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The interface between ecotheology and practical theology: An African indigenous knowledge systems perspective

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Abstract

The present article is an interface between ecotheology and Practical Theology from an African indigenous knowledge systems (AIKS) perspective. The article pursues to facilitate a conservationist rapport between three complementary disciplines, namely: ecotheology, Practical Theology and AIKS. The study attempts to discuss the above disciplines in the context of the phrase "theological eco-praxis". Of particular note is the light that the above themes throw on the contemporary conservationist education. The study proposes a striking common ground through ephemeral dialogue in order to set an agenda for a detailed and contextual debate on ecotheology in (South) Africa. Admittedly, previous conversations on ecotheology and AIKS are widely documented. However, the present essay is anchored on the following two main foci: (1) it examines the interface between ecotheology and Practical Theology and their functionality in the conservation of the natural habitat and (2) it explores the phenomena surrounding ecotheology in (South) Africa from AIKS perspective. In the pursuance of the above slant, it is anticipated that the readership in general and the church in particular will find the insights from the conversation to be beneficial to cause them to participate in the productive sustenance of the ecosystem. The study invites the church to be proactive towards protecting the environment. In this article, a social constructivist theory is employed. It is argued that African indigenous communities have always constructed their own methods toward wildlife conservation.

Keywords

AIKS; church; conservation; ecotheology; ecosystem; education; environment; practical theology; social constructivism

1. Introduction

The present study aims at engaging believing communities to take a proactive approach in environmental conservation. In order to achieve the above thrust, the investigation explores ecotheology, Practical Theology and AIKS and the interface between the aforementioned aspects. The overall aim of the study is to come up with what Orogun and Pillay (2023:1) prefer to describe as "constructive theology". The study seeks to establish how the blending that emerges from such an investigation can constructively be utilised in real life situations affecting the ecosystem. A synthesis of the above three disciplines seeks to investigate the myth that usually punctuated both the media and the pulpit aimed at isolating key factors which should naturally be combined together for the common good of (South) Africa's ecosystem. The impetus of a conversation on the present theme is driven particularly by studies that have carried out an in-depth investigation on elements negatively affecting our planet.[1] It is equally utmost to emphasise the point that AIKS in (South) Africa has a wide range of belief systems that can contribute immensely towards either resolving or shrinking the rudiments that threaten our planet earth. Hence, Kaoma (2017:1–10) warned of "ecological crisis". Factors to be considered which, when combined together contribute to salvaging the current situation threatening our environment, include: the role of believing communities and societies at large. A broader spectrum of ecotheology embraces three complementary elements, namely: environmental stewardship, sustainability, and ethical considerations. The other discipline that deserves the attention of the readership in this study is practical theology which emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living beings and the need to address environmental issues as a moral imperative. While on the one hand, ecotheology draws from religious texts, philosophical discussions, and scientific findings to create a holistic understanding of humanity's place within the natural world, on the other hand practical theology focuses on the practical application of religious beliefs and teachings in

1 Representative examples of previous studies on ecotheology and dangers affecting it include the following: Kanu & Ndubis (2021), Mpofu (2021), Conradie (2020), Gunarathne (2019), Swanepoel (2018), Van Dyk (2017), Kaoma (2017/2013), Williams & Whiting (2016), Dreyer (2014), Ngara & Mangizvo (2013), Troster (2013), and Greenway (2000).

real-life contexts. Phillips (1995:11) seeks to link constructivism with epistemology. Epistemology is the theory of knowledge, the philosophical study of the nature, origin, and scope of knowledge (Moser 2010:1). Phillips (1995:11) maintains that: "Constructivism also deserves praise for bringing epistemological issues to the fore in the discussion of learning and the curriculum". According to Liu & Matthews (2005:387) constructivism comprises the following variants: (1) cognitive constructivism, (2) personal constructivism, (3) radical constructivism, (4) social constructivism and (5) realist constructivism. The present study is anchored on social constructivism as a theory. Social constructivism is used to bring all the ideas together to form a lifeline from the beginning to the end. Social constructivism promotes learner-centred approach in which social interaction is at the core.

2. Theoretical framework

The study employs social constructivism as a theory. Ormerod (2019:18) writes that: "Social constructivism was originally developed by post-revolutionary Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) but came to the fore in the 1980s in educational psychology and practice". Ormerod's opinion draws closer to shedding light on AIKS in which interaction among local people (the environment/the context) enables them not only to understand the phenomena surrounding their indigenous life patterns, but to also enhance their religious belief systems which are usually connected to nature. Mabena, Mokgosi and Ramapela (2021:453) opined that: "A constructivism theory places the child in an active role in the learning process. Learning is not 'swallowed whole' but lesson material is modified and transformed based on the child's cognitive structures, social interaction, previous learning, and environment. Hence, Ballantine and Spade (2014, cited in Dworkin et al. 2013:2) write that: "Symbolic interactionism and social constructionism have been major sources of action theories in the sociology of education, particularly in their focus on interaction". Therefore, there is an interplay between social constructivism and theological eco-praxis in which the latter combines ecotheology, Practical theology and AIKS. It is anticipated that the interconnectedness created by the above three disciplines will summarily proceed to help with findings in order to proffer useful conclusions. Perhaps, when Mpofu

(2021:2) wrote and used the phrase "constructive theology" which he thinks facilitates "the interrelationships between humanity and nature as means to explore African community-based, life-affirming and transformative responses to environmental destruction and enhance *oikodome*", he had both social constructivism and theological eco-praxis in mind.

3. Ecotheology and practical theology

Ecotheology and practical theology are intertwined disciplines. Studies on ecotheology emerged in the 1970s alongside complementary themes such as eco-ethics and eco-praxis (Conradie 2020:1). Reddy (2017) also enlightens readership by saying that: "Environmental education should encompass the development of environmental awareness, knowledge, values, responsibility and action", it is because all over the world "… evidence abounds that environment is in a crisis" (Rinkel & Powers 2019:16). Monumentally, ecotheology delves into the profound relationship between humans, the natural world, and the divine. Yahya Has (2021) proposes that: "If the mankind is to survive on this planet perpetually, the safety of environment and conservation of biodiversity should be their two major concerns". As Mpofu (2021:4) noted: "Transformation requires a praxis that does not alienate the spiritual from the physical". Discussing constructivism in view of practical theology is also in order. Practical theology as a vibrant and dynamic field within the realm of theological studies, focuses on the application of religious beliefs, doctrines, and principles to real–life contexts. Thus, Nwachuku (2014:514, cited in Magezi (2019:117) maintained that "practical theology in Africa is deeply committed to lived religion—living a life of faith—rather than intentional intellectual or disciplinary reflection". Magezi (2019:117) admits that: "practical theology in South Africa has been considerably mapped by many South African Practical theologians". It entails that practical theology encompasses a wide range of subjects, each contributing to the practical outworking of religious convictions. Worship practices, pastoral care, ethics, social justice initiatives, leadership development, and community engagement are all areas of interest within this field. By examining how faith is lived out in these areas, practical theology offers insights into the transformative power of religious beliefs on individuals, communities, and society at large. Practical theology plays a crucial role in

shaping the practice of pastoral care and spiritual formation. It involves the study of human behaviours especially the offering emotional and spiritual support to individuals during times of joy, sorrow, and crisis. Thus, human behaviours "constantly shape their natural and social environments and, in so doing, shape their own future, although not always in ways that they intend or understand" (Bell 2002:33). Practical theology delves into the intricacies of counselling, grief support, and mentorship, emphasizing the importance of empathy, active listening, and theological insight in promoting holistic well-being. Ethics and social justice are central concerns of practical theology. Religious beliefs often contain moral imperatives that call for the pursuit of justice, equality, and compassion. Practical theologians explore how faith communities can actively engage in addressing societal issues such as poverty, discrimination, environmental degradation, and human rights abuses. This engagement extends beyond charity to encompass systemic change and advocacy for transformative justice. Practical theology also examines the role of leadership within faith communities. Effective leadership involves not only spiritual guidance but also the ability to mobilize resources, build inclusive communities, and navigate complex social dynamics. Thus, when Sever (2012:664) writes about "social constructions", the theory of constructivism comes to the fore. By analysing leadership models and strategies, practical theologians contribute to the development of leaders who can facilitate positive change within their communities and beyond. Practical theology bridges the gap between religious ideals and tangible actions, transforming faith from a theoretical construct into a lived experience. By exploring worship practices, pastoral care, ethics, social justice, and leadership, this field enriches our understanding of how faith influences personal and communal life. Thus, Phillips (1995:8) affirms that constructivist theorists "have important educational or social concerns, each of which has a degree of credibility that is independent of the fate of the respective epistemologies". As religious communities navigate the challenges of a rapidly changing world, practical theology remains a vital discipline that empowers individuals and groups to authentically embody their beliefs, making a meaningful impact on the lives of others and the broader society.

4. Religious traditions and preservation of the ecosystem

Before the advent of colonialism and the missionary enterprise in Africa, the rural life of Africans was organised and sacred. The western educational system emerged as a vehicle towards "subjugating and exploiting Africans" (Oba & Eboh 2011:624). To regard Africa as a "dark continent" (Manganyi & Buitendag 2013:1) is to deny indigenous African communities the opportunity to participate in the conservation of the ecosystem, the mother earth which Kapya Kaoma describes as "our common home" (2017:1). For Papu and Verster (2006:190) to state that: "Much of the eighteenth-century missionary activity suffered from serious lack of appreciation of the difference between culture and the content of the Gospel", exposes the sacred institution as the means through which colonialism was rooted and sustained in Africa. Thus, van der Walt (2003:26) wrote about the "conflict between Western individualism and African communalism is a conflict between two idolatries …" African indigenous communities in Africa had their own *modus operandi* of managing the natural habitat because "education existed since African societies became socially organised" (Obanya 1995:4). It is important to note that many Africans who did not attend a formal schooling institution, as in the 21st century, were literate. The study will also problematize the concept of tradition among Africans. Gyekye's (1996:4) assertion is also affirmative for stating the following: "To be born into African society is to be born into a culture that is intensely and pervasively religious and that means, and requires, participating in the religious beliefs and rituals of the community". Ratheiser (2007:460) also maintained Gyekye's opinion by echoing that: "A known culture or tradition of a people remains their identity marker". Similarly, Ogbannaya (1994:2) concurs with Ratheiser to state that: "Personal relationships are characterised, explained and guided by traditional values". When Ogbannaya (1994:8) concludes that African peoples "are surrounded not by things but by beings the metaphysical world is loaded with", is proportional to the correlation that exists between humans and the created order.

Various religious traditions depict that the supernatural (the gods) ordered the universe (the ecosystem). For one to understand indigenous traditions, one has to understand African philosophy. The above trajectory may need to be considered by reflecting on Russell's (1979:14) observation that: "To understand an age or nation, we must understand its philosophy". Due

to a constraint of space, this study will discuss the following religious traditions as representative examples whose teachings on the conservation of the ecosystem is remarkable: Judaism/Christianity, African Traditional Religions (ATR) and AIKS[2].

4.1 Judaism and Christianity

In the Hebrew Bible, we read that: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1.1). God created the "heavens and the earth" (see Gen. 1:1; Ex. 31:17; 2 Kgs. 19:15; 2 Chr. 2:12; Ezr. 5:11; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 33:6; 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; Isa. 37:16; 44:24; Jer. 23:24; 32:17; 33:25; Jon. 1:9). Melchezedek king of Salem (Gen. 14:19) blessed Abram by referring him as the servant "of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth". In his prayer to God, Hezekiah says of God "thou hast made heaven and earth" (2 Kgs. 19:15). Huram king of Tyre blessed "the Lord God of Israel that made heaven and earth" (2 Chr. 2:12). The Psalmist also describes the Lord's works as manifest and that: "In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures" (Ps. 104:24). Isaiah 40:21 uses both "the beginning" and "the foundations of the earth". Ecclesiastes 3:19 reads: "For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same, as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts; for all is vanity" (see also Has 2021:1). In the New Testament, God's creation of the 'heavens and the earth' is also depicted in several places (e.g. Mt. 11:25; 13:35; Lk 10:21; 11:50; Jn. 8:44; 9:32; Acts 14:15; 17:24; Heb. 1:10; 11:3; Rev. 3:14; 4:11; 10: 6; 14:7; 2 Pet. 3:4–5).The fate of the snake is also disseminated by Christian belief systems and the teaching of the biblical text in which the serpent is depicted as evil (e.g. Gen. 3:15).In spite of the teaching of Christianity and biblical text especially on God's creation as "good", Bible readers and believers still find other animal species (e.g., hyena, owl, pig, snake) as "evil" (However, the Hebrew Bible depicts that humans were tasked as caretakers (or stewards) of God's creation (Gen. 1:26). In a previous contribution on the title, "Animals and the Love of God", Greenway (2000) supports the biblical view by writing that an ethic of animal care is the basis of the Genesis creation accounts and the Noahic covenant.

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2 AIKS is discussed separately here because of its significance to this study.

4.2 ATRs

In Africa, creation narratives and creation myths on conservation of nature are also in abundance. From time immemorial, Africans have had their ways of "constructing" knowledge about everyday particularities of life. In fact, among almost all African cultural and religious belief systems, mountains, trees and animals are sacred and associated with the gods. Hence, Ngara and Mangizvo (2013:20) opined that: "Religious beliefs, traditional beliefs, cultural mores and practices play a crucial role for the successful conservation of the environment and specific organisms especially in developing countries". Narratives of religious beliefs bearing conservation of the environment can be found among the Ife and Yoruba of Nigeria, the Shona people of Zimbabwe, the Efe of Congo, the Nyamwezi of Tanzania, and the Basare and Wassa of Ghana, among others. What is common among all these creation myths in Africa is the *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), meaning "that there was nothing except God before He created the universe" (Kanu & Ndubisi 2021:204). For example, the Akan people believed that "God created the world in the order of the heavenly universe, the earth, rivers, waters, plants, animals, man" (Kanu & Ndubisi 2021:204). Within the Nyamwezi creation myth of Tanzania, the gods are angered when a human being is murdered, which causes all the other created order to suffer. Hence, the warning "You have killed your co-wife and thereby caused all men, animals, and plants to die" (Kanu & Ndubisi 2021:203). In fact, indigenous Africans interpret occurrences such as bareness, drought, economic meltdown, famine, miscarriages and wars as curses for neglecting the Mother Earth and spilling of human blood. Among the Shona people of Zimbabwe, "*Musiki* (from kusika: to create), *Musikavanhu* (Creator of mankind) and *Muvumbapasi* (Founder of the land) are the most commonly used terms to indicate the Supreme Being as the Creator" (Daneel 1970:17). According to Daneel (1970:17), terms such as *Mutangakugara* (You came into being first) and *Muwanikwa* (You existed first) depict God as creator among the Shona. Among the Shona people, Mwari is the healer of illnesses and one who cures diseases on both humans and cattle. Mwari also takes away locusts that devours crops and provides rain for good crop yields (Ranger 1967:148). It is taboo to "hunt or poach animals within or running into a sacred forest because they belong to Mwari and the ancestral spirits" (Ngara & Mangizvo 2013:22). Meanwhile, Taylor (1963:85) furnishes our

understanding of the relationship between the creator and the created order in Africa for stating that: "No distinction can be made between sacred and secular, between natural and supernatural, for nature, Man and the Unseen are inseparably involved in one another in a total community". Almost all creation myths in Africa stressed on the conservation of the created order (the universe), from humans to animals to birds. Prohibition against the shedding of blood, veld fires and cutting down of trees is an effort towards serving of justice in Africa. It is therefore critical for Africans to continue adhering to "traditional ecological values that safeguarded sacred Earth" (Kaoma 2017:9).

4.3 AIKS

Traditionally, AIKS is known for being the grease that oils and rails the African continent. According to Gathogo (2022:6), AIKS defines Africa. Africa is not only known for being culturally entrenched, but also for showing that African societies are capable of being procreative and constructive in upholding the God-given nature. However, things seem to be changing downwards rapidly in Africa. There is a negative side on some indigenous (and cultural) practices among African societies. Recently, writer after writer has penned texts on the deforestation rampant in Africa. Some of the causes of the above scenario are influenced by limited land space for urban expansion as well as contested land for agrarian reform. In some African countries (e.g., Zimbabwe and South Africa, see Rugwiji 2019), the conflict and post-independence debate surrounding land ownership have caused and will likely continue to cause human settlement into wildlife conservation areas. As young people we were taught through various mediums (folklore, vernacular literature, etc.) by our elders (especially around a fireplace) and also due to influence of Christian teachings that some weird wild animals and birds were "evil". From these narratives, the implication which gained momentum was the notion that these animal species and birds should not be allowed to live. The list of perceived "wicked" animals and birds which were believed to be mammals used by witches included: hyenas, owls, snakes and bates. Until today in present–day democratic South Africa, a snake is perceived as dangerous and could be stoned to death while still in the bush. In Africa, for anyone to have a snake as a pet (as in some parts of the world, see for example, Kusrin et al.

2021; Purba 2021) is a taboo and one could be deemed a witch. Africans do not necessarily dislike reptiles such as snakes because of snakebites, but more so because of the negative cultural trajectories they attach to these reptiles (e.g. witchcraft). Nevertheless, the above position is not consistent with African belief systems regarding nature. In Africa, the natural world is revered as an embodiment of the sacred.

Meanwhile, the "dominion" of humans over animal species appears to be evermore pronounced move towards extinction (Ngara & Mangizvo 2013:20; Williams & Whiting 2016:179–273). One would then say then that the assignment for stewardship has turned to be a call to extermination instead of environmental conservation. With the rate at which some wildlife species have turned to be endangered species together with veld fires and shortage of land as human population increases accompanied by the quest for expansion, the animal kingdom continues to face an unprecedented crisis. Hence, the voices of ecotheologians should become louder in calling for transformation among societies and local communities by condemning environmental injustice. For Troster (2013:382) examines ecotheology as "the integration of the new scientific perspective on the natural world with traditional theological concepts, producing a new theological paradigm", the participation of local indigenous communities and AIKS come to the fore. In fact, it can further be argued that for indigenous Africans to be regarded as anti-wildlife conservation may not be authenticated because almost all African cultures derive their linkages with animals and birds through totems such as baboons, lions, buffalo, hawks/eagles, fish, and zebra, among others. Individuals will regard it as a taboo to slaughter and feast the animal/mammal from which they derive their totem (Ngara & Mangizvo 2013:22). In fact, land use and ecological conservation in Africa hinges on the relationship with elders and the ancestors. The elders (esp. chiefs) play a critical role in the preservation of the natural habitat. Kaoma (2013:32) explained it explicitly for annunciating that: "The ancestors' lasting relationship with the lands they founded made them standards of morality. They are therefore obliged to intervene in any crisis that threatens their lands". Meanwhile, reports of conservation of the natural habitat were also heard of some individuals who were banned from rural communities by village chiefs after the culprits used some poisonous herbs to suffocate fish in the local river (see for example, "killing animals by poisoning them",

Patel 2017:65–66). According to local rural communities, such kind of fishing is condemned because it tends to kill even the baby fish which the fishermen would not carry away as part of the catch. Elsewhere, deaths of animals (including hundreds of elephants) that died after drinking from a poisoned waterhole in some SADC countries were widely condemned (Swanepoel 2018:1–22). Whether the culprits were apprehended remains to be known. Sagoff (1984:303) wrote that: "The ways in which creatures in nature die are typically violent: predation, starvation, disease, parasitism, cold …" However, Sagoff left without mentioning other threats to wildlife such as poaching and the so-called trophy hunting involving both local communities and professional hunting (Willem, Leslie & Wilkinson 2019:11). Meanwhile, "There is a big campaign and a huge investment in saving the rhino" (Cezula & Modise 2020:17).

5. The interface between ecotheology, practical theology and AIKS

The interface between ecotheology, practical theology and AIKS is a dynamic and complex space where religious beliefs, ethical considerations, environmental concerns, and cultural perspectives converge. Friedrich Max Muller affirmed that, "He who knows one religion knows none" (Almirzanah 2021:2). The affirmation that the world is made up of various religious groups makes individuals appreciate the uniqueness of other cultural contexts other than their own. The prevalence of various religious groups is referred to in scholarship as "religious plurality". According to Almirzanah (2021:1), "Plurality of religion is not only about the historical past but also about the current reality". It is presaged that the intersection between religions offers opportunities for dialogue and collaboration between religious communities, scholars, and indigenous leaders. Mpofu (2021:2) also opined that: "… Justice is not just a matter of peace and reconciliation amongst human beings – but it is also the liberation and restoration of the relationship between humanity and the created order of the universe". Practical theologians engage in critical reflection on religious practices, seeking to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of faith in addressing contemporary societal issues. AIKS refer to the unique and holistic ways of understanding the worlds that are held by indigenous communities around the globe. It is probable that when the constructivist

Cakir (2008:197) spoke about the "way of seeing the world", he might have conceptualised local communities and their perceptions regarding the ecosystem. Indigenous systems encompass traditional beliefs, practices, ecological knowledge, spirituality, and ways of relating to the land and environment. AIKS is often deeply rooted in oral traditions and is passed down through generations. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of humans with nature and highlights the importance of sustainability and harmony with the environment. Previously in this study, critical factors were highlighted as impediments to interconnectedness between humans and nature. This disappearance of interconnectedness (i.e., interface) negatively influences the conservation of the ecosystem. In this section, I will stress on these factors once more to illustrate their importance for this research. First, *African cultural practices*. Local communities are also reportedly fond of using the remains from the animal carcasses as by-products (e.g., born necklaces, skin for beating drums and sitting mats, horns as trumpets, etc.). Some of the animal by-products are used for medicinal potency in Africa. Still to this day, there are rural communities whose life is sustained by tracking down/poaching wildlife (Ngara & Mangizvo 2013:22). The coming of industrialization and the fourth industrial revolution, accompanied by population growth and urbanization, have influenced the decline on the African uses of the natural habitat for survival (Gunarathne 2019:142). However, there is need for the African cultural practices to be regularised. The approaches may include teaching on both national and domestic beneficiations derived from protecting and preserving the ecosystem. In addition, newly settled communal farmers in areas close to game reserves not only set up snares to catch game, but also fell and utilize timber from the same natural habitat for various domestic purposes. In my view, education on conservation of the ecosystem should be intensified among rural communities if we can save anything that is left of the natural habitat (see Masoga 2019:1–11). Preservation of the natural environment must also include education against veld fires. Second, *uneven political environment*. A dialogue on the conservation of the environment with local communities is a political debate about land and land ownership. The question that comes to mind is: Whose land is it? Historical imbalances etched by colonialism and apartheid in Africa have continued to play a negative part in both the management and sustenance of the environment. Much of the vast pieces of land (including the national parks and game reserves) are associated

with colonialism in which beneficiaries of apartheid claimed absolute ownership, and in the process exclusively established themselves into a capitalist society (Francis 2017:144). For example, indigenous Africans who lost productive pieces of land when apartheid emerged in (South) Africa know very well the boundaries of their pieces of land they occupy which they can manage and sustain without any challenge. To invite them to take part in the sustenance of the natural habitat is asking them to participate in a program that does not reward them in the end. According to indigenous Africans, white people own the land, and the land belongs to the white people. However, although the "office of the chief is a colonial creation" (Kaoma 2017:4), the chief remained the custodian in conservation of the environment. Even in post-apartheid South Africa, chiefs continue to pay a central role by maintaining the sacredness of the flora and fauna. Nevertheless, the alleged neglect of the environment in some places (e.g., farms) is mudded by insignificant implication and irrelevant gradation because local communities do not own land in the first place. Thus, a constructivist consciousness seeks to regenerate a "sustainable knowledge-based society" (Spangenberg et al, 2002:85–95). Because knowledge is power, there is need for continued awareness programmes aimed educating local communities on the practical benefits derived from environmental conservation at both local and national levels. Third, *theological eco-praxis*. The church is usually preoccupied with sermons on eternity and very little on the environment. Thus, van Dyk (2017:835) postulates that: "The Bible has very little (if anything) to say on ecological and conservation matters". Haw's (2021:1) analysis presents a response to van Dyk's position above by proposing pursuit of justice, the care of creation and restoration of all things in heaven and earth as critical parts of co-existence. Haw's observation derives from apostle Paul's teaching in Colossians 1:20. By "care of creation", Haw sees the relevance and participation of the church in the conservation of the ecosystem including climate change. In the same vein, Conradie (2020:9) expands the above view by writing that: "We need to reflect on God's mission in the world, also in seeking common ground through dialogue with other living faiths and indeed with all other sectors of society, including government, business and industry …" Thus, Phillips' (1995:5–12) constructivist concept seeks to invite the church to be conscious of and orient itself towards voluntary participation in the upkeep of the ecosystem. Study has shown that the negative impact of

carbon dioxide emissions to climate change cannot be taken for granted. Hence, Wang et al. (2020) proposes that ethnic diversity can play a positive role in decreasing carbon dioxide emissions. In my view, Haw's analysis is opposed to biblical scholars who expend their energies on writing and less on praxis. Therefore, a motion towards actualising theology in view of the ecosystem is desirable.

6. Conclusion

The study employed a constructivist theory to discuss that ecotheology, practical theology, and AIKS share common themes and values that bind them together. It explored the sacredness of nature, the call for responsible stewardship, human/community participation and a commitment to justice resonate across these disciplines. Some religious traditions and their efforts in the conservation of the natural habitat were discussed. For example, indigenous traditions often view the environment as inherently spiritual, paralleling ecotheological viewpoints that emphasize the divinity inherent in all of creation. Similarly, the practical implementation of religious principles advocated by practical theology aligns with indigenous perspectives on ethical living and respectful relationships with the land. At the interface of these disciplines, sacred spaces and rituals take on deeper meanings. It was shown that ecotheology inspires the recognition of the natural world as a sacred space, inviting reflection, prayer, and connection with the divine. Practical theology enhances this notion by urging the embodiment of faith through rituals that not only honour spiritual beliefs but also promote ethical behaviour and ecological responsibility. AIKS infuse these practices with culturally rooted rituals that celebrate the interdependence of humans, nature, and the sacred. The interface also fosters a robust framework for environmental ethics and responsibility. Ecotheology emphasizes the moral imperative of caring for the earth, recognizing humanity's role as stewards. AIKS, deeply grounded in sustainable practices and an inherent respect for the land, offer valuable insights that enrich ethical discussions and provide guidance for harmonious coexistence. Central to this interface is the concept of interconnectedness. Ecotheology highlights the intricate web of life, acknowledging the interconnected relationships that shape the Earth's ecosystems. AIKS embody this interconnected worldview, where humans

are regarded as integral parts of a larger cosmic tapestry. Practical theology bridges these perspectives, encouraging a holistic understanding of humanity's place within the environment and affirming the importance of nurturing the well-being of all creation. The interface between ecotheology, practical theology, and AIKS is a transformative junction where faith, action, and cultural heritage converge. This intersection invites us to re-evaluate our relationships with the earth, our fellow beings, and the divine. By integrating these perspectives, we cultivate a holistic understanding that inspires ethical choices, sustainable practices, and a profound sense of interconnectedness.

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