspires to cultivate a militant end-time cohort where repentance is imperative, liberate individuals from religious enslavement, and nurture believers who are heaven-focused and spiritually fervent. The church prioritizes the making of "prayer eagles"⁷ and aims to cleanse contemporary Pentecostalism from moral and doctrinal compromise, restoring holiness and spiritual discipline.⁸ After articulating MFM's theological identity, the next section investigates how these beliefs are manifested in lived experiences. Comprehending the prayer-centric liturgy and hierarchical organization of MFM elucidates how dominion theology is embodied in communal practices and institutional frameworks.

3.1.3 Worship Praxis and Organizational Structure

Ajani (2013) and Aigbadumah (2011) observe that the practices of MFM are predominantly focused on prayer, especially fervent and "warfare" prayers directed at neutralizing malevolent forces. Their prayer gatherings often entail vociferous, repetitive proclamations and commands against identified adversaries and evil entities. The church organizes various

⁶The beliefs of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries. <https://www.mountainoffire.org/About/Beliefs> (Accessed on 19-04-2025)

⁷In *The Prayer Eagle*, Dr. D.K. Olukoya articulates the concept of a prayer eagle as a believer who has attained significant spiritual advancement, enabling them to ascend into divine dimensions through fervent, disciplined, and efficacious prayer. Such individuals demonstrate spiritual acuity, audacity, and discernment, and tenacity, successfully surmounting demonic opposition through continuous intercessory efforts. Prayer eagles possess the ability to perceive, hear, and act with divine accuracy, engaging in proactive spiritual warfare and obtaining celestial authority. They exhibit spiritual intrepidity, remain concealed within the presence of God, and cultivate profound communion with the Holy Spirit: renewed, valiant, and triumphant in spiritual battles (Olukoya, 2001a:85-90).

⁸The mission and vision of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries. <https://www.mountainoffire.org/About/Mission> (Accessed on 19-04-2025).

initiatives, including the “School of Prayers” on Wednesdays and a mid-week service on Thursdays. Special monthly services also draw significant numbers of attendees. They further assert that deliverance ministries are a prominent aspect, with pastors participating in prayers and activities aimed at expelling demons and nullifying evil pacts. MFM has instituted a formal organizational structure with a Board of Trustees as the supreme governing entity, presided over by the General Overseer. Beneath this are Assistant General Overseers and Regional Overseers who manage the church’s operations within Nigeria and globally. The church boasts a substantial media division responsible for publishing and distributing Dr. Olukoya’s extensive array of books, audio/video recordings, and for overseeing their online presence (Ajani, 2013). With the theological and institutional foundation established, the chapter now transitions to a concentrated analysis of MFM’s theology of dominion. This shift is crucial, as it signifies a movement from historical context to theological interpretation, particularly as expressed in the works of Olukoya.

3.2 Theology of Dominion in MFM’s Framework

While the preceding section introduced MFM’s overarching dominion theology, this aspect hones in on how Olukoya reframes dominion not as stewardship, but rather as militant spiritual warfare. This reframing is vital to comprehending the divergence between MFM’s dominion ethic and conventional ecological responsibility. A prevalent stance among proponents of young-earth creationism, as well as within the broader Pentecostal community, posits that humanity possesses dominion over the earth. This assertion implies that humanity has been bestowed with a unique authority and governance over the creatures and the entirety of creation. This notion is so extensively embraced and propagated that it has consequently acquired a distinct theological name, referred to as the dominion mandate. Now let us look at the perspective of MFM General Overseer on the dominion mandate.

The MFM guided by the spiritual oversight of Olukoya, presents a unique perspective on the biblical dominion mandate anchored in a theology of aggressive spiritual warfare, eschatological awareness, and practices of deliverance. This pivotal theological framework informs Olukoya's writings, necessitating a thorough discourse analysis of his doctrinal assertions and rhetorical methods. This study investigates Olukoya's interpretation of the dominion mandate, primarily as articulated in some of his books. While the analysis elucidates the nature of the adversities to be overcome and the methodologies employed to attain this dominion, as well as the theological foundations, reference to the traditional creation mandate text of Genesis 1:26-28, is not explicit in the writings of Olukoya's theological work.

Dr. Daniel Kolawole Olukoya is without doubt a prominent figure in modern African Pentecostal theology, particularly distinguished for his assertive focus on spiritual warfare and his vigorous methodology regarding deliverance. A persistent motif throughout his literary works is the dominion mandate - the theological affirmation that followers of Christ are summoned to exert authority over creation, personal destiny, and malign spiritual entities. This mandate transcends mere figurative empowerment; it represents an authentic, combative engagement compelled by the ubiquity of malevolent technologies, satanic interventions, and ancestral constraints. While conventional Christian theology frequently anchors the dominion mandate in Genesis 1:26-28 on stewardship and responsibility, Olukoya expands and contextualizes this concept to tackle modern African circumstances, underscoring the imperative for spiritual warfare to reclaim authority. His interpretation intricately weaves together dominion with prosperity, deliverance, and spiritual sovereignty, depicting dominion as both a theological assurance and a combative obligation. In this discourse analysis the book *Dealing with Local Satanic Technology* (2001) written by Olukoya is adopted. This is because it offers one of the most explicit illustrations of how the General Overseer integrates

the dominion mandate with his theology of spiritual warfare, particularly through metaphors drawn from nature. This text uniquely captures how elements of the natural world such as trees, rivers, and land are interpreted as spiritually weaponized, making it especially relevant for analyzing MFM's dominion theology in relation to ecological ethics and environmental perceptions.

There is a distinctive theological paradigm concerning the human condition, the nature of malevolence, and the perceived spiritual battles that influence destinies and environment. While the conventional theological notion of the dominion mandate, as articulated in Genesis 1, asserts humanity's divinely ordained authority and stewardship over creation, Olukoya's exploration delineates a reality wherein this dominion is profoundly challenged, subverted, or entirely usurped by specific, localized demonic entities and "technologies". The conflict depicted is not merely one of stewardship but rather of reclamation and vigorous spiritual warfare. The phrase 'satanic technologies', as expounded by Olukoya in the book pertains to various forms of machinery and implements employed by malevolent entities to obstruct and undermine an individual's personal advancement, development, and achievements. These technologies, as suggested in Olukoya's text may include human body parts, trees, shadows, and other natural elements that could be manipulated and used by sinister forces. He points out that placenta, human altars, evil trees, and the caldron of darkness, shadow, local evil weapons, evil gates, and evil arrows are examples of these Satanic technologies (Olukoya, 2001:4). However, only two are analyzed in this study: the mystery of the placenta, and of the evil trees. Although the placenta is not a component of the natural environment that is directly influenced by ecological crises, which constitutes the subject of this study however, I imagine it would be beneficial to address it in this context nonetheless. This may function as an illustration of how the General Overseer perceives elements within our world as conduits of evil, and how Christians ought to engage with them.

1. The Mystery of the Placenta

Olukoya presents the placenta not solely as a biological organ but as a significant spiritual entity and a primary instrument for the kingdom of darkness (Olukoya, 2001:1). It is characterized as one of the most enigmatic weapons wielded by operatives of the kingdom of darkness (Olukoya, 2001:1). The principal theological claim is that satanic agents assault individuals at their roots or foundation via the placenta, utilizing it as a point of contact and conveyor belt for the introduction of complex issues. This foundational assault, particularly emphasized within the context of the African background, permits the devil to transmit issues and bondage across generations. The placenta is explicitly identified as one of Satan's instruments for altering destinies (Olukoya, 2001:5). Though the perception of inherited repercussions or generational afflictions is acknowledged in some theological frameworks, Olukoya's emphasis on a particular biological byproduct as a mechanism for such transference introduces a unique dimension. The assertion that the unborn baby lacks the physical or spiritual capacity to resist the influx of malevolent deposits results in an automatic succession of evil flows (Olukoya, 2001:5). This perspective circumvents the notion of individual agency and accentuates a perceived susceptibility ingrained in the conditions of birth and ancestral customs (Olukoya, 2001:5).

According to Olukoya, the recommended approach to address this placental manipulation involves direct spiritual confrontation and reclamation. He teaches that the placenta should be spiritually withdrawn and eliminated through prayer, and if feasible, to retrieve and consecrate it, potentially resulting in the nullification of all forms of manipulations.

The question this raise is how does this view relate to dominion mandate? Connecting this to the dominion mandates, Olukoya's viewpoint suggests that although humanity was endowed with dominion, this power has been significantly compromised and usurped through particular satanic tactics targeting the fundamental aspects of life and lineage. The dominion

conflict here is not regarding stewardship over nature, but rather over one's own fate and blessings that have been appropriated by the kingdom of darkness. The endeavor to recover your lost blessings through fervent prayers (Olukoya, 2001:29) signifies an attempt to reclaim a lost state of divinely intended flourishing, representing a form of spiritual repossession. The lack of awareness regarding these satanic machinations is emphasized as a crucial factor contributing to human suffering (Olukoya, 2001:7-10). Consequently, Olukoya asserts that understanding the mystery of the placenta and engaging in vigorous prayer become mechanisms through which individuals can strive to re-establish a semblance of spiritual authority, and dominion over their lives, implicitly aspiring for the liberty to realize a divinely ordained destiny that has been obstructed.

2. The Mysteries of Evil Trees

Olukoya describes evil trees as pivotal instruments within the framework of local satanic practices. He asserts that trees are characterized not merely as botanical entities but as possessing profound spiritual relevance, demonic entities, and abodes of malevolence (Olukoya, 2001:51-59). Olukoya alludes to the tree as the cause of the fall of Adam and Eve: "In the beginning, the problem of man started with a tree." In Genesis 2: 16-17, we read: "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (KJ21). They play a crucial role in rituals such as tree veneration, which are evident across diverse cultures including those in Africa, Sweden, Japan, South Africa, and the USA. Certain species, such as the Iroko, are deemed especially bewitched by Olukoya. The theological assertions concerning evil trees are numerous: they are perceived as instruments to destroy the destinies of numerous individuals, acting as a repository for usurped wealth and destinies, and a bank where blood forcibly extracted from individuals is stored (Olukoya, 2001:48). Furthermore, Olukoya (2001:60)

asserts that tree spirits are believed to endure for centuries, with the capacity to consume lives. Rituals such as depositing hair at a tree or ingesting portions derived from tree components are articulated as mechanisms for imparting anointing from tree demons to individuals, which could obstruct forgiveness and induce various afflictions. The phenomenon of wood demons opposing loggers is also documented. In the context of Christian environmentalism and ethical considerations, this chapter articulates a markedly divergent interaction between humanity and nature than that which is frequently highlighted in stewardship interpretations of the dominion mandate. Genesis 1:28 commands humanity to fill the earth and subdue it, and exercise dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth. Although “subdue” might suggest control, stewardship emphasizes care, accountability, and cohabitation with creation as an expression of God’s benevolent work (as reiterated in Genesis 2:15, where Adam is situated in the garden “to cultivate it and safeguard it”). Dr. Olukoya’s discourse, however, portrays certain elements of creation: particular trees and forests, as actively antagonistic forces or dwellings of demons that necessitate spiritual confrontation and eradication. The narrative perceives trees not solely as objects of reverence (an ethical dilemma of idolatry), but as dynamic participants in spiritual warfare against human destiny. Olukoya explicitly states:

Both the modern and the ancient people have been involved with the worship of trees. This demonic practice is common among the primitive animist who reside in underdeveloped nations as well as the enlightened people who organize intelligent tree planting and preservation campaigns including governmental or non-profit making organizations. The same evil trend runs through both the primitive tree worshippers and modern-day global tree preservation campaigners. Many people are performing terrible demonic acts under green trees (Olukoya, 2001:74).

Olukoya explains that the response necessitates fervent supplication aimed at prohibiting, dismantling, and eradicating the dominion of the dark realm that opposes human through evil

trees (Olukoya, 2001:77). This encompasses the dissolution of pacts established with trees, the restitution of appropriated destinies and prosperity, as well as the expulsion of tree-associated demonic entities. The objective is not to nurture these trees; rather, it is to nullify their purported negative spiritual influence and reclaim whatever they are thought to have ensnared. Moreover, in connection with the dominion mandate (Genesis 1:26-28), the chapter posits that specific components of the created order have been contaminated and occupied by malevolent forces to such a degree that they serve as instruments of resistance against human flourishing and divine purpose. Hence, the confrontation against malignant trees is construed as an endeavor to restore dominion over segments of creation that have, in effect, been weaponized against humanity. This represents a struggle for supremacy over physical and spiritual territories believed to be occupied by antagonistic forces, rather than an exercise in benevolent stewardship over God's creation. The focus is placed on surmounting perceived spiritual strongholds entrenched within some elements of nature. One critical question to ask would be; is the dominion theology embraced by MFM intrinsically anti-ecological, or should it be regarded as theologically deficient in its scope? The latter appears to be a more accurate characterization. Although it does not explicitly oppose ecological considerations, the framework fails to incorporate stewardship of creation as a divine imperative, thereby inadvertently cultivating a sense of environmental indifference. The critique presented here pertains not to the underlying intention but rather to a lack of inclusion in my view. Following from the analysis of specific instances of Olukoya's theological engagement with nature, the ensuing section reflects on their broader implications for environmental ethics. This transition broadens the discourse from particular spiritual practices to the overall consequences for how creation is perceived, valued, or contested within MFM theology.

3.3 Theological Implications for Creation and Ecology

The MFM's theological framework as presented by its General Overseer, Dr. D.K Olukoya as analyzed above has significant implications for theological perspectives on ecological preservation and creation care, particularly when considered alongside the biblical concept of the dominion mandate (Genesis 1:26-28).

First, the MFM's interpretation of the dominion mandate may have influence on attitudes and behaviors of adherents on nature preservation and care. The traditional Christian interpretation of the dominion mandate has generated considerable discourse concerning its ecological ramifications (Brennan, 2014). Brennan asserts that critiques posit that interpretations: which underscore human supremacy and dominion, have facilitated environmental degradation. Conversely, alternative interpretations advocate for the understanding of dominion as responsible stewardship, nurturing, and cultivation of the divine creation, wherein humanity is perceived as vice-regents answerable to the Creator (Brennan, 2014; Moo & Moo, 2018). Within the MFM's framework of "satanic technology", the understanding of humanity's relationship with nature is interpreted through the prism of spiritual battle. Should elements of the natural world be regarded not merely as divine creations warranting stewardship but as active instruments of malevolence, then the dominion mandate (to "govern" and "subdue" the earth) could be re-conceptualized or implicitly enacted as exerting spiritual authority over perceived adversarial spiritual forces manifesting in nature, rather than primarily engaging in the care of nature as God's benevolent creation. This viewpoint likely influences members' perceptions of particular natural elements with distrust and fear, contingent upon whether they are perceived to be potentially tainted by demonic forces. Instead of cultivating reverence, appreciation, and careful interaction grounded in the inherent worth of creation, this perspective fosters an aggressive stance of confrontation towards those regarded as threats. Behavioral manifestations might encompass

prayer rituals directed at specific trees, locales, natural phenomena deemed “satanic technologies”, or even actions aimed at obliterating or neutralizing these elements for spiritual purposes, as opposed to engaging in conventional environmental conservation efforts or advocating for the safeguarding of ecosystems based on their ecological significance or intrinsic goodness. Crucially, Olukoya’s discourse extends this spiritual framing to include contemporary efforts at environmental conservation, particularly tree preservation campaigns. He states that the “same evil trend runs through both the primitive tree worshippers and modern-day global tree preservation campaigners” (Olukoya, 2001:67). Olukoya’s language strongly associates green trees with demonic activity, but the statement appears rhetorically charged rather than carefully argued. While he may be warning against uncritical veneration of nature, the conflation of environmental stewardship with animist ritual is theologically problematic and ethically misleading. From a Christian ethical and ecological point of view, affirming the goodness of creation and responsibly preserving trees does not imply idolatry; in fact, it reflects the biblical mandate of stewardship (Genesis 2:15) when grounded in a theologically sound framework. I argue that, given this theological stance, the implications for the attitudes and behaviors of MFM adherents towards ecological care and environmental stewardship may be substantial and largely negative from a conventional environmental ethics perspective.

Second is the emphasis on spiritual warfare and the approach to environmental issues. The MFM’s distinct focus on spiritual warfare provides a primary interpretative lens through which a variety of issues, including those that may be construed as environmental challenges, are perceived: they are frequently spiritualized. Environmental degradation, natural calamities, or even personal adversities associated with natural elements (such as illness attributed to wicked trees or contaminated water) may be construed as direct spiritual assaults mediated through these “satanic technologies”. As a result, the advocated resolution is

predominantly spiritual liberation through prayer. This preoccupation with combating spiritual entities risks leading to an oversight of the physical, scientific, and systemic factors and repercussions of environmental challenges. For instance, rather than tackling pollution through waste management, regulatory measures, or corrective efforts informed by scientific knowledge, the theological response might concentrate on prayer against the “spirit of pollution” or demonic presences inhabiting polluted locales. While spiritual practices such as prayer are integral to many Christian responses to crises, the MFM framework’s reduction of certain environmental elements to mere “satanic technologies” diminishes or disregards their intricate ecological realities and the human actions contributing to their deterioration. This spiritualization, devoid of engagement with the socio-political and ethical dimensions, is a salient characteristic of some responses within Nigerian churches. Given the above views: could MFM’s emphasis on spiritual warfare be theologically redirected to include ‘warfare’ against environmental injustice? If environmental degradation is understood as a form of systemic evil harming God’s creation and God’s people, then spiritual warfare could justifiably include activism and advocacy for ecological justice.

3.4 Discourse and Rhetorical Analysis of Olukoya’s Writings

Subsequent to the examination of theological implications, the chapter transitions to an analysis of the rhetorical mechanism employed to communicate and reinforce these convictions. This section studies the manner in which Olukoya’s lexicon, imagery, and performative style promote a dominion-centric worldview, thereby influencing the spiritual consciousness of his adherents.

3.4.1 Militarized Spiritual Language

The primary rhetorical instrument under scrutiny is Olukoya’s militarized lexicon, which encapsulates dominion as a form of spiritual conquest. This analysis is pivotal in demonstrating how the linguistic structures within his writings galvanize readers towards a

proactive spiritual engagement with their surroundings. This is exemplified in texts such as *Dealing with Local Satanic Technology* where dominion is articulated in militaristic language, believers are depicted as “soldiers”, “warriors”, and “conquerors” engaged in a continuous struggle against territorial spirits and ancestral pacts (Adedibu et al, 2025:6). Oladejo (2021:6) observes that Olukoya’s preaching and writings are deeply performative and anchored in the theological concept of the dominion mandate (Genesis 1:28). Olukoya’s written works exhibit a pronounced prevalence of repetition, commanding imperatives, and figurative language designed to invoke active engagement from readers. For instance, expressions such as ‘die by fire’, ‘vomit your poison’, or ‘backfire to sender’ operate not merely as linguistic constructs but as performative utterances. Furthermore, his literary works are saturated with war metaphors and militant syntax, signifying a combative spiritual tone consistent with the dominion mandate to “subdue” and “have dominion”. The frequent use of imperative verbs such as ‘command’, ‘bind’, ‘cast out’, and ‘destroy’ reflect this dominion ideology. These phrases compel readers to immediate action and spiritual engagement. The oral and participatory essence of his prose reflects the traditions of African oral culture and incantation formats, thereby obscuring the distinction between reading and ritual performance (Oladejo, 2021). This mode of expression corresponds with the Pentecostal focus on experiential theology. Readers of Olukoya are not simply passive bearers of theological knowledge; they are participants in a cosmic narrative. The result is a democratization of spiritual authority: by adhering to Olukoya’s directives, ordinary believers are empowered to assert control over their situations, environments, and spiritual adversaries.

3.4.2 Spatial Theology and Territorial Dominion

Whereas militarized language predominantly shapes the tone, spatial theology describes the utilitarian aspects of dominion. This aspect investigates how Olukoya correlates spiritual warfare with physical space, thereby intertwining territory, environment, and theology within

a unique spatial cosmology. His lexicon surrounding “gateways”, “altars”, “territorial powers”, “evil trees”, and “environmental demons” implies a cosmological framework wherein physical and spiritual realms intersect. Within his conceptualization, environmental entities such as trees, water, lands, cities, and even nations can be spiritually corrupted or dominated, thus requiring their spiritual recovery through fervent prayer (Adedibu et al, 2025). This spatial theology resonates with indigenous African conceptions of land and sacred space, while simultaneously introducing a Pentecostal interpretive method that reshapes ecological ethics (Oladapo et al., 2016:91). Land is perceived not merely as an ecosystem to be conserved, but as a spiritual asset to be reclaimed. This perspective carries significant ramifications: while it may encourage vigilance regarding land and territory, it also risks fostering exploitative or utilitarian dispositions toward the environment if not moderated by ecological awareness.

3.4.3 The Church as Dominion Agent

Expanding upon the territorial motif, this part shows how dominion transcends the individual to encompass the collective identity of the Church. The institutional manifestation of dominion in “Prayer Cities” serves as a paradigm for how theology becomes both spatially and politically influential. Olukoya’s strategic procurement of extensive land for “prayer city” serves as a performative embodiment of his theological principles. These prayer cities function not merely as sanctuaries; they represent symbolic re-enactments of the dominion mandate, asserting Christian authority over both geographical and spiritual realms (Ajani, 2013). This phenomenon encompasses both empowering and contentious dimensions. On one hand, it energizes Christian communities toward economic and territorial autonomy in a nation where religious identity is profoundly intertwined with political dynamics. Adalakin (2017:1) argues that Pentecostal identity is fundamentally about performing power in social and political contexts. This performance is manifested through various religious practices and

public displays of authority. Conversely, it poses the risk of endorsing a neo-colonial attitude of religious territorialism, wherein spiritual dominion becomes intertwined with land acquisition and the consolidation of power. The ethical dilemma, therefore, is centered on how dominion can be conceptualized in a manner that upholds ecological conscientiousness and interfaith harmony. While dominion asserts authority in the present context, its eschatological framing significantly influences future orientation. This final rhetorical subsection assesses how apocalyptic urgency may lead to a disregard for long-term ecological stewardship, thereby complicating the ethical dimensions of dominion theology.

3.4.4 Eschatological Undertones and Ecological Neglect

Although dominion asserts authority in the present context, its eschatological framing significantly influences future orientation. This final rhetorical section assesses how apocalyptic urgency may lead to a disregard for long-term ecological stewardship, thereby complicating the ethical dimensions of dominion theology. The recurrent references to end-times confrontations and divine judgment cultivate a perspective wherein the current world is perceived as a transient battleground. While this may evoke moral seriousness and spiritual alertness, it can concurrently devalue the importance of long-term ecological sustainability. If the world is regarded as doomed and ephemeral, the impetus to engage in environmental stewardship may be compromised. Nevertheless, this apocalyptic tone also harbors the potential for constructive engagement. On this, Moo & Moo (2018) argue and interpret the apocalyptic imagery as referring to refinement rather than annihilation of the natural world. Osondu (2021, 140) validates this view, that Africans do not hold an eschatology that expects the annihilation of creation, but a creation-fulfilling eschatology. Consequently, the anticipation of divine justice and the restoration of creation can be redirected to underpin a theology of hope and ecological regeneration, provided it is appropriately contextualized.

3.5 Theological-Ecological Appraisals and Reframing

After an in-depth analysis of the theological and rhetorical dynamics of dominion, the chapter now proposes critical evaluations. This section is indispensable for fostering a constructive discourse, investigating how the dominion model of MFM might be re-conceptualized through kenotic and ecological perspectives. Olukoya's writings present a rich and intricate discourse on the dominion mandate, synthesizing Pentecostal spirituality, African cosmology, and Christian eschatology. Though his texts empower believers with a sense of spiritual agency and territorial obligation, they simultaneously provoke essential ethical and theological inquiries. The contemporary challenge for Christian environmental thought lies in how to leverage the mobilizing capacity of Olukoya's dominion discourse while reframing it toward creation stewardship, ecological justice, and sustainable management. A re-contextualization of dominion rooted in kenotic theology and responsible stewardship has the potential to channel its focus toward ecological preservation. This perspective positions human authority not as oppression, but as a form of service exemplified by Christ, thereby promoting a theological framework that incorporates environmental equity, respect, and sustainability. The fundamental question to reframing that integrates kenotic theological ethic is; how can McFague's kenotic theology be appropriated without theological colonialism? The answer lies in translating kenosis through African idioms such as Ubuntu, ancestral continuity, and the communal ethos of stewardship. I imagine that in doing so, McFague's relational model would become not an imported theory but a catalyst for indigenous theological renewal.

3.6 Conclusion

In summary, Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries' (MFM) distinctive interpretation of the biblical dominion mandate diverges from the traditional conception grounded in environmental stewardship. The theological framework of MFM's dominion embodies a

unique integration of Pentecostal spirituality and African cosmological perspectives. While it provides spiritual fortification through spiritual warfare, it concurrently introduces complexities concerning ecological ethics. Natural elements, such as trees, are perceived as sites of conflict rather than as resources to be responsibly managed. To cultivate a more equitable theological outlook, forthcoming deliberations must rigorously examine the ecological ramifications of dominion and re-conceptualize power as a form of service, viewing creation as a sacred responsibility.

CHAPTER 4

SALLIE MCFAGUE'S KENOTIC THEOLOGY AND ITS ECOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter engages Sallie McFague's theological perspectives on kenosis - a theological, ecological, and ethical dimension of this study in the context of reinterpreting the dominion mandate particularly in MFM. McFague's *A New Climate for Christology* (2021) and *Blessed Are the Consumers* (2013) are both adopted as primary sources in the task of this study. The two texts are not merely relevant; they are indispensable primary sources for comprehending McFague's compelling views on kenosis and ecological ethics. The inclusion of both writings is imperative since they provide complementary insights that are essential for our examination. *A New Climate for Christology* (2021), being Sallie's final publication, presents her most developed and culminating theological argument regarding the application of kenosis to the climate emergency. It poses a direct challenge to conventional, dominion-centered perspectives by advocating for kenotic self-sacrifice as an alternative to the anthropocentric, power-controlling, and dominion view that has prevailed in certain Pentecostal theologies. This text anchors its ethical stance in a relational ontology and a reconfiguration of Christology and the Trinity, interpreting divine power as self-giving and empowering rather than as dominion. In addition, McFague's *Blessed Are the Consumers* (2013), although published earlier establishes the vital ethical and practical framework for kenosis. It explicitly emphasizes the practice of restraint as an essential response to consumerism and climate change. It delivers the lived ethical implications and practical illustrations of how kenosis operates as a transformative process, though the scope of this study does not cover practical transformative solution. Employing both texts grounds this investigation in McFague's theological rationale and ethical methodology, thereby

establishing a strong foundation for engagement with MFM's dominion theology and environmental ethics in the next chapter. Having elucidated the significance of McFague's kenotic theology in questioning anthropocentric and dominion-oriented paradigms, the subsequent section situates this theological framework within her comprehensive contributions to ecological theology. This contextualization is crucial for understanding how McFague's intellectual trajectory and metaphorical approach lay the groundwork for her ethical interaction with environmental challenges.

4.1 Sallie McFague's Contribution to Contemporary Ecological Theology

Sallie McFague emerges as a significant contributor to contemporary theological thought, particularly acclaimed for her synthesis of ecological consciousness and innovative Christological perspectives. Throughout a distinguished career that spans several decades, McFague has transformed theological dialogue by advocating for a transition from anthropocentric models to frameworks grounded in interdependence, embodiment, and sacredness of the natural environment. Her theological approach is characterized by metaphorical creativity, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a steadfast commitment to ecological and social equity. McFague's most impactful contribution resides in her ecological theology, which conceptualizes the world as the body of God; a provocative metaphor that redirects Christian doctrine towards themes of relationality, vulnerability, and interconnectedness. This conceptual evolution, initially articulated in her earlier writings and further refined in *A New Climate for Christology* (2021), contests the conventional binary distinction between God and creation. Rather than perceiving God as entirely transcendent, McFague encourages the theological community to adopt a panentheistic view, in which God encompasses the world, and the world exists within God. This paradigm addresses the pressing reality of climate change and compels believers to engage as integral members of, rather than separate from, the Earth community (McFague, 2021:5–10).

Central to McFague's theology is the principle of kenosis; self-emptying love - as the interpretive lens for understanding both divine action and human responsibility. In contrast to a victorious Christology, she proposes a kenotic Christology that underscores Jesus' solidarity with a suffering world. For McFague, Jesus embodies the path of sacrificial love, which serves as the ethical exemplar for humanity's response to ecological degradation. The Incarnation is portrayed not as a unique divine intervention but as a paradigm of divine immanence, illustrating God's profound involvement with the material realm (McFague, 2021:68-72). This kenotic ethic serves as the cornerstone for McFague's advocacy of voluntary self-limitation, particularly in the context of consumerist societies. In *Blessed Are the Consumers* (2013), she articulates a theology of moderation and simplicity, imploring Western Christians to follow the examples of figures such as Simone Weil and Dorothy Day, whose lives exemplified discipline and ecological awareness. McFague contends that such voluntary self-emptying is not an act of heroic asceticism but a vital practice of love and justice within a world constrained by ecological limitations (McFague, 2013:1-4; 128-132). At the core of McFague's theological endeavor is a reimagining of God's relationship with the world - not as an authoritarian ruler, but as a suffering, love presence. Her metaphorical theology, while not claiming ontological finality, provides a poetic and ethical framework that galvanizes Christian faith towards eco-justice and planetary restoration. In this manner, McFague revitalizes theology as a public, constructive discipline, one that engages with the most urgent crises of our time. With McFague's theological identity and ecological commitments thoroughly delineated, the ensuing section investigates the central motif that drives her ecological perspective on kenosis. A thorough exploration of this concept is essential for comprehending the theological and ethical logic that underpins her call for a new relational and sacrificial mode of existence.

4.2 The Concept of Kenosis in McFague's Theology

In this section, I attempt a detailed exploration of McFague's understanding of kenosis, its implications for relationality spanning all creation, and her critique of anthropocentric perspectives, all grounded in Philippians 2:5-8. Let us examine these essential components of her scholarship.

4.2.1 Sallie McFague's Conceptualization of Kenosis Grounded in Philippians 2:5-8

To fully grasp kenosis as a theological tenet, it is imperative to scrutinize its scriptural and doctrinal underpinnings. This subsection clarifies how McFague draws upon Philippians 2:5–8 to convey a vision of divine self-giving that permeates every aspect of Christian thought and ecological responsibility. Sallie McFague situates her theological framework around the notion of kenosis, which she fundamentally interprets as a profound act of self-emptying humility and an embodiment of self-sacrificial love (McFague, 2021:4). For McFague, this concept transcends mere theological abstraction concerning the essence of God or Christ; rather, it is articulated as a comprehensive interpretive lens, a novel, and distinct modality of existing in and comprehending the world. It is a paradigm that operates in multiple dimensions, shaping not only the discourse Christians employ regarding God but also their self-perception (McFague, 2021:17). The scriptural foundation for this perspective is the well-regarded passage in Philippians 2:5-8 (McFague, 2013:8). McFague refers to Paul's exhortation for the faithful to possess "...the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross" (KJ21). She observes that this passage has intrigued numerous interpreters, resulting in a variety of exegeses (McFague, 2013:187). Conventionally, interpretations have often debated whether this text implies a transformation

in God's fundamental nature, a restriction of divine omnipotence, or primarily serves as a moral exhortation for the church to embody humility. While recognizing these interpretations, McFague moves for a significantly broader reading. For her, if the crucifixion, which culminates Jesus' earthly ministry and epitomizes this act of self-emptying, is indeed the locus from which Christians discern both the nature of God and the essence of humanity, then self-giving love must occupy the central focus of every facet of Christian theology (McFague, 2013:187).

McFague asserts that kenosis is central throughout Christian narrative (McFague, 2013:154): First, it constitutes the divine self: God is conceptualized as love, which is defined by a profound self-emptying directed towards others (McFague, 2013:154). This notion is consistent with a Trinitarian perspective of God, wherein divine existence is perceived as an active interplay of perpetual receiving from one "person" and giving to another "person" through mutual, sacrificial love (McFague, 2021:19; 2013:193). The Trinity is interpreted as a reciprocal, ongoing cycle of giving and receiving, central to Christian doctrine (McFague, 2021:90). Second, it is the story of creation: The act of creation by God is viewed as God's own self-emptying, a pulling back or giving space, restraining divine power, thus allowing for the existence of a world distinct from the divine self (McFague, 2013:188). She asserts that this conception does not imply creation *ex nihilo*, but "in creation, God gives of himself" (McFague, 2021:96). Third, it is the story of salvation: This is exemplified most clearly in the existence, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus (McFague, 2021:8; 2013:54). The self-emptying nature of Jesus' life and his sacrificial death on the cross serve as the paradigm for a life of abundance (McFague, 2013:187). Fourth, it is the story of discipleship: Humanity is summoned to live in a manner reflective of the cross by engaging in God's own life (McFague, 2021:90). This entails a human self-emptying for the benefit of others by partaking in God's self-giving love (McFague, 2013:159). It transcends mere imitation of

Jesus, as it involves, akin to him, attaining reality and empowerment through participation in God's perpetual, enabling love (McFague, 2021:90).

Furthermore, McFague references the Eastern Orthodox tradition's conception of salvation as a transformative process of theosis, or divinization (McFague, 2021:95-96; 2013:188). This perspective stands in contrast to the Western emphasis on substitutionary atonement for transgressions (McFague, 2021:75; 2013:186). In theosis, the ultimate aim of all divine actions is for humanity to cultivate companionship and communion with God. This journey entails an exploration of deeper involvement in God's own existence, characterized as divine communion (McFague, 2021:96-97). The Eastern concepts of kenosis, *enosis* (union), and theosis articulate this process, wherein human engagement in God's life is pivotal (McFague, 2013:188). Engaging in this process necessitates practicing an understanding of the world in partnership with God (McFague, 2021:96). Significantly, McFague emphasizes that this kenotic self-emptying does not advocate for asceticism or self-punishment for its own merit. Instead, it acknowledges that the flourishing of life on Earth necessitates specific limitations and sacrifices (McFague, 2013:144). This in her view represents a "spirituality of subtraction" – a process of letting go of our need for security, reputation, identity, and control, which sharply contrasts with the capitalist "spirituality of addition" that prioritizes the self and seeks satisfaction through accumulation (McFague, 2013:152). Kenosis presents a paradox: it is through the relinquishment of the "life of false possession" (sin) that one attains genuine life, which emanates from God and others (McFague, 2021, 75-76; 2013, 74-77). Consequently, McFague's interpretation of kenosis, profoundly anchored in Philippians 2:5-8, transcends a mere event in Christ's existence or a simplistic ethical directive. It evolves into a universal schema of reality, constituting the essence of God, influencing the act of creation, defining salvation, and inviting humanity towards a distinctive mode of existence marked by self-giving love and active participation in the divine life for the flourishing of all.

Having established kenosis as a divine attribute and an ethical exemplar, the next logical progression is to explore how McFague expands this framework beyond the human-divine interaction to include the entirety of the created order. This transition underscores the relational ontology and interdependence that underpin her ecological theology.

4.2.2 Christ's Kenosis as a Paradigm for Relationality and Interconnectedness with Creation

McFague posits that the kenotic model exhibited in Christ is not restricted to divine interactions or human relationships but serves as a paradigm for relationality and interconnectedness that spans the entirety of creation. This extensive perspective is supported by a significant transformation in worldview, shifting from a modern focus on the isolated individual to a postmodern appreciation of radical interdependence (McFague, 2021:98; 2013:201). McFague encapsulates this transition by favoring the assertion "I relate; therefore, I am" in place of the Cartesian "I think; therefore, I am" (McFague, 2021:98). For McFague, "withness" constitutes the essence of existence (McFague, 2021:57). Within this relational ontology, kenosis; self-giving existence, is not simply an additional virtue but fundamentally defines existence from its inception. This comprehension resonates with notions from postmodern science and philosophy, which emphasize a profound materialism and conceptualize humans as corporeal entities reliant on other corporeal entities, embodied beings subject to the planet's forces, including climate change. This worldview contests the idea of human autonomy and exceptionalism, compelling us to confront our inherent dependence, fragility, and vulnerability (McFague, 2021:8). McFague identifies the kenotic paradigm as harmonious with evolutionary science. Evolution illustrates the imperative of sharing, reciprocity, and the essential truth that new life can only emerge through the demise of others (McFague, 2021:90). This symbiotic cycle of life and death reflects the zenith of kenosis evident in the life and death of Jesus. Therefore, the emergent worldview,

emphasizing interdependence, is proposed as optimal for reformulating Christian theology towards the principles of sacrifice and new life as the predominant form of action observable throughout the natural world (McFague, 2021:75).

The concept of the Incarnation is of paramount importance in this context. McFague adopts a broad interpretation that encompasses the whole of creation, rather than confining it exclusively to Jesus of Nazareth (McFague, 2021:56; 2013:54). This entails recognizing that God is actively engaged in (is incarnate within) the world, and that the world subsists within God (McFague, 2021:19). This theological viewpoint is defined as panentheism; the belief that God exists within all entities and that the world derives its existence and ultimate purpose from God's very essence (McFague, 2021:86; 2013:194). The world is conceptualized as the corporeal manifestation of God (McFague, 2013:207-208), not as isolated entities, but as subsisting within the self-emptying love of God (McFague, 2013:194). This sacramental perspective perceives the world as mirroring the divine through its diverse forms of life and species, uncovering the extraordinary within the ordinary (McFague, 2021:87). How did McFague relate this divine kenosis to humanity?

Human kenosis, therefore, involves a deliberate choice to engage with this universal framework of reciprocity (McFague, 2021:76). It necessitates an acknowledgment of one's profound reliance on others, including both God and the natural environment (McFague, 2021:23; 2013:166). It demands the embodiment of vulnerability and dependence, reflecting the Christian kenotic narrative and insights from postmodern anthropology (McFague, 2021:4). The command to love one's neighbor is broadened to encompass all sentient beings and the Earth itself (McFague, 2013:xiv, 42). This radical inclusivity is regarded as the very quintessence of kenotic love (McFague, 2013:xiv). The relational ontology, shaped by kenosis and postmodern thought, engenders an alternative conception of power. Rather than viewing power as coercive domination, the kenotic framework reveals it as nurturing or

enhancing the welfare of others (McFague, 2021:80; 2013:143-144). This is manifest in the reciprocal dynamics of evolution and the intricate interplay of self-giving love within the Trinity (McFague, 2021:83; 2013:181). Transposing this to human interactions with the non-human world entails coexisting with and for the broader ecological community, embracing the call to engage in this interconnected, reciprocal existence (McFague, 2021:69). The ultimate aim is mutual flourishing, achievable solely through the self-emptying of each participant in this expansive embroidery of life (McFague, 2021:83; 2013:181).

In conclusion, McFague elucidates that the kenosis exhibited by Christ extends into a universal principle of self-emptying love and mutual reliance that typifies the entire relational cosmos. Therefore, it offers a theological paradigm for comprehending the profound interconnectedness of God, humanity, and all creation, urging individuals to align their lives with this foundational reality of giving and receiving.

4.2.3 Critique of the Anthropocentric Theologies and Emphasis on the Intrinsic Value of Nature

While the preceding subsection delineated kenosis as a cosmic and relational principle, it is equally vital to assess the theological misrepresentations that McFague critiques. This subsection identifies the anthropocentric models that compromise ecological ethics, thereby paving the way for her corrective vision rooted in the inherent value of non-human existence. One central impetus for McFague's kenotic theology arises from her critique of conventional Christian theology, particularly regarding its anthropocentric inclinations, alongside her pronounced proposition for the inherent worth of the non-human realm. She contends that the traditional Christian narrative, laden with obsolete assumptions and paradigms, proves inadequate in addressing the challenges posed by climate change (McFague, 2021:98). These conventional perspectives frequently originate from medieval or eighteenth-century beliefs that have become untenable when assessed against modern scientific understanding,

especially concerning evolution (McFague, 2021:98). In her view, the core issue resides in the dominant individualistic, anthropocentric, and power-centric worldview that has pervaded certain Christian theologies (McFague, 2021:2-3). This viewpoint typically conceptualizes God as a powerful or an omnipotent, remote, supernatural entity operating from an “otherworldly” realm, which primarily focused on the salvation of humanity, and perhaps even “His favorites”, from the repercussions of their actions or the assurance of their eternal existence in heaven (McFague, 2021:98; 2013:161). McFague characterizes this crude version of the narrative as prevalent yet no longer credible or coherent, particularly within a postmodern cosmological framework (McFague, 2013:69). Such a depiction of God as a distant, imperialistic super-being is incompatible with a kenotic perspective and is unlikely to inspire active engagement with global crises (McFague, 2013:69). This anthropocentric theology is intricately linked to the modernist worldview that emerged in the eighteenth century, which presupposed a static, powerful deity alongside an individualistic, atomistic interpretation of both nature and human existence (McFague, 2021:98). This worldview has culminated in market capitalism and its relentless mantra of “more, more, more”, which McFague asserts is “undermining the health of our planet and the well-being of its human inhabitants” (McFague, 2013:46). The pernicious assertion that the purpose of human existence is consumption is denounced by McFague as a heresy warranting condemnation (McFague, 2013:xi). This problematic worldview assumes human beings are totally different and apart from other forms of life, superior to them, contributing to a refusal to take responsibility for ecological destruction (McFague, 2013:175). Traditional doctrines, by starkly contradicting the contemporary scientific understanding of an interconnected, fluid, and open network of reciprocal interactions, are not only implausible but also detrimental to the planet and to the marginalized members of our own species (McFague, 2013:176). Conversely, McFague’s kenotic theology presents a compelling alternative (McFague,

2021:2). By reinterpreting the Christian narrative through a kenotic lens, it embraces the evolutionary truths of sacrifice and interdependence, proposing a framework wherein salvation is not a matter of divine absolution for human transgressions or an escape to another realm, but rather entails participation in God's self-emptying existence for the flourishing of all creation (McFague, 2021:90-96; 2013:186-194).

Having critiqued conventional theological frameworks and elevated kenosis as a rectifying paradigm, we now shift focus to the fundamental elements that arise when kenosis is pragmatically and ethically operationalized. This next section outlines the specific theological virtues and commitments that constitute the essence of McFague's eco-theological paradigm.

4.3 Ethical Implications of McFague's Kenotic Theology for Ecological Thought

Following an exploration of the theological and cosmological dimensions of kenosis as presented in McFague's scholarship, this section describes the primary ethical and ecological tenets that stem from her theological framework. This segment emphasizes the pragmatic and ethical ramifications of McFague's kenotic model. The concepts of self-giving love, voluntary restraint, interdependence, and establishing rapport with nature constitute the moral foundation of McFague's ecological theology.

4.3.1 Kenotic Ethics: Self-Giving Love and Voluntary Restraint

Fundamental to McFague's ecological perspective is the ethical principle of self-giving love. In contrast to ethics predicated on dominance, kenosis advocates for the relinquishment of self-interest, thereby fostering an environment conducive to the well-being of others both human and non-human (McFague, 2013:xii). This ethical stance stands in strong opposition to the consumerist rationale of accumulation and control. For her, authentic power is exemplified not through mastery but through the ability to nurture and sustain life via acts of sacrifice. Intricately connected to this is the ethical principle of intentional restraint. McFague's concept of a 'spirituality of subtraction' urges individuals in wealthy societies to

embrace voluntary limitations on consumption and comfort (McFague, 2013:152). The objective is not asceticism for its own merit, but rather the pursuit of ecological justice. Voluntary simplicity or poverty, exemplified by figures like Simone Weil and John Woolman, serve as embodiments of kenotic ethics in practice (McFague, 2013).

4.3.2 Interdependence as Ontological and Ethical Reality

Expanding on her theological metaphors, McFague posits existence itself as fundamentally inter-relational. The transition from Cartesian individualism ('I think, therefore I am') to a relational conception of identity ('I relate, therefore I am') affirms that no life form exists in isolation (McFague, 2021:13). The survival and flourishing of humanity are irrevocably intertwined with ecological health (McFague, 2021). Consequently, interdependence emerges as both a metaphysical reality and an ethical obligation. The ethical implication is unequivocal: human beings must engage not as detached overseers but as integral participants within the interconnected web of life. This perspective undermines dominion-based theologies and accentuates mutual responsibility and reciprocal care.

4.3.3 Befriending Nature: From Dominion to Compassionate Partnership

The zenith of McFague's ethical framework is the exhortation to befriend nature. Befriending transcends stewardship or utilitarian approaches; it constitutes a fundamental reorientation of the human-nature relationship towards one imbued with mutual respect, empathy, and shared destiny (McFague, 2021). Nature is not merely a passive backdrop but a subject endowed with intrinsic value and agency (McFague, 2013). McFague's panentheistic perspective that the cosmos exists within God intensifies this ethical call. To befriend nature is to recognize its sacredness and to engage with it from a stance of companionship rather than control. This ethical vision cultivates attentiveness, humility, and a sense of co-responsibility in addressing climate change.

In summary, McFague's ecological ethics, rooted in kenosis, interrogate the dominant paradigms of control, consumerism, and individualism. By fostering self-giving love, intended restraint, relational identity, and compassionate coexistence, her framework presents a theologically profound and ethically pressing response to ecological degradation. These principles offer a model for Christian engagement with the climate crisis, not merely as a political or peripheral concern, but as integral to faithful discipleship and divine companionship with the natural world.

4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, drawing from the theological, ethical, and ecological perspectives examined throughout this chapter, the deduction integrates McFague's kenotic paradigm as a comprehensive response to climate change. It reaffirms the transformative capacity of kenosis as the theological framework essential for reinterpreting human responsibility and the divine presence in the world. Sallie McFague's kenotic theology offers a profoundly significant paradigm shift for Christian thought, particularly in addressing the global climate crisis. McFague, through her theological retrieval and re-conceptualization of kenosis fundamentally critiques conventional anthropocentric and dominion-centric theologies that have exacerbated ecological decline. Consequently, the ethical ramifications for humanity are unequivocal: a summons to self-giving-sacrificial love and moderation, transitioning from the spirituality of addition characteristic of consumerism to a spirituality of subtraction. By underscoring the inherent worth and interconnectedness of all creation and advocating for a nurturing relationship with nature, McFague's kenotic paradigm offers a persuasive, theologically robust framework for promoting the flourishing of all life within our shared planetary abode.

CHAPTER 5

A KENOTIC CRITIQUE OF DOMINION THEOLOGY IN MFM AND THEOLOGICAL- ECOLOGICAL REORIENTATION

5.0 Introduction

The concluding chapter consolidates the central theological tension that has shaped the study: the juxtaposition between the dominion theology advocated by the MFM and the kenotic theology articulated by Sallie McFague. While MFM's interpretation of dominion underscores spiritual warfare and territorial acquisition, often viewing nature through adversarial and utilitarian perspectives, McFague proposes a theology of self-emptying love (kenosis), relational interconnectedness, and ecological interdependence. This divergence prompts critical ethical and ecological inquiries regarding the engagement of Pentecostal theology in Nigeria with environmental issues. The objective of this chapter is to integrate the insights derived from the preceding chapters and to suggest a theologically coherent and contextually pertinent kenotic ecological ethic. In doing so, it presents an alternative framework for Nigerian Pentecostal contexts that transcends spiritualized dominion in favor of a more compassionate, relational, and creation-affirming theological perspective.

This chapter directly addresses the core research question: "How can Sallie McFague's concept of kenosis help to critique the dominion mandate as interpreted by MFM's General Overseer, in light of Nigeria's ecological crisis?" It aims to articulate a constructive theological response that re-conceptualizes Christian discipleship as a call to ecological stewardship rooted in the kenotic model exemplified by Christ. We now proceed to a comparative theological-ethical analysis in the following section. This is essential for delineating fundamental divergences in theological anthropology, doctrines of creation, and ethical praxis between the two frameworks, hence highlighting the extent of theological reorientation that is necessary.

5.1 A Comparative Theological-Ethical Analysis: McFague's Kenosis and MFM's Dominion Mandate

From both theological and ethical perspectives, Sallie McFague's kenotic theology and the dominion theology espoused by the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries exemplify two markedly distinct interpretations of the biblical directive regarding human engagement with the natural world. Each theological framework is anchored in a unique comprehension of the divine nature, the purpose of humanity, and the spiritual significance attributed to the cosmos. This section offers a critical comparative examination of their main theological and ethical characteristics, elucidating how these inform their respective ecological attitudes.

5.1.1 Theology of God and Creation

The comparative examination begins with an analysis of the doctrines concerning God and creation in each tradition, as these establish the metaphysical foundation that informs the concepts of dominion and kenosis, not merely as ethical alternatives but as manifestations of divine ontology. Central to McFague's kenotic theology is a panentheistic and incarnational conceptualization of the divine. God is perceived not as remote from creation, but as profoundly embedded within it. McFague (2021) posits that God's act of self-emptying (kenosis) through Jesus Christ serves as a model for divine interaction with the universe. For McFague, kenosis transcends the historical figure of Jesus to encompass the essence of God, who nurtures and infuses all existence. Within this framework, creation is envisaged as the "body of God" - sacred, interconnected, and infused with divine essence. This theological perspective cultivates a worldview that ascribes intrinsic worth to every element of the environment, given its participation in divine existence.

Conversely, MFM's theological stance, particularly as articulated by its General Overseer - Olukoya, is deeply entrenched in a dualistic worldview wherein creation is often regarded as a battleground for demonic forces. The natural world: trees, rivers, land, and even the

placenta - is frequently depicted not as sacred or theologically meaningful in itself, but rather as spiritually contaminated or susceptible to evil influences (Olukoya, 2001). Here, God is predominantly conceptualized as a warrior-King, empowering adherents to reclaim spiritual authority through combat and deliverance. Accordingly, the ethical status of creation becomes ambivalent or even adversarial. Although Scripture affirms the goodness of creation (Gen. 1:31), the rhetoric of MFM tends to elevate the notion of spiritual warfare above the intrinsic value of the natural environment. This theological divergence leads to two radically different theological epistemologies. McFague's theological framework, which begins with the self-giving love of God and relational immanence, and manifests as stewardship and reverence for creation. In stark contrast, MFM's theology emphasizes divine sovereignty, human agency, and cosmic struggle, resulting in a worldview that perceives the universe as a site of conflict rather than a sacramental reality. It seems there is a possible tension between McFague's panentheism and MFM's specific theological dualism and emphasis on certain natural elements being spiritually contaminated by evil forces. Would endorsing a panentheistic view be compatible with MFM's core beliefs about spiritual warfare against malevolent forces operating through the natural world? In my view, this tension is profound; seeing elements of the physical world as site for demonic activity is fundamentally opposed to perceiving same as sacred and participating in divine existence, highlighting two radically different theological epistemologies.

5.1.2 Anthropology and Human Vocation

Following up on the theological framework of creation, we now shift to anthropology, exploring how each paradigm defines human vocation in relation to the environment whether as conqueror or as relational steward, thereby unveiling the anthropological assumptions behind ecological engagement. McFague's conception of humanity is fundamentally rooted in relationality and mutuality. Referencing Philippians 2:5–8, she posits that authentic

humanity is discovered not in dominion over others, but rather in self-emptying love and service. This kenotic anthropology perceives human beings as situated within intricate ecological and social networks, bearing the responsibility of nurturing the health of creation through humility and self-restraint. In McFague's theological framework, human identity is inherently interdependent, as opposed to autonomous; vocation is understood as a co-creative partnership with the divine.

In contrast, MFM's anthropology is informed by an adversarial understanding of spiritual agency. Humanity is depicted as under siege by spiritual adversaries; ancestral curses, territorial spirits, and satanic "technologies" - and is called to assert dominion by reclaiming power through aggressive spiritual rituals. Human beings are characterized as spiritual warriors tasked with restoring usurped destinies and vanquishing evil. The dominion mandate is interpreted not as a call to stewardship, but rather as a militant directive to assert control over hostile spiritual domains. This interpretation is selective and literal, emphasizing "subdue" and "have dominion" while disregarding associated texts (e.g., Gen. 2:15) that contextualize human vocation in terms of care and cultivation. Therefore, while McFague advocates for voluntary restraint and solidarity with the marginalized, MFM glorifies spiritual conquest and triumph. One is rooted in shared suffering; the other in victorious reclamation.

5.1.3 Ethical Frameworks

With a clear understanding of human vocation, the discourse logically progresses to the ethical frameworks that underpin both MFM's and McFague's paradigms. This part is crucial for elucidating the practical moral implications of each theological model on ecological conduct. From an ethical perspective, McFague's theology is characterized by a spirituality of restraint. Her critique of consumerism is sharp: she contends that affluent societies must adopt kenotic discipline by embracing simplicity, reducing consumption, and acting justly for the sake of ecological sustainability. McFague's ethical stance is profoundly counter-cultural.

It challenges the prevailing anthropocentric paradigm, substituting it with an ethic of planetary mutuality, humility, and responsibility. The love of neighbor is extended to encompass all of creation, and environmental stewardship is reframed as an act of discipleship.

Conversely, MFM's ethical orientation is primarily vertical and spiritualized. Righteousness is equated with holiness, spiritual vigilance, and liberation from demonic enslavement. Ecological responsibility is largely absent from its ethical discourse, and where nature is mentioned, it is often viewed through a lens of spiritual suspicion. Olukoya's caution against tree worshippers and global tree preservation promoters (Olukoya, 2001) exemplifies this viewpoint. Ethical engagement with creation is overshadowed by a spiritual-militaristic ethic: the obligation is not to conserve nature, but to vanquish the powers that (allegedly) operate through it. This distinction is critical: McFague's ethics prioritize interdependence, equity, and justice, while MFM's ethics prioritize conflict, deliverance, and divine supremacy. One ethical framework is ecological and incarnational; the other is eschatological and combative.

5.1.4 Implications for Ecological Engagement

To conclude the comparative segment, this aspect assesses how the respective frameworks manifest in practical ecological engagement. It illustrates the necessity for ethical considerations to evolve from theoretical constructs to actionable theo-praxis within Pentecostal frameworks. The most pressing implication arising from this comparison resides in their respective ecological theologies. McFague's kenotic framework presents a compelling theological justification for environmental stewardship. By conceptualizing the world as the corporeal manifestation of God, McFague sanctifies creation, prompting reverence and a profound theological imperative for ecological preservation. Her focus on intentional restraint, sacrificial love, and systemic transformation situates environmental ethics at the core of Christian discipleship. This theological framework has the potential to

galvanize Christian congregations towards climate justice, sustainable practices, and solidarity with at-risk ecosystems. Conversely, MFM's dominion theology is predominantly ecologically passive, if not overtly antagonistic. The vilification of trees and natural elements diminishes the feasibility of nurturing a significant environmental ethic. The association of ecological attributes with spiritual threats fosters alienation from, rather than reparation with, the created order. Additionally, by framing environmental issues as spiritual diversions or demonic illusions, MFM inadvertently dissuades its adherents from engaging in ecological initiatives or acknowledging climate justice as a valid Christian concern.

From a theological-ethical perspective, this represents a significant shortcoming. Given the intensity of Nigeria's environmental challenges such as oil pollution, deforestation, and flooding among others, churches like MFM possess substantial potential to exemplify responsible ecological stewardship. However, this potential is currently constrained by a theological imagination that favors domination over nurturing, and discord over communion.

In summary, McFague's kenotic theology and MFM's dominion mandate represent two disparate visions of Christian discipleship and ecological engagement. McFague's theological perspective urges the Church to emulate the self-emptying love of Christ, to tread lightly upon the earth, and to recognize the sanctity of all forms of life. It posits a persuasive theological and ethical framework for environmental responsibility rooted in relational ontology and divine immanence. Whereas MFM's theology may resonate with the contextual experiences and spiritual needs of many, it often tends to spiritualize material conditions, depict nature as a peril, and prioritize salvation over stewardship. Its interpretation of dominion undermines the potential for ecological unity, leaving scant opportunity for theological contemplation on the intrinsic worth of creation. If Nigerian Pentecostalism is to effectively address the ecological crisis, it must undertake a theological reorientation. McFague's kenotic paradigm not only critiques the spiritualized dominion theology but also

provides a constructive alternative; a vision wherein God's power is expressed not through domination, but through self-giving, relational love that extends to the very soil beneath our feet. A critical look at the proposal raises a fundamental question: is the proposed shift from dominion over nurturing and discord over communion realistically achievable with MFM's established praxis and theological identity without fundamentally altering its core self-understanding as deliverance ministry? It is safe to say that while this study offers a theological possibility and constructive synthesis, it does not demonstrate the practical likelihood of MFM endorsing such shift from its established praxis and theological identity. The feasibility remains an open question, recommended for future empirical research.

5.2 Ethical Tension: Dominion-based and Kenotic Stewardship

Having contrasted both paradigms, we now go into a more nuanced reflection on the ethical tensions that exist between dominion-based and kenotic stewardship. This section advocates for theological transformation as a prerequisite for reconciling Pentecostal practices with ecological ethics that are grounded in Christian discipleship. The traditional paradigm of stewardship, grounded in Genesis 1 conceptualizes humanity as the divinely appointed custodians of creation. According to this perspective, humans crafted in the *imago Dei* are endowed with dominion that mirrors God's benevolent governance, rather than authoritarian control. While this framework seeks to eschew outright exploitation, it often maintains a hierarchical framework wherein humans are perceived as distinct from, and superior to, the natural world, exercising delegated authority on behalf of God. Its principal merit lies in its emphasis on responsibility: creation is regarded as a divine entrusted obligation to be safeguarded. Some Christian thinkers have utilized this paradigm to articulate environmental stewardship as a manifestation of responsible Christian discipleship. However, the managerial implications inherent in this model risk reducing the earth to a mere collection of resources to be managed efficiently. Even under ethical applications, it may inadvertently

sustain anthropocentric assumptions, prioritizing the environment primarily for its usefulness to humanity or its divine connection, rather than recognizing its intrinsic value.

In contrast, kenotic stewardship, as articulated by Sallie McFague, redefines the concept of dominion by anchoring it in the self-abnegating love of Christ. This theological reorientation re-conceptualizes stewardship not as an exercise of power but as a participatory love founded in vulnerability, relationality, and mutual interdependence. McFague's characterization of the world as "the body of God" highlights an ontological connection among God, humanity, and the natural environment. From this perspective, stewardship evolves into an act of embodied presence and ethical solidarity with all forms of creation, transcending mere managerial oversight. Theologically, kenotic stewardship contests hierarchical and utilitarian perspectives, advocating instead for humility, restraint, and ecological discipleship that reflects Christ's self-giving love. On ethical grounds, it takes an eco-centric position rather than one centered on humans, stressing the essential worth of all life beyond our species. Conflicts between these paradigms emerge in their interpretations of power, purpose, and closeness to creation; delegated authority versus self-giving relationship; obligation versus conversion. While scholars like Conradie (2013) and Gushee (2016) contend that these frameworks can be reconciled through a redefinition of stewardship as servant-leadership, others like Santmire (2000) assert that only a radical kenotic revolution can avert stewardship from perpetuating the very domination it aims to challenge.

Eppinger (2011:47) directly corroborates and elaborates on this critique. Eppinger posits that a praxis-oriented theological examination uncovers the shortcomings of environmental stewardship. She argues that human-induced ecological degradation is escalating in spite of (or as a consequence of) human oversight of natural resources. Significantly, she maintains that the stewardship framework permits the exploitation and misuse of the resources under its care. This affirmation strengthens the assertion made by Santmire (2000:115) that even

morally grounded applications of stewardship risk relegating the planet to mere resources and can perpetuate anthropocentric ideologies. Eppinger ardently promotes the kenotic model as a more effective alternative for addressing ecological challenges. She contends that a kenotic incarnational paradigm for ecology fosters a renewed understanding of relationships, recognizing interconnectedness and valuing all constituents of our communities. The kenotic framework underscores that within any community, all entities including the geological substratum, climate, rivers, winds, flora, and fauna are integral to the relational system and warrant appreciation. While acknowledging the superior power and responsibility held by humans, however, they are also wholly reliant on the broader community for their well-being. She advocates for kenotic incarnation in lieu of the prevailing stewardship model, deeming it a far more theologically sound framework for Christians (Eppinger, 2011:47). In the context of an ecological crisis, the Church faces a choice not merely between two ethical approaches but between two theological paradigms: one grounded in management, the other in love that selflessly sacrifices for the flourishing of the world. This thesis highlights the tension between the traditional dominion-based stewardship and kenotic stewardship, arguing that the latter is more ethically compelling. However, given the socio-economic of Nigeria where many Pentecostal adherents seek empowerment and victory over the perceived spiritual and material adversaries, could the call for self-emptying, voluntary restraint, vulnerability, and dependence be thought as disempowering and irrelevant compared to a theology that promises spiritual and territorial dominion? Put in another way, how does the proposed kenotic ethic resonate with or potentially clash with the felt needs and aspirations of MFM adherents in their specific context? This remains a crucial aspect not fully resolved within the theoretical framework of this study.

5.3 Confessing from Within: A Pentecostal Theologian's Reflection

After the examination of the ethical conflict between dominion-oriented theology and kenotic stewardship in the previous section, I imagine it is imperative in this section to engage in a critical reflection of my own theological and cultural perspective. This awareness of position not only enhances the sturdiness of the analysis but also contextualizes the critique within a lived Pentecostal framework informed by both faith and scholarly conviction. This transition reinforces the notion that theology is inherently biased, and responsible ethical engagement necessitates an acknowledgment of the interpretative framework through which one analyzes and reconstructs. As a theologian who is deeply embedded in Nigerian soil and soul, I argue that: McFague's kenotic relationality offers a culturally adaptable corrective to the theological dualism that plagues many Nigerian Pentecostal circles. Her ethic does not dismiss spiritual realities but insists they be understood in relation, not opposition, to creation. In African cosmology, where sacred interconnection between land, ancestors, and the divine is foundational, McFague's model of humility and shared flourishing complements rather than contradicts local spiritualities, if rightly contextualized. Habitually, people tend to emphasize personal transformation over broader systemic ecological initiatives (Bregman, 2014). I strongly believe that there is an intricate relationship between cultural and spiritual perspectives in shaping human behavior towards environmental stewardship and sustainability. The influence of cultural and spiritual dimensions can play a crucial role in alleviating environmental crises and motivate attitudinal shifts regarding creation care. Within some African cosmologies, cultural practices, such as households engaging in tree planting to commemorate significant life events, including births or weddings, serve as important markers, while sacred plantations act as venues for communal rituals and collective gatherings. Moreover, trees imbued with religious or cultural significance, often utilized in ceremonies or symbolizing particular beliefs, are essential in preserving biodiversity and

combating deforestation. Such practices are closely linked to local traditions aimed at fostering ecological balance. These trees are not only important for their cultural purposes but also for their critical ecological functions, such as preventing soil erosion, improving air quality, and providing shade. I imagine that this cultural conservation is threatened by our spiritualization of elements of nature as agents of evil against human blessings, potentially leading to increased deforestation and loss of biodiversity. Ultimately, employing trees to commemorate life events reflects a profound cultural awareness of the interconnectedness of humanity and nature. These practices reaffirm the sanctity of nature and its integral role in sustaining both human and ecological health.

Furthermore, I argue that re-conceptualizing humanity as kenotic would substantially transform our notions of suitable ethical conduct towards the environment. In reconfiguring relationships, kenosis recognizes humanity's power in relation to the environment but urges those with greater power (humans) to engage in voluntary restraint and self-giving. Kenosis cultivates an alternative viewpoint, encouraging us to regard other members of the cosmic community as kin rather than resources. This perspective of perceiving nature as kin significantly enhances its intrinsic value and fosters a relationship grounded in companionship and mutual respect. I imagine that a sustained practice of kenosis holds the potential to heal some of the exploitation of other members of the cosmic household.

5.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.4.1 Conclusions

This study contends that the dominant understanding of the dominion mandate within the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM), particularly under the theological guidance of Dr. D.K. Olukoya, tends to accentuate spiritual warfare in manners that profoundly spiritualize ecological conditions. Through a theological examination informed by Sallie McFague's kenotic theology, this study has advocated for an alternative interpretive and

ethical paradigm: one that is anchored in self-emptying love, relationality, and the inherent worth of all creation. By presenting McFague's kenosis as a counter-narrative to a dominion theology grounded on conquest, the thesis shifts the Christian ecological ethic from one of control to one of relationship, from a posture of mistrust towards nature to one of sacramental solidarity. Furthermore, this research presents a substantial theological discourse by contextualizing Sallie McFague's eco-kenotic theology within the framework of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries' interpretation of the dominion mandate. Rather than seeking to dismantle the prevailing disciplinary agreement within ecological theology or Christian ethics, this investigation scrutinizes a particular doctrinal stance prevalent in African Pentecostalism specifically the spiritualized cosmology that characterizes nature as tainted by demonic influences, thereby justifying ecological negligence. First, it contests the underlying theological dualism present in MFM's spiritual cosmology, which delineates nature as a domain inhabited by demonic entities. This cosmology effectively sanctifies domination while desacralizing creation, engendering a worldview that rationalizes ecological negligence under the pretext of spiritual warfare. Second, it interrogates the theological adequacy of warfare-centric dominion models by framing kenosis not only as an ethical stance but also as a theological ontology - one that perceives being and authority as relational, interdependent, and self-giving.

Moreover, this work posits that African Pentecostalism, rather than being at odds with ecological responsibility, harbors profound theological resources such as communal cosmology, sacred ecology, and ancestral stewardship that can be integrated with kenotic ethics. When interpreted through a kenotic Christological lens, aspects of African cosmology can be re-contextualized as components of a sacramental ecology, wherein nature is perceived not as a battlefield but as a stage for divine presence and communion. The proposed kenotic ecological ethic for MFM not only counters the theological reductionism

characteristic of spiritual warfare narratives but also reclaims the Christian doctrine of creation as a theological foundation for justice, humility, and hope. It reaffirms the sacredness of the natural world as a collaborator in divine covenant, rather than an enemy to be vanquished. This framework endows Nigerian Pentecostal theology with a spiritually vigorous, doctrinally coherent, and contextually pertinent ethic for ecological transformation. In conclusion, this study transcends both anthropocentric dominionism and escapist eschatology by articulating a theology where divine power is exemplified not through coercion, but through self-giving love for all of creation - a contribution that not only critiques existing paradigms but also actively constructs new theological understandings. While this thesis offers a theologically rich and contextually nuanced critique of dominion theology through McFague's kenotic lens, it is limited by its reliance on textual discourse analysis without empirical fieldwork. The absence of direct engagement with MFM practitioners restricts the interpretive depth regarding lived ecclesial attitudes. Additionally, it presumes the theological coherence of McFague's kenosis across Pentecostal cosmologies without addressing possible doctrinal dissonances. The thesis also focuses solely on MFM, limiting generalizability across African Pentecostal movements. Lastly, its theological synthesis, though compelling, remains theoretical, lacking concrete pastoral strategies for practical implementation.

5.4.2 Recommendations

The theoretical framework articulated by this study could pave the way for numerous fruitful avenues for empirical, ethical, and theological investigations for further research. Here are some recommendations:

1. Empirical Examination of MFM Pastors, Leaders, and Member Perspectives:

A qualitative research could be conducted (interviews, surveys) with pastors, leaders, and members of MFM to explore their lived experiences and interpretations of the dominion

mandate, the spiritual conflict concerning nature, and environmental challenges, thereby evaluating the actual impact of the General Overseer's teachings on their ethical-ecological perceptions and actions. This would serve to complement the textual analysis conducted herein.

2. Assessing the Feasibility of Implementing Kenotic Ethics in Church Practice:

An examination of practical methodologies for embedding kenotic theological principles (such as voluntary restraint, relationality, and the inherent value of creation) into the liturgical practices, discipleship programs, and community initiatives of Nigerian churches could be studied in the future.

3. Comprehensive Philosophical-Theological Critique of Stewardship vs. Kenosis:

I recommend that a thorough examination of philosophical arguments concerning anthropocentrism, instrumentalism, and relational ontology to elucidate why a kenotic framework presents a more ethically compelling foundation for ecological responsibility compared to traditional stewardship paradigms, potentially employing specific case studies of ecological issues in Nigeria could be carried out in future debate.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adedibu, B.A, Adeyemo A.O. & Akanbi, O.J. Dialectics of “Satanic technologies” through the lens of Mountain of Fire and Miracles ministry, Nigeria, *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, (2025) 12:1, 2444776, DOI:10.1080/23311983.2024.2444776 (Accessed on 27-03-2025).
- Adelakun, A. Understanding Sexuality from the Security Gospel Perspective: Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries as a Case Study. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 73(3), 2017. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.3453> (Accessed on 12-04-2025).
- Adogame, Afe. “Anthropology of Evil”. *Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Eds. Kenneth R. Ross, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Todd M. Johnson. Edinburgh Press, 2017.
- _____. “Dealing with Local Satanic Technology: Deliverance Rhetoric in the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries.” *Journal of World Christianity*. 2012, Volume 5:1 # 75-101.
- Agagu, O.K. “Threat to the Nigerian Environment: A Call for Positive Action” Lecture Delivered at 7th Chief S.L. Edu Memorial Lecture (2009).
- Ahiamadu, Amadi. “A Critical Assessment of the Creation Mandate in Genesis 1:26-28 and its human rights implications for Nigeria” *Genesis*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.
- Aigbadumah, C. A. *Jesus the Healer: A Theological Reflection on the Role of Christology in the Growth of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church in Nigeria*. (PhD-Thesis – Research external, graduation internal, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), 2011. Retrieved online from <https://research.vu.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/42205209/chapter+Four.pdf> (accessed 29-03-2025)

- Ajani, E. O. *Leadership roles in the Transnationalisation of Nigerian Pentecostal Churches: The Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church in the Netherlands and Ghana*. (PhD- Thesis – Research external, graduation internal, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), 2013.
- Allen, Michael. Reformed Retrieval in *Theologies of Retrieval: An Exploration and Appraisal*. Ed. Darren Sarisky. T&T Clark, Bloomsbury Publishing, NY, USA, 2019.
- Alokwu, C. O. “The Synthesis of Oikothology and African Ecological Ethics as a Model for Environmental Protection in Africa”. *Journal of African Environmental Ethics and Values*. 2011: Vol. 1, 35-57.
- Ayegboyin, D. “...But Deliver us from evil...” The Riposte of the MFM and its implications for the Reverse in Mission.” *Orita- Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. xxxvii, June & Dec. 2005, 33-64.
- Balcomb, A.O. “African Christianity and the Ecological Crisis: Tracing the Contours of a Conundrum.” *Scriptura* 118 (1): 1–14, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.7833/118-1-1469>. (Accessed on 27-01-2025).
- Barga, Timothy. “African Ecological Theology: Pedagogical Pathways to Environmental Protection.” *African Eco-Theology: Meaning, Forms, and Expressions*. Ed. Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu. Published by the Association for the Promotion of African Studies, Maryland USA. 2021.
- Beiser, Frederick. History of Ideas: A Defense in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Methodology*. Eds. Herman Cappelen et al. 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199668779.013.29> (Accessed on 02-01-2025).

- Bob-Manuel, I. Four Largest Threats Facing Niger Delta Today. Ijaw Youth Congress at London Conference July 3 2017.
- Bratton S.P. “Eco-Dimensionality as a Religious Foundation for Sustainability”. *Sustainability*. 2018; 10(4):1021. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su1004102>. (Accessed on 27-01-2025).
- Bregman, Lucy. *The Ecology of Spirituality Meanings, Virtues, and Practices in a Post-Religious Age*. Baylor University Press, 2014.
- Brennan, Robert. “Dominion over nature: Is traditional Christianity really the eco-villain?” *Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology*. ISCAST Online Journal 2014 Vol. 10. www.iscast.org
- Burton-Christie, Douglas. “The Gift of Tears: Loss, Mourning, and the Work of Ecological Restoration.” *Worldviews* 15 (1): 29–46, 2011. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/156853511X556166>. (Accessed on 27-01-2025).
- Conradie, Ernst. M. “The Earth in God’s Economy: Creation, Salvation, and Consummation in Ecological Perspective”. *Stellenbosch Ecological Journal* 2015, Vol 1, No 2, 783–785 <http://dx.doi.org/10.17570/stj.2015.v1n2.br0>. (Accessed 22-05-2025).
- _____. “Pneumatology and Ecology: Reassessing the State of the Debate.” In *Eco-Theology: Essays in Honor of Sigurd Bergmann*, edited by Hans-Günter Heimbrock and Jörg Persch. Ferdinand Schöningh: Brill Group, 2021.
- Dogara, Barshir. “Environmental Issues and Problems in Nigeria” Presentation at the Capacity Building Workshop on Green Teacher Programme, National Teachers Institute, Kaduna, Nigeria, 2017. <https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/environmental-issues-and-problems-in-nigeria/77794477#1> (Accessed on 17-02-2025).

- Eche, G. A & Amadi, S. E. Religion, and Environmental Sustainability in Nigeria in *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*. 2630-7073 (e). Vol. 3 No. 6. 2020.
- Eppinger, Priscilla E. “Christian Ecofeminism as Kenotic Ecology: Transforming Relationships Away from Environmental Stewardship.” *Journal for the Study of Religion*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2011, pp. 47–63. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24764284>. (Accessed 22-05-2025).
- Golo, Ben-Willie Kwaku. “Redeemed from the Earth? Environmental Change and Salvation Theology in African Christianity.” *Scriptura* 111 (3): 348–361, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.7833/111-0-17>. (Accessed on 11-03-2025).
- Gushee, D. P., & Stassen, G. H. *Kingdom ethics: following Jesus in contemporary context*. InterVarsity Press, Downer Groves, IL. 2003.
- Gwamna, Dogara Je’adayibe. Ecological Crisis. Nassarawa State University, Keffi. 29 January 2016 Ph.D. Lecture Class, 2016.
- Holy Bible. The 21st Century King James Version of the Holy Bible (KJ21). <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%202%3A15-17&version=KJ21> (Accessed on 21/04/2025).
- Horrell, David G. *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Perspectives*. T & T Clark, London, 2010.
- Horthemke, Kai. “Animals and the Environment.” In *African Ethics: A Guide to Key Ideas*, edited by Jonathan O. Chimakonam and Luís Cordeiro-Rodrigues. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023.
- Idialu, Omovrigho. P. “An Eco-Theological Appraisal of Environmental Pollution and its Implications for the Niger-Delta Region” in *African Eco-Theology: Meaning*,

- Forms, and Expressions*. Ed. Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu. Published by the Association for the Promotion of African Studies, Maryland USA. 2021.
- Idowu A.A., Ayoola S.O., Opele A.I., Ikenweiwe N.B. “Impact of climate change in Nigeria” In *Iranica Journal of Energy and Environment*, 2011; 2(2):145–152. <https://api-ir.unilag.edu.ng/server/api/core/bitstreams/d1493db9-5150-4e67-9e1a-4ba41b5823a1/content>. (Accessed on 27-01-2025).
- Ikeke, Mark. “The Value of Ubuntu in Restoration and Sustainability of Nigeria Niger Delta”. *Journal of African Environmental Ethics and Values*. Vol.I, Lagos: Medilag, 2011.
- Ityavyar, M. & Tyav, T. Environmental pollution in Nigeria: The need for awareness creation for sustainable development, *Journal of Research in Forestry, Wildlife, and Environment* 4(2), 1-13, 2012.
- Jarikre, Johnson. The Return of the Eyesore. Punch Newspaper, 5th November 2018. <https://punchng.com/olusosun-return-of-the-eyesore/> (Accessed on 18-03-2025).
- Lefsrud, Sigurd. *Kenosis in Theosis: An Exploration of Balthasar’s Theology of Deification*. Pickwick Publications, 2020.
- McFague, Sallie. *A New Climate for Christology: Kenosis, Climate Change, and Befriending Nature*. Fortress Press, Minneapolis, USA, 2021.
- _____. *Blessed are the Consumer: Climate Change and the Practice of Restraint*. Fortress Press, Minneapolis, USA, 2013.
- Moo, Douglas J., and Jonathan A. Moo. *Creation Care: A Biblical Theology of the Natural World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018.
- Nche, G.C., H.C. Achunike, and A. Okoli. “The Challenges of Climate Change and the Culpability of Churches: Towards an Effective Church Climate Change Action in

- Nigeria.” *Missionalia* 45 (2): 168–187, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.7832/45-2-183>.
(Accessed on 03-01-2025).
- Ngele, Omaka Kalu. “The Dominion Clause and Eco-Stewardship in Genesis 1:26-29: Exploring the Biblical Mandate to the Church as Steward of the Earth.” *International Journal of Theology & Reformed Tradition* 1: 169–189, 2009.
- Oderinde, Olatundun A., & Akerele, Victor B. “‘Green Gospel’ As a Panacea for Environmental Challenge in Nigeria” in *Oguaa Journal of Religion and Human Values* (OJORHV) Vol. 6 Issue 1 (June 2020).
- Ogbu, Kalu. *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction*. Oxford Academic, New York, 2008.
- Ojewale, Oluwole, and Alize, le Roux. “Endless oil spills blacken Ogoniland’s prospects” in *Institute for Security Studies*. Published on 24 March 2022. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/endless-oil-spills-blacken-ogonilands-prospects> (Accessed on 22-02-2025).
- Okopido, I.T. ‘Church and environment’, Papers presented at the National Conference for Christian leaders, Theme: Church in mission and transformation (unedited), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Abuja, 2010.
- Oladapo, A., Onilude, Q., Julius, A. J., Olayiwola, B., Ogunremi, O.C “Influence of Culture on Greening the Environment in the Southern Part of Nigeria” In *International Journal of Scientific Research in Environmental Sciences*, 4(3), 2016, pp. 86-92. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12983/ijres-2016-p0086-0092> (Accessed on 18-04-2025).
- Oladejo, T.O “A Speech Acts Analysis of Dr. D.K. Olukoya’s Selected Sermons” *Language and Literary Studies in Society: A Festschrift for Professor Eno Grace Nta*. (University of Lagos Press), (2021) 297-311. (Accessed on 07-04-2025).
- Olukoya, D. K. *Dealing with Local Satanic Technologies*. Battle Cry Christian Ministries, 2001.
- _____. *The Prayer Eagle*. The Battle Cry Christian Ministries, 2001a.

- _____. *Dominion Prosperity*. The Battle Cry Christian Ministries, 2003.
- Osondu, Jude T. *Framing a Nigerian Eco-theology: From a Contemporary Christian Eschatological Perspective*. Master Thesis. Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. Brighton, Massachusetts, 2021.
- Peter, A. O. & Peter, Dorcas O. “Evil Conception and Symbolization in an African Pentecostal Church: The Case of Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries.” *African Journal of Religion, Philosophy and Culture*, 4(2), 2023, 65–83. <https://doi.org/10.31920/2634-7644/2023/v4n2a4> (Accessed on 20-03-2025).
- Polkinghorne, John. Ed. *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*. Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Pyagbara, Legborsi Saro. “The Ogoni of Nigeria: Oil and Exploitation,” in *Micro Report, Minority Rights Group International*, 2003. <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/mrgi/2003/en/45225> (Accessed on 27-01-2025).
- Robinson, D. S., & Wotochek, J. Kenotic Theologies and the Challenge of the ‘Anthropocene’: From Deep Incarnation to Interspecies Encounter. *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 34(2), 209-222, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0953946820984084> (Accessed on 27-02-2025).
- Santmire, H. P. *Nature Reborn: The Ecological and Cosmic Promise of Christian Theology*. Fortress Press. Minneapolis, 2000.
- World Bank Report. “Building Climate Resilience: Experience from Nigeria, 2019. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2019/04/18/building-climate-resilienceexperience-from-nigeria>. (Accessed on 27-01-2025).