

Nkonge (2016:96) that there is therefore a connection between environmental degradation, poverty and peace. Unfortunately this position has not been given much attention by Congolese theologians thus the necessity of an Congolese *Oikothology* for the DRC (Baltahazar 2024). The reality is that the Church also has mixed feelings about the interrelationship between environment (natural resources and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, injustice, poverty, and peace and reconciliation) for two reasons: the first is the Church's ignorance about care for the environment as a Biblical mandate and global issue. As a result, the environment is abused, raped and exploited by human beings in the pretext of dominion over all creation. As noted by Pope Francis, it is sad that human beings have quite often misunderstand this "dominion" to mean "to rule over", "lord over" or "dominating" the creation (Francis 2015:1). The right of dominion rather means to contribute to and enhance the harmony and beauty of the earth, our *Oikos/DRC* (Wilson 1991:203). The second reason is lack of "home" ethics as John Paul II (1979) warns, human beings frequently seem to see no other meaning in their natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption. However, as a moral value to knowledge and society, it is anticipated that this research helps to deconstruct how "humanity" has taken nature today (i.e. the anthropocentric attitude to nature). In chapter five we developed the central place of human beings in God's creation, where they are God's vice-gerents. They were created to have dominion over all other creatures (Genesis 1:28). Sadly human beings have abdicated their responsibility of caring for the earth, our *Oikos/DRC* and they have become its "ruler", "master", etc where they have mercilessly and violently robbed and raped it as demonstrated in chapter six. As results, Congolese die, displacement, nature groans in pain (Romans 8). Mwikamba possibly clarifies the situation well by his elucidation that "the mother earth has been mutilated, injured and hurt" (Mwikamba 1993:16). From this discussion, we note that traditional African Views of reconciliation is opposed to the Western understanding worldview which objectifies and commodifies nature, here the need for us to integrate African Ethics of *Ubuntu* and Congolese *Oikothology* for the DRC (Baltahazar 2024) to deconstruct this mentality. This allows us space to appreciate valuable contribution which this fusion makes to the promotion of economic justice, good governance, justice, peace and reconciliation among the inhabitants of the *Oikos/DRC*. The fusion of the values of African *Oikothology* for the DRC, African Views of Reconciliation, and African Ethics of *Ubuntu* in our opinion, is considered Congolese's gift to Africa, humanity and DRC as Congolese grapples with injustices, leadership and bad governance, natural resources and conflicts, poverty, peace and reconciliation challenges. It is therefore a great asset waiting to be harnessed.

7.4.2. The model of Preferential Option for the poor and marginalized in the DRC

The preferential option for the poor and marginalized is the mission of Jesus when he takes the place of people who are oppressed or who are suffering for a multitude of reasons (Luke 4:18-22; 6:20-26; 7:20-22; 14:7-14; Matthew 6:9-13). This mission remains a challenge for the Church today in the DRC. Instead of taking sides with the poor and marginalized of the Northern and South Kivus provinces of the DRC, the Protestant Church in the DRC is accused of siding with the government, the powers that be, and the rich, in the words of Vicencio:

"Both these societies were driven by an understanding of God who takes sides with the poor and destitute (Leviticus 25), with those whose basic needs are not satisfied (Matthew 25:32), with the empowerment of the weak and judgement of the strong"(Vicencio 1995:68).

Looking at the concept of the Church being neutral into which many take refuge, Vicencio points out that,

“Differently stated, the Biblical God is never revealed in a neutral place (whether in the mind of intellectuals or among the counsellors of the Pharaohs or high priests), but among the slaves (Exodus), the peasants farmers (Amos), the widows and orphans in New Testament (Vicencio 1995:62-70).

Therefore, the Congolese Church needs to find out whether the interests of the poor are considered in all the socio-political and economic contexts of the country. It is the Church’s role to keep informed about the needs, aspirations and frustrations of the poor and marginalized so that the Church may speak out and act compassionately in respect of their plight. The Church has to offer space to those who are marginalized in the entire country, especially Northern and South Kivus provinces of the DRC. In that way the Church may become once again the voice of the voiceless in the DRC.

7.4.3. Prophetic theology for the Church in the DRC

A prophetic theology understands Congolese *Oikothology* for the DRC (Baltahazar 2024) because it engages with the socio-economics and politics of the country. A prophetic theology accepts the need to confront the status quo, to confront present day Pharaohs and empires. Thus, the prophetic role of the Church in the DRC must seek to expose the causes of the social, economic, political and spiritual ills in the country and insist that these are dealt with. The prophetic theology helps to understand life in its holistic dimensions. Each aspect of life affects life in its entirety. Social situations may impact spiritual states of being. In a prophetic ministry, any earthy human social arrangement is welcome, but it also seeks to achieve what is perceived as the reign of God on earth: “Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). The pastoral ministry and the conscientization of the Church as regard the failing of government and state will lead to the Church participating in governance and playing a role for the well-being of the Congolese people and in their struggle for justice as demonstrated in chapters four and six. Concerning the struggle for justice, I am of the same view as De Gruchy in his statement:

The struggle for justice (with the poor) is not for the sake of confrontation, even though that may often be the immediate, penultimate, and necessary effect. Injustice (and corruption against the poor) and those who perpetrate it must be confronted with the claims of justice and truth, the demands of the gospel. This is all for the sake of reconciliation (justice, democracy, good governance, service delivery) and eradication of poverty” (De Gruchy 1988:168).

7.4.4. Theology on Social Justice in the DRC

In Brueggemann’s understanding of social justice, it is of crucial importance to consider the common good and the hope for a better future for the DRC.

Taking account of these concerns tends to promote socio-*equilibria* and provision for the needy and marginalized in a process that by Brueggemann (2010:38-44) is called the “economy-with-neighbourhood”. The concept of justice is then understood to include a system of distribution that ensures all members of society of dignified living as they have sufficient access to resources and goods.

Righteousness may involve intervention in social affairs to rehabilitate society, promote social well-being and respond to social grievances as demonstrated in chapters four and six.

The Pharaonic exploitation (in chapter six) as described in the Exodus narrative needed a dreamer such as Moses who was able to imagine a world outside the imperial reality, to act and to make that world a reality. Dreamers can challenge powers as, in the words of Brueggemann; they are able to imagine a new future and a different world. Thus, the Church of the DRC must bring a message of hope as such:

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Therefore, this could be appreciated given the population of the Church in the DRC. In addition to the advantage of its population, if the Church could use its “influence” and “lobbying strategy” as demonstrated in chapter four to engage in the current natural resources and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, injustice, corruption, impunity, poverty and peace and reconciliation issues the same way it had engaged in peacebuilding processes, we are left without doubt that it would certainly bring about the needed synergy to the search for solutions to the challenges of socio-economic, and political problems in the DRC. With this in mind, let us turn to Congolese *Oikothology* as theology of the DRC.

7.4.5. Congolese *Oikothology* as Theological Ethical Model of the DRC

The term “*Oikothology*”, as demonstrated in chapters one and two was first suggested in the early years of this century to assist the Church better meet the challenges of the “double crisis” of poverty and environmental degradation. For example, Warmback (2007) and Alokwu (2009) proposed *Oikothology* as a way of helping in both the preservation of the environment and the eradication of poverty. Without doubt poverty and environmental degradation are the main setbacks to human development today and what is very clear is that they are intrinsically linked. That is why while seeing the earth as a global household, *Oikothology* has been proposed as an effective way of helping us integrate environmental concerns with poverty eradication (Warmback 2007:100).

In this study, while retaining poverty eradication and environmental degradation as the main concerns, I look at the situation in a particular sense and suggest Congolese *Oikothology* for the DRC (Baltahazar 2024). Congolese *Oikothology* for the DRC (Baltahazar 2024) is suggested as modern theological trend in the DRC focusing on the DRC as the home/household/*Oikos* of Congolese as demonstrated in chapter six. It aims at addressing the challenges facing the DRC today in all perspectives whether religious, social, economic, political (Nkonge 2016:93). In doing this I do not refute that DRC is part of the global village (earth), but I am suggesting that Congolese must start to see DRC as their home/*Oikos* which they must collectively develop. It is true that poverty and environmental crisis (natural resources and conflicts, justice, leadership and bad governance, corruption, injustices, impunity, and poverty and peace and reconciliation) are challenges that have really hampered the development of the DRC, but there are many other vices which we cannot ignore in our theological reflection as they risk disintegrating the entire country which is our home. The analogy of the home is vital because as Douglas Meeks puts it,

Home is where everyone knows your name. Home is where you count on being confronted, forgiven, loved and cared for. Home is where there is a place for you at table. And, finally home is where you can count on sharing what is on the table (Meeks 1989:37).

Therefore at home, as demonstrated in chapter five resources are shared equally, the welfare of all members is considered, all members are treated with respect, justice is applied fairly, peace and reconciliation are maintained. Unfortunately, the World Bank denotes that the DRC is a clear example of a country in which justice and equity are absent, and whose population is not able to benefit from the potential wealth of their natural resources that abound in its land (World Bank 2013:96). Thus, the following issues which affect our home/DRC call for the attention of all of us include:

7.4.5.1. Conflicts Viewed from Congolese *Oikothology*

In his construction of an *Oikothology* Warmback (2007:102) argues that the *Oikos* metaphor helps illuminate the connection between the concern for the environment degradation leads to poverty. But the problem does not stop here. Congolese *Oikothology* for the DRC (Baltahazar 2024) goes on by declaring that when people destroy the environment or when there is concern of resources-minerals and conflicts in the Northern and South Kivus provinces of the DRC as demonstrated in chapters three and six, there is hunger, poverty, and there is no peace. There is therefore a connection between environmental degradation (natural resources and conflicts, poverty and peace). Unfortunately this standpoint has not been given much attention by Congolese theologians thus the necessity of a Congolese *Oikothology* for the DRC (Baltahazar 2024). Although Philip Ndegwa is not suggesting any theology to address this problem as I do here, he laments that the ways in which environmental crisis in DRC represents a threat to peace have not been given sufficient attention, but they are related to the environmental aspects of poverty and underdevelopment (Ndegwa 1985:118). The late Professor Wangari Maathai, the Nobel peace winner also saw the link between environment, poverty and peace. She then advised that to reduce conflicts and poverty, and thereby increase quality of life in the DRC, we have to protect the environment (Maathai 2016:9).

This is important because DRC is a home of conflicts, as demonstrated in chapters three and six where some Congolese of Northern and South Kivus provinces have not known peace over centuries.

The DRC is one of the world's richest countries with respect to its natural resources but still among the poorest countries based on their GDP per capita. According to Turner (2013:13), these natural resources include: gold, copper, tin, columbium, cobalt, uranium, zinc, timber, precious stones and oil. The total volume of these natural resources should at least provide the state with huge revenues for redistribution among the citizens. Yet, the state has been in constant conflict since the first Congo war in 1996, both external and internal which has resulted in at least 4 million deaths and causing political instability and decreases in financial development (Kisangani 2012:215). Basically, the DRC's natural resources include minerals which are required in assembling different electronic gadgets, for examples, tablets, cell phones, laptops and other electronic devices. However, many of these minerals are called conflict-minerals, which are usually minerals that are mined in war regions (Collier 2000:538). For instance, global companies such as Apple, Google, Intel, have revealed that there might be conflict-minerals in their products (Collier 2000:538). This automatically makes these global companies part of the DRC conflict too. DRC's natural resources therefore become the object of interest by these companies and the role of the private sector has to be taken into consideration. It is

clear that the global companies make profits with the electronic devices they get from the DRC, and, in which they require the DRC's minerals, mainly because the demand for the devices also increases globally. These resources are often gotten from conflict regions, such as eastern, northern, south Kivus and Kasai provinces of the DRC, and fund corrupt individuals and rebel groups in the government and army (Kisangani 2012:369). The country's resources play a part in sustaining the wars because of the financial benefits the rebels groups acquire from them (Autesserre 2010:62). The United Nations states that the situation in the DRC is to a great extent maintained by the funds the actors get by looting and exploiting the natural resources, mainly minerals in the regions that are under their control. The extraction of these resources made the war "an extremely lucrative business" (UN 2001:6). Thus, the DRC remains quite unstable after the violent conflicts, especially the eastern, northern and south Kivus provinces of the country. Even though the second war in the country ended in 2003, rebel groups in these controlled parts of the country have been carrying rebellions and attacks. Therefore, after years of severe hardship and a decade of violent conflicts, in which an estimated 10 million Congolese died (Freedom House 2006:74) and between 2 and 3 million persons were internally displaced (IDPs), poverty increased and access to basic services deteriorated as demonstrated in chapters three and six. Therefore, 16 million people are suffering from hunger and an estimated 1000 people continue to die each day from hunger, diseases, and other causes of instability (DRC PRSP 2006:165). However, DRC's governmental institutions, as demonstrated in chapter three are extremely weak, corruption is widespread (World Bank 2003:v) and eastern, north and south Kivus provinces of the DRC are still experiencing violent conflicts and wars.

The historical backdrop of the DRC can easily be described as one of exploitation of natural resources and violent conflicts. Deibert argues that because of its colonial history, the DRC turned into a seriously distorted state and that the conflicts which have occurred in the country are because of weak governance and individuals that are advancing their own economic and political interests (Deibert 2013:86). In addition, Olivier and Atmore (2001:187) argue that the history of the DRC has been that of a victim of, invasions, cruel destructions and displacement of rural communities, slaving wars, slave raids, frontier wars, forced labour, predatory economic activities such as, smuggling, and royal monopoly of resources. This mostly goes with outlandish human right violation with impunity. Furthermore, rape, mutilation, and ransacking of civilians which Dummett (2004:16) calls a "legalized robbery enforced by violence" is a key note in the history of conflict in the DRC. For instance, Paul Collier's research at the World Bank on the economic cause of civil war submits that primary commodity exports increase the risk of conflict by four routes:

- Financing rebels;
- Worsening corruption;
- Increasing the incentive for secession; and
- Increasing exposure to vulnerability shocks (Collier 2000:40).

Therefore, theology in the DRC has to bring answers to the current challenges by emphasizing the need to promote economic justice, good governance, peace and reconciliation (Kobia 1993:234), hence building a sustainable society (Kobia 1993:241). Therefore, Congolese *Oikothology* for the DRC (Baltahazar 2024) is reconstructed to enable the Church in DRC to engage with both the ecological and the economic aspects of natural resources by emphasizing the need for the promotion of economic justice, leadership and good governance, justice, poverty alleviation, peace and reconciliation among

the inhabitants of the DRC, which is our home. With this in mind, let us turn to the learning from traditional Congolese concept of home.

7.4.5.2. Learning from Traditional Congolese concept of a “Home”

There is a lot we can learn from the traditional Congolese concept of a home/*Oikos*/DRC. A Congolese home is inhabited by what anthropologists regard to as “an extended family”, whose members include children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters, cousins, departed relatives (Ancestors and living dead) and the unborn (Mbiti 1990:105). These members are mutually joined to each other to the extent that an individual can only say that “I am related therefore I exist” (Nkonge 2004:63). Of particular importance is how these members relate to each other, Each member has obligatory duties and responsibilities towards other members of the family (Mbiti 1975:173), and this is essential in that as Aguedze (1990:146) denotes, where every member is conscious of his/her responsibility, there is not much ado about difficulties and problems. Thus courtesy to one another is enforced even among children. At home it is expected that they will learn to tell the truth, to help other people, to be honest, generous, hospitable, considerate, friendly and so on (Mbiti 1975:177). Peace, harmony and love therefore mark family members’ department towards one another (Aguedze 1990:138).

This is an important idea to consider in Congolese *Oikothology*. Since DRC/home is a place where justice, peace and reconciliation should prevail. DRC/home should borrow the same so that DRC becomes a peaceful, harmonious and lovely home for all of us. If this is the case, the current conflicts in the DRC will be the thing of the past. Ademoyo (2015:115) observes that prior to the advent of the expatriates in the DRC; Congolese people had well established mechanisms for conflict management, peacemaking, peace education, peacebuilding, and conflict prevention. For example among the Bembe of the South Kivu DRC, the role of the *Bahocu* (Council of Elders) was not only to resolve conflicts but also to anticipate and arrest conflicts (Bernadi 1959:40). Congolese were very much aware that conflicts can occur, but whenever they occurred families and neighbours came together to resolve them (Ademoyo 2015:105). This was in realization that they needed a happy home (Aguedze 1990:67).

7.4.5.3. Poverty Viewed from Congolese *Oikothology*

Any theological reflection in the DRC today cannot ignore the challenge of poverty in which risks disintegrating our home as demonstrated in chapter three. Although many Congolese governments as they assume power always promise to fight this scourge, poverty remains the great enemy to humanity in the DRC. Current poverty is in fact the result of increased injustice and the not equitable distribution of resources as demonstrated in chapters one, two and three. It is frequently in the name of justice that many countries become rich to the disadvantage of others whose population descend into a situation of indescribable misery as those of Northern and South Kivus provinces of the DRC demonstrated in chapter six. The study suggests that realities of living in poverty alongside social institutions which often create and perpetuate the circumstances of injustice are closely related.

When Mugambi (1989b:41) lists the dehumanizing situation in the DRC he puts poverty as number one. In the DRC for example, a major Participatory Poverty Analysis (PPA) was undertaken from October to March 2005, under the supervision of the ministry of planning. The PPA project was directed by the technical committee responsible for the design and implementation of the country's national Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS).

In 2004, the government of the DRC decided to investigate poverty in the country, by creating a space for voices of ordinary citizens, asking some 35. 750 Congolese citizens to furnish their views on poverty. It was a comprehensive and participatory poverty analysis, carried out through a process of consultations were conducted in 470 Congolese villages and districts across 14 of the 145 territories in the DRC, in the administrative centres of 11 provinces, as well as during a national workshop held at Kisantu in the Bas-Congo province from May 30 to June 4, 2005. All these consultations helped to identify priority issues relating to poverty for the whole nation (Poverty, Insecurity and Exclusion in the DRC: PIE DRC 2006:4).

Poverty is one of the factors which is affecting 80 million of Congolese people in their daily lives and which has reached significantly high levels and led to intensive suffering. To help eradicate this phenomenon, one should break with previous methods of working based on top-down planning (Autesserre 2010:210). Representatives of local communities, non-governmental organizations, civil society, and the private sector throughout the country were consulted through the PPA, and were asked to contribute their own ideas and analyses regarding the state of poverty in the country, and to identify ways and means of improving living conditions in poor communities. It has been noted that PPA undertaken in 2006 was a valuable tool that provided qualitative data as well as a problem analysis for the whole country. The project was achieved through a process of reinitiating a long overdue dialogue between the state and its citizens. According to the PPA, in the DRC, the state of poverty can be understood in terms of some key characteristics, as demonstrated in chapter three, namely:

- ✓ Basic needs that are unmet;
- ✓ The decline of productive activities;
- ✓ The lack of security and peace; and
- ✓ A culture of impunity that leads to further corruption and greater injustice and exclusion (PIE DRC 2006:6-8).

Congolese *Oikothology*, therefore, is a challenge for us to protect our common home. It includes a concern to bring the whole Congolese family together to seek a sustainable and integral development. As we do this there is an assurance that we are not alone in this endeavour. Congolese *Oikothology* is based on the fact that humanity has the ability to work together (as members of the same family) in building our *Oikos*, our common home/DRC.

Thus, as said earlier, when the word *Oikothology* is used one has to see the interrelation between economy, ecology and ecumenics in the same *Oikos*/household/home. In this case, the DRC is our *Oikos* as demonstrated in chapter six. In this home, there is good utilization and management of resources which are equally shared among the inhabitants (economy), the inhabitants (Congolese) form a single unified family (ecumenics) and there is an unrelenting effort to care for the creation upon which the inhabitants descend for survival (ecology). On this regard, proper utilization of

resources, unity among people and environmental conservation become crucial components of *Oikotheology*.

What is however saddening is the fact that DRC's poverty is anthropological poverty (Soede 2011:185). It is manmade thus causing one to doubt about human ability to solve natural resources and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, injustice, corruption, impunity and poverty problems or doubt whether Congolese can't deal with anthropological issues.

Poverty is therefore a vice which Congolese *Oikotheology* (Baltahazar 2024) must address. This is because there is a relationship between poverty, exploitation and oppression (Mugambi 1989a:35). Although this issue has been tackled by the previous theologies in Africa notably liberation theology, African theology and the theology of Reconstruction, Congolese *Oikotheology* (Baltahazar 2024) arises from the need of realizing that God's words to the Israelites can help as we think of the kind of a home we require in the DRC: "However, there should be no poor among you (Congolese), for in the *Oikos*/DRC the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, He will richly bless you" (Deuteronomy 15:4).

Therefore, this study tries to fill the gaps to show that there is connection between natural resources and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, injustice, corruption, impunity, poverty, and peace and reconciliation among the inhabitants of the DRC and the Church has a great role to play in this context. In view of the critical situation that confronts the DRC, the study asks **the main research question** *whether structural and institutional problems have exacerbated environmental problems, conflicts, leadership and bad governance, corruption, and poverty in DRC*. Thus, *how can the gospel become credible and relevant to Africans in the midst of the socio-economic, political and cultural changes that have ravaged our communities?* With this in mind, let us turn to the understanding of natural resources in the DRC.

7.4.5.4. An Analysis of the challenges related to Natural Resources in the DRC

The term "environment" is understood in a broad, yet specific way. It is used as a term that embraces specifically two dimensions – "the word of nature" or "the biophysical environment", and the "economic environment" which looks at access to and distribution of this aspect of the environment. The former dimension is referred to in this study as "ecology" and the latter aspect as "economy" (Warmback 2007:100).

The use of the term environment is problematic in the DRC context. Our history, especially from colonial era, independence, up to post-conflict has left us with a twisted understanding of this term. Mabogunje (1995:1) observes that DRC suffers from serious environmental problems (natural resources and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, injustice, corruption, and poverty), yet efforts to deal with these problems have been handicapped by a real failure to understand their nature and remedies. Although Akin Mabogunje is not trying to argue that Congolese are not wise people, he feels that they are highly irresponsible toward the environment and look at the international community to save them from the current environmental crisis. In contrast, Pope Francis urged the international community to give the DRC country its autonomy while not turning a blind eye to exploitation and violence. He said: "Hands off the DRC"! "Hands off Africa! Stop chocking DRC: DRC is not a mine to be stripped or a terrain to be plundered" (Pope Francis, DRC January 2023).

This was studied by Katunga Murhula and Laudati who observed that natural resources abundance, or rather; resource dependence has been singled out as an important factor and characteristic of the conflict in the DRC. Nkonge points out that protecting the environment of sub-Saharan Africa, especially of the DRC is an issue that needs to be re-examined more carefully and incorporated into an overall strategy of sustainable economic development. The wealth of the DRC depends on our ability to conserve and manage our environment well (FAO 2013:6).

Therefore, the fusion of prophetic theology of social justice, African Ethics of *Ubuntu*, African Views of Reconciliation, and Congolese *Oikothology* for the DRC is a challenge for us to protect our common home and promote economic justice, good governance, justice, peace and reconciliation in our *Oikos*. It includes a concern to bring all Congolese together to seek a sustainable and integral development. This study argues that Congolese *Oikothology* for the DRC is based on the fact that Congolese have the ability to work together (as members of the same family) in building our *Oikos*, our common home as demonstrated in chapter six.

7.4.5.5 The Interplay among the Church, Environment, Ecology, and Economy in the DRC

Church's engagement in a theology that deals with the environment (natural resources and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, injustice, corruption, impunity, poverty, peace and reconciliation as demonstrated in chapters two and four, needs a crucial consideration since it is believed that all these are linked (Maathai2014:2).The environment provides the resources for human sustenance but unfortunately the activities of both the poor and the rich impact negatively on the ecosystem. This point is well documented in chapters two and four. Furthermore, the dominant economic paradigm which offers to "solve" the problem of poverty has unfortunately become the one that is also responsible for much of our current environmental crisis, conflicts, corruption, bad governance and injustices, impunity, and poverty. This statement further underscores the importance of the concept of Congolese *Oikothology* for the DRC, one that deals with the role of the Church in social and economic justice, leadership and good governance, corruption, injustice, poverty, peace and reconciliation issues by taking cognizance of the relationship between ecology and economy. If the problem of leadership and bad governance, injustice, corruption, impunity, peace and poverty is going to be addressed effectively, the current twisted relationship between ecology and economy will have to be straightened in such a way that economy activities do not suffocate ecological activities and survival. This is precisely the emphasis of Congolese *Oikothology* for the DRC. Natural resources exploitation and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, injustice, corruption, poverty are inextricably linked; and caring for the environment and promoting economic justice, good governance, peace and reconciliation are therefore a *sine-qua-non* for economic development and poverty eradication in the DRC. With this in mind, let us turn to practical actions.

7.5. Practical Actions

This section moves from theory to practices. It explores good governance of the mining sector as Church's Engagement model in the DRC; and Towards Congolese *Oikothology* for a better DRC or Common Good and bad good in the DRC.

7.5.1. Effective Governance of the mining sector as Church's Engagement Model in the DRC

The Catholic Church in the DRC has always been at the forefront of social and political engagement as demonstrated in chapter four, and the impact of extractive industries on conflicts has been a major concern since early 2000s. As the Congolese bishops noted in 2007, their action on mining arises from the fact that extractive industries are a source of great wealth for some while being a source of great harm for many:

Instead of contributing to the development of our country and benefiting our people, minerals, oil, and the forest have become causes of our misfortune. How do we take the fact that our fellow citizens, without consideration or compensation, are stripped of their land ...? Is it permissible for Congolese workers to be treated without regard for their rights and human dignity? (CENCO 2007:10).

The Jesuit Center of Study and Social Action (CEPAS: online) took the lead on this issue. In 2006, it initiated a forum of civil society organizations to reflect on good governance of natural resources. This forum led to a campaign, initiated in March 2007 by DRC civil society groups and a coalition of international NGOs, calling for a revision of mining contracts extremely unfavourable to the DRC. A press release from the coalition stated: “The NGOs are calling on the Congolese government and its international partners to renegotiate, revoke, or cancel the contracts inherited from the war and the transition in order to ensure that the Congolese people derive a fair share from the benefits of the exploitation of the country’s mineral wealth” (A Fair Share for Congo/Une part equitable pour le Congo 2007:26). The campaign requested assurance of transparency, from the government and the World Bank, for past mining contracts. Specifically, it asked that the Congolese government establish an independent mechanism for monitoring the execution of contracts; and enshrine conditions for transparent and equitable management of mineral resources in the future (Minani 2007:517).

To anticipate the results of such an exercise, CEPAS engaged mining evaluation experts, including former managers of Gecamines, to study the clauses of twelve contracts signed between the government and mining companies (Republique Democratique du Congo re-visitation des contrats miniers 2007). They came to the conclusion that the review of the mining contracts was necessary so as to correct violations of the Mining Code, revive the economy, and improve the socio-economic condition of Congolese citizens. This initiative laid a foundation for the government to revisit sixty-one contracts signed during the war. The Catholic bishops’ conference of the DRC (CENCO) and CEPAS were invited to observe the process. At the end, the Ministry of Mines of the DRC (2019) entrusted publication of the official government report to CEPAS. Unfortunately, when the time came to actually renegotiate contracts, it was done exclusively between the government and mining companies with no outside experts or observers. And because of confidentiality language included in the contracts, no details were made public.

Around this time, ecclesial leaders began focusing more on issues of mining. In 2007, the Assembly of Bishops of the Ecclesiastical Province of Lubumbashi, a group of pastors in Katanga, the main mining province of the DRC, wrote a pastoral letter that applied elements of the Church’s social doctrine to governance of extractive industries. This letter strongly condemned the fact that “the more investors ... invade Katanga, the more poverty, unemployment, and social problems increase” (CENCO 2007:32). It affirmed the fact that minerals were neither benefiting the population nor the state. Workers were getting poorer, local economies were not strengthened, and artisanal miners were being arrested, tortured, and even killed. The more companies’ profits grew, the more local communities suffered. It

is against this background that the bishops of Katanga demanded that the Congolese state put the mining sector in order: “Congo is neither for sale nor on sale ... The riches of our province must benefit our people ... [A]nd working conditions [must be] consistent with human dignity” (CENCO 2007:36). The bishops also encouraged the government to diversify its economic development strategies by investing in agriculture, tourism, timber, and fishing in anticipation of the depletion of mineral resources.

Inspired by the work of CEPAS and the witness of the Katanga bishops, CENCO, in July 2007, decided to create an ad hoc Episcopal commission in charge of natural resource governance:

CENCO is committed, through its structures, to follow with particular attention the process of “revision” of mining and forests contracts so that it can be done in the greatest transparency for the benefit of the Congolese people. It believes that the proper management of national resources will be a determining factor for the rebirth/reconstruction of the DRC. CENCO will create an ad hoc Episcopal Commission within its own body responsible for monitoring the issue of the exploitation of natural resources and demanding respect for human rights by companies working in this sector (CENCO2007:12).

In 2013, the ad hoc group became a full commission of CENCO, the Episcopal Commission for Natural Resources (CERN). Its mission is to study all issues related to the exploitation of natural resources and propose to the Church means of intervention to promote good governance of these resources and prevent conflicts.

CERN has played several roles. It acts at the level of decision-makers through advocacy to influence laws and policies related to the exploitation and management of natural resources in the DRC. It informs, trains, and raises awareness for citizens’ control and management of natural resources, and advocates for the adoption of responsible economic, social, cultural and environmental lifestyles. It works with local, national, regional, and international civil society organizations with similar objectives, as well as with other politico-administrative and economic bodies. CERN has established natural resources observatories in dioceses that document cases of human rights violations against communities and promote public awareness.

CENCO’s deep engagement on the 2010 DODD-Frank Wall Street Reform and Protection Act is a key example of the systematic, transnational approach the Church has taken on mining. This US legislation included landmark provisions to ensure greater transparency in the supply chain of minerals. CENCO was centrally involved in the campaign to get Dodd-Frank passed. During the time when the legislation was taking shape, the president of CENCO was Bishop Nicolas Djomo Lola. His leadership and lobbying of Western governments were very influential in the law’s formation (Carney 2014:109). He testified before Congress in 2010 to support the law’s passage, and again in 2012 during a hearing about the law’s effects. At the 2012 hearing, he argued that the law should not be softened to make the regulatory process easier on businesses:

We urge the US business community to account for the gruesome social costs of the illicit mining as they calculate their costs for compliance with Section 1502. These calculations are not just cost estimates on a spreadsheet. There is a social balance sheet that places value on the lives that can be saved. We have full confidence in the goodwill of the Congress, the SEC [the US Securities and Exchange Commission], and the business sector to resist watering down

SEC regulations through half measures that may save money, but cost lives (US Congress 2012:22).

Since Dodd-Frank's passage, and since the passage of similar regulations in Australia, Canada, and the EU, CENCO and CERN have continued to support transparency efforts. In 2017, when many believed that the United States might repeal the conflict-mineral provisions in Dodd-Frank, CENCO's Henry Muhiya argued that the repeal would lead to new risks of conflict over minerals and would undermine local development programs begun as part of the DRC's efforts to comply with the law (Bagnetto 2017:8). In 2019, with financial support from CORDAID, CERN published a study on the impact of artisanal mining on local development. They then organized a workshop in 2020 with government and civil society representatives to examine how artisanal mining can be integrated into transparency regulation (ITIE-RDC Communication Unit n.d.). These independent, small-scale miners could be blocked from meaningful market participation if they are not enabled to navigate the regulatory frameworks made necessary by transparency laws. The recommendations emerging from the workshop included calling on the government to make sure technical assistance for transparency regulation is made available to these miners and that transparency frameworks are created that are specific to the artisanal sector. These kinds of initiatives led the Extractives Industry Transparency Initiatives (EITI) (2019:26) to highlight CERN as one of the leading Congolese organizations engaged in advancing EITI standards.

7.5.2. Towards Congolese *Oikotheology* for a Better DRC

In previous chapters, one and two I demonstrated how in the past years DRC has encountered great changes, in all aspects whether social, political, economic, cultural or religious due to globalization. This radical revolution which has invaded Africa has not come without challenges as the country is today replete with poverty, hunger, conflicts, unemployment, corruption, tribal animosity, nepotism, diseases, and so on. It is in response to these challenges that I reconstruct Congolese *Oikotheology* for the DRC (Baltahazar 2024).

Facing this situation of general chaos, crimes, conflicts and confusion, there are two possible attitudes: whether despair in front the killing of millions of people as the result of the most recent conflict in the Northern and South Kivus provinces of the DRC or a more optimistic approach that seize. This moment is a time (*Kairos*) to build a strong and prosperous nation.

Despair, in my view, is a wrong answer to the real question: how to stop the mineral exploitation and its cruel consequences on the populations? The proposed solution must seek to deal with the causes and not the consequences. The problem of the DRC is not its size; bigger countries than DRC are in better shape and smaller countries than DRC have known the same fate than DRC or even worse (e.g. Somalia or Cambodia). The size of DRC is not the reason for the chaos in DRC. To put the DRC under the administration of the United Nations, as some have proposed, will only be a temporary solution and will probably be very humiliating for many Congolese. If the real issues causing conflicts are not addressed, issues linked to economic and social justice, this commissioning will simply postpone the resurgence of the same effect once the DRC will be on its own again.

One can also decide to look at conflict and mineral exploitation in the DRC from a positive perspective. Not because conflict can be a good thing: conflict is always a bad thing. But from this chaos a nation is coming to life, the feeling of belonging is awakened, and justice and peace are more valued. The

Congolese can now understand that nothing has more importance than human life and human dignity as proposes African *Oikothology* for the DRC (Baltahazar 2024). It is my conviction that our natural resources can serve both our population and the poor populations of our neighbouring countries. But we still need to determine how this can happen.

This crisis can become the *Kairos* that will lead to a more just society with just laws to which each citizen is bound.

In this section, I reflect on some of the following practical questions: What is the Common Good in the DRC and how should we build it? The Church in DRC, and particularly the Catholic Church, as demonstrated in chapters one, three and four has been very instrumental in ensuring the tasks that the public administration has failed to do by providing information, education and health care system to the poor. How to reinforce the role of the Church? How to do it without replacing the public administration? The ecclesial community in DRC and specially the Catholic Church can play an important role in accompanying the transition from crisis to prosperity. Since the interference of neighbouring countries – especially from the eastern part of DRC – have been serious factors in causing further chaos in DRC: how could we prevent in the future any invasion and looting in DRC? If we want to go beyond any military solution, what can be done to assure that these countries become friends and not enemies?

7.5.2.1. Establishing the Concept of the Common Good for Congolese People

In this section I reflect practically on what should bind us together as Congolese. If it is obvious that we love our home and dream of a great nation, what explains our current failure and how can we build our common future/*Oikos*?

The first challenge of the Congolese has been creating a national identity. From a disparate population obliged to live together as the result of the *Berlin Conference* (Berlin, Germany 1885), how can we create a nation that is able to face our common threat and opportunities?

The DRC is composed of more than 350 tribes speaking almost the same number of languages. However, there is not a majority tribe in DRC. The country is made of “minorities” that live together, and after only a century of common history, not out of a free decision but because of the historical context.

The DRC was defined as a homogenous territory at the *Berlin Conference* without taking into account the cultural, political, and economic context of the native populations concerned. Today, more than a century after the *Berlin Conference*, a large majority of Congolese wants to assume their history and affirm their will and right to exist as a coherent nation in its current size and with all its cultural, historical, and economic challenges as suggest Congolese *Oikothology* for the DRC (Baltahazar 2024).

With such a background it is not an easy task to build a nation based on the common interests and aiming at promoting the common good. Moreover, the common good is not a ready-made reality. It presupposes a common “fight” for an ideal to build and a common and persevering engagement despite all the obstacles and challenges to be surmounted.

David Hollenbach affirms that even in countries as much advanced in the building of their nation such as the USA, maintaining the common good is not something given once and for all. He writes:

This scepticism about the difficulties involved in conceiving the common good is certainly not limited to academic ivory towers. Ordinary people today are increasingly aware that their neighbours have many ideas about what a good life is. The reality of pluralism impinges on people daily as they rub shoulders at their workplace with those who have different religious beliefs and cultural traditions, and whose race, ethnicity, or language is different from their own [...] More to the point, when group of people are fundamentally divergent in their culture, tradition, and way of life, they can appear as threats to each other. When fear of this threat set the tone, interaction with people who are different is perceived as a danger to be avoided. When understood in such terms, interaction can seem more like a “common bad” than a good we share in common. Defense of one’s turf becomes the first requirement of the good life (Hollenbach 1999:1-14).

In writing this, David Hollenbach was probably more concerned with his own society and his own people, the American people, than with the Congolese. Nevertheless, this quotation shows how differences, apparent or real, can pose a difficulty in defining and building the common good. But, suggesting Congolese *Oikotheology* for a better DRC, I refer to what revealed in chapter three.

Therefore, for the average Congolese, the expectation and definition of the common good is very simple. It resides in how to meet some very basic needs: to have three meals a day (one good meal a day will be even the only requirement for a majority of Congolese); to have access to good medical care for most of the Congolese. To have access to education for children; and to have work and wages that can guarantee the person’s dignity and help her to meet the other two basic needs. People want to work but cannot find decent work and; in most of the cases, when they are hired, there is no authority to ensure that the labourers’ rights are respected. Today, in the context of the study for some Congolese, the common good means just the possibility of living in peace, where peace is understood as absence of conflict, no fear to be raped or being obliged to leave one’s home (*Oikos*) to escape killing as demonstrated in chapter six. For many Congolese, as demonstrated in chapter three, since the outset of the conflict the common good means the right to life, a right that is currently denied to many Congolese.

7.5.2.2. Common Good versus Common Bad

One can ask what in the Congolese society represents the biggest threat to building and preserving the common good. What is the responsibility of the Congolese for what is happening to the country? Why do some other African countries rich in mineral resources seem to be in better shape than the DRC? Botswana, Angola, Nigeria, or Algeria, for example, although they have also known periods of conflicts and violence, does not seem to have reached the level of disintegration of DRC.

In my view, the responsibility of the Congolese to build a country and to resist foreign assault or even for some to participate in it is due to some sort of “cancer” within the Congolese society, a reality that can be identified, using Hollenbach’s expression, as a *common bad*. Our *common bad* as Congolese and our first and worst obstacle to building of the common good is named tribalism.

Tribalism, as demonstrated in chapter six (between the Bakongo, Baluba, Ba Swahili, and Bangala) has two sides. First the passive: fear to denounce all situations of favouritism, injustice towards a group of people based on their tribal membership. Second, an active one: active rejection of one group by another, the approval of discourses based on prejudices towards a group of people based on the tribe

or, worse, the exclusion, violence and killing of people who belong to different tribes. Tribalism is the root cause of the Congolese failure to build a strong nation and to resist assault from the outside. Tribalism could be considered as the original, personal, and structural sin of the Congolese and of the DRC. Tribalism is a structural sin insofar that it approves of structures (internalized or not openly expressed) that deprive people from certain rights and opportunities only because they belong to another tribe. In time both of peace and of conflict, tribalism is the secret struggle and fight that opposes the Congolese and undermines all initiative towards building a common good. Because tribalism involves suspicion, fear, hatred and rejection of the other, tribalism is as harmful as racism. Tribalism is the form that racism takes in DRC. The first form of social and cultural prejudice and discrimination that the DRC faces and that explains together with the exploitation of mineral resources in DRC the reason of the growing chaos as well as political instability is, as demonstrated in chapter three, in my view, tribalism. The ideology of tribalism is more or less founded on the same principles as racism: prejudices, discrimination, rejection and hostility based on the simple fact of difference.

7.5.2.3. Tribalism and Racism in DRC

In *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*, Bryan Massingale (2010:16-35) addresses the issue of racism. It is striking how a parallelism can be made between racism and tribalism both based most of the time, on prejudices. I briefly describe what is tribalism in DRC using some of the concepts of Massingale and then agree with him that the Christian and ethical virtue of compassion is the key element in addressing this Congolese *common bad*.

As in most sub-Saharan countries, the DRC is more or less composed of one racial group. Therefore, racism (understood as discrimination based upon the colour of the skin) as such does not exist. The *Oxford Dictionary* (2008) defines racism as an ideology that validates the belief that members of a race share a set of characteristic traits, abilities, or qualities, that are inherited, and therefore that race can be ranked as innately superior or inferior to others. The same dictionary defines tribalism as “chiefly derogatory, the behaviour and attitudes that stem from strong loyalty to one’s own tribe or social group” (The New Oxford American Dictionary 2008:186). This definition of tribalism is quite clement because my own experience of tribalism is not that it is only a strong loyalty to one’s own tribe or social group, which could actually be a positive thing. This loyalty is mainly directed against the members of other tribes who are considered as a threat and in some cases people to physically eliminate. Although many people have suffered from the prejudices and violence linked to the racist ideology during colonialism, the DRC is now an “independent” country and “ruled” by nature people.

Therefore, in my view, tribalism is another sort of “racism” that replaces the notion of race with the belonging to a cultural group, a tribe as demonstrated in chapters three and six. The same prejudices and hostility toward a “different” people that characterize racism are found in tribalism. Tribalism is as harmful as racism. Tribalism is based on the conviction that one’s own tribe is superior or better than the other and people belonging to one’s own tribe should have the best positions in the society, in political, economic or religious organizations, notwithstanding their competence or experience. In DRC many political parties are constructed on tribal basis. Military conflicts are identified, beyond the political claiming, as opposing people belonging to different tribes or ethnic groups.

The issue of tribalism is not yet fully addressed in DRC. Very few documents and studies mention and discuss about it. There is even a sort of tacit agreement not to talk about it publicly. This situation may

be explained by the fact that people find themselves powerless, not knowing what to propose to address it and do not really believe that the nation can be cured from it. Since tribalism is not institutionalized, it becomes difficult to make law about an issue that officially does not exist.

7.5.2.4. How to Address the Issue of Tribalism as Common Bad?

Addressing the issue of discrimination based on race, Bryan Massingale affirms that most of the people who are against discrimination tend to show sympathy towards the victims. But sympathy is not enough; sympathy does not solve the problem. Massingale rather advocates for an attitude of compassion, which commands a greater engagement. For Massingale, sympathy focuses just on the effort to treat the victim with courtesy, decency, and respect, while compassion should result in a call for social transformation.

7.5.2.4.1. What is Compassion?

Compassion is a composed word, of Latin origin, that means “to suffer together with”. Compassion as a virtue consists in trying to put oneself in the shoes of the person who is affected and imagining how the person feels. Massingale is not the only author to believe in the strength of compassion, Albert Nolan, in *Jesus before Christianity*, writes that:

Although he came from the middle class and had no appreciable disadvantage himself, he mixed socially with the lowest of low and indentified himself with them. He became an outcast by choice. Why did Jesus do this? What would make a middle class man talk to beggars and mix socially with the poor? What would make a prophet associate with the rabble who knows nothing of the law? The answer comes across very clearly in the gospels: *compassion* (Nolan 2001:35).

Compassion, both for Massingale and Nolan is the key virtue that moved Jesus and should move all his followers engaged in social transformation. Tribalism finds its root also in the absence of compassion. If those who act out of tribalism could be helped to put themselves in the shoes of their victims, this probably would change their sense of tribal belonging. Therefore, compassion should engage any person with a healthy mind in taking action against injustice and discrimination. However, compassion is a virtue and a virtue is both what we receive as a gift, given by the Creator, and what we can learn and practice. In DRC the education process should be oriented towards teaching children and adolescent to be compassionate and to fight tribalism as the biggest threat to our life and common good. This will be the first step towards building a more homogenous nation.

In DRC the Catholic Church has worked to maintaining civil society alive in many territories and in many ways. In some places in DRC the only social structures that still exist are run by Catholic priests and nuns. However, if a few years ago these structures were more efficient because of the financial support that the missionaries could have brought from their countries, today the Congolese Bishops, priests and nuns do not have the same financial means. Nevertheless the same spirit of compassion and devotion still help in struggling to maintain the structures and finding new ways to respond to the local challenges in creating new facilities (hospitals, schools, etc).

7.5.2.4.2. The Church of DRC and the challenge of Building the Common Good

On the issue of tribalism

The majority of Congolese affirm to be Christians as Baur (1994) argued in chapter one. Most of the Congolese attend Catholics masses or Christian's celebrations and affirm their commitment to the teaching of Jesus, and "believe" that the Scripture is really the Word of God. A Biblical approach to the issue of tribalism could help to address this problem within the Congolese context. In the Scripture, Jesus repeatedly challenges exclusion. Apostle Paul helped Christianity to affirm the brotherhood of all peoples of all races, tribes and nations. By stressing on this teaching, the Church could help to address and alleviate the impact of tribalism within the society. The Christians churches in DRC could embrace this task more seriously in order to contribute to building of the Congolese nation. Biblically, the reference to the twelve tribes of Israel is a good example of the starting of a successful society although previously scattered into different tribes: in the midst of their differences, the 12 tribes were able to worship and serve the same God and develop into a strong nation. Moreover, Jesus sent his disciples, to the whole people of Israel and to all the nations without discrimination based on race, tribe or language. Hence in Christ, we are all brothers and sisters called to be compassionate to one another:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age (Matthew 28:19).

Although personal identity defines each human being and the tribe to which one belongs contributes to building one's personal identity, in DRC tribalism is a social and cultural cancer that has undermined the blossoming of the nation. Sometimes, a too strong emphasis on cultural identity and differences may not be compatible with the ideals of love, unity, and "self-denial" that the building of a nation entails. We need love, "self-denial" and unity to build the DRC.

In DRC the Church should be more proactive and break the silence that surrounds the issue of tribalism. In other words, it should openly address tribalism as one of the worst handicaps of our society. Tribalism is not a value and no good can come from it. A strong emphasis should be placed on education because tribalism, like racism, is often the fruit of ignorance and ignorance is the lack of education. The Church, which has many schools in DRC, should take good care of the children and adolescent and teach them to accept differences, respect the dignity of all human beings, reject the fallacy of tribal prejudices, and embody the virtue of compassion as demonstrated in chapter five. Within the country, the public authorities should be brought to challenge openly and clearly about tribalism. Policies should be elaborated to prevent any action or situation that could be, equated with tribalism either in appearance or in reality.

At the same time the Church must stand firm on values that have been faithfully carried out throughout this ages: values of life, respect of human dignity and righteousness as demonstrated in chapter five. The sacrifice and commitment of vowed religious must be revitalized with respect to the duties linked to the sacrament of order. The priests, pastors must be helped to be now, more than even, the ministers, the shepherds and the witnesses. In a country where almost everything is

relativized and, people are looking for certainty, help and model, they should be able to find that help in the Church. For many people the priests, pastors, bishops ... are the living face of the Church. How can we make them more aware (if they are not yet) of carrying such a responsibility? How can they be helped to fulfil their responsibilities in promoting the common good and social justice?

The Church must also continue to denounce bad governance as demonstrated in chapters four and six. Once again at the root of bad governance is the insufficient commitment to promote the common good. Perhaps the greatest challenge for our political leaders is their lack of the notion of common interest as demonstrated in chapters three and six.

In DRC people have been so traumatized by different tragedies that have affected the country – from slavery and malaria to HIV/AIDS, from colonization to the present conflicts – that hope in a confident future has disappeared. The notion of “tomorrow” has been devalued. The only moment in which we can be sure of is here and now. We do not know what will happen the next day, the next hour. What new calamity will strike us again? Politically dictators and corrupt leaders have challenged the trust in political institutions and leadership as demonstrated in chapter three. Whoever has got some power tries to steal as much as possible to assure his future and the future of his own family or political party. On the national level, in our current political situation, each one in power wants to assure his financial security first. The goal is not to expand and share the prosperity for everyone by including each citizen, but to “feed” oneself in exclusive way. In this context, there is no room for long term projects, for a policy of common interest. The nation subconscious is marked by uncertainty and fear of tomorrow. Hence, education and the role that the Church can play in this domain are crucial to form people who are open to others, who aim at promoting the common good and the general interest, people who are not focused exclusively on their own interest by willing to build a nation that would last.

In previous chapters, I mentioned that the immediate cause of conflicts or the efficient cause of conflicts, to use Aristotle’s concept (Aristotle 1993:75), is the mineral wealth and the involvement of foreign armies in pursuit of that wealth. Moreover, tribalism and the absence of the notion of the common good and general interest constitute the material cause. In fact, tribalism has prevented a greater national cohesion and has inhibited a stronger resistance to external influences. However, one should recognize that among the younger generations the importance given to one’s tribe and to particular traditions is smaller than within the older generations. The number of inter-tribal marriages is growing and the sense of belonging to the same nation is increasing. Having said this, what are the external influences on the conflicts in DRC? What can help to promote peace in the region?

7.5.2.4.3. The Neighbouring Countries and the Chaos of DRC

The chapters’ one and three demonstrate that DRC shares its borders with nine countries: Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Zambia.

In chapter one, I mentioned how various reports of the United Nations have pointed out the active participation of some neighbouring countries in the conflicts in DRC. Actually out of the nine neighbours, only three are repeatedly mentioned in the United Nations Reports as playing an active role in the DRC conflicts. Among these three countries (Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi), two (Rwanda and Uganda), have been accused of playing the most active role in fuelling arming and training the

actual rebellion in the eastern part of the DRC and participating in the looting of minerals (UN 2000:48).

Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi share some similarities: all the six other neighbours of DRC are known for having either important mineral deposits (Zambia, Angola, Central African Republic ...) or important oil deposits (South Sudan, Congo, Angola). However, Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi have very few natural resources. Moreover, these three countries have the largest population density square Km in the region (Sovereign state and dependent territories by population density n.d.).

Country	Angola	Zambia	Congo	DRC	S/Sudan	Taznia	C.A.R.	Rwda	Brdi	Ugda
Inhabit/km2	17	17	12	30	13	46	8	416	290	141

There is therefore a serious problem of space in these three nations. The combination of lack of resources and lack of space for a growing population in these three countries can explain the hostile attitude of the government of Rwanda and Uganda towards the DRC.

Nothing can justify the killing of millions of people, even the insufficient national space or the lack of natural resources. The conflicts of conquest belong to a past and gone age and the frustration and humiliation that it has sown in Congolese hearts can only create an endless cycle of violence that would only be harmful to all the people in the region.

As Christians, a most peaceful and comprehensive approach can be adopted in the way that compassion and justice allow all the populations to live in peace and dignity as demonstrated in chapters five and six. In chapters one and five, I affirmed that the universal destination of all material goods can point to God's purpose in creating the world and in entrusting to humankind. The condition for peace in DRC and in the rest of the world ultimately depends, on the use and sharing of the resources (economics) entrusted by God to the human race. They should promote the common good (ecumenics).

If the mineral and natural resources of DRC are used with efficiency by the Congolese, they could generate enough financial resources to improve the living conditions not only in DRC but also in the areas less endowed with natural resources among its neighbouring countries. Besides, Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi have the largest population density per square. Rwanda for example, has 416 inhabitants/Km², meaning that soon people will practically live above one another, meanwhile, the DRC has a large area of uninhabited land that could in a mutual and just agreement welcome the foreigners as both the Scripture and compassion teach. However, this cannot be considered as a right to be imposed by Rwanda on DRC, and certainly not as a reason to engage in hidden conflicts of conquest, as unfortunately it seems to be happening. Nothing can justify any country in its goal to occupy the territory of DRC and impose itself on the Congolese population. Such a procedure will be always considered as invasion and would sow the seeds for hatred that will only nourish dreams of revenge. The population of both the DRC and the three eastern neighbouring countries should be brought to understand the danger of acting through violence to reach the same results that can be reached by dialogue and political action.

7.6. Conclusion

This chapter addresses Congolese *Oikothology* for the DRC. Being aware of what is going on in the DRC is only a beginning. This chapter uses *Oikos* metaphor and deals with ways to react practically and positively to the crisis in the country.

The chapter is presented as part of a Biblical and theological reflection on how to realize the economic justice, justice, good governance, peace and reconciliation among the inhabitants of the *Oikos*/DRC as the urgent need of which has been described in the previous chapters. Congolese experience their situation as close to desperate. Hence, the time to act is now. Not only does the Congolese *Oikothology* offer an opportunity for repentance and conversion, but it alerts the population to respond and to challenge that which has been imposed on them by committing to decisive actions for change.

This study uses the approach of African *Oikothology* as developed by Dickson Nkonge Kagema. This draws on earlier work in African theology, liberation theology, African Inculturation theology, South African Black theology and theology of Reconstruction. The Congolese *Oikothology* is a well known fact that currently, the DRC as a nation is overwhelmed by hunger, conflicts, poverty, unemployment, corruption, poverty, peace and reconciliation would be perceived locally and people would begin to understand that every individual action is needed. The silence of some churches needs more attention, training and awareness. Key points are the need for a social analysis that describes the background of the crisis and defines its causes and takes a critical view of the Church's failure in this context.

In addition, a theological analysis is required whereby every Congolese is respected as *Image Dei*. Hence, the model of preferential option for the poor must be adopted and economic justice, leadership and good governance, poverty eradication, economic development addressed.

The experience of the DRC shows that a better understanding of mining's influence on conflict could help improve interventions to prevent and reduce conflict, and build lasting peace. The social doctrine of the Church can help reveal the limits of the promises of the extractive industry. Pope Francis (2015) reminds us that "A type of development which did not respect and promote human rights – personal and social, economic and political, including the rights of nations and of peoples – would not be really worthy of man" (CENCO 2007:93). He criticizes industries, such as mining, with short-sighted development models. Such development is at odds with the teaching of the Church in the sense that it proposes a massive exploitation of resources without worrying about future generations. It aims at a rapid enrichment of investors and leaves local communities in poverty.

The extractive industry also has serious environmental consequences, including deforestation, land degradation, and contamination of air and water. The actors in the industry, including the government, armed groups, and multinational companies, also promote the expulsion of communities from their lands and contribute to massive violations of human rights. This situation in the DRC has contributed to violent conflicts, including an explosion of militias in Kivus today. The Church's action for conflict transformation and peacebuilding in the mining sector is complex. It is, as Pope Francis says, a fight against an economic instrument of death. The Church needs to help the mining industry to better understand and care.

In this chapter, I identified the Congolese responsibility in the middle of all the current chaos and external influences. It appears that the Congolese society suffers from a serious handicap named tribalism. This “common bad”, hinders its society into building a strong communities that can, on the one hand, promote economic development, fight extreme poverty and lead the whole Great Lake Region to flourish. On the other hand it resists all the external negative influence.

In the DRC, tribalism has historical roots. The different local populations of DRC have never had the chance to “choose” living together; rather their conglomeration is the consequence of the *Berlin Conference* that shared the African territories among some European countries. Therefore, the process of building a nation has been characterized by violent opposition and hostility within the Congolese population. However, a great sentiment and will to constitute a nation is coming to life among the Congolese. Many citizens from different parts of the country and different cultural groups have openly shown their opposition to this dismemberment of the nation. The Congolese want to “remain” or become one nation and to face together their challenges.

The Church in DRC and, particularly the Catholic Church have been instrumental in the survival of the country. In many places, the only hospitals and schools that are still functioning are run by the local Catholic clergy and nuns but with very limited means. The Congolese Catholic Bishops have raised their voice on many occasions to denounce the conflict, identify their authors and question the government on its failure to address the social and security issues in DRC. Moreover, many members of the Catholic Church have been victims of their involvement in searching for peace and justice.

The chapter explained why and how the Congolese Church could do more: it could create more schools, and get involved in more social initiatives. It should not substitute the government but answer its call to care for the poor and the marginalized. The Congolese priests, pastors, bishops, nuns and lays could become more involved in education, especially of the young and the children. Such an effort would fight ignorance, the source of all vices, and teach such virtues as honesty, justice, and compassion, which are necessary to build a strong nation on ethical bases. A strong DRC, economically prosperous and politically steady will be a driving force for the all neighbouring countries towards development and peace.

However, the action of the Church can only be very limited in time and impact because, it is not the vocation of the Church to rule nations and replace governments. The ultimate solution resides in the building of societies respectful of human dignity both in the DRC and elsewhere. The Congolese and all men and women of good will throughout the world must ensure that the financial means provided by a legal and just trade of mineral resources benefit all Congolese. A DRC economically and politically stable will have the moral obligation to care for the poor even in the surrounding poor countries and to help their governments to respond to their social obligation. This approach will discourage greed within the poor countries. On the international level, more initiatives such as those that resulted in the creation of the Kimberly Process or the Dodd Frank Act must be taken and reinforced. In such a way, that never again diamond, or coltan or any other natural resources will cause conflict and massive killings.

CHAPTER EIGHT

8.0. GENERAL CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1. General Conclusion

In this final chapter, our task is to make some general conclusions based on the literature findings of the study as a whole. These observations would enable us to recommend some action plans which we believe would assist the Church in the DRC, particularly in the Northern and South Kivus provinces of the DRC to engage positively in tackling the current environmental (natural resources) and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, injustices, corruption, poverty, peace and reconciliation challenges in the DRC. The work generally is expected to contribute to the following areas: (i) to go beyond the global discussion on the current “double earth crisis” of poverty alleviation and environmental degradation by emphasizing the need for the promotion of economic justice, good governance, poverty eradication, justice, peace and reconciliation among the inhabitants of the *Oikos/DRC*. (II) To the global discussion with some ethical characteristics that are applicable to some of the modern peace and security paradigms such as the responsibility to protect and provide collective security. This is because the practical application of the concepts of African *Oikothology*, African Ethics of *Ubuntu*, African Views of Reconciliation, and the Social Justice theology as we have laboriously argued in the work could also provide insights to further research on the role of the Church in natural resources and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, poverty, peace and reconciliation issues.

The flourishing transition from theory to action in our attempt to Africanize/Congolise the concepts of *Oikothology*, *Ubuntu*, and Reconciliation would require that we remind ourselves in this concluding chapter of some salient issues we have been dealing with in this work, namely (I) the interconnectedness between natural resources and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, injustices, corruption, poverty eradication, peace and reconciliation and hence the use of the concepts of African *Oikothology* resource; (II) our inherited theology of heaven and the influence of the dominion thought which do not take environmental issues seriously have to a large extent been at the root of our ecological crisis; (III) the *Oikos* metaphor when considered from the reality of “our home/DRC” experience carries with it some degree of discomfort and a sense of marginalization; (IV) the concept of social justice was developed. It is mostly concerned with stress on the common good of which all human beings deserve. It is an approach that necessitates the Church of the DRC to be open to imagining a better DRC; (V) in trying to construct a Congolese *Oikothology* that takes the DRC seriously by promoting economic justice, good governance, justice, peace and reconciliation among the inhabitants of the *Oikos/DRC*; (VI) the study has provided two arguments in support of the claim that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has failed to realise the UN Collective Security system because their plans have a tendency of prioritising their national interests above the issues of the Collective Security system; (VII) it was further argued that this multilateral organ of the UN is mostly Euro-centric in its conceptualisation and praxis with regards to issues of economic justice, good governance, peace and security; (VIII) it was also revealed that the UNSC has flouted the UN Collective Security system by practising double standards when it comes to implementing the UN Collective Security system in Africa and in the Arab world, we identified the need to recognize the importance of culture, hence the partnership of African *Oikothology*, African Ethics of *Ubuntu*, African Views of Reconciliation, and Social Justice theology. The main focus on this section is to enable us to foster

conflict transformation in the Northern and South Kivus provinces of the DRC which is characterised by ceaseless violent conflict.

The section concludes that in this regard will be deciphered from the commonalities between *Ubuntu* and (African humanism) and the key tenets of conflict transformation. It becomes conspicuously clear in the discussion of conflict transformation and *Ubuntu* that these two thought patterns and concepts provide a comprehensive and holistic ethic or answer to conflict in the DRC as they are crucial in addressing the root causes of the problems that are fuelling endless conflicts in the Northern and South Kivus provinces of the DRC. The failure of the conflict resolution strategies that were used by the regional and continental blocs in trying to eliminate violent conflict in the DRC has necessitated this research to focus on the need African Ethics of *Ubuntu and African Views of Reconciliation* to bring Afro centric and traditional approaches to address violent conflict in the DRC. The research study brought to light that the isolated application and usage of modern approaches in peacebuilding is questionable.

Despite the adoption of these approaches and mechanisms, it appears that violent conflict has been an unending phenomenon in the DRC, implying that these strategies that are being employed by the countries and international players in the peacebuilding efforts are falling short as panacea to conflict in the DRC. Most of these efforts have not provided sustainable and long-term security in the Northern and South Kivus provinces of the DRC. Issues relating to selfish desires by the neighbouring countries as well as the parties to the peacebuilding process have made attempts to peacebuilding in DRC futile. The approaches that were and are still being used in trying to address conflict in the DRC are proving to be inadequate, if not ineffective in addressing conflict in the DRC.

Because of the adverse effects that have been posed to the DRC by these violent conflicts in the form of aggravated economic stagnation, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, internal and external displacements of civilians, destruction of infrastructure and property, environmental degradation, trafficking in small arms, proliferation of armed groups fuelling the illegal exploitation of natural resources among others makes it not worthy to examine why the situation of conflicts remained unresolved despite the SADC regional and multilateral efforts being put in solving it. In trying to come up with an approach to address conflicts in the DRC this study proposed an ethical conflict resolution mechanism in the SADC based on the theories of: African *Oikothology*, African Ethics of *Ubuntu*, African Views of Reconciliation, and the Social Justice theology. From the above salient themes which ran through the work we now make the following conclusions:

8.2. Natural Resources and Conflicts, Peace and Reconciliation Issues

The plunge of the study is principally centred on the engagement of the Church of the DRC on issues of the environment (natural resources) and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, injustices, corruption, poverty, peace and reconciliation. The study notes that the prevailing Western mechanistic understanding of how the environment is viewed, including of course our inherited heaven theology; and the dominant Western approach to peace and reconciliation overlooks the reality of cultural and political diversity that exists in the world, have to a very large extent been responsible for the unfriendly human behaviour and unsustainable attitude in utilizing the resources of the environment and conflicts. Therefore, the study is of the opinion that for the Church of the DRC in particular and the entire Christendom in general to be able to engage positively in the current

environmental challenges as well as respond to the challenges of natural resources and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, justice, poverty, peace and reconciliation among the inhabitants of the *Oikos/DRC*, it has to be actively involved in the process of deconstructing the narrow mechanistic understanding of the natural resources and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, peace and reconciliation and poverty applying peacekeeping methods that are effective as well as constructing a theology whose influence does not denigrate the environment.

In this regard, the tasks of this study were therefore to provide the Church of the DRC with (i) African *Oikothology* for the DRC framework; (ii) an ethical conflict resolution mechanism for these deconstructions processes. The outcome of the study which is based on the construction of the concept of African *Oikothology* for the DRC through the fusion of African Ethics of *Ubuntu*, African Views of Reconciliation, and Social Justice theology. It is anticipated that this fusion will now help the Church to understand the terms: economic justice, good governance, justice, Oikos, poverty, Exodus, common good, peace and reconciliation in their broader contexts – to include non-humans

- Working together for justice in the economy and the DRC in our own local contexts and globally (“to the ends of the earth”: Acts 1:8).

This was shared by Conradie (2011:119) who feels that the power of the *Oikos* metaphor lies in its ability to integrate especially three core ecumenical themes for the DRC on the basis of the Greek word *Oikos* which forms the etymological root of the quests for:

- Economic justice in the DRC (amidst the inequalities and multiple injustices, corruption, impunity, conflicts that characterize the current neo-liberal economic order),
- Ecological sustainability in the DRC (amidst the destruction of the ecosystems through conflicts, wars, poverty, and
- Ecumenical fellowship in the DRC (amidst the many denominational and theological divisions that characterize Christianity worldwide, in Africa, and DRC in particular).

On the issue of empire, Brueggemann’s understanding of social justice called on churches of the DRC to “resist empire and to renew communities life”. It is of crucial importance to consider the common good and the hope for a better future for the DRC. Taking account of these concerns tends to promote *socio-equilibria* and provision for the needed and marginalized in a process the Brueggemann (2020:38-44) is called the “economy-with-neighbourhood”. The concept of justice is then understood to include a system of distribution that ensures all members of Congolese society of dignified living as they have sufficient access to resources and goods as is needed in the DRC. Righteousness may involve intervention in social affairs to rehabilitate Congolese society, promote social well-being and respond to social grievances. The Pharaonic exploitation of the natural resources in the DRC as described in the Exodus narrative needed a dreamer such as Moses who was able to imagine a DRC country outside the imperial reality, to act and to make that a reality. Dreamers can challenge powers as, in the words of Brueggemann; they are able to imagine a new future and a different DRC. Thus, the Church of the DRC must bring a message of hope as such:

If my people, which are called by my name, should humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:14).

This could be appreciated given the number of Christians in the DRC because, as the World Bank denotes that the DRC is a clear example of a country in which justice and equity are absent, and whose Congolese population is not able to benefit from the potential wealth of their natural resources that abound in its land (World Bank 2013:96). There is urgent need of Oikotree Movement in the DRC.

8.3. Establishing Oikotree Movement for the DRC

Oikotree Movement for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is the fruit of the PhD research project on: *“Reconstructing an African Oikotheology for the DRC”* (Baltahazar 2024) which recognises the power of the *Oikos* metaphor as is demonstrated above.

This movement is part of the global ecumenical covenanting movement open to people of all faiths seeking to identify and oppose economic injustice and ecological destruction in the DRC and the world.

This call is open to individuals, theologians, local churches, people’s movements and all who share our concern for economic justice, good governance, poverty alleviation, and peace and reconciliation in the DRC. Oikotree Movement for the DRC is build upon the following Biblical principles:

Revelations 22:1-2 says:

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On both side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the Congolese people (inhabitants of the DRC/Oikos)”.

Taking its name (**Oikotree Movement for the DRC: OMDRC**) after Revelations 22:1-2, it seeks to

- network,
- challenge,
- educate,
- encourage, and
- Offer support to all who wish to covenant together for justice, good governance, peace and reconciliation among the inhabitants of the DRC/*Oikos*. As such its core values are:

8.3.1. Core Values:

1. Living faithfully through engaging in the struggle for justice in the economy of the country.
2. A Spirituality of resistance and transformation.
3. The formation of life-sustaining, justice-affirming communities, which embrace creation and humanity.
4. Advocacy of economic and ecological justice, and support for alternatives to an ecologically destructive economy.
5. Resistance to neo-liberal corporate globalization, patriarchy and empire as demonstrated in chapter six.

6. Accompaniment with people and communities struggling to overcome economic and ecological injustice.

7. Solidarity in the struggle to change the systems that are destroying humanity and the earth.

8. Inclusivity, diversity, openness and transparency.

8.3.2. Our Goals:

A. Process

1. To invite participation in a covenanting for justice organisation (Oikotree) by churches, ecumenical organizations, local congregations and individuals engaged in the struggle for justice in the economy of the DRC and the world.

2. To share resources for nurturing, developing and sustaining the commitment to justice and its lived expressions.

3. To support individual and communal actions which live out alternatives promoting justice, good governance, poverty alleviation, peace and reconciliation among the inhabitants of the DRC/*Oikos*.

4. To explore and promote alternative economic and ecological models to neo-liberal economic globalization, the consumerist materialism it spawns and the patriarchy it supports.

5. To strengthen mutual support through networking.

6. To further develop the theological (Congolese *Oikothology and Kairos document* for the DRC) and missiological implications of the Accra Confession and the AGAPE call in a pluralistic and multi-faith world.

B. Approaches

1. Compassionate engagement with the lived experience of others and the issues raised by that experience.

2. A spirit of learning and commitment to personal and communal formation and transformation.

3. A life-engaging kairotic (reading the signs of the times) reading of the bible rooted in the everyday lives of Congolese people, open to the insights of other faith communities.

8.3.3. Reading the Signs of the times

1. Cultivation of life-affirming spiritualities, sharing rituals, prayers, images, symbols, actions, songs, music etc....

2. Inviting people to see diverse perspectives and other ways of living, offering examples and alternative models.

3. Joining in actions of resistance against systemic injustice, patriarchy and empire.

In this regard, it is essential that the DRC's resources are utilized in the most sustainable manner in order to sustain the entire *Oikos*. It is equally imperative that the distribution of these resources is done in the most equitable way to ensure that the basic needs of the majority of the Congolese people are met. These have been the central postulations of the concepts of Congolese *Oikothology*, *Ubuntu*, Reconciliation, and Social Justice Theology throughout the study. This could be the very beginning of the many steps needed to address the environmental challenges as well as ensure economic justice, good governance, justice, peace, reconciliation and poverty eradication in the world, Africa, and DRC in particular.

However the study notes that the prevailing global economic structures, policies, the dominant Western approach to peace and reconciliation not only encourage despoliation of the environment resources but also entrench hegemony which excludes the majority of the citizens of the DRC from enjoying the resources of the *Oikos*/DRC. The global economic structure has deeply entrenched inequality, class division and perpetuated conflicts and poverty on a large scale. It is on the above note that the study argues that poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability would still be a mere rhetoric as long as these economic policies and structures that engender hegemony are not addressed. The over hauling of the current dysfunctional DRC economic structure and the UN Collective Security system will only become possible if our understanding of how the environment and its resources should be utilized is positively changed by adopting a new understanding and attitude towards the natural resources, economic justice, peace and reconciliation from the perspective of *Oikos*/DRC and the fusion of the concepts of African *Oikothology*, African Ethics of *Ubuntu*, African Views of Reconciliation, and Social Justice Theology.

8.4. The Church of the DRC's Stance on Natural Resources, Leadership, Poor Governance, Injustices, and Matters of Peace and Reconciliation

Our observation based on the response of the Church to natural resources and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, injustices, corruption, impunity, poverty eradication, peace and reconciliation issues is that the Church, especially the Protestant and Independent churches have been very slow to respond to socio-political issues. The basis of this conclusion hinges on the reflection on the Church's inaction on socio-political issues in general and on environment concerns in particular. We do not want to make a blanket statement here. As such, we could see that in some areas of social concern, such as peacebuilding and reconciliation, the Church has tried to respond to some specific issues demanding its attention at any particular point in time. For example, Baur (1994:336) noticed that the Church has been active in social services development processes, and peacebuilding, but in socio-political issues generally and environment in particular, it has not positively made much impact as it has the case of the Catholic Church in general.

This invisible commitment is attributable to the Church's naïve knowledge of the inextricable link between natural resources and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, injustices, corruption, poverty issues in general. The Church's naïve knowledge is portrayed in the manner in which it has in practice seemed to have followed the traditionally perceived view that ecological and economic

concerns are separate and that the Church's primary assignment is to proclaim the gospel: socio-economic, cultural, and political issues is not considered as its main evangelical or mission thrust. This observation is made more vivid by the absence of a national policy document on socio-political or on the environment in the Church (Protestant Church) in the DRC. In the vision of the Church of the DRC issues of socio-economic, political, and cultural are not specifically spelt out let alone include them.

The absence of a national policy document in the Church of the DRC could suggest at least two things. It is either that the Church has no priority on socio-political issues, or that it is not aware of its potential as an agent of change to influence the ways in which socio-political is understood and pursued. This suggestion, could perhaps explain the reason why the Church of the DRC has maintained a very disturbing silence (or apolitical) even on the critical issues of natural resources and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, injustices, corruption, impunity going on in the Northern and South Kivus provinces of the DRC. The study notes that the Church of the DRC's non prioritization of socio-political, economic, and cultural issues stood in sharp contrast to its vision which sought to position the Church as "salt" and "light"; "caring Church"; "peace keeper". But the salt and light; and caring vision of the Church has not been felt in the socio-political areas in general and in natural resources and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, injustices, corruption, poverty eradication, peace and reconciliation in particular. This also explains why part of the Church's mission is "to promote economic justice, peace, good governance, to bring about peace and to keep peace". There is therefore the need for the Church of the DRC's visions of "salt" and "light"; "caring Church"; and "peace keeper" to extend to all other areas and to include economic justice, good governance, justice, peace and reconciliation to all members of the *Oikos/DRC*. The reflection on ecumenical collaboration between churches is developed.

8.5. Insufficiency of *Oikothology* to Provide Enough Practical Commitment

The thinking behind the proposal of African *Oikothology* for the DRC as a theological framework is that it could go beyond "the double earth crisis" of environmental degradation and poverty alleviation by emphasizing the need for the promotion of economic justice, good governance, poverty eradication, peace and reconciliation among the inhabitants of the *Oikos/DRC* and provide the Church as a whole as well as the individual members with the praxis which inspires action against environmental challenges (natural resources) and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, injustices, corruption, poverty.

However, the observation made by the study is that *Oikothology* alone could not fulfil this promise of inspiring practical commitment to environmental action and peace because of the challenges and the gaps we have already discussed in the work. These challenges and gaps are essentially associated with both the churches' various teachings and liturgical practices which emphasize much of the eschatological longing for another world. As a way of revitalizing *Oikothology* in order to invoke both inspiration and commitment, we proposed the fusion of African *Oikothology*, African Ethics of *Ubuntu*, African Views of Reconciliation, and Social Justice Theology. Building on the strengths of this fusion, an Africanized/Congolized form of *Oikothology* could provide the basis for the appreciation of African Theology which seeks to integrate those cherished African traditions with Christian values to produce coherent Christian ecological and ethical models more akin to African Christianity. The dialogue between African *Oikothology*, African Ethics of *Ubuntu*, African Views of Reconciliation, and Social Justice Theology is therefore seen as a positive way of doing this.

In bringing the research to a close through the above general observations, we now want to make practical suggestions on how to translate this fusion into action. These suggestions are expected to keep up the theory building process. The suggestions below emerged as a result of our interaction with a whole range of literature.

8.6. From Theory to Practice

During our literature discourse, the study observes that although the Church's teachings and liturgical events, it concludes that this still a "paper knowledge" since the knowledge has not been practically translated and utilized in a manner that justifies its relevance. Based on the Church's "invisible contribution" or nonchalance to respond and engage in environmental (natural resources) and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, injustices, corruption, poverty, peace issues in a more practical way in spite of the purported knowledge by the teachings and liturgical events, the study further concludes that practical commitment and action are very vital for Church's engagement in the fight against environmental challenges (natural resources and conflicts), leadership and bad governance, injustices, corruption, and poverty alleviation. This conclusion is based on the understanding that mere rhetoric unaccompanied by practical or contextual theologizing would not provide the Church with the needed inspiration to be practically committed to natural resources and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, injustices, corruption, poverty, peace and reconciliation challenges.

In this regard, the Church is reminded of the caution that any theology that does not reflect the lived experiences of the people is not worth pursuing in the first place. In view of this caution, the Church of the DRC needs to engage theologically from "inside" in order to be active and proactive in its engagement on natural resources and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, injustices, corruption, poverty, peace and reconciliation issues. This is because the Church as an agent of social change is expected to change itself first before it can show the world how to change in several ways. The process of this change starts from the Church acknowledging its past mistakes, predominantly its anthropocentric teachings and attitudes against nature. This, it could do by appreciating the values of African *Oikotheology* for the DRC and the fusion of African Ethics of *Ubuntu*, African Views of Reconciliation, and Social Justice Theology as proposed by the study. A proper appreciation could result to the teaching and preaching of a vision of what our attitude to the environment, governance, justice, poverty, and peace could and should be; and by practicing same in order to give hope to the DRC as it gropes in darkness in its struggles with the current environmental (natural resources) and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, injustices, corruption, poverty, peace and reconciliation challenges.

For the Church of the DRC to engage in this redemptive work which could actually demonstrate its practical concern to environmental issues, it has to set up a national body on the environment.

8.6.1. Formation of National Commission on the Environment for the Church of the DRC

It is unfortunate that the dynamics of building partnerships with the government, NGOs, and the private sector have not been fully explored by the Church in the way in which the Church of the DRC operate in the provinces and the nation at large. Our suggestion in this regard is that the Church of the DRC needs to set up a Commission comprised of group of interested and committed theologians and development experts. The task of the National Commission on Environmental should include

among other things to formulate development policies which also covers environment (natural resources and conflicts), leadership and bad governance, injustices, corruption, poverty, peace and reconciliation issues for the communion. It would also help other Groupements to set up environmental NGOs as well as assist them to network with other environmental agencies both at the national and international levels. Through this type of networking the much desired synergistic approach to the current environmental challenges could be achieved. The Commission could also make proposals and provide resources as well as technical assistance to the Church in order for it to respond creatively to ecological and economic problems. This Commission could in time metamorphose into Christian Institute of Ecological and Economic Studies, but its primary assignment should be to help the Church form a faith based environmental organisation such as “Oikotree Movement for the DRC” demonstrated above.

8.6.2. Establishment of Church Environmental Society of the DRC

There already exists may be in some churches many organisations and societies with various aims and objectives. The Church with the help of the proposed Commission could also introduce an environmental society consisting of Christians who are interested in environmental issues. This society with the assistance of the national commission on the environment, will be responsible for articulating resources (both theological) to address environmental problems of the Church and the immediate community where the Church is located. The society will design and engage in activities like tree planting programmes, grassing, erosion control measures, and Church compound beautification to improve the aesthetic outlook of the Church with flowers and ornamental trees. Planting trees is one of the most costs-effective ways to attack carbon dioxide building up in atmosphere. This could play a great role in the DRC due to its diversity ecosystems.

Our vision is that this society will link with other environmental organisations or societies in the provinces and in the country as well like the “Earth Keepers” to join hands together in the fight against environmental degradation. This society will be entrusted with the responsibility of :

- organising environmental campaigns,
- workshops and seminars from time to time where environmental activists, policy makers and environmentalists will be invited to speak to the local congregation on the need for environmental conservation, the causes and prevention of environmental degradation and others relevant environmental challenges such as conflicts, bad governance, injustices, corruption, and poverty issues.

The establishment of this society if adopted should be seen as a practical expression of the Church’s commitment to caring for the rest of the local community, thereby maintaining its relevance in the society. The need for the establishment of this society is seen from the literature which showed that the majority of the churches of the DRC do not have environmental society or organisation.

8.6.3. Advancement of Reconciliation and Peacebuilding for National Unity in the DRC

The Church of the DRC should advocate and work towards building a strong national cohesion which will, in turn, reduce the intensity of ethnic and economic conflicts. They should appeal to the government, political leaders and other group leaders to publically engage in the promotion of a national reconciliation between conflicting parties because “only the community can decide to

embark on a process of reconciliation and healing as a collective” (Du Toit 2003:282). This recommendation is also in line with the sixteenth goal of the SDGs. In this regard, leaders of different ethnic groups should publically recognise and repent of any wrongdoings that their ethnic groups have committed to others. Political leaders also should publically acknowledge and repent of the wrongdoings that have been happening in the country since independence up to now. The Church should play a major role if these aims are to be reached. The Church in the DRC should work together with other churches within the region to bring about reconciliation between the different people of the region by publically recognising and confessing any wrongdoing that has affected others. Peacebuilding initiatives that promote hope, forgiveness and reconciliation such as the one developed from the ministry of the Flame International could be implemented by Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs), Church denominations and local congregations as grassroots initiatives to promote peace.

8.6.4. Reclamation of the Church’s Role with regard to Education

The Church of the DRC should use the different opportunities and agencies it has to work for justice, peace, good governance, and poverty alleviation. Educationally, the Church should train and inform people about their rights and duties as active citizens. The Church of the DRC still has schools under its control and can use these venues together with their pulpits for these purposes. As Green points out, “education is crucial in breaking the cycle of poverty. It is a right in itself, and it equips individuals to lead full lives, understand the world and ultimately gain the self-confidence to make them heard” (Green 2008:42). This recommendation also responds to the fourth goal of the SDGs.

8.6.5. Advocate for Creation Care in the DRC

Any moral teaching from the Church in the DRC and its leadership should include commitment to the natural world and a struggle for more just social order so as “to establish and protect healthy ecosystems where all living creatures can flourish” (Johnson 2000:16). In this regard, the Church of the DRC should use all the opportunities and agencies at its disposal to educate Church’s members concerning the awareness and commitment to the integrity of creation (Mische 2000:595). This recommendation is also part of sustainable development with regards to the sixth, twelfth, thirteenth and fifteenth goals of the SDGs. In light of the summary of the report of the committee of the World Evangelical Fellowship Theological Commission Unit on Ethics and Society/AU Sable Forum 1992 on Evangelical Christianity and the Environment, Samuel and Sudgen suggest the following recommendations. These recommendations are also applicable to the Congolese Church and its leadership:

- The Christian community needs to develop practical policy approaches to the environment and environmental issues (natural resources and conflicts, leadership and bad governance, injustices, corruption, poverty), based on Biblical principles and sound analysis.
- Christians need to form and join environmental organisations that apply explicitly Christian principles to environmental problems.
- The Christian community must be willing to identify and condemn social and institutionalised evil, especially when it becomes embedded in a system. It will purpose solutions which both seek to reform and (if necessary) replace creation-harming institutions and practices.

- Churches should seek to develop as creation-awareness centres in order to exemplify principles of stewardship for their members and communities and to express both delight in and care for creation in their worship and celebration. They should particularly aim to produce curricula and programmes which encourage knowledge and care of creation.
- The Christian community must initiate and support the process of education (for all its members) on the Christian approach to environment ethics. In particular; Christian colleges and seminaries should provide teaching in this area. The Church's goal should be growth of earth-keepers, both in the habits of everyday life, and in the provision of leadership for the care of creation (Samuel & Sudgen 1999:356-7).

8.6.6. Church Partnership across Denominational Lines

The Congolese Church needs to work in partnership and develop greater ecumenical cooperation with each other nationally, with the region and at the international level to address the different issues affecting the DRC. Therefore, CENCO on the Catholic side, ECC on the mainstream churches side and RERC on the AICs should work together and with their partners at regional and international levels in order to find solutions to the crisis of the country. The Church of the DRC should also work in partnership with different organisations and civil society's actors dealing with justice, good governance, peacebuilding and development initiatives.

8.6.7. Address of Dualistic Spirituality and Promotion of a more Holistic Theology

The Church of the DRC and its leadership should ensure that people become involved in the process of finding solutions to their own problems instead of simply watching from a distance and praying that things will improve. Prayer has to go with actions; that is, Christians should be involved in the political affairs of their countries where they are both citizens and part of the government; people should also follow the whole will of God (Kinoti in Van de Walt 2003:56-9). The Church in the DRC should critically get involved in the socio-political and economic life of the country out of compassion. The Church should seek to produce Christians who are able to analyse the social and religious situations, and who seriously engage with the Bible, and who are able to hear and respond to the cry of the marginalized people of the DRC. Theology should be directed towards reflection and actions for moral education based on the understanding of the mission of the Church as being both spiritual and socio-political. Evangelisation and the management of politics should work hand in hand for the well-being of humankind (Mugaruka 2010:45). One way of doing this is through formation and training of Church members (clergy and laity) in issues related to economic justice, good governance, justice, poverty eradication, peace and reconciliation. Also, the Church should encourage their members and communities to be aware or get involved in the environment, peace, ecology, economic, and political issues of the DRC. This also implies a need of a sound practical theology based on the compassion of God.

8.6.8. Theological Training

Theological training institutions are the laboratories of the Church in the DRC. Their graduates have to be able to reflect and determine theological positions on social matters. Hence, it is necessary to add a socio-political dimension to their curricula.

8.7. Further Research

The present research is neither final nor complete. Many other dimensions are awaiting the scrutiny of future research. For one thing, this research was limited in scope by focusing mostly on the need to promote economic justice, good governance, poverty eradication, justice, peace and reconciliation among the inhabitants of the *Oikos*/DRC that the Church should address. Many other points need attention and many questions ask for answers as seen below: *What is the background of the profound involvement of the Protestant and Independent churches in problems of a socio-political nature and what are their impacts in the DRC?*

It is suggested that a post-doctoral study focuses on the role of churches in the public sphere and on the urgency of the need for a prophetic theology in the contemporary world. Also, a compilation of an *Oikotree Movement* document for the DRC and an assessment of all the *Oikothology* studies and their impacts in the social life of their countries of origin could be a useful contribution to a more precise conception of the Church's role in society.

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