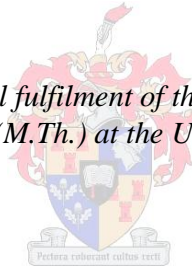# *Natural Law and Human Dignity in the Old Testament? A Case Study of Isaiah 1:2-3*

by
Friday Sule Kassa

Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
Master of Theology (M.Th.) at the University of Stellenbosch

Supervisor: Prof. Hendrik L. Bosman
Faculty of Theology
Old Testament and New Testament

March 2014

Declaration

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Abstract

This research investigates the role of nature and cultures/traditions in the ethical and theological interpretation of the Bible. To be specific, it is concerned with the legitimacy of the knowledge of the existence and attributes of God arrived at using only the natural faculties of sense and reason and whether moral norms or evaluative principles can be derived from or grounded in nature. When the issue of moral norms and principles appears, it leads to reflection on the issue of so-called natural law, an ethical principle which claims that moral duty can be learned through nature. The research argues that the invitation of the cosmic elements and the parable of the ox and donkey in Isaiah's prophetic indictment (Isaiah 1: 2-3) provide evidence of the traces of natural law in the book and the entire Bible. It also argues that natural law and natural theology correspond to elements of African cultures/traditional religions. As such, incorporating natural law in the theological-ethical interpretation of the Old Testament will be relevant for interpretive communities in Africa, like the Tangale in the northern Nigeria. The research also envisages that the natural law tradition and the elements of African cultures/traditional religions can have a favourable impact on the theological ethical understanding of human dignity if appropriately incorporated into the theological-ethical interpretation of the Bible.

Opsomming

Hierdie navorsing ondersoek die rol van die natuur en kultuur/tradisie in die etiese en teologiese interpretasie van die Bybel. Meer spesifiek gaan dit oor die geldigheid van die kennis van God se bestaan en eienskappe, soos wat dit met behulp van slegs die natuurlike persepsie van sintuie en rede veronderstel kan word; en oor die vraag of morele norme en evaluerende beginsels vanuit die natuur afgelei kan word of gegrond kan wees. Waar die kwessie van morele norme en beginsels verskyn, gee dit aanleiding tot nadenke oor die vraagstuk van die sogenaamde "natuurlike wet", 'n etiese beginsel wat beweer dat morele plig aangeleer kan word deur die natuur. Die navorsing argumenteer dat die uitnodiging van die kosmiese elemente en die gelykenis van die os en die donkie in Jesaja se profetiese aanklag (Jes 1: 2 – 3) bewyse lewer van die spore van die natuurlike wet in die boek en die Bybel in geheel. Dit voer ook aan dat die natuurlike wet en natuurlike teologie met sekere elemente van Afrika-kulture/tradisionele godsdienste ooreenstem. As sulks is dit relevant vir interpretatiewe gemeenskappe in Afrika soos die Tangale in noord-Nigerië, om die natuurlike wet by die teologies-etiese interpretasie van die Ou Testament te inkorporeer.

Die studie veronderstel ook dat die tradisie van die natuurlike wet en die elemente van Afrika-kulture/tradisionele godsdienste 'n gunstige uitwerking op die teologiese, etiese begrip van menswaardigheid kan hê, indien dit op gepaste wyse in die teologies-etiese interpretasie van die Bybel geïnkorporeer word.

Dedication

For the cause of biblical – ethical and theological hermeneutics in African context, to the glory of Yahweh Elohim Tsebaoth.

Acknowledgement

My immense gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Hendrik L. Bosman, for his fatherly care, and effort to bring out the best he sees in me. Thank you sir for being patient with me; sometimes you had to push me too hard before I move an inch, yet you did not abandon me. You have taken our relationship beyond the normal academic exercise to showing interest in my personal and family wellbeing because according to you, dignity is involved. Sir, I do not take credit for anything good that come out of this research, I want to say it is because of you. However, I take responsibly for portions that seems to be written in haste, you have done the best.

To Stellenbosch University, the Faculty of Theology and the Department of Old and New Testament for funding, thank you. Special thanks to Prof. Louis Jonker and Dr. Len Hansen for reading and giving insightful suggestions.

To my wife Lucia and our children David and Ruth, thank you for standing beside me and praying for and with me. Thank you for enduring all the difficulties that you have had to go through because I chose to study. I love you all.

To my Mentor, Rev. Dr. N. H. Chiroma, Sir, I am bereft of words to use as appreciation to you, your wife Jane and the two boys, Nasuri and Namiri. I thank God that you are here with me.

To Papa Uli and Mama Heide, I thank you for all the material and moral support I received from you. Thank you for praying for my family and me.

The Pastor and board of elders of ECWA Good News, Billiri, I thank you for supporting me. To ECWA Tangale DCC, thank you. To the Secretary, Rev. Yusuf Nayako, thank you for your passion to see that I go beyond where I was. I also thank you for your personal support towards my studies.

To my extended family, thank you. Special thanks go to my brother Rev. O. S. Maikenti, to my sister, Janet (Nathe) and nephew Maikwada (Sule). You are indeed a family.

To my friends, Shadrach Nuhu and Musa Ibrahim, thank you. Hassan Musa, discussing with you have been quite enriching, thank you. Friends from the ECWA family in Stellenbosch, thank you all.

To God for His faithfulness in guiding me through this research period.

Table of Content

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1.   Background to the Research

This research focuses on natural law from an Old Testament biblical perspective. It investigates the role of nature and cultures or traditions in the ethical and theological interpretation of the Bible. This research idea was motivated by my research during my Postgraduate Diploma in Theology (PDT). During the PDT, I had to work through a reading list that further stimulated my interest in the role of natural law in the theological-ethical interpretation of the Bible.[1]

It came to my knowledge during the course of my study that natural law and natural theology[2] are fields of study in biblical studies that scholars have given less attention to. For example, Rodd (2001: 52-63) demonstrates how alien the Old Testament world is to us in terms of ethical standards. He uses Abraham's plea to God, when God was about to destroy Sodom, to introduce the existence of an ethical standard that Abraham uses to challenge God's action as being unjust (Gen. 18: 23-25). Such a standard he calls "natural law." In another book, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective,* Barr (1999) observes that biblical scholars have neglected natural theology. In a similar way, Barton, (2003) argues for the existence of the concept of natural law as one of the important bases of Old Testament ethics, which in his opinion have been neglected by those who assume that Old Testament ethics is based on covenant stipulations and the imitation of God. In an article, "Natural Theology", Dixon (2005:1610) confirms Barr's and Barton's concerns about the

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[1]Some of the books and articles that I had to study were: "Ethics in Isaiah of Jerusalem" by John Barton (1981) in Journal of Theological Studies; *Glimpses of a Strange Land: Studies in Old Testament Ethics* by Cyril S Rodd (2001);*The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective*, by James Barr (1999) and *Understanding Old Testament Ethics: Approaches and Explorations* by John Barton (2003)

[2]Natural theology and natural law are two distinct concepts, but are closely related. As observed in the questions raised in the text above, natural theology relates to the attempt to establish some sort of theistic claim through the observation of nature, while natural law deals with the quest to derive or ground some moral norms and ethical principles in nature. Simply put, natural law asks the question whether human morality can be informed by nature, while natural theology asks whether God is knowable through nature. These are very wide areas and crucial issues to be dealt with in a research project like this, which is limited by time and space. The research interest however, focuses on natural law as an ethical principle, to see how the concept can nurture and enhance the dignity of humankind. However, the research would like to observe that the full scope of the concept of natural law might be understood when the doctrine of natural theology is made clear. The premise of this assertion is based on the fact the two concepts both concern nature and the argument from nature presuppose creation theology. It raises the question:"Where does nature come from?"

negligence of natural law and natural theology. Many Protestant scholars have questioned the theological legitimacy of the "knowledge of the existence and attributes of God arrived at using only the natural faculties of sense and reason" (Nash 2000:229). They also question whether moral norms or evaluative principles can be derived from or grounded in nature,

When the issue of moral norms and principles appears, it leads to reflection on the issue of so-called natural law, an ethical presupposition that claims that moral duty can be learned from nature. Questioning the theological acceptability of natural theology and natural law does not mean they did not exist in some or other form within the Bible. Therefore, scholars such as Barr (1993; 1999) and Barton (2003), who informed my conceptual framework, affirm the need for research on the issue of natural theology and natural law in biblical texts. Akin on these observations by the aforementioned scholars, the researcher was motivated to find out what role nature can play in influencing the moral and ethical life of human beings.

Reflection within my Tangale cultural context[3] prompted an awareness of natural law that existed among the Tangale people long before the advent of Christianity. My reflection on natural law and natural theology will therefore be done with reference to the Tangale people in northern Nigeria: Long before the advent of Christianity in Nigeria, there was a belief among the Tangale in a son of god, who will reward right and punish wrong conduct during one's life time in the afterlife. To a Christian, such beliefs must seem familiar, as other similar beliefs in other African cultures/traditions, may indeed also[4]; this, of course, begs the question of where such beliefs originated and may lead an average African reader to concur

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[3]The Tangale is an ethnic group living in the southern part of Gombe State, Nigeria. Even before the advent of Christianity, this people had a high respect for the sanctity of life and human dignity. For example, moral ethics seem to form the basis of the social, political, religious/cultural interaction. This may be explained by referring to a real life story within that community: A young man was bitten by a snake and was taken to a hospital. There, he was administered anti-venom serum. Under normal circumstances, it was expected that his healing would be complete within a week or two, but in his case it took months. The story behind his predicament was that he was alleged to have lived and behaved immorally. In Tangale cultures/religions, it is immoral for a couple who are dating to have sexual intercourse. Similarly, it is morally objectionable for a married man or woman to have an unbridled sex life. Such circumstances, they said, is capable of prolonging one's process of healing or lead to death and could even cause an epidemic. In the case of this young man, they believe he has had an uncontrolled sex life, most probably with the spouses and girlfriends of his friends. It is believed that if this was the case, then his condition would keep on deteriorating, especially when those friends of his keep visiting him. This is assumed because the Tangale's value system have sanctioned such a way of life as shameful acts that the gods and ancestors are not pleased with and can bring punishment that might even affect the whole community. The value of moral purity is exemplified by the traditional priest and the traditional ruler. Both live lives of purity in action, attitude and speech. In fact, their appointment to the office and throne of priest and chief respectively, depend on the sound testimony on their moral character. The point of this illustration is to demonstrate an awareness of natural law

[4]Other examples of such beliefs will be discussed in Chapter Four as structures in the Tangale belief system that informs their moral conduct and character. Such beliefs include their worldview of the ecosystem, magic, witchcraft, and so forth.

with the assertions of a strand of African theology that West (2011:1) has observed, "[a]strand within African theology [that] has long argued that African culture is Africa's 'Old Testament', and therefore that Africans have had their own preparation for the gospel/New Testament." This assertion seems to place the African cultures/traditions on par with the Old Testament. In more recent times, there has also been a lively debate on how African cultures (and religion) resonate with the Old Testament. For example, according to well-known African theologian, John Mbiti, (1978:311):

> African Religion made people to be disposed towards the Christian Faith. It is African Religion, which has produced the religious values, insights, practices, and vocabulary on which the Christian Faith has been planted and is thriving so well today. The points of continuity between Biblical faith and culture and African Religion have been sufficiently strong for the Gospel to establish a strong footing among African peoples.[5]

For some, African cultures are, in this sense, seen as a kind of general revelation. With these assertions, one may ask whether and to what extent cultural traditions and nature can function as forms of revelation. Where do the African Traditional Religions receive their "religious values, insights, practices and vocabularies", which serve as the foundation for the strong rooting of Christianity on the African continent? In light of the striking similarities between certain elements within the African cultures or traditional religions and natural law, this research takes as point of departure that a better understanding of natural law may help Africans (such as the Tangale) to understand biblical texts in their cultural contexts. The researcher is not oblivious to the fact that there are elements of natural law that play significant roles in African traditional religions and Christianity. Although such issues are not explicitly discussed from an African theological perspective, the researcher would like to point out that theologians in Africa should become more involved in this scholarly debate.

1.2.   Statement of the Research Problem

In light of the aforementioned considerations, this study focuses on natural law and human dignity. The concern of the researcher then is: "Can nature and African culture or religion be

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[5]See Kwame Bediako's *Theology and Identity and Christianity in Africa*; and Lamin Sanneh's *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*.

utilised in the theological and ethical interpretation of the Bible in such a way that it can lead to the affirmation of human dignity?"

1.3. Research Questions

Asking the right questions is crucial to any research process, because the research questions form the backbone of the research project. After due consideration, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Are there traces of natural law in the Old Testament?
2. Can elements of African culture and traditional religion be related to natural law and can this be appropriated in the theological-ethical interpretation of the Old Testament?
3. Can natural law have a favourable impact on the theological-ethical understanding of human dignity in Africa?

1.4. Hypotheses

These research questions can be addressed by focusing the research done in this thesis on the following working hypotheses:

1. That traces of natural law can be found in the Book of Isaiah and Isaiah 1:2-3 can be used as a case study to prove this.
2. That a research survey of natural law and natural theology will indicate that it, to some extent, corresponds to elements of African culture and traditional religion.
3. That there is some potential to incorporate natural law in the theological-ethical interpretation of the Old Testament in a manner that will be relevant for interpretative communities in Africa, like the Tangale in northern Nigeria, without jeopardising the integrity of theological discourse.
4. That natural law and elements of African culture and traditional religion can have a favourable impact on the theological-ethical understanding of human dignity.

1.5. Conceptual Overview

Central to this research are the concepts of natural law, natural theology, culture, nature and human dignity. This section provides some brief preliminary clarifications of these concepts, which subsequent chapters will clarify in more detail.

1.5.1. Nature

'Nature' could mean different things to different persons or group of persons. Broadly, the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, defines 'nature' as (1)"the phenomena of the physical world collectively including plants, animals, and the landscape, as opposed to humans or human creation…" or (2) "the basic or inherent features, qualities, or character of a person or thing…" (Soanes& Stevenson 2008). Avalos (2009:238) concurs thus:*"Nature* refers to the entire realm of entities that human beings experience, and which includes animals, plants and the greater cosmos". He adds that there is no word that corresponds to the English word "nature" in the Old Testament. The fact that there is no corresponding English word for nature in the Old Testament does not mean that the Hebrew people do not have such a concept. Jewish ideas of nature are essentially based on what God reveals in Scripture and their reflection shows a strong appreciation for nature in their worldview.

As will be seen, both natural theology and natural law are concepts that are built on the appreciation of the value of nature as previously defined. By "natural", it does not necessarily mean the opposite of supernatural. *Nature could generally refer to the phenomenon of the physical environment, or it could mean the inherent features, qualities, or character of a person or thing.*

According to the biblical perspective, nature, both the natural world and humanity, are created by God (Gen. 1& 2). Various testimonies about nature (as previously defined) in the Old Testament provide a bridge between the concept of natural law and natural theology, i.e. nature, which is central in both traditions, has been created by God.

The philosophical nature of the theories of natural law and natural theology is assumed by those who question the concepts as notions that might degrade the natural world through comparison with eternal and abstract ideas. However, the Greeks philosophical or abstract thinking fused together with the Jewish spirit can "enrich the Old Testament insistence upon the worth of the natural order, both in itself and as the symbol and instrument of the divine" (Barr 1999:16).The necessity of this fusion can be seen in the reality that several peoples of diverse cultures and traditions are seeking for the relevancy of the Old Testament in their contexts. The onus now rests on biblical scholars to engage with this responsibility by

seeking to understand the tenet of each thought pattern and then employ contextualization[6] as a method of this task,.

1.5.2. Culture/Religion[7]

As with nature, culture too is subject to many different understandings and definitions. Scholars from anthropology attest to the difficulty in defining culture[8].Dearman (1992:1) confirms this when he says: "Both religion and culture are deceptively simple and are not defined easily in deductive fashion". However, before a working definition is provided, an outline of its elements is worthwhile. This might help in providing an inclusive definition.

Culture has material and non-material elements. By material elements, it includes the things that human beings produce and the method by which they produce them. The non-material elements include things such as ideas, behaviours, value systems and beliefs. Concerned about the difficulty of having a definition of culture, Tiénou (1990:20) notes some definitions that may be relevant for the theological point of view. He quotes Mbiti thus:

> Culture… [is the] human pattern of life in response to man's [*sic*] environment. This pattern is expressed in physical forms (such as agriculture. the arts, technology, etc.) in inter-human relationships (such as institutions of laws, customs, etc.), and form of reflection on the total reality of life (such as

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[6]Contextualization is discussed in Chapter Four. However, for a preliminary understanding, it is an effort by interpreters to make a text from a particular context relevant for another context.

[7]Culture and religion are two elements that are distinct, but can never be separated from each other (see Dearman 1992:3). Culture might not necessarily be religion, but religion is part of culture because religion is a natural characteristic of humanity; it is the human quest to relate with the divine. It is one of the ways that human kinds seek to organize themselves in their environment. In the case of African culture and traditional religion, it will later be argued that one cannot put a dividing line between the sacred and the common,, hence the reason that the words are not separated here. However, for clarity, Dearman (1992:2), adapting the definitions by Clifford Geertz, distinguishes the two terms thus: Religion is a "set of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men [*sic*] by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic." On the other hand, culture is defined as follows: "it denote an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men [*sic*] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitude toward life". The distinction is that religion communicates a particular understanding of life through symbols (written or unwritten), while culture is a social context in which human activity communicates meaning. This distinction also shows that culture and religion are inseparable, religion is part of culture. The relationship is like two way traffic. Religion is shaped by culture and likewise, culture is shaped by religion. Dearman says there are wide variety of possible relationships between religion and culture.

[8]This research is not ignorant of the debate among anthropologists about the attempts to define culture. The point here is not the definition of culture, even though the research tries to do that, but the main concern is what the link between culture and natural law is.

> language, philosophy, religion, spiritual values. Worldview, the riddle of life –
> birth – death, etc.).[9]

Another definition, which Tiénou (1990:20) cites, is the one that came up from the 1978 consultation on the Gospel and culture held in Willow bank, Bermuda. It says:

> Culture is an integrated system of beliefs (about God or reality or ultimate meaning), of values (about what is true, good, beautiful and normative), of customs (how to behave, relate to others talk, pray, dress, work, play, trade, farm, eat, etc.), and of institutions which express these beliefs, values and customs (government, law courts, temples or churches, family, schools, hospitals, factories, shops, unions, clubs, etc.), which binds the society together and gives it a sense of identity, dignity, security and continuity.

One's definition of a term depends upon his/her premise. Suffice it to say that no definition is wrong in itself. A critical look at the definition that came up at the consultation on Gospel and Culture seems relevant for the course that this research is taking. Therefore, an alternative and simpler definition that the research adapts is: Culture can be defined as "the totality of what a group of people think, how they behave, and what they produce and passed unto feature generations" (Jervis 2006:5).

Culture is very important; it is what makes human beings different from other creatures (see Jervis 2006:2).The goal of this thesis is not to give a more inclusive definition of the term, but rather to argue the point that culture, whatever its definition, has a very important role in the theological-ethical interpretation of biblical text. Tiénou (1990:20) confirms that: "Whatever our definition of culture is, we must take into account its integrative function and impossibility of separating culture from philosophy, religion and spiritual values. The importance of this for the development of theology should be evident."

How does culture then relate to natural law? This will be discussed in Chapter Four, but for a preliminary background, it is important for the reader to keep in mind that natural law

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[9]John S. Mbiti. 1978. "Christianity and Culture in Africa" in *Facing the New Challenges,* M. Cassidy & L. Verlinden (eds.). Nairobi: Evangel. 273.

presupposes that human morality can be informed by nature. The connection then is, at first, that one needs to understand that culture is not an innate quality; it is learnt and transmitted in a societal context. Therefore, the ability of human kind to interact with the environment, developing adaptations, methods of survival and organising themselves socially, indicates the power of human nature to acknowledge certain principles of conduct in their relationships.

Viewed from the standpoint of culture, this interaction is a process of culture formation.[10]Thus, there is a link between nature and culture; "human nature is essential to human culture [and culture can be seen] as the dynamic process and product of the self-cultivation of human nature" (Brown n.d:8). This link between nature and culture demonstrates that humankind's ability to contemplate God is not limited to the domain of special revelation. It also shows that human morality is not limited to the domain of special revelation, but it can rather be informed by the dynamic process of the human nature in organising themselves socially.

Returning to the link between natural law and culture, the interest is particularly on African cultures/traditional religions. The question one might ask is whether African traditional religions have any relevance, especially to the African Christians who have embraced the biblical traditions? It should be noted that the strand of theology referred to previously make their assertion on the basis of similarities between the African cultures and the Old Testament traditions. This assertion is made to show that God is not disdainful of Africans and by implication, it firstly imbued the local cultures with eternal significance and, secondly, it presumed that the God of the Bible had been known to the Africans before the coming of Christianity to Africa (see Bediako 1995:120 & West 2011:4). As such, this research assumes that nature and African traditional religions or cultures can contribute to the ethical and theological interpretation of the Bible, to such an extent that the dignity of the African people is nurtured and enhanced.

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[10]Pinker (2004:6) has strengthened the argument for the role of nature and its link to culture when he says: "Though human nature has been debated for as long as people have pondered their condition, it was inevitable that the debate would be transformed by the recent efflorescence of the science of mind, brain, genes and evolution. One outcome has been to make the doctrine of a blank slate untenable. No one of course, can deny the importance of learning and culture in all aspects of human life. But cognitive science has shown that there must be complex innate mechanisms for learning and culture to be possible in the first place." It will be argued later in chapter two that natural law is not a set of moral norms as many might assume, but, to use the words of Pinker (2004:6), "what is innate is not a set of rigid instructions for behaviour but rather programs that take information from the senses and give rise to new thought and actions."

1.5.3. Natural Theology

"Theology" in simple terms is reflection about God.[11]In dogmatic theology, the medium through which the object of the reflection is known is called "revelation". Thus, "revelation" is a term that is used to explain God's activities in the history of humankind. By 'natural', it implies reflection about God aided only by the physical environment and the inherent qualities or features of a person.Natural theology in a primary sense is a contrastive notion. It is a "contrast between natural and revealed knowledge" (Dixon 2005:1610). "[It] underlines the relationship between the "book of Nature" and reasonable nature of man throughout history…" (Geffré 2005:1103).Therefore, it implies that natural theology presupposes that God is knowable through nature. In other words, valid reflections about God, unaided of special revelation, are possible. Barr (1999:12) surmises that:

> Natural theology implies that human persons, just because they are human, or because of the environment of God's creation around them, know something valid about God. Extended somewhat further, it may imply that something valid about God can be worked out on the basis of human reason.

Barr (1993:1) had earlier observed that it is the pre-existing "natural" knowledge of God that makes special revelation possible. This implies that natural theology has produced the environment and vocabularyof special revelation and that it is highly significant and important (Barr 1993; Geffré 2005).

The literature review in Chapter Two provides a survey of the development of the concept and how it was construed in different eras. Notwithstanding, a brief outline of what natural theology is not might aid the reader to grasp the concept as used in the research more easily. Barr (1993:2ff) states:

1. Natural theology does not mean absolute knowledge of God by pure reasoning. This is likely true in light of the research's quest, there is much doubt if much could be found in the Old Testament that so much depend on 'pure reasoning' in that sense. There is evidence in the Bible of the existence of an anterior knowledge of God even before special revelation. This knowledge forms the basis upon which pure reason is built and that that it is gained through pure reasoning.

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[11]See chapter two for an elaborate explanation of the development of the concept 'theology'.

2. Secondly, natural theology is not an effort to prove the existence of God by reason. To some extent, natural theology does prove God's existence, but it does more than just proving; sometimes it just states people's thinking about God. In addition, natural theology does not work by reason alone, but it sometimes also works with what is accepted in the society, what is felt. It is not about the existence of God alone, but also with our picture of what God is like.

What natural theology seeks to do is to answer the question: "Is there any human knowledge of God antecedent to his self-revelation in Jesus Christ?" (Barr 1993:3). This question sets the great classic debate of the twentieth century between Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, during which the two main issues were the tension between philosophy of religion and theism. Natural theology is seen as an argument by the philosophy of religion, about the existence of God. It is also assumed that natural theology seems to support theism, which has qualities of universality and abstraction. Theism is disliked because it associates a particular faith or religion with others, which are considered erroneous and defective.

From these observations, a working definition that may serve as a preliminary understanding of the concept of natural theology is that natural theology is a presupposition that God is knowable through nature, nature as phenomena of the physical environment or nature asinherent features, qualities, or character of a person or thing. The main issue in the knowledge of God in this sense is not how much or the extent of what may be known, but that a certain knowledge, no matter how deep it is, is possible and is in fact, highly significant.

1.5.4. Natural Law

Closely connected to natural theology is the concept of natural law. Simply put, natural law presupposes that human morality can be informed by nature. Hastings (2000:465) traces the concept of natural law to Aristotle's principal legacy (which is the argument for "Prime mover" as the principle of the first things) and its (natural law) character in theological terms to Thomas Aquinas. He cites Aquinas' definition of natural law thus: "As a participation in the eternal law by rational creatures" (2000:465; see also Nash 2000:230). By eternal law, God's divine wisdom in directing all actions and movement of created things is meant. It means God's supreme plan of governance of the world. In this eternal law there is what is known as laws of nature and the moral law. Law of nature describes the way things are, how objects or systems behave, while moral laws are prescriptions of how someone ought to

behave. Participating in the eternal law therefore, "signifies the very functioning of a person's practical reasoning with it inbuilt commitment to seeking good and avoiding evil. In this the intellect is enlightened by the divine law which it can reject but not escape" (Hastings2000:465).

Hastings (2000:465) continues in stating that natural law is not discovered through inference from the study of our body functions and needs, but primarily, natural law means that humans beings, by their nature as rational beings, are inherently moral and "the exercise of the moral judgement reflects what God has made us, and necessary opens to us an awareness of the divine law, whether or not we recognize it as such". At the heart of this definition is the emphasis on human nature, and one of the properties of human nature is freedom. Nevertheless, human nature is not characterised by the fact that it is a manifestation of freedom. Our freedom is that which is dependent on our nature; as such, one could say natural law has one modest purpose: Setting a certain limit to individual freedom with their tendencies to exercise power tyrannically (Gonzalez 2008:11; Spaemann 2012:33).

Later, in Chapter Two, it will be discussed how the theory of natural law was construed differently in different eras. However, it is worth mentioning that the challenge that natural law theory is facing was the removal of its traditional theological foundation in search for common bases for coexistence in the modern era.

The main constituent of the definition of natural law is human nature; it contends that through observance of God's creation, human and nonhuman, by their nature human beings are able to discover some certain things about God's existence and His fundamental moral norms. These inherent features are said to be held in common or are likely to be held in common by all human beings. According to Rodd (2001:63), natural law "is understood as the way of ethics which seeks to discover what ethical duties can be derived from a study of the nature of human beings." The challenge posed by Rodd's definition is that it somehow shifts the focus of the real question of natural law. Natural law, just like natural theology (noted previously), do not seek to "discover what" ethical duties can be derived from the study of nature, but it rather emphasises nature itself.

Natural law therefore, means that human beings by their 'nature' are able to perceive through the natural world and by intuition the divine being who is above nature, but integrates nature into the moral order of God's government of humankind. Alternatively, natural law is an ethical theory that recognises certain principles in life that cannot be violated. It recognises

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the principles of right and wrong, which identify any act, that affect the normal continuity of the existence of human beings, as abnormal. It recognises the ontological dimension of the concept of human dignity. Spaemann (2012:44) says human beings possess dignity because they represent the absolute as moral beings, "every one counts."

1.5.5. Human Dignity

Human dignity refers to an intrinsic quality that cannot be separated from other essential aspects of the human person. This dignity is not based on any human quality, legal mandate or individual merit or accomplishment. It is endowed by God. The German theologian Heinrich Bedford-Strohm (2010:214) confirms that: "The affirmation that human beings are created in the image of God (Gen 1: 27) is a qualification of human dignity that cannot be underestimated." Genesis 1:27[12] is said to be the relevant passage *par excellence* for the assessment of human dignity, which "…is given to human beings by their close link with God and thereby affirming a relationship between God and human beings that cannot be destroyed by human misbehaviour, …" (Bedford-Strohm 2010:214). The concept of human dignity presupposes the idea that human beings are created with rights and duties, i.e., by their nature, it is a duty for them to act rationally and ethically. Spaemann (2012:27) rightly defines human dignity thus:

> Dignity is not a property among other empirical data. Nor should we say that it is a human right to have one's own dignity respected. Dignity is rather the transcendental ground for the fact that human beings have rights and duties. They have rights, because they have duties, i.e., because the normal, adult members of the human family are neither animals who are instinctively integrated into their communities, nor instinctually indeterminate subjects of drives, who in the interest of their community need to be kept under social or police control. Human beings can act based on insight, rationally and ethically, and they have the duty to do so.

One may ask, what has human dignity to do with natural law. It is not proper yet to pre-empt the content of chapter four here, but for the sake of preparing the ground for understanding the discourse, briefly, natural law is a concept that underscores role of 'nature'. There is a

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[12] This passage will be considered in more detail later in Chapter Four, where concept of human dignity and its relevance to natural law is discussed.

connectedness between what the concept of natural law emphasise with the basic concept of human dignity. Both concepts recognise that "Human beings can act based on insight, rationally and ethically, and they have the duty to do so" (Spaemann, 2012:27).By implication, this suggests that human dignity and the discourse on human dignity may be embedded in the concept and discourse on natural law. For instance, natural law is saying there are certain principles in life which cannot be violated. It is therefore clear that the discourse on natural law has human dignity as it basic kernel.

1.6. Reasons for the focus on the Book of Isaiah

In his article, *Ethics in Isaiah of Jerusalem*, Barton (1981:1) indicated that:

> I shall try to show that the prophet Isaiah… already had a developed understanding of the basis of morality which has more affinities with the Western theories of natural law than has usually been thought and less in common with the notion of moral imperatives as 'revealed' or positive law, given by God as the term 'covenant'…

The above assertion presumes that there is an ethical system that resembles the Western notion of natural law. This seems unusual to what has commonly been held as Israel's (biblical) basis of moral imperatives. As Barton (quoted above) rightly observes, the common notion about moral imperatives in ancient Israel is that they were all revealed. The laws of the codes (the revealed law of God in the Torah), including those held in common with or perhaps even borrowed from Israel's neighbours, were not regarded as having been derived at from some universal moral law, but as having been given directly to Israel by Yahweh (Martin 1974:193). The prophets seem to be the least likely of all the categories of biblical books, where one would look for something resembling our contemporary understanding of natural law. The nature of the prophetic message seems clear: Every word from the true prophet's mouth is assumed to have come as a direct utterance from God (Deut. 18:12-22).

Firstly, Barton (1981:1) made it clear that natural law cannot be assumed to be central to Isaiah's concerns, but that he (Isaiah) was interested in moral offences, which he sets out to denounce. This denunciation is what Barton speculates "assumes something like natural law as the starting point". Secondly, Barton also notes how scholars have focused more on the predictive aspect of Isaiah's prophesy, neglecting the question of the basis of the prophet's moral teaching. Barton (1981:8) sees the supremacy of YHWH as Isaiah's most cherished belief (cf. Brueggemann 1998:1). Isaiah is guided by the notion that YHWH is the *de*

jure ruler, who possesses absolute power and demands supreme reverence. "The universe forms an ordered whole in which each creature should know its place …" Barton (1981:11) sees Isaiah's approach to ethics as"cooperation in maintaining the ordered structure which prevails, in God's guidance, in the natural constitution of things … and the avoidance of any action that would challenge the supremacy or seek to subvert the orders he has established".The researcher was challenged by Barton's final conclusion (that his conclusion can be defended within a more rigorously and committed form critical environment) to conduct an exegesis (although not with the goal of defending Barton's assertion), of a pericope to ascertain the validity of such an assertion. It is especially with reference to specific passages in the book that critical observations will be made as to the existence of the idea of natural law.

Regarding the choice of the pericope, it will later in Chapter Three be indicated how the text is demarcated, but building upon the basic premise that Isaiah's thinking about ethical obligation depends on maintenance of ordered structure, it will be observed that Isaiah began his indictment against a disregard for this order. This, Barton (1981:11) observes, is a kind of "perversity which man [*sic*]alone seems capable of, for while the natural and animal worlds seem to observe order by instinct, man, [*sic*] in this respect more degraded than his [*sic*] own domestic animals, goes against the principle of his[*sic*] own nature". Thepericope, serving as the introduction of the book, provides the theme that is programmatic for the understanding of the book as a whole (Brueggemann 1998:1).The presence of this cosmic realities and the parable of the ox and the donkey motivated the researcher to find out what role cosmic realities and beasts could be playing in this long speech of judgement.

Perhaps one may question the selection of the two verses to generalise the research topic.Of course this is a legitimate question, especially given the fact that the passage does not stand alone in this literary context.However, the strategic possitioning of the two verses motivated this reseach to focus on them as a case study to find out in what way it introduces natural law, which would serve as a theme to enter the book. Moreover, there is a broad concensus on the shape of the book of Isaiah. Barton (1996:15) affirms and even added that "there is broad agreement at least about the the main blocks of the material, and quite a wide concensus even about the smaller units within these blocks." This consensus informs the research choice of the pericope. The synchronic study of the demarcation of the pericope will convince the reader that the choice of the two verse (1:2-3) is a valid choice to be used as entrance point for the quest on "natural law and human dignity".

1.7.   Methodology[13]

This research is in part a literature study of existing scholarly research. It provides a survey of the history of research on natural law and natural theology, their meaning and conceptualisation and how their content is generated. It is believed that the survey of the development of the concepts of natural law will unravel the possible misconstrual that led to the rejection of the tradition. The survey provides opinions and definitions of the concepts of natural law and natural theology and other relevant terms, which are then used to generate more 'appropriate' concepts used by the research. Inductive reasoning is not the only method to be employed in formulating the theory of the tradition of natural law; where necessary and applicable, deductive reasoning might also be employed. Any theory or conceptual framework developed from this literature review will be used to interpret and ascertain the possibility of using the book of Isaiah to reveal aspects of natural law as one of ethical basis of morality in the Old Testament.

The general approach to the exegetical chapter of the research is a "close reading". A "close reading" is a form of criticism that focuses on the text itself. It focuses on a close examination of the literary features of a text (see Lawrie 2005:72ff). A close reading is also an approach to a biblical text that involves careful observation, as if with a magnifying glass, of the details of the text. Attention is given to notable characteristics of the text and how they relate to each other. Emphasis is placed on how the reader understands, interprets, and makes sense of the text. Lawrie (2005:75) explains that a:

> [C]lose reading requires a sharp eye for every detail and the ability to relate various details to one another … One also has to see how the meaning of a word would have in isolation is modified (changed) by its place within the

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[13]Methodology and Research Design are often used interchangeably. Research design is the blueprint that one follows to reach a conclusion in her/his thesis, while methodology deals with the details of the tools for data collection. Mason (2006:24) explains that decisions about research design and strategy in qualitative research are an on-going process. Even though it is not possible to produce the entire blueprint in advance, there is a need for one to produce a design at the start of the research process. For this reason, this research engages on an extended literature review toprovide an overview of scholarship on the theory of natural theology and natural law in the Old Testament. The research is also designed as a case study, with a focus on the book of Isaiah in the prophetic section of the Old Testament. This, I assume that the principle of natural theology and natural law can be argued and generalise to other sections of the Old Testament. Literature on the background of biblical texts and some literatures on hermeneutic approaches will also be consulted for exegeses of some pericopes from the book of Isaiah. It is also limited to the Tangale as the case study of an African cultural/religious environment. The researcher also relies exclusively on secondary literature to determine the Tangale's understanding of their cultural/religious environment.

whole. *[Sic]* in addition one has to look at the *theme* of the text, its tone, its *imagery,* its *dramatic structure,* and so on.

 A close reading is required for a text like the one under consideration (Isaiah 1:2-3); a genre somewhere between poetry and prose, it helps the reader to come to grips with the uniqueness of the text (see Lawrie 2005:74). A close reading is not a reading of a text that disregards others readings of the text, but involves a dialogue with the previous readers of the text. In this regard, this research engages into dialogue with other scholars' understanding of the text, based on the hermeneutical foundations thereof. This dialogue is necessary because we are dealing with an introductory and programmatic biblical text, which makes historical questions about context necessary (see Lawrie 2005:76f).The research analyses the previous readers' point of view in the light of a personal observation of the text. Thus, the hermeneutical foundations that the research engages with are synchronic and diachronic exegesis of the pericope. These approaches deal with both the literary aspect of the text and the historical aspect of the text respectively. Combining synchronic and diachronic reading is appropriate in an ancient text like the book of Isaiah. This is so because the book has undergone a successive restructuring in the course of history.

A synchronic reading of a text amounts to an analytical approach that focuses on the linguistic characteristics of the text. A synchronic analysis of a text is an approach that investigates the literary structure of a particular text in its current or final form. It analyses text function in relation to its current literary position (see Barr 1995:4).

A diachronic analysis on the other hand, focuses on the history of a text, how it evolved over time. It deals with linguistic and rhetorical features as they change through time. Barr (1995:1ff) made an important observation on the distinction between synchronic and diachronic elements within biblical studies. Explaining synchronic analysis, he says: "Words can only be intelligibly interpreted by what they meant at the time of their use, within the language system used by the speaker", and in case of diachronic aspects, he says it deals with the method of etymology and by etymology, it suggests historical matters, i.e. issues of text's background. In other words, a diachronic approach suggests the reconstruction of the socio-cultural context of the text. In this article, Barr focused on the relationship between the two approaches as a response against the tendency of devaluing the diachronic approach.

Again, synchrony, according to Barr (1995:2) is not anti-historical – "synchronic meanings were also the historical meanings in one sense of the word… as soon as one looks at the synchronic state of language in the past time then one is entering into a historical investigation". This understanding is important in dealing with Old Testament texts, where its production, redaction and finalization took place over a long period. Therefore, applying synchrony to the final text "is dependent at many points on diachronic information" (Barr 1995:7). In the same vein, Williamson (1995:217ff), analysing Tomasino, Carr (who both approach Isaiah 1 synchronically and diachronically) and Gitay (who attempted to read the text purely synchronically), comments on the inadequacy of the scholars to do justice to the texts. Williamson (1995:221), commenting on the main problem, suggested a strong relationship between synchronic and diachronic approaches. He writes:

> A problem which has been noted with regard to several of these studies is the unsatisfactory treatment of the headings in 1: 1 and 2: 1. In some cases, they are deliberately ignored while in the others their witness is overridden or taken insufficiently seriously because they seem to conflict with the wider case being argued. In the present context, however, there is a strong argument to be made for taking them as starting point …They are thus the most promising single element in the text for the discussion of the relationship between synchronic and diachronic readings.

On exegesis, synchronic question is rather a matter of literary paradigm than a linguistic theory[14].For instance, in dealing with Isaiah 1:2-3, the researcher employed the following literary technique as synchronic approach:

a) Demarcation of the pericope - this provides reasons from existing research as to why I consider it meaningful to focus on Isaiah 1:2-3.

b) Employ text criticism (compare MT with LXX, Peshitta, and Vulgate etc.) and then make my own translation in view of the text criticism.

c) Intratextual reading of the pericope - close attention is paid to the literary characteristics of the two verses.

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[14] By literary paradigm, it suggests that synchronic exegesis should not be taken at face level of its linguistic theory from where the idea was derived. The linguistic theory of synchronic analysis of a text suggests that the history of the text can be ignored. However, biblical exegesis deals with a composite text and because there are a lot of speculations about the background information, it prompted the literary quest not in its strict linguistic theory, but as metaphor. By this synchrony, a move from historical-critical paradigm to a more literary custom or theory that deals with the biblical text in its final form is implied, putting into consideration other ancient readings, literary characteristics and its relationship within the larger demarcation and perhaps the canon.

d) Intertextual reading of pericope – comparing Isaiah 1:2-3 with other similar pericopes in Isaiah.

The following background study to the pericope is also employed as a diachronic approach in the exegesis:

a) Socio-cultural contexts of the pericope: –this section presumes that the pericope is part of a post-exilic introduction to the Book of Isaiah.

b) Ideological and theological interpretation of 1:2-3: Is the theological point of view articulated in Isaiah 1:2-3 an attempt to criticize existing ideologies? The theological-ethical conclusions of this thesis must be based on the synchronic and diachronic characteristics of the text as observed in the aforementioned methodological steps.

1.8.   Conclusion

This chapter introduces the research; it begins with the background to the research, which avowedly was motivated during my recent Postgraduate Diploma programme. The apparent lack of attention to the theory of natural law in the field of biblical studies and especially Protestant biblical scholars motivated the researcher to find out what possible contribution "nature" would make in theological and ethical interpretation of the Old Testament. The researcher assumes that natural law and natural theology can enable the appropriation of nature and culture/traditional African religion in the theological and ethical interpretation of the Bible that nurtures human dignity. The chapter also provides some preliminary background to the main concepts of the thesis; natural law, natural theology, human dignity, nature, and culture, to provide a preliminary understanding to the reader with the knowledge of all that they entail.

As an introduction, the researcher would like to conclude this chapter by providing an overview of the proceeding chapters. Chapter Two will be tracing the historical development of the concept of natural law from the patristic era to the contemporary post-modern appeal to the natural law. The patristic conception of natural law, the scholastic conception of natural law, and the modern approach to natural law will be discussed. This will be done for the purpose of laying the foundation of an 'appropriate' construal of natural law, which the research envisages. A definition of the concept of natural law will be generated at the conclusion by way of an inductive reasoning from the survey.

Chapter Three will focus on the exegesis of some pericopes from the book of Isaiah. A close reading of Isaiah 1:2-3is employed with the goal of understanding Isaiah's source of prophetic morality as a way of situating or testing the working definition provided.

Chapter Four will discuss the resonance of the concept of natural law to human dignity. This will bring to light how the text of Isaiah employed natural law as an ethical base to indict Israel against injustice and dehumanisation. The chapter will be concluded by examining how the principle or theory of natural law fits constructively within the context of Africa and contemporary concerns. To be more specific, the definition of natural law is also tested in the cultural context of Africa, with a specific focus on the Tangale people.

Chapter Five is the conclusion; a summary of the chapter will be provided as I reflect on the research questions. The contribution of the research will be briefly stated. Lastly, recommendation for further research will be outlined.

Chapter 2

Natural Law and Natural Theology: A Survey of Scholarship

2.1. Background to the Confusion on Natural Law and Natural Theology

This chapter wants, within the scope of a study such as this, to trace the development and relationship of the concepts of natural law and natural theology in order to come to a definition thereof that can be applied to Isaiah 1:2-3.Briefly, the goal of this chapter is to analyse the epistemological framework of the theory of natural law. It has been mentioned in Chapter One that there exists a connection between natural law and natural theology. Concurrently, this chapter provides a survey of both concepts in order that the more controversial theory of natural law may be understood from the perspective of the role of nature in moral and or social ethics.

This historical survey provides the framework for understanding the possibility of the existence of the idea of natural law, which serves as a point of departure for an ethical and theological reflection. In the introductory chapter, it was observed that natural theology and natural law have suffered as a result of a lack of attention in the field of biblical and theological studies. However, the reasons behind this – especially on the part of Protestant biblical scholars –also need to be explained. This is a further aim of the historical survey of scholarship presented in this chapter.

Within the whole of the study, this chapter serves to provide the basis for an understanding of natural law that is relevant to the Scriptures and relevant within African contexts and contemporary perspective and concerns. However, the background to the rejection of these concepts will help to provide an overview of the origin and the history of the various conceptualizations.

2.1.1. Natural Theology: Background to its Rejection.

The major confusion about the concept of natural theology is probably caused by some of the philosophical associations of these concepts. The tension between philosophical and biblical thought goes back as far as the early period of the expansion of Christianity, when it clashed

with and adopted aspects of Hellenistic culture. Elements of this conflict may be found in the writings of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians and Colossians.[15]Among the early church fathers, some also considered Hellenistic philosophy as essentially incompatible with Christianity. Tertullian (160-220 CE) is typical of the rejection of the philosophy's rational approach to the knowledge of God. He advocates for a discontinuity between Christian faith and Greek philosophy when he says:

> Heresies are themselves instigated by philosophy…what indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the academy and the Church? what between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from "the porch of Solomon" who had himself taught that "the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart" [Wisd. of Sol. 1:1]. Away with all attempt to produce a mottled Christianity of the Stoic, Platonic and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after enjoying the Gospel! With our Faith, we desire no further belief[16] (Tertullian, 1988: 44)

The concept of "natural theology "it is said, depends so much on the rational ability of humankind to know God and his moral will without making any appeal to special revelation. This suspicion against philosophy (rationality) as encroaching upon the terrain of faith (revelation), leads to a long history of neglect of the theme of natural theology in biblical and theological disciplines. For example, Bonhoeffer (2005:175f) observes that:

> The concept of the natural has fallen into disrepute in Protestant ethics. For some theologians it was completely lost in the darkness of general sinfulness, whereas for others it took on the brightness of the primal creation. Both were

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[15] 1 Cor. 1:19-23: "For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate'. Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles" (see also 1 Cor. 3:18-19). Col 2:8: "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ" (NIV). See also 1Tim.6:20.

[16]Tertullian, 1988. "The Prescription Against Heretics" in *Reading in the History of Christian Thought,* William C. Placher (ed.). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Translated by Peter Holmes. From *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* edited by Alexander Robert and James Donaldson.

grave misuses that led to the complete elimination of the category of the natural from the protestant thought; it was left to Catholic ethics.

According to Durbin (1999:139), the concept of natural theology only reappeared in the field of theological enquiry in the twentieth century, when it once more solicited the interest of theologians, philosophers, and natural scientists.[17] The problem, Durbin(1999:139) says, was as a result of what he called, borrowing the phrase from Alister McGrath, the "'crisis of confidence' within the discipline of natural theology in previous years, reaching back to the Enlightenment's lingering scepticism about our ability to derive God's existence or attributes through the empirical observation of nature". What this means, is that natural theology has not been in the forefront of theological enquiry, especially in the Enlightenment period when there was a lot of scepticism. The assumed definitive characteristic of natural theology was that it rules out any appeal to special revelation or supernatural revelation.[18] In other words, natural theology has been charged with a deistic or passive view of God – i.e. a view of God that says God created the universe and sets it in motion, but never interferes with its laws. Therefore, if this assumption is true of natural theology, it is apparently undermining the important place of the authority of the Bible and pushes God away from the governance of nature, which He created and sustains; hence, philosophy and natural theology were viewed as enemies of theological studies (biblical or doctrinal)that teaches just that.

In fact, in biblical theology, the suspicion was so strong that it caused the rejection of natural theology and that it was seldom even considered as a subject of discussion. Barr (1999:168) noticed the absence of works on natural theology in biblical theology, referring to his own

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[17] Nash (2000:227) notes that "the people of this planet are now involved in a great civil and ethical struggle, testing which socioeconomic and ecological vision of the planetary future will long endure." This statement explains the current interest in the resurgence of the tradition of natural law. In the preface of the book, Sullivan (2000: xii) explains the purpose of the collection as an effort to bridge the gap that excluded religion in the discussion of the struggle to sustain earth's environment as viable for future generations. Sullivan says that "ignorance of religion prevents environmental studies from achieving its goals, however, for though science and technology share many important features of human culture with religion, they leave unexplored essential wellspring of human motivation and concern that shape the world as we know it." In short, *Christianity and Ecology* is a "volume…that addresses the critical gap in our contemporary understanding of region and ecology" (Sullivan 2000: xii). Natural science's involvement in the tradition of natural law and natural theology is seen in its constant appeal to the feature of the environment and life. There are collaborations between science and religious bodies that is a pragmatic effort of the natural science participation in the tradition of natural law. They (natural science, especially ecology and evolutionary biology) help us to understand the environmental impact, ecological interdependence (Barbour 2000:385-401). Interestingly, this point became more convincing when in our recent OTSSA meeting (11-14 September 2013) the first paper was presented by a natural scientist, Prof. Jo van As, with the topic: "Endless Forms Most Beautiful and Wonderful."

[18] This is assumed because it is what most of natural theology's critics think and express as the reason to reject the theory.

experience, namely that "[t]he first time I have noticed even the mention of it as a theme within any major work of biblical theology is in H. H. Schmid's interesting and stimulating theology of creation, order and peace". The dispute between Brunner and Barth is seen as another reason for this neglect of the theory or theories of natural theology. Barth simply assumed that there is no evidence for natural theology; that it is simply impossibility, while from his own angle Brunner never tried to valorise the biblical evidence for natural theology.

Another reason for the rejection of natural theology in Protestant circles was because of associations made between it and the Roman Catholic tradition. Barth seems to have convinced many Protestants that natural theology is "a Catholic thing" and not worthy of any attention by the Protestants.

Yet another element of Barthian criticism against natural theology (as earlier noted in Chapter One) is the association of natural theology with German National Socialism (cf. Bonhoeffer 2005:vii, 431). The philosophical foundations of natural theology suggest that the theory of natural law leads one outside of normal biblical scholarship; hence, it seems to challenge the authority of biblical scholarship. Finally, natural theology has also been thought to be a corruptive liberal phenomenon. The rejection was based on the suspicion "that natural theology, [even] the slightest drop of it, might undermine biblical and confessional authority" (Barr 1999:170). Although Barr observes that it is quite true that some natural theology has been associated with liberalism, the incidental link between liberalism and natural theology cannot be used as an argument to deny the existence of elements of natural theology in the Bible. In fact, Barr correctly observes "… it is the *denial* of natural theology, if anything, that detracts from the authority of scripture and it is in that sense 'liberal'" (1999:170).

2.1.2. Natural law: Background of its Rejection

There are quite a number of problems that emerged in the conceptions of natural law, which, of course led to the rejection of the theory. Nash, (2000:229) observes that some expressions of natural law have been associated with moral distortions or perhaps to justify opposing courses of moral behaviour. For example

> Natural law has been used both to promote and condemn democracy, imperialism, gender inequalities, racism, and slavery. Culture –bound values were express as timeless truth. Historical biases, antiquated worldviews, and particular social systems such as medieval feudalism, were absolutized or eternalized.

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Natural law has been understood as a source of ethics that seek to establish an autonomous moral standard. Specifically the Protestant churches are suspicious of the natural law tradition as somewhat deistic. "They see it [natural law]pushing God off into a realm where he may be the remote origin of moral obligation, but is not present in his creation as the one who teaches human being how they should live"(Barton 2002:59; see also Nash 2000:229). Just as in the case for natural theology, so also in the ethical sphere, Karl Barth extended his rejection of natural theology to the concept of natural law by "insisting that God rules the world (and the church, and the individual) by positive law, of which the Ten Commandments are the most obvious example. The good for humanity is what God decrees it to be, not what human beings can deduce" (Barton 2002:59). Jacques Ellul[19], in his *The Theological Foundation of Law* (1969), argues against some construal of natural law from three points of views:

1. *The view concept of man:* Ellul (1969:61) points to the idea of total depravity; sin has caused a total separation between humanity and God. In addition, "even though God preserves man's life, this is no reason to believe that he there by preserves any attribute of Adam". Ellul argues that as a result of humankind's radical perversion, one cannot admit the idea of *imago Dei* as the foundation of natural law as "[t]he fact that man *(sic)* is created in God's image in no way implies that the *imago Dei* remain strong enough after the Fall to generate in man an understanding of justice and of law" (1969:61).

2. *The view of the concept of justice:* The idea of universal justice is said to be humankind's temptation to replace God's justice with a 'creation of man' *(sic).* In natural law, justice is used as a criterion to measure both the action of humankind and the action of God, which is viewed as a superimposition upon human nature. Ellul quoted Ezekiel 33: 17, 20 as condemnation of such an absolutizing of human sense of justice.

3. *The certain concept of the law of God:* Ellul explains that the Christian understanding of the idea of natural law presupposes that God has revealed the true law in the Old Testament and that humans know both the foundation and the content of law and need

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[19]Jacques Ellul (1912–1994) was a French philosopher, law professor, sociologist, and lay theologian. He wrote several books about the technological society, propaganda, and the interaction between Christianity and politics, including *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*. He was one of the key figures in the dialectical theology movement. His dominant theme has been the threat to human freedom and Christian faith created by modern technology. His constant concern has been the emergence of a technological tyranny over humanity. As a philosopher and theologian, he further explored the religiosity of the technological society.

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to apply it. This is said to create a dichotomy between gospel and law. This assumption tends to define natural law in terms of the statutes first given by God. Ellul argues that those God-given statutes are neither law, nor principles of law, nor content of law, even though they teach something *about* law and social problems. They are rather part of revelation and an actual expression of God's eternal will, which are contingent upon their time of fixation and economic and social context.

Ellul's point can be summarised in the words of Henry (1995:2): "Protestant critics contend that the derivation of natural law from what is inherent in human nature implies that God and the supernatural are irrelevant to moral knowledge, and moreover that the theory does not take sufficient cognizance of the epistemic impact of sin upon the life of man." On the other hand, Bonhoeffer (2005:431) "saw with regret that the nature of the natural had been lost in Protestant ethics".

A cursory look at Ellul's points of view for the rejection of natural law seems as if this rejection is legitimate. However, a careful study and analysis will reveal that neither point explains away the real argument for the theory of natural law. The argument for natural law does not claim to be ignorant of the effect of sin on human nature, neither does it assume that nature can be equated to law or principles of law or imply an autonomous and absolute human sense of justice. The historical development of the concepts of natural law would reveal how Ellul's construal misses the point. Against this background of the rejection of the concepts of natural law and natural theology, the research provides the understanding of these concepts from classical thought up to the modern era.

2.2. Natural Law and Natural Theology in Classical thought (Greek Philosophy), the Early Church and the Patristics[20]

In a sense, the history of natural theology is as long as the history of theology itself.

The origin of the concepts of natural theology and natural law can be trace back to the thought of the ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle and Roman jurist Cicero[21].

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[20]The period extending from the beginning of Christian speculation to the time of and including Augustine, is known in philosophy and theology as the Patristic era. The Fathers strove to construct, on Platonic principles, a system of Christian philosophy. They brought reason to the aid of Revelation. They leaned, however, towards the doctrine of the mystics (the belief that direct knowledge of God, spiritual truth, or ultimate reality can be attained through subjective experience as intuition) and, as ultimate resort, relied more on spiritual intuition than on dialectical proof for the establishment and explanation of the highest truths of philosophy.

[21]Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BCE-43 BCE), was a Roman statesman, lawyer, scholar, and writer. He was a judicial officer (magistrate) of great prominence at the time. His writings include books on rhetoric, orations, philosophical and political treatises, and letters. He is remembered in modern times as the greatest Roman orator

Theology was reflections about the gods, mostly in poetic form. In fact, Brent (2008:1f) observes that the term "theology" itself does not have a Christian background. Initially, theology referred to pagan mythological poetry and the worship of the (pagan) gods. The poetic mythological sense of the term was established in the predominant Roman-Hellenistic milieu. Brent (2008:1) notes that in this same age, when the gods dominated the popular thinking, the philosophical movement also was growing. The philosophers' quest was to find the principles of things; that is, "first principles", which are the source and origin of all things.

Brent continues that both the theological and rational quests are said to be cultural heritage of Plato (427-347 BCE) and Aristotle (384-322 BCE). In its early stages, the arguments for natural theology "include the existence and nature of God, for the immortality of the soul, and for the basic principles of morality in so far as they are founded on nature as created by God" (Ward 2003:1). The quest at this period was purely rational in the sense that it never referred to the stories and the reflections about the gods. Having identified Plato's and Aristotle's thought as foundations of theological and rational quest, the next two sections provide a brief discussion of the philosopher's basic tenet of their thought pattern to serve as a point of orientation of understanding the theological dimension of the theory of natural law.

2.2.1. Plato and the First Principles:

Plato is of the opinion that there exist a "Form of Good" that is responsible for the cause of being and all knowledge. This "Form of Good" is what he refers to as "First Principles". In the *Phaedo,* for example, Plato offers an argument for the existence of Forms or Ideas and an argument for our possession of *a priori* concepts of the Forms. Plato bases the argument on the imperfection of sensible objects and our ability to make judgments about those sensible objects. The argument implies that we cannot perceive a thing, for example, 'A', to be imperfect-'A', unless we have *a priori* conception of 'A'. By this, we can deduce that Plato is

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and innovator of what became known as Ciceronian rhetoric. Cicero's works include *De oratore* (55; *On the Orator*) and *De Republica* (52; *On the Republic*) and began the *De legibus* (52; *On Laws*), *Brutus, Paradoxa Stoicorum* (*Paradoxes of the Stoics*), and *Orator* (*The Orator*) in 46; *De finibus bonorum et malorum* (*On Supreme Good and Evil*) in 45; and *Tusculanae disputationes* (*Tusculan Disputations*), *De natura deorum* (*On the Nature of the Gods*), and *De officiis* (*On Duties*). Cicero studied philosophy under the Epicurean Phaedrus (*c.* 140-70 BCE), the Stoic Diodotus (died *c.* 60 BCE), and the Academic Philo of Larissa (*c.* 160-80 BCE), and thus, he had a thorough grounding in three of the four main schools of philosophy (the Epicurean, the Stoic, and Socratic schools of philosophy). In ethics, he was more inclined to dogmatism and was attracted by the Stoics, but for his authority he looked behind the Stoics to Socrates. In religion he was an agnostic most of his life, but he had religious experiences of some profundity during an early visit to Eleusis and at the death of his daughter in 45 BCE. Cicero usually writes as a theist, but the only religious exaltation in his writings is to be found in the *Somnium Scipionis* ("Scipio's Dream") at the end of *De republica.*

arguing for the eternality of human souls. The soul in it prenatal state must have had contact with or experienced this Ideal "Form of the Good", otherwise it would not have conceptualise such a form of the Good. However, Plato believes this prenatal knowledge was made ineffective sometime before birth and only through education it can be redeemed. His method was a dialectical argumentation which, although it does not prove the existence of the "Form of the Good", does contribute however to its non-inferential perception (Brent 2008:1; Cohen 2006:1ff, Ward 2009:4-13).For Plato, the underlying reality of a material world is the existence of the "Form" or "Ideal", which is rational and intelligible "and which ultimately flows from a being of supreme beauty and goodness" (Ward 2009:12). Plato's notion of the Ideal presupposes the existence of a supreme being who is perfect. Plato's teaching influenced his pupil Aristotle, even though he differs from Plato in a substantial way. For Plato, there are three first principles of all things, a Supreme Being, Matter, and Form.

2.2.2. Aristotle and the First Principles

Aristotle makes no mention at all of form as a first principle, but he recognises matter and the prime mover. Plato says ideas coexist with the supreme, but for Aristotle only the supreme is the origin of all other movers (gods). Aristotle's *Metaphysics* contains argument for a "Prime Mover". In this, he offers argument for the existence of God. On the observable fact of motion, change, and causality in the environment, Aristotle's proceeds to offer a theory that there exists "a first mover of all other movers which is not itself moved in any respect" (Brent2008:1 cf. Ward 2003:1).

Brent continues by saying that Aristotle identified the unmoved mover as the mind. Like Plato, Aristotle holds that one can arrive at some awareness of principles without referring to the theological reflections or authority of sacred writing.

Having briefly seen the basic tenet of Plato and Aristotle's philosophy, the research now will examine the early church period and the era of the Church Fathers to see how Plato and Aristotle's thought influenced their theology, as would be demonstrated in the concept of natural law.

2.2.3. The Early Church and Church Fathers

In the aforementioned background, it has been noted that the history of the confusion of the concept of natural theology and natural law is as long as the history of theology itself. It is important to note that even the term theology was in the initial stage rejected by Christians because it was meant for the pagan mythological poetry and worship (Brent2008:1f). It was

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only later, when Christianity became the culturally dominant religion, that theology was Christianised as the Christian task of thinking and speaking about God as revealed in the Scriptures. However, not all Church Fathers rejected the rational method in approaching the issue of knowledge of God, as Tertullian did. Some of Tertullian's contemporaries applied the philosophical vocabularies, concepts and reasoning to expound Christian teaching. Among them were Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria, who used a variety of ideas drawn from the prevalent philosophies to expound their teaching on Jesus Christ. For example, Clement says:

> Philosophy is in a sense a work of Divine Providence… Before the advent of the Lord, Philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness. And now it becomes conducive to piety, being a kind of preparatory training to those who attain to faith through demonstration… Philosophy was given to the Greeks directly and primarily, till the Lord should call the Greeks … [It] was a preparation, paving the way for him who is perfect in Christ… The Greeks preparatory culture, therefore, with philosophy itself, is shown to have come from God to men.[22]

Brent (2008:2) notes that Greek speaking Eastern Christians were "borrowing, altering, and then using prevalent philosophical categories to corroborate and clarify their faith-based views of God."Terms employed in their discussion of God and his attributes were recognisable to philosophers.

Generally, one could say that the Church Fathers played an instrumental role in shaping Christian attitudes towards philosophical approaches or methodology in expounding the Scriptures as it may be found in the Scholastics approach in the Middle Ages, (2.3 to follow). However, the philosophical approach was not limited to the effort of establishing knowledge of God independent of special revelation alone, the movement also extended to the ethical borders or aspect of law. The next immediate point surveys how the influence of philosophy permeated even the ethical boarders.

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[22]Clement of Alexandria. In In Placher, W.C. (ed.). *Reading in the History of Christian Theology.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1988:34.

2.2.4. Law: Philosophical, Jurisprudence and Theological

Many classical philosophers and jurists were convinced that there were rules for human behaviour based on eternal objective(s), which were established in nature and human reasoning. Here again, just as in the effort to rationally establish the knowledge of God, philosophers also claim that humankind has the moral capacity to discern good and evil, that is the law of nature or natural law. The phrase 'natural law' was first coined by the Romans as *iusnaturale*. According to Cicero, in his *De republica* 3.22, "true law was right reason that was congruent with nature." There were two types of law that transcended the Roman Empire, namely the law of nations *(iusgentium)* and natural law *(iusnaturale)*. The law of nations itself was said to have been established by the natural reason of all humankind.

In the third century BCE, natural law was defined as "what nature teaches all animals", including human beings. This was an effort to distinguish between natural law and the law of nations, both of which were common only to human beings. The source of natural law was in the first place the behaviour of the creature, meaning that nature itself provides the blueprint for every conduct. But later, when law was codified, (in the so-called Justinian codification), there was an introductory textbook for the study of law called the '*Institute* of Justinian', in which the source of natural law was identified as God. "Natural laws were established by divine providence and always remain firm and immutable" (Institutes 1.2.11) (Pennington 1997:2; cf. D'Entreves 1970).

It is important to note that the ancient Roman jurists' (particularly Cicero's) concept of law was what early Christian thinkers incorporated into their thought. Church fathers thus saw natural law as originating in and preserved by God and revealed law and human conscience were both seen as natural law. Porter (2005:420), for example, reports that:

> Origen identifies the law of nature with the law of God. Ambrose identifies the natural law with Mosaic Law. Explaining that the latter confirms and extend the former, he also takes Paul's reference to the inner law of the Gentile (Rom. 2:14-15 …) to refer to the natural law. Jerome likewise identifies this inner law with natural law, and in addition, he offers the much-quoted comment that *synderesis*, or reason, cannot be extinguished even in Cain. Augustine identified natural law with the unwritten law of the Gentiles, and as such, he considered it to be universally binding even though, sometimes he adds that it has been entirely obscured through sin. He also associates natural law with the image of God, which he interprets as the rational soul; hence, on his view the natural law is innate…

Porter continues that Augustine connects natural law with the Golden Rule of the Decalogue. Natural law, to Augustine, is the basic moral norm known to all. From it, the fundamental principle of morality is derived. Nonetheless, he observed that sin has limited and corrupted human's moral knowledge. Therefore, God mercifully formulated the precept of natural law in Mosaic Law, particularly in the Decalogue.

Despite what is said in the previous, reflections on natural law and natural theology were brief in this era. The concepts never became important issues for theological reflection. There was not much controversy on the conception of natural theology and natural law. All in all, the Church Fathers seemed to be at ease in using philosophical methods. They incorporated the philosophical approach in corroborating the faith-based and text-based beliefs. Nevertheless, their usage of this philosophical method was not purely philosophical because, unlike philosophers, they appealed to the Christian sacred texts. Church fathers were able to establish the foundations of the concepts of natural theology and natural law in the Bible.

It is evident from the brief survey of this era that there was no resistance and suspicion over and against these two concepts.The only small challenge that this research notices is the absence of a clear distinction between Cicero's two categories of laws. The only distinction was that natural law (*ius naturale*) is what "nature teaches all animals," including human beings, while *ius gentium* was common only to human beings and was established by their customary usages.

Finally, because natural theology and natural law do not occupy the early Church's theological reflections, it has been observed that there was a long period, from Isidore of Seville[23] in the seventh century and jurist Gratian in the twelfth century, without any significant discussion of the topic. This is the transition period between the Early Church and the Patristic era, and the Medieval Era, when the issue reappeared.

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[23]Isidore (c. 620) was one of the thinkers who fall in the transition period from the Patristic era to the scholastics. He and others helped to hand down the traditions of the Patristic age to the new generation and also continued the current of Platonism into the Scholastic era.

2.3. Natural Law and Natural Theology in the Scholastic Approach of the Middle Ages (or in Medieval Scholasticism)[24]

2.3.1. Transition Cultures: The Renaissance of the Middle Ages

At the forefront of medieval thought was a struggle to reconcile the relationship between theology (faith) and philosophy (reason). The works of Plato and his student Aristotle characterises most of the debates in the Middle Ages. Heavy reliance on the rational was the point at which the voice of Christian mysticism was heard uttering its note of warning, and condemning the excess into which rationalism had fallen. Both rationalists and the mystics were able to reach a compromise, so that Christian schools incorporated rationalist approaches in their disciplines without, however, driving the mystics from the field. In other words, the scholastics[25] held high, among others, the authority of Scripture (Bible), a legacy they inherited from the Patristic era. Upholding the authority of the Bible gave the scholastic theories of natural theology and natural law a kind of perspective that is not held by many modern and contemporary theories.

The scholastics engaged, within the bounds of moderation, reason and other philosophical approaches, in the discussion of spiritual truth and theological issues. The Scriptures were used to justify any appeal to natural theology and natural law (Roman 2:14-15; Psalm 19). That does not mean it was a one sided relationship where the Scriptures determined the contours of natural theology and natural law; their reading of the Scriptures were also shaped by wider assumptions about natural theology and natural law, which in turn, were formed by

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[24]The data in this footnote is from Tuner, except where otherwise mentioned. "'Scholastic' is often used to designate a chronological division intervening between the end of the Patristic era in the fifth century and the beginning of the modern era, about 1450. The scholastic period proper began in the ninth century CE during Carolingian revival of learning. Between fifth and ninth century CE, there were intercalary thinkers, as they may be called, like Claudianus Mamertus, Boethius, Cassiodorus, St. Isidore of Seville, Venerable Bede etc., who helped to hand down to the new generation the traditions of the Patristic age and to continue into the Scholastic era the current of Platonism". Initially, the word was used to describe a professional philosopher in Greek. Historically, however, the word, as now used, is to be traced to early Christian institutions, where in the beginning of the sixth century, the head of the school magister was called scholae, capiscola, or scholasticus. Through the course of history, scholasticus came to be used exclusively. This heads of schools taught dialectics, which characterises the manner and system of philosophy in the Middle Ages. Hence, the name scholastics designate both the method and system that grew out of the dialectical teaching of the schools heads (scholasticism), and the period of time. The movement was an effort endeavoured to bring the Patristic (principally the Augustinian) tradition into touch with the new life of European Christianity. They did not abandon Platonism. They knew little of Aristotle, except as a logician. But by the emphasis they laid on dialectical reasoning, they gave a new direction to Christian tradition in philosophy that is quite different to the Patristic era that relied more on the doctrine of the mystics and intuition.

[25]The term scholastics here designates the advocate of a philosophical movement dominant in Western Christian civilization from the ninth until the seventeenth century and combining religious dogma with the mystical and intuitional tradition of patristic philosophy, especially of St. Augustine and later with Aristotelianism. See footnote above for more on the history of the term.

a multifaceted traditions of reflection on the concepts. For example, in the early Middle Ages, Augustine was attracted to Platonic philosophy. His theology was shaped around Platonic thought. He believed that there is useful knowledge that can be used from Greek philosophy and science and that Christians could use philosophy to convince non-Christian philosophers. Schoolmen were willing to go outside the lines of strict ecclesiastical tradition and learn from philosophers like Aristotle and also Arabians (Arabic scholars played an important role in the reception of Aristotle – it was via them that Western Medieval scholars 'rediscovered' Aristotle) and the Jews, whose works had begun to penetrate into the schools of Christian Europe in Latin translations. Scearce (2008:9) notes for example, that:

> European scholarship, intellectuals began to reclaim the domain of reason implied in the logical works of Aristotle that had survived in the literature of the early Middle Ages. Medieval natural philosophy assumed the existence of God and that the universe was formed through an act of divine creation.

These era experience what is referred to as the transitions of cultures in Europe, connoting the substitution of traditions, like the university culture spearheaded by the lawyers. Europe is said to have discovered the art of legislation, which was instrumental in replacing war culture. Emperors began to change their feudal customs and law of their kingdom (see Porter 2005:10ff; Turner 2012; Hittinger 2008:31; Scearce 2008:1ff). Nevertheless, these achievements seem to lead to the re-erupting of the old dispute between philosophy and biblical faith and tradition noted previously.[26] The transnational cultures explain how the Medieval Christian schools were influenced by the philosophy and how their concept of natural law and natural theology were affected. For instance, Medieval naturalism (a theory explaining action, inclination, or thought based only on natural desires and instincts) did not challenge the assertion of the divine origin of creation, but did challenge God's participation, saying that God is only the source, but do not participate in its control. It is important to note

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[26]Carolyn Scearce (2008:8) captures some of these tensions:"The expansion of the Aristotelian corpus both stimulated and troubled Christian scholars. The focus on reason attracted intellectuals. However, propositions of Aristotle, such as the eternity of the universe, conflicted with accepted Christian theology. Scholars who attempted to incorporate Aristotelian ideas into contemporary philosophy sometimes found themselves in opposition to the Catholic Church". In 1277 the Bishop of Paris issued a condemnation of 219 propositions regarding the Faculty of Arts at the University of Paris. Primarily, theologians resented the Faculty of Arts teaching aspects of Aristotle's philosophy without any regard to how it might conflict with the accepted theology (Luscombe 1997). For some time after the condemnation, intellectuals had to be circumspect about their use of Aristotelian philosophy. Nonetheless, the rediscovery of Aristotle's works left a lasting impression on philosophy, as it revolutionized the natural philosophy and theology of the Middle Ages.

here that this is the point at which Protestantism began to raise more resistance and suspicion about the concepts of natural law and natural theology. Protestants charged natural law with having a deistic view of God.

Notwithstanding, philosophers who supported Naturalism sought natural explanations for observable physical phenomena. By accruing to Aristotle's thought, causal explanations for natural phenomena that invoked God's omnipotence or that relied on Scripture were challenged. Naturalists posit that the universe is rational and intelligible to the human mind. In other words, only natural explanations could properly explain natural phenomena.

On the other hand, Christian struggled to combine the knowledge they obtained through revelation with the information they observed naturally using their mind and their senses. Church authorities were alarmed with many of Aristotle's philosophy and commentaries of his work. For instance, Averroes' commentary, *Theory of the Double Truth,* observes that the knowledge obtained through revelation and those obtained by observation of natural phenomena were in direct opposition to each other. It was at this period that people like Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) [27]appeared on the scene, calmly surveyed the difficulties of the situation, and met them fearlessly through his revolutionary doctrine of natural theology. Aquinas succeeded; he won the victory for the new philosophy and successfully continued the traditions established in the preceding century.

Aquinas, with his revolutionary views, rejected Averroes' theory and asserted that "both kinds of knowledge ultimately come from God" and was therefore compatible. Not only were they compatible, according to Aquinas' view, but they could also work in collaboration. Revelation could therefore guide reason and prevent it from making mistakes, while reason could clarify and demystify faith (A+E Networks 2012; Turner 2012; Scearce 2008).

In relation to natural law, there was an absence of the discussion of the concept of natural law from Isidore in the seventh century CE to Gratian in the twelfth century CE. Gratian is said to have compiled, in ca. 1140 CE, an ecclesiastical norm called the *Decretum,* in which he discussed various types of laws that regulated and guided the behaviour of human beings. His collection places natural law in the forefront of future discussions of the structure of human law. In fact, Gratian's collection became the template for scholastic method in theology and

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[27]Philosopher and theologian Thomas Aquinas combined the theological principles of faith with the philosophical principles of reason. Aquinas was among the influential, if not the most influential, thinkers of medieval scholasticism. He studied Aristotle's work, which later became his own launching point for the exploration of philosophy.

philosophy and early modern discussion of the concept of natural law. According to Gratian, human beings are ruled by two things; natural law and customary usages. His idea of natural law was expressly connected to the New Testament passage that is commonly referred to as the "golden rule", Matthew 7:12. He defines natural law as the injunction to treat other beings with care and dignity. Gratian definition is said to have stimulated the jurists after him to reflect on the values of natural law; the rendering of justice and the administering of equity in the legal system (Pennington 1997:2; Hittinger 2008:31; D'Entreves 1970:37).

In general, Aristotle's thought profoundly influenced the Scholastics. However, the Scholastic theologians did not adopt everything Aristotle taught. They departed from Aristotle in their reliance on Scripture and their belief in the existence of an active God, who is seen as the causality of every natural phenomenon by his supernatural power.[28] Their theories of natural theology and natural law are crucial for an understanding of the concept that would be relevant in certain contexts, particularly in an African context and contemporary challenge of universalism. A better understanding of Aquinas will lay the foundation for drawing the relevancy of the theory of natural law to texts like the selected pericope (Isaiah 1:2-3) and its implication for a contemporary African. The exegesis is carried out in chapter three, while its implication for a contemporary African is done in Chapter Four.

2.3.2. Thomas Aquinas' Natural Theology and Natural Law

Before proceeding to the issue of natural law and theology in the Modern Age, it will be worthwhile to reflect some more on the views of Aquinas, who for many epitomises scholastic reflection on the topic. Aquinas is referred to as the 'famous natural theologian.' He synthesises Aristotle's philosophy with Christian teachings. Aquinas and some of his contemporaries, like John Dun Scotus[29], avowed that faith and reason play vital roles in people, both in perceiving and proving the existence of God. Aquinas believed that reason was sufficient to obtain at least some certain knowledge of God. He believed that the existence of God could be proved by reasoning in the following five ways:

1. Observing movement in the world as proof of God, the "Immovable Motor";

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[28]Although, Grant (2006:7) observes that: "Medieval appeals to God's absolute power however had little, if any, religious motivation."

[29]Scotus was a "Franciscan monk", who later sought to refine Aquinas' work. It was reported that he "came to maturity after the Condemnation of 1277, and so encountered a more theologically conservative environment than Aquinas … Scotus also felt that Aquinas had potentially limited God's role too much by claiming that God didn't interfere with rules of nature. He argued that God could do, might well do, anything short of behaving in logically impossible way" (Scearce 2008:12).

2. Observing cause and effect and identifying God as the cause of everything;

3. Concluding that the impermanent nature of beings proves the existence of a necessary being, God, who originates only from within himself;

4. Noticing varying levels of human perfection and determining that a supreme, perfect being must therefore exist; and

5. Knowing that natural beings could not have intelligence without it being granted to them by God.

On the issue of law, Aquinas seems to reflect his contemporary, Italian jurist Huguccio's analysis of Gratian's definition of natural law. He (Gratian) locates the origin of natural law in human beings. "Natural law is reason, and that reason is the power of the soul (*naturalisvis animi*) that permits them to distinguish good from evil. This reason is called 'law' (*ius*) because it commands and 'law' (*lex*) because it binds" (Porter 2005; Pennington 1997). Aquinas believed that the laws of the State were a natural product of human nature, and were crucial to social welfare. He defines law as "an ordinance of reason, for the common good, made by a competent authority, and promulgated" (Hittinger 2008:32). Aquinas also identifies three types of laws; natural, positive and eternal. Positive law is the law of the State, or government, and should always be a manifestation of natural law. Eternal law, in the case of rational beings, depends on reason and is put into action through free will, which also works toward the accomplishment of our spiritual goals (A+E Networks 2012; Gonzalez 2008).

Aquinas' notion of natural law stems from the very nature of practical reasoning. This is clearly expressed in words of Aquinas himself:

> Every act of reason and will in us is based on that which is according to nature … for every act of reasoning is based on principles that are known naturally, and every act of appetite in respect of the means is derived from the natural appetite in respect of the last end. Accordingly the first direction of our acts to their end must need be in virtue of the natural law (from *ST* I-II, q. 91, a. 2. ad 2, as quoted by Gonzalez 2008:14).

Gonzalez sees two notions as the glaring aspects of Aquinas' concept of law; the notion of the intellect and the notion of the natural will. These notions are different dimensions of the same power to Aquinas; the intellect as the repository of the first universal principles of

knowledge (natural law), while reason mediates between those principles and conclusion. The intellect serves as law for reason. The intellect is not innate, so when habit is referred to as innate, it is the intellectual power of the soul that is being referred to. In matters of practical principles, virtue and positive law are to a certain extent, the natural development of these principles, which include the perceptive dimension of practical reasoning (Gonzalez 2008:11ff). Natural law as understood here governs humanity's sense of right and wrong. It is defined as an active participation in eternal law. Human beings, as rational creatures, have a share of eternal reason that underlies their sense of participation in eternal law.

Pennington (1997:4) summarises Aquinas' conclusions that natural law has it origin in human nature, which is the same in all human beings. He says that reason is the foundation of Aquinas' natural law. Again, he says that the primary goal of natural law is to direct human beings towards good by (1) following the order in nature, (2) obeying what nature has taught, and pursuing the inclinations and tendencies of human reason.

In summary, two distinctions of laws were made by the scholastics in this era; the primary and the secondary. The primary sense is natural law that was established by nature and the secondary sense is one that was established by the natural order of the world (Porter 2005:13; Pennington 1997:3). The primary sense was identified from the Scripture in Paul's reference to the unwritten law of the Gentiles as interpreted through the Patristic commentary.

Although it was earlier observed that that some resistance and suspicion started developing due emphasis on reason and naturalist point of view, the aforementioned survey of the Medieval Era reveals how the scholastic resolved the tension. They married what they perceived to be two sources of knowledge, "nature" and "divine source". From their effort, we therefore understand that natural law and natural theology has gained a strong footing. It should be understood that when Aquinas claims the sufficiency of human reason to have certain knowledge of God from nature, he is not proposing the autonomy of human ability, but rather ability based on the intrinsic qualities engrained in the character of the human soul as being created in the image of God. The scholastic conception of natural theology and natural law is crucial for an understanding of the concept of natural law that is theologically sound in matters of ethics. What do we then find in the Modern Era? Why was the suspicion and resistance still fresh, despite the scholastic handling of it? In the following section, the research will peruse through the Modern Era for clues.

2.4. Natural Law and Natural Theology during the Modern Era

2.4.1. The Context

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"(Thomas Jefferson).

These words by Thomas Jefferson are indications of the influence of the scholastic period upon modern thoughts. After Aquinas' synthesis of Christian teaching and the philosophical approach, there were several people who concluded that human conduct is motivated wholly by self-interest. The modern period witnesses the proliferation of various theories of natural theology and natural law, which came because of various non-reconcilable principles. Non-reconcilable principle here implies theories of the origins and source of all things (Gonzalez 2008:11). Despite this, Gonzalez (2008:11) remarks that none of the modern theories of natural law lack medieval precedents. She points out the point at which the modern theories, particularly the group she called the voluntarists, have changed from medieval theory. She observes that the voluntarists rely on discrete commands given by God now and then, in distinct situations[30]. They have abandoned the Aristotelian teleological vision of nature(seeBrent2008:4).

The proliferation of theories on origin and cause of all things has lead modern ethics to embark with enthusiasm on the adventure of founding moral law upon an independent investigation of nature, which no longer had scholastic reasoning for a guide, but rather the paradigm of the new science of nature. Gonzalez (2008:11) notes how the historical context, which was marked by wars of religion, was influential in dictating the tone of the search for the common bases for coexistence. This search for the common bases for coexistence consequently succeeded in driving the mystics from the field, and natural theology and natural law became types of autonomous philosophical approaches without any theological reference.

2.4.2. Modern Conceptions of Natural Law and Theology

Aquinas' approach in the Medieval Era received a variety of responses. Some philosophers and theologians held that knowledge of God might not be gained apart from faith and divine

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[30] Any ethics based on such dependence on discrete commands, has the tendency to fall into pure occasionalism, actualism and situationism – implying that ethical decisions are made existentially in each moment and situation, thereby denying the basic assumptions about human's ability to make moral judgement. Consequently, there is no bridge to the public order of life.

revelation. Others continue to hold that nature afford some certain knowledge of God. The rise of modern science introduced a new dimension to the investigation of natural phenomena. Natural theology began to incorporate this scientific and experimental philosophy to justify their religious beliefs, and as a new source of knowledge. Natural theology thus posits that knowledge from science compliments faith base knowledge. It is believed that the work or result of scientific inquiry is but a reflection of the attributes of a good, powerful, and intelligent God (Paley's argument from natural design). On the other hand, several philosophers rejected the Christian view of natural theology and Aristotelian teleological view of nature. Some of these philosophers and their philosophies are worth mentioning:

1. Descartes (1596-1650) suggests ignoring totally the argument of final causality (Aristotelian) and proffered a new version of Anselm's ontological argument for the existence of God. He advanced his theory by avoiding presuppositions about the external world and even of its existence, pure reasoning (Gonzalez 2008:11).

2. David Hume (1711-1776) is said to have criticised the Aristotelian form of natural theology and various divine attributes. In his book, *Treatise on Human Nature*, ethics appeared without theological reference to either content or obligatory force. Natural law, in his, view "ultimately designated the basic conventions upon which social orders rest" (Gonzalez 2008:11).

3. Emmanuel Kant (1724-1805) rather decided to sit on the fence by posing the most significant challenge to theology, natural theology and philosophy. Kant was sceptical of the rationalist metaphysical ambitions and at the same time, never gave in to Hume's scepticism, which has gone to the extreme and threatened metaphysics and even new science as well. Kant held that the argument for the existence of God cannot prove the rationalist point because of the limits of human cognitive capacity (Gonzalez 2008:11).

In addition, as a modern phenomenon, the concept of natural law has developed into multifarious forms. Of course, there were differing principles that informed the varying concepts of the theory. It has previously been noted that the historical context marked by a war of religion lead to giving of a new role to natural law, that of searching for a common base for peaceful coexistence. Haakonssen (2008:68) captures this when talking about natural law in the Protestant tradition, saying: "Seventeenth and eighteenth-century thinkers were well aware that natural law was prominent in both ancient and medieval thought, but in their

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eyes it acquired a new role with the division of Christianity and the emergence of modern statehood."One major characteristic of rationalist thought at this period was its effort to detach natural law from the theological beliefs and practices that characterised it (natural law) in the patristic and scholastic periods (e.g. David Hume).Porter [31](2005:1) expresses this by quoting Ernest Barker:

> Allied to theology for many centuries … the theory of Natural Law had become in the sixteenth century, and continued to remain during the seventeenth and eighteenth, an independent and rationalist system, professed and expounded by the philosophers of the secular school of natural law.[32]

In this period (sixteenth-eighteenth centuries),natural law was in agreement with reason; reason, in contrast to the view held by the scholastics, was seen as the very expression of natural law and not a means of discovering it. Natural law became a product of autonomous reason, which led to the polarization of the Christian body on these concepts. The Protestant and the Anglican camps, with their emphasis on *sola fide, sola scriptura, etc.,* become suspicious and therefore resisted the concepts, while the Catholic Church tradition embraced it. In the Catholic tradition itself, there were two approaches. Some decided to use modern philosophy for theological purpose, while others decided to resurrect the thought of Aquinas. Brent(2008:5), referring to the latter group, remarks: "Thomists disagree amongst each other on how to relate to strands of contemporary thought such as science and Kant. So neo-Thomism grew in many directions: Transcendental Thomism, Aristotelian Thomism, Existential Thomism and so forth". The most glaring characteristic of this polarisation is the age longstanding issue of the acceptance of the existence of truths that humans know, as well as the existence of revealed truths of faith. Just like in the Mediaeval Era, there were still others who held that these two kinds of truths were in direct opposition to each other, yet others saw these kinds of truths as complementing each other and never contradicting one another. Those who held the non-contradiction view were concerned with trying to coordinate what they knew with what they believed. For example, the concern about natural law form the Protestant angle became the quest to find a basis for moral life that did not

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[31]Porter is a Professor of Moral Theology at the University of Notre Dame. Her *Nature as Reason: Z Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law* (2005) has been described as the capstone of her "twenty years intense research and extensive writing on Thomistic and Christian ethics" (cover page), in which a "theological account of natural law" was given (2005:1).

[32]Porter took this quotation from Ernest Barker (*Traditions of Civility,* 1971:216).

conflict with the basic biblical teaching and at the same time, which was neutral with respect to confessional religion.

However, on the other hand, the eighteenth and nineteenth not only witnessed to the neo-Thomistic movement among the Catholics, there were also other movements from the Protestant side that sought to re-evaluate and restore Reformation teachings. Among such movements was the "dialectical theology movement", a reactionary movement to Enlightenment philosophy and German Idealism. Famous in this movement, in relation to natural theology and natural law, were Karl Barth and Emil Brunner. These two scholars exemplified the polarisation of opinions mentioned in the previous paragraph. More on this movement/theological current follows in the next section.

2.4.3. The Influence Dialectical Theology

Dialectical theology is a twentieth century movement, a form of neo-orthodox theology emphasizing the infinite tensions, paradoxes, and basic ambiguities inherent in Christian existence, and holding – against rationalism– that God is unknowable to human beings, except through divine grace and revelation(*Random House Unabridged Dictionary,* 1997). Dialectical theology was developed in opposition to nineteenth century liberal Protestantism. The movement "both altered and intensified the attitude of theologically conscious biblical scholars towards philosophy" (Barr 1999:147). Barr summarises three outcomes of how dialectical theology has moved into contrary directions:

(1) It encouraged both strong personalism[33] and existentialism[34].

(2) It encouraged scholars to ignore philosophy, to regard it as an enemy of theology.

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[33] A philosophical school that developed throughout the nineteenth century as a reaction to perceived depersonalizing elements in Enlightenment rationalism, pantheism, Hegelian absolute idealism, individualism ,as well as collectivism in politics, and materialist, psychological, and evolutionary determinism. In its various strains, personalism always underscores the centrality of the person as the primary locus of investigation for philosophical, theological, and humanistic studies. It is an approach or system of thought that regards or tends to regard the person as the ultimate explanatory, epistemological, ontological, and axiological principle of all reality, although these areas of thought are not stressed equally by all personalists and there is tension between idealists, phenomenological, existentialist, and Thomist versions of personalism (Williams & Bengtsson 2011:1).

[34]"Existentialism"… may be defined as the philosophical theory which holds that a further set of categories, governed by the norm of *authenticity*, is necessary to grasp human existence. Existentialism does not deny the validity of the basic categories of physics, biology, psychology, and the other sciences (categories such as matter, causality, force, function, organism, development, motivation, and so on). It claims only that human beings cannot be fully understood in terms of them. Nor can such an understanding be gained by supplementing our scientific picture with a *moral* one. Categories of moral theory such as intention, blame, responsibility, character, duty, virtue, and the like *do* capture important aspects of the human condition, but neither moral thinking (governed by the norms of the good and the right) nor scientific thinking (governed by the norm of truth) suffices. (Crowell, 2010: 1)

(3) It encouraged some of them to suppose that the Bible itself provided something, hardly a philosophy, but a way of thought, a mental pattern, which could be derived from the Bible and then be reapplied to the Bible with the assurance that the result would be the right interpretation of the Bible (Barr 1999:147).

According to Barr, existentialism was a key concept in many current movement of dialectical theology. The work of Bultmann is said to show the relevance of existentialism in the field of New Testament scholarship. In the Old Testament field, Emil Brunner is said to be more influential, specifically his works *Divine-Human Encounter* (1943), *Revelation and Reason* (1946). Barr (1999:148)explains in the words of Childs that Brunner's theology was "adamant in placing the Bible at the centre of its work." He added that on the one hand, Brunner introduces certain philosophical trends and their relevance to biblical theology, while on the other hand, he encourages an anti-philosophical ethos of biblical theology.

Existentialism questions the validity of the famous philosophical thinking: 'the Object-Subject Antithesis in Thinking', i.e., it questioned whether truth could be known through these methods of reasoning. However, it engages with some realities of the Bible and enables these realities to be valorised in a salutary way, by which at the end they become dogmas in the hand of biblical theologians that question such dogmas and term them heresy.

What this means is that the existentialist philosophical approach was questioned, but in some dimension it was productive because some dogmas were built through the approach. For example, Origen, who promulgated the doctrine of Trinity, was influenced by existentialism. He contemplated the existence of the Holy Spirit that the Bible talks about as hovering over creation, the wisdom of God being delighted over creation, and the transcendence of God. From this, the doctrine of the Trinity was developed (Ward 2009:12).In other words, "Platonism provided the concept in terms of which Christian orthodoxy was defined" (Ward 2009:12). This important aspect of philosophy (existentialist) was not given any consideration; rather it was combined with the continuing hostility toward philosophical seriousness as seen in Brunner's contrasting argument; hence, there was a call for discontinuity with any serious study of philosophy "since theological truth was known independently of the one true philosophy, while little would be gained from many wrong ones" (Barr 1999:150).

Dialectical theology laid emphasis on revelation, which had helped in reviving the rejection of philosophy. Philosophy was seen as "empty deceit" and is viewed as human trading (cf.

Col. 2:8) in contrast to divine wisdom. Biblical scholars tended to be more severe with regard to idealist philosophies, as it was assumed that even a little drop of it in theology might distort it. The rejection of idealist philosophy by biblical scholars were accentuated by Barth's rejection of natural theology – the latter seen as evoking an idea of God that is quite different from what God had revealed about himself. "Generally speaking, serious involvement with philosophy is alien to the atmosphere of dialectical theology…" (Barr 1999:151).

Biblical theology, like dialectical theology, sees itself as opposed to philosophical thinking because it suggests a theology based upon the Bible. However, some philosophical assumptions are followed in some works on biblical material. In this sense, biblical theology was eclectic in its choice of philosophical assumptions that seem helpful to its own aims and uses it to discredit contrary theological positions. An example is the question of history, which is emphasised in most biblical theology. Historians are said to have philosophical presuppositions. Barr explains the eclectic approach as the inadequacy of biblical theology in handling philosophical questions. Fear of engaging with philosophical thought has led to the negligence of many areas in biblical theology. Old Testament ethics is one such area, particularly natural law as an ethical base. Having discussed how the modern era engages with philosophical reasoning and the fear and opposition expressed by people like Barth, it is proper to now make some preliminary conclusions (redefining natural law), based on the history of the conceptualisation of the theory.

2.5. Preliminary conclusion: What is Natural law?

From the previous discussion, there has been an undeniable effort over the centuries/from the earliest times to account for the reality of the sense of justice that is innate in all human beings. This innate sense of justice refers to the idea of natural law. This discussion also shows that there have been futile efforts to reach agreement on some elements, for example the foundations, content, and viability of the force of this law that is due to nature. The historical survey, particularly in the Mediaeval Era, reveals the points at which the concepts became suspicious. In the Modern Era, the resistance was intensified. Natural theology was seen as a process of knowing God that emphasises rational ability without appealing to God himself. In a like manner, natural law had become an independent and rationalist system, professed and expounded by the philosophers of the secular school of natural law. This section is an evaluation that is geared toward providing at least a constructive theory that is true to the Scripture and theologically relevant. In subsequent chapters, this definition will

then be evaluated in the light of the selected pericope (Isaiah 1:2-3 as case study) and whether the theory might contribute to the theological and ethical interpretation of biblical passages, both in the Old and New Testament.

2.5.1. Nature as Natural law

It is important to understand natural theology as a process rather than a doctrine (Collins 1998:3). Knowing this helps one understand the goal of natural theology and natural law, which Durbin (1999:140) observes is the following:

> [G]oal of natural theology is not simply to derive propositional knowledge about God from observation of nature. Rather its task is to understand and interpret nature within the rule Trinitarian economy of salvation and discern the nexus between the normal world of our experience and a transcendent reality… In short, natural theology is a way of observing nature that reflects our assumptions, theological convictions, and the insight that arise from our philosophical reflections (1999:140).

The concepts of natural law and natural theology are grounded in the argument for nature. By grounding natural law and natural theology in nature, creation theology is presupposed, i.e. an answer to the question: "Where does nature come from"? From a theological point of view, natural theology and natural law may be rooted in the Scripture, especially the Old Testament. The Old Testament's creation narrative reveals that nature is part of creation and is a result of the actions of the Creator. Grounding natural theology and natural law in 'nature' emphasises the power of the human mind to know the Creator and moral discernment from creation, rather than just being guided by some sets of rules of right conduct. For an understanding of the role of nature as claimed by natural law and natural theology, the biblical worldview of natural environment is very crucial, otherwise the possibility of a continuation upon the path set by Lynn White and Gerhard von Rad[35] and their views on Scripture will become the order of the day. For an understanding of a biblical

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[35]Lynn White and Gerhard von Rad are two watershed figures in the history of modern biblical interpretation. White saw biblical religion as responsible for the ecological crisis and bases the thesis on the Genesis creation account as articulating anthropocentrism. White's argument has been refuted as a misinterpretation of the biblical passages. However, this attack has prompted biblical scholars to reflect on the natural world. History-oriented interpretation was rooted in biblical scholarship. Von Rads' view of the Bible exemplifies another path that many biblical scholars held on the relationship of the Biblical revelation and nature (natural world and innate human quality). Von Rad saw Israel's (biblical) worldview on the natural world as "an ancillary function for Israel's doctrine of redemption", meaning that nature has no other function except that reference are made to them only in connection to the unfolding drama of redemption of Israel and the salvation of the world which culminate in the person of Jesus Christ.

worldview of nature, the approach taken here is single dialogue partners. Their views regarding specific themes are used as sources for this discussion on nature as natural law because they represent three distinct, but complementing views on the subject.

2.5.1.1.   McKenzie on Creation (1974)[36]

McKenzie explains various views concerning creation myths. These views are not the concern of this research. However, the relevant area to this work is McKenzie's view concerning the biblical myth that Yahweh is seen as the faithful one controlling and restoring the order of nature and that Creation is seen as the motif of faith in the promises of Yahweh. Creation in the biblical account is good.[37]

McKenzie distinguishes the creator from the creation; the creator is above and outside of creation, but uses various natural forms as mode and means of revealing and communicating with the people He desired to revealed himself and communicate with (Theophany). These theophanies are expressions of Yahweh's power as not inhibited by the evil competitor in heavens, on earth, or under the earth. It also shows how nature is integrated into the moral order of Yahweh's government of humankind.

2.5.1.2.   Simkins on Natural Environment (1994)[38]

Simkins outlines three main issues in studying Israel's relationship to the environment; their impact on the environment, the influence of the environment in the development of their religion and culture, and their view of the environment. Simkins also further discusses three major worldviews regarding people's relationship with the natural environment; subjugation

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[36]John L. McKenzie was a pioneering and outspoken Roman Catholic biblical scholar. He did his doctoral degree in sacred theology at the Weston School of Theology. His *A Theology of the Old Testament* was an effort to trace the reality of Yahweh as presented in the biblical creation narrative. One of the sections of this work entitled "Nature" discusses the impact of "nature" in Israel's experience of God.

[37]The Hebrew adjective טוב (good) that describes creation has a broad meaning. The meaning comprises "… to the moral opposite of evil… pertaining to having good value… generous, formally, good, i.e., pertaining to giving much in relation to one's possessions… pertaining to a joyful time or feeling… beautiful, i.e., pertaining to being pleasant to the eye [and] pleasing, i.e., pertaining to a feeling of fondness and enjoyment" (Swanson 1997:3202II). Implicit in the nature or quality of the creation is the idea that God uses both natural environment and human nature in carrying out his moral function as in maintaining moral law, bestowing value to other creation human and environment and the maintaining of social relationships, etc.

[38]Ronald A. Simkins is a Professor of Theology and Classical & Near Eastern Studies at Creighton University. He specializes, amongst other things, in the Bible and the environment, gender and the worldview of the ancient Israelites, and the political economy of ancient Israel. Simkins' current work includes Virtual World Project: exploring the ancient world through virtual reality (project director) and General Editor of the *Journal of Religion & Society. Simkins' volume, Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel: Creator and Creation,* is a kind of response to accusation against the Bible as responsible for the current environmental crisis.

to nature, harmony with nature, and mastery over nature. Creation myths and metaphors reveal ancient Israel's assumptions concerning the relationship between humans, God and natural world.

Israel interpreted their history in relation to God's activity for or against them. Natural phenomena like draught, famine, and even human oppression were seen as God's instruments. Favourable circumstances are God's blessing and approval of a good relationship. However, some approaches to biblical interpretation have resulted in certain worldviews that, on the one hand, ascribe no active role to the natural world and as such, these strands of interpretation see the world only as raw material to be exploited. On the other hand, it has credited nature with an active role in interaction with both gods and humans. The latter worldview personifies the forces of nature as god and therefore, human beings are subject to nature.

Israel's religious worldview, however, has elements of both views. Simkins uses the concepts of theophany and covenantal relationship as means through which God communicate with his people. Nature is seen as communicating God's attributes and reminding his people of his covenant promises. From this, one can see that nature, according to Simkins' understanding, is portrayed as principle through which the human capacity for discerning between good and evil operates.

McKenzie's views in the biblical worldview of the creation and Simkins' discussion on Israel's worldview on the environment lay the foundation for what Wright discusses in what follows. His summary or perspective on Old Testament ethics is solidly built upon these worldviews.

2.5.1.3.   Wright on the Structure of OT Ethics (2004)[39]

Wright rightly argues that the structure of Old Testament ethics is built in Israel's worldview. He describes Israel's worldview with reference to three focal points; the theological angle (Old Testament ethics is based on the person and works of God; see McKenzie's and Simkins' aforementioned perspectives) the social angle (Israel functions as a historically specific 'ethical paradigm' for other cultures and people), and the economic angle (Israel's

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[39]Christopher J. H. Wright is an evangelical scholar. His work, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God,* is an effort to provide a way of "understanding and applying the Old Testament ethically…" (2004:17). The choice of the three scholars from Catholic and Evangelical background is to provide a balanced argument, using insight from the two most often conflicting traditions.

spiritual and social relationships can be measured by the use of the land). The third focal point apparently represents the role of nature in the structure of Israel's ethics. Israel saw the land as a gift and blessing to them by their God, but with God remaining the land's ultimate owner. The divine ownership is emphasised in the sense that the earth is God's and is therefore good, distinct from, but dependent upon God.

The goodness of creation reflects the character and image of its Maker (a kind of natural theology can be implied here) and its intrinsic value. It also reveals God's mysterious purpose(decay, death, predation and prodigality seem to be built into the very structure of created reality, yet it this too is valued by it Maker as good).Goodness has an eschatological dimension, as it has not yet attained its ultimate design even apart from the effect of sin, e.g. its enormous capacity for procreation. The effect of sin does not completely destroy this goodness. God's creation is still good and may be seen in human participation with God in the eternal law.

God is self-sustaining and also sustains Creation. The divine ownership impact has some implications. It is not "neutral 'stuff' that we can commodify and commercialize, use and abuse for our own ends. We should treat what belongs to God with honour, care and respect" (Wright 2004:16).

The earth is the Lord's but has been given to humanity with accompanying responsibilities. Humankind is given distinct and special qualities that separate it from other creatures; humanity was made in God's image and given power of dominion. The image of God is not an additional quality to being human, it is what defines us. To be human is to be the image of God and being created in the image of God enables as human beings to exercise dominion over all other creatures. The idea of having dominion should not to be misunderstood however, as to mean the power to exploit. It is a delegation of God's kingly authority. As image of God, humanity is the image of the authority that belongs to God. There is righteousness and kindness in God's exercise of his kingly power over all he has created. Humanity is to reflect the qualities of one whose image they bear. This means to rule with justice, mercy and true concern for the welfare of all, including the non-human. The model of a servant king was the basic idea of the power and authority given for humanity to rule the earth.

As is has previously been referred to in passing, sin has affected God's own economy. There is conflict over resources; corruption of work concept (explain); economic growth became an

end in itself, leading to oppression of fellow human beings; unjust distribution of property seems the order of the day. Wright argues that creation values, the goodness of nature are restored in Israel's economic system.

1. Laws regarding land ownership are formulated, e.g. Num. 26: 52-56.
2. There are regulations for work and working relationship, Ex.21: 1-6; Lev. 19: 13; Deut. 5: 15.
3. Sufficiency is a principle to regulate the principle of production and multiplication.
4. There are also regulations to govern the principle of having dominion; justice, compassion and generosity in the fair sharing of the products of economic activity.

With regards to point number one above, one finds that, for example, despite limitations to right of private ownership, God sanctioned private property. Private property rights can be considered to be a kind of natural law, which help one keep the second level of the authority of natural law that prohibits. Wright cites Calvin as saying that "the common society of human race demands that we should not seek to grow rich by the loss of others" (Wright 2004:17). He notes that on the basis of our common origin and common grace and moral demand, concern for the poor goes beyond the borders of the covenant people. This suggests that moral standards are not limited to covenant revelations; nature has taught all of humankind the need for justice, compassion and fairness. Having seen the biblical worldview on nature, and how Old Testament ethics is structured upon such conception, one may conclude that natural law is not alien to the concept of revealed theology as noted earlier. Rather, biblical tradition and worldview is seen to sanction the concept of natural law as one of the bases of ethical approaches in the Old Testament. However, it is proper to have a brief discussion on the relationship of the concepts.

2.5.2. Natural Law/Theology and Revelation

Natural theology has commonly meant that by nature and through nature, human beings have access to a certain degree of knowledge of God and an awareness of him, or at least a capacity for such an awareness that exist even before special revelation. But, what does the Bible teach about revelation? As noted previously, natural theology seems to suggest a contrast to revealed theology. In the context of the contrast between natural theology and revelatory kind of theology, 'revelation' is understood differently by these two types of theology (natural and revelatory). According to J. Barton Payne (1962:44), "[t]hat God communicated his will to men like Isaiah and Jeremiah is one of the basic assumptions of

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biblical theology." Affirming this, Lacoste (2005:1383) comments that the idea of the word revelation is that "God is known through God." In relation to biblical theology, he continues:

> Faith in a hidden God occupies the centre of the experience of Israel (Is 45:15). [Quoting E. Haag] "For the theology of the Old Testament, it is unthinkable that man can know God through *his* own resources. God can be known only when he allows himself to be known, that is when he wishes to reveal himself."

It is interesting to know that the Bible has no real term for 'revelation' as used in dogmatic theology. In Chapter One, it was remarked that "the term revelation is a philosophical or dogmatic formulation used to explain God's activities in history of human kind." In the argument between Barth and Brunner, revelation seems to be the cause of disagreement. Revelation occupies a central place in Barth's argument against natural theology. He uses the term to express God's activity, in which He made himself known or communicates in certain ways with Israel. Barth is of the opinion that the revelation of God occurs only through Jesus Christ and no possibility of *natural revelation*.

However, for some, understanding the term 'revelation' in this way seems to limit God's activity in relation to his people. Lacoste, for examples, declares that "God allows himself to be known in many ways: in catastrophic events such as storms or earth quakes, in numinous experiences of his glory, in the prophetic word authenticated by the formula 'Word of YHWH'" (2005:1383). Other means include the theophany (previously noted), the *Torah,* etc. These various means that YHWH chooses to disclose himself by, imply that one cannot pin the idea of revelation to the assumptions of biblical theologians alone.

For scholars such as Von Rad and Lacoste "[r]evelation is bound up with election and reaches the people through chosen mediators, Moses and the prophets" (Lacoste 2005:1383). The soteriological focus of biblical theologians contributes to the idea of limiting revelation within election and the covenant. What is revelation actually?

Historically, revelation has been categorised as either natural revelation or special revelation by dogmatic theologians (Lacoste 2005; Yarbrough 2004; McKim& Chung 2008). Yarbourgh describes natural revelation as the "knowledge of God that in theory all people everywhere are capable of inferring from the phenomena of nature and human experience" (Yarbrough 2004:733). Within the Bible, such thoughts are also expressed. For example, the Psalmist says: "The heavens declare the glory of the Lord; the skies proclaim the work of his

hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge" (Psalm 19:1-2). In Job 38-40, God responds to Job by referring to his creation that should have help Job to understand God's ways rather than challenging God's "…counsel with words without knowledge" (Job 38:2).

The New Testament passages that explicitly imply nature as revelation is Romans 1:18-20 and Acts 17, Paul's speech, although historical critics have their own way of attributing the Acts 17 speech to another Paul, other the author of Romans. It is therefore evident from these passages that God has endowed nature with an innate quality to reveal and perceive God and his moral will.

However, many theologians have argued that the effects of sin have totally corrupted the nature of humankind, so that only special revelation and grace remain the necessary foundations for knowing anything about God (Ellul 1969:61). Yet another school of thought object the idea of total depravity on the basis that the image of God is still intact despite the fall into sin. The account of the Fall is portrayed to have affected God's creation so that the "goodness" proclaimed after creation seems totally depraved when in Genesis 6: 3-6 God expresses his utter disappointment and regret. Nevertheless, this regret does not negate the rational ability that the creator has placed within human being, but it shows that humans' sense of value is affected, hence the necessity of grace. Yarbrough, concur with this that: "Nature alone, or unaided human apprehension of it may point to God, but they do not mediate what the soul requires for salvation: saving knowledge of God" (2004:733).

In light of the aforementioned, one may therefore conclude that the tension between the theory of natural theology and a 'revelatory' kind of theology is not the problem of inferring certain knowledge of God from the phenomena of nature and human experience, but it is rather the problem of the sufficiency of that knowledge. In this case, one may suggest Barr's (1993:1) view as one possible solution to the issue: "It is the pre-existing "natural" knowledge of God that makes special revelation possible." In other words, natural theology is a pointer to soteriological knowledge of God. At this juncture, it may therefore be suggested that natural theology may be understood not in sense of inferring knowledge independent of God, for that would imply the ages-long charge of a deistic or passive view of God, but that *natural theology means that humankind, by its nature, is able to perceive, through the phenomena of nature and by intuition, the Divine Being who is above nature but integrates nature into the moral order of God's government of humankind.*

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The argument for natural revelation brings to mind another contemporary debate, specifically among African biblical scholars, who seem to infer in their discourse on natural theology that African Traditional Religion/culture may constitute a means through which God communicates knowledge about God self and his will. In the introductory chapter, West's observation was referred to, namely that: "A strand within African theology has long argued that African culture is Africa's 'Old Testament', and therefore that Africans have had their own preparation for the gospel/New Testament." This strand of theology should be understood in the context of the quest to understand the significance of African culture in theological development in Africa.

Renowned African theologians such as Idowu (1962), Mbiti (1969), and Kwame Bediako (1999), talk about the African pre-Christian heritage as useful in setting the background upon which Christianity finds rooting in Africa. It is felt that, in their pre-Christian state, i.e., before the encounter with both the Old Testament and the New Testament, Africans possess some knowledge of God. In the words of Mbiti (1969:1): "Africans are notoriously religious", meaning, among others, that they have a deep longing for God. The role of Christianity – or in this sense special revelation – would then be the fulfilment of that deep longing of this God who has previously been sought in the Traditional Religion.

Mbiti (1978:311) is of the opinion that it is African Traditional Religions/cultures that have "produced the religious values, insights, practices and vocabulary on which the Christian Faith has been planted and is thriving so well today." Taking this in the context of the general argument in favour of natural theology and natural law, i.e., that there is an innate capacity for humankind to infer a certain knowledge about God and or the moral capacity or power to discern between good and evil, it seems to point in the direction of subscribing to the research hypothesises that culture/African Traditional Religion is in a way a natural product. Following from the suspicion and resistance towards natural law and natural theology, it goes then that given that human nature is limited to what it can know its sense of justice and moral judgement is not absolute. The limitation of human capacity puts forward the question of the natural scope of revelation; is faith needed for natural revelation? To what extent is natural revelation accessible to sinful humanity? Or how much knowledge of God is possible through nature and what would be the effect of this knowledge or lack of knowledge?

Having surveyed the development of the concept, it is obvious that the question of natural law and natural theology is not to be directed at the scope of knowledge and absoluteness of human moral judgement, but should rather focus on nature itself. Even though the Scripture

teaches that sin has corrupted nature, surely this does not mean that there is no role that nature plays in God's present design for the world; after all, sin did not remove human dignity (Ps. 8), (see Barton 2003:1).It is in light of these assertions that this research investigates the Old Testament for a possible existence of the concept of natural law and how it relates to human dignity.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter has concurrently surveyed the historical development of the concepts of natural law and natural theology. The survey has shown that the concepts in the initially stage of its conception (although the terms were not coined at that period) was not a problem to the adherent of the Christian faith. Although it notes that that the battle between philosophy and biblical faith was an age long one, it show how early Church Fathers employed philosophical tools in their evangelisation of the Greek and Hellenistic philosophers.

In the Mediaeval Era, the concepts were fully blown. It was during this era that resistance began to grow stronger because of the influence of what this research calls the Renaissance of the Middle Ages. Emphasis was laid on the autonomy of human reason, which tends to water down the authority of the Bible. Nevertheless, rationalist and the mystics were able to reach a compromise so that Christian schools incorporated rationalist approach in their disciplines, however, without driving the mystics from the field. The work of Aquinas on the concepts cleared the suspicion and resistance.

The Modern Era experiences the resurgence of the rejection of the concepts. The Modern Era was characterised by the abandonment of the Aristotelian teleological vision of nature. The rise of modern science in the era introduced a new dimension to the investigation of natural phenomena. Works of people like Duhm and Descartes were based on pure reasoning. They completely rejected the theological reference, either content or obligatory force of natural theology and natural law. Hence, natural law was construed differently in the era. Neither room nor scope of the study allows for a more extended analysis of other scholarly definitions of natural law. However, the following caveat must be mentioned before attempting to give a definition of natural law. It has been observed that natural theology and natural law rely heavily on Hellenistic philosophy and the issue has been addressed philosophically. However, if natural law is also approached as a Scriptural doctrine, it will be seen as an important tool for understanding many biblical pericopes and as a very important response to the contemporary challenge of universalism and rationalism to Scriptural

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doctrines. *One may thus define natural law assets of moral principles that are known naturally through the innate power of the intellect to reason in light of creation and natural phenomena. These sets of moral principles are supposed to be held in common by all of humanity, by virtue of their common origin and nature, as being created by God and in the image of God.*

From the aforementioned, it follows that natural law is a set of moral principles rather than a set of rules that guide the human mind toward right conduct. Nash (2000:230) submits:

> The natural law is not law in the sense of enacted and enforceable legal codes, usually called positive law… Rather, it is a law in the sense of moral norms and obligations, which provide a basis for evaluating, challenging, and transforming human character and conduct, including legal and political structures.

Human beings, by virtue of their nature, have been endowed at creation with the capacity to discern good and evil by reference to creation. It is not an autonomous moral norm because implicit in this definition is what dogmatic theologians call "general revelation". By natural, it means "moral values and norms should reflect the reality of the human condition and …the condition of the planet's whole biota."

There is an emphasis on the *innate power of the intellect to reason* because this help us to understand that natural law is not engraved into our hearts but there is an innate capacity, which Paul identifies as 'conscience…bearing witness' (Rom. 2:15), to know and follow the natural law. This consciousness, which the research refer to as principles, are not full-fledged principles; they are capacities and inclination that cannot only be cultivated and developed, but can also be corrupted. This suggests, as Nash (2000:234f) explains, the rational power refer to calls experiential method covering the totality of being; past and present. Resistance of it limits the subject matter of theology and ethics to past privileged revelation and ignores the continuing revelations of God in totality of existence.

The question might then be asked that, if certain moral principles are then knowable through natural phenomena and human experience, does this not accordingly suggest that, *that which is revealed* through Moses is something already knowable in other ways?

One may respond to this question in the affirmative, because the fundamental principle of morality is derived from natural law. Nevertheless, the question to ask is whether we need the Decalogue. If that which is revealed to Moses were something knowable, it would imply that humanity would be able to live perfectly. Natural law is not ignorant of the epistemic impact of sin upon man however. Natural law predates the 'Fall'; humankind was given these moral principles (natural law) to govern their relationship. Natural law was not necessitated by the Fall. In fact, it was rather the Decalogue that was necessitated by the Fall. In this sense, Mosaic Law may be seen as God's merciful formulation of the precept of natural law to restore the corrupted human knowledge. In other words, one may even conclude, that without the first principles of the moral law, the revealed law would not have been understood.

It is understood that 'natural' is a loaded term with different meaning. Not all meanings are negative in relation to biblical faith; there are positive ones that the research assumed it is biblical. For this reason, a working definition is given but the question remains whether this form of natural law exist in African thought, and if yes, how? Does it also exist in the Bible? In response to these questions, the next chapter provides an exegesis of the selected pericope, to see how the definition is understood from a biblical point of view. In the later Chapter Four, the research will find out if the definition will work in African context. However, first, how is the definition understood in Isaiah 1:2-3?

Chapter 3

A Close Reading of Isaiah 1: 2- 3: Text Interpretation.

3.1. Introduction

Retrospectively, from chapter two we understand that natural law is not an independent or autonomous moral norm and neither is it law in itself but *sets of moral principles that are known naturally through the innate power of the intellect to reason in light of creation and natural phenomena. These sets of moral principles are supposed to be held in common by all of humanity, by virtue of their common origin and nature, as created by God and in the image of God.*

From this then, one might conclude that the quest for justice is innate in all human beings. Therefore, the values of natural law would then be the rendering of justice and the administering of equity in the legal system. The logical conclusion one might make then is that natural law serves as an ethical base for moral conduct, but does the Hebrew Scripture support this conclusion? Where in the Old Testament can we anticipate to find evidence of authors presupposing the existence of natural law? The obvious choice will probably be the Torah (Law or Instruction) with special attention to the three major collections: Covenant Code (Ex 23-24); Holiness Code (Lev 17-25) and Deuteronomic Code (Deut. 12 – 26). A second choice for finding Old Testament examples of natural law might be the proverbs in Wisdom Literature that presuppose some form of creation theology, which is used to motivate a system of cause-and-effect. A distant third seems to be the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament!

"Thus says the Lord" is a common statement in the context of prophetic literature in the Old Testament and it seems to indicate a special kind of revelation. It usually characterizes prophetic messages suggesting that every word from the prophet's mouth is a direct message from the mouth of the LORD (see Barton 2002:74). Barr (1999:475) says: "At first sight the prophets would seem to be of all ancient institutions, the most revelatory in character, the most dependent on the direct word of the Lord, and in all the most remote from natural theology." I would argue, however, that the closer scrutiny of prophetic text might produce

significant examples of natural law. This then leads to the question of methodology, what approach would be for this scrutiny.

The research has noted that the exegetical part employs a "close reading" as an exegetical approach to the pericope. [40] In this definition, some sequences of steps were outlined and this will be followed in the interpretation of the text. The close reading is employed to examine Isaiah 1:2-3, to see how it introduces the concept of natural law. This research does not intend to force the idea of natural theology and natural law into the Bible. It is believed that the observable facts from the close reading would be used to generalise the claim or principle of natural law in the Bible, particularly the Old Testament.

3.2. Background of the Book of Isaiah[41]

Before embarking on the close reading, attention must be given to existing research on the book of Isaiah. The book of Isaiah is described as one of the most complex books in the Old Testament and there are numerous issues that are not yet resolved(Barton 2003:9; Collins 2004:307).To begin with, the question of authorship has occupied scholars' attention for most of the past century. A number of scholars, presuming a more traditional understanding, have argued on the basis of predictive prophecy that Isaiah authored the entire book. Calvin (1850: xxxii) and Young (1965:8) are good examples of those who support this assertion.

Other schools of thought, such as historical-critical scholarship, questioned the possibility of an eighth century prophet, Isaiah, writing the entire book. Most of these arguments are centred on the presupposition that there is a "noticeable theological shift of themes between Isa. 1 and 66… The historical setting of the book appears to change completely after ch.40 and shift to a period 200 years later" (Schmid 2012:403f).This noticeable shift of theological themes and changes in historical context led many scholars to go with Bernhard

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[40] A "close reading" is a form of criticism that focuses on the text itself. It focuses on a close examination of the literary features of a text (see Lawrie 2005:72ff). A close reading is also an approach to a biblical text that involves careful observation, as if with a magnifying glass, of the details of the text. The hermeneutical foundations employed are the synchronic and the diachronic reading of the text. This shall be explained at every stage of the exegesis.

[41] The book Isaiah is classified among the section referred to as the Prophets (*nĕbî'îm 'ahărōnîm*) in the Old Testament. The Prophetic books are further divided into former and later Prophets. Isaiah is set first of the later Prophets in almost all Hebrew manuscripts. This arrangement differs in the Septuagint (LXX), where the prophetic books follow the historical and the didactic books; Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel followed by the Twelve so-called "minor prophets" (Gray 1912:xxiii - xxv; Blenkinsopp 2000:74ff).

Duhm's[42]tripartite division of the book: Chapters 1-39 attributed to First Isaiah, chapters 40-55 to Second Isaiah, and chapters 56-66 to Third Isaiah.

Blenkinsopp (2000:82) notes that the authorship of the book of Isaiah is a matter of an on-going and heated debate, to the point that even the presumption that chapters 1-39 can be attributed to Isaiah ben Amoz is questioned. "[I]t was understood that much of the materials in chapters 1-39 could not have been authored by Isaiah ben Amoz whose name is on the title page".

Another bone of contention in Isaiah scholarship is the matter of the structure of the book. Suffice to say, this goes beyond the scope of this research, but one would like to recognise the contributions of scholars such as Childs, who described a "deliberately unifying theological intent," as well as Ackroyd, Clement and Rendtoff, who identified structural, thematic, and lexical clues indicating an underlying unity as a result of redactional rather than authorial activity (Blenkinsopp 2000:82; cf. Brueggemann 1998:5; Collins 2004:308f).

Recent scholarship is said to shift interest "towards an integrative notion of the original and secondary text" (Schmid 2012:405). The book is now seen to reflect an intentional compositional decision with a clear agenda; "a redactional process molded by theological concerns" (Schmid 2012:405). Schmid goes further to identify some texts that he assumes are the ones inserted to serve as a scribal prophetic text written solely as a connection to different sections (I Isaiah, II Isaiah and III Isaiah). Thus, Isa. 35 is the one mostly identified as the bridge and sometimes Isa. 33, as bridges between I and II Isaiah. Others include 11:11-16; 27:12-13; 51:1-11 and 62:10-12. The traditional division of the book is further challenged by another strand of scholarship, which sees I Isaiah as closely related to II Isaiah and thus concludes that the latter is a theological development of themes in I Isaiah.

Schmid (2009:569; cf. Williamson 1995:211) identified another important issue, an area on which he thinks biblical scholars do not agree, which is the diachronic and synchronic reading of Isaiah. He calls for the synthesis of the diachronic history of the development and synchronic structure for the purpose of seeing the unity of the composition. He argues that

> There can be no doubt …that the book of Isaiah has been composed as a whole
>
> …The inclusios between the first and the last chapters of the book (1, 66)

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[42]Bernhard Duhm (1847 – 1928) "OT scholar. From 1888 he was a professor at Basel. His main work was on the Prophets. In his commentary on Isaiah (1892) he separated Is. 56–66 from 40–55 (Deutero-Isaiah) as a later composition (Trito-Isaiah) and he argued that the Servant Songs were not the work of Deutero-Isaiah" (htt://oxfordindex.oup.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095733994).

clearly indicate that the entirety of Isaiah has been conceived as a (also literarily productive) redactional unity (2009:568).

The question whether the structure of Isaiah is divided into three or two is still in the balance. The underlining matter is that the book as it is, is a unity carefully structured with theological concerns.

Another significant element in the recent Isaiah scholarship also relates to the structure of the book. The positioning of the call narrative of Isaiah is only in Chapter 6. This leads to a broad consensus in recent scholarship that the argument in Isaiah 1 − 5 can therefore be considered as an introduction to the entire book. It will be demonstrated later how important the understanding of these recent development is in terms of the selection of the pericope.

3.2.1. A Survey of the History of the Demarcation of the Pericope

Chapter 1 of Isaiah gives rise to some critical introductory questions. For instance, the determination of the demarcation and the extent of smaller units of the passage, the question of origin and date, the question of authorship, literary characteristic, purpose, context, and so forth.

Briefly, the research has observed in the previous chapter that the close reading employs the synchronic approach in it demarcation of the pericope. The synchronic reading employed in this thesis takes the literary qualities of the text as point of departure, viewing the pericope in light of all that follows. However, it does not neglect diachronic elements by making every element fit into its mould; reflection will also be given to the historical context within which these verses would make sense as an introduction. The approach tries to look at each element in the text in its own right.

To begin with, the canonical text of Isaiah did not commence according to the traditional pattern of prophetic books in the Old Testament, where the prophet's call narrative is recorded first. Most of them begin with the introduction of the prophet and his call to ministry in chapter 1(cf. Jeremiah 1:1ff; Ezekiel 1:1ff; Jonah 1:1-17).In the case of Isaiah's prophetic literature, his call narrative is recorded in chapter 6. The popular argument for this structure speculates that an editor(s) might have added materials and also rearranged some of the material in the process of composition, compilation and copying.[43] Consequently, this

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[43] Clifford (2008:75) posits that "…editing has made Isaiah a unified book. Its unity is owed largely to the fact that it interprets a single process or plan that unfolded over two and a half cent., from ca. 750-500 BCE."

positioning of the call narrative in chapter 6 demarcates chapters 1 – 5 as a unit, introducing the entire prophecy. Furthermore, chapters 1 – 5 contain two separate headings; chapters 1:1 and 2:1.[44] These further demarcate chapter 1 as a major section of the text in its canonical form.

A close reading of Chapter One reveals "a sequence of fairly short stanzas loosely linked thematically or by one of the familiar forms of prophetic incipit or catchword" (Blenkinsopp 2000:180; cf. Tucker 2012:46). Some of these catch words that link the distinct units are expressions from one section appearing in the subsequent units. The extents of the demarcations of these smaller units have attracted various conclusions.[45]For example, Williamson (2006:8) cites a list from Willis' survey thus: "1:1-4: 6; 1:2-2: 5; 1:2-31; 1:2-3 + 21-31; 1:2-17; 1:2-9; 1:2-7; 1:2-6; 1:2-4; 1:2-3". Willis himself favours 1:20, a view he shares, amongst others, with Budde and Roberts. Although the close reading in this thesis will take the literary qualities of the text as point of departure, reflection will also be given to the historical context within which these verses would make sense as an introduction.

This research agrees with the view that chapter 1 contains units of different origin assembled as a redactional unity. It is also assumed that there are elements in these units that could have been pronounced by the prophet Isaiah himself.

Trying to speculate about the extent and the possible historical context of these different units led to the varying conclusions. Tucker (2001:46) attributes this varying positions to the fact that: "More than one organisational or compositional rational [that] can be detected in the shape of the chapter. First, it is clear that there are quite distinct units of discourse, recognized by changes in form or content." He further identified some of the formulas that help in the recognition of the individual units as 'call' (verse 2, 10), cries (verse4) or some concluding formulas, as in verse 20 and of course 'catchwords' as noted by Blenkinsopp (2000:180).

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[44] Isa 1:1: The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzzi'ah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Isa 2:1: The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem (RSV).

[45] Williamson reports that many commentators tried to approach the text by trying to sort out materials relating to Isaiah or his immediate successor, thereby making the primary role of commentary writing a historical reconstruction. The difficulty with this approach is that the text at hand is its finished form. So conclusions are mainly hypothetical accruing to the fact that a text like Isaiah covers a long period of time. More to this is the fact that redactors have not only added to the text but rearranged earlier materials into its present form. This now presents the challenge of double contexts, its historical setting and the later context in which the text is placed.

Accruing to this and from a redaction-critical point of view, different demarcations of the text are proposed by different commentators. Firstly, some commentators view chapter 1 as a unit that is consciously arranged or assembled to serve as an introduction to the first section of the book of Isaiah, i.e., 1 – 39. In this vein, 1:2-26 is viewed as "an orderly arrangement of Isaianic materials to summarize the prophet's message, and 1: 27-31 + 2: 2-4 demonstrated a similar process of expansion to that attested elsewhere in the book in order to bring the section to a close on a note of promise" (Williamson 2006:9). Buttressing this point, some scholars, like Blenkinsopp (2000:85), see a connection between 1:2, 28, 31 and the last three paragraphs of the last chapter (66:17, 18-21, 22-23 all rounding off with verse 24).

However, it is noted that this argument should not be pushed so far as to mean that chapter 1 serves as an introduction in the sense of giving summary of the content of either the whole or a section of the book. This is so because of to the fact there are several themes in the book that are not introduced in chapter 1. More so, it is argued that the rhetorical standpoints of those passages which appear to be linked together are different. Therefore, the extent to which this argument stands is that: "[Chapter 1] thus serves as an introduction to the book in the sense of an appeal to the reader to repent in the light and on the basis of all that is to follow; it prepares the reader's frame of mind at the start of the book rather than anticipating what is to come" (Williamson 2006:10).[46]

Another view is exemplified by Sweeney, who conducted a redactional critical analysis of Isaiah 1 - 4. Sweeney (1988:101) argues that elements of varying ages have been welded together here into a coherent structure, which he summarizes as an exhortation to the people to choose righteousness. He first affirms the demarcation of chapter 1 as an initial unit demarcated by a second superscription in 2:1. By means of form critical analysis, which helps him to ascertain the structure, genre, setting and intention, Sweeney (1988:123) outlines chapter 1 thus:

I. Superscription   1:1

II. Exhortation Proper: Trial Genre   1:2-31

   A. Speech of the accuser   1:2-20

     1) Announcement of YHWH's accusation against Israel   1:2-3

     2) Admonition concerning continued wrongdoing   1:4-9

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[46]A review of Carr's reflection in his *Reaching for Unity in Isaiah*, pp. 71 – 75.In this article, Carr examines the relationship of the passages (1:2-31 and 65 – 66), which are linked together and he concluded by attesting to the redaction unity of the book.

3) Prophetic Torah on proper service of YHWH	1:10 -17
4) Appeal to begin legal proceeding	1:18-20
B. Speech of the Judge: Announcement of Zion's redemption	1:21-31
1) Concerning the cleansing of Jerusalem: Rehabilitation speech	1:21-26
2) Explication: redemption for Zion's righteous and Annihilation for her sinners	1:27-31

Tucker (2001:46) recognises Chapter One as a distinct unit that is framed by the two titles (1:1 and 2:1) and that consists of diverse materials from different timeframes of the prophet's ministry. His demarcation of the distinct unit in Isaiah 1was informed by recognising the text's changes in form or content. In this regard, he uses the thematic approach, which he thinks was the underlining motif of the organisational and compositional structure of the text. He says:

> [T]he materials in this chapter are not simply prophetic addresses that have been linked as beads on a string but discourses that have been organised thematically so as to display an interpretation of the Lord's way with the Lord's people and with the holy city; indeed, the chapter is organized as a theological interpretation of history" (Tucker 2001:46).

In addition to this view, Tucker went further to add one more crucial point that some commentators and of course, this research, question. He says the theological movement reflects a style of lawsuit (what Sweeney refer to as "Trial Genre" in his outline). However, on the basis of his thematic approach, he came up with an outline with same demarcation with that of Sweeney mentioned previously. The summary of his outline, as he states, is that the chapter is arranged thematically from the theme of sin to repentance and to renewal.

Like Sweeney and Tucker, Carr (1996:199) acknowledges that the chapter is made up of smaller units. However, he decided to look at the overall movement of the chapter, Isaiah 1: 2-31, and he prefers to treat the text using a larger demarcation.[47]

Exhortation to Repentance	1:2-31
I. Divine Description of the Problem: Persistence Evil of Israel.	1:2-9

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[47]Carr's outline must have been informed by his conclusion about the redactional unity when he cautioned that "no editor intervened deeply enough into the book to make it all conform to an overall conception" (1993:78).

From these arguments, one could see that there is a redactional unity in Chapter One. This implies that no units are composed for their own sake; the redactors skilfully structured the units to fit together with an intention. Therefore, in other to understand these intentions, the individual units have to be interpreted in the light of one another and the whole, not in part or isolation.

From the on-going discussion, it is clear that the majority of scholars demarcate chapter 1:2-3 with 1:2-20 as a unit using perhaps a certain formula. More narrowly, others prefer to go with 1:2-9 as a unit. But from a thematic, form and genre point of view, chapter 1:2-3 presents a complete unit. Wildberger (2009:9) affirms that:

> [T]he genres are different and there are differences in emphasis: "The message of Yahweh, which is introduced by Isaiah in 1: 2-3, is harsh and sharp. Accusation, which is introduced by Isaiah begins the reproach in 1: 4-9 with more of a rebuke; then he goes on to make accusations against his people, rather than scold them…"

Despite varying opinions on the demarcation of this text, there is an almost unanimous agreement that the different units of the text are from diverse sources and are artistically organised to convey a certain message, which the redactor intends; introducing the message of the book by way of preparing the mind of the reader in anticipation of what is to come.

However, the question is what informs the researcher's choice of the two verses that do not stand alone in this context? Before explaining the motivation for the choice of the two verses, a brief survey of history of interpretation will provide a background.

The book of Isaiah has been read and interpreted from a host of different perspectives. Scholars like Otto (1963:7) and Davies (1981:41) attribute the prophetic indictment in this passage as a common requirement for cultic worship (see Deut. 4:26; 30:19; 31:28; 32:1; Ps 50:4). Blenkinsopp (2000:182) sees more than one background at play in this prophetic indictment. He identifies the rhetorical device as common practice in poetic literature (see 1:10; 28:23; 32:9; 42:23; 51:4; 64:3; and also Gen. 4:23; Num. 23:18; Judg. 5:3; Jer. 13:15;

Ps 5:1 – 2). He calls it one of the stylistic features of prophetic diatribe and protreptic. Blenkinsopp (2000:182) says the indictment resonates with Deuteronomy 32:1 cf. 4: 26; 30:19; 31:28; suggesting an indictment following a covenant violation similar to the treaties between great powers and their vassals. He also sees the contrast with the ox and donkey as common practice or pedagogical approaches of the sages; drawing from observable features, nature, for guidelines to human conduct.

Evidently, there are varying opinions on the background of the passage. Sweeney and Tucker (previously surveyed) identified it as trial genre or lawsuit. Of course, the passage is a complaint against Israel for breaking a relationship that presupposes a prior covenant relationship in the background. Nevertheless, the text did not explicitly say Isaiah was aware of that covenant relationship. This research would like to reckon with Williamson's observation that chapter 1:2 – 3 present a literary:

> [G]enre which represents God as formally accusing his people and finding
> them guilty, but there is lack of agreement over whether a more specific
> background should be sought in the imagery of the law court, or in the cult, or
> in the particular indictment of covenant infringement (itself often associated
> with secular ancient Near Eastern treaties (2006:26).

As observed in the previous paragraph, this text does not stand alone in its literary context. Some of the literary characteristics preclude the possibility of drawing a sharp line of demarcation between the smaller units, especially because of the way the text functions.[48] One may suggest that in view of its present function, the best or the smallest unit could be 1:2-3. This is a valid presupposition, taking the overall purpose of the chapter into consideration.

However, the research's preliminary demarcation of the unit is informed by the thematic argument and the question of the background of the prophetic indictment. On the thematic argument, there is a similarity between form and content of the selected unit. The two verses draw from observable features: Creation; in this case, Isaiah summons the heavens and the earth to bear witness to Yahweh's accusation of his children. The second example, still in this pericope, is the contrast made between Israel, his people, and irrational creatures, the ox and the ass. The two verses also emphasises the theme of sin and can be distinguished from 1: 4ff, which is a pronouncement of judgement.

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[48] Isaiah 1:2-3 plays an introductory role to the longer poem, which has been composed by the editor or redactor.

On Isaiah's ethical basis, the aforementioned survey shows that there is lack of agreement on the specific background of the pericope, and base on the emphasis from the observable features of the text, is it possible to consider an alternative ethical background, which would be used as a hermeneutical foundation? Certainly alternative readings or approaches can yield fresh and significant insight into the biblical books.

At this juncture, the research will delve into text critical and literary analyses to see the possibility of the suggested alternative reading of the text, which will then be proposed as an approach in ethical-theological interpretation in biblical studies. Again, as a reminder, the hermeneutical foundation to be employed is the synchronic reading of the text. Focus is laid on the text's characteristics, how it is understood or translated in various ancient readings so that an informed decision is made in making a personal translation.

3.3. Text – Criticism

The text of Isaiah has been found to be one of the best preserved books in the Old Testament, after Psalms and Deuteronomy. Isaiah research is fortunate to have numerous Qumran texts at their disposal "at least twenty – one copies, though not all were produced there" (Blenkinsopp 2000:76). The complete scrolls of Isaiah, perfectly preserved, were found in the first cave (1QIsa[a]) and in good part, it is identical to the Masoretic Text, although it has its own orthographic conventions. Another scroll, which was not well preserved, was also found in this cave (1QIsa[b]); it was closer to the Masoretic Text than 1QIsa[a]. Several more fragments and also some citations were found.

Several ancient translations of the Hebrew book of Isaiah also exist. Among them are the Septuagint (LXX), the Targum, the Vulgate, and the Peshitta etc.[49]This section compares different ancient readings of the pericope, to see how these variant readings affect or influence the interpretation.

The LXX Isaiah 1: 2 – 3.

2 שִׁמְעוּ שָׁמַיִם וְהַאֲזִינִי אֶרֶץ כִּי יְהוָה דִּבֵּר בָּנִים גִּדַּלְתִּי וְרוֹמַמְתִּי וְהֵם פָּשְׁעוּ בִי:

3 יָדַע שׁוֹר קֹנֵהוּ וַחֲמוֹר אֵבוּס בְּעָלָיו יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָדַע עַמִּי לֹא הִתְבּוֹנָן:

2 Ἄκουε, οὐρανέ, καὶ ἐνωτίζου, γῆ, ὅτι κύριος ἐλάλησεν υἱοὺς ἐγέννησα καὶ ὕψωσα, αὐτοὶ

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[49]The LXX is termed the most important of all the ancient readings. It was the first official translation that was supported by Jewish authorities and found to be a faithful, competent and idiomatic translation. Noteworthy is the fact that the LXX also shows evidence of varying reading and tradition; compared to the Masoretic Text, there were few minuses and pluses. A number of more critical revisions were carried out, but the overall goal was to have the LXX conform to Hebrew text, which was normative in Palestine. These variations are mostly as a result of the interest of the translator in trying to contemporise and actualise the text.

δέ με ἠθέτησαν.

3 ἔγνω βοῦς τὸν κτησάμενον καὶ ὄνος τὴν φάτνην τοῦ κυρίου αὐτοῦ, Ισραηλ δέ με οὐκ ἔγνω, καὶ ὁ λαός με οὐ συνῆκεν.[50]

The first noticeable change in verse 2 is that the Stuttgart version of the LXX does not use the article to express the vocative (שָׁמַיִם) οὐρανέ and (אֶרֶץ) γῆ, but other Greek Manuscripts do. However, most scholars note that the article is not necessary in expressing the vocative.

Inverse 2, the LXX translates the verb גִּדַּלְתִּי, as ἐγέννησα, meaning 'I have begotten'.

However, this is not the word that is used in the Hebrew. The Hebrew could have read הוֹלַדְתִּי (hiphil perfect, first person singular), which is translated 'I bore'. Williamson (2006:22) comments that: "This equivalence appears not to be attested anywhere else in the Old Testament, where γεννάω most commonly renders a form of ילד. (The piʻel of גדל is rendered variously in the LXX, including ἐγέθρεψα in Isaiah 23:4; 49:21)". The verb גדל in the piʻel is literally translated as 'to make great' and often has the idea of rearing children (Is.23:4; 49:21; 51:18; 2 Kings 10:6; Hosea 9:12) (Davies 1981:40). The Vulgate rightly translated the Hebrew verb גִּדַּלְתִּי as "*enutrivi*", meaning "I have brought up".

Inverse 3, the LXX has added the pronoun "me" to the verbs יָדַע and הִתְבּוֹנָן, which reads "Israel does not know me; my people does not understand me". The context does not require the pronoun; the subject of both the first and the second part of the sentence is the same and is known so with the pronoun or without, the meaning does not change. Similarly, the Vulgate added the pronoun to the verb יָדַע, 'know', and it reads "know me." However, as previously observed, the pronoun adds no meaning to the context (See Wildberger 1991 and Williamson 2006: 22f).

וְרוֹמַמְתִּי is in the poʻlel and is usually translated as 'to promote' or 'to exalt. "And this is the sense attributed to the word in the present context by LXX (ὕψωσα) and the Vulgate (*exaltavi),* where the reference is presumably to the greatness of Israel among nations" (Davies 1981:40).

Having observed these ancient variant readings, one can continue with the contemporary reading (English translations) of the text. Two versions are used, namely the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) and the New International Version (NIV).[51]

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[50]*Septuaginta: With morphology*.1996, c1979 (Is 1:2). Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

NRSV and NIV Translation	שִׁמְעוּ שָׁמַיִם וְהַאֲזִינִי אֶרֶץ כִּי יְהוָה דִּבֵּר בָּנִים גִּדַּלְתִּי וְרוֹמַמְתִּי וְהֵם פָּשְׁעוּ בִי:²
	יָדַע שׁוֹר קֹנֵהוּ וַחֲמוֹר אֵבוּס בְּעָלָיו יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָדַע עַמִּי לֹא הִתְבּוֹנָן:³

NRSV

2 Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth; for the Lord has spoken: I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me.

3 The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.[52]

NIV

2 Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: "I reared children and brought them up, but they rebelled against me.

3 The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand."[53]

3.4. Translation of Isaiah 1: 2 – 3.

In terms of textual variance in the aforementioned analysis, it is interesting that the New International Version (NIV) and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) did justice to most of the issues observed in the Ancient Manuscripts. The New International Version and New Revised Standard version, however, substitutes the noun בָּנִים (literally 'sons') with Children.

This is in an effort towards being gender sensitive and the בָּנִים is in no way referring to male children, but is rather being generic.

Personal translation of Isaiah 1: 2-3	
שִׁמְעוּ שָׁמַיִם וְהַאֲזִינִי אֶרֶץ כִּי יְהוָה דִּבֵּר בָּנִים גִּדַּלְתִּי וְרוֹמַמְתִּי וְהֵם פָּשְׁעוּ בִי²	*Hear, O heavens! And give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: Sons have I nurtured and brought up; but they rebelled against me.*
יָדַע שׁוֹר קֹנֵהוּ וַחֲמוֹר אֵבוּס בְּעָלָיו יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָדַע עַמִּי לֹא הִתְבּוֹנָן:³	*(The) ox knows its owner and (the) donkey the crib of his master; Israel does not know, my people do not understand.*

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[51]The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is widely recognized by scholars and religious authorities as the most accurate translation. It is a literal translation rather than a paraphrase; the NRSV leaves interpretation in the hands of the reader. The NRSV stands out among the many translations because it is "as literal as possible" in adhering to the ancient texts and only "as free as necessary" to make the meaning clear in graceful, understandable English. It draws on newly available sources that increase our understanding of many previously obscure biblical passages. These sources include new-found manuscripts, the Dead Sea Scrolls, other texts, inscriptions, and archaeological finds from the ancient Near East, and new understandings of Greek and Hebrew grammar. (http://www.nrsversenet/[06/12/2012]).The translators made full use of contemporary biblical manuscripts, resulting in a clearer understanding of many obscure passages. It uses gender-inclusive language (making it clear where the original texts include both males and females), (http://www.cambridge.org/bibles/nrsv/06/12/2012).The NIV is a dynamic equivalent translation made by scholars from various denominations. It is a thorough translation because it underwent several processes of review and revision by different committees.

[52]*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Is 1:2-3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

[53]*The Holy Bible: New International Version.* 2010 (Is 1: 2-3). Wellington: Lux Verbi.BM (Pty) Ltd.

In the personal translation, the second verb וְהַאֲזִינִי is literally translated "give ear". The idea here is for one to broaden his/her ears and by implication it means to 'listen', as rightly translated by the NIV and NRSV. Again, בָּנִים is literally translated as 'sons', but looking at the next verse, the subject changes to 'Israel' and 'my people'; this suggest that the 'sons' referred to in verse two are the Israelites. Therefore, the research once again accepts the NIV and NRSV translation of בָּנִים as 'children'.

3.5. Literary Analysis[54]

It has been previously been established that Chapter One has been carefully rearranged in such a way that there is a connection in the themes of the small units. Chapter 1:2-3 is being considered to be part of a larger unit, either 1:2-9 or 1:2-20. Either way, there is a kind of relationship between the smaller units, either in form or content or by means of catchword motifs.

The passage in question is poetry. "Isaiah's is a poetry of parallelism; it depends not on metre and rhyme, but on a balance of thought conveyed by a corresponding balance of sentence; and the effect of this can be transferred to another language" (Blenkinsopp 2000:79). Form critical analysis notes that these verses are different in a couple of ways; length, metre and rhythmic pattern. The majority of scholars suggest that 1:2-3 is patterned to correspond to a legal trial and this leads to a so-called "*rib*-pattern". This "legal" formulation can clearly be distinguished from the next section, 1:4-9, that is formulated as a reproach, introduced by הוֹי (see Davies 1981:41; Wildberger 2009:9). If one considers the thought pattern in Chapter One as whole, there is a link between 1:2-3 and the subsequent units. If viewed together, the oracles in the first chapter present:

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[54]Brueggemann (1998:1) describes the book poetry of Isaiah as an "Oratorio", which include many voices. In these different voices one finds what Blenkinsopp (2000:79)describes as "poetry of parallelism; it depends not on metre and rhyme, but on a balance of thought conveyed by a corresponding balance of sentence; and the effect of this can be transferred to another language". There are portions that are introduced as "song" (šîr 5:1; 23:16; 26). There are also psalm-like passages (12:1-6; 25:1-5; 33:2-6; 42:10-13; 63:7-64:12), dirge (*qînâ*, e.g.1:21). Others are presented as proverbs (*māšāl*, 14:4-21), visions (*hāzôn*, 1:1), speeches (*dābār*, 2:1), oracle (*maśśā'*, 13:1), or woe-sayings (*hôy*, 5:8) (Blenkinsopp 2000:79). The book of Isaiah does not follow the normal Hebrew verse structure. Blenkinsopp suggests a term called "recitative" to describe the discourse in all the sections of the book of Isaiah, the kind laid out in this verse. This, he says, allows for variations in the rhythmic regularity and cadence (tempo). This style of discourse is characteristic of the prophetic role as a preacher. The style is said to be consistent with the intensity of the emotional charge with which the words are uttered, and it supports an oral origin of this kind of diction. This implies that prophetic discourses are therefore, predominantly vocative. Blenkinsopp outlines some characteristics of this style of discourse thus: (1) frequent call for attention (1:2, 18-20), (2) use of forensic language and themes (3:13-15), (3) brief and vivid illustrative "cameos" (3:6-7; 4:1; 7:20; 29:11-12 cf. Amos 3:12; 6:9-10), (4) putting words in the mouth of the opponent in order to condemn them (10:8-14), (5) rhetorical questions (1:5; 5:4), and (6) diatribe sometimes of an extremely violent and temperate nature (25:10-12; 34:5-17; 57:1-21).

> [A] systematic composition with a progressing train of thought: vv. 2-3 are
> concerned with the theme of "sin", and this is followed in vv. 4-9 by a
> pronouncement of judgement; vv. 10-17 hold out the possibility of
> deliverance; vv. 18-20 present a choice between judgement and deliverance,
> while the possible realisation of this deliverance is expressed in vv. 21-6
> (Davies 1981:41).

Retrospectively, the catchword motif has also been noted as one of the skills employed by the redactors to provide links between these short stanzas. Take for instance 1:2-9,which is considered to be a unit because both sections i.e. vv. 2-3 and vv. 4-9 give utterances concerning בָנִים (children). In addition, vv. 2-9 is also linked to vv. 10-20, first by the reference to Sodom and Gomorrah in verse 9 and verse 10 (a new section opening with a call to hear prophetic instruction) ending in verse 20 with a concluding formula echoing כִי יְהוָה דִּבֵּר (for the LORD has spoken) taken from verse 2.

However, 1:2-3 is also distinct from other units in several other ways. For example, verses 2-3 are an accusation of the children of Israel. Verses 4-9 continue that accusation, but differ in emphasis. In 1:2-3, the accusation is "harsh and sharp", showing the gravity of Israel's sin (rebellion), whereas the reproach in 1:4-9 is more of a rebuke. The introductory word, הֹוִי is usually, if not invariably, used to start a new section (Williamson 2006:23). Hence, these differences which suggest the units' distinct sources are noted by Williamson (2006:23):

> The addressee changes from heaven and earth (with Israel referred to in the
> third person) in verse 2-3 to the people in verse 4-9; they are mentioned in the
> third person in v.4 as object of הוי, but this quickly shifts to second person
> address in v. 5. Furthermore, whereas 2-3 is prophetic citation of a divine
> speech, 4-9 records the prophet's own address."

Metrical consideration can also be a possible pointer to the distinction of these smaller units, but Williamson (2006:23) warns that "they should be used with caution both because of uncertainties about the subject in general and because of variation within these …sections themselves."

Having established these possible links within the texts demarcations, a closer look at the pericope will help in supporting the reason for its preliminary demarcation as a unit.

2a Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! 2a' For the LORD has spoken: 2b I reared children and brought them up, 2b' but they rebelled against me.	שִׁמְעוּ שָׁמַיִם וְהַאֲזִינִי אֶרֶץ כִּי יְהוָה דִּבֵּר בָּנִים גִּדַּלְתִּי וְרוֹמַמְתִּי וְהֵם פָּשְׁעוּ בִי
3a The ox knows his master, 3a' the donkey his owner's manger, 3b but Israel does not know, 3b' my people do not understand.	יָדַע שׁוֹר קֹנֵהוּ וַחֲמוֹר אֵבוּס בְּעָלָיו יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָדַע עַמִּי לֹא הִתְבּוֹנָן:

3.5.1. Isaiah 1:2

Firstly, the grammatical analysis: In verse two, the nouns שָׁמַיִם and אֶרֶץ are the subjects presupposed by the imperatives: שִׁמְעוּ (qal imperative, masculine plural) and וְהַאֲזִינִי (hiphil imperative, feminine singular); thus, it constitutes a direct address (see BHRG 34.4) and they have no articles. BHRG 24.4.1 (ii/ (2)) notes: "The use of the article is a relative phenomenon in Semitic languages and is therefore often omitted in poetic sections." However, other manuscripts have the definite article; Williamson (2006:22) points out that: "1QIsaᵃ in fact has הארץ (and few LXX manuscripts add the article here); this is usually dismissed as secondary."

One should also take note that the word order has changed in the second part of the sentence. The nouns יְהוָה and בָּנִים are placed before their verbs and this is done for the sake of emphasis (see BHRG 46.1 and 47.1). It is stressing the focus of the statement, as rightly observed by Brueggemann (1998:1) that the central theme of Isaiah's message is the predominant and constant character of Yahweh.

The verbs גִּדַּלְתִּי וְרוֹמַמְתִּי are translated as "reared" and "brought up" because the context suggests parental care. Kohler and Baumgartner (1996:178, 1981), defined the root word for וְרוֹמַמְתִּי as "to develop into, to elevate and to raise and גִּדַּלְתִּי from the qal as "to grow up, to become strong, and to be great" (1996:178). In the pi'el, it is translated as "raise, to bring up, to let grow, and to make greater"(1996:179).The question to be asked is why would the prophet use the verb גִּדַּלְתִּי instead of ילד? The answer is that God is rarely the subject of ילד, most likely because the concept of father carries a negative connotation in the ancient Near Eastern (ANE)traditions. In the ANE traditions, "father" suggests a pantheon or a family of gods and that goes against monotheism etc.

פָּשְׁעוּ has divergent meanings. It can be translated as 'dispute', 'rebellion', or "transgression". It is the most profound word for sin in the Old Testament, although not frequently used. It is associated with the political alliance against an existing colonial power. It consists of a wilful

disobedience; indicating its theological meaning as revolt against God (see Kohler & Baumgartner 1996:981; Price 1990:827).

It is important to note that the meaning is not only determined by Hebrew grammar. Blenkinsopp (2000:79) suggests a term called "recitative" to describe the discourse in all the sections of the book of Isaiah expressed by means of its verse structure. This, he says, allows for variations in the rhythmic regularity and cadence (tempo). This style of discourse is characteristic of the prophet's role as a preacher. The style is said to be consistent with the intensity of the emotional charge with which the words are uttered, and it supports an oral origin of this kind of diction (Blenkinsopp 2000:80).

Verse 2a opens with an imperative, summoning the heavens and earth. The writer employs a parallelism, a synonymous parallelism and at the same time, a synthetic parallelism. Synonymously, the heavens are called to hear, and the same idea of hearing is communicated in the imperative: 'Listen, O earth' (literally, 'give ear').Synthetically, the 'heavens' is complemented by the 'earth'. 2a itself is synthetically paralleled to 2a' in the sense that 2a is a proclamation formula while 2a' is a prophetic citation. The motivation to 'hear' and 'give ear' to what Yahweh is about to say is a common characteristic of prophetic proclamation. They often suggests that what is about to be heard or being heard is from Yahweh. Both lines introduce (2a and2a') the unit and to some extent, the entire chapter and or the entire prophetic text.

Line2b is a synonymous parallelism in itself. It expresses Yahweh's concern about his children. Yahweh has 'reared' and 'brought them up'. However, 2b is antithetically paralleled to 2b' because they are a contrasts. The negative reaction of Yahweh's children is contrasted to Yahweh's care, "but they rebelled against me".

3.5.2. Isaiah 1: 3

In verse 3, יָדַע is qal perfect third person masculine singular; literally to be translated "to recognise (in the language of treaties, to perceive, to notice, to hear of (learn), and to know" (Kohler & Baumgartner 1996:390f). It is expressing a condition or state of being in the text, therefore it is translated in English as present tense ("knows" or in the negative "does not know") (see BHRG 19.2.2[55]). The verb is used in describing the relationship of God with his people.

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[55]Perfect form can indicate (1) action, process and event that have been completed, (2) state of affairs or condition, (3) performative action, (4) action or evens and/or fact that are not time-bound. In the context of the

קָנֵהוּ is used to describe the relationship between the animal and its master. In contrast to the imagery of the parent – child relationship, which describes the relationship between Yahweh and his people, קָנֵהוּ connotes the idea of acquiring something through purchase(Kohler & Baumgartner 1996:1970f). Hence, there is no intimacy in this sort of relationship. בְּעָלָיו, meaning "owner, lord, husband". According to Kohler and Baumgartner (1996:143), the plural connotes the nature of the relationship, not the number. It indicates ownership, intensity, and as master or owner of the possession it is a plural of majesty–*pluralis majestatis* (see Young 1965:41; Kaiser's 1963:5 footnote 'c').The word order also changes in the second part of the sentence in verse 3. The subject יִשְׂרָאֵל precedes the verb, thus laying more emphasis on the focus of the sentence. The sentence focuses on Israel, who has been chosen in covenant love, nurtured and exalted. That it is Israel and non-other people who have refused to know and understand.

The beauty of the prophet's message can be seen in how he articulated it, i.e. his style. In a parabolic style, Israel's rebellious attitudes are demonstrated in an analogy with animals. Verse 3a is synonymously paralleled to verse 3a', 'ox' and 'ass' (domesticated animals), both possessing a certain knowledge regarding their owner and source of livelihood. Verses 3b and 3b' are also synonymous because 3b' repeats the idea of 3b. 'Israel' is repeated as 'my people', and the lack of knowledge in 3b is repeated as 'do not understand'. However, verse 3b and verse 3b' are antithetically parallel to 3a and 3a'. 3b and 3b' are obvious contrasts in both statements: "Israel" and "my people" are contrasted to "ox" and "ass" so also is the action, Israel's action is contrasted to the animals, where Israel's action negates that of the animals. The contrast here is that Israel does not understand what an ox and a donkey understand. Even though the kind of relationship that exists between the animals and their master and source of lively-hood cannot be equated to that which exists between Yahweh and Israel, "my people". It is an intimate relationship that is described as a parent-child relationship. What is happening here is that, if these domesticated animals could respond faithfully to their given situation, then failing to do so is considered rebellion on the side of Israel, because "Israel does not know, my people do not understand." However, for the theological dimension of Isaiah 1:2 – 3, and of course for contemporary relevancy, there is the need to understand the historical context of the event and historicity of the text in its current position.

Pericope, it is expressing number (2) which is expressing a state of affairs. It is not usually translated with element of certain duration. It is never used to refer to once off completed action. In a dialogue it is usually translated with the present (BHRG 19.2.1ff)

3.5.3. The Setting of the Pericope (Isaiah 1: 2-3)

Determining or identifying the setting of the pericope involves some historical quest. The technical term for this historical quest is the diachronic reading of the text. Having observed previously that the text is redactional unity, the diachronic investigation in this section investigates the origin and the period from which the text was placed in its current position.

The poetic nature of the text makes it difficult to construct the settings of the text of Isaiah. Williamson (2006:28) rightly posits that:

> We cannot say for certain when or by whom this passage was composed. From both thematic and linguistic point of view, it fits perfectly as an introduction to Isaiah 1, so that it would be hazardous in the extreme to seek a basis for interpretation either in the proposal of an alternative literary or historical setting or in some overriding tradition-historical context.

Nevertheless, some speculation about the origins of the individual units is possible. From these, one can then glean the possible literary integrity and the time of composition of the pericope in its present position.

Isaiah 1:2-3 is an indictment for which various backgrounds were assumed as its basis. Many commentators (example Oswalt 1986:84f) agree that the passage originates from the eighth century prophet. Nevertheless, as to the time of composition, they are clueless. But going by its content, Israel was accused of rebellion. Taking the political angle; two circumstances come to mind, it could be an indictment against a political alliance with the Assyrians against the Syro-Ephraimitic coalition or with the Egyptians against the Assyrians (Isaiah 7-8; 18-19; 30:1-7). But going by the religious angle, 1:29-31 suggest a cultic apostasy, "yet it is clear that the prophet was concerned with social justice and moral behaviour. Nowhere else in this chapter is the prophet explicitly concerned with the people's participation in a fertility cult. In fact these verses (1:29-31) are somewhat of a surprise in chapter 1" (Sweeney 1988:124). The indictment in these units was not specific, and this implies that the passage did not stand independently, as otherwise it would not be meaningful to the readers. It is possible that Isaiah 1:2-3 was gleaned from Isaiah 30:8, 9, considering the background of the political alliance with Egypt against Assyria.

Notwithstanding, determining the date and the compiler of the pericope in its current position is not possible. However, synchronically, the redactional intent can be speculated from

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observable features of the text and its connection with the other units. Sweeney (1988:21) explains that verse 27 is crucial in understanding the redactor's intent, and invariably, his setting or context suggests he speaks of Zion's returnees i.e. a post-exilic context. The connection between Isaiah 1 and Isaiah 65-66 is also a possible reason to assume a post-exilic context, because according to many commentators Isaiah 1 and 65-66 form an inclusion for the book (Sweeney 1988:22; Schmid 2009:568). Having considered the coherent structure of Isaiah 1,Williamson (2006:10) rightly observes that Isaiah 1:"…thus serves as an introduction to the book in the sense of an appeal to the reader to repent in the light and on the basis of all that is to follow; it prepares the reader's frame of mind at the start of the book rather than anticipating what is to come" (cf. Sweeney 1988:123). Thus, one could say that Isaiah 1 must have been compiled by a post-exilic redactor who carefully collected and edited these previously independent units into a single document to serve as a programmatic introduction of either the first section of Isaiah or even the whole book (1-66).

3.5.4. Social and Conceptual Background of the Pericope

The interpretation of this passage has been blurred as a result of lack of agreement on its social and conceptual background. Various opinions are suggested as the background of this passage; secular ancient Near East's treaties or covenant law suit (Blenkinsopp 2000:182; Watts 1985:10), legal background (Seitz 1993:33; Brueggemann 1998:13, 15) and wisdom literature. These opinions are based on the fact that Israel's covenant relationship is maintained through the law and that wisdom was a pedagogical approach of the sages. Hence, it is believed that most of the prophet's background of indictment is based on the people's neglect of this covenant law. This section will first briefly discuss scholars' various suggestions, before attempting to analyse and suggest a new element, natural law as the basis of the prophet's indictment in this pericope.

a) *Covenant and Ancient Near East Treaties Background* (Davies 1981:47;Oswalt 1986 85). Davies (1981:47) and Oswalt (1986:85) observe from a form critical point of view that the first statement, "Hear, O heavens and listen, O earth!" is one of the recurring features of an ancient Near East vassal treaty (a preamble to the vassal treaties of the ancient Near East). This assertion is based on the fact that earlier studies (example, Mendenhall 1954 Wiseman 1958) on the Mosaic covenant law posit that the mosaic covenant treaty is patterned after the suzerainty treaty between an emperor and a vassal. In most cases, the gods and cosmic elements are listed as witnesses (Deut. 30:19; 32:1). The summons to

heavens and earth in Isaiah 1:2 is strongly reminiscent of Deut. 30:19; 32:1, where Moses called upon the heavens and the earth to witness the covenant of blessing and curse (Oswalt 1986:85). Oswalt did not stop here, however; he notes that Isaiah's use of the covenant terms is not explicit but that he was conscious of the covenant. He added that the appeal to heavens and earth is not a matter of legality, but that of the whole order of life.

Several commentators (like Blenkinsopp 2000:182; Watts 1985:10) conclude that in the background of Isaiah's indictment is covenant treaty. This view is supported by idea that Israel is accused of being rebellious, (פָּשְׁעוּ), a term that is associated with a political alliance against an existing colonial power. However, it has been previously observed that פָּשְׁעוּ has a broad connotation, so it would be an overstatement to assume that it is specific to the background of Isaiah 30:8-9.

Again, it is observed byDavies (1981:47),that the idea of Israel as "sons" might denotes a blood bond kind of a treaty and if it is agreed that the unit's initial place was 30:89, the assertion stands because here the son is being condemned for turning to strangers for help. However, one can respond that the idea of son ship does not fit into the new context of Isaiah 1:2. The verbs used to describe this relationship do not carry this idea of being a son, as in Israel as a nation owes its existence to God when he redeemed them from Egypt. The father-son relationship is not to be understood in terms of the covenant treaty, but rather as an indication of intimacy between Yahweh and his people.[56] More so, בָּנִים גִּדַּלְתִּי וְרוֹמַמְתִּי should not be taken as "recital of Yahweh's benevolent acts in history" as found in the "lengthy historical prologues of the treaties …the father-son relationship…involved a relationship of the highest order with reciprocal faithfulness that was seldom found among suzerains and vassals of ancient Near East" (Davies 1981:47).

The argument for a covenant lawsuit as the basis of the prophetic oracle can equally be contested on the basis that some of the characteristic elements of a lawsuit are lacking. For example Davies (1981:50) observes that:

> There is nothing in Isaiah 1: 2-3 to indicate that these cosmic entities are to function as witnesses in this particular context…although an accusation is brought against Israel…there is no indication that Yahweh is judge … finally

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[56]It has been noted earlier that the father concept carries a negative connotation in the ancient Near Eastern (ANE) traditions. In the ANE traditions, "father" suggests a pantheon or a family of gods and that goes against monotheism.

it may be observed that although these verses contain an indictment of Israel

for her obduracy and recalcitrance, no sentence is decreed.

Elsewhere in the Old Testament, similar summons to the heavens and the earth are found; the mountains are called to listen to a law suit (Mic. 6:2); in a slightly different form, the peoples and the earth are called that the Sovereign LORD may witness against them (Mic. 1:2; Jer. 2:4); the heavens and the earth are summoned to be present when Yahweh judges (Ps 50:4); it is interesting to observe the way Job 20:27 employs these natural elements, the heavens and the earth are seen as subjects of the verb and not as ordinary witnesses. The pericope is so complicated that one could not pin it to these arguments.

Notwithstanding, Wildberger (2009:10) rightly explains the summons to heavens and earth as a hyperbolic expression or a rhetorical device, an appeal to the reader to repent in the light and on the basis of all that is to follow; it prepares the reader's frame of mind at the start of the book rather than anticipating what is to come (Williamson 2006:10). The underlying concern in the passage is ethical justice, not cultic violation, which presupposes the argument for a covenant treaty.

b) *Legal background* (Davies 1981:53ff; Melugin 1996:208; Williamson 2006:27):

The form of the accusation in this pericope is said to correspond to the procedure of a normal court of law in that the prophet is using the form of speech used in an ordinary everyday legal matter at the city gate (cf. Seitz1993:33; Brueggemann 1998:15). In this case, the prophet is functioning as the court official who demands the attention of witnesses (heaven and earth) and proclaims Yahweh's judgement. However, reconstructing a typical every day legal procedure is not possible because of the poetic nature of the text. But elsewhere in the narrative sections of the Old Testament, the picture presented of an ordinary every day court proceeding is one whereby the plaintiff calls upon his witness and brings his/her accusation against the other party (cf. 1 Kgs. 3:16ff.; 21:8ff.; Jer. 26:1ff.;Ruth 4:1ff). However, here this assertion is blurred because a plaintiff becoming his own judge is unimaginable in a normal day court proceedings, given that that undermines the judicial process and destroys the validity of the trial. Note also Wildberger's conclusion that inclusion of the cosmic elements in the indictment is a rhetorical device to stress the importance of what is to follow. Their presence in this particular sentence does not portray the role of a witness in normal every day court proceedings in Israel. In a normal court procedure, there is always the sentence after the accused is convicted, but this element is evidently lacking.

c) *Wisdom Tradition* (Davies1981:61ff, Williamson 2006:27):

The main argument for the wisdom tradition centres on the fact that it was common practice or a pedagogical approach of the sages; drawing from observable features, nature, for guidelines on human conducts (cf. Blenkinsopp 2000). This is because "wisdom literatures show awareness of a basic order… to which animate and inanimate world were likewise subjected…" (Davies 1981:61). In the context of Isaiah 1:2-3, the parable of the 'ox' and 'donkey' is said to be "proverbial expressions reflecting the thought of the wisdom teachers who often had recourse to the animal kingdom to draw analogies for their instruction" (see Prov. 6:6ff; 30:25-28) (Davies 1981:61). Another feature of the wisdom literature in the text is the father-son analogy. The relationship of the wisdom teacher and the pupil in the ancient tradition is analogous to the father-son relationship (cf. the Wisdom text of Ahikar and how he complained about the wisdom of his adopted son, Nadan).

Nevertheless, these reasons are not enough to conclude that wisdom is at the background of the text, because the ideas are not exclusively wisdom tradition even in the Old Testament. Williamson's (2006: 8) proposal on this sounds plausible:

He observes that if it becomes difficult to draw a distinction between wisdom and prophetic tradition, "then it becomes possible rather to propose that both the wisdom writers and this passage were drawing, each in their own way, upon a common epistemological basis, thus illuminating some of the fundamental beliefs which were taken for granted in the ancient Israel…"

Having seen how futile it is trying to pin a tradition to Isaiah's message, one point remains incontrovertible, namely the purpose of the text in its present context, which is introducing the section or even the entire book.

Notwithstanding, the question is what can one deduce from the divergent approaches to the interpretation and construal of the text? This research is of the opinion that these divergent construals of this text open up an opportunity for the researcher and any modern reader of the Old Testament for a new and/or multiple approaches to the interpretation of a text. Williamson (2006:26) has observed that several commentators have preoccupied themselves with the idea of the pericope as a part of prophetic lawsuit, to the extent that it "has distorted

the exegesis of the chapter to such an extent that some of its background and major contributions to a theology of the book have been overlooked".

The research would like to take Williamson's observation as a point of departure to an alternative reading of the text. Is it possible that wisdom writers and this passage in particular were drawing, each in their own way, upon a common epistemological basis? Assuming natural law is this basis, how can the text be understood? The research will now go into conversation with scholars to see how Israel's theological and ethical world developed through history. The history of the development of the ethical-theological world of Israel will either support the proposed assumption or discredit it.

3.6. The Development of Israel's Theological and Ethical World

It is very important to establish at the beginning that Israel's religion and faith was a progressive one. The periods of the prophets are seen as the peak of religious and faith development of Israel. On this basis,Gerstenberger (2002:5) makes a good point, namely that there is no objective standpoint in theology. "It is an integral feature of the wealth of ecumenical Christian theology and the global concert of all religion that theological truths manifest themselves in connection with specific places, times and societies and can be mutually fruitful" (Gerstenberger 2002:5).

Talking about prophecy and tradition, Davies (1981:12ff) explains from the view of a critical approach to the prophetic literature that prevailed toward the end of the nineteenth century. He launches his explanation from the contributions of Wellhausen and Duhm, whose determinative factor was their "recognition of the fact that Israel's faith had progressed from crude, tribal religion of the Mosaic period to a glorious climax in the teaching of Amos and his contemporaries" (1981:12).Wellhausen argues that prophets in Israel were great innovators, in the sense that they were regarded as the pioneers of ethical monotheism. Even though this research has some reservation as to the implication of this assertion, there is still an element of truth in it if one takes seriously the premise from which the statement is made, namely: that Israel's faith developed in a progressive manner.[57] In a similar fashion,

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[57]The implication of the assertion is that the Torah will be seen as the creation of the prophets. "Wellhausen's dictum that the law was in fact later than the prophets meant that these men could no longer be regarded as interpreters of a legal tradition originating in the time of Moses" (Davies 1981:12). Agreed, they were great innovators, but what is the place of oral tradition which was the mode through which the Torah was preserved? The assertion seems to downplay this important and significant medium of preservation and communication of moral and ethical values in Israel's developmental history. The prophets were very instrumental in the composition, copy, and compilation of biblical literatures, but it is an overstatement to say that they originated

Gerstenberger (2002:1) speaks of the Old Testament as levels of testimonies of faith in Israel's history. This implies there is no unitary theology such that we can claim to have understood God and his actions in a particular way. The individual forms and strata in the Old Testament texts need to be evaluated as independent testimonies of faith at particular times.

Gerstenberger divides the periods of Israel's historical development into five major phases: The family level, Village level, Clan and Tribal level, the Monarchy, and the Faith community. The prophetic ministry began in the Monarchy level and continued into the Faith community. Yahweh commissioned the prophets as spiritual opposition groups. They served to check the loyalty of the people to Yahweh, although archaeological remains show evidence of worship of other gods.

The prophets spoke with the authority of inspiration. Notwithstanding, their intense involvement in everyday human affairs is very crucial. Davies (1981:17) also cited Albrecht Alt's work. From a form critical analysis, Alt traces many of the portions of the Torah to the pre-literary history of Israel, but then he too goes extreme of attributing the sections he calls apodictic law to the cult traditions and that it is uniquely Israelite. The reason for saying that Alt goes extreme is that the apodictic law is not uniquely Israelite; some extra-biblical literatures show parallels to the legal codes. Examples are the code of Hammurabi, the Hittite treaties and Wisdom of Ahikar. Gerstenberger (2002:207) buttresses this by adding thatit was during the exile that most of ancient Israel's traditions were composed, collected, copied and set as the fundamental documents of faith. The theology of the exclusive faith in one God Yahweh was firmly established in all levels of the social strata. In relation to ethics at this period, there are no fixed dogmas of the kind we know in the history of Christianity. This was as a result of the fact that the Jews were more concerned with orthopraxis than orthodoxy. Therefore, the scribes investigated and wrote down the rules of life in relation to the theology developed in the era. These documents, the everyday rule for life developed from the norms, which had long been applied in various phases or levels of developments. "Although the ethical orientation is put under the authority of Yahweh …the individual precepts are very often completely neutral in religious terms and have been taken from general norms of societies of the ancient Near East" (Gerstenberger 2002:263). In other words, "The theologians of the exilic and post-exilic community drew on many sources for their revision

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with them. This tradition existed long ago in oral form. "The law as enshrined in the Decalogue and Covenant Code could be traced back to a comparatively early period in Israel's history and it could not, therefore have been dependent upon the teaching of the prophets" (Davies 1981:17).

of old traditions" (Gerstenberger 2002:314).Davies (1981:17) presented the argument by Mendenhall for the covenant concept, which of course is believed to have similarities with the Hittite treaties but was adopted to express Israel's relationship with Yahweh.

It is no wonder then that the idea of covenant treaty of the ancient Near East is sought for as the background of Isaiah message. The research would like to comment that ancient Near Eastern treaty background should not be sought for in Isaiah. If that is done, the prophet's creativity in communicating Yahweh's messages is obscured. Rather it should be seen that all the assumed background of the text and Isaiah himself must have had a common source or background.

From these developments, understanding Israel's faith (theology and ethics) as a collection of testimonies emanating from various periods of historical development, it is easier to understand why Williamson (2006:28, quoted above) says it is indeed hazardous in the extreme to seek a basis for interpretation either in the proposal of an alternative literary or historical setting or in some overriding tradition-historical context. It is true that there are elements of legal tradition/covenant treaties and wisdom tradition in the pericope under discussion, however, a close reading of this text shows that Isaiah employed a stronger terminology in expressing a kind of relationship that goes beyond a covenant relationship – the father-son relationship. This relationship also is not exclusive to wisdom tradition.

The majority of commentators agree that Isaiah employed a powerful parable to explain Israel's rebellion, not to be taken in the cultic sense as turning to other gods, but that their behaviour is unnatural. Their attitude of injustice is unnatural (see. Kaiser 1963:8; Young1965:35; Wildberger 1991:15; Oswalt 1986:85;Brueggemann 1998:13; Williamson 2006:33). According to Calvin (1850:42), what Israel has done is unlike animals, as they have "transgressed the laws which nature has prescribed… For here the prophet does not speak of miracles but of the order of nature, and declares, that those who overturn that order may be regarded as monsters." Smith (1890:5) explains the pericope as a preface to and as the first article of religion according to Isaiah. He says: "Revelation is not magical, but rational and moral. Religion is reasonable intercourse between one intelligent being and another. God works upon man first through conscience." Smith (1890:10) adds that Isaiah did not follow the technicalities of a system of law or appeal to a covenant obligation, rather, he stresses the intellectual side of the moral being as demonstrated through his frequent use of the expression *know, consider,* and *reason*. Drawing from this, the motif of 'knowing' is

crucial in understanding Isaiah's basis of indictment. Wildberger explains Israel's rebellion as lack of knowledge and insight, and though this:

> …they put themselves outside the bounds of the created order and renounced 'what was characteristic of all creaturely existence, that which would draw the creature to one's master and provider'… whoever renounces faithfulness toward God is finally also a fool before the forum of human wisdom (Wildberger 1991:17).

Similarly, Watts sees this motif portrayed in various ways in words like *reasoning together, being willing, hearing* (1:18-19), and *turn* (1:25-27). The vision stages the drama in such a way that it reflects the deep emotion of the problem and its effect on the relationship between Yahweh and his sons. The sons rebelled; the word used here:

> Shows a deliberate willed nature of the issue: the unwillingness to recognize the nature of the relationship to God as parent or king and to draw the consequences of that relation and dependence that it implies. Ox and ass are credited with recognition and discernment which men do not display (Watts 1985: lv).

Isaiah did not use notions that are familiar to a covenant treaty in the Torah in his indictment. Thus, the appeal to the heavens and the earth is not merely a matter of legality; it is a matter of the whole order of life. What God's people are doing is an offense against nature."Sin, pride, oppression are contrary to creation as God envisioned it" (Oswalt 1986:85). The father-son relationship was a relationship which is above the contractual sphere and more than the wisdom teacher-student relationship. The verbs יָדַע"to know" and בּוּן "to understand" means more than intellectual but experiential knowledge. "One's experience of the natural world ought by itself to lead to submission to the creator. How much more should experience of God's election-love lead to submission to the Deliverer?" (Oswalt 1986:86).Here, one could say that the approach seems to lay more emphasis on the natural order as basis for human moral behaviour rather than any of the backgrounds suggested. It should be noted that this research does not in any way deny the possibility of the elements of these traditions; rather it argues that there are elements in the passage that would not fit in if one tradition were singled out as the basis of Isaiah's indictment. Thus, it is safer if the pericope is viewed in the light of

natural order of things as the basis of the indictment. This approach seems to incorporate all these traditions.

3.7. Theological Dimension of the Text

From the aforementioned discussion, there is an assumption about the world behind the text of Isaiah 1:2-3. The discussion speculates that Isaiah 1:2-3 must have been from the background of the ancient Near Eastern treaties, Israel's legal tradition, and the wisdom tradition of the ancient Near East. From the synchronic and diachronic analysis of the text, the study shows that the text has all of the three backgrounds speculated, and there is no one background that can be singled out as the background of the text. Akin to this, the research therefore sets out to prove an alternative background, which incorporates all the three. Thus, it suggested that natural law could be the possible ethical foundation behind the text of Isaiah 1:2-3. Taking into consideration the "character of Yahweh" as the predominant theme of Isaiah (see Brueggemann 1998:1), one would agree that natural theology fits the background of the text. Thus, the following theological dimension become visible from the text as it exists in its present position.

3.7.1. Character and Attributes of God

Isaiah's prophesy is introduced uniquely in such a way that the "predominant and constant character of Yahweh, who looms over the telling in holy sovereignty and in the faithful gentleness of a comforting nursemaid" is seen as the central theme (Brueggemann 1998:1 quoted previously). Yahweh is revealed as the primal player in world affairs. Isaiah 1:1 introduces the message as a vision, which Yahweh revealed to the prophet concerning Judah and Jerusalem. It then continued by making it clear that a rebellion has already taken place. Israel has disrupted the initial amiable, reliable and reliable relationship and that the wrath of God is revealed against their unnatural behaviour– rebellion, Isaiah 1:5 – 8, 25 (see Seitz 1993:32, 34; Brueggemann 1998:13). Oswalt sees the possibility of a misunderstanding that might likely surface. Firstly, that God is pictured as a tyrant who dares any one to oppose his arbitrary decrees. To this, he rightly responded that God's decree in matters of spirit is no more arbitrary than those in the physical. There is always a natural result for every unnatural act. It is not a matter of breaking natural law but a demonstration of it. In the spiritual realm, "if I live in ways contrary to my nature, I will experience the destructive result of my behaviour" (Oswalt 1986:90).

The second misunderstanding is that if there is a natural law, then God may be seen as impersonal God who is not involved with his creation. This extreme should also be avoided because scripture is opposed to that:

> [God] is a Person, intimately and passionately involved with his creatures. His emotions are neither fickle nor arbitrary; they are real and deep. His hatred of sin is as intense as his approval of righteousness is profound. Thus, genuinely biblical view of God's response to sin must always hold these two extremes in tension. On the one hand, he does not respond out of arbitrary rage, but on the other hand, he does respond personally and directly (Oswalt 1986:90).

The Image of God as a father used in this passage suggests that God is constantly involved with his creation (see Hos.11:1-3; Ez. 16:1ff), even though the creatures do not keep the covenant obligation. God has been faithful to the covenant obligation that he entered in freely with his people, Isaiah 1:9 (see Seitz 1993:32;Brueggemann 1998:13).Understanding the character and attribute of Yahweh as explained here, support Seitz's (1993:34) assertion that Isaiah uses a "Zion" theology that is concerned with the restoration of Zion.

God's relationship with Israel as father-child relationship is not in the context of giving birth to, but ultimately, the idea of creation is brought to bear, Yahweh, is father in the sense that he is the creator. Like a father, he nurtured Israel, provided everything they needed for life and their relationship with God. He still cares for them, and that is why they are עַמִּי (my people) even though they יָדַע לֹא(do not know) and לֹא הִתְבּוֹנָן (do not understand).

3.7.2. Human Nature

Two images were used by Isaiah that explains human nature in this pericope; the imagery of a child and the contrast with ox and donkey. The way a child would naturally respond to his father's loving nurture is exactly what is intended here. Elsewhere in Ex. 20: 12, it is the duty of a child to honour the parent. In Exodus, it was a command, but in a real sense it ought not to be so. It is a natural response. Isaiah brings to light this understanding when he contrasted Israel's attitude to that of an ox and donkey who in their *"first nature (not second nature)… know instinctively* that to survive depends upon trust of the master" (Brueggemann 1998:13, italics mine). By the principle of first things, children ought to respond to the parents' loving, nurturing, and caring relationship by honouring them. This principles of first things displayed in unreasonable animals is used to describe Israel's rebellion as an intentional thing. If

unreasonable beings like ox and donkey do by nature what reasonable beings ought to have done, then Israel's rebellion is a wilful and deliberate act(Watts 1985: lv).

As rational beings, humankind ought to know God through observing and reasoning God's activity in nature or in relation to them. Although the verb יָדַע that Isaiah uses in this pericope implies more than just cognition, it is an intimate relationship that one might question the possibility of that relationship without God being the initiator. This is absolutely true; natural theology does not claim an independent or autonomous knowledge of God. The passage suggests that by the principle of first things, humans have been endowed with nature that is capable of cognition and of responding naturally to God and his moral demands (cf. Rom 1:18ff). This is why Israel is totally accountable for the disruption of their relationship with Yahweh.

3.7.3. Ethics

Old Testament ethics are most often narrowed to obedience to the laws of God. Notwithstanding, a close reading of this pericope seems to suggest implicitly in its approach that there are other approaches or foundations for ethics. This research is not insinuating that the author or redactor consciously planned to include such approaches in the delivery of the message, but the way the message is skilfully put forward, challenges the notion of covenant relationship that might likely make the readers or hearers conceited. Scanning through the book of Isaiah, one identifies different ways in which the approach become unique from the tradition of covenant relationship. To confirm that the pericope speak of something reminiscent of the contemporary notion of natural law, Barton (2003:134ff) observes that Isaiah's comments on morality include issues that were not included in the covenant law. In the pericope, rebellion is the one sin mentioned. This is a matter of attitude; it does not fall in the category of specific sin outlined in the covenant law. In addition, to say that the pericope introduces something reminiscent of the contemporary natural law is demonstrated by Barton (2003:134ff) as he identifies several of these sins that fall into this category not found in the covenant law, for example:

- ➢ Isaiah spoke of the people's folly and stupidity, which is the motive force behind human sin. Their rebellion contrasted with the attitude of domestic animals clearly demonstrates such a stupidity (1:3; 19:11-14), gross insensibility.

- ➢ Pride or arrogance (5:21; 10:5-15),

> ➢ Delight in prestige and self-aggrandizement (22:15-19; 3:16; 4:1; 9:9-10),

> ➢ Isaiah identifies failure or unwillingness to trust God as the root of political and religious sin as described above (8:19; 31:3).

Pride has been identified as the major or fundamental sin in Isaiah. Barton quotes Eichrodt, saying that "the central sin of man lay in the overweening pride with which he sets himself up against God … Luther's dictum "*omne peccatum est superbia*"("all sin is pride"), exactly sums up Isaiah's conviction" (Barton,2003:134).

Barton (2003:135) rightly notes that the denunciation of attitudes forms the second major stratum of Isaiah's moral universe. His condemnation of specific offences is thus set against a more general backcloth, in the form of a certain vision of how a society should be. This is a high order of generality that describes Isaiah's ethical principles. Isaiah 2:6-22; 3:1-12; 5:8-10; 5:20 and 29:15-16 are passages that provide us with such clues: pride, usurpation of power by the unworthy, expropriation of land from the poor, turning good into evil and evil into good (reversal of natural order of things), turning things upside down. These points suggest or "imply an ethical system which sets a very high value on the received orders of society…" (Barton 2005:135). In view of this observation, he posits that: "Morality is cooperation in maintaining the ordered structure which prevails, under God's guidance, in the natural constitution of things, and the key note of the whole system is order, a proper submission to one's assigned place in the scheme of things and avoidance of any action that would challenge the supremacy of God or seek to subvert the orders he has established" (Barton 2003:138).

Our pericope describes Israel's sin as pervasion of this moral order, even a gross pervasion of the highest order, rebellion. If animals obey, by instinct the natural order, Israel's lack of insight and understanding (ידע and בין) is a deliberate action, which is rebellion. Rebellion leads to a state of anarchy, power is usurped by the unworthy and breaking of the law and every sort of moral pervasion ensues.

3.7.4. Natural Theology and Natural Law

In the previous chapter, this research has defined natural law as *sets of moral principles that are known naturally through the innate power of the intellect to reason in light of creation and natural phenomena. These sets of moral principles are supposed to be held in common by all of humanity by virtue of their common origin and nature, as created by God and in the*

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image of God. From this, it therefore follows that if there are "moral principles" in nature then natural law is "right reasoning" (Cicero's definition of law in chapter two) and of course it is logical to conclude that this right reason can lead to the knowledge of the creator as human beings contemplate on the law of nature, just as Aristotle did, who reached the conclusion of the existence of a supreme being through his contemplation on law of motion. Natural theology therefore, stemmed out from the more controversial theory of natural law, and can be defined as the ability to infer through reason, certain knowledge of God. The question that remains is whether the pericope agrees with the understanding of natural law defined above.

The general assumption is that prophetic messages are dependent upon Israel's historical and legal traditions. However, the first section of the book of Isaiah has "very little to say about normative Israelite tradition either historical or legal" (Blenkinsopp 2000:108). Most references to past history are made in relation to ingratitude to for benefits received, (Isa.1:2-3; 5:1-7). Blenkinsopp (2000:108), citing several scholars, notes that Isaian traditions seem to have drawn from Jerusalemite and dynastic traditions rather than from the interventions of the native deity on Israel's behalf in Egypt, in the wilderness, and the conquest of Canaan. As for legal traditions, though things forbidden in the laws in the Pentateuch are often condemned in these chapters (1-12, 28-33), there are no explicit references either to specific laws as known and acknowledged basis for conduct. Rather, the familiar terms for legal enactments are either absent or, if present, carry a different meaning (Blenkinsopp 2000:108f). What Blenkinsopp is simply saying is, for example, the word *torah* does not carry the legal connotation of the Pentateuch, but it connotes a prophetic teaching, (Isa. 1:10; 2:3; 5:24; etc.); also the word מִצְוֹת in Isa. 36:21 means either royal decree or conventional religious behaviour (Isa. 29:13); מִצְוַת appears frequently but never with the meaning "status" or "ordinances" as in the book of the covenant. Blenkinsopp (2000:109) continues that:

> This does not oblige us to conclude that no written legal compilation was in existence in the eighth century B.C.E., but it does suggest that Isaiah and other dissidents of that time authorized their categorical ethical demands and their teaching with reference to traditional consensual social ethic rather than specific legal enactment. Although the pericope seems to be an allusion to the event of covenant making in Deuteronomy, nowhere is it mentioned that Isaiah called the heavens and earth as witnesses to the indictment detailing the violation of that covenant.

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The idea of natural law and natural theology are found in the pericope. Take for instance, the accusation implicit in Isaiah's indictment is that Israel by the first principles of things or by 'right reason' knows God but then willingly refused to יָדַע (to know and reciprocate God's loving care), hence it is rebellion. This assertion for natural theology can be supported by 6:3; the angels of the LORD cry to each other …the fullness of the earth is his glory. God's glory is seen in all creation (fullness of the earth), yet Israel chose to 'rebel'. "The rebellion grows out of the failure to have insight… which here as in 30: 8 – 11, is in no way to be taken as the result of Yahweh himself causing a hardening, but rather, it is represented as something contrary to what is natural…"(Wildberger 1991:15). Now, for the purpose of this research with ethics as the focus, the aspect of natural theology will be curtailed so as not confuse the concept as meaning the same with natural law. The research will like to narrow its focus to natural law.

Isaiah's ethical teaching is an example of an ethical approach that places natural order as basis for human moral behaviour. Going against such is:

> …a disregard for natural law. Of course, what we have in Isaiah is a theological form of natural law, as were most natural-law theories before the Enlightenment: one might perhaps speak equally well of a theory 'general revelation'. It is the remote ancestor of one of the classic source texts for such theories, Romans 1: 19 – 25 (Barton 1981:13).

Isaiah's ethical approach (placing natural order as basis for moral behaviour) can further be illustrated using the song of the vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-7). The unnaturalness of Israel's behaviour is made clear in this passage. Isaiah pointed out how good God had been to his people. God had done for them all that He could do. He gave them a holy law and a wonderful land, but they broke the law and defiled the land with their sins and failed to produce fruit for God's glory. Now all that remained for him to do was to bring judgment on the fruitless vineyard and make it a waste.

Retrospectively, in anticipation of a possible objection of reading natural theology and natural law into Isaiah's prophecy, this research has earlier established that Isaiah or the redactor was not consciously constructing a theory of ethics or moral philosophy such that

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this research suggests. Of course, Isaiah's prophecy was concerned about his specific situation. His prophecy was understood by his audience in its context.

In summary, if the argument about Isaiah focuses on natural order as the basis of moral behaviour and is evaluated against the definition of natural law cited from the beginning, it may be seen that something reminiscent to the contemporary definition of natural law exist even in the prophetic book. However, how does this resonate with his preaching against injustice? This forms part of the content of the next chapter, where it discusses the resonance of natural law to human dignity in Isaiah and African traditional religion.

3.8. Conclusion

This chapter started on the notes that several definitions of natural law exist and not all meanings are negative to the biblical faith and tradition. The chapter employed a synchronic and diachronic close reading of Isaiah 1:2-3 to evaluate the definition that was deduced after a survey of the development of the concept.

Firstly, the synchronic reading of the text has helped to demarcate the two verses on the basis of similarity in its form and content. The two verses both seem to draw on natural order and it also focuses on the theme of sin. Secondly, from the diachronic reading, the study shows that the text must have been drawn elsewhere from Isaiah 30:8, 9. Furthermore, the placement in the present place could have been the work of a redactor in the post exilic period. The placement of the text was a skilful act to introduce the reader to what is to follow. Therefore, the pericope could have been an introduction to chapter 1 or 1-5 (which is also considered a latter construction) or even I Isaiah or the whole canon (based on the assumed inclusios between chapters 1 and 65-66).

In the critical analysis of the pericope, this study has revealed that Israel has rebelled against Yahweh and that rebellion is something contrary to what is natural. As children of Yahweh, they have put themselves outside the borders of the created order and renounced what was characteristic of all creaturely existence. It recognises that it is characteristic of creaturely existent to draw the creature to one's master and provider. Israel's refusal to "know" her creator is rebellion, a disregard for natural law. I also identified the intentionality in the analogy that the prophet or the editor or redactor of the book employed. At the time of writing, Israel's legal system was fully developed, yet Isaiah or the redactor did not refer to any of their legal documents. Rather, he decided to form the basis of his accusation from the

natural order of things "[to show] the deliberately willed nature of the issue" (Watts 1985: lv).

Again building upon the argument for the placement of the pericope as serving as an introduction of the chapter, or section or the entire canon, the study concludes that the writer employs powerful images at the beginning of the book, giving the book the theme by which to enter into the rest of the content (Brueggemann 1998:13). Hence, it agrees that Isaiah's ethical basis is not the revealed law or the *torah* alone*,* but it includes the nature of being. Now, how does this approach agree with the prophet's indictment of Israel on injustice and dehumanization? Chapter Four discusses the resonance of natural law to human dignity. It will demonstrate how Isaiah's justice system recognises that there is an intrinsic quality in every human being that ought to be respected. The chapter will also show how the ethical approach discovered in the pericope would be applied in the context of the Tangale, thereby demonstrating the possibility of application in a larger African context.

Chapter 4

The Resonance of Natural Law with Human Dignity

4.1.   Introduction

This chapter discusses the resonance of the concept of natural law with human dignity. It also links the possibility of understanding the pericope in the context of the Tangale people. This is done by testing the working definition and whether it applies to the Tangale context. If it does, to what extent can Tangale culture then be used as a source for natural law? It aims to provide a bridge to a common public moral life. By assuming that this might provide a link to a common public moral life, it means that natural law provides a common ground upon which a society might discuss moral issues independent of any religious affiliation.

So far, the research assumed that "nature" and "cultures/traditions" are important elements. They are sometimes used as instruments by God in his sovereign government of human social and moral affairs etc. This thesis has established that the theory of natural law and natural theology have 'nature' as the point at which the two concepts overlap.[58]Natural theology assumes that God is knowable through nature, while natural law presupposes that human morality can be informed by nature. Natural law also assumes that orderliness in nature is informative and sometimes prescriptive of how human beings should conduct themselves in moral life.

Nature as phenomena of the physical environment has been viewed in various ways. To some cultures and traditions, especially in many parts of Africa and the Ancient Near East, nature is synonymous with god or his power. The biblical creation narrative reveals that nature is created by God and is integrated into the moral order of God's government of humankind. This supports the notion that there are principles for human behaviour or human inclinations that are established in nature and human reasoning based on eternal objective. These principles seek to protect the minimal conditions for the core values of human dignity. The core values of human dignity hold that there are rights possessed by every person at all times

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[58]Nature as defined earlier can mean the phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, and the landscape, and/or the basic or inherent features, qualities, or character of a person or thing.

that ought not to be violated, and that there are intrinsically evil actions that are defined as violations of these rights.

In retrospect, this thesis has established that human dignity and the discourse on human dignity may be embedded in/or related to the concept and discourse on natural theology and natural law. Implicit in this assertion is the assumption that there is a resonance between natural law and human dignity. So far, the research has provided a brief overview of the concept of human dignity and an elaborate discourse on natural law. In this section, attention is given to a more extensive understanding of the concept of dignity. This, it is assumed, might provide a clear link between the theory of natural law and human dignity.

4.2.   Human Dignity and Natural Law[59]

Having defined human dignity in Chapter One, the research will thus continue the discourse that human dignity is such an important concept not only in theological studies, but also in the secular studies. The concept of human dignity has become the centre of various discourses, especially legal and ethical discourses. However, despite the value and the position that the concept is universally given in various talks, one still finds different kinds of atrocities committed against human beings.Kirchhoffer (2013) identified complex issues that the concept of human dignity raises.[60]He says that human dignity is being used and abused in contemporary ethical discourse. However, Kirchhoffer offered a significant insight concerning the meaning and application of dignity so that its position as key in various life discourses are pursued and maintained.

4.2.1. Dimensions of Human Dignity

The table that follows (adopted from Kirchhoffer 2013:3), is Kirchhoffer's summary of these dimensions that are necessary in understanding what human dignity is.

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[59]Human dignity is defined in the following manner in Chapter One: Human dignity is an intrinsic quality that cannot be separated from other essential aspects of the human person. This dignity is not based on any human quality, legal mandate or individual merit or accomplishment.

[60]Kirchhoffer (2013:48) notes that the abuse of the concept of human dignity is as a result of the misconception of its meaning. He observes that due to the limited focus given by some definitions, human dignity came to be used to justify the opposing courses of moral behaviour and this, Kirchhoffer added, led many to consider the concept as vacuous. Kirchhoffer embarks on the clarification of the meaning of human dignity as a way of revitalising it against its dismissal suggested by its critique. Because of limited space and to guard against serious digression, the research will not elaborate on the criticism of the concept. Attention is rather given to the dimensions of the concepts of dignity that Kirchhoffer identified to elaborate on the usefulness of the concept in ethics that it warrants, anchoring it on the topic of natural law.

Component Dimension	Complementary Duality	
	Already	Not yet
Existential	Have (Potential)	Acquire (Fulfilment)
Cognitive –Effective	Inherent Worth	Self-Worth
Behavioural	Moral Good	Morally Good
Social	Other's Dignity	My Dignity

4.2.1.1.   The Existential Dimension of Dignity

The existential dimension deals with the issue of the reality of human existence; that is, it focuses on the aspect of what constitutes a human person. The existential dimension of human dignity is described as something that human beings have and also acquire. As something that human beings have, it implies that dignity is inherent in every person, and as something acquired, it implies that there are aspirations that human beings want to become, which are normative.[61] Therefore, fulfilling the potential through one's capacity is dignity. Kirchhoffer (2013:21) says: "The Existential Component Dimension raises the question of how one turns the dignity one has (the potential) into acquired dignity (the fulfilment). There are three facets to the answer, each constituted by the three remaining Component Dimensions."

4.2.1.2.   The Cognitive-Effective Dimension

This Dimension lays emphasis on the potential that human beings have in relation to the capacities to reason and having feelings or emotion. The Cognitive-Effective Dimension recognises the rational ability of human beings to think creatively and to form ideas and feelings about one's self, others, and how others think of feel about one. The rational ability of human beings makes them moral beings and this ability leads human beings to contemplate the purpose of existence. The Effective Dimension makes human beings feel that they have meaning and purpose (the inherent worth); therefore, they now behave rationally to realise the meaning and purpose of their lives (self-worth). "This inherent worth makes a moral claim on society to provide the basic freedoms and goods necessary for the fulfilment of one's dignity" (Kirchhoffer 2013:21). Although what constitutes one's self-worth may

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[61] See Kant (1908:225ff) on existential issues. Kant says that nothing can be regarded as good without limitation except "good will". Understanding this helps one to see the good in human aspirations, which has to be based on a particular norm. Kant recognizes that nature provides for the maintenance of the wellbeing, but because sometimes "it has hit upon a poor way of attaining its end" nature produce.

vary and the means of acquiring such worth may vary from place to place, the inherent worth may not be questioned. Therefore, the process of acquiring one's self-worth should never mar this inherent worth.

4.2.1.3. The Behavioural Dimension

This deals with the question of human behaviour. Kirchhoffer (2013:21) puts it this way: "The Behavioural Component Dimension addresses human behaviour in the world, and the observation that human beings act… and justify their actions… according to societal mores and moral norms". This dimension concerns the "moral good" of human dignity and the dignity of the "morally good". Human dignity, described as "moral good" in the Behavioural Component Dimension, implies that dignity is an end in itself in so far as it is the good end of human moral behaviour. Having observed that moral good of human dignity is both the inherent worth and the acquired self-worth, it suggests that behaviour, leading to the realisation of the self-worth may be defined "morally good". Engaging in such behaviour itself confers worthiness. Thus, to be morally good is also dignity over and above that which one inherently has as a human person, although what is morally good may be subjected to one's context.

4.2.1.4. The Social Dimension

There is a tendency of defining what is morally good (in Behavioural dimension noted previously) as relative, because there is variation in how people pursue their sense of self-worth. However, Social Component Dimension checks such a tendency because it is a dimension that "makes it clear that every individual is inextricably bound-up in the fortunes of others who affect(corporeality) and are affected by individual subjectivity in each of the three aforementioned facets of human existence and experience." What this suggests is that the relativity of "moral good" is not ideal, although it may be argued on the basis of the strategies to fulfil the desire for dignity as self-worth. Objective normative ethical assessment of one's dignity can be done through the "Social Component Dimension". This, as with the aforementioned other three, also has two faces; it speaks about "other's dignity" and "my dignity" (the actor's dignity).

The dignity of others implies that all people attain their self-worth by engaging in what they believe is "morally good" behaviour; because all person's inherent dignity is "moral good". The actor's dignity then refers to the ideal form of acquired dignity that fulfils this inherent worth. One's acquisition of dignity should not infringe upon the inherent dignity of the

others, but it should rather facilitate the actualisation of others' acquired dignity. The reader should recall that in giving the conceptual overview of natural law, this point was echoed when the research stated that natural law is an ethical theory that recognises certain principles in life, which cannot be violated. It recognises the principles of right and wrong that identify any act that affect the normal continuity of the existence of human beings as abnormal. It can therefore be said that natural law identifies any act that infringes on the inherent worth of a human personas abnormal or morally bad. For example, it may defined as indignity to say that because of the fall, human being can not by their "Cognitive-Effective" Component Dimension contemplate the existence of God and to assume the their sense of moral judgment is completely depraved.

Having seen these dimensions, in retrospect to Chapter One, the research has established "the affirmation that human beings are created in the image of God is a qualification of human dignity that cannot be underestimated." This points to the necessity of understanding the nature of human being as found in Genesis 1: 26-27.

The point that this statement makes is that Genesis 1:26-27 is foundational to the understanding of the true nature of humanity. The question is whether the concept of the "image of God" as the basic constituent of human nature capture the four dimensions of human dignity previously outlined. The next section deals with this question. It will first explain what the "image of God" is and as it does this, links to Kirchhoffer's four "Dimensions" will be noted simultaneously.

4.2.2. The "Image of God" as Human Dignity

Genesis 1: 26 – 27

²⁶וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ וְיִרְדּוּ בִדְגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל־הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל־הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל־הָאָרֶץ:
²⁷וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

²⁶Then God said, ''Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth and over all the creatures that move along the ground.''
²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

The term 'Image of God; is known "in classical Christian theology as the *Imago Dei*. The term refers to the idea that human kind, by virtue of creation and mandate, corresponds

somehow to the creator" (Merril 2003:441). There are several interpretations of the image and likeness of God in humanity. The image and likeness of God is seen in his creative, sustaining and providential work. Others see capacity for relationship, sense of divine and unseen, and a longing after God as all encompassing. Pinnock (1973:304) rightly says "man [*sic*] can best be understood in terms of his relationships. Full and rounded human existence demands balanced and harmonious relationships in four directions –down, in, out, and up." The human role in terms of this relationship is what Pinnock describes as "priest of the world", the term that could be understood as stewardship of God's creation and relationship with God. Rightly put, this image includes "sharing characteristics and attributes- even in the physical realm and a relationship in which the human race does not resemble God in any way but merely represent him" (Merril:2003:442). These overviews of how the image of God should be understood kind of corresponds, not in detail, but captures the overall idea of Kirchhoffer's Cognitive-Effective, Behavioural and Social component Dimensions of human dignity. However, a further discussion on the relation the Image of God and Human dignity will explain the core issue of the concept of human dignity.

In Genesis 1: 26,"image" and "likeness" are two words that are translated from the Hebrew בְּצַלְמֵנוּ (our image) and כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ (our likeness). In Genesis 1: 28, the word is used in a construct state, showing a genitival relationship, בְּצֶלֶם.אֱלֹהִים. In the creation narrative context, the image and likeness of God suggest that humankind is like God. Humans share qualities like personality, will, and sensitivity and not simply in God's essence. Merril appended that "understanding the meaning of *imago Dei* is that human kind is not only in the image but is, in fact the image… a representative of [God's] reality (2003:443).

What does the image imply? Being made in the image of God means being endowed with an intrinsic quality that cannot be separated from other essential aspects of the human person (see Kirchhoffer's first dimension of dignity above). This dignity is not based on any human quality, legal mandate or individual merit or accomplishment.

The term "human dignity" is not found in the Bible. However, the word כָּבוֹד translated as "*abundance*, *riches*, *honour*, *splendour*, *glory*, of external condition and circumstances"[62] and

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[62]Whitaker, R., Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (1997, c1906). The Abridged Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament: From a Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by Francis Brown, S.R. Driver and Charles Briggs, based on the lexicon of Wilhelm Gesenius. Richard Whitaker

the term אָדָם, translated as "human" can be put together to mean human dignity. In spite of the lack of appearance of the term אָדָםכָּבוֹדin the Bible, there is inherent human worth that must not be violated. Typical is the sanctity of life (Gen. 9:6), which is derived from one's basic worth as created בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים, in the image of God.

Having observed that natural law underscores the role of nature,[63] it is thus logical to conclude that the essential argument for natural law is therefore an argument for human dignity. Firstly, it should be understood that natural law is arguing that human beings are endowed with certain qualities, which sometime informs or even prescribes how one should behave. Secondly, human dignity is saying that human beings, by virtue of who they are, possess intrinsic quality that cannot be separated from other essential aspects of their being. Now, if natural law is emphasising that one should recognise certain qualities in human nature in matters of moral judgement, one is apparently saying those qualities are significant. Therefore, it is in the recognition of such significance in the nature of human beings as the image of God, that human dignity is revealed.

## 4.3.	Human Dignity and Natural law in Isaiah

It is long assumed that natural law is built upon the account of practical reasoning and a rich and flexible understanding of the human good. This moral inquiry seem separated or independent from the word of God, the theological dimension. This thesis posits that natural law should be defined in its initial theological terms. Moreover, the theological terms or dimension of natural law prescription is the question of rooting it in the 'text' (the word of God).Therefore, what we have in Isaiah is a theological form of natural law. Having observed that Isaiah 1 is a post-colonial composition, the redactor skilfully weaved these different individual units as an introduction to book of Isaiah to caution the post-exilic Israel regarding their social, political and moral condition. The redactor employs the motif of knowing to cement the individual units of the passage and perhaps the entire canonical shape of the book (Williamson 2006:31). The motif of knowing brings in the argument of natural theology. The

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(ed.). Princeton Theological Seminary. Text provided by Princeton Theological Seminary. (459.2). Oak Harbor WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

[63]Natural law is defined as sets of moral principles that are known naturally through the innate power of the intellect to reason from creation and natural phenomena. These set of moral principles are supposed to be common to all humanity, by virtue of their common origin and nature, as created by God and in the image of God. It is "a range of theological and philosophical positions, including the conviction that the God who created all humans in his image and likeness endowed them with the capacity, through human conscience, to intuit not only God's existence but also something of God's fundamental moral will for humanity and the world" (Hale 2008:996).

call narrative in Isaiah 6:3 declares that the earth is full of God's glory, but it seems that Israel did not utilise the moral function of nature in their administration of justice. Their knowledge did not produce works proportionate to what they know and that is why their lack of knowledge is declared rebellion. The summons to hear God's words apparently agrees with this assertion, because:

> … we are about to be told that Israel does not 'know' or 'have understanding'; it is evident, therefore, that they are incapable of hearing, even though we should have expected them to be the first recipients of the prophetic work. Instead, the summons must be addressed to the heavens and the earth. Since Israel's failure to hear is depicted in terms which show it to be contrary to nature, this appeal makes good sense; heaven and earth have seen the unfolding history since the time of creation, and can therefore confirm that such behaviour is unheard of and unnatural (Williamson 2006:31).

There is a link between knowledge and action. Israel ought to respond to the voice of Yahweh and caring relationship in awe and gratitude (cf. Isaiah 66: 2), but instead, how did they respond? "But they have rebelled against me" (Isa 1:2 NIV). Isaiah 1:5 links Israel's persistence in rebellion to a refusal to learn from history. Yahweh asks: "Why should you be beaten anymore? Why do you persist in rebellion?" (Isaiah 1:5 NIV). The nature of the rebellion is not mentioned, but the context of the passage shows that the redactor was concerned with the administration of Justice. The administration of justice therefore goes contrary to the natural order of life.

Firstly, Davies (1981) notes that the term for justice, מִצְוָה is not always translated as "status" or "ordinances" as in the book of the covenant. Secondly, he also observes that laws for the prevention of giving and acceptance of bribe were established in the Torah (see Ex. 23:8; Deut. 16:19). Nevertheless, Isaiah did not refer to this law when accusing Israel of tempering with the administration of justice (Isaiah 1:23). The literary context shows that these laws sound ineffective because the שָׂרַיִךְ (rulers, NIV; Princes, RSV) are the ones that pervert justice. Given this situation that the prophet was confronted with, the accusation concerning the administration of justice in the legal assembly could not be based on specific laws in the Torah, because that would not be effective in providing a remedy. The officials were the ones who in normal circumstance serve as the last resort that one could appeal to when justice is

not done. The שָׂרִים would not discharge the law preventing the abuse of the judicial system, for they are guilty themselves. Isa 3:13-15 states:

> The Lord has taken his place to contend, he stands to judge his people. The Lord enters into judgment with the elders and princes of his people: It is you who have devoured the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?" says the Lord God of hosts (RSV).

By logical conclusion, if the princes or officers, who were presumably assigned by the king, are corrupt, then the king himself must be corrupt. The prophet calls for justice that is in accord with the natural order of life. Here, being corrupt does not imply the acceptance of bribes alone, but perhaps the strict administration of justice at the expense of its ultimate goal. In the first place, according to the political system of the period, the composition of the members of the judiciary have been tempered with, given that the very thing (land, houses, property) that qualifies one to be delegated is taken away (Isaiah 5:8-10).Therefore, by logical conclusion, there is no justice, seeing as democracy is not observed. In other words, there is no equal representation.

Another possible way to consider how Isaiah's indictment resonates with natural law is to look at the sin that the prophet accuses Israel of. Barton (1995:47f) observes that the sins are mostly directed to leaders and that they are more of "analysis of the social ills based on a coherent understanding of how society should be. Isaiah's condemnation of specific offences is thus set against a more general backcloth, in the form of a certain vision of how a society should be." For example, poverty is seen as a social problem, resulting from the perversion of justice. Isaiah is concerned with how justice is turned upside down. Isa 5:20 says: "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!"(RSV). The inversion of the natural order of life is crucial in the understanding the social problem.

Employing the motif of knowing, reason should have helped the judges to effect the law appropriately, but it seems the judges did not know how (lack of understanding, Isaiah 5:13), hence the basic purpose of the legal system was defeated. It was probable that in the effort to strictly keep to the law, the judges did not take the overall purpose of the law into consideration. They might have unnecessarily imposed heavy penalties for relatively minor

cases, or punishment for every crime was insisted irrespective of the economic situation of the defendant. Other social ills outlined include mockery, pride and human wisdom, drunkenness etc. (5:8-23).

In the analysis of the social ills, Isaiah addresses the underlying attitudes or the state of the minds of those whom he condemned. Just as in the case of the rebellion in Isaiah 1: 2-3, these social ills are not specific sins in the law code. Therefore, looking for a tradition in which to view Isaiah's message is not the appropriate approach. Rather it is more reasonable to assume that a common faith underlies both the traditions and Isaiah's message, that the qualities that Yahweh demands of humankind include a sense of compassion, humility, honesty and integrity.

The question one could now ask is:"Are these virtues obtainable by human effort?" The answer boils back to our definition of natural law. Was Isaiah saying humankind is morally good? The answer is no, for that would suggest 'universalism'. Isaiah is saying that by virtue of one's nature, there is intrinsically the ability to reason toward harmony with the social and ecological system, and that is a kind of justice. Retrospectively, *Natural law is sets of moral principles that are known naturally, through the innate power of the intellect to reason from creation and natural phenomena. These sets of moral principles are supposed to be common to all humanity, by virtue of their common origin and nature, as created by God and in the image of God.* Isaiah's analogy of an 'ox' and a 'donkey' is indirectly suggesting that Israel has decided to go contrary to the real nature as human. If unreasonable beasts could respond positively to certain experiences, why not Israel to her God?

The judgement of the injustice that the prophet condemns is that which fits the crime. In the song of the vineyard, where the concept of the motif is brought to bear, the prophet pronounced judgment that Israel must go to exile, not for breaking the covenant requirement, but for "lack of knowledge".

Isa 5:13	Isa 5:13
לָכֵן גָּלָה עַמִּי מִבְּלִי־דָעַת וּכְבוֹדוֹ מְתֵי רָעָב וַהֲמוֹנוֹ צִחֵה צָמָא	Therefore, my people go into exile for want of knowledge; their honored men are dying of hunger, and their multitude is parched with thirst. RSV

4.4.   Resonance of Natural Law with African Cultures/Tradition

Various African scholars have reacted differently to some of the Western missionaries' perspectives on African cultures/traditions. Many Western missionaries do not understand many things in the rich African cultures and traditions; hence, they misinterpret them as immoral, demonic etc. This sort of view has prompted scholars like Mbiti (1978:311) to see African cultures/traditions as *praeparatio evangelica;* in other words, African cultures/traditions are considered as African Old Testament. However, the question is on what ground this comparison is made. Does African cultures/traditions constitute the revelation of God and can it be relied upon for moral guidance? Asked in another way: Can African cultures and traditions be considered as a source for natural law?

The laws designed to keep human conduct seems to be deeply rooted and reflected in many traditional African societies, but many individuals in the Western world assumes that Africans are incapable of conceiving God, or to put it in another way:

> There exist the bare notion that there are peoples somewhere in the world to whom 'the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity' would not stoop so low as to reveal Himself, peoples who could not attain to the knowledge of the living God and the assurance of his being, just because they happen to have been born in some particular geographical location and brought up in their own native cultural atmosphere (Idowu 1962:31).

The lack of conceiving of God implies that all that Africa possesses as its cultural moral values is nothing to be cherished; at its worse, it considered evil, because it does not come from God and has to be replaced with moral values revealed by God. Bediako (1989:58) confirms this when he cites Dietrich Westermann[64] as exemplifying a misunderstanding of the African cultures/traditions:

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[64]Dietrich Westermann is the father of the Old Testament scholar Claus Westermann, who made a tremendous contribution to Old Testament studies. He authored quite a number of Books in German and English. They include: *Genesis 1- 11: A Continental Commentary* (1994); *Genesis 12 - 36: A Continental Commentary* (1995); *Elements of Old Testament theology* (1982); *Isaiah 40-66: A commentary* (1969) ;and co-authored *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* etc.

Dietrich Westermann took the view that in Africa the transposition of Christianity ought to entail the complete elimination of all that went to form the pre-Christian religious traditions. "However anxious a missionary may be to appreciate and retain indigenous social and moral values, in the case of religion he has to be ruthless …he has to admit and even to emphasize that the religion he teaches is opposed to the existing one and the one has to cede to the other" …In short, for Westermann, "giving the new means taking away the Old."

The question that one might ask is where African cultures/traditions originate. What are (is) its value(s) to those who possess them? To answer these resurging questions, there is a need to reflect on the findings of the previous chapters. This research had earlier, in chapter two, established that the cause of disagreement between natural theology and a 'revelatory' kind of theology is not the question of inferring some certain knowledge of God, but of the scope of natural revelation. For example, is faith needed for natural revelation? To what extent is natural revelation accessible to sinful humanity? Alternatively, how much knowledge of God is possible through nature and what would be the effect of that? This assertion is affirmed by Idowu (1962:31), who explains that: "The whole matter… pivots round the vexed question whether revelation of God is restricted to any particular race or creed or whether in deed by 'divers portions and in divers manners' God has spoken from the very beginning to every heart of peoples of the earth…" There is no better response than the testimony of the Bible, which is held in esteem by those who considers African cultures as something to be discarded. The Bible testifies that God has never left himself without a witness anywhere in the world (Psalm 19; Romans 1: 19-20). The element of the testimony of the knowledge of God is manifested in religion. Dearman (1992:2) observes that: "Human communication clothes itself in symbolic action – whether the communication is written or unwritten – and culture is the social context in which human activity communicates meaning." Therefore, religion (as part of culture) can be considered as the first language of God's communication. Mbiti (1969:1) rightly observes: "Africans are notoriously religious, and each people has its own religious system with a set of beliefs and practices. Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it."Mbiti's assertion implies God has in some way allowed the African to contemplate his existence and his moral will. This is also affirmed by Brighenti, (2008:523-524) who says:

> To think, in Africa, hurts, bewilders, confuses and creates perplexity. There is no place for docetisms, because in its people is the prolongation, in history, of passion of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. However, to do theology in Africa involves not only pain and suffering. It is above all to realize that the Spirit of God has passed through the continent before…

The research had previously noted that some scholars, like Idowu (1965), Mbiti (1969), Dickson (1985) and Bediako (1989), see continuity of God between African traditional religion and Christianity. It will be restated again that not all may put it in similarly strong terms, but either continuity or discontinuity; it is evident that "many of the African concepts bear striking resemblance to biblical ideas, particularly those of the Old Testament… [Affirming the fact] that religion is the richest and most profound part of the cultural heritage of African peoples" (Bediako 1989:60). Having seen that God has not left himself without witnesses anywhere in the world, can one then link revelation in the African Traditional Religions to biblical revelation? This question begs for the argument of continuity and discontinuity of God in African Traditional Religions and Christianity but it is beyond the scope of this research; in all probability it might be part of the researcher's future work. In order not to digress too far, the researcher would like to remind his readers that the essence of discussing revelation in African context is to use it as a point of departure to the discussion of social ethics, which is one of the cardinal elements of natural law.

Now, as to the question whether African cultures/traditions can be equated with revelation, the answer is no. Culture is never defined as revelation; more so, culture is not innate, lest one would assume it has divine origin. Like religion, and in fact all religion is an aspect of culture, culture is the language of God's communication. As such, it is connected to the rational ability of the human nature that God created. That innate nature contemplates on how to be harmonious with the social environment and ecological environment. Through this harmonious interaction, rules for social ethics are formed. This is affirmed by Idowu (1965:144ff), as he examines several possible responses to the question "Whence does morality derive its norm, the force of its demands and sanctions?" The various answers include:

1. The society created its system of self-preservation, to this conscience is nothing more than a complex residual habit implanted by this society's system.

2. It is a product of common sense; human experience with the environment taught them what to do and what to avoid.

The steady accumulation of this experience resulted in what has come to be known as right and wrong. Idowu observes that these two schools of thought are held strongly that the proponent refused to see any connection between religion and morality. He notes how these schools of thought fail to see how the question of morality is bound up with the fundamental nature of humanity. Speaking from the Yoruba point of view, Idowu (1965:145) summarises his viewpoint thus:

> Our view is that morality is basically the fruit of religion and that, to begin with, it was dependent on it. Man's concept of the Deity has everything to do with what is taken to be norm of morality. God made man *(sic)*; and it is him who implants in him the sense of right and wrong. This is a fact the validity of which does not depend whether man *(sic)* realises and acknowledges it or not.

It is difficult to put a sharp line between African social life and religion. Equally so morality is indistinguishable from African social life. Kunhiyop (2008:8) notes that:

> African situation is one in which life is not divided artificially into sacred and secular, that it is one in which reality is regarded as one, and in which the things of earth (material things and man's daily doings and involvements) have meaning only in terms of the heavenly (the spiritual reckoning with the Transcendent and that part of man which has links with the super sensible).

Therefore, talking about an ethical system in African society means one has to look into the religious system because it forms the foundation and governing principles of life. The social life (cultures and traditions) of the people need to be interpreted in their context (Kunhiyop 2008:8f), otherwise they will be misunderstood and, like many non-Africans have, be assumed that "African has no sense of sin" (Adegbola 1972:116). By using some structures in the Tangale beliefs and practices, the researcher will illustrate how social ethics is deeply connected to them. Earlier in Chapter One, the researcher expressed his reliance on secondary materials on Tangale beliefs and practices. For this reason, my primary source is John S.

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Hall's *Religion, Myth and Magic in Tangale* (1994).[65] Of course, being a Tangale myself, with regards to Tangale culture, I can speak of personal experience thereof.

4.4.1. Some Tangale Beliefs

4.4.1.1.   *Supreme Being*

The Tangale people have a system of religion called "*Yeku*" or "*Eku*". In this system of belief: "There is a definite and unquestioned belief in the existence of a supreme being. His name is *Yamba,* the meaning of which word, as it does not appear to be derivative or a compound of common Tangale roots or stems, I have not yet discovered" (Hall 1994:32). This *Yamba* dwells in *ta kiton* (the up above, i.e., the heaven). The Tangale believe that *Yamba* is the creator of the heaven and the earth. It is this same word that is used for God in the Tangale version of the New Testament. *Yamba* to the Tangale traditional religious worshiper is a pure and holy God and he is the source of all ethical and moral life. This Supreme Being is unique and his uniqueness is described in statements such as *Yamba rabo?* Meaning is God two? He is supreme and above all other gods. Even though this God is unique and supreme, he is not known. The feminine pronoun is used in speaking of the Supreme Being, not because they think of *Yamba* as a female deity, "but rather more in a neuter sense, something whose lines of and forms are hidden and a life condition of which may not be learned" (Hall 1994:35).

Yamba is approached through *anambure* (ghosts). *Anambure* are the ghost of deceased ancestors. It is never use to describe God as spirit. When the question is asked: *Yamba nụ? -*

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[65] John Stevenson Hall (1883 – 1953), who was popularly known by the locals as Mr. Hall, is the one who first trekked the Tangale in the South of Gombe, Nigeria, in the year 1917. Hall attended McMaster University Toronto in Ontario, Canada, and graduated with a B.A. in 1916. That same year, in the month of November, he went to Nigeria and arrived in January 1917 as a missionary to the Tangale. Hall latter left for a furlough in 1920 and completed his Master's degree in Hebrew Language. This source says in 1936-37, Hall had completed the necessary study for a PhD at Kennedy School of Missions in Hartford, Connecticut, but refused the degree because he never wanted to be known as Dr. Hall among his fellow missionaries. This particular work, *Religion, Myth, and Magic in Tangale,* is said to have had a long history of futile attempts to publish. The manuscript is said to originate from Hall's "… twenty-eight closely written, tightly packed notes book." Hall submitted a version of this manuscript as his Master's degree thesis. At last, the work came to be published through the influence of H. Jungraithmayr. "Repeatedly, H. Jungraithmayr, who had started linguistic work among the Tangale in 1962, was asked by various Tangale friend's to procure and make available this manuscript dealing with matters only fairly known to the present generation." The editors notes that Hall's work as a missionary contributed to the undermining the traditional religion of the Tangale, yet he considered it worthwhile to document. In other words, Hall could be grouped among the categories of some of the missionaries who had a negative view of the African culture and tradition, yet he documented what he perhaps calls paganism. In fact, as far as the researcher knows, being an insider himself, this is the only documented work dealing with such issues.

Who is God? The answer is always *Yamba Yimish* – God is spirit. *Yamba* has all authority – *Yamba Mai* (literally, God is king) and he is all powerful –*Yamba ka Ponon*.

> *Yamba* is the supreme dispenser of good. Perhaps this is brought out in their remarkable judgements on sexual intercourse. "Concerning the intercourse men have with women we say 'Sin (*sashlap*) is at the bottom of it, but God turns it to good'; that is God turns it to good by giving a child by it" (Hall 1994:33).

However, even though the Tangale believes in *Yamba* as the supreme dispenser of all good, in their theological response for theodicy, "*Yamba,* too, is supremely, though not uniquely, the dispenser of evil and the ultimate explanation for all enigma" (Hall 1994:34).To them, God uses natural disaster and epidemic as a tool for the correction of ethical and moral conduct and character. Hall (1994:34) rightly captured this:

> All serious calamities of widespread of irremediable sort are simply called God. When an epidemic of small-pox or cerebro-spinal meningitis is raging, "God", they say, "is on men". A plague of locusts, where swiftly and thoroughly a black cloud of these pests envelope and destroys all green stuff, is simply called God; so of leprosy that has eaten a man out of recognition.

Yamba is also used to describe other personal gods. A magician is said to perform his magic because he has his *Yamba*.

4.4.1.2.   Ancestral Believe - Anambure

There are quite a number of other deities. However, suffice it to say that the research in this particular section is not about the gods of the Tangale people, but about their belief systems and how it resonates to the tradition of natural law. An example may help this research to situate the Tangale's ethical system however. Let us regard the example of the *anambure* (previously mentioned), ancestral spirits that are powerful: "They are regarded as having command over natural forces, with power to help or hinder crops…quite certainly, the dead are thought to have access to God" (Hall 1994:29). A translation from the native idea goes as follows:

> As all things, then, there is nothing that excels God in greatness. He excels them all. But we, when we pray to the ghosts (*anambure*), ask them to talk

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with God and have him take our part. We believe that the *anambure* have power to speak to God because they are not in the body. We beseech them to ask God to be merciful to us and heal sicknesses, because He alone is able to heal our bodies.

The activities of *anambure* are crucial to the Tangale people. The *anambure* are intermediaries between the deities (Supreme Being and other gods) and the people. Most often, it is believed that epidemics and natural disasters are punishment from the deities for wrongdoing against the deities, the *anambure,* or fellow human beings. A historic account of the truce between the Shongom[66] and the Borak[67] in which there was deception from the Shongom side explains the reasons for calamities that the Shongom faced in their dwelling place. Being neighbours, there was frequent strife between the Shongom and the Borak. At a certain time, both parties decided to bring an end to the strife, so they made a treaty, but the Shongom people did not keep to the terms. The historic account goes that: "That was the beginning of calamitous years for Shongom in their dwelling place. Every evil thing came upon Shongom" (Hall 1994:43). The breaking of the treaty terms was seen as the cause of the presence of some evil spirit in the land. It was seen as the decaying that spoiled the life of Shongom: "And up till how *(sic)* the old straight truth is lost. That is what our old men tell: They affirm that the origin of the spread of *shoro* [evil spirit] among men [sic] was when Shongom wronged Borak, and [men] decreased" (Hall 1994:24).

This narrative, to some extent, explains how the ethical concern exists in the Tangale believe system just like for many of the peoples of Africa. "In Africa, ethical principles and rules of conduct have been preserved over the ages in various customs and traditions that provide explanations of the moral code and indicate 'what the people must do to live ethically'" (Kunhiyop 2008:9; cf. Adegbola 1972:116).

4.4.1.3.   The belief in Lau Yamba

In the Tangale culture, there exists the concept of *Lau Yamba,* the son of God. The idea of *Lau Yamba* frequently appears in issues of afterlife. Firstly, it was believed that initially there was no death. However, because people were dying, there was another myth to explain that death is not the end of life; there will be a resurrection of the dead. On the former belief, there

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[66] Shongom is a tribe in the southern Tangale. They are Tangale, but preferred to be identified as Shongom.

[67] Borak belong to another tribe (not part of the Tangale) about eighteen or twenty miles south of Shongom.

exists a myth that in olden times, people in a particular clan called the *Nathe* did not die. However, they became covetous of the gifts that people who lost their relative to death obtained. Therefore, they played a trick, pretending that a person had died among them. People from other clans joined them in mourning and as usual, the people brought them gifts. From that period onwards, people in that clan began to die, to the extent that they had to disperse among the other clans, for fear that their lineage might be wiped out through the pangs of death. On the latter belief, death to the Tangale people is a journey to another life. The grave is a resting place. Similar to the aforementioned myth, is another one that explains the Tangale's concept of life after death. It goes that an argument ensued between a lizard and chameleon. The lizard said people do not resurrect when they die, while the chameleon said they do. It happened that they set a task to themselves that the one that wins is the one with truth and it happens that the lizard won. To the Tangale, that was why people do not resurrect any longer.

Nevertheless, even though it is believed that there is no longer imminent resurrection because of the lizard – chameleon argument, the Tangale still believe that the grave is a resting place, not the permanent abode of a person. In the three natures of human being discussed previously, the soul is not touched by death; it is immortal. Sacrifices and prayers were mostly offered for the soul of the diseased to be released from the place of rest, into the life of eternity with *Yamba*. They believe that *Lau Yamba* will not welcome any one who was not morally and ethically pure into heaven in the afterlife.

4.4.2. Tangale World Views of Nature

4.4.2.1.   The Cosmic Worldviewin Tangale

The Tangale notions about nature, the cosmic environment "…is, in essential character though not in uniformity of manifestation, the same there as elsewhere" (Hall 1994:7). There is much traditional knowledge or belief regarding the forces of nature. *Pidi* (literally place) is a word employed to describe nature and its elements; weather, season and climate. The Tangale believes *pidi* follows a pattern; permit me to employ the term used by this research, natural law, or better said, there is law of *pidi*. Notwithstanding, the Tangale believes in *Yamba's* control of the law of nature. Their description of the eclipse of the moon implies this belief:

> Sometimes something comes over the moon so that the moon's face becomes
> purely red. We then cry out that the moon is about to die. Then everybody

rushes out to dance and shout … We do this to revive the moon. How otherwise shall we act when God is killing the moon? These activities are kept up until the moon shows itself again… (Hall 1994:11).

Tangale people look for signs in nature. In other words, nature is not just there as a physical phenomena, it serves as a means of communication of what lies ahead. For example, the position of the moon at its coming out could mean success or disaster, especially with regards to going to war. Councils are given against going to war if the position of the moon is bad. Refusal to heed the council leads to calamity and disaster. Lightning and thunder also serve as a means of judgement. A person might take an oath in the name of thunder, saying:"May thunder kill me if …" Thunder is the voice of water (*dil am)* and lightning is the flashing of the water (*kilip am*). Nature to the Tangale is used by *Yamba* as a control measure. The previous example of thunder and lightning is typical. Most often, the belief is that thunder and lightning does not kill without a cause. Sometimes the same with a snake bite. Nature's elements, weather, seasons and climate (favourable or unfavourable) are interpreted in terms of *Yamba's* pleasure and displeasure with human conduct and character.

4.4.2.2.   The Human Nature in Tangale

There is no myth explaining the origin of the human king among the Tangale people. It is unquestionably believed that *Yamba,* the Supreme Being, created human beings and set them on the earth and in families (Hall 1994:16).Broadly, with Tangale, human beings comprises of three essential elements: *Ik* (body)*, shirum* (spirit) and *kebe* (soul)*.* In some periods, human beings in their totality can enter into a totemic relationship with non-humans. In the case of the Tangale, dogs and lions are most often held as human beings. Both animals are gifted with supernatural powers that are invincible to human beings. In connection to revelation, the Tangale believe that *Yamba* opens the eyes of little children and give them revelation, so also with dogs, that *Yamba* opens their eyes to see ghosts. Not only children and dogs, but some adults are also said to possess a double sets of eyes. The other set is invisible; the one who possess it is known only in his/her ability to see and hear ghost and understand their communication.

4.4.2.3.   Social control in the Tangale

The Tangale belief system and concept of nature, as seen in the aforementioned, is like a spider web. They are interconnected through various practices associated with the belief systems. The space and scope of the research is a constraint for considering such practices. However, the Tangale practice of medicine, witchcraft and worship are associated with the belief system. Hall (1994:112) summarises this as follows:

> The practitioner of medicine, for instance, may on occasion adopt the ways of witchcraft and trust on purely magical processes; and his treatment may mingle with or be preceded or allowed by rites of magic at one time, and rites of religion (namely, by worship at another). The practitioner of witchcraft too may imitate both the ways of the doctor and the priest, and his treatment may make use of medicine…

Social control and moral conduct do not exist alone; they are interwoven into these beliefs and practices. Quite a number of taboos are incorporated in some certain practices to serve as restrictive measures (see Hall 1995:114, cf. Kunhiyop 2008:8). For example, the strong believe in the ancestral spirit and the concept of *Lau Yamba* etc. is a strong motivation for one to do what is morally right in the community.

These belief systems and practices of the Tangale can be summarised in Bediako's (1995:93-95), summary of Turner's framework of understanding of the world's primal religions:

1. *The Essence of kinship in nature:* This relates to the spiritual existence of animals and plants in the universe as independent parts of a whole. "Accordingly any object of the natural environment may enter into a totemic spiritual relationship with human beings or become a tutelary and guardian spirits whilst the environment itself is used realistically and unsentimentally but with profound respect and reverence and without exploitation. This ecological aspect of primal religions … [is] a profoundly religious attitude of man's *(sic)* natural environment".

2. *The minuteness and limited ability of human beings:* This relate to idea of the Holy, "that man's *(sic)* basic to the Holy is in terms of a sense of creature hood… [This describes] an authentic religious sensitivity, coupled with realistic assessment of man's *(sic)* condition. This is said to be hidden from the Westerners because of their technical and socio-political power".

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3. *Spiritual world of power:* This is the conviction that human beings are not alone in the universe. There are spiritual powers stronger and ultimate than human beings. This affects the Tangale's perception of an event in terms of someone being the cause. Hence, they ask the question "who did this or that" and not "what caused …" These spiritual beings include the ancestors, divinities, gods and even evil spirits, demons, and "malevolent divinities, and the range of lesser earth-born occult powers of wizards and witches."

4. *Human beings can enter into a relationship with the spirit world:* Humans can relate with the benevolent spirit world and so share in the powers and blessing and receive protection from evil forces by the transcendent helpers. The emphasis on the transcendent power is said to be contrary to the "neat projectionist theories that explain religions away as man-made and ignore the primary testimony of so much of the data about religions".

5. *Reality of the afterlife:* This explains the important place of the ancestors or the living dead in primal religion. Ancestors in primal religion often "remain united in affection and in mutual obligations with the living".

6. *Sacramental universe:* The universes in which human beings live are viewed as sacred. There is no dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual. The physical act as the vehicle for spiritual power and is held as pattern on the model spiritual world beyond.

Following these examples from the Tangale, and as previously observed, to a Christian, some of this beliefs sounds familiar, for example, the idea of *Yamba and his son,* the concept of an afterlife and so forth, resonate with the belief in the supreme God, Jesus Christ and the resurrection of life in the Christian Bible. The question now is what the relationships between these beliefs and the biblical beliefs are. Tangale beliefs and practices are the testimonies of the Tangale people concerning their interpersonal relationship with the divine (the supreme God, *Yamba,* and their tutelary spirits), with fellow human beings and with the ecological system. The Bible is also the expression of such worldviews of the Israelites. In the case of the Israelites, these worldviews as expressed in the Bible has a supernatural source, unlike the Tangale worldviews, which do not document the sources of such testimonies.

The question of the centrality of Scripture in relation to African Traditional Religions needs to be addressed. Firstly, in relation to the matters of faith, the centrality of special revelation is not to be compromised. Michael (2011:45) explains the focus of special revelation thus: "The centrality of special revelation lies in its salvific nature and the particularity of such

divine expression within the Christian religious faith." In matters of ethics and morality in African Christianity, Mbiti (1969:276) observes that "the religious traditions of Africa contain the only lasting potentialities for a basis, a foundation and a direction of life for African society." This assertion is true to a certain extent, in the sense that the religious heritage of Africa is rich, and prepares the ground for the growth of Christianity. However, the statement cannot go uncontested, even though he made the profound observation that:

> Christianity …holds the greatest and the only potentialities of meeting the dilemmas and challenges of modern Africa… And yet, the strength and uniqueness of Christianity do not lie in the fact that its teaching, practice and history have all major elements of the other religious traditions. The uniqueness of Christianity is in Jesus Christ. He is the stumbling block of all ideologies and religious systems; and even if some of His teaching may overlap with what they teach and proclaim, His own Person is greater than can be contained in a region or ideology… It is He, therefore, and only He, Who deserve to be goal and standard for individuals and mankind …I consider traditional religions, Islam and other religious systems to be preparatory and even essential ground in the search for the ultimate (Mbiti 1969:276).

This research would like to observe that the understanding of revelation in connection to African Traditional Religions should be guided by the fact that, "every human community or person has some limited comprehension of the divine being and in a loose sense, the human desire for virtues and morals are fundamentally informed by such a partial comprehension of revelation in the theological category of the general revelation" (Michael 2011:46). Natural revelation places the onus of understanding and interpreting God as expressed in nature, conscience and moral inclinations on human beings; hence, the "inevitable propensity towards misinterpretation" (Michael 2011:47).Consequently, ethical principles established through natural law become subjective because of the ability of humanity to turn justice upside down (Isaiah 5:20). Romans 1:21-23 says:

> For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged

the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles (NIV).

Considering how the concept of natural law is understood in the book of Isaiah, and how the concept is seen to pursue the basic kernel of human dignity, and seeing the relationship of the concept to African traditional religions, the researcher will like to give some implications for biblical studies in what follows; thus, ask the question: "What does this mean?"

4.5.   What Does this Mean?

Let us here begin with the question: "What happens when two groups from radically different contexts read the same biblical text regarding its significance, first by themselves and then in dialogue with each other? (De Wit 2013:1). The question seeks to unravel the question of the effect of reading the Bible on people. "[C]ulture impacts the Bible in both biblical context itself and in our reading of it in our own contexts. The biggest eye-opener for me was number and complexity of cultural codes that are needed and uncovered to unlock the Bible for people" (De Wit 2013:2). De Wit cites the example of a particular group's (the Dalit Christians in India) understanding of the text of John 4. The Indians "quickly saw in the text that Jesus came to the Samaritan woman without even a jar, so not only was he asking for water but for her to give him a jar, which was by definition impure" (De Wit 2013:2). De Wit also notes that this perception would have been difficult for a person who is not living in a purity/impurity situation to fully crack this code. "The Bible" says De Wit "is always more than you are" (2013:2).When one invests a lot in it, a simple text is able to lift one up above radical differences (De Wit 2013:2).

This research holds that contextual hermeneutics is necessary in biblical interpretation. Contextualisation is the effort to move the message of the Bible out of "the cathedral …into the market place" (Hesselgrave 1984:693). Hesselgrave (1984:694) gives what he prefers to use as a definition of contextualization thus:

> Contextualization is the process where by representative of a religious faiths adapt the forms and content of that faith in such a way as to communicate and (usually) commend it to the minds and hearts of a new generation within their own changing culture or to people with other cultural backgrounds.

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Thus contextualization is an effort to make a message that is either written down or orally transmitted relevant to a person or a group of persons of different cultural backgrounds. Hesselgrave (1984:694) outlines several areas in which contextualization is undertaken and which he believes may achieve the said goal of contextualisation. These areas include:

1. Translation of Scriptures,

2. The interpretation of Scriptures,

3. The communication of the gospel,

4. The instruction of believers,

5. The incarnation of truth in the individual and corporate lives of believers, and

6. The systemisation of the Christian faith (theologizing).

In connection to this research, it is only the first point that does not deal directly with the theory of natural law. The research is looking at the possibility of the interpretation of the biblical text from the standpoint of natural law, how the approach may be used to launch into the ultimate purpose of the gospel, and more clearly and directly, natural law deals with moral instruction of believers. It is believed that contextualization will bring about the incarnation of truth on the basis of human dignity. Finally, natural law, (even though this research is not looking at it from the point of view of dogmatic theology) is indeed a theology; it deals with nature as created by the divine. These, of course, if done properly, might make the ancient text (Old Testament) relevant to the Tangale, who is alien in respect to both time and geography to the Hebrew text.

Byang Kato (1985:23), in a paper presented in 1974, defines and endorsed contextualisation thus:

> 'Contextualization' is a new term imported into theology to express a deeper concept than 'indigenisation' ever does. I understand the term to mean making concepts or ideas relevant in a given situation. In reference to Christian practices, it is an effort to express the never changing Word of God in ever changing modes for relevance. Since the Gospel message is inspired but the mode of its expression is not, contextualization of the modes of expression is not only right but necessary.

Tiénou (1990:19) expresses the concern for evangelicals to become involved in "many key issues in theology currently under discussion in Africa … namely, the relationship between

Christianity and African culture, the relationship between African traditional religion … and the concepts of African theology and contextualisation." Evangelical Christianity in Africa, at least in theory, advocates a discontinuity between Christian faith and culture and traditional beliefs in Africa, but in practice, African Christianity is never without elements of the traditional beliefs. The researcher is under the impression that biblical scholars in Africa must become more involved in this quest for contextualisation.

Whenever Africa is mentioned in biblical studies, what mostly comes to mind, especially to a biblical scholar in an African context, is the matter of an unique approach to hermeneutics, as opposed to the philosophical/analytical approach that originate through the influence of Greek/Hellenistic culture, promoted by Western thinkers and theologians. This thesis seeks to pull down the wall that has long stood between the West and Africa in matters of the approach to biblical interpretation. Previously, the thesis has noted how some Westerners have made negative sweeping assumptions about African cultures. The thesis will also like to observe that it is equally wrong for African scholars to assume that the right approach to biblical interpretation in Africa is to distance one's self from the approaches that originate elsewhere than Africa. I would like to mention that being African is not synonymous to being resentful of Western approaches to biblical interpretation, but that it is rather the recognition that Africa has a lot to contribute in biblical hermeneutics and the development of biblical Christianity in the global world. I therefore suggest that some synthesis of approaches between Western, philosophical, and African is possible.

In this work, we have seen how the rich African cultural heritage has been vital in the establishment and growth of the biblical faith, Christianity. African cultures/traditions are imbedded with diverse life issues. Understanding the humanness in this context is important, if biblical hermeneutics that promote human significance is to be achieved. Tiénou (1990:25) suggests that we must recognize the fact that there are good elements of African cultures/traditions.

However, Tiénou cautions going to the extreme of seeing more continuity between African cultures/traditional religions than is warranted. One should be aware of human tendencies, knowing that "every human community or person has some limited comprehension of the divine being and in a loose sense, the human desire for virtues and morals are fundamentally informed by such a partial comprehension of revelation in the theological category of the general revelation" (Michael 2011:46). With this caution in mind, the research would like to note that there are diverse conceptualisations of approaches in biblical hermeneutics,

specifically with regards to the quest of making the text relevant to the cultural context, i.e. inculturation[68] and the contextualisation process in Africa. On this note, there is therefore a need for a meaningful common discussion about the Bible with a view to ecumenical unity among Christians and of providing a bridge for general public morality.Such a discussion should bring various approaches of interpretations into conversation, each of which should not only be based on a specific tradition, culture, context and situation, but one that has emerged out of a great variety of ways of proceeding.

Interpretation of Scripture must embrace all areas of life. This obliges the Bible reader today to take other approaches to biblical interpretation seriously. African cultures' and traditions' claim for resemblance in many contextual and cultural ways to the understanding of reality and the meaning of life in the Old Testament is of great advantage to biblical hermeneutics. "The point of departure here," Ukpong (2002:18) rightly asserts, "is that the Bible is not (culturally and ideologically) an innocent text. It is God's Word in human language, which implies human culture with its ideology, worldview, orientation, perspective, values and disvalues that are intertwine with the Word of God." With this as a point of departure, it raises the "need for a critical ethical reading in terms of its stance and toward other peoples and culture in the light of basic human and biblical values of love and respect for others, justice, peace, and so on" (Ukpong 2002:18).

Tiénou (1990:23) encourages Protestants "not to be afraid of the fact that we are moving toward culturally differentiated Christianities… It will not necessarily lead to syncretism if the essential doctrines of the Bible are kept." He also warns against making absolutes of our own interpretation of the Scriptures. However, the fact is that it is legitimate to interact with the African cultures/traditional beliefs by way of investigation, so as to come up with an authentic and meaningful interpretation, relevant to a particular group in context. For as Kato (1985:23), citing William Barclay, says:

> It is not Jesus' purpose that we should turn all men into one nation, but that there should be Christian Indians and Christian Africans, whose unity lies in their Christianity. The oneness in Christ is in Christ, and not in any external change. The unity in Christ produces Christians whose Christianity transcends all their local and racial differences; it produces men who are friends with each

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[68] This is a contextual hermeneutic methodology that seeks to make any community of ordinary people and their socio-cultural context the *subject* of the interpretation of the Bible. Its specific characteristic is that it articulates and emphasizes the use of conceptual frame of reference of the people doing the reading in the interpretation process (Ukpong 2002:18).

other because they are friends with God; it produces men who are one because they meet in the presence of God to whom they have access.

The fear of syncretism has deterred many evangelicals to contextualise the Bible; hence, most of our practices portray the culture of the West, through whom the gospel came. Nevertheless, the fear of syncretism is justified, but that does not mean that everything in African culture is bad. Christian ethical teaching should take the value systems of the African as a point of departure to launch the biblical ethical teaching into the consideration; after all, there is no human being in whom God has not deposited that conscience, which to a certain extent directs their social and cosmic relationship.

In the light of this goal for the synthesis of the approaches proposed previously, the thesis adopt and recommends Niebuhr's (1952) work as very important in placing the rich African cultural heritage in its proper place within biblical studies. Niebuhr (1952:58ff) suggests models for approaches to cultures and tradition in the light of biblical faith and traditions:*(i)* Christ against culture, *(ii)* Christ of culture, *(iii)* Christ above culture, *(iv)* Christ and culture, and *(v)* Christ as the transformer of cultures. African theologians must engage a "biblical text in dialogue with a contemporary contextual experience so as to appropriate its message in today's context" (Ukpong 2002:19). This means that all aspects of cultures/traditions that resonate with biblical cultures/ traditions should be critically examined in both contexts. This is what Ukpong (2002:19) describes as "a holistic approach to culture, making the biblical message come alive as good news in people's lives, and awareness of functional conditioning of the reader in the process of reading."

The fear expressed by many biblical scholars concerning the concepts of natural law, which they think pushes God away, arises from a misconception. Rather than seeing natural law theory as a threat to biblical authority, it should be considered as a valuable approach to biblical hermeneutics that seeks to be contextual. Meaning to biblical texts undergoes a complex dialectical process; in other words, interpretation involves a rigorous process of dialogue between different forces or elements that inform the interpreters' worldview. The reader is faced with several factors ranging from culture and tradition, socio-economic givens, personal and situational circumstances of life. Ukpong (2002:26f) indicates that the contextual character of reading involves the following:

1. The reading is done from a certain standpoint or perspective. It is viewing the text from a particular angle and this is what the research is proposing, that some biblical texts be viewed from the angle of natural law theory for ethical and moral character.

2. Contextual reading does not claim to appropriate the totality of the meaning of the texts read. This is so because in any given reading, only a certain aspect or certain aspects of a text are appropriated.

3. Contextual reading is done in relation to some context outside of the Bible itself. Human knowledge does not take place in a vacuum, but always in relation to other things in the external world.

4. Contextual readings are mediated through a particular conceptual frame of reference derived from the worldview and socio-cultural context of a particular community. It informs and shapes the exegetical methodology and reading practice, and acts as a grid for making meaning of the text.

Lest one might assume that I am advocating for universalism; nay, natural law focuses on human morality. Of course, there is a strong connection between ethics and religion. However, natural law theory points to the fact that human morality is not limited to the religious sphere. Nature provides strong motivation for human conduct that honours, nurtures and protects human dignity. From the Judeo-Christian point of view, human morality is informed by the sacred text, which was revealed by YHWH. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the quest for justice, fairness, and human dignity is not limited to the Jewish people and the Christians. No human society is without a standard for living. Of course, it might vary from one particular society to another; what may be morally acceptable in one society might not be in another. Natural law theory advocates that Christians can use this as a point of departure to launch in the biblical concept of morality, so that the hearer might see a link with his/her own perspective, thereby achieving the basic purpose of human dignity and ultimately, the Christian perspective of the ultimate purpose of life. The theory of natural law does not in any way undermine the uniqueness of Christian faith in matters of salvation, but it rather upholds the biblical worldview of nature as vital in ethics and morality.

Natural law theory provides a platform for interaction with non-biblical faith. In Nigeria, since the early 1980's, religious crisis has been a factor that has continued to plunge the country into many challenges. The country has been polarised into the North and South. Mostly, the North is assumed to belong to those in the Islamic faith, while South to those of the Christian faith. These two major religion claims some sorts of exclusivity that makes it

difficult for the adherent to co-exist peacefully. People have lost their lives and properties. In fact, it might not be an exaggeration to say that the religious factor makes the country difficult to govern. It is the religious beliefs that enshrines the attitudes of human kind in such a way that the beliefs define all human activity, ranging from the meeting of daily basic needs to daily basic interaction or relations that make up the social, moral and/or ethical order. The adherents of the different religious beliefs in Nigeria are most often preoccupied with sectional and private interests and consequently, this results in the loss of sight of the common interest, unity and cohesion. With these challenges, there is a need for a restorative reading of the Old Testament, as well as the New Testament in the Nigerian context. Natural law theory suggests this kind of reading in the moral and ethical dimension. Natural law suggests a reading of the Bible that gives room for the readers to reinterpret their traditional and or mystical religious values, which evoke acceptance of the social, moral and ethical order.

From the perspective of religion, natural law argues that from the sphere of theological category of the general revelation, African traditional religions and cultures provide to the Africans its sanctions, moral and legal norms. These moral and legal norms should not be discarded and viewed as "primitive"[69] just because it does not say 'thus says the LORD'. Notwithstanding, natural law is not saying that African social, moral/ethical and legal order should substitute the biblical moral and ethical standard. However, it is saying that in the ethical and theological interpretation of the Hebrew or Christian texts, natural law suggest that there should be interaction. The reader's point of view, his/her cultural, political, social, political, and economic perspective should not be neglected. Human dignity in the African perspective should be understood in its context. Quite a number of practices that are considered inhuman and barbaric need to be revisited. They are very important tools that may help in doing a meaningful contextualisation.

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[69]African traditional religions were sometimes considered primitive because there was no written text to which persons can refer to. It was assumed that African religions were "fossilized until modern travelers came and unearthed it." The implication for taking African religions as primitive is that it "leaves out of account altogether the possibility of revelations of God to Africans and inspiration by him." However, the question of revelation and inspiration is vital to a religious person of any race. Numerous writers from Africa consider that Africa once worship one God, but later degenerated into polytheism (Parinda 1976:18). Parinda further explains from the perspective of those who believe in the diffusion of culture and religion from a common source, African may not be primitive but were in a state of degeneration from a former high culture until recently.

4.6.   Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the resonance of natural law with human dignity. It also discussed the connection of the theory to African cultures and traditional religions. The chapter first began with an elaboration on the definitions of the concept of human dignity, noting four important dimensions of the concept, namely; the existential dimension, the cognitive dimension, the behavioural dimension, and the social dimension. These four dimensions must be incorporated in any one definition of human dignity. This, the thesis notes, will minimise the abuse of the concept of human dignity, which is partly as a result of misconceptions regarding its meaning.

The chapter has also elaborated on the concept of human dignity in relation to biblical testimony that humanity is created in the image of God. It links the elements of the image of God (known as *Imago Dei* in classical theology) to the outlined dimensions and draws the conclusion that *Imago Dei* is a qualification of human dignity that cannot be underestimated. The understanding of human dignity in this perspective connects the concept to the theory of natural law.

It was argued that natural law theory resonates with human dignity in that natural law recognises that 'human nature' has some qualities that enable one to make moral decisions; its goal is the protection of the basic kernel of human dignity. The connection was explained in terms of the basic issue, which each of the concepts underscored. The argument pointed out that natural law underscores the role of nature as being endowed with a capacity by the creator to not only know something about God, but also informs them of moral behaviour, whereas human dignity emphasises the fact that this nature is something that is not to be violated. Seen from this perspective then, natural law is an important concept which need not be discarded as some Protestant scholars have stipulated.

Having connected the concept of natural law with human dignity, the chapter also observe that natural law should be defined in it theological dimension, implying that it should not be stripped of its basis in the word of God. The chapter demonstrated how the resonance of the concept of natural law with human dignity was interwoven in the prophetic message of Isaiah. The text explains that Israel has sinned because it has refused to observe order in nature; their knowledge did not produce works proportionate to what they knew. They carried out acts of injustice not because they were ignorant, but because they wilfully and deliberately decided to go against an order that irrational beasts were found to observe.

Again, on the basis of some movement among African biblical scholars who seek for interpretation that is African, the thesis argues that natural law resonates with African cultures and traditions. It viewed African cultures and traditions as products of the inherent quality bestowed by God. They are not innate in themselves, but they are laws that emanate thorough the African struggle with the environment, to help them in adapting to changes in the physical and social dimension of human experience. In other words, cultures are a method of survival and organising people socially, and this confirms the inherent ability bestowed on humankind. Like natural law, the religious traditions of Africa contain potentialities for a basis, a foundation and a direction of life for African society. As such, the thesis proposed that African cultures and religions can serve as a source for theological and ethical reflection.

In conclusion and particularly in relation to the resonance of natural law with African cultures and traditions, this chapter recognises that African cultures and traditions have a lot to contribute to the field of biblical studies. This thesis, however, is not calling for cultural revival; it therefore cautions that one cannot accept all African cultures as useful. Hence, it adopted Niebuhr's (1952:58ff) five models of approaches to all cultures and religion within Christianity in Africa. In this light therefore, the thesis suggested that African scholars should not vie for a replacement of Western critical approaches to what they may call "African", but it rather calls for the synthesis of these approaches. It also maintain that a critical approach be employed to Western, as well as African traditions.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the overall argumentation of the thesis. Summaries of the findings in light of the research question and hypotheses are provided. Conclusions are also made in the light of these research findings. As with most masters' theses, this research does not claim to be exhaustive, but it constitutes a critical engagement with the presuppositions related to natural law. In conclusion, some recommendations for further research focused on the relationship between natural law and biblical interpretation are given at the end.

5.2. Summary

This thesis began with the background and motivation for the research, which was rooted in my previous Postgraduate Diploma in Theology (PGD). During my preparation for the PGD, I detected that natural theology and natural law were under suspicion and have been resisted by some Protestant scholars. The thesis identified the main reason for this suspicion to be the notion that the concepts have their roots in Greek philosophy. This link with Greek philosophy caused the fear that it might make God at most the remote origin of moral obligation and eventually promote deism. The thesis decided to focus on natural law, with the concern that what if, after all, it turns out that natural law is a significant constituent of the theological reflections within the Old Testament itself? On this basis, the research sets out with the question: "Can we utilise nature and African culture or religion in the theological and ethical interpretation of the Old Testament?"

The research started on the premise that nature and African cultures and religions can be appropriated through natural law in the theological and ethical interpretation of the Old Testament. The question of human dignity is set as the background of the quest for understanding the role of the theory of natural law in biblical studies, and this led to the formulation of the topic as "Natural Law and Human Dignity in the Old Testament? A Case Study of the Book of Isaiah 1:2-3."

An overview of some concepts that are foundational to the understanding the research focus was provided in Chapter One. It also explained the choice of the prophets as a relevant area to carry out the research. The choice was actually motivated by John Barton, one of the important Old Testament scholars, who informed my conceptual background. He suggested that something reminiscent to the contemporary theory of natural law existed in the prophetic section of the Old Testament; the section of the Old Testament most scholars would least expect traces of natural law to prevail. The thesis decided to limit it pericope to the two verses, Isaiah 1:2-3, because these verses are part of a very important and programmatic introduction to the Book of Isaiah. Therefore, the existence of traces of natural law in these two verses is very significant.

Chapter Two was a historical survey of the development of theories related to natural law. This was done with the goal that it might trace the point at which the theory of natural law became suspect and was resisted. The survey limited its scope to particular time frames: Classical Greek philosophy, early Church and Patristic Periods, as well as the Modern era. This survey detected that in the early stage of its development, natural law was not a problem to the adherents of the Christian faith. For example, Justine Martyr and Clement of Alexandria used a variety of ideas drawn from the prevalent philosophies to expound their teaching on Jesus Christ. Clement (1988:34, quoted in Chapter Two) says: "Philosophy is in a sense a work of Divine Providence… Before the advent of the Lord, Philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness. And now it becomes conducive to piety, being a kind of preparatory training to those who attain to faith through demonstration…"

As a result of the resurgence of Greek philosophy, especially the impact of Aristotle, Medieval theologians like Thomas Aquinas developed elaborate theories of natural law and natural theology. These trends prevailed during the Renaissance, with its appreciation of Greek culture and during the Enlightenment, with its emphasis on human reason.

In the Modern Era, the influence of the Renaissance brought about new approaches for the investigation of natural phenomena. These developments resulted in the abandonment of the theological dimension of the concepts of natural law and natural theology. During the Modern Era, strong resistance against the use of concepts such as natural law and natural theology developed in some Protestant theological circles. Systematic theologians like Karl Barth were anxious to maintain the priority of the Bible as the main fountainhead of divine revelation. Any suggestion of natural law and natural theology, in either the text of the Bible or the theological-ethical interpretation thereof, was frowned upon and rejected. Having

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identified the real problem that resulted in the rejection of the concept of natural law, the chapter suggested that the theory, although philosophical in nature, should be recognised as a phenomenon that can be detected within sections of the biblical text itself.

This then leads us to Chapter Three, where a definition of natural law was used in an interpretation of a biblical text to ascertain if it could actually be considered as a concept that could be prevalent in sections of Scripture. A synchronic and diachronic close reading of Isaiah 1:2-3 was employed as an exegetical methodology. The exegesis indicated that Isaiah's ethical basis was grounded on the natural order of life and on events in creation. The thesis therefore drew the conclusion that natural law was prevalent in at least some sections of the Old Testament.

As an important biblical concept, natural law is seen to resonate with the concept of human dignity. Chapter Four explained that this resonance with human dignity in terms of the emphasis that either concept sought to establish. It was detected that natural law emphasises the basic kernel of human dignity. Natural law recognises that there is an element in a human being that has been endowed with a certain capacity by the creator, whereas human dignity emphasises the fact that this element is something that should not to be violated. This assertion was affirmed in how Isaiah incorporated the concept in the indictment of Israel against injustice. The thesis identified that Isaiah 1:2-3 laid the foundation for every injustice committed as refusal to follow the natural order of life. Israel's knowledge of Yahweh was contrasted to the knowledge that an "ox" and a "donkey" have. The "ox" and the "donkey" know their master, even though there was no intimacy in the relationship between the beasts and the owner, whereas while Israel, in contrast to the beasts, experiences a father – son intimate kind of relationship, they did not know their father. The natural order of life presupposes that Israel's relationship with Yahweh should have helped them produce acts of justice proportionate to the knowledge of Yahweh that they have.

Natural law was also seen as an important concept because it obviously resonates with African cultures and traditions, there by opening the possibility for scholars to consider allowing African cultures and traditions to be used as a source for theological-ethical reflection. Taking these research findings into consideration, the thesis makes the following conclusions.

5.3. Conclusions

Firstly, it is understood that natural law is a loaded term with different meanings. However, not all meanings in relation to biblical faith are negative; there are also positive ones that the research assumed is biblical. Natural law theory is grounded in presuppositions about "nature". This entails assumptions about creation in general, and about human beings as created by the Divine in particular. Natural law in connection to human nature emphasizes the power of the human mind for moral discernment from creation, rather than just being guided by some sets of rules of right conduct. The ability of humankind to construct moral order does not deny or water down biblical authority on moral laws, but rather recognises and confirms the biblical creation narrative. That humanity is created in the image of God, and by this creation has the ability to make moral and ethical judgments is implied. Therefore, natural law theory should not be considered as suggesting an autonomous moral law, but recognised and appreciated as a vehicle for the expression of divine will.

The thesis has identified that the argument of the effect of sin on "nature" does not negate the argument for the theory of natural law. Implicit in the argument for the effect of sin on natural law, is that sin has affected the human understanding of justice and law and therefore, cannot be relied upon for moral judgment. Notwithstanding, the argument for the theory of natural law is not the question of the scope of human sense of justice and law, but the awareness of it. Simply put, sin does not take away human dignity. Therefore, if human beings in their sinful nature have dignity and are recognised as such, then it implies that natural law can be found in the Old Testament. The pericope discussed challenges Israel for not appropriating that "nature" (rational capacity) in responding to God intimate relationship. Their attitude was described as "rebellion", indicating the wilful character of their offence.

However, the question of the effect of sin is an area that falls outside the scope of the research. In Chapter Four, I observed that sin affects human perception of the divine will and that human desire for virtues and morals are fundamentally informed by such a partial comprehension. Consequently, ethical principles established through natural law becomes subjective because of the ability of man to turn Justice upside down (Isaiah 5:20 cf. Romans 1:21-23).[70]

The argument for natural law also appeals rationally to all of humanity. This is seen in the thesis's argument that similar presuppositions also exist in African cultures and traditions.

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[70] See the recommendation that follows on the tendency of human beings to employ the same argument of natural law to justify the opposing courses of moral behaviour.

The thesis recognises that ethical laws designed to keep human conduct in Africa is not only grounded in the biblical tradition, but also seems to be deeply rooted and reflected in many traditional African societies and other non-biblical faiths. The example of the trend of African biblical scholarship, for example Idowu, Mbiti, Sanneh and Bediako, represent the lively discussion on the resonance of African cultures and traditions with the Bible. This discussion might better be understood from the point of view of natural theology and natural law. In other words, African cultures and traditions are interpreted by the research as a product of natural theology and natural law.

The research has identified that there are some potential to incorporate natural law in the theological-ethical interpretation of the Old Testament. For instance, in the course of the discussion in this thesis, I have acknowledged that ethical behaviour in Africa derives from its complex patterns of beliefs, which are encoded in its rich cultural heritage. However, it is not the acknowledgement that matters, rather, it points to the obvious need for a non-syncretic synthesis between culture and biblical faith. It is on this basis that contextualisation was suggested, the goal of which is to transform cultures that might not be related to what Christianity stands for. In fact, Niebuhr's (1952:58ff) five models for accommodation of culture and tradition was suggested as a possible way to assess what needs to be accepted from culture and traditions.

Again, with regards to how an interpretive community like the Tangale people might incorporate natural law in its theological-ethical interpretation of the Old testament, the thesis emphasises the need for African biblical scholars to be involved in a meaningful dialogue with African cultures and traditions, Western (especially Greek) philosophy and the biblical text.

The research would like to caution African scholars to guard against a hermeneutic of superficial resonance and to maintain a critical approach towards both Western Christianity and African culture and religion. This approach, the thesis presumes, will give room for the appropriate and relevant incarnation of the Bible into what is truly African. The thesis must not be misunderstood as being an argument for equating the authority of the Bible with African traditions or any other cultural and religious context; the arguments in the thesis still allow for the uniqueness of biblical revelation. However, the uniqueness of biblical revelation does not lie in its ethical and moral teachings, but rather in the salvific work of Jesus Christ, through whom God's grace culminates (see Bonhoeffer 2005:356).

5.4. Recommendations for Further Research

In the introduction at the beginning of this chapter, this study has observed that there are quite a number of important issues that this thesis did not address. For this reason, I suggest the following as important areas to be addressed in feature research:

1. Natural law theory is not a new doctrine. The contemporary challenge of universalism is a clarion call for biblical scholars (especially those in Protestant circles) to reconsider their position with regards to this doctrine. Many of the contemporary ethical issues are invariably connected with an argument from nature. Therefore, biblical scholars should not follow certain systematic theologians by only saying "nay" on the assumption and fear that it will downplay the authority of the Bible. Rather, there is an urgent need for a fresh look into the theory of natural law, especially as it relates to ethical issues referred to in the Old Testament.

2. There is a need for research about the relevancy of African traditional religions to biblical hermeneutics.

3. This thesis recommends that research be conducted on the role of natural law in different religious beliefs and practices. This can be a viable research area, especially in Nigeria, where there are several committees that are set up to foster inter-religious dialogue for the purpose of avoiding the challenge of religious conflict.

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