

THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LESOTHO

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Department of Theology and Religious Studies

NATURAL ECOLOGY AND HUMAN ECOLOGY ACCORDING TO JOHN PAUL II: A
MORAL CONCERN (1979-2005)

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Theology and Religious Studies in Fulfilment
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Abstract

The issue of natural ecology and human ecology has not been given much attention especially as a formal object of discussion. Pope John Paul II as philosopher and theologian broke away from popular understanding of ecological issues only in relation to the physical natural environment. He shocked the world of science when he ascribed the moral laws to the natural environment. Although the physical world has its logic which must be respected and cultivated, the human environment is more delicate and calls for change in life-style and attitude.

The human person was called from the beginning to explore this logic and to relate it to himself and to the truth. Thus, John Paul II holds that at heart of ecological case and environmental unity is the special worth of the person. Thus, all initiatives to improve man's natural environment; either through scientific methods or commercial methods of industrialization or urbanization should be geared to the development of the human person.

Hence, this study will employ a person-centred approach as its method of understanding the relationship between man and all his environment. It attempts to find the "controlling idea", in the ecological theology of Pope John Paul II; in order to identify this "controlling idea" hermeneutics of the spirit is used as a tool. This hermeneutics of the spirit investigates the world-view of the author and his or her philosophy. In the case of this study a personalism philosophy is employed since it stresses the value of being self-conscious and informed by his personal experiences.

In summary one could say John Paul II embraced and pioneered what is now known as integral ecology. The ecology that takes into account all disciplines of inquiry that contribute to the balance of nature.

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Chapter One

1. Introduction to the Study

1.0 Introduction and background

The issue of environmental care has always been the concern of Pope John Paul II throughout his entire pontificate (1979-2005). Pope John Paul II perceived both the natural environment and the human person through their intimate relation to God. He was convinced that the harmony of nature reflects the perfection of the Absolute (God), which is confirmed in the incarnation of God's Son. The Pope's philosophical and theological approaches intertwine so closely that it is sometimes difficult to separate his philosophical speculation from his theological reflection. Therefore, his idea should be treated as philosophical and theological at the same time, as it is often the case that his philosophical speculation, which originates in reason, is accompanied by theological interpretation of reality, which takes its origin from Divine Revelation.

However, John Paul II postulates that harmonious coexistence between natural environment and man was rampantly disturbed by the effects of original sin. This resulted in a breakdown of cosmic and social order that God intended from the very beginning of creation. Nonetheless, the Holy Father affirmed and echoed the same thought as Paul the Apostle in Romans 8:20-23, that death and resurrection of Christ brought reconciliation between mankind and the whole world (creation groans to be liberated from the state of corruptibility, which it hopes to attain in the coming of Christ). Hence, this world has an eschatological expectation to be achieved in Christ. Thus, John Paul II shows vividly how the balance between the human person (human ecology) and the natural environment should be maintained. In his writings he devoted a section

on how human beings affect the natural environment. He wrote on issues related to sustainable development, which are usually embedded in the broader context of social, political and international problems. In his encyclical, *Centesimus Annus* the Pope clearly states: “development cannot be understood only in its economic sense, but also in an integrally human sense”¹. The sustainable development in the philosophical vision of John Paul II assumes balance between economic development and the need for the protection of the environment both human and natural.

The Holy Father did not stop at the natural *environment* when he drew attention to the ecological question. He focused as well on the destruction of the human *environment*. Here he introduced the concept of “*human ecology*”. Yes, damage to the natural environment is serious, but destruction of the human environment is more serious. We see people concerned for the balance of nature and worried about natural habitats of various animal species threatened with extinction. But meanwhile, too little effort is made to safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic human ecology. Not only has God given the earth to humanity, who must use it with respect for the original good purpose for which it was given, but the human too is God’s gift to man, indeed, it is the greatest gift². For this reason, we must respect the natural and moral structure with which we have been endowed. The encyclical (*Centesimus Annus*) applies this thought to the serious problems of modern urbanization; it calls for proper urban planning which is concerned with how people are to live, and for attention to a social ecology of work³. With this teachings, John Paul II expanded the Church’s social thought on the ecological questions, leading to the teaching in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* that “the relationship of man with the world is a constitutive part of his human identity”⁴, and that

¹ John Paul II. *Centesimus Annus*, (1 May 1991),29

² *Ibid*,38

³ *Ibid*.

⁴ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Vatican Press, 2005 (reprint 2010), no.452

the “cry of the earth and that of the poor are related”⁵. In fact, in his *World Day of Peace Message* (1990), he wrote; “The proper ecological balance will not be found without directly addressing the structural forms of poverty that exist throughout the world.”⁶

Citing, *Centesimus annus* no. 28, the Pope asserted that the human is a gift for himself received from God and therefore must respect the natural and moral structures with which he has been equipped. Strikingly, the Polish Pope understood that environmental problems are ultimately grounded in moral problems, especially the problem of consumerism. The papacy of John Paul II was marked by his promotion of the social teaching of the Catholic Church. On the World Day of Peace, January 1st of 1990, the Pope was supposed to speak about peace, but surprisingly he spoke about the environment, indicating that they are related issues. John Paul II saw environmental concerns only within the larger context of human good. Pope John Paul’s claim is that the lack of peace in the world and the lack of environmental stability spring from the same root, which is human sin. In other words, the ecological crisis is, at its root, a moral problem⁷. In the encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* (Redeemer of Man), the first encyclical of John Paul II, promulgated on 4 March 1979, here the Pope shows that Jesus redeemed the world in its entirety, that is the human life and of creation with its all manifestations was saved from futility which Paul apostle says, the creation waits for revelation of the sons of God.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

When looking at voluminous writings of John Paul II, there is no unified work on environment particularly in the form of an encyclical (Encyclical: a letter from the Pope to Roman Catholic bishops, often about the Church’s official opinion on a subject). Thus, this study intends to put together all the fragments whereby the Pope spoke about environmental issues in order to

⁵ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Vatican Press, 2005 (reprint 2010), no.452

⁶ *Ibid*, no.481-484

⁷ John Paul II. *World day Message of Peace. Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation*. 1990, no.6

construe his mind on natural environment and human environment (human ecology). Moreover, in his approach, he does not emphasise on the natural environment but on human ecology which is a shift from the usual way of thinking about environmental issues. Therefore, the study wants to know how according to John Paul II, what is human ecology and how it relates to the natural environment.

John Paul II realised that economic and political gain is preferred over environmental protection and over the intrinsic value of person. Therefore, John Paul II posits that the ecological crisis has a moral character, meaning most ecological problems emanate from the decline in equitable distribution of resources, and throw away culture whereby people dispose of wastes randomly without consideration of negative impacts on the health of other people. Furthermore, John Paul II emphasized that though the dawn of scientific discovery brought advancements in human civilization they are on the other hand the sources of environmental degradation. Thus, “the gradual depletion of ozone layer and the related “greenhouse effect” has now reached crisis proportions as a consequence of industrial growth, massive urban concentrations and vastly increased energy needs”⁸. In the message addressed for the celebration of World Day of Peace 1990, Pope reiterated that the burning of fossil fuels, industrial waste, unrestricted deforestation, the use of certain types of herbicides: all these are known to harm the atmosphere and the environment. According to John Paul II, the most profound and serious indication of the moral implication underlying the ecological problem is the lack of respect for life evident in many patterns of environmental pollution. In the last paragraph of the Message for the Celebration of World Day of Peace (1990, 16) John Paul II explicitly extends respect for life to non-human creation: Respect for life and for the dignity of

⁸ John Paul II. *World day Message of Peace. Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation*. 1990, no.6

the human person extends also to the rest of creation, which is called to join (the human) in praising God (Ps 96 & 148).

This leads the pope to formulate (1990, 7) a two-fold fundamental principle for a peaceful society: No peaceful society can afford to neglect either respect for life or the fact that there is integrity to creation. He develops the idea of the integrity of creation along with that of common heritage: “Theology, philosophy and science all speak of a harmonious universe, of a ‘cosmos’ endowed with its own integrity, its own internal, dynamic balance”⁹. This order must be respected. The human race is called to explore this order, to examine it with due care and to make use of it while safeguarding its integrity.

1.2 Relevance of the Study

This study plays a significant role in bringing balance in a created ordered system. This created order was lost due to human sin. The Cross of Jesus brought back this lost harmony though humans due to their unrestricted freedom continued to destroy both the human environment and natural environment. Therefore, this study aims at safeguarding the integration of creation which is greatly disfigured by anthropogenic attitude and greed. Furthermore, the Pope redirects traditional understanding of human beings as masters over creation in the sense of domination and reinforces that human’s vocation and participation in the universe is of stewardship. In addition, this study commends Pope John Paul II for his vast contribution in Catholic Social teaching especially on the issue of ecology. Thus, it is relevant because John Paul II coined the term “human ecology” so as to show intimate interconnectedness between humans and their environment.

⁹ John Paul II. *World day Message of Peace. Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation*. 1990, no.8

Moreover, this study reveals a novelty in the thinking that in order to halt environmental problems, there should be a moral change in the life-style. Hence, this study emphasized the earth as a common “heritage” for all and as such breaking unjust preferences of the selected minority groups. Therefore, for John Paul II, ecological crisis is not just about the natural environment endangered by the pollutants and wastefulness but touches the fundamental values of a human person hence he talks of structural poverty. From this framework this study wants to bring balance between humans and created order which is directed to its “Omega point” (God).

1.3 Research Assumptions

The most basic assumption in this study is that environmental issues are purely scientific and as such no contribution can religion and theology make in that regard. Another dominant assumption is that Christianity with its utilitarian approach to nature promotes a particularly anthropocentric view of the environment. Moreover, the researcher realized that Genesis 1, where God commanded to rule the earth and subdue it, is misunderstood as domination on the part of man on animate and inanimate organisms.

1.4 Objective of the Study

This study plans to protect both the ecosystem and the social ecosystem showing the fragility of the environment and of the human condition. Again, this study aims at showing the due value that John Paul II placed on the human person. For instance, his philosophical and theological approach to ecology is “person centered” although he does not subject the material world solely for the utilitarian purpose of humans. As *Redemptor Hominis* n.15, puts it “it was the Creator’s will that man should communicate with nature as an intelligent and noble “master” and “guardian”, and not as a heedless “exploiter” and destroyer”.

1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The issue of environmental care accords with the theology of creation in Catholic theology. However, this study will not delve much on the segments of creation theology that shape Catholic thought on environmental issues. The researcher will only confine this work on the writings of Pope John Paul II on the subject of natural environment and human environment (human ecology). Ecology is the multifaceted concept as understood in many disciplines of study for instance, natural ecology, global ecology (political, economic, and social) and human ecology. Despite the broadness of the types of ecology, the researcher will focus on the human ecology and natural ecology as perceived by John Paul II.

1.6 Methodology of the Study

This study will employ the “hermeneutics of the spirit” as its method. Hermeneutics of the spirit refers to both the spirit of the age in which the document was written and the individuality of the author (F. Rakotsoane. *Writing a Scholarly Research Proposal*. 2012,63). That is to say that hermeneutics requires an understanding of the world-view of the author and his/her community and of the particular ‘controlling idea’ embodied in the text. It is qualitative method at its best sense, this is because qualitative method emphasises on words (understanding of individual social reality, his beliefs and attitude) rather than quantification in the collection and presentation of data. Further, this study will show that John Paul II’s career as a philosopher and theologian also shaped his views on environmental issues. He defended the philosophy of personalism, which stresses the special worth and dignity of human beings as persons.

In this way, he affirmed the traditional Christian distinction between humans and the rest of nature. At the same time, the Pope followed St. Thomas Aquinas in emphasizing that humans are composed of both matter and spirit. Not just the mind has value, but also the body, including its health, emotions, and sexuality. This holistic concern for humans as embodied beings

implies a related concern for the natural environment in which people live, grow, and make their home.

Therefore, in this study the researcher will explore the interdisciplinarity of the concept of ecology. Hence, from a socially transformative perspective environmental issues are seen as ‘socially constructed and subject to reconstruction through historical and social processes.’ The researcher will portray how the notion of the natural environment is deeply connected to the idea of human ecology. Thus, the researcher will show the new approach of Pope John Paul II on issues of environment and how he introduced the concept of integral ecology, that is, the ecology that takes into account both the value of the natural world and human conditions. This study will restore proper attitudes toward nature as having a theocentric purpose.

1.7 Chapters Arrangement

Chapter **ONE** will deal with the research proposal outline with relevant subsections: introduction and background of the study, the problem as identified by the researcher, the relevance of the study, the assumptions of the study, the scope and limitation of the study, the objective of the study and the research methodology.

Chapter **TWO** will dwell more on the conceptual framework and literature of John Paul’s II on environmental issues.

Chapter **THREE** will outline the methodology employed in carrying out this research work in order to understand John Paul II’s environmental theology.

Chapter **FOUR** will elaborate on data presentation on the relationship between the natural environment and human ecology.

Chapter **FIVE** will expound on main themes in John Paul II’s view of natural and human ecology.

chapter **SIX** will be a summary of key concepts, recommendations and general conclusion.

Chapter Two

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.0 The Concept of Ecology According to John Paul II

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will comprise seven subtitles on the subject of ecology according to John Paul II. In addition, this chapter will illustrate extensively what each subtitle contains and how each chapter relates to one another. Nonetheless, the contents of this chapter will not deviate from the major and central themes of this paper which are the natural ecology and human ecology. These two concepts Natural ecology and human ecology shaped the theology and philosophy of John Paul II particularly on environmental care. Furthermore, this chapter will show that ecological crisis is at its core a moral concern.

Ecology was the subject chosen by John Paul's II for his 1990 Peace Message because he saw the lack of respect for nature as a threat to World Peace, and also as expression of a deeper moral crisis reflecting selfishness, dishonesty, disregard for others, and contempt for man and lack of respect for life¹⁰. John Paul II elaborates; the universe does not make sense without mankind; 'God entrusted the whole of creation to the man and woman'¹¹. It is the relationship man has with God that determines his relationship with his fellows and with his environment. This is why Christian culture has always recognized the creatures that surround man as also gifts of God to be nurtured and safeguarded with a sense of gratitude to the Creator¹².

¹⁰ John Paul II. *World day Message of Peace. Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation*. 1990, n.7

¹¹ *Ibid*

¹² *On Safeguarding the Environment, from the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church: Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace*, 2004, n.464

2.1.1 Conceptual Framework of John Paul II's and Environmental

Issues

The restoration of the natural environment from the destructive activities of human persons did not first appear during the tenure of Pope John Paul II. Already in 1979, John Paul II had recognized the environmental crisis as he posits, a balanced view of ecology begins with a correct understanding of the ecology of the human person. The Pope asserts that man cannot use the resources of the earth recklessly with impunity without retaliation on the part of the earth. In his message of 1990 Pope John Paul II posits, "When man turns his back on the Creator's plan, he provokes a disorder which has inevitable repercussions on the rest of the created order"¹³. Stating that "the ecological crisis is a moral issue," he affirmed the obligation of all men and women to contribute to the restoration of a healthy environment. For Christians the responsibilities within creation, and their duty towards nature and Creator, are an essential part of their faith. The Pope further says, if man is not at peace with God, then earth itself cannot be at peace¹⁴. "Therefore, the land mourns and all who dwell in it languish, and also the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and even the fish of the sea are taken away" (Hos 4:3).

In his 1995 *Encyclical* letter, *Evangelium Vitae* (The gospel of life), the pontiff affirms that: Man has specific responsibility towards the environment in which he lives, towards the creation which God has put at the service of his personal dignity, of his life, not only for the present but also for future generations¹⁵.

¹³ John Paul II. *Message of His Holiness for the 1990 World Day of Peace, Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation* (January 1990) no.5

¹⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵ John Paul II. *Evangelium Vitae*, (25 March 1995), no.42

He emphasizes that; it is the ecological question-ranging from the preservation of the different species of animals and other forms of life to “human ecology” properly speaking which finds in the Bible clear and strong ethical direction, leading to a solution which respects the great good of life, of every life¹⁶.

In 2002 the Pope issued a joint declaration with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the spiritual leader of Orthodox Christians, which stated that: Christians and all other believers have a specific role to play in proclaiming moral values and educating people in ecological awareness which is none other than responsibility towards self, towards others, towards creation¹⁷.

John Paul II steers clear of materialism and pantheism, embracing a sacramental view of creation as a visible manifestation of God¹⁸.

The Pope’s insight was that the term “ecology” had become almost exclusively applied to the natural environment in debates about conservation. In this *Encyclical Centesimus Annus* no. 38 he observed: “not only has God given the earth to man, who must use it with respect for the original good purpose for which it was given to him, but man too is God’s gift to man”. He must therefore respect the natural and moral structure with which he has been endowed. In the mind of this Pope, proper stewardship of the natural world is a good that is required of humanity¹⁹.

Hence, the concept of sustainable development with its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) built on John Paul’s II personalism philosophy which resulted in his conception of “human ecology” and development of Catholic Social teaching and his worldview of natural ecology. Thus, looking at 17 goals as tabled out in September 2015 by the General Assembly

¹⁶ John Paul II. *Evangelium Vitae*, (25 March 1995),no.42

¹⁷ *Common Declaration on Environmental Ethics*, John Paul II & the Ecumenical Patriarch his Holiness Bartholomew I (10 June 2002)

¹⁸ G. TRACY Mehan, *John Paul II and the Environment*, Cadmus Group,2005

¹⁹ CONLEY P. *John Paul II on “Human Ecology”*; issue #1.3 of Catechetical review

of heads of States envisioned to transform the world, they all allude holistically to the concept of human ecology as embraced by John Paul II. John Paul II's contribution to human ecology helps to refocus the policy sciences, economy, politics and development, to the service of the human person.

It encompasses the rich Catholic tradition of thought on social issues and provides a harmonious view which integrates and reconciles the natural environment with the human, including the human person, his body, soul and spirit, as well as human activity and its expression in life, technology, development and culture. It is no doubt that John Paul II presented human ecology not as an alternative or in opposition to natural ecology, but rather as something to complement it; advocating "for the defence and preservation of common goods such as the natural and human environments²⁰".

It is the relationship man has with God that determines his relationship with his fellows and with his environment. *This is why Christian culture has always recognized the creatures that surround man as also gifts of God to be nurtured and safeguarded with a sense of gratitude to the Creator.*

In addition, John Paul II is more detailed on the issue of environmental care. During the World Day of Peace 1990, Pope John Paul II addressed the problem of the environment as the serious concern of the modern world.

Thus, John Paul II entitled the world day message of peace, "Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation", this shows John Paul's conception of unified and harmonious interrelationship between God and man as communion. In this way, for John Paul II there could not be peace and stability in the world if the created order of all creatures is disrupted. Moreover, John Paul II conceived the human person as the sole custodian in maintaining order

²⁰ John Paul II. *Centesimus Annus*, (1 May 1991), 40

and harmony between all creatures from animate to inanimate organisms. It is the responsibility of the human person to protect, care and enhance the form and shape of the world, not to selfishly use its natural resources as a heedless exploiter to the point of depletion.

According to John Paul II the natural environment has to be protected because its value is not only immediate but also for future generations, hence eschatological expectation of all creation. Therefore, he encouraged what he calls ecological conversion, that is, a new outlook and perception towards nature and a change in life styles especially on consumption and production. The Pope maintained that in order to combat the ecological crisis there should be ecological awareness initiated by concrete programs and proper education. By way of analogy, the Pope depicts the indivisible bond that exists in the Trinity as the bond that should exist in the created order. In his famous adage, John Paul II asserts that, “modern society will find no solution to the ecological problem unless it takes a serious look at its lifestyle”²¹.

Thus, the concept of ecology extends beyond the physical environment as perceived in their phenomenal state but comprises deep-seated human virtues such as peace, justice, equality and love. Hence, John Paul II shifted from the usual paradigm which viewed the environment in its natural demands and introduced a new paradigm which viewed both the natural environment and human environment forming the parts of one whole. For the Polish Pope, in order to achieve a harmonious and habitable cosmos there should not be a dichotomy between natural environment (natural ecology) and human environment (human ecology). However, looking at various writings of this Pope it becomes apparent that he concurs with many scholars and the biblical narratives that there is hierarchy in the created order and human beings are placed at the top of the ladder. Moreover, the Pope highlights the fact that ecological problems cannot be solved merely on the level of policy.

²¹ John Paul II, *World Day Message of Peace*. Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation. 1990, n.13

Thus, the Pope proposed what he named “ecological conversion”, that is a change of attitude towards nature and a change of perception towards the welfare of every person. This affirms the fact that John Paul II saw environmental concerns only within the larger context of human good (*Green Popes: Benedict XVI and John Paul II on the environment*, 2010, 8). For John Paul II, the point of departure is on the creation account in the book of Genesis where God created a physical world and endowed it with an inherent value. Then, the Pope’s point of arrival is the creation of man and woman which later helped John Paul II to establish the theory of ‘human ecology’.

Having succinctly illustrated the view of John Paul II on environmental issues, one realises that this Pope conceptualized ecology as an integral part of the human person. Therefore, John Paul II perceives natural ecology in light with human value; this means that there can never be ecological balance if human conditions are disregarded. Since the created world was entrusted to the care of human beings, a human person must be co-creator with the creator and as such should respect the created ordered system of the universe. Thus, Pope John Paul II posits that ecological crisis goes deeper than what an eye can meet, it reveals moral crisis. The urge to accumulate the resources of the earth more than necessary unequivocally calls for moral degradation. To use more than one’s share is an abuse, and deprives others of their fair share. In this regard, it is interesting that the *catechism of the Catholic Church* (no.2415) puts the issue of concern for the environment under the heading of the seventh commandment: “You shall not steal”. By destroying the environment or abusing its resources, one steals from others who depend upon the environment, whether presently or in future generations²².

Furthermore, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC 2415) reiterated and expounded the above assertions by saying: “Use of the mineral, vegetable and animal resources of the universe

²² *Green Popes: Benedict XVI and John Paul II on the environment*, 2010, 16

cannot be divorced from respect for moral imperatives”. It further says, man’s dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbour, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation (ibid). The theme of human ecology and its relatedness to natural ecology was later developed by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, in his encyclical Benedict stresses the moral dimension of the environmental concern, and then challenges the world to see what creation says about the human person.

2.1.2 The Connection of Personalism Philosophy of John Paul II and Environment

According to John Paul II, there could never be equilibrium in the natural ordered system if human values are not cultivated. In his (John Paul II) Apostolic journey to Poland, His Holiness reiterates in his homily of June 12 1999, Zamosc:

Is it really possible to oppose the destruction of the environment while allowing, in the name of comfort and convenience, the slaughter of the unborn and procured death of the elderly and the infirm, and the carrying out, in the name of progress, of unacceptable interventions and forms of experimentation at very beginning of human life?

When the good of science or economic interests prevail over the good of the person, and ultimately of whole societies, environmental destruction becomes at once an inevitable alternative. All who have at heart the good of man in this world need to bear constant witness to the fact that “respect for life, and above all for the dignity of human person, is the ultimate guiding norm for any sound economic, industrial or scientific progress”²³. It is no surprise that

²³ John Paul II. *World day Message of Peace. Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation.* 1990, no.7

Pope John Paul II's earlier career defended the philosophy of personalism, which places a special worth and dignity to human beings as persons.

Thus, John Paul II followed Thomistic philosophy which views a human being as a composite of both matter and spirit. This framework as employed by the Pope takes a human person in a holistic sense taking into account all faculties of the human person. Furthermore, John Paul II in illustrating more on the philosophy of personalism, he brings on board the concept of subjectivity or interiority of the human person against the perception of a human person as a mere object or a means to achieve an end. This notion of subjectivity of John Paul II affirms the self-consciousness and self-awareness of the human person as present to himself²⁴. John Paul II makes a contrast of personalism or subjectivity of the human person with the cosmological image of man. He stressed very much the notion of subjectivity of the human person that is putting the human person at the centre of the natural world; however, he does not out rightly despise the concept of cosmological image of man²⁵. For him, these two notions are complementary.

2.1.3 Types of Ecology

There are many types of ecology embraced in different disciplines of inquiry such as social sciences, economics, politics, philosophy and physical sciences. However, this paper will focus mainly on two types of ecology, namely, natural ecology and human ecology. In this chapter, the researcher will show how John Paul II developed the reality of natural ecology into the concept of human ecology. For John Paul II to safeguard the natural environment it is needed first of all to protect the human environment. Thus, though his point of departure is from natural ecology, he arrived at human ecology which was a ground-breaking notion by this Pope.

²⁴ Dr John F. Crosby Presenting, *Karol Wojtyla (later known as Pope John Paul II) and Thomistic Personalism*, at Hilderbrand Project 2017.

²⁵ *ibid*

2.1.4 Human Ecology

According to John Paul II “human ecology” denotes the idea that the human person possesses a nature that must be understood and nurtured for his full flourishing. The Pope further mentions that human ecology, by contrast to natural ecology, allows one to reflect with fewer intellectual stumbling blocks upon the design and dynamism of the human person and his life experience. Thus, “human ecology more readily calls to mind the reality that the human person is created and yet, by his choices, creates himself; that he is deeply influenced by and, in turn, influences others; that he is conditioned by the environment in which he finds himself and yet is capable of transcending it.”²⁶ Therefore, the extinction of many natural species which alarms the harmony of human life because it upsets the balance of natural habitats, too little attention is given to the ‘ecology of the human person’. For John Paul II, the natural environment only becomes resourceful and productive only if the human environment (human ecology) is protected. It is clear that human ecology strives to regain the unique dignity of human person in all aspects and to uphold and embrace the moral conditions in which the human person lives. Thus, both the natural ecosystem and the social ecosystem are fragile; they need protection and cultivation to thrive. In *Centesimus Annus* no.39, Pope John Paul II asserts that the first and fundamental structure for “human ecology” is the family, in which man receives his first formative ideas about truth and goodness, and learns what it means to love and to be loved, and thus what it actually means to be a person²⁷. Later, in November 2014, the present Pope Francis repeats the same words as John Paul II, by saying:

The crisis in the family has produced an ecological crisis, for social environments, like natural environments, need protection. And although the human race has come to

²⁶ ERIKA; Article: Safeguarding the Conditions for an Authentic Human Ecology, January 17, 2017

²⁷ *Centesimus Annus*, John Paul II (1 May 1991), 39

understand the need to address conditions that menace our environments, we have been slower to recognize that our fragile social environments are under threat as well²⁸.

2.1.5 Natural Ecology

The concept of natural ecology as perceived by Pope John Paul II is at much risk as human ecology. The Pope maintains that anthropogenic attitude toward nature has compromised the natural habitat and turned this beautiful creation of God into a pile of filth. In his General Audience address (2001, 3-4) the Pope writes:

“Unfortunately, if we scan the regions of our planet, we immediately see that humanity has disappointed God’s expectations. Humanity, especially in our time, has without hesitation devastated wooded plains and valleys, polluted waters, disfigured the earth’s habitat, made the air unbreathable, disturbed the hydrogeological and atmospheric systems, turned luxuriant areas into deserts and undertaken forms of unrestrained industrialization, degrading that “flowerbed”. We must therefore encourage and support the “ecological conversion” which in recent decades has made humanity more sensitive to the catastrophe to which it has been heading”.

2.2 The Biblical Narratives Adopted by John Paul II in Ecology

Christian responsibility for the environment begins with appreciation of the goodness of all God’s creation. God looked at everything He had made, and found it very good (Gen 1:1-31). Furthermore, God’s wisdom and power were present in every aspect of the unfolding of creation (Prov 8:22-31). The book of Wisdom reiterates the similar view that greatness, magnitude and beauty of creatures reflect the grandeur of their creator and therefore should

²⁸ ERIKA; Article: Safeguarding the Conditions for an Authentic Human Ecology, January 17, 2017

draw our focus to the author of these things (Wis 13:5). In an analogy to human fatigue and to what God did after creating heaven and the earth and all its arrays, God rested on the seventh day; similarly, the land needed a sabbatical year so as to recuperate itself (Lev 25:1-7). Again, Daniel recites the song of praise to the Creator to show that all creatures owe their existence to God and all of them give gratitude to Him (Dan 3:56-82). Moreover, John Paul II alluded to the fall of man in the book of Genesis that even creation itself shared the punishment that befell a human person. However, the Pope affirms by saying that if we speak of the world sharing in the effects of human sin, we also know that it too could not be deprived of a share in the divine promise of the Redemption. The time for the fulfilment of this promise for mankind and for all creation arrived when Mary, by the power of the Holy Spirit, became the mother of the Son of God. He is the first born of creation (Col 1:15). Everything created was eternally in Him. In coming to the world, he comes into what is his, as the gospel of John says (Jn 1:11). He comes in order to embrace creation anew, to begin the work of the world's redemption, to restore to creation its original holiness and dignity. He comes to make the world see, by his very coming, the particular dignity which belongs to created nature.

2.2.1 Moral Dimension and Degradation of Environment

In his entire writings on the subject of ecological concern John Paul II, vividly shows that respect for human life extends to respect for the whole of creation animate and inanimate alike. It is a strong conviction of John Paul II that debasement of nature leads to social ills such as greed, social injustices and disrespect of human life. Thus, John Paul II integrates ecology into the tradition of Catholic social teaching. For instance, in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987, 34) he offers three considerations that ground respect for the order and interconnectedness of the whole creation:

The first consideration is the appropriateness of acquiring a growing awareness of the fact that one cannot use with impunity the different categories of beings, whether living or inanimate - animals, plants, the natural elements - simply as one wishes, according to one's own economic needs. On the contrary, one must take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system, which is precisely the cosmos. The second consideration is based on the realization - which is perhaps more urgent - that natural resources are limited; some are not, as it is said, renewable. Using them as if they were inexhaustible, with absolute dominion, seriously endangers their availability not only for the present generation but above all for generations to come. The third consideration refers directly to the consequences of a certain type of development on the quality of life in the industrialized zones. We all know that the direct or indirect result of industrialization is, ever more frequently, the pollution of the environment, with serious consequences for the health of the population²⁹.

All the above considerations depict interdependence that exists between natural ecology and human ecology. Therefore, he displays the moral character of both the natural world and human environment, this means that man cannot use the resources of the world as one wishes without considering their intrinsic value and the good they bring to all. Nonetheless, at the heart of all these considerations is the value of the human person. The status of the person according to John Paul II must always be the central concern and should be safeguarded at all cost. Thus, John Paul II affirms the hierarchical order in the ecosystem and human person at top of this hierarchy. However, this precedence given to human beings does not permit them to use heedlessly the natural resources with impunity but man has a mission from God to epitomize the Creator in caring for the natural world. Hence, in the last analysis John Paul II conceived

²⁹John Paul II. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987, no.34

the notion that harmony in the ordered created systems would imply tranquillity in the human person and social structures of a society. For the Pope consideration in the use of resources must be taken into account, that is, shared in fairness. Hence, the disturbance in the natural order brings about distortion in the human environment. For John Paul II, the concept of human ecology is multifaceted since it touches units such as family, society and culture. This is the reason the approach of John Paul II on human ecology is said to be interdisciplinary, meaning it involves different disciplines of inquiry such as philosophy, anthropology, sociology, cultural anthropology and theology. Moreover, John Paul II construes the issue of poverty as an ecological phenomenon contributing to the structures of poverty. For him there are two structures of poverty, namely rural poverty and unjust land distribution. Thus, unjust land distribution has led to subsistence farming which does not create revenue for the poor and results in the exhaustion of the soil.

Another phenomenon which has negative effects on ecological balance is the emergence of war. The Pope affirms; “despite the international agreements which prohibit chemical, bacteriological and biological warfare, the fact is that laboratory research continues to develop new offensive weapons capable of altering the balance of nature, damaging the land, ruining crops and vegetation as well as poisoning soil and water.”

John Paul II emphasized that if the ecological crisis is to be addressed effectively, the ethic of individualism must be replaced with an ethic of communion or companionship. Thus, John Paul views the reality of nature as relational, nature does exist solely for itself but for the common good of other created order. He points out that man is commissioned with a special responsibility to guard and care for nature so as to support its integrity and to be in solidarity with all creatures.

2.2.2 Poverty as the Result of Environmental Crisis

John Paul II construes the issue of poverty as an ecological phenomenon contributing to the structures of poverty. For him, there are two structures of poverty, namely rural poverty and unjust land distribution. Thus, unjust land distribution has led to subsistence farming which does not create revenue for the poor and leads to the exhaustion of the soil.

Another phenomenon which bears the consequences of poverty to humanity is war. John Paul posits that war has negative effects on ecological balance. He affirms, “Despite the international agreements which prohibit chemical, bacteriological and biological warfare, the fact is that laboratory research continues to develop new offensive weapons capable of altering the balance of nature, damage the land, ruining crops and vegetation as well as poisoning soil and water”³⁰.

2.2.3 The Relationship of Man and Creation in Ecology of John Paul II

According to John Paul II, the anthropological view of nature is paramount in order to understand a God-given vocation towards nature, animate and inanimate. Thus, John Paul II grounded his ethic of centrality of the person in the dignity of man created in the image and likeness of God as reflected most fully in the Word made flesh

The human person is mandated to rule the earth and creatures and to subdue it (Gen 1:28). However, this mandate is not of domination but rather of stewardship towards nature and all creatures. St Gregory of Nyssa, one of the three great *Cappadocian* Fathers, commented: "God made man capable of carrying out his role as king of the earth. Man was created in the image of the One who governs the universe. Everything demonstrates that from the beginning his

³⁰ John Paul II. *Message of His Holiness to the General Assembly of the United Nations*. 1982, no.8

nature was marked by royalty. He is the living image who participates by his dignity in the perfection of the divine archetype"³¹.

According to *Evangelium Vitae* no. 52, it says, man's lordship, however, is not "absolute, but ministerial: it is a real reflection of the unique and infinite lordship of God"³². Hence, man must exercise it with wisdom and love, sharing in the boundless wisdom and love of God. In biblical language "naming" the creatures (Gen 2:19-20) is the sign of this mission of knowing and transforming created reality. It is not the mission of an absolute and unquestionable master but of a steward of God's Kingdom who is called to continue the Creator's work, a work of life and peace. His task, described in the Book of Wisdom, is to rule the world in holiness and righteousness (Wis9:3)³³.

We must therefore encourage and support the "**ecological conversion**" which in recent decades has made humanity more sensitive to the catastrophe to which it has been heading. Man is no longer the Creator's "steward", but an autonomous despot, who is finally beginning to understand that he must stop at the edge of the abyss. "Another welcome sign is the growing attention being paid to the quality of life and to ecology, especially in more developed societies, where people's expectations are no longer concentrated so much on problems of survival as on the search for an overall improvement of living conditions"³⁴ At stake, then, is not only a "physical" ecology that is concerned to safeguard the habitat of the various living beings, but also a "human" ecology which makes the existence of creatures more dignified, by protecting the fundamental good of life in all its manifestations and by preparing for future generations an environment more in conformity with the Creator's plan.

³¹ John Paul II. *General audience*, Wednesday 17 January 2001

³² John Paul II. *Evangelium Vitae*, (25 March 1995),no.52

³³ *Ibid*,3

³⁴ *Ibid*,27

2.2.4 Various Writings of Popes on Environmental Concern

In the documents of Vatican Council II, ‘Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World’, *Gaudium et Spes*, December 7; promulgated by Pope Paul VI. This document brings forth the Church as the conscience of people and the Church as embodiment of human values which are manifest in the world. According to *Gaudium et Spes* number 40, depicts the Church as travelling the same journey as all mankind and shares the same earthly lot with the world: it is to be a leaven and, as it were, the soul of human society in its renewal by Christ and transformation into the family of God. This document further names the best way to fulfil the obligations of justice and love as people contributing to the common good; this leads to better living conditions for all people, especially those most in need (*Gaudium et Spes* nos, 25, 30,43,75). The dignity and value of the human person is central (26, 27).

Following *Gaudium et Spes*, his Holiness Pope Paul VI pioneered the apostolic exhortation *Octogesima Adveniens* (A Call to Action) in 1971. In this apostolic letter, the Pope asks all Christians to turn to new perceptions of the environmental issue and to warn the consequences of the environmental degradation in order to take on responsibility, together with the rest of the world, for a destiny which from now on is shared by all.

According to *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* #26, 1987(On social concern), Pope John Paul II addresses his ecological concern in his letter as a sign of respect for an eco-justice and consequently a fair distribution of earth’s resources for everyone’s development³⁵. Thus, this document (*Encyclical*) of His Holiness points out the difference between “having” and “being” and therefore places the emphasis on the “being”. The philosophy behind “having” sees no value inherent in the human person except through the categories of accumulating goods and consuming, it plays down the moral dimension of the human person. Hence, John Paul II

³⁵ John Paul II. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. (1987). No.26

differentiates between evangelical poverty and socio-economic poverty or structural poverty. Socio-economic has harsh and often tragic characteristics, since it is experienced as a form of coercion. While evangelical poverty endorsed moderation and simplicity and spirit of sharing as the criteria for a better and peaceful society. Such evangelical poverty is the source of peace, since through it the individual can establish a proper relationship with God, with others and with creation. Evangelical poverty is something that transforms those who accept it. They cannot remain indifferent when faced with the suffering of the poor; they feel impelled to share actively with God his preferential love for them³⁶.

In the message of His Holiness John Paul II for the celebration of the World Day of Peace (1990), named; “Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all creation”, here the Pope states a growing awareness that world peace is threatened not only by conflicts but also by a lack of due respect for nature, by the plundering of natural resources and by a progressive decline in the quality of life. The ecological crisis is a moral problem as the Pope declared. The Pope further says, “the most profound and serious indication of the moral implications underlying the ecological problem is the lack of respect for life evident in many of the patterns of environmental pollution”³⁷.

According to 1991 encyclical, *Centesimus annus*, the Pope referred to “the ecological question” in terms of the impacts of consumerism, the resources of the earth, and the destruction of the natural environment:

Equally worrying is the ecological question which accompanies the problem of consumerism and which is closely connected to it. In their desire to have and to enjoy

³⁶ John Paul II. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. (1987). No.42

³⁷ John Paul II, *World day Message of Peace*. Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation. 1990,no.7

rather than to be and to grow, people consume the resources of the earth and their own lives in an excessive and disordered way³⁸.

2.2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter what remains outstanding is the interconnectedness of “human ecology” and natural ecology. Thus, this chapter attempted to review relevant literature of John Paul II on ecology, his special attention to “human ecology” as the bedrock for the healthy and balanced natural ecology. Furthermore, in this chapter the different scriptural texts which promote care for God’s creation as his handiwork have been demonstrated. The centrality of the human person in the created ordered system is unravelled and outlined in the notion of personalism philosophy of John Paul II. Thus, man has special mandate to relate other creatures to truth not only seeking the extrinsic value of creatures but to acknowledge their intrinsic value. Moreover, this chapter tackles some of the many salient conditions which curtail the dignity of the human being such as poverty, greed, anthropocentric view of nature and production of biological weapons with the view promoting warfare. Hence, John Paul II emphasized that nature has moral conditions which man must uphold and cultivate if natural and human environments were to coexist in perfect harmony.

³⁸ John Paul II. *Centesimus Annus*, (1May 1991), no.37

Chapter Three

3. Methodology

3.0 The Interlink between Genesis Account and Other Biblical Accounts

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher will use the Genesis creation account as the bedrock for the ecological approach of John Paul II. In discussing the environment, John Paul II turns to scripture, recalling how God called the creation of the natural world “good” (Gen 1). As the action of God, the creation signifies not only calling from nothingness to existence and establishing the existence of the world and of man in the world. It also signifies, according to the first narrative of creation, *beresit bara*, giving³⁹. From this giving assertion, it can be deduced that creation constitutes the fundamental and original gift. Hence, man appears in creation as the one who received the world as a gift, and similarly, the world received man as a gift. It is a fundamental and radical giving, that is, a giving in which the gift comes into being precisely from nothingness. Although this chapter dwells more on Genesis creation accounts and other biblical texts, this chapter will integrate other aspects such as moral decline which is evident in population control, injustice for the poor, warfare. Thus, John Paul II maintains that by pushing the moral value of the world to the side-lines, people risk viewing the world in utilitarian terms, that is, the world is valuable as long as it provides production and satisfies human consumption. Although, John Paul II does affirm that human beings are at the centre of all creation, he does however point out the goodness and inherent value of created systems. The Pope emphatically warns people of the domination over nature and proposes the spirit of stewardship instead. Thus, John Paul II made reference to Genesis **1:26-31** to support that human beings are the centre of the earth and are given the resources of the earth to sustain their

³⁹ John Paul II. *General Audience, Creation as a Fundamental and Original Gift*. (Jan 1980)

life. However, human beings when using the resources of the earth must exercise responsibility and care.

John Paul II in showing that the earth has a moral value, he made an analogy of the prohibition given to Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit of tree in the middle of the garden and asserts that human beings cannot use the resources and other forms of life of the earth with impunity as though they are not willed by God.

3.1.1 The Splendour of God's Creation

In his message for the World Day for Peace, Pope John Paul II recalled the book of Genesis by outlining these words: “In the book of Genesis, where we find God’s first self-revelation to humanity (Gen 1-3), there is a recurring refrain: “And God Saw It Was Good”. After creating the heavens, the sea, the earth and all it contains, God created man and woman. At this point the refrain changes markedly: “And God Saw Everything He Had Made, and Behold, It Was Very Good” (Gen 1:31)⁴⁰. God entrusted the whole of creation to the man and woman, and only then, as mentioned, could he rest “from all his work” (Gen 2:3). Thus, God invites man and woman to cooperate with him to continue improving and making the earth a magnificent place. John Paul II interpreted the line of Genesis 1:28, as saying people should be responsible care-takers of the earth, protecting and safeguarding it. This mastery according to John Paul II is of stewardship and egalitarian agent of God. Hence, Christian responsibility for the environment begins with appreciation of the goodness of all God’s creation. God looked at everything He had made, and found it very good (Gen 1:1-31). Thus, the book of Genesis articulates that the life which God gives man (sic) is quite different from the life of all other living creatures, in as much as man, although formed from the dust of the earth (Gen2:7, 319;

⁴⁰ John Paul II, *World day Message of Peace*. Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation. 1990,no.3

Job 34:15; Ps 103:14), is a manifestation of God in the world, a sign of his presence, a trace of his glory (Gen 1:26-27; Ps 8:6).

The book of Genesis affirms this when, in the first account of creation, it places man at the summit of God's creative activity, as its crown, at the culmination of a process which leads from indistinct chaos to the most perfect creatures. Everything in creation is ordered to man and everything is made subject to him⁴¹. Furthermore, God mandated a man and said, "Fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over every living thing" (Gen 1:28); this order was given to man and woman. A similar message is found also in the other account of creation: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it" (Gen 2:15). Here there is a clear affirmation of the primacy of man over things (An anthropocentric view); these are made subject to him and entrusted to his responsible care.

Hence, in the biblical narrative, the difference between man and other creatures is shown above all by the fact that only creation of man is presented as the result of a special decision on the part of God, a deliberation to establish a particular and specific bond with the Creator: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen 1:26)⁴². Even the accompanying phrase which came after each creation changed remarkably after the creation of man and woman, "God saw all he had made, and indeed it was very good" (Gen 1:31).

Furthermore, God's wisdom and power were present in every aspect of the unfolding of creation (Prov 8:22-31). The book of Wisdom reiterates the similar view that greatness, magnitude and beauty of creatures reflect the grandeur of their Creator and therefore should draw our focus to the author of these things (Ws 13:5). In an analogy to human fatigue and to what God did after creating heaven and the earth and all its arrays, God rested on the seventh

⁴¹ John Paul II. *Evangelium Vitae*. (25 March 1995),no.34

⁴² *Ibid*

day; similarly, the land needs a sabbatical year so as to recuperate itself (Lev 25:1-7). Again, Daniel recites the song of praise to the Creator to show that all creatures owe their existence to God and all of them give gratitude to Him (Dan 3:56-82). Moreover, Paul the Apostle alluded to the fall of man in the book of Genesis that even creation itself shared the punishment that befell humanity (Rom 8:20). However, the Pope affirms by saying that if we speak of the world sharing in the effects of human sin, we also know that it too could not be deprived of a share in the divine promise of the redemption⁴³.

The time for the fulfilment of this promise for mankind and for all creation arrived when Mary, by the power of the Holy Spirit, became the mother of the Son of God⁴⁴. He is the first born of creation (Col 1:15). Everything created was eternally in Him. In coming to the world, he comes into what is his, as the gospel of John says (Jn 1:11). He comes in order to embrace creation anew, to begin the work of the world's redemption, to restore to creation its original holiness and dignity. He comes to make the world see, by his very coming, the particular dignity which belongs to created nature⁴⁵.

Again, the Pope says, "When man disobeys God and refuses to submit to his rule, nature rebels against him and no longer recognizes him as its "master," for he has tarnished the Divine image in himself"⁴⁶

3.1.2 Environmental Degradation as a Consequent of Moral Poverty

The Polish Pope vividly underscores the relation between moral poverty and material poverty. Thus, John Paul II affirms that if people are not grounded in moral imperatives, it is hard to achieve economic and developmental freedom.

⁴³ John Paul II. *Address at the Liturgy of the Word*, (12 June 1999). no,3

⁴⁴ *Ibid*

⁴⁵ John Paul II. *Address at the Liturgy of the Word*, (12 June 1999). no,3

⁴⁶ John Paul II. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. (1987). no, 30

Again, John Paul II brings forth the concept of uncontrolled development of technology as an antecedent to moral failure and consequently to material poverty. For the Pope, material poverty is subsumed in the loss or decline of morals and these could manifest in the name of technology and progress over the value and dignity of the human person. In the Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, the Pope states:

“Uncontrolled development of technology outside the framework of a long-range authentically humanistic plan often brings with them a threat to man’s natural environment, alienating him in his relations with nature and removing him from nature. Man, often seems to see no other meaning in his natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption. Yet it was the Creator’s will that man should communicate with nature as an intelligent and noble “master” and “guardian”, and not as a heedless “exploiter” and “destroyer”⁴⁷”.

The above extract shows that John Paul II warns against technology which only its primary goal is to accumulate and consume in the name of mass production, this attitude John Paul II maintained necessitates moral poverty and material poverty.

John Paul II holds the view that despising the material conditions such as fair distribution of agricultural land and protection of fisheries areas which are necessary for the development of every person result in exploitation of earthly resources for the benefit of the few. In his social encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, the Pope states, “Unfortunately, instead of becoming fewer the poor are becoming more numerous, not only in less developed countries but in the more developed ones too”⁴⁸. John Paul II reiterated that the goods of this world are originally meant for all. The right to private property is valid and necessary, but it does not nullify the value of

⁴⁷ John Paul II. *Redemptor Hominis*, (4March 1979), no.15

⁴⁸ John Paul II. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. (1987). no, 42

this principle. Private property, in fact, is under a “social mortgage,” which means that it has an intrinsically social function, based upon and justified precisely by the principle of the universal destination of goods⁴⁹. Thus, John Paul II further expounded that the growing affluence of a few people parallels the growing poverty of the masses. Again, the Pope asserts that the moral conditions that debase the very dignity of the human person are likely and tantamount to debase the natural environment. It is not surprising therefore that the whole Magisterial history has linked the consumerism of developed nations and the drive of capitalistic economic growth with the demise of the environment and the poor. The Pope questions the belief that technology and economic growth are the answers to poverty and environmental degradation. On the contrary, these devices of development John Paul II held that if not controlled with responsibility they contribute to the detriment of the human environment.

Furthermore, John Paul II merged the notion of consumerism of the affluent with the culture that perpetuates the poverty of the masses. In the encyclical *Centesimus Annus* no.37, the Pope stated, “In his desires to have and to enjoy rather than to be and to grow, man consumes the resources of the earth and his own life in an excessive and disordered way”⁵⁰. This shows that the moral peril of the human person and the urge of his immediate gratification has called for a senseless use of resources of the earth on the part of the human being.

Hence, Pope Saint John Paul II brings on board the notion of **structures of sins**, here the Pope affirms that problems of the society are more structural than innate. In fact, in his World Day of Peace Message (1990), he wrote: “The proper ecological balance will not be found without directly addressing the structural forms of poverty that exist throughout the world”⁵¹. Here we

⁴⁹ John Paul II. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. (1987). no,42

⁵⁰ John Paul II. *Centesimus Annus*, (1May 1991), no.37

⁵¹ John Paul II. *World Day Message of Peace, Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation*. 1990, no.11

see John Paul II's thought that ecological harmony cannot exist in a world of unjust social structures; nor can the extreme social inequalities of current world order result in ecological sustainability. Additionally, to this malice, John Paul II stated, "For the poor, to the lack of material goods has been added a lack of knowledge and training which prevents them from escaping their state of humiliating subjection"⁵². Thus, this lack of knowledge and training jeopardizes the integrity of the earth since ecological education is very important for human development and integration of creation maintained by the Pope.

3.1.3 Environmental Climate Change and Loss of Biodiversity Impacts Human Life

This is the assertion of John Paul II that the ecological crisis is deeply rooted in social injustices. Thus, the Pope brings forth the interdisciplinary dimension of ecological crisis. At the heart of this ecological crisis lies human crisis with its expressions such as injustice for the poor, warfare caused by highly developed nations, lack of solidarity among nations and the culture of consumerism which fostered by greed and fuelled by throwaway attitude. The Holy See has the tradition of participating in what had been known as the "earth summit", these are the conferences of the United Nations which discuss sustainable development and the interplay of the three acknowledged pillars of such development namely, economic growth, environmental protection, and the promotion of social welfare. The two conferences which took place during the pontificate of John Paul II are in Rio de Janeiro (1992) and in Johannesburg (2002), the latter "earth summit" in conformity with Holy See made these declarations:

⁵² John Paul II. *Centesimus Annus*, (1May 1991), no.33

“First, protecting the environment means improving people’s lives; and second, that environmental degradation and underdevelopment are closely interdependent issues needing to be approached together, responsibly and in a spirit of solidarity”⁵³.

Furthermore, John Paul II, referred to the issue of loss of biodiversity in his first encyclical (*Redemptor Hominis*), the Pope warned that human beings frequently seem “to see no other meaning in their natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption”⁵⁴. Subsequently, the Pope would call for a global ecological conversion. At the same time, he noted that little effort had been made to “safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic human ecology”⁵⁵. The destruction of the human environment is extremely serious, not only because God has entrusted the world to us men and women, but because human life is itself a gift which must be defended from various forms of debasement. Every effort to protect and improve our world entails profound changes in “lifestyles, models of production and consumption, and the established structures of power which today govern societies”⁵⁶. Authentic human development has a moral character. It presumes full respect for the human person, but it must also be concerned for the world around us and take into account the nature of each being and its mutual connection in an ordered system. Accordingly, our human ability to transform reality must proceed in line with God’s original gift of all that is⁵⁷.

John Paul II, made reference to the contribution of his contemporary Patriarch Bartholomew on the destruction of biological diversity, he stated:

⁵³ Turkson P. *Ecology, Justice and Peace: The Perspective of a Global Church*. De Paul University, Chicago. 2015,8

⁵⁴ John Paul II. *Redemptor Hominis*, (4March 1979), no.15

⁵⁵ John Paul II. *Centesimus Annus*, (1May 1991), no.38

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 58

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 37

“For human beings to destroy the biological diversity of God’s creation; for human beings to degrade the integrity of the earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the earth of its natural forests or destroying its wetlands; for human beings to contaminate the earth’s waters, its land, its air, and its life, these are sins”⁵⁸.

He further goes on to say, “To commit a crime against the natural world is a sin against ourselves and a sin against God”⁵⁹.

Thus, the concept of extinction experienced by different species of the earth has always concerned not only the civil leaders but equally the same, religious leaders. Hence, John Paul II integrates the notion of development as intertwined with the protection of the environment. In the encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* the Pope says, “The development of technology and the development of contemporary civilization, which is marked by the ascendancy of technology, demand a proportional development of morals and ethics”⁶⁰. These morals and ethics which are prerequisites for the good development of human life and civilization at large, the Pope asserts, should extend to the way we deal with ecosystems, taking into account the connectedness of every creature in an ordered system. John Paul II expounded on the issue of development and industrial growth, he pointed out how this phenomenon can negatively impact human life and nature if care is not exercised. In the World Day for Peace Message, *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation*; the Pope mentioned:

“The gradual depletion of the ozone layer and the related “greenhouse effect” has now reached crisis proportions as a consequence of industrial growth, massive urban concentrations and vastly increased energy needs. Industrial waste, the burning of the fossil fuels, unrestricted deforestation, and the use of certain types of herbicides,

⁵⁸ Patriarch Bartholomew. *Address in Santa Barbara on Environment*, California (8 November 1997)

⁵⁹ *Ibid*

⁶⁰ John Paul II. *Redemptor Hominis*, (4 March 1979), no.15

coolants and propellants: all of these are known to harm the atmosphere and environment”⁶¹.

Again, in his introductory remarks of World Day for Peace Message, John Paul II stated, “In our day, there is a growing awareness that world peace is threatened not only by the arms race, regional conflicts and continued injustices among peoples and nations, but also by a lack of due respect for nature, by the plundering of natural resources and by a progressive decline in the quality of life”⁶². It is important however to make a mention of the concept of solidarity though this concept will be dealt with extensively in the next chapter as independent subtitle but it will keep recurring since it forms John Paul II’s approach in combating the environmental crisis. Thus, the Pope says, “the ecological crisis reveals the urgent moral need for a new solidarity, especially in relations between the developing nations and those that are highly industrialized”⁶³.

3.2 Controlled Population Growth

John Paul II connects the issue of population control as an inhumane act to human dignity and ultimately a threat to the environment. It also goes against the mandate God gave people and other creatures to procreate and fill the ends of the earth (Gen 1:24-28). For John Paul II, endangering the human conditions which constitute the human environment would definitely threaten the natural environment. In his encyclical, *The Gospel of Life*, for instance, Pope John Paul II says that:

“The powerful of the earth are haunted by the current demographic growth in the developing countries and fear that the most prolific and poorest peoples represent a

⁶¹ John Paul II. *World Day Message of Peace, Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation*. 1990, no.6

⁶² *Ibid*,1

⁶³ *Ibid*

threat for the well-being and peace of their own countries. Consequently, rather than wishing to face and solve these serious problems with respect for the dignity of individuals and families and for every person's inviolable right to life, they prefer to promote and impose by whatever means a massive program of birth control. Even the economic help which they would be ready to give is unjustly made conditional on the acceptance of an anti-birth policy"⁶⁴.

Furthermore, John Paul II alluded to what his predecessor Paul VI had said in the apostolic letter *Octogesima Adveniens* of 1971 whereby he taught that the destruction done to the natural environment calls for retaliation of the environment against humanity (*Octogesima Adveniens*, no.21). Similarly, John Paul II in the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* quoted the story of Cain and Abel in the book of Genesis and how God avenged justice for Abel and the earth on which the blood of Abel splattered (Gen 37:26). The Pope quoted:

“Cain is cursed by God and also by the earth, which will deny him its fruit (Gen 4:11-12). He is punished: he will live in the wilderness and the desert. Murderous violence profoundly changes man's environment. From being the “garden of Eden” (Gen 2:15), a place of plenty, of harmonious interpersonal relationships and of friendship with God, the earth becomes “the land of Nod” (Gen 4:16), a place of scarcity, loneliness and separation from God. Cain will be “a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth (Gen 4:14), uncertainty and restlessness will follow him forever”⁶⁵.

Thus, for John Paul II, the issue of ecological crisis is multi-layered and therefore different social factors contribute to environmental degradation. At the heart of these social classes is the violence against the life of many human beings, especially children, who are forced into

⁶⁴ John Paul II. *Evangelium Vitae*. (25 March 1995),no.16

⁶⁵ *Ibid*,9

poverty, malnutrition and hunger because of an unjust distribution of resources between peoples and between social classes. John Paul II reiterated that the spreading of death caused by reckless tampering with the world's ecological balance reveals lack of respect for human life. Hence, John Paul II speaks of an environment as a home and environment as a resource⁶⁶. Thus, the Pope warned that the environment should not be considered merely as a resource but most importantly as a home, a common heritage. He further says, “The environment has often fallen prey to the interests of a few strong industrial groups, to the detriment of humanity as a whole, with the ensuing damage to the balance of the ecosystem, the health of the inhabitants and of the future generations to come”⁶⁷.

Again, the Pope expounded:

“Today we often witness the taking of opposite and exaggerated positions; on the one hand, in the name of the exhaustibility and insufficiency of environmental resources, demands are made to limit the birth rate, especially among the poor and developing peoples”⁶⁸.

On the other hand, in the name of an idea inspired by an egocentrism and biocentrism it is being proposed that the ontological and axiological difference between men and other living beings be eliminated, since the biosphere is considered a biotic unity of indifferentiated value. Thus, man’s superior responsibility can be eliminated in favour of an egalitarian consideration of the dignity of all living things.

It is not surprising that John Paul II intersects the issue of development with ecological enhancement. The Pope says, “Among today’s positive signs we must also mention a greater

⁶⁶ John Paul II. *To Conference on Environment and Health*. (24 March 1997),no.5

⁶⁷ *Ibid*

⁶⁸ John Paul II. *To Conference on Environment and Health*. (24 March 1997),no.5

realization of the limits of available resources, and of the need to respect the integrity and the cycles of nature and to take them into account when planning for development, rather than sacrificing them to certain demagogic ideas about the latter”⁶⁹. In order to substantiate his position on protecting life at all levels and in all forms, John Paul II made this assertion:

“As a sign of respect for life, despite all the temptations to destroy it by abortion, euthanasia is a concomitant concern for peace, together with awareness that peace is indivisible. It is either for all or for none. It demands an ever greater degree of rigorous respect for justice and consequently a fair distribution of the results of true development”⁷⁰.

Furthermore, John Paul II on the issue of development which does not respect the integrity of human life and circles nature, he says:

“It is very alarming to see governments in many countries launching systematic campaigns against birth, contrary not only to the cultural and religious identity of the countries themselves but also contrary to the nature of true development”⁷¹.

Thus, development which disregards human values, John Paul II warns against such development as enemy to human civilization. In his encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, he says: “nor can the moral character of development exclude respect for the beings which constitute the natural world, which the ancient Greeks alluding precisely to the order which distinguishes it, called it the cosmos”⁷².

⁶⁹ John Paul II. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. (1987). no,26

⁷⁰ *Ibid*

⁷¹ *Ibid*,25

⁷² *Ibid*,34

3.2.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, it suffices to say that the researcher has dwelled more on encyclicals of John Paul II as primary sources in wrestling the issue of ecology particularly “human ecology” and natural ecology. This is due to the fact that encyclicals carry with them a certain authoritative teaching of the Church. Since this work explore the thought of John Paul II on environmental issues and as it is indicated, the hermeneutics of the spirit have been employed as the method to carry out this work. It is, therefore fitting that the researcher has shown the worldview of John Paul II, his personalism philosophy as a constitutive approach to ecological crisis. The moral categories which John Paul II fostered for the balance of nature are merged with the issue of development. In other words, the Pope postulates that there could not be authentic development if human conscience is not reformed and the spirit of solidarity among people and nations is not endorsed. Hence, John Paul II addressed the issues of ecology from socially transformative approach and this tallies harmoniously with his theory of person-centred or personalism philosophy.

Chapter Four

4. The Relationship between Natural Environment and “Human Ecology”

4.0 Introduction

The key concepts in this chapter are the natural environment and “human ecology.” How these concepts interrelate and ultimately how they form what is correctly be understood as ecology of nature. This ecology of nature integrates the human person as part of nature other than to situate the natural environment (ecology) and “human ecology” in a separate watertight compartment in which each has its own specific goal. However, for ecologists and ecological theologians, it is inappropriate to contrast the natural environment with “human ecology.” This is due to the fact that “human ecology” predicates the relationship between humans to their natural, social and cultural environment. Thus, this chapter will explore the natural environment (ecology) and “human ecology” as perceived by John Paul II. It will extensively show how ill treatment given to the natural world reflects the dysfunctional human relationships. Again, this chapter will investigate how the notion of stewardship is related to the human environment. Furthermore, the moral dimension of “human ecology” will be discussed in view of “human ecology”. Finally, this chapter will show John Paul II’s vision of the natural environment and “human ecology.”

4.1 Human Ecology Expounded

In order to begin this analysis, it is chiefly important to give the etymological meaning of ecology, since this scientific work revolves on both ecologies, namely human and natural. Ecology derives from the ancient Greek words of “*oikos*” and “*logos*,” meaning “household,” or a “place to live.”⁷³ Hence, it can rightly be deduced that ecology deals with management of affairs of God’s house “the earth” which has become our common home. The Holy Father did

⁷³ www.Britannica.Com

not stop at the natural environment when he drew attention to the ecological question. He focused as well on the destruction of the human environment. Thus, he introduced the concept of “human ecology”. The analogy to natural ecology is helpful in today’s philosophical climate change, because it implies an interdependence of influences and actors, a complexity of causes and effects, while calling for empirical and scientific validation.

4.1.1 The Interdependence of Natural Environment and Human Ecology Understood by John Paul II

John Paul II developed his views on environmental care from what his predecessor Paul VI, already wrote concerning environmental protection. Thus, the concept of ecological concern has always been in magisterial teaching of most recent popes either explicitly or implicitly. Hence, in order to understand painstakingly environmental issues as perceived by John Paul II, Paul VI environmental epistemology stands as reference for this Pope.

In his apostolic letter *Octogesima Adveniens* of 1971, Paul VI made a mention of environmental degradation which interlinks the menace done to the natural environment to destruction of the human environment. In the words of this pontiff:

Man is suddenly becoming aware that by an ill-considered exploitation of nature he risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation. Not only is the material environment becoming a permanent menace-pollution and refuse, new illness and absolute destructive capacity- but the human framework is no longer under man’s control, thus creating an environment for tomorrow which may well be intolerable. This is a wide-ranging social problem which concerns the entire human family. The Christian must turn to these new perceptions in order to take on

responsibility, together with the rest of men, for a destiny which from now on is shared by all.⁷⁴

In his message to the 1972 Stockholm Conference, Paul VI insists that the environment be regulated for the good of all human beings, for they are the first and the greatest wealth of the earth.⁷⁵ This statement echoes the same pontiff's description of integral development and anticipates John Paul II's emphasis on the importance of protecting the "human ecology". However, these two pontiffs had been accused of anthropocentric approach to nature by some ecologists and sociologists and historians like Lynn White.

Further, the synod held in 1971 during the tenure of Paul VI, focused on peace and justice delivered a pointed critique of environmental degradation as a violence carried out by wealthy consumers against the poor. Among its recommendations was the following:

We consider that we must also stress the new world-wide preoccupation which will be dealt with for the first time in the conference on the human environment to be held in Stockholm in June 1972. It is impossible to see what right the richer nations have to keep up their claim to increase their own material demands, if the consequence is either that others remain in misery or that the danger of destroying the very physical foundations of life on earth is precipitated. Those who are already rich are bound to accept a less material way of life, with less waste, in order to avoid the destruction of the heritage which they are obliged by absolute justice to share with all other members of the human race⁷⁶.

⁷⁴ Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*, Apostolic Letter, No.21 (14 May 1971)

⁷⁵ Faller P. *The Integrity of Creation: Environment as a Social Issue*. St Augustine College of South Africa, 2002,8

⁷⁶ Justice in the World. *World Synod of Catholic Bishops*, 1971, no.70

These recommendations apply the concept of the universal purpose of created things to the ecological crisis, and offer a bold challenge to the rich in whose hands the power lies to change both the impact of human activity (anthropogenic) on the environment and the inequitable distribution of the world's resources. John Paul II strikes a similar note in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987). He expounds the notion of true development initiated by Paul VI where human rights, spiritual values, and opportunity for growth are integrated without economic considerations being the final criterion. The moral character of development must include respect for the integrity and the cycles of nature⁷⁷. Though these considerations have been discussed in previous chapters, they are worth repeating since they summarize John Paul II's attitude towards environmental issues. This respect is therefore built on a threefold consideration which deserves careful reflection⁷⁸:

All beings in the cosmos are mutually connected in an ordered system.

Natural resources are limited, and some are non-renewable.

Industrialisation, through pollution, has negative consequences on the quality of life.

All this suggests a limitation on the use of the natural world in development, and calls for a change in spiritual attitudes which define the individual's relationship with self, with neighbour, with even the remotest human communities, and with nature itself⁷⁹.

4.1.2 Improving Natural Systems Enhance Human Development

We cannot speak of balanced ecosystems without improving the human systems maintained by Pope John Paul II. In the message of 1990 for the World Day of Peace, the Pope entitled his message as follows, "peace with God the Creator, peace with all of creation". In this ground-

⁷⁷ John Paul II. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987, no.26

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, no.26

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, no.38

breaking document on environmental issues John Paul II asserted that “if man is not at peace with God, then the earth itself cannot be at peace”⁸⁰. Here John Paul II affirmed that the world is the handiwork of God and as such coexist with the human beings therefore a harmonious relationship with the Creator should be reflected in all creation. The roots of the ecological crisis are seen to lie in an indiscriminate application of scientific and technological advances⁸¹. The Pope further says, “There is reckless exploitation of natural resources, and indiscriminate experimentation in the biological sphere, while a privileged few accumulate excess goods, squander available resources, and leave masses in conditions of misery at the very lowest level of subsistence⁸². Further, John Paul II’s first direct public address on the natural environment was in a special conference organized by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)⁸³. In the World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development, which took place in Rome in June 1984, John Paul II remarked that a flourishing aquaculture was central to creating new employment opportunities in tight-knit communities. Moreover, John Paul II noted: “It is therefore the task of your Conference to re-examine the criteria already laid down with regard to agriculture in order to ensure not only technical and economic development but also the human development of individuals and communities”⁸⁴.

4.2 John Paul II Calls for Man’s Stewardship to Nature

For John Paul II, humanity has a mandate to safeguard nature and to bring it to fruition as per requested by the Creator. However, the human person through his uncontrolled desire for productivity has caused the earth to turn against man. Thus, John Paul II advocated for a better

⁸⁰John Paul II. *World day Message of Peace*. Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation. 1990,no.5

⁸¹ *Ibid*

⁸² *Ibid*,5

⁸³ Lai T & Tortajada C. *The Holy See and the Global Environmental Movements*, Glasgow, United Kingdom. 2021, 7

⁸⁴ John Paul II. *Address to Participants in the World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development*, June 1984, no.3

understanding of the natural world and reminds man of the primary responsibility man given to the world by the Creator. According to *Redemptor Hominis* no.15, it says: “it was the Creator’s will that man should communicate with nature as an intelligent and noble “master” and “guardian”, and not as a heedless “exploiter” and “destroyer”⁸⁵.

At the centre of the whole of creation, He placed us, human beings, with our inalienable human dignity. Although we share many features with the rest of the living beings, Almighty God went further with us and gave us an immortal soul, the source of self-awareness and freedom, endowments that make us in His image and likeness (*Gen* 1:26-31;2:7). Marked with that resemblance, we have been placed by God in the world in order to cooperate with Him in realizing more and more fully the divine purpose for creation. In his speech John Paul II further says: At the beginning of history, man and woman sinned by disobeying God and rejecting His design for creation⁸⁶. Among the results of this first sin was the destruction of the original harmony of creation. If we examine carefully the social and environmental crisis which the world community is facing, we must conclude that we are still betraying the mandate God has given us: to be stewards called to collaborate with God in watching over creation in holiness and wisdom.

God has not abandoned the world. It is His will that His design and our hope for it will be realized through our co-operation in restoring its original harmony. In our own time we are witnessing a growth of an *ecological awareness* which needs to be encouraged, so that it will lead to practical programmes and initiatives⁸⁷. An awareness of the relationship between God and humankind brings a fuller sense of the importance of the relationship between human

⁸⁵ John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), no.15

⁸⁶ John Paul II & The Ecumenical Patriarch His Holiness Bartholomew I: *Common Declaration on Environmental Ethics*,(10 June 2002)

⁸⁷ *Ibid*

beings and the natural environment, which is God's creation and which God entrusted to us to guard with wisdom and love (*Gen 1:28*).

4.2.1 Solidarity and Ecological Awareness

Solidarity in the context of ecological awareness suggests that all people are of one common mind to save the earth. Thus, solidarity calls for personal and community involvement both national and international, says John Paul II.

John Paul II says, respect for creation stems from respect for human life and dignity. It is on the basis of our recognition that the world is created by God that we can discern an objective moral order within which to articulate a code of environmental ethics. In this perspective, Christians and all other believers have a specific role to play in proclaiming moral values and in educating people in *ecological awareness*, which is none other than responsibility towards self, towards others, towards creation⁸⁸. On the other hand, ecological awareness is tantamount to ecological conversion. It is no wonder that the joint declaration of ecumenical Patriarch His Holiness Bartholomew I and His Holiness John Paul II maintains by saying:

What is required is an act of repentance on our part and a renewed attempt to view ourselves, one another, and the world around us within the perspective of the divine design for creation. The problem is not simply economic and technological; it is moral and spiritual. A solution at the economic and technological level can be found only if we undergo, in the most radical way, an inner change of heart (*metanoia*), which can lead to a change in lifestyle and of unsustainable patterns of consumption and

⁸⁸ John Paul II & The Ecumenical Patriarch His Holiness Bartholomew I: *Common Declaration on Environmental Ethics*, (10 June 2002)

production. A genuine *conversion* in Christ will enable us to change the way we think and act⁸⁹.

The principle of solidarity conceived by John Paul II endorses that humanity has a universal mandate to promote a healthy environment. Thus, a human person has an active responsibility to God, to self, and to creation so as to achieve and fulfil a God-given obligation to all created systems. It is therefore imperative to realise that solidarity does not only apply to the present generation but its effects today should extend to future generations. The two ecclesial leaders stressed that we and, much more, our children and future generations are entitled to a better world, a world free from degradation, violence and bloodshed, a world of generosity and love⁹⁰.

4.2.2 Integrated Protection of the Environment in the Works of John

Paul II

It has already been stated that John Paul II did not view ecological problems as independent from other social, economic, and technological problems but in reference to one another. One can even say that this Pope created his own holistic conception, wherein he took into consideration the most important issues related to the preservation of the still existing resources of nature. This conception is theocentric, and it belongs to the creationist view of the world rooted in the Bible⁹¹. It is worth repeating, however, that John Paul II stresses the necessity of protecting not only the natural, but also human environment, because these two dimensions correspond and are complementary. However, John Paul II affirmed the biblical texts which imply an autonomous value of creation, independent of its utility for human beings.

⁸⁹ John Paul II & The Ecumenical Patriarch His Holiness Bartholomew I: *Common Declaration on Environmental Ethics*, (10 June 2002)

⁹⁰ *Ibid*

⁹¹ Sadowski R. *A Holistic Approach to Environment Conservation*. Warsaw, 2008

Man was called into existence as the last of creatures, and his task was to manage the created world in a responsible and good-natured manner. Unfortunately, human greed was stronger than responsibility and, in consequence, nature came to be exploited in such a way that it lost the ability of self-renewal⁹². John Paul II writes in this context about anthropological error:

“At the root of the senseless destruction of the natural environment lies an anthropological error, which unfortunately is widespread in our day. Man, who discovers his capacity to transform and in a certain sense create the world through his own work, forgets that this is always based on God’s prior and original gift of the things that are. Man thinks that he can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to his will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose, which man can indeed develop but must not betray. Instead of carrying out his role as a co-operator with God in the work of creation, man sets himself up in place of God and thus ends provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, which is more tyrannized than governed by him”.⁹³

The above quoted passage implies that unlimited exploitation of nature does not follow from the license granted by God to man, but, on the contrary, is its negation. Opposing God, man has released the resistance of nature, which can no longer return to balance on its own and responds with violent climatic disorders⁹⁴.

⁹² Sadowski R. *A Holistic Approach to Environment Conservation*. Warsaw, 2008

⁹³ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, (1 May 1991), 37

⁹⁴ Sadowski R. *A Holistic Approach to Environment Conservation*. Warsaw, 2008

4.2.3 John Paul II warns against the Lack of Sensitivity to the Beauty

and Harmony of nature

Since time in memoria, man used to perceive the beauty of the world as God's flawless creation, reflecting His greatness and perfection, now this ability to know God from his work seems to be disappearing (Wis 13:3). Thus, the Pope stressed that the duties of mankind with regard to environmental protection are also its duties and obligations towards future generations⁹⁵. Eco-centrism and biocentrism propose that the ontological and axiological difference between people and other living beings be eliminated. It emphasizes that man's superior responsibility can be eliminated in favour of an egalitarian consideration of the "dignity" of all living beings⁹⁶. Thus, biblical anthropology has considered man, created in God's image and likeness, as a creature who can transcend worldly reality by virtue of his spirituality, and therefore, as a responsible custodian of the environment in which he has been placed to live. The creator offers it to him as both a home and a resource. The reference to the Bible shows that God made nature perfect. This is why the same expression concerning different species is repeated in the Bible: "And God saw they were good" (Gen 1-3). Thus, Biblical texts imply an autonomous and intrinsic value of creation, independent of its utility to human beings.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the nature of ecology from the general perspective and how John Paul II moved from what is commonly known as a ecology of nature and arrived to the concept of "human ecology". It is logical therefore to construe the natural environment in view of the human environment. According to John Paul II the former is the fertile ground for the latter, that is, it prepares for a full understanding of the latter and as such the full understanding of

⁹⁵ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, (1 May 1991),37

⁹⁶ John Paul II. *Address to Conference on Environment and Health*. 24 March 1997,5

natural environment is realized and achieved in human environment. Moreover, this chapter tried to unpack the responsibility a human person has toward nature, that he must exercise his God-given power as a guardian and care-taker of the entire creation. Again, John Paul II asserts that development can only be attained if natural systems such fair distribution of natural resources, quality water for all, proper planning of urban cities are taken into earnest consideration. Thus, the chapter acknowledges that ecological crisis needs a coordinated approach from all sectors of life, be it civil leaders both at national and international level and the religious leaders from all denominations and religions.

Chapter Five

5. Ecology and Coordinated International Participation

5.0 Introduction

The issue of ecology, much as it needs the principle of subsidiarity so as to respect the autonomous and sovereignty of each State or nation, coordination and participation at international level is very paramount. In this chapter the researcher will illustrate how John Paul II developed the themes that show the urgent response to ecological crisis as a universal problem. These themes are more heralded in his social encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, especially the themes of shared responsibility, environmental conservation and centrality of the human person, models of production that respect integrity of creation, tourism as a key to sustainable, the promotion of common good, solidarity and stewardship, these are the positive aspects in which John Paul II construe his ethic of ecology whereas the negative aspects are, plundering the earth's resources and exploiting the poor yields the same results and modern urbanization.

Talking about the crisis of natural environment and its moral precedents, in the encyclical *Centesimus Annus* John Paul II takes up the issue of human environment and stresses the necessity for its protection⁹⁷. The Pope concedes that the destruction of the natural environment is blameworthy and appreciates the efforts towards its protection. He notices, however, that equally dangerous for the future is the destruction of the “human environment”, but unfortunately “too little effort is made to safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic human ecology”⁹⁸. Like in the case of the earth, which man should use with respect for the originally intended good purpose, he must also have a high regard for “the natural and moral structure

⁹⁷ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, (1 May 1991),no.38&39

⁹⁸ *Ibid*

with which he has been endowed”⁹⁹. Although man has a reason and a sense of his own dignity, which allow him to search for the truth independently, his development is to a large extent conditioned by “the social structure in which he lives, by the education he has received and by his environment” which may either help or hinder his self-realization.

5.1 Shared Responsibility

John Paul II recalling the words of the second Vatican Council, “God designed the Earth and everything on the Earth for the use of the humanity as a whole and all peoples”¹⁰⁰. This universal character also entails joint responsibility for food that exists. Since the common good is involved, the responsibility for it should also have a communal dimension. “This matter cannot be left to free market regulations because the mechanisms of selling and buying and the logic which governs them do not guarantee to safeguard such goods as the natural environment and the human environment, together with the elements that constitute them”¹⁰¹.

The global dimension of the ecological question calls for the international co-ordination of the management and protection of natural resources. Such a co-ordination is all the more recommended, because the necessary expenditures connected with solving the ecological problems exceed the financial and administrative possibilities of single countries. According to John Paul II, “practice shows that international co-operation results in visible progress, which is however limited by political circumstances, occurrences of extreme nationalism, and particular economic interests”¹⁰².

Nonetheless, the Pope affirmed that steps have been taken to mitigate the problem of alienation of nature at global level. Thus, since the dangers for the environment are caused by concrete

⁹⁹ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, (1 May 1991),no.38&39

¹⁰⁰ Vatican Council II. *Gaudium et Spes*. (7 DEC 1965)no.69

¹⁰¹ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, (1 May 1991),no.40

¹⁰² John Paul II. *World day Message of Peace*. Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation. 1990,no.9

actions, they can be prevented by proper legal regulations. The international community should work out rules which will allow each country to execute effective control on its own territory and protect itself from the pollution of the atmosphere and biosphere as well as negative consequences of technological development. International and domestic care for the environment should assume the form of the right “to a safe and healthy natural environment”, which could help to co-ordinate pro-ecological enterprises, so that the use of commonly available resources may agree with the demands of the common good (JOHN Paul II 1988. NO.5).

5.1.1 Development and Environmental Conservation Found its Roots in the Centrality of the Human Person

Pope John Paul II maintained that the Church approaches the protection of the environment from the viewpoint of the human person. In his speech, John Paul II emphasized that authority over the environment was not one of domination, but stewardship¹⁰³. He argued that the human dignity made it necessary to exercise dominion over creation in a way that adequately serves the human family¹⁰⁴. Thus, human personhood was to remain at the centre of environmental care. He further argued that “all ecological programmes must respect the full dignity and freedom of whoever might be affected by such programmes. This observation breaks away from the false dichotomy between economy and environment that remains in traction even within the present-day discourse on climate change. Thus, John Paul II’s environmental stance was significantly influenced by his philosophy of personalism. John Paul II argued that human flourishing was the ends upon which environmental conservation efforts ought to be built¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰³ John Paul II. *Address to the members of the agency of the United Nations*. Nairobi (Kenya), 1985, no.2

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 4

¹⁰⁵ Lai T & Tortajada C. *The Holy See and the Global Environmental Movements*, Glasgow, United Kingdom. 2021, 7

He added to the secular perspective, with its focus on social change, by applying a uniquely philosophical lens over the issue of environmental degradation. John Paul II maintained that development and environmental conservation found its roots in the centrality of the human person¹⁰⁶. As entities endowed with reason, a major aspect of being human was to responsibly manage the earth's resources, such that any abuse would contravene their dignity as beings accorded dominion over the environment.

John Paul II's address to the members of the agency of the United Nations at Nairobi, Kenya 1985, John Paul II postulates that the Catholic Church has taken an active interest in questions concerning the environment. The pontiff further says,

“With the rapid acceleration of science and technology in recent decades, the environment has been subjected to far greater changes than ever before. As a result we are offered many new opportunities for development and human progress; we are now able to transform our surroundings greatly, even dramatically, for the enhancement of the quality of life. On the other hand, this new ability, unless it is used with wisdom and vision, can cause tremendous and even irreparable harm in the ecological and social spheres. The capacity for improving the environment and the capacity for destroying it increase enormously each year”¹⁰⁷.

5.1.2 Models of Production that Respect the Integrity of Creation

Human development: John Paul II envisioned the environmental ethos based on the respect of human dignity. Thus, the Pope adheres to the idea that economic and industrial developments which promote a healthy environment should be guided by conviction on the

¹⁰⁶ Lai T & Tortajada C. *The Holy See and the Global Environmental Movements*, Glasgow, United Kingdom. 2021, 7

¹⁰⁷ John Paul II: *Address to the Members of the Agency of the United Nations*. Nairobi, Kenya, 1985,3

respect for human person. For John Paul II economic development was not an aim in itself. Reducing development to purely economic categories lead, in the Pope's opinion, "to subjecting the human person and the deepest human needs to the requirements of economic planning or pure profit"¹⁰⁸. Therefore, economic development in the social thought of the Polish Pope was subordinated to the more general category, that is, the development of the human and was just one of the elements of this development. In his encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, the Pope clearly states: "development cannot be understood only in its economic sense, but also in an integrally human sense"¹⁰⁹.

Thus, the basic aim of all the activities should be the integral development of the human. In the Pope's opinion, this integral development means genuine and common progress, contributing to the lasting peace in the world. Progress assumes the holistic vision of the human, that is, the vision taking into account human nature in its spiritual and material dimension, of which the world of the human spirit constitutes the superior value, as it is the source of culture and as it determines the human as a person. Hence, economic development appears as a struggle for providing the human with decent conditions of living. It is, however, subjected to cultural development, leading to satisfying the spiritual needs of the human, which of course may adopt a materialised form, such as a work of culture, but which essentially expresses the human spirituality. In encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* the Pope pointed out that "the gathering of goods and services itself, even if it is to the benefit of the majority, is not enough to guarantee human happiness"¹¹⁰. According to John Paul II, people need an integrated balanced vision of development, ensuring their decent living, allowing for their self-realisation as subjects of culture and for the satisfaction of their spiritual needs. Finally, in order to live decently and

¹⁰⁸ John Paul II. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987, no.33

¹⁰⁹ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, (1 May 1991),no.29

¹¹⁰ John Paul II. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987, no. 28

safely, humans need an unpolluted natural environment. In other words, sustainable development in the philosophical vision of John Paul II assumes balance between economic development and the need for the protection of the environment both human (culture) and natural.

5.1.3 John Paul II on Tourism a Key to Sustainable Development

In his message for the 23rd World Day of Tourism 2002, John Paul II says, “tourism enables people to use part of their free time to contemplate the goodness and beauty of God in his creation and, through contact with others, helps to intensify mutual dialogue and acquaintance”¹¹¹. Sacred Scripture considers the experience of travel a special opportunity to acquire knowledge and wisdom, since it puts the person in touch with different peoples, cultures, customs and lands. Indeed, it says: “A man who has travelled knows many things, a man with much experience will speak with understanding. He who is never put to the proof knows few things, but he that has travelled acquires much cleverness” (Sir 34:9-11).

John Paul II affirmed that there are countless tourists who “go around the world” every year, there are many who set out with the explicit goal of the discovery of nature to explore even its most secluded areas. An intelligent brand of tourism tends to appreciate the beauty of nature and directs people to approach it with respect and to enjoy it without altering its balance¹¹². Nevertheless, the Pope acknowledged that today humanity is experiencing an ecological emergency. This ecological emergency comes as a result of a particular kind of fierce tourism which has contributed to and still contributing to this unwanted catastrophe by way of tourist installations built without any planning that respects their impact on the environment.

¹¹¹ John Paul II. *Message for the 23rd World Day of Tourism*. 2002. no.1

¹¹² *Ibid*

For John Paul II, the primacy of the human person should be the striving force for development of any kind in any given society. Indeed, the destruction of the environment highlights the consequences of decisions made by private interests that do not weigh the real conditions of human dignity. Hence, John Paul II postulates that:

“We should favour forms of tourism that show greater respect for the environment, greater moderation in their use of natural resources and greater solidarity with local cultures. This type of tourism implies a strong ethical motivation based on the norm that the environment is everyone’s home and that the good of nature is destined for everyone who enjoys it now and for the generations to come¹¹³”.

Further, the Pope invites all to properly situate the emergence which seems to devote much attention on tourism than on cultural and social welfare of people. These emerging paradigms are commonly known as “ecotourism”, the assumptions of this concept are commendable. However, John Paul II warned people that they should exercise caution to ensure that this concept is not distorted and does not become a channel of abuse and discrimination. In fact, if the protection of the environment were to be made an end in itself, there is the risk that new, modern forms of colonialism will arise that would injure the traditional rights of communities resident in a specific territory. It would be an obstacle to the survival and development of local cultures and take financial resources from the authority of the local government who are the first to be responsible for the ecosystems and rich biodiversity present in their respective territories.

Thus, John Paul II stressed that ecotourism takes people to places, environments or regions whose natural balance needs constant care if it is not to be jeopardized. Studies and rigorous

¹¹³ John Paul II. *Message for the 23rd World Day of Tourism*. 2002. no.3

controls must be encouraged; they should aim at harmonizing respect for nature with the human person's right to benefit from it for his personal development¹¹⁴. Moreover, John Paul II referred to the second letter of Peter (2Pt 3:13), "we wait for new heavens and a new earth". With regard to the inconsiderate exploitation of creation that is a result of human insensitivity, our current society will not find an adequate solution unless it seriously reviews its life-style and manages to base it on "firm points of reference and inspiration: a clear knowledge of creation as a work of God's provident wisdom and the awareness of human dignity and responsibility in the plan of creation"¹¹⁵.

More importantly, John Paul II established that tourism can be an effective means of forming an above-mentioned consciousness. A less aggressive approach to the natural environment will help people discover and appreciate better the goods entrusted to the responsibility of all and of each. A close knowledge of the fragility of many aspects of nature will create a greater consciousness of the urgent need for adequate measures of protection, to put an end to the inconsiderate exploitation of natural resources¹¹⁶.

5.2 The Promotion of Common Good, Solidarity, Stewardship and Responsibility

Solidarity refers to the virtue by which the states and nations commit themselves to working for the common good. If environmental resources are destroyed, as a result of over-consumption, and future generations are unable to obtain a dignified living as result, this undermines the common good. The Pope further suggests that "it is the task of the state to provide for the defence and preservation of common goods such as the natural and human environments, which cannot be safeguarded simply by market forces¹¹⁷". Similarly, in the

¹¹⁴ John Paul II. *Message for the 23rd World Day of Tourism*. 2002. No.4

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*,5

¹¹⁷ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, (1 May 1991),no.40

encyclical *Centesimus annus* no.37, John Paul II resonates “in all this, one notes first the poverty or narrowness of man’s outlook, motivated as he is by a desire to possess things rather than to relate them to the truth, and lacking that disinterested, unselfish and aesthetic attitude that is born of wonder in the presence of being and of the beauty which enables one to see in visible things the message of the invisible God who created them. In this regard, humanity today must be conscious of its duties and obligations towards future generations. Moreover, John Paul II connects the notion of solidarity with the concept of alienation, “man is alienated if he refuses to transcend himself and to live the experience of self-giving and of the formation of an authentic human community oriented towards his final destiny, which is God. A society is alienated if its forms of social organization, production and consumption make it more difficult to offer this gift of self and to establish this solidarity between people”¹¹⁸. Thus, solidarity plays a vital role in human relationships and among states. In his words John Paul II affirms, “When man does not recognize in himself and in others the value and grandeur of the human person, he effectively deprives himself of the possibility of befitting from his humanity and of entering into that relationship of solidarity and communion with others for which God created him”¹¹⁹. It is worth repeating the address of His Holiness John Paul II to Conference on environment and health:

“The balance of the ecosystem and the defence of the healthiness of the environment really need human responsibility and a responsibility that must be open to new forms of solidarity. An open and comprehensive solidarity with all men and all peoples is essential, founded on respect for life and promotion of sufficient resources for the poorest and for future generations”¹²⁰.

¹¹⁸ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, (1 May 1991),no.41

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*

¹²⁰ John Paul II. *Address to Conference on Environment and Health*. (March 1997), no.5

5.2.1 Modern Urbanization

The term urbanization refers to the life of the cities or townships; it is the era of modern technology and industrialization. This concept was prevalent in John Paul II's vision of development and safe-guarding the natural habitat but most importantly the human environment. Hence, John Paul II on the subject of urbanization emphasised the inalienable dignity of the human person and thus should not succumb to market force.

Hence, John Paul II on the issue of environmental care, he blends the concept of development with the notion of urban planning. He stressed that development is good and a condition for human civilization. However, he warned of exploitation of resources which does not take into account "human ecology", and the goodness of future generations. Thus, the Pope further explains:

"Exploitation of the earth, the planet on which we are living, demands rational and honest planning. At the same time, exploitation of the earth not only for industrial but also for military purposes and the uncontrolled development of technology outside the framework of a long-range authentically humanistic plan often bring with them a threat to man's natural environment, alienate him in his relations with nature and remove him from nature"¹²¹.

John Paul II asserts that technology can be used for good, but currently is alienating humans from nature and causing exploitation and destruction rather than care. Thus, the concept of urbanization is multifaceted because it includes the issues of tourism especially in places of resort; the Pope holds that much as these places contribute to the economy of the respective states but should not be preferred over the welfare and rights of people. Again, with more

¹²¹ John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), no.15

emphasis the Pope outlined that any development which does not support the balance of the ecosystem is a menace to both the natural and human environment.

5.2.2 Plundering the Earth's Resources and Exploiting the Poor go Hand in Hand

John Paul II attests that the balance of the ecosystem and the defence of the healthiness of the environment really need human responsibility and a responsibility that must be open to new forms of solidarity. He continues to say that, “an open and comprehensive solidarity with all men and peoples is essential, founded on respect for life and the promotion of sufficient resources for the poorest and for future generations”¹²².

Hence, the earth's resources are also being plundered because of short-sighted approaches to the economy, commerce and production. John Paul II made a clarion plea that in the use of earthly resources the present generation should take into consideration the development of future generations. He affirmed that the loss of forest and woodlands entails the loss of species which may constitute extremely important resources in the future, not only for food but also for curing disease and other uses. Moreover, John Paul II connects the act of plundering natural resources with the decline in moral imperatives and the quality of life and those who suffer most from these repercussions are the poor. In his message of the World Day of Peace 1990, the Pope proclaimed: “In our day, there is a growing awareness that world peace is threatened not only by the arms race, regional conflicts and continued injustices among peoples and nations, but also by a lack of due respect for nature, by the plundering of natural resources and by a progressive decline in the quality of life¹²³”.

¹²² John Paul II. *To Conference on Environment and Health*. (24 March 1997),no.5

¹²³ John Paul II. *World day Message of Peace*. Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation. 1990,no.1

The Polish Pope reiterated that the most profound and serious indication of the moral implications underlying the ecological problem is the lack of respect for life evident in many of the patterns of environmental pollution. He goes on to say, “often, the interests of production prevail over concern for the dignity of workers, while economic interests take priority over the good of individuals and even entire peoples¹²⁴”. In the same pulse, John Paul II holds “The promotion of human dignity is linked to the right to a healthy environment, since this right highlight the dynamics of the relationship between the individual and society¹²⁵”.

5.2.3 Conclusion

This chapter plays a vital role in the entirety of this work because it comprises key themes which constitute the why question of this dissertation and objective it aims to achieve. Thus, the issue of environmental protection both natural and human has been investigated using John Paul II’s theology of ecology as the framework in understanding ecological crisis. Hence, John Paul II established that it is hard to talk about safeguarding the world from degradation without consolidating human principles proposed by Catholic Social Teaching (CST) namely, respect for the dignity of human person, solidarity, subsidiarity and integrity of creation to mention but few. It is important to note that John Paul II while advocating for the protection of natural environment with all its expressions, he introduced another dimension which is protection of human environment and maintains that an equal attention and care is needed in this regard.

¹²⁴ John Paul II. Message for the World Day of Peace, “Respect for human rights: the secret of true peace”. 1999. no.7

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 10

Chapter Six

6. Main Themes, General Conclusion and Recommendations

6.0 Introduction

This chapter will extensively outline the main themes which constitute John Paul II's theology of ecology. This work would be insufficient if these salient points which constitute John Paul II's theology on ecology, especially his new paradigm of "human ecology" are overlooked. This concept was traditionally not incorporated into the ecological framework. However, John Paul II brought on board the notion of human ecology to an orthodox view of natural ecology, he outlined central aspects that conform with his thought. Thus, John Paul II strongly suggests the issue of human dignity, integrity of creation, responsibility to the natural environment and the marginalized, stewardship, universal destination of the world's goods and solidarity. These elements shaped the philosophical and theological understanding of John Paul II on ecological issues. It is no surprise therefore that John Paul II affirmed that natural ecology is not given the attention it deserves; nonetheless too little effort is made to safeguard the moral conditions for authentic "human ecology"¹²⁶.

6.1 Human Dignity

When addressing the value of the human person in relation to the environment and his role in the ordered system, "Cosmos" as it is called by philosophy and theology. John Paul II reiterated more on what he calls "inalienable dignity of the person". Thus, contrary to this inalienable dignity of the human person, there is the phenomenon of alienation, this concept detach the person from fundamental moral principles and sets him as a mere object. According to John Paul II the problem of alienation is more prevalent in the Western societies, although in a

¹²⁶ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, (1 May 1991),no.38

practical sense it affects the societies and communities at large. Hence, John Paul II combined the problem of alienation with the problem of consumerism. He further explains;

“When people are ensnared in a web of false and superficial gratifications rather than be helped to experience their personhood in an authentic and concrete way. Alienation is found also in work, when it is organized so as to ensure maximum returns and profits with no concern whether the worker, through his own labour, grows or diminishes as a person, either through increased sharing in a genuinely supportive community or through increased isolation in a maze of relationships marked by destructive competitiveness and estrangement, in which he is considered only a means and not an end”¹²⁷.

Moreover, John Paul II postulates that man is alienated if he refuses to transcend himself and to live the experience of self-giving and of the formation of an authentic human community oriented towards his final destiny, which is God¹²⁸. A society is alienated if its forms of social organizations, production and consumption make it more difficult to offer this gift of self and to establish this solidarity between people. Thus, John Paul II in showing the primacy of the dignity of human person and the value of nature, warns that the person should not be viewed in materialistic terms, that is commodifying his value and nature much as it provides for man’s needs has on the other hand its own requisites. In addressing this anthropological error and irrational use of earthly resources, John Paul II expounds, “Man thinks that he can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to his will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose, which man can indeed develop but must not betray”¹²⁹. However, John Paul II puts a strong emphasis on safeguarding the human dignity,

¹²⁷ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, (1 May 1991),no.41

¹²⁸ *Ibid*

¹²⁹ *Ibid*,37

as he maintained that the human person is the only creature that God willed for its own sake and God imprinted his image and likeness only to human person¹³⁰. Thus, the theological underpinning for ecological balance comes from the aforementioned assertion that the human person is created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27), and as such his intelligence and rational soul allows him to direct other creatures to their final end, which is God. The human person possesses an inherent and inalienable dignity, which is never to be violated. Although one earns dignity by one's acts, the human possesses a prior and irreducible level of dignity which we are obliged to accord to one another. Hence, John Paul II reiterated that the dignity of the human person does not come from the work they do, but from the persons they are¹³¹. In the final analysis, John Paul II grounded his ethic of human dignity on the fact that human life is sacred:

“After all, life on earth is not an ‘ultimate’ but a ‘penultimate’ (Penultimate is the second last, something that happens before the last) reality; even so, it remains a sacred reality entrusted to us, to be preserved with a sense of responsibility and brought to perfection in love and in the gift of ourselves to God and to our brothers and sisters”¹³².

John Paul II attests, “as explicitly formulated, the precept ‘You shall not kill’ is strongly negative: it indicates the extreme limit which can never be exceeded. Implicitly, however, it encourages a positive attitude of absolute respect for life; it leads to the promotion of life and to progress along the way of a love which gives, receives and serves”¹³³.

¹³⁰ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, (1 May 1991),no.11

¹³¹ *Ibid*

¹³² John Paul II. *Evangelium Vitae*. (25 March 1995),no.2

¹³³ *Ibid*,5

6.1.1 Integrity of Creation

In his peace message of 1990, entitled “Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation”, here John Paul II detailed ecological issues as a moral concern. Although Papal messages in Catholic circles do not constitute magisterial teaching and therefore not binding with the same intensity as the encyclicals. The 1990 peace message has been referred to as a guiding tool in understanding ecological debates; hence this message has contributed greatly in shaping the Catholic thought on ecological crisis and its restoration. It is worth mentioning therefore that this message of John Paul II, (1990) will be cited a lot in this section. The message acknowledged that “the ecological crisis is a moral issue”, that the immoral use of resources is the root cause of all environmental problems. Thus, John Paul II makes it clear that there must be unity and respect for life and dignity of the human person, as well as to the rest of God’s creation. Hence, integrity of creation denotes that there is interdependence in the ecosystem from biotic to abiotic; it further explains that every creature makes its contribution in the ordered system either big or small. Hence, John Paul II in referring to this integrity of creation calls for coordinated solutions to problems of world, environmental awareness included¹³⁴. Due to sin originated from Adam and Eve, the integrity of creation was disturbed and therefore a harmonious coexistence among all creation was lost as well. As a result the earth became rebellious against humankind, no longer yields fruits effortlessly for man (Gen 3:17-19; 4:12). Nevertheless, creation was not left to futility indefinitely but hoped for eschatological expectation of the Son of God (Rom 8:20-21). Thus, “through Christ, God reconciled to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross”¹³⁵ (Col 1:19-20).

¹³⁴ John Paul II. *World day Message of Peace*. Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation. 1990,no.2

¹³⁵ *Ibid*,4

The Pope chose to use the terms “ecosystems” and “delicate ecological balances”¹³⁶. John Paul II emphasizes the interdependence and the unforeseen consequences of actions previously regarded as unrelated. This interdependence, springs from the very nature of the universe.

“Theology, philosophy and science all speak of a harmonious universe, of a “cosmos” endowed with its own integrity, its own internal, dynamic balance. This order must be respected, the human race is called to explore this order, to examine it with due care and to make use of it while safeguarding its integrity”¹³⁷

6.2 Responsibility to Natural Environment and Marginalized

John Paul II adheres to the conviction that all people of all faiths and even those who do not subscribe to faith have a responsibility towards the environmental protection. For the people of faith, this responsibility stems from biblical vision and mandate (Gen 2:15-16). Thus, the mandate harnesses their behaviour to be reckless to the environment and use its resources arbitrarily with impunity.

Hence, John Paul II talks of an urgent education of ecological responsibility, responsibility for oneself, for others, and for the earth¹³⁸. He further says, “This education cannot be rooted in mere sentiment or empty wishes”¹³⁹. On the contrary, a genuine education in responsibility involves an authentic conversion in ways of thought and behaviour. Churches and religious bodies, non-governmental and governmental organizations, indeed all members of the society, have a precise role to play in such education¹⁴⁰. The first educator, however, John Paul II posits is the family, where the child learns to respect his neighbour and to love nature. Thus, human

¹³⁶ John Paul II. *World day Message of Peace*. Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation. 1990,no.6

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 8

¹³⁸ *Ibid*,13

¹³⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*

person through his ingenuity has the responsibility to transform and improve the face of earth which was destroyed by sin. Hence, the Bible speaks again and again of the goodness and beauty of creation, which is called to glorify God (Gen 1:4; Ps 8:2; 104:1; Wis 13:3-5; Sir 39:16, 33; 43: 1,9). This shows John Paul II's appreciation of the advances of science and technology as the work of human creativity in responding to God's mandate to cultivate and care for the earth. However, John Paul II diametrically warns that these advancements should be undertaken in view of improving the human conditions and should not have callous disregard for the moral imperatives and spiritual dimension of human person¹⁴¹. Thus, care for the environment represents a challenge for all of humanity. It is a matter of a common and universal duty, that of respecting a common good¹⁴². Furthermore, John Paul II emphasized that responsibility for the environment should also find adequate expression on a juridical level. It is important that the international community draw up uniform rules that will allow States to exercise more effective control over the various activities that have negative effects on the environment and to protect ecosystems by preventing the risk of accidents. "The State should also actively endeavour within its own territory to prevent destruction of the atmosphere and biosphere, by carefully monitoring, among other things, the impact of new technological or scientific advances and ensuring that its citizens are not exposed to dangerous pollutants or toxic wastes"¹⁴³

John Paul II understood ecological issues from interdisciplinary approach. For the Pope, environmental issues do not only concern natural sciences and social sciences but involve integrated disciplines of inquiry. Thus, John Paul II interprets ecological issues in light of

¹⁴¹ John Paul II. *World day Message of Peace*. Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation. 1990, no.14

¹⁴² John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, (1 May 1991),no.40

¹⁴³ John Paul II. *World day Message of Peace*. Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation. 1990, no.9

modern times. Hence, at its core, the environmental crisis is a moral challenge. It calls us to examine how we use and share the goods of the earth, what we pass on to future generations, and how we live in harmony with God's creation. John Paul II further concedes on the effects of environmental degradation that surround us:

“The smog in our cities, chemicals in water and in food; eroded topsoil blowing in the wind; the loss of valuable wetlands; radioactive and toxic waste lacking adequate disposal sites; threats to the health of industrial and farm workers”¹⁴⁴. Thus, the aforementioned assertions confirmed what John Paul II has said to the participants in the congress on environment and health, “technology that pollutes can also cleanse, production which amasses can also distribute justly, on condition that the ethic of respect for life and human dignity, for the rights of today's generations and those to come prevail”¹⁴⁵.

It is important to note that John Paul II linked environmental issues with social, economic and development issues. However, John Paul II asserts that the issue of morality plays a vital role in understanding and interpret the issues of environment. He postulates that to ensure the survival of a healthy environment, then, the nations must not only establish a sustainable economy but must also labour for justice both within and among them. Thus, John Paul II explores the links between the concern for the person and for the earth, between natural ecology and social ecology (human ecology). He further asserts everything interrelates; the web of life is one. Hence, “our mistreatment of the natural world diminishes our own dignity and

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of*

Catholic Social Teaching. (November, 1991)

¹⁴⁵ John Paul II. *To Conference on Environment and Health*. (24 March 1997),no.5

sacredness, not only because we are destroying resources that future generation of humans need, but because we are engaging in actions that contradict what it means to be human”¹⁴⁶.

Furthermore, John Paul II urges people of faith as individuals and as groups to seek understanding in more clearly the ethical and religious dimensions that pose environmental threat. In *Centesimus Annus*, John Paul II advised that in addition to protecting natural systems and other species, we “Safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic human ecology, in urban planning, work environments, and family life”¹⁴⁷. John Paul II, presenting a Catholic thought on the natural environment, teaches that nature is not merely a field to exploit at will or a museum piece to be preserved at all costs. Thus, the place assumed by human beings is not of being gods, but stewards of the earth. Furthermore, John Paul II to World Day peace message on the subject of ecology, he saw the lack of respect for nature as a threat to world peace, and also as an expression of a deeper moral crisis reflecting selfishness, dishonesty, disregard for others, and contempt for man and lack of respect for life¹⁴⁸. Hence, John Paul II as already mentioned his idea of ecology touched diverse dimensions of life. These should be worldviews, religious convictions and morals, science and business strategies, war, migration, government policies and international bodies, lifestyles and poverty, urban planning, education and solidarity, family life and economy; all affect each other. They are affected by and affect the environment.

¹⁴⁶ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light*

of Catholic Social Teaching. (November, 1991)

¹⁴⁷ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, (1 May 1991), no.38

¹⁴⁸ John Paul II. *World day Message of Peace*. Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation. 1990, no.1

According to Pope John Paul II, the earth is considered ultimately as a “common heritage”, the cooperation of individuals, peoples, States and the international community is needed¹⁴⁹. He continues to say:

“The State should also actively endeavour within its own territory to prevent destruction of atmosphere and biosphere, by carefully monitoring, among other things, the impact of new technological or scientific advances. The State also has the responsibility of ensuring that its citizens are not exposed to dangerous pollutants or toxic wastes. The right to a safe environment is ever more insistently presented today as right that must be included in an updated Charter of Human Rights”¹⁵⁰.

6.2.1 General Conclusion

In conclusion, one realizes that ecological issues need an urgent action. Again, the concept of human ecology is central to John Paul II’s understanding of environmental issues. In order to yield the fruits of the earth care is needed on the part of the human person to protect the natural environment. Hence, if the balance in the ecosystem is not supported both the natural environment and human environment suffers. Thus, the mandate Adam and Eve received from God to till and care for the earth is still applicable in today’s world. Hence, this study has shown how the human dignity and human development should always be the first priority when engaging in the programs that are said to be modernized and industrialized. This does not, however, deprive human creativity in the world, which in essence reflects and continues handiwork of God. Moreover, the concept of natural ecology and human ecology denotes an inseparable link between man and nature, it shows that the human person is the gift to world and the world is also a gift to human person. Hence, in order to have a balanced ecosystem

¹⁴⁹ John Paul II. *World day Message of Peace*. Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of creation. 1990, no.1

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*,9

man's behaviour towards nature should always be in line with God's original purpose of relating and directing all creation towards its final destination. Therefore, man should pay due attention to the moral laws the natural world endowed with so as to endorse its equilibrium. More importantly, the balance nature calls for anthropogenic consciousness and how the poor people suffer most from these inconsiderate activities done on the environment in the name of development.

6.2.2 Recommendations

Scientific discoveries, scientists must truly use their research and technical skill in the service of humanity, being able to subordinate them to moral principles and values which respect and realize in its entirety the dignity of the person. A central point of reference for every scientific and technological application is respect for men and women, which must also be accompanied by necessary attitude of respect for other living creatures. Even when thought is given to making some change in them, one must take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system. Thus, the researcher concurs with a general understanding of John Paul II on ecology and human ecology; embracing the latter in high esteem. The notion of human ecology reappears and therefore revert to John Paul II's philosophy of personalism. John Paul II argued that human flourishing was the ends upon which environmental conservation efforts ought to be built. This has become apparent that people should not be used as means to an end, but they are an end themselves. However, the researcher is compelled to admit limitations of exaggerated dominance given to human person in the ordered natural systems. Thus, it is imperative that discoveries of science and technology be merged with moral principles and guided by human conscience dictated by the word of God and precepts laid down by religious morals.

Furthermore, the researcher acknowledges the mistaken view of man's status in nature which many interpret as having absolute power over creation. This mistaken view Pope John Paul II calls, "anthropological error", which sees no intrinsic value of the earth except in relation to man. Hence, it is crucial to correct this distorted view of man's place in nature now and for future generations and to redefine the place of man in nature in light with interconnectedness of man with other creatures. This study warns against per accidens approach to nature which may lead to problem of consumerism and development that has no regard for God-given dignity of man. Most importantly, the researcher has become aware that the issue of ecology is a social concern that needs participation of all stakeholders, the governments, States, Church leaders and international community. Although, the principle of subsidiarity plays pivotal role in solving local problems, ecological issues need integrated solutions and international-oriented solutions. Thus, it is commendable that the heads of States take stork the issue of ecological abuse and its dire implications to man's environment. While John Paul II connected his speeches on ecology to food production and economic employment in developing countries, his remarks on environmental protection extended to the rest of the world. Despite the independence of his thought, John Paul II's remarks were capable of speaking to many assumptions in the political sphere, and served to entrench the Holy See's unique stance on human societies and the natural environment.

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