Cameroon Journal of Evangelical Theology
- CAJET -

Number: 3
Issue: 1
Date: 13/10/2026

Editor-in-Chief: Prof. Emmanuel Oumarou.
Associate Editors: Dr. Roch Ntankeh, Dr. Fai Ebenezer.

Editorial Board

Prof. Dieudonné Djoubairou. Dr. Felix Niba, Dr. Sap Jacques Duclaire, Dr. Deugoué Tite, Dr. Fubang Emmanuel, Dr. Elias Ngomediage, Dr. Longa Augustine, Chongsi Godswill, Wankagué Gaston, Theoneste Hitimana.

©2026 Cameroon Journal of Evangelical Theology
Yaoundé, Cameroon
www.cajet.org

Scientific Committee

Prof. Mbacham Wilfred Fon (PhD. Public Health Biotechnology; M. Div., Discipleship). FCAS, FAAS, FTWAS/ Adjunct Faculty, *Faculté de Théologie Evangélique du Cameroun* (FACTEC), Yaoundé, CAMEROON.

Prof. Fohle Lygunda li-M (D. Min, PhD.), Extraordinary Senior Lecturer for Research (in Missiology) at *North-West University Potchefstroom Campus*, South Africa/Director of *Africa Center for Interdisciplinary Studies* (ACIS), DRC.

Prof. Elie Sikamosi, *Institut Protestant de Théologie*, (PhD. Biblical Studies, NT), *Université Chrétienne de Kinshasa* (UCKIN, RDC) /Directeur Général de *l'Institut Supérieur Pédagogique de Sonabata*, RDC.

Prof. David E. Bjork (MA, DEA, M. Div., PhD). Director of the Doctoral Program of the *Cameroon Faculty of Evangelical Theology* (FACTEC), Yaoundé, CAMEROON / Member of *World Partners* in collaboration with *Cooperative Studies* (CS), USA.

Prof. Ghislain Afolabi Agbèdè (PhD, Systematic Theology and Holistic Development). Fondateur de *ADONAÏ Yireeh House* et promoteur de la *Faculté de Théologie Holistique et de Misiologie Appliquée* (FATHMA), BENIN.

Prof. Herbert Rostand Ngouo (PhD, Linguistics), Université de Maroua, CAMEROON.

Prof. Patrick Nkolo Fanga (Practical Theology), Head of Department of Practical Theology, *Faculté de Théologie Evangélique de Bangui* (FATEB), CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC.

Prof. Abel Njerareou (PhD., Biblical Studies, OT). *Faculté de Théologie Evangelique Shalom*, Ndjamena, CHAD.

Prof. Sammy Beban Chumbo (PhD, Linguistics), Distinguished Professor at *ICT University*, USA, Cameroon Campus and Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at the *University of Yaoundé 1*, CAMEROON.

Prof. Dieudonné Djoubairou, (PhD, Systematic Theology), *Faculté Autonome de Théologie Évangélique du Cameroun* (FATECAM), Ngaoundéré, CAMEROON.

Prof. Joseph Mavinga (PhD., Biblical Studies, OT), Head of Department of OT Studies, *Faculté de Théologie Evangélique de Bangui*, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC.

Prof. Paul. Mpindi (PhD, Biblical Studies, OT), Founder and president of *Faculté de Théologie Evangélique du Congo* (FATEC), Kinshasa, DRC.

Dr. Steve Sang-Cheol Moon, (PhD, Missions and Intercultural Studies), Founder and CEO, Charis Institute for Intercultural Studies, Seoul, SOUTH KOREA.

Dr. Mbam Stéphane, (PhD, Practical Theology), *Faculté de Théologie Evangélique du Cameroun* (FACTEC), Yaoundé, CAMEROON.

Dr. Mbukulu William, (PhD, Biblical Studies, NT), Head of Department of NT Studies, *Faculté de Théologie Evangélique de Bangui*, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC.

Dr. Nditemeh Charlemagne (D. Min., Practical Theology; Th.D. Systematic Theology). *Faculté de Théologie Evangélique de Bangui* (FATEB), CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC.

Dr. Julius Ndishua (PhD. Biblical Studies, OT). *Cameroon Baptist Theological Seminary*, Ndu, CAMEROON.

Articles published in the *Cameroon Journal of Evangelical Theology* mirror the opinions of their authors. They do not necessarily represent those of the editors, reviewers or publisher.

Theocentric Stewardship as a Framework for Effective Pastoral Ministry in Contemporary Africa

La Gestion Théocentrique Comme Cadre pour Un Ministère Pastoral Efficace Dans l'Afrique Contemporaine

Oludare Olugbenga Babalola[1]

Abstract

In Africa, stewardship sometimes carries exclusive human influence through ancestral authority. In some cases, absolute reverences are given to the plants and animals within the created order at the expense of God's Sovereignty. In contrast, theocentric stewardship emphasizes the collaborative management of human, material, and spiritual resources according to God's will in the Church and society. This research places theocentric stewardship within the theological framework of pastoral calling and practice, explores the biblical-historical backgrounds, examines the features, and highlights the challenges and the implications for pastoral ministry in Africa. The qualitative research employs historical-theological and biblical hermeneutical methods with critical analysis of relevant literatures on stewardship and other variables. Critical analysis of the documents indicates the prominence of God's ownership and humanity's delegated authority. Human-pastoral partnership constitutes secondary means of God's providence despite the limiting challenges of developmental stages of global Christianity. The universal God rules and reigns in all affairs of humanity within the priestly-pastoral witness and services of Christian leaders. The researcher reiterates the promotion of theocentric stewardship among pastors in Africa through reinterpretation of human "dominion" in stewardship, and the inculcation of responsible, co-operative, and collaborative stewardship patterns for sustainable societal development.

Keywords: Theocentric Stewardship, God, Pastors, Africa, Church, Society.

Résumé

En Afrique, l'intendance est parfois comprise comme une influence humaine exclusive fondée sur l'autorité ancestrale. Dans certains cas, une vénération absolue est accordée aux plantes et aux animaux de l'ordre créé, au détriment de la souveraineté de Dieu. En revanche, l'intendance théocentrique met l'accent sur la gestion collaborative des ressources humaines, matérielles et spirituelles selon la volonté de Dieu, dans l'Église et dans la société. Cette recherche situe l'intendance théocentrique dans le cadre théologique de l'appel et de la pratique pastorale. Elle explore ses fondements bibliques et historiques, en examine les caractéristiques, puis met en évidence les défis et les implications pour le ministère pastoral en Afrique. Cette étude qualitative emploie des méthodes historico-théologiques et d'herméneutique biblique, ainsi qu'une analyse critique de la littérature pertinente sur l'intendance et d'autres variables connexes. L'analyse critique des documents souligne la prééminence de la propriété divine et de l'autorité déléguée à

[1] Rev. Dr. Babalola Oludare Olugbenga is the Head of Department, Theological Studies and Public Theology in Gindiri Theological Seminary, Plateau State, Nigeria. Area of Specialization: Systematic Theology and Christian Philosophy oludarebabalola2023@gmail.com, +2348032917954, +2349057091644.

l'humanité. Le partenariat entre les humains et les pasteurs constitue un moyen secondaire de la providence de Dieu, malgré les défis liés aux différentes étapes du développement du christianisme mondial. Le Dieu universel gouverne et règne sur toutes les affaires de l'humanité à travers le témoignage et les services sacerdotaux et pastoraux des responsables chrétiens. Le chercheur réitère la nécessité de promouvoir l'intendance théocentrique parmi les pasteurs en Afrique, par une réinterprétation de la « domination » humaine dans la perspective de l'intendance, ainsi que par l'inculcation de modèles d'intendance responsables, coopératifs et collaboratifs en vue d'un développement social durable.

Mots-clés : intendance théocentrique, Dieu, pasteurs, Afrique, Église, société.

Introduction

It is believed that Africa is blessed with human and natural resources but the continent is still burdened with the sustainability, conservation, preservation, and transformation of both human and natural resources. United Nations' socio-economic research statistics indicate that Africa has huge debts repayment, low women empowerment based on lack of involvement in economic decision making, and its resultant effects of sexual violence and gender inequality. Specifically, only 13 countries have strong legal framework for gender equity. In 2023, 20% of women between 15-49 years have been exposed to physical (sexual) violence. 130 million girls married before the age of 18years. Likewise, 71.7% are exposed to job insecurity based on skill mismatch. 44.5% are involved in child labor while the aquatic habitat is also exposed to the hazards of urbanization in African cities ("Executive Summary." 2025. www.//undp.org>sites). These statistics point to the stewardship of time, talents, and resources at personal, communal, political and religious levels where pastoral roles cannot be underestimated. Church leaders in Africa have enormous influence on their followers as agents of value and moral rejuvenation.

Historical-contemporary formats of stewardship exist in various molds of theocentrism, anthropocentrism, within the specifics of biocentrism, egocentrism, and ethnocentrism, which further relegates God's ownership of creation and its resources, together with the environment. Generally, some basic stewardship research concepts promote human ownership and excessive dominion under the auspices of freewill while some promote the environmental effects of scientific naturalism, leading to biocentric fatalism. Likewise, some Christian scholars promote cultural heritage over and above God's ownership, resulting in different, diverse, and contradictory concepts of stewardship. Thus, the researcher covers anthropocentric-biocentric gap of stewardship with the central thesis that theocentric stewardship grounded in God's ownership and humanity's delegated responsibility provides an effective framework for pastoral practice and social transformation in contemporary Africa.

Conceptual Framework of Theocentric Stewardship

Relevant concepts of theocentric stewardship include stewardship, anthropocentric, biocentric, and theocentric, together with the church and pastoral ministry.

Stewardship

The word carries the general identity of words like care, control, management, and administration in a procedural organizational task. The contemporary substitutionary synonyms such as manager, trustee, and public servants indicate that stewardship is an act of management and allocation of resources through skills, services, talents, abilities, capacities, and experiences (Stewardship, March 5, 2003. Merriam Webster Online Dictionary,

https://merriamwebster.com/dictionary/stewardship, Young and Mellor 2007, 8-11). Stewardship is *oikonomia*, indicating household management and administrative duties within the figurative contexts of Adam and Eve, together with Joseph in Potiphar's house (Gen.1-3, 39:4-6). In Christian circles, it is the application of harmless management principles in the recreational generation and distribution of kingdom resources (Elwell and Treir 2017, 842. Erickson, 82).

Anthropocentric Stewardship

Anthropocentric stewardship affirms the human domination of the created world. The extreme form of anthropocentrism is the egocentrism identified with human's absolute ownership of land, leading to the ancestralization and capitalization of land and its incessant boundary disputes in African contexts. From an African worldview, land belongs to the dead, the living, and the unborn. While the living inherits the land for the sake of the unborn, it is difficult to discern whether they are fighting for the ancestors or land (Conradie 2020, 159).

Biocentric Stewardship

In contrast with anthropocentric stewardship, biocentric stewardship gives the impression that the natural creation controls humanity. Some Africans believe that the cosmic forces together with ancestors control the environment, leaving human beings at the mercy of the unseen forces. Human beings sometimes rely on fate and place their faith in the creation outside the stewardship responsibility, thereby promoting biocentric fatalism, the precarious idea of what will be will be. (Fernandez 2005, 385-386).

Theocentric Stewardship

Theocentric stewardship reechoes that the transcendent - immanent God is the source and architect of all wisdom, knowledge and truth. This paper affirms that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the Father of Jesus Christ within the "absolute transcendence of the One God," "the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" in the scriptural revelation of God. The basic presupposition in this paper is that the theocentric stewardship is trinitarian in nature and the Trinity is God. Theocentric stewardship is the scriptural revelation of God's providence through the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Nihinlola 2019, 289-306). The relevance of theocentric stewardship lies in the unitary profoundness of God's providence along the trinitarian track. The redemptive work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is emulative for contemporary pastors because God's providence is sometimes accomplished through human's responsibility. Thus, theocentric stewardship is the trinitarian approach towards promoting responsible care, generation, and distribution of God's resources outside the historical oppression and the contemporary corruption of the ecosystem. The theocentric stewardship affirms God's truth of righteousness and justice through scriptural-spiritual discernment in accordance with evangelical ethics (Matt. 6:32-34; 1 Cor. 2:14-16).

Church and Pastoral Ministry

God's providence is demonstrated through the Son and Holy Spirit's incarnation for the church. The church is the arm of God in, and for the society. The pastor or the prophet is the shepherd, servant of "God and Christ, and God's people," and is also the cymbal of the Holy Spirit. The church is the product of God's providence while God's Son, Jesus Christ, is the head of the church. Notable social-political issues ranging from personal to political stewardship necessitate that the pastors function as advocates without neglecting other denominational roles as theologians, editors, missionaries, evangelists, janitors, electricians, pianists in accordance with the African distinctive pastoral models. The pastoral ministry of all categories engages in the existential stewardship of life and eternal life for the earthly universal church within the typification of the

Son, Jesus Christ, described as the mediator, advocate, good Shepherd, king, prophets, and judge, for the sake of ministerial balance of spiritual-social ministries (Perez 1977, 109-123). Thus, the buoyancy of life is attainable in Africa when contemporary pastors promote theocentric stewardship for the church and the society, which is the cumulative term for the environment.

Biblical Foundation of Theocentric Stewardship

Genesis accounts of creation indicates that eternal God who has neither beginning nor end is identified as the creator who spoke the heaven and the earth into existence. The emptiness of uncreated world was filled with lights, day, night, season, sky, waters, ground (land), trees, and animals. God filled the land orally with both wild and creeping animals on the sixth day prior to human's creation (1:2-25). Theocentric stewardship gets to its peak through human creation and its purposes of filling, subduing, nurturing otherwise classified as dominion, rulership, governance, in its responsible outlook (Gen. 1:26-31; 2:8-9, 15-17). Theocentric stewardship portrays God's authority over all creation, including all categories of humanity in their gender and classes. However, delegated authority was given to humanity, Adam and Eve, with a caution and commandment such that stewardship is not jeopardized without the creator.

The uniqueness of humanity is traceable to God's image, delegated responsibility subject to accountability (Gen.1:26-28; 2:15-17). God made provision for all animals before and after the flood in the days of Noah despite the fall. The stewardship of Noah is under the theocentric orderliness of God (Gen. 6:14, 19-22, 7:1-5, 8:1). The Jewish law carries intonation of God's justice and mercy for all creation (Ex. 22:10-15, 22-24, 23:4-9). God does not deny His absolute ownership of land despite the tenancy and other socio-cultural agreements (Lev. 25:23). The dichotomy of heavens and earth does not deny the transcendent and immanent nature of God. The Psalmist emphasizes God's delegation based on God-human attributes with the overwhelming testimony of God's Sovereignty (Ps. 115:16, 15, 17-18).

Jewish biblical writings and Torah never imagined any part of creation without God's magnificence and Sovereignty. The wisdom literatures associate godlessness with foolishness. In Proverbs 1:7, a fool denies and neglects God in his thinking and conduct while the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. The Psalmist elucidates that a fool denies God (Ps. 14:1). He expressly affirms that everything on earth belongs to God despite humanity's creativity (Ps. 24:1). All creation, including the heavens declare God's glory (Ps. 19:1-4). Human delegation does not threaten God's ownership in biblical anatomy (Ps. 8:1-9). The processional hymn in Psalm 148 affirms that both the greatest and youngest of humanity at the centre of the creation, and with the creation should give praises to him based on His providence. God affirms that all animals under the control of humanity, and with humanity still belongs to Him (Ps. 50:10-11). The general consensus of Old Testament is that humanity is a laborer in God's ecosystem (Ps.104: 23). Prophetic ministry frowns at hypocrisy of offering God's children, animals, and other resources to idols (Hosea 13:1-4; Amos 5:21-27). In the Old Testament, the stewardship mandate is broken. God is the redeemer and restorer through series of giving, sacrifices, and dedications which show allegiance to Yahweh (Ps. 14:6; 35:10; Job 24:2-4; Is. 10:1-2; Exod. 20:1-2; Is. 40:28-31; Deut.18:4; Num. 18:12; Prov. 3:9; Exod. 34:19; Lev. 27:26; Deut. 21:7; Num. 3:13; Neh. 10:36).

In the New Testament, theocentric stewardship points to the Son who was with the Father from the beginning, conceived by the Holy Spirit through incarnation, and was going about doing good. The Son's atonement is a replacement of animal sacrifice as ultimate sacrifice. The Gospel specifies that the Son is the immanent God who will save His people from their sins (Mat.1:22-

23). Johnn the Baptist identifies him as the lamb of God for world's atonement (John 1:29). The Son's atonement makes it possible makes it possible for humanity to enter the most holy place. Atonement of the Son puts an end to the killing of the animals, identified as the freedom to be with God after leaving the world (Massaquoi 2016, 15). The Son's Lordship over creation is acquired on the cross and not in the palace.

This is the foundation of responsible dominion compared with the creation abuse. Theocentric ethics of New Testament specifies that the Father sent the Son to proclaim the Father's kingdom (Mat. 4:17; 6:33). The Son affirms God's ownership of all parts of the creation such that both animate and inanimate components give glory to God. In Matthew 6:25-28, God the Father cares for the birds and "feeds" them through His secondary provisions. The Father's providence is also applicable to the field flowers without neglecting humanity despite his uniqueness in creation scheme. The Son portrays the pneumatological content of theocentric stewardship through the ethics of double procession. The Son affirms that the Holy Spirit who was hovering over the waters at creation proceeds from the Father and the Son to the church for the purposes of glorification and edification services (John 14:10-11, 26, 15:26-27, 16:12-15; Acts 2). In 1 Cor. 4:1-2, Apostle Paul clarifies the church workers such as pastors, evangelists, prophets, among others, should be regarded as Christ's servants through faithfulness. Apostle Peter corroborates that all gifts, talents, abilities, and potentials should be harnessed for God's glorification and human edification in the church (1 Pet.4:10). However, Peter affirms that theocentric stewardship is kingdom consciousness because of the temporary nature of the fallen world.

In 2 Peter 3:10-13, the Apostle commands holiness and godliness based on the realities of New Heaven and New Earth. Thus, the Son's atonement and the post-resurrection experiences, together with the ultimate reconciliation at the eschatological realm culminate in the common hope of Christians, and natural creation, together with the environment (1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 5:19; Col.1:20; Rom.8:20-21; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev. 7:9-12, 21-22). The theocentric stewardship in the New Testament resonates the Son's redemption and the final state of stewardship accountability which reminds all Christians to keep eternity in view. The biblical data indicates the existence of God, creation, and humanity as trustee of the Creator. God's initial sphere of influence on the Jews became noticeable when Gid's power became universal in Christ. the redemptive effect of the Gospel becomes the focus of the church stewards in pastoral ministry. God has become their inheritance in Christ, together with His sheep under their care. Thus, theocentric stewardship is better done in Christian-pastoral allegiance to God through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit's power. Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God brings the increase.

Historical Development of Stewardship Theology

Graeco-Roman foundational stage of stewardship influenced the Mosaic writings concerning the Adamic mandate and Jewish socio-economic conducts (Gen, 2:15; Lev. 25:23). The New Testament idea was also influenced by the Graeco-Roman practices through Jesus' parables and Pauline theology. In all these scriptural instances, the worldly things should be used to bring glory to God. While the Roman world promotes pleasure in its hedonistic affirmation, Christians are enjoined to bring glory to God in aspects of life. Thus, stewardship was viewed as holistic service because it connotes "total responsibility" (Young and Mellor 2007, 27). Pre-Christian history of stewardship in Dark Ages spans through the Stoic-Aristole philosophies of pre-Christian era which viewed creation as a tool for human satisfaction (Baukham 470).

Anti-intellectual nature of the Dark Ages limited stewardship and exposed the people to "extensive poverty and disease" (Adetunji 42-43). Stewardship suffered doctrinal nemeses of

ancient Christianity based on Platonism, Asceticism and Montanism, which were derived from the fundamental idea that matter is evil before the Constantine era (Scott 2003, 13-14). Apart from this, constantinization and its effect of state Christianity did not help matters due to weak priestly discipleship and mentorship. Historians affirm that what the church gained in quantity was lost in quality. However, Patristics period promoted the view that private property should be held in trust to promote common good, specifically to serve the poor. Both Augustine and Chrysostom insisted that wealth was a trust for the purpose of sharing with the poor. In essence, material deprivation is a failure of stewardship because the goods of the whole creation are meant for everyone (Stott 2006, 150-151).

Medieval period of intellectual and economic buoyancy was characterized by sales of indulgences, thereby relegating stewardship to the sphere of the rich. Only the rich gave gifts to the church to secure their salvation (Young and Mellor 3). Medieval stewardship promoted human trusteeship and its implication of conservation. While it is true that the early church fathers were under the influence of Stoic- Aristotle Philosophies which summarily affirms that creation is a tool for human satisfaction (Baukham 470). Their philosophical theology indicates that God is the "Lord of life and the Source of Being" (Nihinlola 2021, 294-295). Augustine's *City of God* is interpreted as New Heaven and New Earth in its eschatological concepts based on the fall of Constantinople in Roman Empire. The best of earthly city will be destroyed compared with the eternal nature of God's city (*Civita Dei)* (Coward 2008, 41-44). Thomas Aquinas maintained the idea of hierarchical dominion, posited that animals are for human pleasure and profits. Francis of Assisi based on intellectual and spiritual simplicity placed humanity and animals at the same pedestal, specifically as his brothers and sisters based on ecological interdependence. Francis' stewardship separates dominion from domination. Dominion undergoes deconstruction outside the precarious creational domination as the benevolent rule of sharing among all creatures (Stott 2006, 151).

Reformation era of stewardship did not help matters before it was replaced with discipleship. The basic teaching of the Reformation that Christians were saved by grace promoted the hyper-grace tendency of fatalism, Christian faith without responsibility (Young and Mellor 3-5). The post-reformation and enlightenment eras witnessed competing and conflicting theologies of stewardship based on anthropocentrism and theocentrism (Audi 2019, 169). Uncertain direction of global Christianity on ecological matters gave impression that all about Christianity is human soul. Modern period of stewardship under the influence of science and technology promoted animal right based on creation spirituality and respect for life. Eco-feminist theologies view natural dominion as patriarchy while Peter Singer promoted "animal liberation" through his rejection of prejudicial animal species and the affirmation of equality principle. According to Singer, it is abnormal for "human animal" to rule "over other animals" (Stott 152). Lynn White consolidated the critique of dominion theology in 1967, criticized the church and the inward-voluntary church fundings in the Protestant Era, together with the popular stewardship of time, talent and treasure. Human exploitation is the foundation of ecological crises (Baukham 470). Contemporary idea of stewardship becomes elaborate through the incorporation of ecological responsibility, biodiversity, preservation, and conservation approaches into Christian commitments. White promoted ecological stewardship because the environment is a general concern of all human beings created in God's image (Stott 153-157). Responsible and corporate stewardship are closely linked with ecological theology and ecological ethics because humanity is placed between God and the environment.

Theological Dimensions of Theocentric Stewardship

Packer, Wright, and Ferguson (1988, 61) specify that stewardship is "grace" within the cosmological category of faithful administration of God's resources, including time, talents, and money, together with the Gospel at the personal and pastoral levels. Michael Wright (1992, 1-2) observes that money has taken the Church's attention today despite the core Christian ethics of "believing, belonging and behaving" (Eph. 3:10, 20-21). Money is not an end in itself but an expression of our faith and one of the means of God's glorification (8). Field and Atkinson (1995, 814-815) outline the tripartite components of stewardship as the Gospel, life or environment, and human resources, leading to the stewardship of the Gospel, environment, and human resources. McCain (2004, 105-114) highlights related ideas of stewardship like cosmological care, preservation, conservation, administration, and restoration in its dual components of services to the Church and society. According to him, Christian leaders and politicians are concerned about "spiritual things" within an eschatological dimension and economy, environment, and social infrastructure. Whelchel (2012) affirms that stewardship is leadership within the broader principles of ownership, responsibility, accountability, and reward (Col. 3:23-24). Block (2013, 1-2) expounds the visionary concept of stewardship as posterity service for the sake of the "unborn king" or the next generation. According to him, stewardship serves the interests of the "low power" for the "low power" outside the power class, just as it entails the common good's support for the earth, community, and people in general.

Gwamna (2019, 22-26) argues in stewardship gets to its zenith through "administrative competence," over and above intellectual competence of theological and doctrinal matters in pastoral ministry. According to him, 21st-century pastors should value advocacy apart from being financially literate and prudent, and being legally conversant with the national working document that guarantees freedom of speech under the underlying doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God (22-26). Nihinlola (2019, 15-20) describes Gospel stewardship as the "critical" conservation of Christian "treasures" under the guardians of church officers, including pastors. According to him, supporting Gospel workers play more significant roles in believing, understanding, living, proclaiming, guarding, and suffering as stewards of Christ (15-20).

Theocentric stewardship differentiates a church from a club through her commitment to God, which starts from the pastors as the leaders and shepherds of God's people as the intrinsic commitment flows from the heart and not the head, leading to authentic devotion of maximum impact (Kolawole 2019, 24-42). The good Lord indirectly pushes back the frontiers of wickedness identified as the works of sin and Satan through Christian service for the common good of all, both in the church and the society (Turaki 2012, 105-116). In theocentric stewardship, the pastor is not just for the Church but a public analyst, educator, philanthropist, and social worker, as well as an activist in the process of defending the "rule of law" and "human rights," which guides the national code of existence through life, resources and religions and other relevant matters. The Church, under the pastor's human leadership, becomes an agent of inseparable socio-spiritual transformation in Africa (Olakunle, 154-170). Conradie (2020, 158-159) emphasizes environmental stewardship as a pointer for the conservation and preservation of human and natural resources in their interactive levels of "green agenda" and "brown agenda." The green and brown agenda refer to the conservation of plant-animal interaction in the ecosystem and the negative impact of desertification and industrialization respectively (159). Oladimeji (2020, 138) opines that Church revitalization is a product of stewardship promotion. His theocentric stewardship indicates that "stewardship education that will refocus God's people to love God" is a necessity for pastoral revitalization through the inauguration of "stewardship education ministry" and

exemplary leadership, which is not devoid of integrity in the presence of other challenges (138-140).

Challenges to Theocentric Stewardship in Africa

The common challenges facing pastoral-prophetic model of theocentric stewardship in African contexts include the evolving nature of the historical faith, conflicting biblical hermeneutics and perspectives on stewardship, contradictory theologies, Science and Technology, and church traditions.

Historical Christianity

The evolving nature of Christian faith is a challenge to theocentric stewardship in Africa. Western influence on African Christian theology becomes imminent. Apart from the European theological influence, different cultures in Africa stand the chance of producing multiple contextual stewardship theologies. Some of the historical challenges become apparent in the formation of stewardship theology. Various doctrines of creation based on reconciliation challenges of Christianity and science also limit the application of theocentric stewardship in Africa (Morgan with Peterson 2020, 178-180. Nihinlola 2021, 39-40).

Conflicting Scriptural Hermeneutics

One of the major ecological controversies is related to the meaningfulness of Genesis 1:26-28 where God gave human's mandate to "rule," "subdue," or have "dominion" over the creation. Some Bible interpreters affirm "unique dominion" because human beings are the image bearers of God while others support "double" or "delegated" ownerships. In unique ownership, humanity occupies the intermediate position between the creator and other creatures as co-creatures with special privileges. The image of God empowers humanity to attain the higher pinnacle of creation hierarchy compared with other creatures. On the contrary, other pastors view stewardship as God-human responsibility in a corporate pattern (Stott 2006, 146-147). African pastors face character and reputation challenges. Another area of hermeneutical conflict lies in the eschatological concept of the environment. Some pastors promote "renewal" while others affirm "destruction" of the present ecological system through total annihilation (Rev. 22:1-5; 1 Cor. 15:25-26; 2 Pet. 3:10-13; Rev. 21:1). The "renewal" seems to promote fatalism because all human efforts will eventually be futile while the "destructive" concept brings the best out of the worst in the similitude of the furnace and gold purification (Massaquoi 2016, 16-17).

Contradictory Theologies

The post-Medieval or modern period of stewardship was influenced by renaissance through secular humanism. Theological formulations moved away from revelation, Scripture and tradition. Human reason was given attention because of the preconception that humanity has the mandate to operate above ecological limitations. Several forms of environmental spirituality and theologies evolved. Both fundamental and secular humanists agreed that dominion is both mastery and creativity. Altizer's death of God theology promoted deism and the involvement of atheistic scientists in environmental stewardship (Baukham 470).

Science and Technology

This becomes inevitable in theocentric stewardship which promotes God's providence and human collaboration. The opposition between science and religion in Africa becomes a limiting factor in pastoral interest and implementation of theocentric stewardship principles. Some pastors believe

that truth is restrictive to the religious sphere while some with adequate knowledge of science affirm that the Sovereign-universal God is the architect of all truth. Maximum benefits of theocentric stewardship are not attainable with "dogmatic biblicism" and "rational scientism" (Nihinlola 2018, 19).

Church Tradition

This includes the beliefs, practices, together with the governance of various denominations in African context. Theologically, the church is the arm of God in the society. The beliefs of the church need to be heavenly complaint and earthly relevant because God does not take Christians to heaven immediately after conversion (John 17). Theocentric stewardship is identifiable with pastoral care. However, the striking distinctiveness of the stewardship pattern is that the pastors are the earthly representative of the 'good," and "chief' shepherd, who is also the incarnate God. In Africa, some church beliefs, tradition, governance sometimes work against the optimization of the pastors' potentials. Theocentric stewardship becomes ineffective in toxic environments when the round peg is abandoned in a square hole (Conradie 2020, 161).

Implications for Pastoral Ministry in Africa

Pastors' involvement in Practical stewardship becomes crucial in Africa for the sustenance of valuable ecological strides among Christians. Records indicate the need to harness the traditional and indigenous approaches for environmental stewardship. The United Nations Development Programme in Africa shows the commendable efforts of the Massai and San tribes of Kenya and South Africa respectively. In Ethiopia, deforestation and climate changes are progressively tackled through the planting of 25 billion trees. Gabon also designated eleven (11) percent of its land for forest conservation towards the support of African Union Agenda for 2063 (Executive Summary, 2025, https://www.undp.org). Pastoral involvement becomes relevant for peaceful coexistence, through the prevention and management of the ecological crises through rotational grazing, shifting cultivation and bush fallowing.

Contemporary pastors in Africa need to transcend the Platonism of separating life into religious and secular, or private and public because what concerns one affects all in African *Ubuntu* contexts. African pastors function as stewards through Christian sensitization concerning the holistic nature of life because the Scripture affirms God's ownership of the entire creation (Ps. 24:1). Christian Scripture declares that "a righteous man cares for the needs of his animal (Prov. 12:10). Contemporary pastors affirm the inclusive patterns of rights and privileges ascribed to humanity, together with the animate and inanimate components of the creation in the authoritative Christian canon (Exod. 20:10; Psalm 104; Matt. 6: 26, 10:29-31). Pastors ought to champion Gospel godliness as people use their talents, abilities and capacities both in and outside the church because the heaven and the Earth are God's constituency. The church leaders serve as the environmental advocates. God cannot leave without a witness. While "general stewardship" is attributed to all people, including Christians in their localities, theocentric stewardship belongs to the universal context of God's salvation. Pastors are priests, teachers, prophets, apostles, and evangelists, and are empowered to saturate the atmosphere with sound ethics of generation, management and distribution of God's resources (Young and Mellor 2007 6-7, Elwell and Treier 842-843, Wright 1992, 3).

Theocentric stewardship is concerned about God's original intent for life's buoyancy against the sinful-satanic and worldly tendencies of resources depletion, corruption, and other forms of environmental degradation. The Father sent the Son to destroy Satan's work on earth. Contemporary pastors in Africa cannot afford to shy away from their public roles because they

manage God's household as stewards of His mysteries through the diverse forms of spiritual endowments including the earthly possessions (John 10:10; 1 Cor. 4:1; Tit. 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:10ff; Lk. 12:48; 1 Corr. 4:1-2; 9:17; Gal. 2:7; 1 Tim. 6:17-19). Apostolic content of theocentric stewardship prioritizes "kingdom stewardship" and reinforces absolute commitment to God's kingdom and its values at the expense of wealth accumulation (Lk.19:18-27; Matt.6:24; 6: 19-21).

The essence of the theocentric stewardship is that human beings will truly be human, made in the image and likeness of God. African Church leaders should adopt responsible and collaborative stewardship for vital and sustainable purposes, as reflected in Genesis 2:15 and Psalm 8, because of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature of the societies. Trinitarian feature of theocentric stewardship promotes Christian unity. The simultaneous presence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit at the Father's creation, the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's glorification become emulative for Christian stewardship. Teamwork is enshrined in theocentric stewardship because all the three Persons of the Trinity participated in the central programme of God's recreation and redemption (Gen.1:1-3; Matt. 1:18, 20, 22-23; 28:19; John 1:1-3, 14; 14:10-11, 26; 15: 26; Eph.1:17).

Paul's anatomical truth in 1 Corinthians 12 agrees with the awareness that the Church is the body of Christ. Every member is a minister of the Gospel because the body is only working as it is intended to when every one of its members is doing their part, thereby promoting functional cordiality such that the ministry of the Church becomes that of all its members in and outside the church (Wright 1992, 2). Theocentric stewardship accommodates other views, unites Christians, and promotes mission with an ecumenical spirit and interaction with civil society according to an acceptable ethical standard of God's will. Stewardship pattern is nourished in Africa based on a shared belief in God's existence. The anthropocentric nature of religious-cultural ideas is subjected to the Scriptures, with the overriding effort and effect of love. In Rwanda, the inclusive approach of Twahirwa Foundation in environmental stewardship is aimed at preserving the biodiversity. The foundation canvasses for capacity building in the city and Agrarian communities apart from tackling the dual challenges of desertification and water scarcity through the collaborative efforts of the government, community, and youthful population (2025. https://twahirwafoundation.org). By implication, pastors in Africa need to develop an intergenerational approach to community development.

Recommendations

The recommendations that follow are drawn from the findings of this study and focus on practical measures for promoting theocentric stewardship in African pastoral ministry. They address theological training, pastoral development, Christian collaboration, and community engagement.

1. Seminaries in Africa should adopt an integrative curriculum for theological training to promote practical stewardship through the incorporation of pastoral fieldwork and theological study of the church (ecclesiology). This promotes the inculcation of global best practices of stewardship in African churches.
2. Stewardship modules become relevant in African seminaries for academic and spiritual evaluation. This facilitates regular documentation and transmission of ecological reports and events.
3. Regular training and retraining are necessary for African pastors in contextual environmental theological courses for effective ministerial stewardship.

4. Promotion of ecumenical fellowship for Christian unity. Christian fellowship facilitates effective solutions to the challenges of theocentric stewardship.
5. Community development, which fosters intergenerational partnership, is also relevant towards reducing the lack of sustainable amenities in African communities.
6. Partnership with other religious, government, and non-governmental agencies becomes relevant because of the inclusive nature of the theocentric stewardship in the African context.

Conclusion

This research shows that theocentric stewardship grounded in God's ownership and human's delegated responsibility provides an effective framework for pastoral ministry. The historical-biblical reflections indicate that effective pastoral ministry in contemporary Africa needs to imbibe the inclusive culture of theocentric stewardship. Handling contemporary environmental issues often goes beyond socio-cultural and religious affiliations. These issues remind the pastors and other Christians of their intrinsic humanity. The God-centeredness of theocentric stewardship provides the necessary authority for church servants against the contextual challenges in Africa. The trinitarian feature of theocentric stewardship promotes Christian unity through ecumenical services at communal levels. In addition, theocentric stewardship empowers the pastor to harness the Gospel authority for the maximal benefits of ministerial influence, especially in the areas of his relationship with God, the people of all cultures, and the environment. The biblical revelation of creation's finiteness helps pastors to keep eternity in view. Further studies on theocentric stewardship and its effectiveness in pastoral ministry should be carried out at local levels because it promotes awareness about skills, gifts, and abilities for allocation and management of resources for Christians and their leaders, apart from promoting the final accountability consciousness.

References

Adetunji, Oluwaponmile Gideon. 2010. *Leadership in Action: A Sourcebook in Church Administration for Students and Ministers*. Ibadan. Baptist Press.

Audi, Moses. 2019. Theology of Creation and Environment: *Theocentric Approach in Theology of Creation and Environment (2)*, Ogbomoso: ICHE.

Baucham, Richard. 2005. *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology:* Creation. London: Routledge.

Block, Peter. 2013. *Stewardship: Choosing Service over Self-Interest (2*). San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Conradie, Ernst. 2020. *African Public Theology*: The Environment (no edition), Bukuru: ACTS.

Church Leaders Challenge (3): Thought Provoking Feature Articles to Sharpen Church Leaders on their Calling: What Makes a Church? 2003. Bukuru: ACTS.

Coward, Harold. 2008. *Sin and Salvation in World Religion: A Short Introduction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Elwell, Walter A. and Treier J. Daniel. 2017. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology Third Edition.* Grand- Rapids-Michigan: Baker Academic.

_____ ed. 1985. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology.* Grand Rapids-Michigan: Baker Book House.

Erickson, J. Millard. No date. *Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids-Michigan: Baker Book House.

Fernandez, Irene. 2005. *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology (1)*: Creation: London: Routledge.

Field, David H. and Atkinson, David J., eds. 1995. New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.

Gwana, Dogara Raphael. 2019. *Administering the 21st Century Church.* Jos: Chapel of Salvation, NIPSS-Kuru.

Kolawole, A. Simon. 2019. *Being A Minister of Maximum Impact.* Ogbomoso: Grace Publication.

Massaquoi, A. Momolu. 2016. *Humanity, Creation and Sustainable Development: Church Stewardship of Environment (21)*: Towards a Christocentric Perspective of the Environment with Ramifications for the African Church. Ogbomoso: OJOT

McCain, Danny. 2004. *We Believe: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine (1).* Bukuru: ACTS.

Nihinlola Emiola Ezekiel. 2018. *FIRST INAUGURAL LECTURE:* Human Being, Being Human: Theological Anthropology in African Context. Ogbomoso: N.B.T.S.

Nihinlola, Emiola. 2019. *Living and Preaching the Gospel: Ministry Enrichment Series (6*): Stewardship of the Gospel. Ogbomoso: N. B.T.S.

_____ 2021. *Theology for Living: Essays in African Contexts:* Hermeneutics of Life: A Theological Method. Ogbomoso: N.B.T.S.

Olakunle, Jeremiah Olatoye. 2018. *Ministerial Integrity: Papers in Honour of Rev. Dr. Sunday Aramide Fagbemi @ 60:* The Minister and Human Rights Activism. Ibadan: KOGIAH Communications.

Oladimeji Sunday. 2020. *Revitalizing the Church: Ministry Enrichment Series (7)*: Church Revitalization through Stewardship Promotion. Ogbomoso: Kingdom Impact, N.B.T.S.

Perez, Pablo. 1977. *Evangelical Review of Theology:* Present Day Pastoral Work in Latin America. New Delhi: The Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship.

Peterson A. Robert with Morgan W. Christopher. (2), 2020. *Christian Theology: The Biblical Story and Our Faith.* Tennessee: B & H Academic.

Packer, J. I., Wright David F., and Ferguson Sinclair. 1998. *New Dictionary of Theology.* Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.

Prime, Derek. 2013. *Pastor and Teacher: The Calling and Work of Christ's Minister (Special Edition).* Hants: Christian Books for Africa and Asia.

Scott, Anthony, ed. 2003. *Good and Faithful Servant: Stewardship in the Orthodox Church.* New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.

Stott, John. 1999. *The Message of 2 Timothy: Guard the Gospel*. London: Inter-Varsity Press.
_____ 2006. *Issues Facing Christians Today (4).* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.

Turaki, Yusuf. 2012. *The Trinity of Sin*. Bukuru: ACTS.

Wenham G. J., Motyer J. A., France, R.T. and Carson, D. A. 1994. *New Bible Commentary (21st Century Edition).* Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.

Whelchel, Hugh. November 26, 2012. "Four Principles of Biblical Stewardship." www.tifwe.org, Accessed April 22, 2026.

Wright, Michael. 1992. *Yours, Lord: A Handbook of Christian Stewardship*. London: Mowbray.

Young, Peter R. and Mellor Christopher N.2007. *Principles of Stewardship.* Jos: Church of Christ in Nigeria, Theological Education by Extension.

Stewardship. March 5, 2023. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. https://merriamwebster.com /dictionary/stewardship. Accessed April 15, 2026.

Environmental Stewardship in Africa: Protecting the Continent's Future. Jan. 27, 2025. https://www.twahirwafoundation.org, Accessed April 20, 2026.

"Executive Summary. United Nations Development Programme 2025. *African Sustainable Development Report Towards 2030 Agenda and African Union Agenda of 2063.* https://www.undp.org>sites Accessed April 15, 2026.