

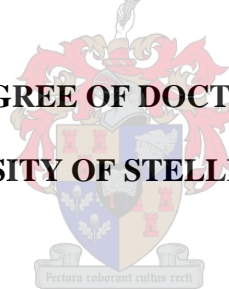
**THE RELATIONSHIP OF HUMANKIND AND NATURE ACCORDING TO  
PSALM 8**

**By**

**OSCAR THEMBA MNGQIBISA**

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“DECLARATION

I the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature: .....

Date: .....”

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on studying the relationship between humankind and nature in Psalm 8. The study of this relationship was triggered by Psalm 8 which, when closely examined, reveals a relationship suggesting an interrelatedness between humankind and nature. This research investigates the cause, nature, and result of that interrelatedness.

The hypothesis that has guided this study has been that humankind and nature form a oneness or holism and partnership, and this oneness or holism and partnership lead to interrelatedness between these two entities. Our appreciation of this can be enhanced by approaching it from a Xhosa perspective. This approach also makes a contribution to Seventh-day Adventist theological reflection.

In support of this hypothesis an exegesis of Psalm 8 is presented. Psalm 8 is one of the several Old Testament texts that seem to reflect this oneness and partnership, suggesting the interrelatedness between humankind and nature. In this exegesis a *close reading* approach was employed. The *close reading* approach refers to the studying of the language in the text, the style of the writing, the metaphors, and the relation of these to one another [Childs 1983:33, 34].

Xhosa and Seventh-day Adventist perspectives of the relationship between humankind and nature have been considered in this discussion: the Xhosa perspective because of my affiliation to these people, and also because Xhosas maintain that there is oneness or holism between humankind and nature. The Seventh-day Adventist perspective has been

incorporated since I am a Seventh-day Adventist and have derived my theology from this tradition.

Exegesis of Psalm 8 reveals a oneness or holism and partnership of humankind and nature, and this oneness or holism and partnership of these two entities leads to their interrelatedness. Moreover, this oneness and partnership that leads to the interrelatedness of the two entities is rooted in the creation of Genesis 1 of which Psalm 8 seems to be a development. In this relationship each party (humankind and other created beings) plays a role. Humans play the role of leading and representing the group in such a way that their actions or the results of those actions – good or bad - influence all members of the partnership. On the other hand, the other members of this partnership are there to serve the rest of the body, including humanity. In short, the emphasis on the relationship of Psalm 8 is that humankind and nature are so connected that they can hardly survive without each other.

The benefit of this research is two-fold. First, it has provided an alternative perspective into the modern theological debate of the relationship of humankind and nature based on the Old Testament. This alternative is that humankind and nature form oneness or holism. Therefore, rather than separating humankind from nature and focusing the attention on humanity to the exclusion of nature, let the debate recognize this oneness and inseparableness.

The second benefit of this research is to strengthen of ecologists who fight to save nature from destruction by humanity. This study is to sensitize the conscience of these humans to the solemn responsibility of saving nature, for by doing so; they will find that in the end they are actually saving themselves.

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## OPSOMMING

Hierdie verhandeling fokus op 'n studie van die verhouding tussen die mens en die natuur in Psalm 8. Die studie van hierdie verhouding is aan die gang gesit deur Psalm 8, wat by nadere ondersoek, 'n verhouding openbaar het wat wys op 'n onderlinge verband tussen die mens en die natuur. Hierdie navorsingstuk ondersoek die oorsaak, die aard en die gevolge van daardie onderlinge verband.

Die hipotese wat vir hierdie studie as riglyn gedien het, was dat die mens en die natuur 'n eenheid of holisme en vennootskap vorm en hierdie eenheid, of holisme en vennootskap lei tot die onderlinge verband tussen hierdie twee entiteite. Ons waardering daarvan kan verhoog word deur dit vanuit 'n Xhosa perspektief te benader. Hierdie benadering lewer ook 'n bydrae tot die Sewendedag Adventiste teologiese beskouing.

Ter ondersteuning van hierdie hipotese word 'n eksegeese van Psalm 8 aangebied. Psalm 8 is een van verskeie Ou Testamentiese tekste wat klaarblyklik hierdie eenheid en vennootskap reflekteer, deur die onderlinge verband tussen die mens en die natuur te suggereer. In hierdie eksegeese is gebruik gemaak van die *noukeurige lees* benadering. Die *noukeurige lees* benadering verwys na die studie van die taal in die teks, die skryfstyl, die metafore, en die verhoudinge ten opsigte van mekaar [Childs 1983:33, 34].

Die Xhosa en Sewendedag Adventiste perspektiewe van die verhouding tussen die mens en die natuur is oorweeg in hierdie bespreking: die Xhosa perspektief as gevolg van my affiliasie met hierdie bevolkingsgroep, ook omdat die Xhosas aanvoer dat daar 'n eenheid

of holisme bestaan tussen die mens en die natuur. Die Sewendedag Adventiste perspektief is geïnkorporeer aangesien ek 'n Sewendedag Adventis is en my teologie aan hierdie tradisie ontleen het.

Die eksegeese van Psalm 8 openbaar 'n eenheid of holisme en vennootskap van die mens en die natuur en hierdie eenheid of holisme en vennootskap van hierdie twee entiteite lei tot hulle onderlinge verwantskap. Verder, hierdie eenheid en vennootskap wat lei tot die onderlinge verband van die twee entiteite is gewortel in die skepping van Genesis 1, waarvan Psalm 8 'n uitbreiding blyk te wees. In hierdie verwantskap (verhouding) speel elke party (die mens en ander geskape wesens) 'n rol. Die mens speel 'n leidingsrol en verteenwoordig die groep op so 'n wyse dat hulle handeling of die resultate van daardie handeling – goed of sleg – alle lede van die vennootskap beïnvloed. Daarenteen, die ander lede van hierdie vennootskap is daar om die res van die liggaam te dien, insluitend die mens. Kortliks dus, die klem op die verhouding in Psalm 8 is dat die mens en die natuur so verbonde is dat die een nouliks sonder die ander kan bestaan.

Die voordeel van hierdie ondersoek is tweevoudig. Eerstens, dit het 'n alternatiewe perspektief gebied op die moderne teologiese debat oor die verhouding van die mens en die natuur soos gebaseer op die Ou Testament. Hierdie alternatief is dat die mens en die natuur 'n eenheid of geheel (holisme) vorm. Dus, in plaas daarvan om die mens van die natuur te skei en die aandag te vestig op die mens en daardeur die natuur uit te sluit, laat die debat hierdie eenheid en onafskeidbaarheid erken.

Die tweede voordeel van hierdie navorsing is om die taak van ekoloë wat 'n stryd voer om die bewaring van die natuur van vernietiging deur die mens, te versterk. Hierdie studie is gemik daarop om die gewetes van hierdie mense sensitief te maak ten opsigte van die gewigtige verantwoordelikheid om die natuur te bewaar, want sodoende sal hulle vind dat hulle uiteindelik hulleself red.



## ISISHWANKATHELO

Owona mongo woluphando kukufuna ukwazi ukuba buyinina kanye ubudlelwane obuphakathi komntu nendalo ngokuphathelele kwiNdumiso yesiBhozo [Psalm 8]. Nto ethe yavuselela olu langazelelo lokuphanda ngale ntsinda-badala kukufunda le Ndumiso nethe yabonisa ukuba kuyo umntu nendalo abanelanga kunxulumana nje kodwa, koko nento le ayenzayo umntu iyayichaphazela indalo, kanti nendalo ngokwayo inezinto echaphazelana noluntu ngazo.

Siye sayithatha le Ndumiso sayityakatya, siyihl'amahlongwane phezulu, sizama ukubona kuyo apho ukuba ingaba lukho nene na olu nxulumano kukhangeleka ngathi lukho phakathi komntu nendalo . Ukuba lukho, ingaba lunxulumano olunjani na, ziyini zona iziphumo zobukho balo?

Ekuphandeni le ntsumantsumane kusetyenziswe enye yeendlela ezisayakusetyenziswa xa kusenziwa uphando olu loluhlobo. Lo ndlela ikukuqwalasela bonke ubugocigoci bolwimi olusetyenziswe ngulo ubhalayo, indlela abhala ngayo, kanti nezafobe azisebenzisileyo ekubhaleni apho. Yonke ke le nto seyibaliwe kujongwa ukuba iyiphuhlisa njani na le nto umbhali lowo azama ukuyiphuhlisa.

Iziphumo zolu phando zibonise gca ukuba nene lukho unxulumano phakathi koluntu olo nendalo. Olu nxulumano lusuka kwasendalweni kwincwadi yeGenesisi. Kobu buhlobo ke bomntu nendalo leyo elowo kubo unendima ayidlalayo. Umntu unikwe nguThixo ukuba akhokhele, abe ngummeli endalweni. Lento itsho izenzo zakhe ke kufuneke

azigqale kuba zisenokuzisa ukonwaba okaye usizi endalweni leyo. Kanti nendalo nayo ngokwayo inezinto ezenzayo eziyintsikelelo kumntu lowo. Ngokuphandle kukhangeleka ngathi umntu nendalo bayamene kangangokuba elowo kubo akangekhe aphaile ngaphandle komnye.

Ezi ziphumo zolu phando ke zizakuba luncedo kubaphandi beziBhalo abazamazamana nokwazi ngolu nxulumano, kuba zivula indlela yokude bafikelele kwimpendulo eyiyo kulo mzamo wabo. Kanti ke ziyakuba luncedo nakwabo balwa ulondolozo lwendalo kuba ngoku bazakulwa bhetele besemandleni kuba bencediswa nazezi ziphumo. Siyathemba ukuba nabanye abakweminye imiba abangakhankanywanga nabo bayakuzifumana ezi ziphumo zikwaluncedo kwezabo iingxaki.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to Catherine, my wife, and my three daughters: Thembi, Vuvu and Sihle who strongly supported me in the effort towards this achievement.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Certainly, to attempt thanking everyone who has contributed towards the achievement of this work is difficult. Nonetheless, there are special names that I dare not omit mentioning.

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My great appreciation goes to Professor HL Bosman who has been my mentor throughout this process. The patience, helpfulness, and Christian spirit he displayed during our interaction has been a source of strength to me.

Finally, I praise God for giving me health and the ability to complete this work. I trust that it will not only enhance His cause but will glorify His Name.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

BDB	Brown, F, Driver, SR, and Briggs CA (eds) Hebrew-English-Lexicon.
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
DCH	Dictionary of Classical Hebrew
GNB	Good News Bible
K&B	Köhler, L, and Baumgartner, W (eds) Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon.
KJV	King James Version.
NIV	New International Version
REB	Revised English Bible.
SDABC	Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
TLOT	Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament.

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# THE RELATIONSHIP OF HUMANKIND AND NATURE ACCORDING TO

## PSALM 8

### CHAPTER 1

#### INTRODUCTION

##### 1. 1 Problem

A close study of Psalm 8 reveals that there is a relationship between humankind and nature, and this relationship suggests interrelatedness between them. Regarding the word *nature*, it must be said that the concept of nature in the modern sense, namely, that nature comprises all nonhuman created objects as opposed to humankind, is foreign to Scripture [Simkins 1994:11]. Rather than lumping together all nonhuman created objects under a blanket term, *nature*, and setting them over against humankind, the Bible uses a different model of differentiation. This method of differentiation is applied not only to the relationship between humankind and nonhuman created objects, but even to the relationships among the nonhuman created objects themselves. The Scriptures give each created object an individual name. For example, it speaks of *the heaven and the earth*: Genesis 1:1 or *earth and all that there is in it*: Psalm 24:1 [Simkins 1994:11, 12].

Perhaps one of the factors that have contributed immensely towards the polarization between humankind and nature has been the influence of the view of Biblical scholars on the relationship between humankind and nature. These scholars have tended to regard the nonhuman world as secondary to humankind. In fact, “Biblical scholars and environmentalists have questioned whether the world of nature has any significant value

within biblical thought and whether, in fact, serious attention to it does not stand in some conflict with the core dogmas of biblical religion” [Hiebert 1996:4].

The word *nature* seems to occur only once in the Old Testament, in Deuteronomy 34:7. Even in this passage it does not appear as *nature* but as *natural* or *vital force*. In that context it describes the health condition of Moses at his death, that he *was a hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim nor his natural force gone*. The Hebrew word that has been translated as *natural force* is נָחַל which is moistness or freshness, and the idea conveyed being that Moses was enjoying the suppleness of youth [Cressy 1976:870]. Therefore, the modern usage of *nature* has no Biblical support.

However, for clarity, the modern usage of this term is adopted in this dissertation and all nonhuman created objects are referred to as *nature*, despite the preceding discussion.

Indeed, Psalm 8 does not appear to be the only passage that suggests the relationship between humankind and nature. Several others such as Genesis 1 - 3, and 9; Job 12:7-9; Isaiah 11:8, 9 and Jonah 3:7-9 seem to indicate the same relationship. [An elaborate demonstration of this relationship will be presented later in this chapter.] However, Psalm 8 has been selected for our consideration for several reasons. First, Psalm 8 seems to be among the Biblical passages that are popular with Seventh-day Adventists in their worldview of the relationship between humankind and nature. This popularity is evident in the frequency with which this passage is used in the literature of this church that pertains to such issues as creation, nature, and humankind. The following are representative sources



where this psalm appears: Shea 2000:432; Damsteegt 1988:86. [The Seventh-day Adventist worldview is given special attention in this dissertation; the reason and the process thereof appear in chapter 4].

Other significant considerations about this psalm, even though they may not have direct relevance to the topic under discussion, are first, its importance in the Hebrew Psalter: Terrien has identified it as one of the greatest poems in this hymnal [2003:132]. Second, Psalm 8 represents Priestly and Wisdom Theology, both of which are very important traditions in the Old Testament [Francisco 1977:62; Jenson 1978:106].

The purpose of this dissertation, therefore, is to explore the interrelatedness between humankind and nature in this psalm in order to establish its nature and its cause, and the impact that each of the two entities has on the other according to this passage. The question will also be posed as to what the modern theological (especially in Seventh-day Adventist theological thought) and ecological implications of this interrelatedness are from a Xhosa and Seventh-day Adventist perspective.

The Xhosa perspective has been chosen here to that of other cultural groups for two main reasons. First, I am more conversant with the Xhosa culture than with any other. In fact, many experiences that I discuss in this dissertation I have first-hand information of, for I am not only myself a Xhosa but I also grew up and worked among Xhosas in both urban and rural settings.

Second, Xhosas form a significant section of South Africa's people. In fact, they are the second largest group, the largest being the Zulus. Therefore, from the Christian perspective, their theology with respect to the relationship between humankind and nature is bound to influence a large number of these South Africans.

Third, Xhosas take nature seriously, and therefore, it is important to examine how their perspective of the relationship between humankind and nature relates to that of Psalm 8.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been chosen for investigation in this dissertation rather than another tradition because of my affiliation to this tradition. It is in this theological context that my own theology was born and fashioned. The findings of this survey will contribute firstly to the theology of this Church as well as benefit scholarship in general.

## **1.2 Hypothesis.**

The hypothesis of this dissertation is that humankind and nature form oneness or holism, and partnership, and this oneness and partnership leads to interrelatedness between them. This interrelatedness can be appreciated more by approaching it from a Xhosa perspective and this approach makes a contribution to Seventh-day Adventist theological reflection.

### **1.3 Definition of terms**

This section deals with the definition of two terms – humankind and nature –both of which are central in Psalm 8. To define them before they appear in the research is helpful, because it clarifies the meaning they convey and the sense in which they are used in this context. The establishment of this sense and meaning is even more critical with regard to these two words because of their wide usage, which seems to have resulted in their assumption of various shades of meanings [Cressy 1976:969].

In defining the two terms in question, the semantic field of each explored, is with the main focus on the words that appear in Psalm 8. (By semantics we refer to the study of the meaning of words) [Barr 1962:1]. Those words that form the semantic field of humankind and nature but do not appear in Psalm 8 are also given attention. However, they appear at the end of this dissertation as part of an addendum.

The terms to be considered are studied in Hebrew and how these words were also used in the cognate languages such as Akkadian, Aramaic, Arabic, Phoenician, and others are also explored, since those cognate languages formed part of the world within which the writer of Psalm 8 probably lived. This effort is intended to create awareness of the richness of the two concepts in terms of their meanings and nuances, and the wide usage even outside Psalm 8, as has already been mentioned above.

At the end, general remarks will be made on what can be learned from the number of the occurrences of these words, and where those occurrences are. The observations made in this

respect are not intended to reveal a detailed analysis of each word. On the contrary, these comments will be of a general nature, for their focus is on the demonstration of the multidimensional meanings that the words *humankind* and *nature* have, the extent of their usage in the Canon, and whether this usage is in prose or poetry. In short, this exercise is intended to broaden our scope of knowledge as we use these terms in this dissertation.

### 1.3.1 Humankind

#### 1.3.1.1 Semantic Field of “Humankind”

Appearing below is the semantic field of *humankind*, with a focus on the words that are reflected in Psalm 8.

אֱלֹהִים (Ps 8:5)

This term has been used in the Old Testament with reference to the God of Israel (Gn. 4:26; Dt. 4:35) [K & B 1994: 53; Schmidt 1997:117]. However, its use has not been limited to Him only, but has also referred to other gods worshiped by Israel's neighbours (Ex. 12:12) [K & B 1994:53]. There have also been cases where אֱלֹהִים has referred to patron deities, [Schmidt 1997:118], and spirits of the dead (1 Sam. 28:13; Is. 8:19). It is actually because of this human dimension that this term is considered to be related to humankind [Clines 1993:277-286; K & B 1994:53; Schmidt 1997:117, 118].

Schmidt suspects that the term might have been derived from Old Aramaic and Arabic, since *ilāh* already occurs in both of these languages [1997:115].

There are 2570 appearances of אֱלֹהִים in the Old Testament, and these are in plural form [Fretheim 1997:405]. Many of these occurrences are in the book of Psalms: as many as 365. Other books that have displayed a significant use of this term are Genesis (219), Exodus (139), Deuteronomy (374), 1 Samuel (100), 1 Kings (107), 2 Kings (97), Jeremiah (145), 1 Chronicles (118), 2 Chronicles (203). There are also other books that have a fair number of these appearances. Generally, this word shows a good spread throughout the Old Testament canon.

אֹיֵב (Ps 8:2)

אֹיֵב appears 283 times in the Old Testament [Williams 1997:365]. It is more frequent in Psalms where it appears as often as 74 times. This strong appearance in the book of Psalm is followed by another significant appearance in Deuteronomy where the word appears as often as 25 times. Thereafter, it is spread throughout the rest of the canon [Jenni 1997:89].

The term itself refers to an enemy of an individual (Ex. 23:4) or of a nation (Gn. 49:8) [K & B 1994:39]. There are instances where the term is used to point out God's enemies (Job 13:24; Ex. 15:6, 9) [Williams 1997:367].

The root of this word “`yb”, which means “to be hostile” appears in Akkadian and Canaanite [Jenni 1997:89]. In this sense the Hebrew meaning of אֹיֵב seems to be shared with these other languages.

אָנִישׁ (Ps 8:4)

אָנִישׁ appears in both Aramaic and Hebrew in the Old Testament. In Aramaic it appears 25 times and this is in Daniel and Ezra. In Hebrew it appears 42 times and these appearances are only in poetical texts such as Job (18 times) and Psalms (13 times); the rest are found in other books [Westermann 1997:32].

Westermann suggests that this term is used in a more collective sense than אָדָם, hence it signifies “people” [1997:32]. In this sense the word harmonizes with Ugaritic (*anš*) and Akkadian (*nisü*) both of which refer to “people” [Westermann 1997:32].

Besides meaning “people”, אָנִישׁ carries several other meanings. First, in Daniel this term has been used to either explicitly or implicitly contrast human beings with gods or with animals (Dan. 2:10; 3:10; 4:16).

Secondly, אָנִישׁ is derived from a verb that means to be weak, even though it would be incorrect to assume that each time אָנִישׁ appears it refers to weakness. Along with this idea of weakness אָנִישׁ has also been used to refer to human hardships in life (Job 7:1), brief tenure on earth (Ps. 103:15), and maggot-like or worm-like existence (Job 25:6) [Hamilton 1997:454].

Finally, there is an instance where אָנִישׁ has been used to refer to trusted friends (Ps. 55:13 and Jr. 20:10) [Hamilton 1997:453, 454]. Incidentally, in both instances these so called “trusted friends” turn out to be enemies. There seems to be an intentional use of אָנִישׁ by the

writer in reference to “trusted friends”, when he actually means the opposite, namely, enemies.

בן-אדם (Ps 8:4)

בן alone has 5000 appearances in the Old Testament and these spread over almost all the books of the Bible, with the greater concentration in Genesis (365), Numbers (611), and 1Chronicles (708) [Kühlewein 1997:239].

According to Kühlewein, this term is common in Semitic languages. It has been replaced by *wald* in Ethiopian and by *maru* in Akkadian [Kühlewein 1997:238].

Among the several meanings that בן has the following are more prominent: First, this term refers to a biological son of his father or mother (1 Ki. 14:20). There are instances where it also refers to the grandchildren (Ex. 34:7).

Second, בן is also applied to animals (Lv. 22:28)..

Finally, בן has been used in combination with such terms as אדם and אנוש. Connected with אדם in particular בן may mean “fickle” (Nu. 23:19), a “fool” (Ps. 14:1ff), ungodly and deceitful (Ps. 12:1f), fully set to do evil (Eccl. 8:11), insignificant (i.e. “a worm” Job 25:6), ephemeral (Ps. 89:48), and powerless (Ps. 146:3) [Caragounis 1997:667].

אָדָם itself has 555 appearances in the Old Testament, except where the word has been used as a personal name (Gn. 4:25; 5:1). Several meanings of the word have been given that range from “humanity” or “humankind” or “people” (Jr. 47:2); individual person (Lv. 22:5); to leather, skin or hide (Hos. 11:4) [K & B 1994:14].

In several places אָדָם has also been used consistently in combination with בְּהֵמָה in Genesis 6:7; Numbers 3:13; Job 36:6; Psalm 135:8; Jeremiah 21:6; Ezekiel 14:13; Jonah 3:7; and Zephaniah 1:3. The pattern in which they appear [men and animals] whenever they are used together seems to be the same throughout the Old Testament. In most cases they have been used in a context where God intends to destroy every living being. To express this total destruction the speaker used the expression “men and animals”. “Men” in this expression seems to represent human beings, while “animals” represent non-human beings. The expression seems to emphasize unity between humankind and the rest of nature, on one hand, while on the other hand it seeks to point out their differences within this oneness.

In the Hebrew cognate languages אָדָם appears in Ugaritic, being used as an epithet of *El* where you find *`ab `adm* “father of men”. In Phoenician, *`dm* and the *pl,dmn* are used for person(s) or commoner(s) [Hamilton 1997:262-266].



יָנֹקִים (Ps 8:2)

יָנֹק, does not seem to have significant occurrences in the Old Testament. In the Hebrew cognate languages, Akkadian has *enequ* which means to “suck”. Aramaic has *yenaq*, which also means “suck”, *yanaqu* “child”, and *yonqa* “suckling” [Abegg & Hamilton 1997:427-428].

The meaning of this Hebrew word is “suckling” or “infant”, and very often it is combined with “children” (Lam 4:4; 1 Sam. 15:3; 22:19; Ps 8:2).

There are cases where the image of יָנֹק is used in a simile as in Numbers 11:12. In that instance the term indicates helplessness.

יָנֹק has also been used to show the extent to which an action is to be carried out (Dt. 32:25) [Abegg & Hamilton 1997:427-428].

מִתְנַקֵּם (Ps 8:2)

מִתְנַקֵּם comes from the verbal root נָקַם. The idea of “revenge” embedded in this word is also attested to in Aramaic, Arabic, South Arabic, and Ethiopic [Lipinski 1999:1]. The verbal root of this word נָקַם is synonymous with Amorite *niqmu* and Arabic *niqma*.

In Hebrew נָקַם appears 36 times in various forms of a Hebrew verb and it carries the meaning “to avenge” [Lipinski 1999:1]. מִתְנַקֵּם is a participle that has been built on נָקַם, and

it means the one who avenges or the avenger [BDB 2000:668]. The revenge here may be human vengeance (Ju 16:28) or divine vengeance or retribution (Is. 34:8) [K & B 1995:721].

עוֹלָלִים (Ps 8:2)

עוֹלָלִים is the plural form of עוֹלָל, a word which is derived from עוֹל. This word appears only 5 times in the Old Testament.

There is a sharing of meaning between Hebrew and its cognate languages, even though the form of expression has been shortened in the other languages. For example, “w” is not evident in the following languages: Old Aramaic ’l “child”, Ugaritic ’l “child”. At times the w is alternated with y as in Arabic *ayyil* “small child” [Saebo 1999:518].

In Hebrew the first meaning of עוֹל is nursing mother animals. This refers to both young and old livestock (Gn. 33:13; 1 Sam. 6:7, 10). The noun עוֹלָל points to a “child” [K & B 1995:798].

צֶרֶךְ (Ps 8:2)

The number of occurrences of this term is uncertain. There is disagreement even among scholars of the exact number. Some speak of 70 times, while others have observed as few as 3 times [Ringgren 2003:464].

צָר derives from the root *šrr* comparable to Ugaritic *šrt* which means “hostility” or “enmity” [Ringgren 2003:464]. The term occurs almost exclusively in poetic language and has rarely been used in purely prose texts [Ringgren 2003:464].

The meaning of צָר is “enemy”. While Jenni alleges that צָר is not used for an individual’s enemies, but generally or collectively [Jenni 1997:1098-1098], these enemies can be the individual’s enemies as in the case of Abraham (Gn. 14:20) and David (2 Sam. 24:13). These enemies may also be God’s enemies (Ps. 8; Dt. 32:41-43) [K & B 1996:1052]. There have been situations where the enemies of God’s people were also seen as God’s enemies (Dt. 32:41; Jr. 46:10) [Ringgren 2003:466-468].

#### **1.3.1.2 Conclusion.**

In conclusion, a few observations can be made on the above study of the semantic fields. First, our comparison of the words used in Psalm 8 with those words that were used in their neighbouring nations show great similarities. This free exchange of language suggests a close interaction between Israel and these nations. If such a short passage such as Psalm 8 could show so much language similarity between Israel and her neighbours, one may wonder how much of this language similarity between these nations and Israel would be reflected by the whole Old Testament. The next question is, if there was such a mutual influence between the nation of Israel and their neighboring nations on the language level, how much influence did they have on one another in other areas of life?

Second, the different meanings and nuances showed by some individual words in Psalm 8 have revealed the richness contained in the language of this passage, as well as in the Old Testament as a whole. This fact provides added options in the interpretation of this passage.

Finally, we have noted that some words appear in a number of Bible books that represent different periods of the Bible. This suggests that these words enjoyed usage during those different periods of the Bible. This phenomenon could mean that, while it is possible that certain words and language expressions may have been common at certain periods, we should guard against confining words and language expressions to particular periods of the Bible exclusively, because such an assumption may be misleading.

### **1.3.2 Nature.**

In this section we define the second word *nature*, which is also central in this dissertation.

#### **1.3.2.1 The Bible tripartite view of *nature*.**

Just as we defined humankind in Psalm 8 by exploring its semantic field and connections with the cognate languages, we will do the same with *nature*. Unlike *humankind* which represented only one created entity, *nature* represents a multitude of created objects. Obviously, an attempt to go into each of these objects and explore its semantic field will be cumbersome. On the other hand, to avoid that by lumping all these created objects together as a unit and looking for a semantic field common to all of them is not a solution either.

Therefore, the alternative is to break the concept of nature into smaller components. The formula to achieve this is already given by the Bible itself: the Biblical tripartite view of cosmology. Referring to the totality of created order, the Bible speaks of it in terms of *heaven, earth, and sea*. This concept is found in the following texts: Job 9:8; Exodus 20:11; Nehemiah 9:6; and Psalm 69:34 [Tsumura 1997:160; Kawale 1998:52, 83].

The distinction between *heaven, earth, and sea* seems to be in accord with at least two other worldviews. The first one is the well-known three-storied Ancient Near East world view which speaks of the heaven above, earth in the middle, and water all around and beneath [Soggin 1997:1369].

The second is a Xhosa worldview, which will be developed in chapter 5. Some Xhosas hold a concept of three divisions of the world. These are the heaven, which they associate with God; earth; and a place in the rivers which is the home of some people called *Abantu bomlambo*, literally meaning *people of the river* [Lamla 1981:14-21].

Before we adopt this tripartite formula we need to state that this is not the only formula by which the Bible expresses the created reality. A number of times it also speaks of *heaven and earth*. Some of the Biblical texts in which this phenomenon occurs are the following: Genesis 2:1; 1 Chronicles 16:31; Psalms 89:11; Isaiah 1:2. The spread of these texts over the Canon suggests that this expression was not limited to a particular time, but was a common language and its emphasis seemed to express the totality of the created order [Schmid 1997:173].

However, we adopt here the heaven-earth-sea formula for it seems to embrace not only what exists in heaven and on earth, but recognizes even that which is at the bottom of the sea. In dealing with these natural objects we will focus on the natural objects that are also reflected in Psalm 8. The other objects will receive attention, but they appear in the addendum.

### **1.3.2.2 Semantic field of “Nature”**

#### **1.3.2.2.1 The Heaven or heavens שָׁמַיִם (Ps 8:1, 3)**

The first aspect of this tripartite view of cosmology is שָׁמַיִם or “heavens”, and this is also the first word in the semantic field of *nature*.

שָׁמַיִם has a root *šmy*. In this form it is in the plural. In the cognate languages such as Akkadian, Aramaic, Ugaritic, and Phoenician שָׁמַיִם, appears in more or less the same form, and carries the same meaning. For example, Akkadian has *šamû*, which can mean “heaven” as the realm of God [Tsumura 1997:166]. In Ugaritic, where the word appears as *šmm*, it means “heaven” [Tsumura1997: 160].

This word, which seems to be one of the most prominent, if not the most prominent of those that have been translated as heaven or heavens, has 420 occurrences in the canon [Soggin 1997:1369]. שָׁמַיִם refers to the firmament, heaven and sky especially, as distinct from earth and sea, according to most dictionaries. One example of this is in Genesis 1:8. שָׁמַיִם is also associated with God, denoting His dwelling, as in 1 Kings 8:23.

A few times the expression *heaven of heavens* has appeared in place of just *heaven*. A good example of this phenomenon is in Deuteronomy 10:14. Soggin has noted that its appearance is always in clauses with elevated styles (hymns, prayers, and wisdom sayings) and, except for Psalm 148:4, always with a preceding ה. He further suggests that “the circumlocution for the superlative... seems to indicate heaven in its totality, not a (highest) region” [Soggin 1997:1370].

Following are more words in the semantic field of nature that are associated with שָׁמַיִם and also reflected in Psalm 8.

כִּיכָב (Ps 8:3)

There are 37 occurrences of כִּיכָב in the Old Testament, all except two are in the plural [Clements 1995:76]. This word has cognates in languages such as Ugaritic, Phoenician, Akkadian, Amorite, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic. All these languages share the same basic meaning, namely, “star” [Clements 1995: 76].

In the Old Testament כִּיכָב is mentioned in conjunction with luminaries of the heavens. Even though stars are part of creation and not to be worshipped as deities, the Old Testament has incidents where these stars were objects of worship (Dt.4: 19; 2 Ki. 23:5) [Clements 1995:76]. The main function of the stars is to separate the day from night (Gn. 1:14). The stars were also created to praise God (Ps. 148:3-6) [Newman, RC 1997:611].

יָרֵחַ (Ps 8:3)

There are 27 appearances of יָרֵחַ in the Old Testament and in all of these occurrences it appears as a noun. This word is well attested by the Babylonian and Assyrian texts with a meaning “moon” and appearing there as *arhu*. In Ugaritic, it occurs 92 times with the meaning of “moon” or “month” [Clements 1990:355].

The moon refers to the lesser light that God called into being at creation (Gen. 1:16) to function as marking off the seasons (Ps 104:19), and to participate in praising God (Ps 104:19). Since the moon is a regular fixture in the sky, it has been suggested that it represents permanence or continuity [Massouh & Verhoef 1997:541]. In depicting the glorious future, the prophets say that the moon and the sun will darken (Is. 13:10; Joel 3:15) [Massouh & Verhoef 1997:541].

צִפּוֹר (Ps 8:8)

צִפּוֹר comes from the root *spr* and appears in most Semitic languages such as Ugaritic. *ʿsr*, Akkadian. *iššuru*, Aramaic. *šippar*, Syriac. *sepp’ra*, and Arabic. *usfür*. [Kiuchi 1997:839]. In all these languages it means “sparrow” or “small bird” [Schwab 2003:449].

In the Old Testament צִפּוֹר occurs 40 times [Kiuchi 1997:837]. Its meaning ranges from “bird” to “winged creatures” as a collective group (Gen. 7:14; Deut. 4:17). It can also refer to an individual bird (Lev. 14:5-7; Ps 11:1;) [K & B 1996:107].



#### 1.3.2.2.2 The earth הָאָרֶץ (Ps 8:1, 9)

The “earth” אָרֶץ is the second aspect of the tripartite view of cosmology that we are now to address. אָרֶץ has 2505 occurrences in the Old Testament, with a wide range of meanings [Wright 1997:518]. This word is said to be the most common substantive in the Old Testament [Schmid 1997:173]. אָרֶץ seems to be shared with Ugaritic *’rs*, Akkadian *Eršetu* [K & B 1994:90]. However, it must be noted that in Sumerian and Akkadian a differentiation is made between earth and land [Ottosson 1974:390].

In Hebrew אָרֶץ represents several things, namely, the earth (in contrast to heaven) and the dry land (in contrast to waters) [Schmid 1997:173]; earth together with heaven, which constitutes the entire world (Gen. 1:1; 2:1); the ground on which people and things stand (Ex. 8:12) [Schmid 1997:173, 174, 175], and people of the land (Gen. 23:7) [BDB 2000:76]. Following are natural objects that are associated with אָרֶץ.

אֱלֵפִים

This is a plural of אֵלֶף which refers to a docile lamb (Jer. 11:19) [Holladay 1988:18], oxen that are serviceable to human beings [Kraus 1988:184] or oxen [BDB 2000:48].

בְּהֵמָה (Ps 8:7)

בְּהֵמָה appears at least 188 times in the Old Testament. This word is attested in the cognate languages such as Ugaritic, Aramaic, and Arabic. where it appears as *cattle*, *large cattle*, *animal*, *lamb*, *sheep*, *domestic animal*, and *an ass* [Botterweck 1975:6]. Referring to these animals, the Bible has stereotyped statements like “the beast of the earth” (Lev. 11:2; Deut. 28:26; Is. 18:6) and “the beast of the field” (Ex. 9:19).

Animals are the product of creation by God, differing from humankind by lacking the image of God (Gen. 1, 2) [BDB 2000:97].

טָרֵף (Ps 8:7)

טָרֵף is found in all Semitic languages, namely, Akkadian, Phoenician, Moabite, and Ugaritic with the basic meaning “small livestock” [Waschke 2003:207]. This word appears 275 times in the Old Testament. Most of these occurrences are in Genesis (63 times), Ezekiel (19), 1 Samuel (18). This concentration diminishes and the words are spread over a number of books.

Not only does טָרֵף mean “small livestock”, but it also refers to sheep and goats collectively in flock or possession [Hamilton 1997:733; Waschke 2003:198]. There are cases where this term is used for sheep only with the exclusion of goats (1 Sam. 25:2; Gen. 31:19; 38:12-13; Deut. 15: 19). It is also used for lambs and kids (Gen. 30:32; Lev. 1:10). It has even been

used to refer to individual animals of small livestock (Ex. 12:5), and to animals that give milk or those that suckle (Gen. 33:13) [Waschke 2003:199].

#### **1.3.2.2.3 The Sea יָם (Ps 8:8)**

The “sea” or יָם is the third aspect of the tripartite Biblical worldview to consider. There are 395 occurrences of יָם and these seem to be common in Biblical books such as Exodus, Joshua, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Psalms [Grisanti 1997:461-466]. Following are some of the Biblical texts in which this word appears: Exodus 10:19, 13:18; Joshua 13:27; Isaiah 11:15; Ezekiel 47:18; and Psalm 69:34. Where it appears, it is associated with lake or reservoir, and in some cases it refers to the sea as a Geographical entity.

As indicated before, when this sea or יָם is used in combination with heaven and earth it seems to point out wholeness [Ringgren 1990:97].

#### **דָּגָה (Ps 8:8)**

דָּגָה or דָּג is the natural object appearing in Psalm 8 which is associated with the sea. This word has 18 occurrences in the Old Testament, 15 of which are in plural form. This word which means *fish* appears again only in Ugar. [Botterweck 1978:132-139].

According to the creation story in Genesis 1 and Psalm 8, the fish of the sea and the rest of creation were subject to the rulership of humankind. The eating of these created beings was given to humankind only after the Flood [Botterweck 1978:139].

### **1.3.2.3 Conclusion.**

Our tripartite worldview of reality has encapsulated everything that exists in the heaven, earth, and sea. In this dissertation, as previously indicated, these three combined are referred to when using the term *nature*.

Furthermore, the same observations that have been made under *humankind* are also true with regard to *nature*. Here we refer to multiple meanings that some words reflected in Psalm 8 have; the similarities in the language used by Israel and the surrounding nations; and the implications of the occurrence of some words in different periods.

### **1.3.3 Old Testament Biblical passages with an overlap of humankind and nature.**

Under “1.1 Problem” it was mentioned that Psalm 8 is not the only Old Testament passage that displays a relationship between humankind and nature. There are several indications of this fact elsewhere in the Old Testament. Below we provide just a sample of texts from the wealth of passages in which there is an overlap of the two terms, namely, humankind and nature

In order to appreciate the overlap of these words and their influence upon each other, we will divide the passages where these words occur into three themes, namely, *humankind* exerting influence on *nature*, *nature* exerting influence on *humankind*, and *humankind* and *nature* appearing together in certain dealings of God with them.

### **1.3.3.1 *Humankind exerts influence on nature (Ps 8:6).***

The Old Testament presents instances where humankind and nature appear together and humankind exerts influence upon nature, such as humanity naming animals Genesis 2:19 “אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא-לוֹ הָאָדָם נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה הוּא שְׁמוֹ” [Gage 1984:89; Wenham 1987:68]; humanity having control over nature Genesis 1:28; Genesis 9:2; Psalm 8:6 “יִרְדּוּ וְכִבְשׁוּ” “בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ” [Fleming 1990:307; House 1998:60]; humanity being exhorted not to fear nature Job 5:22 “וַיִּתֵּן הָאָרֶץ אֶל-יָדֶיךָ”; and humanity being promised a future where it will have power over nature Psalm 91:13 “תִּרְמַס כָּפָר תִּנְיֹן”.

### **1.3.3.2 *Nature exerts influence on humankind (Ps 8:3).***

There are other Old Testament passages that present nature as having influence upon humankind. Nature provides a classroom for humankind to learn the greatness of God Job 12:7-9 “בְּהִמּוֹת וְתִרְדָּה” [Gage 1984:75]; nature proclaims to humanity the righteousness of God “וְרָאוּ כָּל-הָעַמִּים כְּבוֹדִי” Psalm 97:6; nature is used by God as His instrument to judge humankind [Ryken, Wilhoit and Longman III 1998:590]; animals and vegetation are means of human sacrifice to God Genesis 4:3, 4; and, nature as the source for human sustenance Genesis 9:3 “כָּל-רֶמֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר הוּא-חַי לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָה” [Fleming 1990:308; House 1998:60-61].

### **1.3.3.3 *Humankind and nature* appear together in certain dealings with God.**

Finally, there are instances where humankind and nature appear together in certain dealings with God. Some of these dealings are where God enters into a covenant with both of them Genesis 9:3 [Ryken, Wilhoit and Longman III 1998:590]. There are also times where God reaches out to both of them in His effort to change humans from their evil ways Jonah 3:7, 8. The two entities appear together also in passages that point forward to the new creation such as Isaiah 11:8, 9 [Fleming 1990:308-309; Gage 1984:83].

The overlap of the above passage does not seem accidental. Instead, among other things, this overlap emphasizes the oneness or holism of humankind and nature.

## **1.4 Methodology.**

This section presents the methodology that is to be pursued in our establishment of the nature and the cause of the interrelatedness between humankind and nature as reflected in Psalm 8.

*The first phase* will concentrate on the examination of the Seventh-day Adventist worldview of the relationship between humankind and nature, and its roots in its Western background. [The preference of the Seventh-day Adventist tradition to other church traditions has already been stated early in this chapter].

*The second phase* will focus on the examination of the Xhosa worldview of the relationship between humankind and nature. [As in the Seventh-day Adventist worldview, the motivation for the incorporation of the Xhosa perspective in this dissertation has been given].

The *third phase* will consist of an exegesis of Psalm 8. To carry out this exegesis a *close reading* approach will be applied. The *close reading* approach refers to the study of the language in the text, the style of writing, the metaphors, and the relation of these aspects to one another [Clines 1983:33, 34].

The *final phase* will entail the development of an alternative worldview of the relationship between humankind and nature, which is rooted in Xhosa-Seventh-day Adventist tradition. The relevance of this model to the current theological and ecological debate will be pointed out. Furthermore, how this model impacts on the Seventh-day doctrines that entail relationship between humankind and nature will also be demonstrated.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **SEVENTH -DAY ADVENTIST THOUGHT ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF HUMANKIND AND NATURE, AND ITS RELATION TO THE WESTERN BACKGROUND.**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

This section addresses Seventh-day Adventist thought on the relationship of humankind and nature. However, the theology of the Seventh-day Adventists on any Biblical teaching cannot be properly investigated without reference to their origin as a Church. The pioneers of this denomination were not only almost all from the West, specifically North America, but had also been members of the churches that surrounded them there [Thomsen 1971:36-43; Damsteegt 1981:84].

Therefore, it seems inevitable that this background would colour the thinking of these people. Even though they had investigated and scrutinized the Bible teachings that they would adopt as their theology and which were to distinguish them from other denominations that surrounded them, yet it is unthinkable, however careful they might be, that they would screen out all vestiges of their Western context, if, according to their understanding, those vestiges were not necessarily in collision with the Scriptures. Their interpretation of the relationship of humankind and nature, especially as reflected in Psalm 8, seems to contain one of those theological vestiges.



In view of this, it is necessary therefore to trace briefly the development of the two concepts – *nature* and *humankind* – in Western thought. Our discussion covers the Renaissance and Enlightenment and the modern time. More attention will be given especially to *nature*, since the idea of nature does not only seem to have been an area of serious discussion, but the debate on the concept goes very far into the past [Wilkinson 1980:104]. In our exploration of this concept we will attempt to slot the contributors to the debate into two epochs, first the 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and second the 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, or the modern times. The reason for making this division is that the two periods have been identified as showing a difference in terms of the nature of debate on *nature*, as well as in contributors to the debate. Referring to the difference of the debate on creationism in the 20<sup>th</sup> (which, in essence, involves *nature*) in comparison with the period that had gone before, Marsh observed, “In a general way it may be said of much of the creationism of today that it has largely passed out of the realm of scientific facts. ... Much of the creationism of our day is purely theological dogma, which commonly does not pretend to have any scientific standing” [1950:35-36].

## **2. 2. The development of western thought on nature and humankind during Renaissance and Enlightenment and modern time.**

In this section we deal with the development of western thought on *nature* and *humankind* during the Renaissance and Enlightenment, and the modern time.

### **2.2.1 The idea of nature during Renaissance and Enlightenment.**

The first person to consider during this period is Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) whose contribution was described by Pannenberg as marking the first phase of the whole debate of *nature* [1993:52]. Since Copernicus wrote to challenge the Greek perspectives of *nature* [Collingwood 1964:5], it is appropriate to provide a summary of the Greek views of *nature* before we discuss him and those who followed after him.

#### **2.2.1.1 A summary of the Greek perspectives of *nature*.**

Loren Wilkinson has divided the Greek thought regarding *nature* into four phases, namely, Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic, and Epicurian perspectives [Wilkinson 1980:105].

##### **2.2.1.1.1 Platonic perspective of nature**

According to this perspective, nature has certain significant characteristics that tend to distinguish it from other Greek perspectives. Some of these characteristics are, firstly, nature is seen to be ever changing. Existing things come to being, grow, decay, and die.

The second characteristic is that nature is regarded as imperfect. This imperfection emanates from the fact that nature is seen to be mutable. According to Platonists, that which is mutable and not orderly is viewed as imperfect. Only that which is unchanging, eternal, and orderly is perfect.

However, while nature has signs of not being perfect, it is also not wholly imperfect, for even its state of continuous change could also be orderly.

The concept of *Forms* in the Platonic perspective was considered as another significant characteristic of *nature*. *Forms* were defined by Platonists as being *ideas* or *concepts*. However, these *Forms* were somehow also viewed as more than mere *ideas* or *concepts* but as things that actually existed. These *Forms* were transcendent, perfect, and were not apprehended by senses [Clatworthy 1997:47; Wilkinson 1980:105-108].

Finally, according to this view, humans were regarded as having the task of bringing order to nature. The idea of a divine element in nature, which would lead to its worship, had no room in the Platonic perspective [Wilkinson: 1980:107-108].

#### **2.2.1.1.2 Aristotelian perspective of nature.**

Aristotle was a student of Plato and following are some of the elements of his perspective of *nature*.

To this school, the universe was seen to be essentially organismic with all processes goal-oriented, arranged to achieve their particular purpose [Barret 2000:13].

Aristotelians regarded cosmos as consisting of the eternal and the perfect realm of the heavenly spheres. These heavenly spheres referred to the moon and other spheres beyond. All that lay beneath the moon was regarded as temporal and corrupt [Barret 2000:13].

To them, the world was composed of countless diverse things: stones, trees, animals, humans, and so forth. These things were substances and capable of existing independently of one another.

Regarding the relationship between humankind and nature, while humankind is part of nature, yet it also transcends nature. “Humans share form with the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms, but have more: the ability to think things out prudentially and scientifically. The thinking ability means that humankind transcends the other kingdoms. In addition to being rational, people are also fully animals, vegetables, and minerals. Thus humans are embedded in nature, and share completely in its character” [Wilkinson 1980:109].

The substances in question were composed of form and matter. The form is what makes the substance what it is. The matter is that on which the form is impressed. These substances could be grouped into the so-called “natural kinds”, which in turn form natural groups or kingdoms. These kingdoms were interrelated. In fact, they formed a continuous hierarchy [Wilkinsom 1980:109].

#### **2.2.1.1.3 Stoic perspective of nature.**

Stoicism arose after Plato and Aristotle. Following are some of the characteristics of the perspective of the Stoics. They believed that there is a dynamic principle, which is the source, pattern and goal of everything, including humans. They gave this dynamic principle

several names such as God, Zeus, creative fire, ether, the law of nature, providence, soul of the world, and word [Wilkinson 1980:111].

They said that the goal of every person is to bring his or her life into conformity with this pervasive cosmic order. The good person, according the Stoics, is the one who lives in complete harmony with the rest of the universe. Humanity is to live under the guidance of the life-giving word, which animates all the universe.

The Stoics observed the world as a vast organism whose soul is God. They saw each part of this organism as having purpose. For example, “the air is a medium for birds, and the sea for fish. Clouds bring water to the land, rain for plants and animals, which they need for sustenance [Wilkinson 1980:111-112].

Humans occupy a special place in this ordered world. In fact, the world exists for them. Not only does the world exist for them, but they also are to tend it, maintain its order, and beautify it with industry.

One of the concepts associated with Stoics is the personification of *nature*, namely *Mother Nature* and *Nature's Way* [Wilkinson 1980:112-113].

#### **2.2.1.1.4 Epicurian perspective of nature**

Epicurianism is the last of the four phases identified by Wilkinson. According to this perspective, all things were seen to be composed of atoms. These atoms are small, solid,

indivisible, indestructible, and move about in empty space. Humans are not able to see these atoms [Wilkinson 1980:113].

The motion of these atoms is regular and uniform. This regularity and uniformity results neither from divine intervention nor from the atoms themselves.

In this perspective there are no forms or purpose, as in the other Greek worldviews previously discussed.

Finally, humans have no obligation with regard to nature – either to control or to care for it – since they themselves are part of nature [Wilkinson 1980:105-114].

### **Conclusion.**

In this discussion what can be gleaned from the Greek perspective of nature is that nature is seen from two viewpoints. First, nature is evil because of its changing and chaotic tendencies. Concerning its relationship with humankind, humans are the only ones that can bring order to nature. Humans can bring form to the formless nature. The reason why humanity has this ability is that humans are the only ones who have knowledge of form.

In this we see not only an allusion to separation of humankind from nature, but here is also highlighted the superiority of humans to nature, which they are to manipulate.

The second view is that nature is not evil. For example, the Aristotelians who represented this view saw goodness inherent in nature. The goodness of humanity is also rooted in the goodness of nature. Concerning the relationship between humankind and nature, the purpose of nature rests on its relationship with humankind.

In both views humankind is the centre of everything. The centrality of humankind to nature is highlighted in the following discussion of the contribution of Copernicus and those who followed him.

#### **2.2.1.2 Contributors towards the idea of nature during the Renaissance and Enlightenment.**

The idea of nature around this period attracted several contributors. The first one considered here, as we mentioned earlier, is Copernicus. Copernicus received his education at the University of Cracow (Poland) in Mathematics and Astronomy [Barret 2000:24]. Not only have scholars found in his work the Renaissance view of nature beginning to take shape [Collingwood 1964:5], but, as mentioned earlier, in the same work some of these scholars trace the first phase of the debate on *nature* and theology [Pannenberg 1993:52; Walker 1976:426, 427].

Copernicus put the cat among the pigeons, as it were, when he introduced a theory of the sun being central and the earth revolving around it. This view was not only new but was regarded as being in conflict with the prevailing one namely, that it is the earth that is central, and the sun is in motion. Both the Roman Catholic and the Reformers rejected

Copernicus' theory, their rejection being based on Scripture that teaches that it is the sun that is in motion [Pannenberg 1993:52].

The impact of this theory on nature was far reaching. Perhaps this effect has not been better articulated than in the words of Collingwood, who alleged, "It destroyed the entire theory of the natural world as an organism". "An organism implies differentiated organs; in the spherical world-organism of Greek thought there was earth in the middle, then water, then air, then fire, and lastly, for Aristotle, the *quinta essentia* of the world's outermost envelope; now, if the world has no centre, the very basis of these differentiations disappears; the whole world is made of the same kind of matter, ... the stars, instead of having a divine substance of their own, are homogeneous with our earth", he continued [1964:97].

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) is the second prominent figure in the debate of the idea of *nature*. His words, namely, "nature to be commanded must be obeyed" [Wilkinson 1980:131], suggested his view of nature, namely, that nature is something to be manipulated by the mind. This obedience of nature was described by Wilkinson as referring to the acquirement of power over nature and the getting of knowledge about nature through observation [1980:131]. In fact, Bacon was associated with at least two methods with regards to the approach to nature. The first one was that humanity needs to have power over nature [Wilkinson 1980:131, 132]. His "thought is pervaded by images of nature as a female to be coerced, 'penetrated', conquered, and forced to 'yield' - the language of rape and subjugation of women, while the scientist is imaged as the epitome of masculine power over such 'feminine' nature. ... Through the sin of Eve, 'nature' fell out of man's control,



but through scientific knowledge this fall will be reversed and ‘nature’ restored to man’s dominion as representative of God’s dominion over the earth” [Ruether 1992:195].

Bacon’s second method was the acquirement of knowledge about nature by studying nature itself, not for nature’s sake but for humankind’s sake [Wilkinson: 1980:134].

The third contributor toward *nature* on our list is Galileo Galilei (1564-1642). He is the person who disputed the condemnation of Copernicus by the Church for his theory of heliocentrism [Ruether 1992:33].

Galileo revived the ancient Greek theory of atoms. This theory maintained that the world consists of atoms in motion. These atoms were described as hard and indestructible particles, and had different shapes, sizes, and weight.

Actually, Galileo subscribed to the theory of primary quality and secondary quality of things. The former referred to the sizes, shapes, weight and motion of things, while the latter meant that things have colour, taste, and temperature [Clatworthy 1997:80].

According to him, *nature* is not an organism. He described it as pure quantity. Any qualitative aspects that could be attributed to it are conferred upon it from outside. *Nature* cannot be regarded as self-creative. It has a cause other than itself [Collingwood 1964:102-103].

The fourth figure in our list is Johannes Kepler (1571-1630). Born ill, poor, and in an unsettled family, Kepler won a scholarship to a Lutheran seminary at the age of thirteen. His studies eventually led him to become the first great Protestant scientist [Barret 2000: 28].

Regarding his ideas about *nature*, Kepler worked hard to develop principles that would describe the real motions of the planet [Wilkinson 1980:126]. He repudiated the Greek idea of natural movements. He maintained that every body tends to remain stationary anywhere it happens to be. According to Kepler, whenever the body is near another, its rest is disturbed, so that there is a mutual attraction of each body towards its neighbour. For example, a stone moves because it is attracted to the ground. The tide moves because it is attracted by the moon [Collingwood 1964:101].

Rene Descartes [1595-1650] another contributor to the idea of *nature* has been described as a foundational figure in modern science [Ruether 1992:195]. He was a Frenchman who studied under Jesuit teachers and worked largely in Holland [Barrot 2000:40; Williams 1988:193, 194].

With regard to nature, Descartes saw a division between the mind and matter. To him the mind is transcendent and stands over against matter [Ruether 1992:196]. The mind is seen to be the thinking thing and it is the only source of absolute certainty [Wilkinson 1980:128, 129]. Matter has no mind or soul, but is merely passive. It is made of corpuscles with shapes, sizes, weight, and speed, and has innate qualities [Clatworth 1997:80].

This view had serious implications on how nature was to be regarded. Since it had no mind or soul, it was treated as a mere machine. Animals were described as “automata”, which essentially meant that they were soulless and thus had no feelings [Ruether 1992:196].

Among those who sought to bridge the division of mind and matter with some concept of the divine as the unifying source of both the mind and physical things was Benedict Spinoza (1632-77). A Dutch philosopher with Jewish origin, Spinoza was expelled from the Synagogue because of his pantheistic views [Ruether 1992:239].

Regarding his ideas of nature, Spinoza saw God and nature as being one. God, to him, is the only substance, and mind and nature are two of His attributes [Collingwood 1964:106].

The person who was alleged to have laid the foundation for modern physics prior to Einstein was Isaac Newton [Ruether 1992:197]. A professor of mathematics at Cambridge and president of the Royal Society, Newton was regarded as the most eminent physicist of his day [Hillyer 1988:467-468].

Newton's contribution towards a theory on *nature* was also on the motions of things. According to him, the same laws of gravitation that explain movements of heavenly bodies are the ones that could explain the motions of things near us such as fruit, trees, stones, etc. He likened the working of nature, the universe and, to a degree, human beings to a machine [Wilkinson 1980:128].

Newton is associated with the idea often called *the God of the gaps*. The purpose of this idea was for him to defend the existence of God and His involvement in nature by showing that nature could not explain everything, so that God had to intervene from time to time [Clatworthy 1997:77].

## **Conclusion**

In this discussion we have witnessed nature being denied the status of an organism, as it was viewed in the Greek period. In this era it was not seen as possessing mind. Instead, it was perceived as merely a quantity, a machine, something that must be conquered and subdued by humankind.

The Eighteenth Century did not present us with any different view of nature from the mechanical view that we found in the previous period. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), who for many years was a professor of logic and metaphysics in East Prussia (Geldard 1988:361), and whom we have selected to represent this period, endorsed this mechanical view of nature. He too, saw the physical world “consisting of immutable, hard and dead conglomerations of moving particles” [Deane-Drummond 1997:32].

Concerning the relationship between humankind and nature, Kant maintained that there was a difference between humankind and the rest of nature. Humankind enjoys freedom which “overcomes the deterministic quality characteristic of non-human existence” [Deane-Drummond 1997:32].

### **2.2.1.3 Modern view of nature.**

The idea of nature as lifeless, a machine to be manipulated or controlled from outside itself, something to be overpowered and subdued, continues even to modern times. In fact, Philip Hefner, Professor of Systematic Theology at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, not only confirmed the continuing of this view of nature as machine, but he also pointed out its effect on the relationship of humankind and nature: the emergence or the existence of distance between the two entities that resulted from the claim that humankind is in essence different from nature [1984:204].

Before introducing the names of the contributors and their contribution during this period, it needs to be said that those who participated in the debate not only represent a shift in terms of their professional background, namely, natural scientists and philosophers to theologians, but there was also a shift in the nature of the debate from the scientific realm to that of theology [Marsh 1950: 35-36].

In the writings of the scholars of this time nature consistently remained inferior to and different from humankind [Tillich 1951:168; Wright 1952:43; von Rad 1966:131-43; Vriezen 1970: 422-423; Berkhof 1976:183; Childs 1985:199]. This inferiority and difference is based firstly on the composition of both humankind and nature at creation. Humanity was made in the image of God, while other created objects were created each after its own kind [Berkhof 1976:183; Vriezen 1970:422-423]. The purpose of this image, according to Bruce C. Birch et al, is to mirror God to the world. It is to be as God would be to the non-human, and an extension of God's own dominion [1999:49-50].

Second, God Himself made human beings with His own hand, and He made them the apex of His creation, whereas, He spoke the rest of nature into existence [Berkhof 1976:183; Vriezen 1970:422-423].

Thirdly, humanity was crowned as king, and given dominion over the rest of creation [Vriezen 1970:422-423; Berkhof 1976:183; La Sor et al 1982:78; Childs 1985:199; Birch et al 1999:49-50]. By pre-eminence it was intended that humankind and its whole glorious dominion might magnify the Almighty Creator and Lord of the universe [Berkhof 1976:183].

The last point of superiority on humankind over nature and also an area of difference between them is what Paul Tillich [1886-1965], a German theologian and philosopher, termed “ontology”. Tillich observed that “man occupies a pre-eminent position in ontology, not as an outstanding object among other objects, but as that being who asks the ontological question and in whose self-awareness the ontological answer can be found. ...[He] is able to answer the ontological question himself because he experiences directly and immediately the structure of being and its elements” [Tillich 1951:168].

In addition to the reasons that have just been enumerated and which had to do mainly with the make-up of human beings as opposed to that of other created objects, there are scholars like Gerhard von Rad and G Ernest Wright who viewed the inferiority of nature to humanity as based on different reasons. For example, to von Rad nature is separate from humans and inferior to them firstly on “the presumption of a sharp dichotomy between redemption and

creation, that is, between the realm of human culture and history on the one side and the world of nonhuman nature on the other. Redemption and creation, history and nature, are regarded as distinct conceptual categories, each relatively unique and self-contained in its own right” [von Rad 1966:131-43].

The second reason presented by this scholar is “the judgment that these two realms, now distinguished from one another, do not share equally in the biblical drama. One of them, the realm of human culture, dominates biblical religion. It is the primary, and, for all practical purposes, exclusive concern of biblical authors. ... By consequence, the realm of nonhuman nature recedes into the background and becomes less important ... Thus nature is not only separated from human culture, but it is regarded as subservient to it” [von Rad 1966:131-43].

The views of von Rad concerning the relationship between humankind and nature were also echoed by Wright, who saw Biblical theology as “first and foremost a theology of recital in which Biblical man confesses his faith by reciting the formative events in his history as the redemptive handiwork of God” [Wright 1952:38, 43]. Consequently, in the light of this focus of Biblical theology, nature lost its significance [Hiebert 1996:6]. It became only a “handmaiden, a servant of history” [Wright 1952:33, 43].

However, a view that separated history from nature was refuted by Theodore Hiebert. This scholar observed that “Redemption, well-being, or salvation was conceived of entirely within the concrete agricultural environs in which J, his ancestors, and his contemporaries lived out their lives on this earth. Redemption depended on this fertile and secure land. It

consisted of a lasting and stable relationship with this land and the bountiful harvest it produced. The attempt to separate out historical experience from natural phenomena within such and understanding redemption, or the attempt to elevate one over the other, introduces a perspective foreign to J's thought" [1996:152-154].

As a result of this superiority of human beings over nature, theologians like Berkhof have not only seen it as the duty and the privilege of human beings to make all nature subservient to their will and purpose [Berkhof 1976:183], but these human beings should also regard nature, as existing for their own benefit [Young 1976:95].

Even in North America in the immediate context of the development of Seventh-day Adventism [Froom 1978:77-90], the notion of humans overpowering and subduing nature, which was interpreted as a Christian duty [Wilkinson 1980:136], became an assumption on the basis of which the Church was operated.

There seemed to be divergent approaches, though, to nature around this period. At least two of these were significant. The first one was the mechanical view of nature, which had been stressed by Bacon's attitude towards nature, namely, that nature should be conquered. This approach was an answer to the challenge of tangled forests and untamed animals that the first citizens of North America encountered as they came from Europe to settle in this new country. The extent and vitality of nature that they encountered was something that they had not seen before. They likened nature to the condition of the sinful heart of humankind after the fall. The situation had to be reversed, and to do so, nature had to be conquered. To



fail to do this would be interpreted as the failure to carry out God's mandate to humanity namely, the domination of creation [Wilkinson 1980: 135-136].

This conquest of nature was understood in religious terms, as we see above. Even the coming into New England was also understood in the same terms, for to these people the occupation of this new country was, as it were, an entrance into the Promised Land [Wilkinson 1980:136].

As mentioned earlier, the mechanical view of nature was not the only prevailing view. There was also a different view that promoted harmony between humankind and nature, instead of humanity regarding nature as an enemy that must be conquered. This view was *Romanticism*.

Even though an agreed definition of *Romanticism* is problematic because of the many meanings that this concept has assumed [Elias 1988:598], yet, pertaining to nature, this term refers to a reaction to the mechanisation of nature [Wilkinson 1980:139]. English and German poets felt and even wrote against treating nature and the earth mechanically, excluding sights, smell, and colours. These writers stressed the beauty and vitality of nature. Some of them even maintained that God is immanent in nature. Nature is a garden in which one can sense His nearness [Elias 1988:598].

In North America there was a type of *Romanticism* called *Transcendentalism* that developed around 1836 and which, among other things, advocated this divine pervasion in nature [Pearsall 1998:1967]. While it seems that the thrust of this concept was the separateness of

the mind from nature and the access of the mind to a reality beyond nature, yet one of its manifestations was the appreciation of the natural world and a critique of the manipulation of nature [Wilkinson 1980:141].

It was in this background of the concept of nature that the Adventist Church emerged, and its Bible teachings were developed.

### **2.2.2 The idea of Humankind.**

However, since the thrust of this chapter is to explore the Adventist worldview of the relationship between *nature* and *humankind*, it is necessary therefore, also to explore the concept of *humankind* separately, just as we did with nature, before we consider how the two entities relate to each other. We need to indicate, though, that we will not trace this concept to the time of the Greeks as we did with *nature* for it does not seem to have been a controversial issue at that time. Instead, we will only go as far back as the time of the Enlightenment, for it was at this time that “ideas about God, reason, nature, and humankind were synthesized into a worldview that gained wide assent and that instigated revolutionary development in art, philosophy, and politics” [Goetz 1987:504].

We will also not pursue a strict division of contributions on this theme according to epochs, for there does not seem to be any cause in the debate itself that calls for this division as was the case with *nature*.

Furthermore, among several aspects of *humankind* such as *individualism*, *corporate personality*, that could be considered on the basis of studies on humankind [this fact will be demonstrated in the discussion below], we will select the concept of *the image of God in humankind*. The reason for this selection is that *the image of God* is central to the formation of humankind in the creation tradition of Genesis in which Psalm 8 seems to be rooted [Weiser 1962:140; Kidner 1973: 65]. Besides, this *image of God* seems to be also implied in Psalm 8 itself [verse 5].

#### **2.2.2.1 The Image of God in Humankind.**

Referring to the importance of the concept of image, which is what we address in this section, G.A. Jonsson observed, “Scarcely any passage in the whole of the OT (Old Testament) has attracted as much interest as Gen. 1:26-28” [1988:1]. Because of the sizable amount of material on the subject (which Jonsson describes as “nearly infinite, irrespective of the discipline, whether it be systematic, the history of ideas or exegesis” we will be selective in what we consider in our discussion [1988:1].

In the discussion of this topic we intend tackling the difference between God’s image and God’s likeness first, for these two phrases have been seen to refer to two separate aspects of humankind by some scholars. Subsequent to that, we will go into the various meanings that have been given to the concept of the image of God. This discussion will be concluded by a brief summary of our findings.

#### **2.2.2.1.1 The relationship between God's image and God's likeness.**

A study of the *image* and the *likeness* of God shows that there are two ideas about the relationship of the two terms. There is a school that sees this *image* and this *likeness* as referring to the same thing, while there is another school that separates these two terms, seeing them as representing two different concepts.

We start with the school that separates these two ideas and maintains that they represent two different things. Some of the prominent names that appear in the Nineteenth Century who subscribed to this view are Franz Delitsch, John Peter Lange and Ludwig Schoeberlein. To them the *image* referred to the principle or the norm after which humans were to be created, while the *likeness* meant that they would be like God. The *image* denoted the ideal, therefore, also the disposition, the being, the definition. The *likeness* denoted the actuality, the appearing [Lange 1864:1:172-73]. The distinction is as that between concrete and abstract designation [Schoeberlein 1882:1061-1062].

To Delitsch the *image* was not only different from the *likeness* but it also referred to the ethical part of human beings, while the *likeness* referred to their physical nature. The *image* is that human part that enables him or her to have mastery over himself or herself and therefore makes him or her exalted above all other creatures. Moreover, human beings do not share this *image* only with God, but they share it also with the angels, since God's expression "let us" in Genesis 1:26 must have included angels as well, who are also part of the heavenly family [1888:100].

On the other hand, as noted above, there are scholars who do not see any distinction between the *image* and the *likeness* of God, but identify these two ideas as referring to the same thing. The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries present at least two scholars who subscribed to this view. These are M Henry and Thomas Scott. They maintained that these two concepts express the same thing [Henry 1706:1]. God merely used both terms making the express doubled and varied so that it may engage our attention and ensure our belief [Scott 1823:1-5].

In the Twentieth Century, CHN Henry and SB Ferguson are two scholars who addressed this relationship. These two writers observed that the terms *image* and *likeness* [Genesis 1:26; 5:3] do not point out different aspects of the *image* of God, but state intensively that human uniquely reflects God. The use of these two terms side by side vigorously declares that by creation humanity bears an image actually corresponding to the divine original [Henry 1984:545-548]. Either expression is used to denote the total concept of the *image*. *Likeness* qualifies the image in two ways. The first one is the limitation, which means that human is not identical to God. The second one is the amplification, which means human is actually a reflection of God Himself, and is to live as His created analogy [Ferguson 1988:328-329].

#### **2.2.2.1.2 The meaning of the *image* and the *likeness* of God.**

To explain the *image* of God in humankind has not only drawn a great deal of attention from scholars, but has also been difficult to achieve. Millard J. Erickson in his *Christian*

*Theology* has pulled together much of the scholarly contribution in this regard and divided it into three aspects which he calls *substantive*, *relational* and *functional* categories.

The *Substantive* view, which is the first of the three views, has several varieties and the common elements in each of them is that the image is identified as some definite characteristics or qualities within the make-up of the human [Erickson 1998:520-529].

With regards to the *relational* concept, he suggests that in this view God's image is not seen as something resident within human nature. It is rather thought of as the experiencing of a relationship. Humans can be said to be in the image or displaying the image when standing in a particular relationship, which *is* the image [Erickson 1998:520-529].

In defining the third view, namely, the functional concept, he says that in this the image is not something present in the makeup of the human, nor the experiencing of the relationship with God or with fellow humans, but the image consists of something one does. It is the human function, the most frequently mentioned being the exercise of dominion over the creation [Erickson 1998:520-529].

In our discussion of the image of God in humanity we will also use Erickson formula as a guide in our differentiating among scholarly views.

### **A Substantive view of God's image.**

Between the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries there were few scholars who subscribed to the substantive view of the image of God. F Delitsch, S.R Driver, M Henry, J.P Lange, L Schoeberlein, T Scott, C Simeon, were among these scholars. While they all highlighted some characteristics in humanity that are akin to God's characteristics, some of them seemed to avoid identifying any bodily likeness between God and humanity. In fact, Scott denied that there could be any bodily resemblance between God and human beings, because God is spirit and therefore has no shape that can be resembled [Scott 1823: 1-5]. The only person among these writers who alluded to the human body as also part of the image of God is Schoeberlein. This writer says that it is as a person and in the totality of his or her being – body and soul – that a person is the image of God [1882:1062].

Consequently, these scholars seem to have dwelt more on the intellectual and the moral aspects of God's nature, and identify these as areas where humankind reflects the image of God. Intellectually, the human ability to imbibe true knowledge, possessing perfect discernment and judgment free from corrupt bias, all of these made human beings akin to God [Scott 1823:1-5; Simeon 1833:1-5; and, Lange 1864:172-174]. These qualities make them superior to animals.

Morally, humankind displays righteousness, true holiness, love of everything that is good, and a will disposed to obedience [Henry 1706:1; Scott 1823: 1-5; Simeon 1833: 1-5].

Some of these scholars emphasized that this state of humankind existed before the Fall. The entrance of sin at the Fall effaced this image. That is why the Bible speaks of its renewal [Scott 1823: 1-5; Simeon 1833: 1-5].

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century presents scholars such as E Brunner, A Fernhout, T.R.W Longstaff, A.H Strong, T.C Vriezen who supported the substantive view of the image. Some of these scholars recognized this image first in the bodily make-up of human beings [Strong 1907:514-524; and, Longstaff 1985:418-419]. In fact, Longstaff suggested that the very Hebrew term that is translated as image denotes a concrete likeness [1985:418-419].

A few of these writers extend this image to the intellectual aspect of human beings. Human beings are the only ones who have been given reason, the power of choice, mental capacities, and aptitudes [Jemison 1959:125]. Through this endowment they can know themselves and God. These intellectual powers also differentiate between them and brutes [Strong 1907:514-524].

These human beings also display moral characteristics akin to God's. This moral likeness with God involves holiness, righteousness, and integrity [Strong 1907: 514-524; Fernhout 1978:1-34].

Brunner's description of the *image* does not entail spiritual and bodily aspects. Rather it involves what he calls formal and material aspects. The material aspect, according to Brunner, is that which was bound up with the human's original righteousness but was erased



by the Fall. The formal aspect is that which distinguishes humankind from animals and was not affected by the Fall. Even a sinner has not lost this one [1986:47-52].

### **A functional view of God's image.**

Not only do the various definitions of God's image in humankind given by scholars reflect the substantive aspect of this image, but there are also definitions that focus on the functional aspect of this image. Our study reveals representatives of this school in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century [Henry 1706: 1], 19<sup>th</sup> Century [Scott 1823:1-5; Lange 1864:172-74; Schoeberlein 1882:1061-62] and 20<sup>th</sup> Century [Strong 1907:514-24; Jemison 1959:125; Ferguson 1988:328-329].

This image has been seen by some of these scholars as referring to the status of humanity being a viceroy of God, governing other creatures [Henry 1701:1; Schoeberlein: 1882: 1061-62; Jemison: 1959:125]. Other scholars, while they recognize that the image has to do with this governing role of humanity, yet to them this human dominion over creation is not itself the image, but the result of the image [Scott 1823:1-5; Lange 1864:172-74]. Henry has extended the image of God in humanity beyond humankind being merely able to govern other creatures, but also to humans being able to govern themselves [Henry 1701: 1].

### **A relational view of God's image.**

A few scholars have brought up a third dimension of the image, which has been described by Erickson as the relational [1998:523-27]. As shown above, God's image is seen as not

something that is resident within human nature, but rather as being in a particular relationship with God [1998:523-27].

There are at least three proponents of this school that can be cited, all from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. These scholars are Emil Brunner, A Fernhout, and S.B Ferguson. Brunner identifies this relational image as referring to a person when he or she turns to God. In that state the image is reflected in full [Brunner 1986:45]. This idea is strengthened by Fernhout, although he describes this relational image as relating to the bond of covenant by which God ties him or her to Himself [Fernhout 1978:1-34].

To Ferguson the image of God is not received only when a person turns to God, but because he or she is the child of the Great God, he or she bears that image. A man or a woman is made for filial fellowship with the divine, and intended to demonstrate the family likeness in righteousness, holiness and integrity [Ferguson 1988:328-329].

Brunner does not see this image as only limited to the relationship between God and humanity, but he maintains that to reflect the image of God also means to love your fellow human being, just as the Bible's command is two-fold, namely, to love God as well as one's fellow human beings [Brunner 1986:45].

In conclusion, it is clear that the issue of God's image in humanity is an enigma. In fact, H.H Rowley dismissed the whole concept of image as a metaphorical and not a theological description [1974:75]. The enigmatic nature of this image is clearly demonstrated by the divergent views that characterize its definition. As has been demonstrated in the afore discussion, some interpreters identify this image as relating to the physical being of God,

while others see it as having to do with intellectual, moral and spiritual aspects of His being. There are even those who see the very status of rulership over other creatures that human beings enjoy as a reflection of this same image.

Admittedly, there is merit in making the definition of the image of God inclusive of more than one aspect of His being. Indeed, His being is not defined in terms of any one of these aspects, but it includes all of them. In other words, the Scriptures attribute to Him not only bodily features (albeit no one knows the form of body that He has), but ascribe to His being also intellectual and moral or spiritual features. Therefore, there is sense in talking of His image as consisting of all bodily, intellectual, moral or spiritual qualities. We also support the view that the image of God in humankind consists of all these aspects, and the role He has of serving other creatures as the result of this image rather than the image itself.

As mentioned before, it was with this background that the Adventism as a movement emerged and its teachings were developed. We now consider the Adventist worldview of the relationship between humankind and nature.

### **2.3 The relationship between humankind and nature in Seventh-day Adventist theological thought.**

Seventh-day Adventist theological thought, which is addressed in this section, is to be investigated in the light of the suggestion of Psalm 8 presented in Chapter 1 in the Problem section. It was pointed out there that Psalm 8 shows interrelatedness between humankind

and nature, and that this interrelatedness suggests oneness and partnership between the two entities.

At the end of the survey of this theological thought a brief evaluation will follow. This evaluation's aim is to determine the position of Seventh-day Adventist scholars (who represent the theological thought of this Church) regarding the theme of this dissertation, is necessary for at least, two reasons. First, the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a tradition has its bent in terms of its interpretation of theological issues. Even in the issue of the relationship of humankind and nature that bent may be evident. Therefore this evaluation is to establish and highlight it.

The second reason is that the Seventh-day Adventist scholars who are to address the theme of our discussion are themselves from varied backgrounds, and those different backgrounds may influence their understanding of the relationship between humankind and nature. It is the purpose of this evaluation therefore to establish whether that influence did or did not occur.

### **2.3.1 The preference of Seventh-day Adventists over other church traditions.**

I have chosen the Seventh-day Adventist Church for investigation in this dissertation rather than another tradition because I myself am a Seventh-day Adventist. It is in this theological context that my own theology was born and fashioned to where it is today. Moreover, the findings of this survey will contribute firstly to the theology of this church but also benefit scholarship in general.

In the process of the investigation of the Seventh-day Adventist worldview we will pay special attention to those Bible texts that seem popular among Seventh-day Adventist scholars. It is from these texts that we have selected a passage for exegesis, as is indicated in Chapter 1.

### **2.3.2 Who are the Seventh-day Adventists?**

Seventh-day Adventists form a religious community of believers who now exceed 16 million and are scattered around the globe. It is no exaggeration to say that their presence has now infiltrated almost every country in the world. There are at least two features that distinguish them from many believers in other traditions, and these are their observance of Saturday as the Sabbath day and their belief in the imminent return of Christ [Vyhmeister 2000:1].

Adventists can be described as a conservative Protestant body of evangelical Christians who have their faith rooted in God's Word and centered on Jesus, with special emphasis on His death on the cross, his ministry in the sanctuary in heaven, and his soon coming to claim His followers. Seventh-day Adventists are known in many places for their vigorous promotion of health and mission activities [Vyhmeister 2000:1].

What follows is the contribution of this group of people to the theme of this dissertation, namely, interrelatedness between humankind and nature.

### **2.3.3 Challenges in the discussion of Seventh-day Adventist theological thought.**

Before discussing the contribution of Seventh-day Adventists towards the issue at hand, it is necessary to highlight several challenges.

#### **2.3.3.1 Rarity of contributions from Old Testament scholars on the subject.**

Contributions from Seventh-day Adventist scholars in the field of Old Testament towards the specific theme of interrelatedness between humankind and nature are rare. Instead, the attention of these scholars has been engaged in issues such as evolution versus creation and other contentious topics on nature. Consequently, the input of these scholars, which is so critical in this study since it is based on the Old Testament, is deficient. To fill this vacuum this study will lean more on the input of scholars of other disciplines.

In fact, whether or not the availability of articles from the Old Testament scholars is in abundance, the contribution from scholars of other disciplines would still need to be incorporated in the discussion, for these scholars have made a significant contribution. To ignore this invaluable input would surely disadvantage this study.

#### **2.3.3.2 The absence of the perspective of Black South African Scholars in Seventh-day Adventist theological thought.**

Along with the rarity of the contribution of the Old Testament scholars that has been noted above, there is also the absence of the perspective of the South African Black theologians on

this theme. In fact, these theologians have written nothing on nature, let alone its relationship with humankind. The result of this is that the position of the so-called Seventh-day Adventist worldview is liable to be lopsided or, specifically, reflect a strong western bent.

#### **2.3.3.3 The precariousness of the categorization of scholars on the basis of a single article that a scholar has written.**

To categorize each scholar who has made a contribution to our theme on the basis of a single article that he or she has written is precarious and can be misleading. This is because in an article a scholar may seem to hold a particular position on a subject depending on the audience to which he or she writes and the purpose of his or her article, whereas in another article the same scholar may seem to have shifted from the former position because of the different audience to which he or she now writes and the purpose for which he or she writes.

However, despite the precariousness of our endeavor, it is absolutely necessary for us to consider these articles (even if they are the only ones available) and establish the differences therein, for it is these differences that inform our exercise of categorizing these scholars.

#### **2.3.3.4 The available articles being allusions to the theme rather than directly addressing it.**

The last challenge is that much of the information from which we seek answers to our quest consists of allusions to the relationship between humankind and nature rather than the direct

dealing with this subject. As stated before, albeit much has been written by Seventh-day Adventist scholars in the realm of nature, yet a great number of these articles actually address issues such as Evolution versus Creation, the Creation week, etc., and not specifically our theme.

However, it is difficult to discuss issues that are related to creation without touching nature and humankind, for the two entities form the brick and mortar of creation. We therefore feel comfortable in using these articles for our purpose.

#### **2.3.4 Tendencies revealed by Seventh-day Adventist theological thought on the interrelatedness between humankind and nature.**

A study of Seventh-day Adventist theological thought on the relationship between humankind and nature reveals three tendencies, which are represented by three groups of scholars. The first group tends to emphasize both unity and separation between humankind and nature at the same time. They see the two as united in some respects and separate in others. The second group leans more to separating the two to the extent of recognizing very little unity or no unity at all. The third one stresses unity, and allows no or little room for any distinction between them.

##### **2.3.4.1 Humankind and nature are united in some respects and separate in others.**

A large number of Seventh-day Adventist scholars emphasize unity and separation between humankind and nature at the same time. We start with the aspect of unity between the two



entities. The unity between the two entities has been identified by these scholars in a number of areas. The earliest scholar on our list to point out this unity is JN Loughborough, an Adventist church leader. In an article which addressed the subject of New Heaven and New Earth, which appeared in 1853, Loughborough identified the area of unity between the two entities as being the fact that the sin of humankind could impact nature. According to Loughborough, the results of the sin of humankind caused the earth, which was supposed to be fruitful, to be barren. The whole creation was reduced from a state of having pure and uninterrupted happiness to that of death [1853:198].

The view that human sin has an influence on nature was strengthened by Ellen G. White (perhaps the most prolific writer and one who seems to have written more than any other writer on nature in this Church). White did not only support Loughborough's view of humanity influencing nature by its sin, but she saw this influence as a mutual experience. In other words, to her it was not only nature that suffered from the results of the actions of humankind, but nature too replied negatively to humanity because of these actions. "So long as Adam remained loyal to Heaven, all nature was in subjection to him. But when he rebelled against the divine law, the inferior creatures were in rebellion against his rule", White said [1958:59].

According to Loughborough, the sin problem is not the only thing that unites humankind and nature, but the anticipated re-creation of humankind too will be shared between them. "With sinful man the creation has sunk into a state of suffering; and with redeemed man it is destined to rise into a state of felicity and glory", Loughborough observed [1853:198]. In this view he enjoys the support of White who also sees the two entities sharing the same

destiny for she says, “All what was lost by sin is restored. Not only man but the earth is redeemed, to be the eternal abode” [1958:342].

However, Dr Frank L Marsh, a biologist, who agrees with Loughborough and White in the view of relationship between humankind and nature, seems to differ with both these writers in their view of nature sharing the same blissful destiny with humankind. According to him, only human beings will benefit from eternal bliss because they were formed in God’s image and were saved from eternal death by their loving Creator [1947:7-9].

The constitution of humankind and nature has been seen as the second area of unity between them. Marsh pointed to the bodily members of a human as being identical with those of an ape. Even the chemical substances that are formed in the human body are frequently duplicated in the bodies of the lower forms [1947:7-9].

Lawrence Maxwell, the editor of the *Signs of the Times*, extended this constitutional affinity between the two entities beyond just their physical aspect. He observed even emotional and intellectual similarities between them [1973:34]. In fact, Adventist scholars highlight so many things in common between the two entities, such as both owing their existence to the same Creator who used the same material and blueprint [Johns 1981:18-20], having been made on the same day, eating the same food [Weiss 1979:54-62], their lives being maintained in the same way [Marsh 1947:7-9], and, both sharing a common principle of life and principle of death [Ekkens 1994:5, 6].

According to Harwood A Lockton, Chairman of the Humanities Department at Avondale College in Australia, this unity between the two entities extends beyond just humankind and nature to include God as well. Lockton called this a Tripartite relationship. As a result of the unity of these three parties, the disruption caused by the fall of humanity affected the harmony that existed among them. Thus the redemption of humanity not only brings harmony between humankind and God, but also inspires good stewardship – the caring manner in which humanity relates to nature [Lockton 1992:5-7].

It is not only humankind that has been seen to influence nature, but nature too has this influence on humanity. White refers to some of the areas where nature affects humankind. She says that nature has a tongue that speaks of God's love and glory to humankind without ceasing [1948:333]. It quickens the mind and refines and elevates character [1952:112]. It is one of God's healing means [1948:112]. Finally, nature has the ability to lead the soul away from sin and worldly attraction, and toward purity, peace, and God [1941:24].

As mentioned above, these writers did not only observe things that unite humankind and nature, but they also identified characteristics that differentiate between the two entities.

The first person to allude to this difference, although he did not expatiate on it, is Loughborough [1853:198]. This theme of difference between the two entities was to be picked up later, and received full attention from writers such as Ekkens, Marsh, Maxwell, Weiss and White.

The main area of distinction between humankind and nature that the majority of these writers agreed upon is the image of God that humanity possesses that is missing in other creatures [Ekkens 1994:5, 6; Marsh 1947:7-9; Maxwell 1973:34; White 1955:7].

This image has exalted humankind high above nature. Adam, who represented the human race, though formed from the dust, “was the son of God”. Human beings were a new order [White 1955:7]. Being made in God’s image is also the source of human desire to worship. Such a desire is unique to humanity. It does not exist in the animal world [Maxwell 1973:34].

Besides, before creating humankind God went into consultation with other members of the Godhead about this act, which He did not do when He created other beings [Weiss 1979:54-62]. The creation of humankind was personal in that God moulded the first person with His hand and breathed into his nostrils, while He merely spoke the rest of creation into existence [Marsh 1947:7-9]. In fact, even the very name *soul*, which has been used for living things, refers exclusively to humanity [Ekkens 1994:5, 6].

In the endeavor to distinguish humanity from nature, perhaps, there is none among all the Seventh-day Adventist scholars who has gone into the minute details of what constitutes this difference to the extent that Marsh did. He highlighted this difference in a number of areas, such as the human brain being twice as large as that of the highest ape; the human hand having distinctive thumb and fingers; human having beauty of features, mobile countenance, with changing expressions of the eyes and the flashing light of the smile; humans being the

only ones that are conscious of time and space; and humans being the only ones resembling God in having a peculiar, holy character when linked with Him [1947:7-9].

In conclusion, it must be reiterated that a number of Seventh-day Adventist scholars have maintained a good balance in the relationship of humankind and nature, in that they highlighted not only the unity of the two entities but saw also a distinct difference between them.

However, as it was mentioned above, this unity and separation at the same time between humankind and nature is not the only view that prevails among the scholars of this church. Rather, there are scholars who seem to emphasize unity between humankind and nature almost to the exclusion of any separation between them. Below we address this view.

#### **2.3.4.2 Scholars with a tendency to emphasize oneness between humankind and nature.**

As indicated at the beginning of this section of this study, the views of Seventh-day Adventist scholars suggest different tendencies. In addition to the tendency that we have just discussed above, which attempted to keep a balance in the relationship between humanity and nature by downplaying the similarities between them to the extent of excluding their differences, the view now under discussion tended to emphasize oneness of the two entities. This oneness seems to have been so stressed that the differences have been pushed out of sight, at least as far as the articles seem to suggest.

There are at least four scholars who fall in this category: MC. Wilcox a church leader, DT. Hawley, a pastor in the Nebraska Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, J. Greig, Associate Professor of Religion at Andrews University, and MT. Terreros, a lecturer in theology at Colombia Adventist University.

The oneness identified by these scholars can be described as constitutional and relational. The earliest scholar in the group whose article appeared in the *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, entitled “The Life-Unity of All”, is Wilcox. In that article Wilcox upheld the unity of humankind and nature as shown in his exegesis of Romans 8:18-25. The results of this exegesis suggest that Wilcox held a relational type of unity between the two entities. In fact, this unity could already be noticed in the title of the article [1925:11-12].

This oneness, as Wilcox pointed out, led humanity and nature to impact each other. For example, human sin directly affected nature. The pain that this sin brought about could be felt everywhere [1925:11-12].

The relational oneness of humankind and nature is picked up again by Greig, whose article promoted human stewardship of nature. Indeed, the oneness upheld by this article can be described as relational, for even though Greig alluded to the constitutional aspect of the relationship between humankind and nature by stating that humanity is the apex of the created order, yet the thrust of this article is on how humankind should relate to nature [1990:30].

However, unlike Wilcox who addressed the impact of the oneness that binds the two entities, in his article Greig, apart from charging humankind to care for nature, is himself silent about that impact [1990:16-18].

It is Terreros who not only echoed the relational view of oneness espoused by Wilcox but also pointed out that in this oneness humankind and nature impact each other. For example, the results of the sin of humankind have also affected nature. Actually, not only do the two entities share their plight of sin, but nature will also share in the redemption of humanity. In view of this, Terreros encouraged humankind to exercise care over the natural world, to carry out thoughtful cultivation of the ground, and show proper care of natural elements. He even discouraged what he called useless killing of animals [1996:142-61].

#### **2.3.4.3 Scholars with a tendency to emphasize the separation as well as difference between humankind and nature.**

In addition to the two tendencies that were discussed above there is also a third one which emphasizes separation and difference between humankind and nature, and plays down any similarity that seems to prevail between these two entities.

Just as the two tendencies that were discussed previously were represented by a good number of scholars, this tendency is also supported by several scholars. Some of the prominent names among these are WJ. Bryan; HW. Clark, Professor Emeritus of Biology at Pacific Union college; PG Damsteegt, currently lecturing at Andrews University; GF Hasel, Professor of Old Testament at Andrews University; HW Jones; G. Oosterwal, Professor of

Missions and Comparative Religions at Andrews University; and William Shea, an Old Testament scholar, currently an Associate Director of the Biblical Research Institute. The primary element that marks this difference between humankind and nature is the image of God. This image is pointed out as being borne by humans alone and missing in all other created beings [Clark 1965:10-11]. While human beings were created in the image of God, other creatures were created after their own species [Damsteegt 1988:80].

In his definition of this image Shea traced it back to the Hebrew word צֶלֶם which is used in Genesis 1:27. According to Shea, this צֶלֶם referred to gods that were used in the ancient world and which were placed in the temples. The significant difference between the Bible and the ancient world regarding the manner in which these gods were made is that, while in the Bible it was human beings that were made in the image of God, in the ancient world it was these gods that were made in the image of human beings [Shea 2000:423-424].

Concerning the essence of this image, Shea suggests that it consists of the physical, rational and emotional aspects of human beings [2000:423-424]. Even morally or spiritually, human beings originally resembled God for they were pure and sinless [2000:423-424].

While Clark, who also addressed the image of God in humanity, did not rule out the possibility that it might refer to the bodily aspect of a human being (as Shea pointed out) he himself did not see that as the main consideration. Instead, to him the essence of the divinity is activity; that is the ability to think and to act, to execute, to design, and to carry out the designs. According to Clark, this is where humans differ from other creatures.



While humans are capable of doing all the things enumerated above, nonhuman creatures cannot [Clark 1965:10-11].

Other scholars identified this difference between the two entities in areas other than the image of God. For example, William J. Bryan recognized this difference between humankind and nature in that human beings are made a little lower than angels. To them God has opened possibilities that are not available to other creatures [1921:1].

In response to the Babylonian myths whose thrust was to degrade human beings and minimize their dignity, the late Gerhard F. Hasel, who was an Associate Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Theology at Andrews University, restored dignity to humankind by showing that human beings are the pinnacle of God's creation and are the only ones blessed [1971:81-90].

It seems that the fact that humans are created in God's image, and that they have been made rulers over nonhuman creatures, are two key factors that make these humans different from the rest of the natural world [Hasel 1971:90; Damsteegt 1988:80].

In conclusion, as shown above, Seventh-day Adventist scholars did not necessarily show uniformity in terms of their interpretation of the relationship between humankind and nature. There were three tendencies that emerged from the articles of these scholars: some emphasize both oneness of and separation between the two entities, while other scholars either emphasized oneness with no separation of the two entities, or separation with no oneness between them.

Certain areas of oneness between these two entities such as bodily features and other characteristics were highlighted. Features in human beings that constitute difference between them and nature were also identified. These were God's image, human dominion over nature, and others.

Concerning the issues of equality and partnership which were also some of the elements associated with the theme of this dissertation as suggested in Chapter I, these scholars consistently placed nature below humankind, and none of these scholars made mention of a partnership.

One of the notable facts about the articles of the Seventh-day Adventist scholars that were used for this dissertation is that even though these scholars came from various places in the world, thus representing a variety of cultures and backgrounds, the theological tendencies that these scholars demonstrated were not necessarily attributable to these differences. In other words, the background of these scholars did not seem to have influenced their worldviews of interrelatedness between humankind and nature.

## **2.4 The selection of Psalm 8 that seems popular in the articles of Seventh-day Adventists.**

Our survey of the worldviews of Seventh-day Adventist scholars has revealed that Psalm 8 is among the Biblical texts that seem popular among Seventh-day Adventists in connection with the relationship of humankind and nature. Besides Psalm 8, other texts use include Genesis 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8; Exodus 20:8-11; Leviticus 25:2-4; and Deuteronomy 5:4.

The seeming popularity of these texts is manifested in their frequent occurrences in many articles. In these articles these texts are frequently used in relation to issues such as Sin and Punishment [Jemison 1959:280; La Rondelle 1975:50; Fowler 2000:233]; the Sabbath [Haynes 1928:14; Jemison 1959:280; Froom 1971:202; Damsteegt 1981:144]; and the New Earth [La Rondelle 1975:50; Seton 1981:54]. All these are connected to the relationship of humankind and nature.

These findings underscore the importance of Psalm 8 which has already been pointed out in Chapter 1 and which has led to the selection of this psalm for our exegesis.

What follows in the next chapter is a study of the Xhosa worldview of the relationship of humankind and nature.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **A XHOSA PERSPECTIVE OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMANKIND AND NATURE.**

#### **3.1 Introduction.**

This chapter addresses the Xhosa perspective of relationship between humankind and nature. The issues that are to be considered here are the identity of Xhosa people; the reason for the inclusion of their perspective in this dissertation; the nature of this perspective; the sources of information about it; and finally its critique.

#### **3.2 The inclusion of the Xhosa perspective in this study.**

The inclusion of a Xhosa perspective in this dissertation is crucial because of my connection with the Xhosa people. I am a Xhosa, was born, grew up, and worked among these people for many years in both urban and rural areas. My deep roots in this culture are bound to influence my worldview. This also means that my Xhosa worldview will influence my interpretation of Psalm 8, which has been selected for our exegesis. However, it must be said that the effects of this background have not been received without scrutiny and sifting. This fact will be demonstrated in the section where this Xhosa worldview will be critiqued.

### **3.3 The Xhosas.**

Xhosas are a branch of the Nguni language family whose origin is thought to have been around the north east of Central Africa. From this area they moved southward through Natal and settled near the Drakensberg Mountains [Soga 1931: 6]. The hiving off of the sons of the ruling chief to found their own chiefdoms, as well as the hunting for fresh pastures were some of the main reasons for expansion [Hodgson 1982: 6]. From those beginnings Xhosas have today reached several millions and occupy an area currently known as the Eastern and the Western Cape.

The language spoken by this group of people is called isi-Xhosa. Soga describes it as “practically non-absorbent, incorporating only a word here and there in extremely limited numbers from neighbouring tribes, its purity being practically unaffected, so that it remains in the unadulterated form in which it was found when Europeans first came into the country” [Soga 1931: vii].

Soga’s observation of the resilience of the Xhosa language could be true up until about the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. However, it is presently challenged because pressures such as the mixing of Xhosas with people of other languages at universities and in the work place have altered this language, so that to talk of an unadulterated isi-Xhosa today would not be correct [Mcetywa 1998:24].

With regard to religion, Xhosas have always had a conception of a Supreme Being, whom they called *uMdali* the One who creates. Soga said this is a Being “who is the creator of all

things, who controls and governs all, and as such the rewarder of good and the punisher of evil” [Soga 1931: 149-150]. It seems that Xhosas believed that the place of abode of *uMdali* is somewhere in the sky for they pointed at the sky with their fist, and never with a finger, so as not to put the finger in his eye [Pauw 1975: 76]. [A further discussion on the Xhosa religion will be taken up again when we deal with the link between the Xhosas and the supernatural world].

### **3.4 The preference of the Xhosa Tribe to other groups.**

This dissertation prefers to examine the Xhosa worldview for at least two reasons. First I am more conversant with the Xhosa culture than with any other. In fact, I have first hand information of many experiences that I discuss in this dissertation for, as I mentioned earlier, I am not only myself a Xhosa but I also grew up and worked among Xhosas in both urban and rural settings.

Second, Xhosas form a significant part of the South African people. In fact, they are the second largest group, the largest being Zulus. Therefore, from the Christian perspective, their theology with respect to the relationship between humankind and nature is bound to influence a large number of South Africans.

### **3.5 Sources of information used.**

There are, at least, two main sources that have been consulted for information about the Xhosa worldview of relationship between humankind and nature. The first source is

literature that has been written specifically on the culture of the Xhosas. The second source is the literature that has been written about the African people on the continent in general. The reason for the inclusion of other African cultures in talking about the Xhosa worldview is that there are such strong similarities between these cultures and that of the Xhosas that much of what is said about these cultures can also be said about Xhosas. Referring to the similarities existing among these African groups, Mbiti observed, “A great number of beliefs and practices are to be found in any African society. ...Studies of African religious beliefs and practices show that there are probably more similarities than differences” [Mbiti 1977:3, 103].

### **3.6 Xhosas do not all share a common perspective of relationship between humankind and nature.**

Not every Xhosa shares the perspective of relationship between humankind and nature as presented in this section. This perspective maintains that there is a close connection between humankind and nature, which manifests itself in a number of facets in the Xhosa culture. Nature here encompasses animals, birds, vegetation, rivers, sites, and many other objects that constitute the environment to humankind.

There are several factors that may attribute for this variance of the Xhosa perspective of the relationship between humankind and nature. This dissertation will present only four of them.

### **3.6.1 Xhosa urbanization.**

Many Xhosas, both young and old, have moved away from rural settings where there is ample opportunity to interact with nature. Pressures like searching for employment, pursuing educational opportunities, and a host of other reasons have driven these people away from their places of birth where there is scarcity of these things to where these people see prospects of realizing their dreams [Mcetywa 1998: 24; Hammond-Tooke 1962: 8]. They now reside in urban areas where exposure to nature has either diminished or is completely nonexistent. As shown above, when talking of nature we refer to animals, birds, vegetation, sites, and other created objects, which comprise the human environment. Many of these natural features do not exist in urban areas to the same extent as they do in the rural areas. Or, where they exist, they do not become part of humankind as such. Consequently, many experiences that are presented in this dissertation and which reveal the interaction between humankind and nature in the rural situation are not appreciated in the urban life.

### **3.6.2 The influence of learning.**

Learning is another factor that has modified the perspective of many Xhosas, causing them to look critically at some of the elements of the Xhosa perspective that is presented here. Referring to the cultural shifts that have been caused by education among Xhosas, Hammond-Tooke observed, “There has been a steady and progressive modification of the indigenous culture, not only through the introduction of material goods by the trader, but by the more fundamental changes brought about by education” [1962: 8].



This education seems to have provided modern Xhosas with the skill of critiquing their life experiences. Consequently, some beliefs, which have been taken to be factual by traditional Xhosas in the past are now subjected to scientific scrutiny by modern Xhosas. In some cases, the conclusion that is made at the end of this exercise is that those beliefs have no scientific basis, but are mere superstitions.

### **3.6.3 The influence of foreign cultures.**

A meeting with cultures other than that of their own has also had a telling effect on the Xhosas. These are cultures that do not share some of the prevailing Xhosa beliefs. Instead, these cultures frown upon these Xhosa beliefs, seeing them as queer and questionable. This attitude influences some Xhosas, so that they also begin to look askance at traditional beliefs.

### **3.6.4 The influence of Christianity.**

The introduction of Christian religion to Xhosas has also helped to widen the gap between the Xhosas who accept and practice Xhosa beliefs and those who do not identify themselves with these beliefs. Very much like the influence of education on Xhosas, the Christian influence has also encouraged Xhosas to look critically at the beliefs that heretofore were accepted without question [Hammond-Tooke 1962: 8]. Many of those beliefs are now labeled as pagan and are associated with darkness. For anyone to still pursue them after he or she has confessed Christianity, is regarded as a denial of faith by some Christian extremists.

### 3.6.5 The absence of “Nature” in Xhosa worldview.

It is important to know that the word “nature” and the sense in which it is used in English namely, to designate animals, birds, vegetation, and all other created objects, excluding humankind, does not seem to exist in Xhosa. The Xhosa word that is used to refer to all these things, humankind included, is *indalo* – creation or created objects [Hodgson 1982: 43]. The absence of this “nature” has been noted by Professor Kwesi Dickson to be a phenomenon existing in many other African languages. “In both the Old Testament and the African languages best known to me there is no word corresponding to Nature. The Old Testament speaks of Creation, a word whose connotations are quite different from those usually associated with the word Nature, for the word ‘creation’ implies that the world has been created; ... Similarly in the Akan (Ghana) language, for example, the equivalent of what is meant by Nature is *Nyame n’abodze* (God’s created things)” Dickson observed [1984: 161].

It seems that the absence of the term “nature”, whose effect is to lump together all other created objects and set them over against humankind, has not been an oversight in these African languages. Rather, it is reflective of African conception of reality namely, that humankind and nature are one. In fact, at least two scholars who have written about the Xhosa culture, as well as the other African groups, noted this. Hodgson in her *The God of the Xhosa* says “No distinction can be made between sacred and secular, between natural and supernatural, for Nature, Man and the Unseen are inseparably involved in one another in a total community” [Hodgson 1982: 17].

This oneness of the two entities is confirmed by Dickson for he observed, “The African believes himself to share kinship with Nature, and relates to it in a way that is basically alien to the Westerner. ...Man is in concert with Nature; not only is he subject to Nature’s fierce wrath, but also he is sustained by Nature’s bounty and shares kinship with the things that make up Nature” [Dickson 1984: 161].

However, despite this explanation, the writer is going to adopt “nature” in this dissertation to designate all other created objects, besides humankind, since it is generally used for this purpose.

### **3.7 The multifaceted interrelatedness between humankind and nature.**

The Xhosa perspective reveals that the relationship between humankind and nature is multifaceted. This dissertation highlights six of these facets.

#### **3.7.1 Nature represents a status symbol.**

To Xhosas some natural objects are looked upon as representing a status symbol. This is true of animals, birds, and even a few inanimate objects.

Starting with animals, probably the most favourable animals that are used for this purpose are cattle. Several scholars who have done studies on Xhosas have noted this phenomenon [Soga 1931: 389; Hammond Tooke 1962: 14-15; Becker 1974: 91; Pauw 1975: 326, 327].

Selling or slaughtering of cattle is not a common practice among Xhosas for it is never their intention to part with their cattle [Hammond-Tooke 1962:14-15]. Observing the tenacity of Bhacas [another branch of Xhosa] to cattle, Pauw said of them, “The herds grazing on the hills and mountain tops bear witness to their [the Bhacas] pride in cattle and a man’s wealth is gauged, not by land or the magnificence of his kraal, but by the number of his stock” [Pauw 1975: 326, 327]. The value of these cattle is not placed on their quality but on their quantity. Certainly, this kind of relationship with these animals is queer to an outsider to this culture. In fact, it has been described by B. Tyrrel & P. Jurgens in their *African Heritage* as being deeper than that of a Westerner. “He [African] regards those [cattle] in a much more profound way than Western man does his particular status symbols”, Tyrrel and Jurgens say [1983: 205, 206].

Besides the cattle, an elephant, providing Xhosa chiefs with ivory armband [*umxhaka*], and a leopard, from which a special robe [*umnweba*] is made for these chiefs, are valued greatly among Xhosas [Magubane 1998:207].

There are also birds, which represent a status symbol among Xhosas. Indwe, a blue crane, is among these birds. Its feathers are worn on the heads of warriors who fight with gallantry during wartime [Maclaren 1963:34].

Certain trees too, have this special importance attached to them. *Iminqayi* – sticks that are made out of black wood are given to initiates ( *abakhwetha* ) when they finish their period of seclusion. At that time these initiates are presented with these sticks that have been

blackened and symbolize peace. These initiates are now regarded to have acquired ability to settle disputes within the group with words rather than blows [Magubane 1998:15].

This stick or rod is still carried by Xhosas when consulting a diviner or herbalist [Magubane 1998: 15].

### **3.7.2 Nature is used for naming time.**

Perhaps, there are few occasions where Xhosas display their intense involvement in nature as when they name their time. From the seasons and months of the year, the division of each day, and even the counting of a person's age, all of these are named after natural symbols.

#### **3.7.2.1 The naming of annual Seasons.**

Starting with the annual seasons, Xhosas have four seasons, and the naming of each of them is designed to describe the condition in nature at that particular time in the year. The first season is spring and this is *I-ntlakohlaza* [the head of greenness] which points to the time when the grass sprouts [Soga 1931: 417-418].

Summer – *I-hlobo* – [which means sameness] is the second one and this sameness refers to the time when all is of the same kind, or when all is green [Soga 1931: 417-418].

After Summer comes Autumn – *U-Kwindla*. *UKwindla* is a Xhosa noun coming from the verb – *ukudla* (to eat). The eating referred to here is that of harvest. Therefore, *UKwindla* is the season of harvest [Soga 1931: 417-418].

The last season is Winter – *ubu-Sika* [time of cutting]. This is the season of cutting corn because it has ripened [Soga 1931: 417-418].

### **3.7.2.2 The naming of months.**

The Xhosa calendar has twelve months, and the naming of each of these months is associated with a particular natural object. That object may be a plant, a tree, or even a heavenly star. January – *Eyomqungu* – [of the tall grass] is the first month. The grass that is referred to here is Tambooki grass that ripens at this time.

January is followed by February – *Eyomdumba* – [of the pod] which points to the time when pod-bearing trees are carrying pods.

After February comes March – *Eyokwindla* [harvest month], the time of the earliest ripening of the grain.

The fourth month is April – *Utshazimpuzi* [when the pumpkins become frost bitten].

May – *uCanzibe* [Saturn] is the time when this star makes its appearance.

After May follows June – *Isilimela* [The Pleiades]. This month falls at the time when this constellation appears. *Isilimela* is derived from *ukulima*, meaning to hoe in seed, dig, plow, and cultivate. “The first appearance of the Pleiades above the eastern horizon at dawn each year signaled the start of the cultivation season, hence the name the ‘digging for’ stars. This coincided with the month of June, named *eyesilimela*, and heralded the beginning of the Xhosa new year”, Hodgson observes [Hodgson 1982: 53].

June is followed by July – *Eyentlaba* – [aloe month]. June falls in time when the aloe bursts into flower.

August follows July, and August – *Eyethupha* – [month of buds] is the month when trees begin to bud.

September – *Eyomsintsi* [Coral Tree] is the eighth month. This is when an *Erythrina caffra* [a leguminous plant bearing clusters of blood-red flowers] blossoms.

September is followed by October – *Eyedwara* – [Rag-wort, small variety] a month when rag-wort, is in blossom.

After October comes November – *Eyenkanga* – [Rag-wort, large variety] the time when the large rag-wort is in bloom.

The last month is December – *Eyomnga* – [Mimosa month] and this is the time when this acacia is in full bloom [Soga 1931: 417-418].

### 3.7.2.3 The naming of each section of the day.

Even the naming of the divisions of the day has an association with nature. Heavenly bodies such as the sun and the stars, and animals and birds, are some of the natural objects that are used for this purpose. The first example is the timing of the early hours of the morning. Xhosas observed cocks crowing in the early hours of the morning. They noticed a pattern that this crowing seems to follow namely, three stages. Each of these stages was given a name – *ukukhala kweenkukhu zokuqala* [the first cock crowing], *ukukhala kweenkukhu zesibini* [the second cock crowing] and *ukukhala kweenkukhu zokugqibela* [the final cock crowing]. These three stages were used to mark each time section of the morning. In the days gone by, when watches and clocks were not yet in use among Xhosas, the knowledge of the sequence of this cock crowing and carefully listening to it was critical because this phenomenon was about the only instrument the Xhosas had at their disposal to determine the morning time.

As it has been said, animals too are employed by Xhosas to indicate time. For example, Xhosas speak of *Xa kumpondo zankomo* [when it is still so dark that you see cattle only by their horns]. This is early morning before dawn. Midday is referred to as *ukubuya kweemazi* [When the cows come home from the grazing field for milking]. Dusk is called *uratya lwemivundla* [The time when rabbits begin to move around in search for food].

Alternatively, instead of using animals, Xhosas use heavenly bodies like the sun and the stars to designate the same time portions of the day, as mentioned above. Some of these designations are: first, *ukuphuma*



*kwekhwezi* [The appearance of the Pleiades]. That refers to early morning. Second, *ukuthi chapha kwelanga* [The rising of the sun]. This is the time when the day begins. Third, *ukutshona kwelanga* [The setting of the sun], referring to sunset.

Surely, this free and extensive use of nature symbols in the Xhosa language expressions testifies to the intensive involvement of Xhosas in nature.

#### **3.7.2.4. The means of reckoning age.**

Nature has also been used by Xhosas in reckoning age. The *Isilimela* [Pleiades] has been the factor around which a person's span of life is built. This *Isilimela* [Pleiades] appears around the month of June, which to Xhosas in the past "heralded the beginning of the Xhosa new year" [Hodgson 1982: 53]. Each yearly appearance meant that another year was added to a person's age.

Not only was the *Isilimela* used for the age reckoning, but it was employed by Xhosa men to determine the years of manhood. Hodgson has also remarked on this: "*Isilimela* also symbolized new life in man for the time of the coming-out ceremony of the *abakwetha* (circumcision) school was determined by the appearance of this constellation. It has always been the custom for Xhosa men to count their years of manhood from this date" [Hodgson 1982: 53].

### **3.7.3 Nature is the basis for subsistence.**

Without nature Xhosas would never subsist. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that nature is the very life of rural Xhosas. From what goes into the mouth to what is put on the body, and even what covers many other areas of their day-to-day living, for all of these Xhosa are totally indebted to nature.

Starting with their food, if one looks through the list of items that are given by Soga, which constitute Xhosa diet, and all of which come from the soil [Soga 1931: 398-405], one concurs with Hammond-Tooke who said “It is upon agriculture and the vegetable products of the environment that the tribesman depends for the greater part of his diet” [1962:14]. In fact, Hammond-Tooke has seen agriculture as being so vital among these people that it constitutes one of “the resources of the environment that make (this) society possible” [Hammond-Tooke 1962: 14].

The soil products are not the sole basis for Xhosa subsistence; but animal products are just as indispensable. Referring to the indispensability of cattle to Africans in general, Dr Peter Becker observed “they are a prolific source of supply, yielding their master’s requirements for fresh and curdled milk; hides for thongs, bags, mats drums and items of clothing; dung for fuel, and when mixed with clay, for making floors and plastering walls. And more, much more ...” [Becker 1974: 91]. Much of what is said about cattle, is also true of sheep and goats.

With regard to the consumption of these animals [which in fact, was not the main purpose of keeping them, as it will be shown later in this dissertation], Xhosas did not depend only on

the cattle, sheep, goats, and other domestic animals. Instead, hunting wild game was another avenue, and this activity was comparatively more popular then than what it is today. Presenting the variety of this game, Hammond-Tooke says “Generally speaking, however, the main game to be found today is bushbuck, wildcat (*iimbodla*), hares, dassies (rock rabbits), porcupines, (especially in the forests), jackals and a large variety of birds ranging from warblers and seedeaters to the Cape vulture” [Hammond-Tooke 1962:24, 25].

#### **3.7.4 Nature is an agent for charming.**

The practice of charming among Xhosas is probably one of the highest forms of demonstrating their extreme dependence on nature to help them against external forces that are aimed at hurting them. On the other hand, through charming, they also display a unique gift of harnessing the power that they believe that nature possesses, and exploit that power to achieve their own ends. Nature too, in this interaction, shows its superiority to Xhosas in being capable to keep them continuously in fear of their lives in its presence.

Below we will try to show some phenomena in which Xhosas interact with nature, using nature to hurt, or protecting themselves against hurt. These natural objects are animals, birds, and even natural objects that are considered by an outsider to this culture as inanimate.

### **3.7.4.1 Nature has life and power.**

First of all, unlike Galilei who saw nature not as a living organism but as inert matter [Collingwood 1964: 103], to Xhosas natural objects have life and power. In this worldview they are in harmony with other African groups who also believe nature to have power that may be revered as well as harnessed to man's benefit" [Pobee 1979:48].

#### **3.7.4.1.1 Animals**

Xhosas have several animals (some of which are really mystical) that are associated with magic power. Perhaps, a baboon is one of the most popular and common among them, albeit, none among Xhosas would dare admit that he possesses a baboon, for the ownership of this animal is kept very secret. In fact, a mere mention that one owns a baboon is an insult. Consequently, an owner of a baboon is said to ride it in the night and carry out his nefarious work when no one is awake to witness it [Soga 1931: 196].

A crocodile is also thought to possess this magic power over human beings in that it is believed to be able to call anyone into the river for destruction [Soga 1931:197]. However, unlike the baboon, which is owned and does its dirty work as an expression of loyalty to its master, a crocodile, on the other hand, works independently of human influence.

Perhaps, among all the animals employed by Xhosas for charming there is none as fearful as *I-Canti* or *uMamlambo* [Mother of the river]. While its existence has been known to Xhosas for a long time, yet no one has been able to give the identity of *I-Canti*. The nature of its

identity has not been a puzzle to Xhosas only, but even to scholars like Joan A Broster and Hammond-Tooke who have studied the Xhosa culture. Soga admitted that “Indeed, there is more variety in the delineation of this fabulous water-sprite than in the description of any other thing known or unknown. Its appearance and qualities depend entirely on, and are subject to, individual fancy”, [Soga 1931: 193].

At least two things about *I-Canti* or *uMamlambo* that Xhosas agree upon are the everchanging form that this animal has, and the high level of danger that it poses to anyone who happens to spot it. Commenting on the unique ability of this animal to change itself, Broster says that *uMamlambo* has great powers of metamorphosis and magic. It may appear in any form and on occasion display an ever-changing variety of beautiful colours and forms, interchanging as in a kaleidoscope. One minute *umamlambo* lies as a burnished brass bracelet sparkling in the water, and before it can be touched it changes into a dazzling water container and then in a flash into a burst of sunbeams” [Broster 1981: 59].

Because of the deadliness of this animal, Xhosas have devised measures to help anyone who happens to be its victim. Some of the things that he needs to do soon after the incident are to avoid the following: talking to anyone, drinking sour milk, and sitting around the fire. To violate these prohibitions might result in sudden death [Soga 1931: 193].

#### **3.7.4.1.2 Birds.**

It is not animals only that are involved in the charming practice, but certain birds also, feature prominently as either being charming agents or their presence being an evil omen.

A Barn owl *isikhova* is the first of these and is perhaps worse than any other in causing awe among Xhosas. Its mere mournful cry as it passes the house in its night flight is sufficient to bring with it the fear of impending disaster [Soga 1931: 201].

A Bateleur eagle *ingqanga* is the second bird whose appearance is not regarded as a sign of luck among Xhosas. Instead, these people see it as a harbinger of misfortune. Being associated with men, Xhosas call it *intaka yamadoda* [a bird of men].

When a Bateleur eagle appears to any army that is heading to war and makes its cry, fear creeps into the soldiers, for to them this act predicts calamity. At times this bird circles the army, and if in the process it drops its excrement and that excrement falls on any soldier, that soldier is regarded as being defiled and therefore likely to bring calamity on the rest of the army. For the safety of everyone he must be removed from battle. To keep him there is to invite disaster not only to him but also to the army as a whole. After his removal, the soldier himself should then seek for a diviner to dispel any misfortune that might befall him.

Not only is the war eagle believed by Xhosas to predict calamity to the army by its cry and by dropping its excrement on the soldiers, but it is also said to feed on those men who die in the battle by plucking out their eyes and committing other uncanny excesses on the dead [Soga 1931: 200].

The third bird that Xhosas associated with evil omen is the African Pied Wagtail (*umvetshane*). The wagtail, which is always found with cattle, does not pose danger by its

presence, but it is its death that causes fear. A boy who kills it erroneously - for it tends to be boys who are a threat to birds – will offer prayer to God or to the spirits of the ancestors for clemency that the misfortune that comes because of the killing of this bird should pass him by. This misfortune is poverty, for this bird is associated with poverty [Soga 1931:201].

The last bird to be associated with misfortune is the *Umdlampuku* or Blackshouldered Kite, Common Kite or Hawk. It is in the eating rather than in the killing of this bird that actually brings calamity upon the victim. This misfortune entails baldness that the eater suffers as a result of the eating of this bird.

It must be mentioned though, that while there are a number of birds that are not seen as friendly by Xhosas, as we have seen, there are also a few that have endeared themselves to this group of people. *Inqilo*, an Orange Throated Long-Claw bird is one of these. Whenever this bird appears, it is regarded as foretelling luck.

#### **3.7.4.1.3 Natural forces.**

It is not only animals and birds that are regarded by Xhosas as being evil omens, or their appearance being taken upon as predicting luck, or even being manipulated in charming, but there are also forces of nature that are seen in the same light. Rain is one of these forces. While Xhosas recognize that rain can work independently of humankind, yet they also believe that humans can also manipulate it both to bless as well as to harm. They also have the capacity to dispel or facilitate its arrival [Mcetywa 1998:93].

Xhosas have had special people in their society who possessed the power and the gift of magic for controlling rain. These were called rainmakers. Some scholars identify the chief of the tribes as being formerly one of these rainmakers [Hammond-Tooke 1962: 177; Pauw 1975: 62]. But Soga presents him as a mere facilitator, suggesting that the real rainmakers were different people called rain doctors *amagqirha emvula* [Soga 1931:176-7]. How a rain doctor possesses such power, no one knows.

The practice of rainmaking is not limited to Xhosas but phenomena of many African tribes [Mbiti 1977: 181]. Mbiti describes these rainmakers as being well versed in weather matters, and many of them spend a long time acquiring their knowledge. “This they obtain from other rainmakers, from observing the sky, from studying the habits of trees, insects and animals, from a study of astronomy and the use of common sense” [Mbiti 1977: 181].

According to Mcetywa, a Xhosa rainmaker has certain characteristics by which he is recognized in the community. A few of these are that he is very popular in the society, upright, not a drunkard or womanizer, and, so avoids coming close to water, that even his speech refrains from mentioning the word “water” [Mcetywa 1998:93].

Some of the activities that are involved in the calling of rain are that the rainmaker dances, as he makes his invocations, with a group of people assisting him by singing without clapping hands [Soga 1931: 176]. Mbiti mentions the use of sacred objects like rain stones, and the burning of rain leaves in other parts of Africa [1977: 181]. Along with all of these there is prayer to God and ancestors as a recognition that they are the actual rain providers [Mcetywa 1998: 93]. If the rain does not fall after the rite has been performed, it is believed



that the cause might be that the ancestors are angry, and something has to be done to appease them [Mcetywa 1998:93].

Thunderstorms and lightning form another natural force that Xhosas believe can be controlled by humans. First, the lightning is caused by the lightning bird – *impundulu*. The thunder is the noise that this bird makes as it claps its wings. It is said that the lightning bird can be sent by a witch to strike an enemy or his or her property. At times this strike is interpreted as a mere act on the part of this bird of amusement [Hammond-Tooke 1962: 282; Elliott 1970: 111; Mcetywa 1998: 92]. When lightning strikes, a witchdoctor is called to prevent this lightning from reappearing [Soga 1931: 213].

Lightning and thunder are also associated with God, who is said to be angry and expresses that anger through thunder [Hodgson 1982: 42].

The relationship between humankind and nature here does not only reveal the power that humanity has over nature, but that same power is also wielded by nature over humankind. This is attested in the fear of nature that humans display and the efforts they make to protect themselves against nature.

### **3.7.5 Nature is a link between a Xhosa and the Supernatural world.**

Nature is a link between Xhosas and the supernatural world. This supernatural world is where God and the ancestors are.

### 3.7.5.1. God and the Xhosa Tribe.

Starting with God, Xhosas have always believed in the presence of a Supreme Being, whom they called *UMdali* (Creator) or *UMenzi* (Maker).

This is the Being who created every thing, and continues to control, govern and sustain it [Soga 1931: 150; Elliott 1970: 126; Hodgson 1982: 44].

The alternate names like *uQamata* and *uThixo* – which seem to have overtaken *uMenzi* and *uMdali* – are thought to be alien and have been borrowed from the Khoi or San people [Soga 1931: 150; Hodgson 1982: 44].

God has always been understood to dwell above in heaven so that in the past Xhosas would never point with a finger at the sky, to avoid putting that finger into the eye of God. Instead, they used a fist as a sign of respect to point heavenward [Pauw 1975: 76].

As to when exactly Xhosas came to embrace the idea of the existence of God, is an issue of much debate. Hodgson in her *The God of the Xhosa* discusses the various views on this issue. These views divide scholars into two camps namely, those who say that the notion of the Supreme Being among Xhosas was introduced by missionaries, and those who maintain that the Xhosas had this knowledge even before meeting with missionaries [1982: 44]. Soga, a Xhosa historian, suggests that it is the name *uThixo* that dates back to the advent of missionaries, which implies that the concept of the existence of God itself might have been there before those missionaries [Soga 1931: 150].

It is very interesting to hear Lukas Rapaledi, an eighty-three-year-old man who met Dr Peter Becker in 1970, talking about the origin of the knowledge of God among the Sothos, who are neighbors of Xhosas and share many cultural similarities. “My old father and his father ... knew about God, the *Molimo*, long before the coming of the missionaries, God the Supreme Being who created all things ...”, said the old man.

“They knew that although man was too puny ever to see God with his eyes, he could both see and hear the spirit of God with his soul. For by living with the glory of Nature he lives side by side with the workings of God”, he continued [Becker 1974: 102 -103].

It is possible therefore that Xhosas too knew God even before missionaries arrived and introduced Him to them.

#### **3.7.5.2 Ancestors and the Xhosa Tribe.**

With regard to the relationship between a Xhosa and the ancestor, the two are inseparable. The ancestors are generally deceased fathers and grandfathers. However, it is not only to males that this status is given; a few females have also become ancestors [Hammond-Tooke 1962: 50]. Furthermore a person does not always have to wait for death before becoming an ancestor. There have been cases where people became ancestors while they were still alive [Hammond-Tooke 1962: 53]. Not everyone who dies necessarily becomes an ancestor. Hammond-Tooke proposes some of the factors that lead to Xhosas making a person an ancestor after death: the personality of a person; the impression that he leaves in the minds of others; and the age are some of these determinants [1962: 234].

Although the veneration applicable to God and the ancestors corresponds at a certain level, God and the ancestors are still venerated at different levels. For this reason we will keep them apart in our discussion.

A study of the Xhosa worldview of the relationship between humankind and nature reveals three important underlying principles that influence the thinking, behavior, and practices of Xhosas relating to nature. These principles are as follows: holism of humankind with nature, the continuity of life, and the communality of existence. Before we demonstrate how these principles govern the interaction between Xhosas and God and the ancestors, and nature, we will briefly examine each of them.

#### **3.7.5.2.1 Holism of humankind and nature.**

Starting with holism of humankind and nature, unlike the general worldview of the West that tends to make a separation between humankind and other created objects by calling them “nature” and set them over against humankind, Xhosas on the other hand, lack such a word or its equivalence. Consequently, they do not have this separation between humankind and nature. Instead, the two entities are seen as holistic. However, within this holism there is a difference not only between humankind and nature, but, even among the natural objects themselves. In other words, a human being is a human being and not a tree or animal [although the latter sometimes happens, as we will show later]. Also a human being does not come from a tree or animal, as in certain forms of evolution. Similarly, a tree is a tree

and not an animal, and does not come from an animal. Instead, each of these entities retains its identity within the holism.

In essence, this holism is an interconnection between humankind and nature, such that the two can hardly exist without each other. Joan A Broster, commenting on this relationship between these two entities, observed, “In their oneness with nature they [Xhosa] have developed a holism in which plants and animals are linked with the ancestral spirits in a religious way. The amaXhosa believe that, in the miracle of creation, each forms an incomplete part of an indivisible whole and this bond is inviolate” [1981: 25].

This observation was confirmed by Hodgson, albeit, she extended this holism beyond humankind and nature, and included even what she called the “Unseen”, assuming that this is God. “No distinction can be made between sacred and secular, between natural and supernatural, for Nature, Man and the Unseen are inseparably involved in one another in a total community” Hodgson said [1982: 17].

This holism of humankind and nature seems to be shared by other African tribes, for Dickson, referring to the Africans in general, said in his *Theology in Africa*, “African believes himself to share kinship with Nature, and relates to it in a way that is basically alien to the Westerner. Man is in concert with Nature; not only is he subject to Nature’s fierce wrath, but also he is sustained by Nature’s bounty and shares kinship with the things that make up Nature [1984: 161].

### **3.7.5.2.2 Continuity of life.**

Before discussing the continuity of life - one of the principles that influence Xhosas in their relationship with other created beings - it is important to point out that Xhosas differ from Westerners in their identification of created objects that possess life and those that do not possess it. For example, some of the created objects that a Westerner would see as inanimate a Xhosa sees as having ability to exercise power. To them there is life in the rivers, mountains, hills, kraals, trees, and other objects, all of which a Westerner would probably describe as lifeless. It is this worldview that causes them to relate to these things quite differently from the manner in which an outsider would relate to them.

This outlook of life does not seem to be unique with Xhosas, but is shared with other fellow Africans, as observed by Pobee: “Nature is believed to have power and even spirits. Thus an Akan may offer an egg or mashed yam to a tree. Behind the offering stands their theory of Reality: behind the visible substance or things lie essences or powers which constitute their true nature. Nature has power which may be revered as well as harnessed to a man’s benefit” [1979: 48].

Mbiti also confirming this African perspective of reality, says “Nature in the broadest sense of the word is not an empty impersonal object or phenomenon: it is filled with religious significance. Man gives life even where natural objects and phenomena have no biological life” [1977: 56-57].

Both writers seem to give the same reason why Africans look at life this way, and that is, to them, the visible and concrete objects possess what cannot be seen. To Pobee this invisible world is constituted of “essences or powers” which is the true nature of what is visible. Mbiti says that what is behind these visible things is God Himself. “God is seen in and behind these objects and phenomena: they are His creation, they manifest Him, they symbolize His being and presence. The invisible world is symbolized or manifested by these visible and concrete phenomena and objects of nature. The invisible world presses hard upon the visible: one speaks of the other, and African peoples ‘see’ that invisible universe when they look at, hear or feel the visible and tangible world” Mbiti says [1977: 56-57].

It is striking to note that the reason given by these two scholars, that nature links Africans with God, is also applicable to Xhosas albeit, to them this may not necessarily be God, but the ancestors. [This fact will be demonstrated below when we deal with nature linking humankind with the Supernatural world].

To Xhosas life continues. They do not look upon death to mean the annihilation of the personality [Hammond-Tooke 1962: 226]. Soga also confirms that “The soul lives on, continuity of the family is preserved, the spirits of the departed have direct communication with the living: the living minister to the wants of those who ‘have gone before,’ and the latter punish the shortcomings of their friends in the flesh, by sending sickness or death upon them. These, in their turn, offer sacrifices to appease the offended spirits” [1931: 318].

While they mourn and grieve like all bereaved people, yet they do not do so without hope, because their loved ones are still with them even though they are not visible, and may at times even appear as animals [Pauw 1975: 131; Broster 1981: 24].

### **3.7.5.2.3 Communality of life.**

With regard to the communality of life, it must be said that Xhosas have a strong sense of belonging. Each Xhosa feels a part of a great community that embraces not only members who are living, but even those who have already departed.

The sense of belonging to a community has been seen by Pobee, as governing Africans in general. “Whereas Descartes spoke for Western man when he said *cogito ergo sum* – I think, therefore I exist – Akan man’s ontology is *cognatus ergo sum* – I am related by blood, therefore I exist, or I exist because I belong to a family” [1979:49].

Xhosas demonstrate this strong spirit of belonging in different facets of their life experience. One of them is the wide network of relatives that Xhosas have. Almost everybody is related to everybody else in a clan, and these relationships, however distant they may be, are taken very seriously. In fact, they are a strong factor that determines exogamy [Hammond-Tooke 1962: 97].

It is not only people who are alive who form a part of this network, but even those who have already died are very much a part of the community. They share in its space, property and food, and even at death, they are laid in the midst of friends and relatives.



As shown above, next to the serious regarding of relationships, sharing is another way in which Xhosas display their sense of communality. This spirit of sharing is shown in a number of aspects in their life experience. First, it is seen in their attitude towards space. For example, a plot of land that is occupied by a Xhosa is not regarded as his or hers, but belongs to the community. Each member is a mere trustee. This community does not consist only of those who are alive – and this applies to many African groups - but includes even those who are departed. The land mystically binds both those living and the dead loved ones together [Soga: 1931: 383; Mbiti 1977: 27].

This land is in the form of huts, kraals, and graves all of which, as said earlier on, do not only belong to the living people but are shared with the dead loved ones. As for the graves, the living Xhosas, as well as African people in general, concur with Mbiti when he says “People walk on the graves of their forefathers, and it is feared that anything separating them from these ties will bring disaster to family and community life”. In fact, in the light of this, he maintains that to remove an African by force from his land is an act of injustice that no foreigner can easily understand. Even when these Africans voluntarily move away from their land in the countryside because of employment and other reasons, “there is a fundamental severing of ties which cannot be repaired and which often creates psychological problems with which urban life cannot as yet cope” [1977: 27].

The link that binds a Xhosa with the land occupied by his or her community (living and the dead) forces the relatives to transport a person when he or she dies from a place where they died or worked to be buried at his or her place of birth. At times this travelling involves

hundreds of kilometers and great expense, yet all the inconvenience and the expense involved in this exercise sink into oblivion when compared with the significance of burying the deceased among his or her own people.

It is not only the space that Xhosas share with their community, but property is another area where communality is expressed. Talking about the Xhosa understanding of ownership of cattle in this context of communality, Tyrrel and Jurgens observed, “The meaning of cattle lies deep in their hearts and intertwined with roots of traditional history. A man’s cattle are not his alone; they are the communal property of his lineage, of the living and the dead, and belong to him only as a ‘sacred trust’ of his lineage ancestor” [1983: 205-206].

In addition to the sharing of space and property, the handling of food is another area where Xhosas demonstrate their sense of belonging to others. Food is never monopolized. Xhosas are no monopolists. What each of them has they do not regard as theirs alone. It must benefit everyone who may be around him or her. Soga, a Xhosa who grew up in this culture, observed, “While each family owns its private food supply, yet the spirit of community of property, the inherent kindness and loyalty to one another, which is a natural trait of this people, compels one and all to regard what they have as held in trust for the community” [Soga 1931: 385].

This spirit of sharing is taught to children while they are still of tender age. When a child secures some luxury, the first thing for him or her to do is to think of sharing it with companions. Not only is this value of sharing communicated to these children verbally, but they also see it exemplified in the family as “at meal times the male members of the family

sit round a common dish; the female members sit round and eat from another; the friend, relative or stranger who stops in passing at a kraal thus engaged, is free to share the meal. Where there is food none go hungry. There are, therefore, no indigent poor; no beggars in the sense in which these terms are understood in Europe” [Soga 1931: 385].

The sharing of food, too, is not confined to the living, but the departed ones are also remembered. In the past this sharing with them was carried out through special feasts that were conducted periodically. One of these important occasions was the First Fruits festival [Hammond-Tooke 1962: 174], albeit this is no longer practiced in many parts of the Eastern Cape, the area of greater concentration of Xhosas [Pauw 1975: 172].

This ceremony occurred in summer when the crop was ripening. Before any family could partake of the new grain, pumpkin, beans, sugar cane, or any other land produce, a portion of it had to be taken to the Great Place. The Great Place was where the ceremony was inaugurated. The chief, who was looked upon as the religious leader of the tribe, was the one to declare the liberty to eat of the harvest. From then on the families would begin partaking of the harvest.

In this ceremony “the tribal ancestors are called to share in the feasting, and the rite is in part a thanksgiving to them for the safe arrival of the harvest” [Hammond-Tooke 1962: 193].

Their partaking of the ceremony took various forms. According to Becker, this would be “a basket of grain or a gourd of beer left overnight beside the lands; a cake or two of wild honey placed on the threshing floor, or the offering of a specially slaughtered goat

accompanied by a recital of prayers, the chanting of incantations and the singing of sacred songs” [Becker 1974: 98].

It is these three principles – the oneness of life; the continuity of life; and, the communal spirit – that underlie the Xhosas perspective of life and their relationship with the supernatural world. Let us keep this in mind as we now enter the discussion of how nature links the Xhosas with the supernatural world.

### **3.7.5.3 Agents that link nature with the supernatural world.**

Certain created objects are very important to Xhosas for they link them with the supernatural world. Here we refer to animals, trees, and sites.

#### **3.7.5.3.1 Animals.**

The first kind of animals that make this connection is cattle. Referring to the link that cattle make between Xhosas and the ancestors, Tyrrel and Jurgens remarked, “A man’s cattle are holy objects and with them he has a very special, mystic link, for it is through them that he has perhaps his most meaningful communion with the ancestors” [Tyrrel & Jurgens 1983: 205 – 206].

Cattle achieve a number of things in their capacity as a link between Xhosas and their ancestors. First, they are the medium through which a Xhosa consults the ancestors [Pauw 1975: 26]. Second, soon after the funeral an ox is slaughtered in order to “accompany the

dead” [Pauw 1975:100]. The reason of accompanying is not always clear, whether it is for the strengthening of the dead one as he or she enters this unknown phase of his or her life, or it is to accompany the soul of this dead person as it is wondering about. The latter is more likely, for Xhosas believe that when someone dies, his or her soul wonders about until a certain ritual called *ukubuyisa* (bringing back) is conducted. This ritual is to ensure that that soul has been given its place among the spirits. As long as the ritual has not yet been completed, that soul will continue to wonder and be a menace to the living people. To conduct this ritual, Xhosas slaughter another ox. This event is very important among these people so that the relatives are attracted from very far to attend it [Broster 1981: 20].

Third, there is the ritual killing of a cow called *inkomo yobulunga* (a cow of correctness) through which to appeal to the ancestors when there is sickness or danger facing the family. The sick one puts hair from the brush of this animal around his or her neck like a necklace [Broster 1981: 24-25].

Finally, through the slaughtered cattle, Xhosas appease the anger of the ancestor, invoke or solicit their aid, and give thanks for the favors rendered by these ancestors [Pauw 1975: 172]. Much of what is said about the role of the cattle in linking Xhosas with their ancestors can also be said about the goats [Pauw 1975: 155].

The role of these domestic animals, especially cattle, in linking Xhosas with the supernatural world also has parallels found in other African customs for many of the practices involving cattle and the ancestors are the same as those practiced by the Xhosas [Mbiti 1977: 150].

In addition to domestic animals, there are also wild animals such as mystical elephants, leopards, snakes, and even spiders, which are called “family animals” and through which Xhosa ancestors are believed to appear. These totems are held in special regard and relied upon for safeguarding the health and the prosperity of the family. They are said to be patrolling around the huts, and keeping away any danger that may be approaching [Broster 1981: 24; Elliott 1970: 126].

Among these animals, there is a snake called *Majola* which is probably one of the most significant familiars especially among the *Mpondomise* clan [Pauw 1975: 160]. It is said to appear immediately after the birth of a child. At its appearance, the women of the clan cover themselves, or show their respect to it in another form. No one is allowed to kill it for to do that might invite calamity upon the one who perpetrates that act.

Another snake that represents the ancestors is the black mamba. This is associated with the *Mditshwa* clan, which is situated around Bizana area. When this snake visits the family, it is accorded special respect, which is shown by the slaughtering of an animal and the making of beer. At the death of a chief of this clan this snake is believed to appear and plays a role in the appointing of the site where the grave should be dug. This location is generally in the forest, for that is where these chiefs are buried.

### 3.7.5.3.2. Vegetation.

The animals discussed above are just one section of the created objects that Xhosas look upon as a link between them and their forefathers. Vegetation also provides this connection. Referring to the role played by vegetation in this regard, Broster observed: "... the tribal people are greatly influenced by their natural surroundings, and animals and plants play a supporting role in the ancestor cult. Every head of a family is familiar with a large number of plants and their usage in safeguarding the health and prosperity of his family, fields and animals. In addition, each family or clan has its own plant, known as *iyeza lasekhaya or ubulawu* (medicine of the home), which is dedicated to the ancestor spirits" [Broster 1981: 24]. Except for the father of the home, no one else knows about this medicine. It is only when this head of the household gets too old that he decides to disclose it to the eldest son or his wife [Broster 1981: 24].

In fact, the role of vegetation as *amayeza* (medicines) is significant among the Xhosas for these medicines are used to achieve many objectives. Some of these objectives are the harming of one's enemies, or warding off harm or evil from those enemies [Molema 1963:165]; defendants softening the hearts of the judges in court; women and children using them for purification and protection; and people in general using them against lightning [Hammond-Tooke 1974: 339-342]. The use of plants is so common among these people that "There is practically no plant whose bark, twigs, roots, bulbs or leaves are not at one time or another pressed into service as an ingredient in some magical concoction [Hammond-Tooke 1974:341].

The First Fruits festival was another occasion in the past that enabled Xhosas to demonstrate their link with and dependence on the Supernatural powers namely, God and the ancestors. At that time these people did not only express their thanks for the safe arrival of the harvest but they also invited the ancestors to participate in the products of the soil [Hammond-Tooke 1962: 193].

Their partaking of the ceremony took various forms. According to Becker, this would be “a basket of grain or a gourd of beer left overnight beside the land; a cake or two of wild honey placed on the threshing floor, or the offering of a specially slaughtered goat accompanied by a recital of prayers, the chanting of incantations and the singing of sacred songs” [Becker 1974: 98].

Apart from these isolated vegetation manifestations of the connection between Xhosas and God and the ancestors, it must be understood that the whole natural environment draws Xhosas to the Supernatural Being whom they call *UMdali* (Creator), *UMenzi* (Maker) and *UMninintozonke* (The Owner of everything) [Hodgson 1982: 44]. All of these designations underscore the Xhosas’ knowledge of who God is and that knowledge has come through creation.

The impression of God that Xhosas receive from observing creation is not different from that which other Africans receive from the same source, albeit, many times Xhosas mix God with the ancestors. “According to African peoples, man lives in a religious universe, so that natural phenomena and objects are intimately associated with God. They not only originate from Him but also bear witness to Him, Man’s understanding of God is strongly coloured by



the universe of which man is himself a part. Man sees in the universe not only the imprint but the reflection of God; and whether that image is marred or clearly focused and defined, it is nevertheless an image of God, the only image known in traditional African societies” [Mbiti 1977: 48].

#### **3.7.5.3.3 Sites.**

Certain sites have been places of meetings between Xhosas and God and the ancestors. Huts, kraals, rivers, mountains and *isivivane* are some of these special places. Huts and kraals are the two places closest to the members of the family and thus perhaps ensured a close and frequent interaction between them and the ancestors [Pauw 1975: 130]. Kraals are particularly honoured to Xhosas because these places are not only where the sacrifices to these ancestors are made [Elliott 1970: 30-31], but when these ancestors depart from this life, kraals become places of their burial. Apart from that, there are many other customs that are carried out in these kraals [Pauw 1975: 130].

The centrality of the kraal in the life of Xhosas engenders a sense of respect from all members of the household. This respect for a kraal is expected especially from a newly married woman so that for her to enter the cattle kraal is one of the taboos among Xhosas [Mcetywa 1998: 49]; Hammond Tooke 1956: 73]. In fact, Soga extends this taboo to cover all women. The reason behind it is that it is said that women will render the cattle kraal unclean and cause the cattle to become weak in the knees. This idea emanates from the fact that when women are subject to their menstrual period, they defile anything with which they

come into contact with, especially if they are not covered. This prohibition seems to be lax to the old women who have passed this stage [Soga 1931: 354].

#### **3.7.5.3.3.1. Rivers and pools.**

Rivers and pools have been identified by Xhosas as venues where they come into contact with the ancestors. These places are regarded as the homes of the ancestors. The connection between the rivers and the forefathers possibly has its origin from one of the myths that associate the origin of Xhosas with waters. While some people came out of the waters to the surface, others remained in them and are called today *abantu bomlambo* (people of the river) [Hodgson 1982: 18, 23].

Stories that identify rivers as homes of the ancestors are in abundance in Africa. “The majority of peoples hold that the spirits dwell in the woods, bush, forest, rivers, mountains or just around the villages” [Mbiti 1977: 80].

The meetings between Xhosas and their ancestors at these places take various forms. At times, the ancestors themselves are the ones who take the initiative by inviting or calling whoever they need, especially if they intend to initiate the person as a diviner. A good example is that of Chief Gcaleka, one of the Xhosa chiefs, who was called into the *Ngxingxolo* stream in the neighbourhood of Mooiplaas Location in the East London district. Part of this process was for this chief to go down into the pool and converse with the ancestors. Later, when he died he descended into this pool and disappeared. Consequently, its water would not be drunk or used for washing by the local people. As a recognition of

the presence of these ancestors, those who cross this stream would greet these spirits with the salutation “Zinkosi”, meaning “Chiefs”.

In addition to this greeting, *amaTshawe*, one of the Xhosa clans in the area, would drive cattle to this place. The first ox to enter the stream and urinate would be regarded as the one that is called by the ancestors. That ox would be slaughtered and special parts of the meat would be thrown into the water as an offering to the ancestors. The performance of this rite would ensure the increase of cattle and the prosperity of the people [Hammond-Tooke 1956: 65].

Another form of meeting would be for the people themselves to go and share communal rituals like the First Fruits Ceremony with the ancestors. “At intervals, usually of several years at a time, representatives of the clan (of Bacas, another Xhosa group) take offerings of meat and seed of traditional crops to the river, and deposit them in or beside the river. In the latter case the river is supposed to rise at night to take the offerings if these are acceptable to the ancestors” [Pauw 1975: 172].

Rivers were places that commanded such respect from Xhosas that they did or avoided doing certain things in the past as they approached them. A traveler would be seen throwing a stone into the water before he or she crossed. The purpose of this was to alert the dwellers of the river of his or her approach so that they may hide away.

As part of this respect to their ancestors, women were prohibited from “lifting their dresses when crossing a river, so as not to expose their legs to the ancestors in that river” [Pauw 1975: 196].

It is possible that Xhosa travelers too expected favours from these rivers as they crossed them, very much like other African groups who believed that there were blessings derived from these rivers. Regarding this belief, Mbiti observed that travelers made sacrifice and offerings “when they come to a river, by taking some of the water, squirting on the ground and offering the water to God with a prayer that He would lead, shepherd, and prosper them” [1977: 60].

Other sites of meetings between Xhosas and God or the ancestors are mountains and hills. Xhosas retire to these places for prayer during drought or other calamities in the society [Hodgson 1982: 77]. *Intaba kaNdoda* in the King Williamstown area is one of these sacred mountains.

Perhaps, some elements of what is said about the belief of Gikuyu people in Kenya with regard to their mountains could also be said about Xhosas. Gikuyu people maintain that “although God lives in the sky, He comes to earth from time to time to inspect, bestow blessings and mete out punishment. When He comes He rests on Mt Kenya and four other sacred mountains” [Mbiti 1977:47]. It sounds as if Xhosas too believe that God is closer to them on these mountains than He is when they appeal to Him at other places.

However, it must be mentioned that these mountains and hills are not regarded by Xhosas as an object of worship. Instead, they merely provide a concrete manifestation of God’s being and His presence. One might identify with Mbiti as he suggests that the closeness of these mountains to the sky, in a sense, might cause them to be easily associated with God. “They

are on earth what the sun and, to a less extent, the moon and stars are in heaven. They are points of contact, drawing together, not only people in a given region, but also men, spiritual beings and God” [1977: 55].

#### **3.7.5.3.3.2. Isivivane**

The last one of these sites is *isivivane*. This is a heap of stones that would be found at the roadside, near river fords and on mountaintops. These stones were thrown to this place by travelers who passed that road on their journey. Each individual traveler would throw a stone and along with that act pray for blessings and safety during his or her travels. In this act he or she would be identifying with those who had passed along that road before him or her and also adding strength to their request for traveling blessings and protection [McLaren 1963: 177; Hodgson 1982:83].

The origin of *isivivane* is not very clear, even though some scholars trace it to the Khoi who passed it on to the Xhosas [Hodgson1982: 83]. What is clear about *isivivane* is that it is an old practice that was carried out in many places judging from the widespread evidence. Perhaps, one might have a better appreciation of the age of this custom if one considers Broster’s account of it, which she found in her grandfather’s diary, dated back to 1880.

According to Broster, her grandfather was in the company of an unnamed Xhosa gentleman, and both of them were heading for Cala to buy cattle. They came to a pile of stones, at which the Xhosa gentleman reverently took his own stone and added it to the pile that was

before them. He followed this act with these words, “*UNkulunkulu maze asigcine kolu hambo lwethu*” meaning, “May the Great One take care of us on our journey”.

Curiously, Broster’s grandfather sought for the meaning of this act and the reason for it. He was told that those stones had been accumulated by individual travellers who had passed that road. According to the Xhosa custom, they [Broster’s grandfather and the Xhosa gentleman] too were expected to add their stones. The diary mentioned two other sites of *isivivane* [Broster 1967: 67].

While huts, kraals, and rivers seem to be associated more with the ancestors, it appears that *isivivane* was associated more with God, to whom the traveler appealed for protection and care on his or her journey.

This practice of throwing stones on a *isivivane* later found its way into the speech of the Xhosas, so that it is common today to hear a speaker saying “*Makhe nam ndiphos’ilitye esivivaneni*” [let me also throw a stone onto the *isivivane*] meaning that “I must also contribute to what is being discussed, or what everybody else is wrestling with”.

### **3.8 A critique of the Xhosa perspective of relationship between humankind and nature.**

The critique of the Xhosa perspective of the relationship of humankind and nature is intended to highlight its strengths and weakness. It is those strengths that we intend to incorporate into the alternative model that we plan to propose in chapter 5. In this critique

the Bible will be our point of departure. It is those elements that appear to harmonize with the Bible that will be incorporated into our proposed model.

This process is crucial in order to ensure that the worldview of this dissertation demonstrated in the interpretation of the Biblical texts in Chapter 1 does not only reflect a Xhosa perspective, but also a Xhosa-Christian perspective, since I am a Xhosa Christian, and the Bible is the foundation of my faith and beliefs.

As shown above, the Xhosa worldview emphasizes holism of humankind and nature. The main indication of this holism has been the absence of the word “nature”, which has the effect of dividing humankind and other created objects and putting them into two different camps, making humankind stand one side while everything else that is not human stands on the other side. Xhosas, instead, have brought humanity and every other created object under one umbrella called *indalo* “creation” or “created beings” or “created objects”, and within this unity each segment is called by its generic name (animals, vegetation, humankind, etc.) to recognize its difference from the others.

As far as the absence of the word “nature” is concerned, the Xhosa worldview is in harmony with the Old Testament, for this word does not exist there either. Instead, every thing is called by its name [Simkins 1994:11]. [How this absence of “nature” influences the interrelatedness between humankind and nature will be addressed when the writer discusses the suggested worldview below].

The second thing way in which the Xhosa worldview differs from the Western worldviews is its elevation of nature. To Xhosas, nature is definitely more than just a thing to be used, a machine to be manipulated, and a stage on which humankind are to act. Xhosas accord dignity to natural elements. To the Xhosas, some of these natural elements represent status symbols, a source of existence, animals representing protection and blessing, and even facilitating a communication between Xhosas with the Supernatural powers. On the other hand, Xhosas too respond to this kindness of nature in various forms. This interaction emphasizes a high level of dependence of Xhosas on nature.

There is a parallel between the Xhosa's high regard of nature and the Biblical teaching about the attitude that humanity should have toward nature. While, on one hand, Xhosas' high regard for nature is motivated by fear for punishment for their misbehaviour, on the other hand, this high regard of nature is a natural response to their dependence on it. The Pentateuch is replete with statements that express Divine injunction as to how humankind is to relate to nature. Humans are charged to cultivate and keep the soil [Genesis 2:16]. They are to treat animals with kindness and care. A sheep, a donkey, an ass, an ox, or any other animal that is straying must be taken back to safety. The one that has been found having fallen on the road must be helped to stand on its feet [Deuteronomy 22: 1-4].

The third point to note in this worldview, and which is critical for this dissertation because it is one of the characteristics that this dissertation seeks to highlight, is the strong interaction existing between Xhosas and other created objects. This is witnessed in their use of some animals as status symbols, for charming purposes, and as facilitators of communication between these people and the ancestors. Through animals these ancestors are believed to



move around to assure people of protection and prosperity, as well as to pronounce punishment. On the other hand, Xhosas too present sacrifices and perform other rituals to thank or appease the Supernatural Beings through nature.

Some birds fly around in order to communicate luck or calamity. Vegetation is used for subsistence and medicine. Some forces of nature such as thunderstorms and lightning are feared, but also manipulated by Xhosa people to harm enemies, or protect themselves against those enemies. Some heavenly bodies are used to designate times and seasons. There are special sites such as huts and kraals where these Xhosas stay, and mountains and rivers that surround them, where these people sense the presence of their dead ones. This interaction has made the world of humankind and nature so close that the two entities seem to have been locked in one room, as it were.

However, there are also concerns raised by this worldview. These are the humanization of the nonhuman created beings, the representation of the ancestors by animals, and the rituals that are presented to animals, which are regarded as representing the deceased human beings.

Before we briefly address each of these elements, it is necessary to establish and address the basic issue that underlies all of these concerns. This issue seems to be the Xhosa interpretation of the state of the dead. The humanization of animals, the representation of ancestors by animals, and the rituals that are presented by Xhosas to ancestors through animals, are all directed at their departed loved ones. The question therefore is whether

these deceased loved ones are indeed conscious to see, understand and appreciate what is done for them. To put this question differently, what does it mean to be dead?

To answer the question at hand, we refer to the definitions of death given by three dictionaries: death is a “permanent ending of all life in a person, animal or plant” [Webster’s New World Dictionary]; “the permanent end of life of a person or animal, when the heart stops beating and all the other functions of the body stop too” [Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary]; and “The end of the life of a person or organism” [The New Oxford Dictionary of English].

The first important characteristic of death that is common in all of these definitions is that death is the end of life. At death the deceased ceases to live, meaning that his or her participation in the activities that are designed for the living ones becomes suspended.

This concept of death seems to be supported by many Old Testament passages that address the issue of death. These passages see the dead as having their breath perished (Ps 146:4); being incapable of knowing, doing, and participating in anything that occurs under the sun (Eccl 10:5, 6; 9:10); and even being incapable of praising God (Ps 115:17).

Certainly, this view is in conflict with that of Xhosas in which the participation of the dead is seen to be continual. The dead person still interacts with the living ones as before.

Secondly, according to the *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary*, one of the dictionaries mentioned, the brain which is the seat of judgment in a person, and through

which one can carry out protection and other acts for others, or mete out punishments to them, and, in return, receive and appreciate sacrifices from those he or she serves, must now cease to function.

As we have shown above, the Old Testament texts that we quoted are in agreement with this understanding, while the Xhosa worldview differs with it. On the contrary, to Xhosas the dead ones continue to provide protection and mete out punishment to their loved ones, and, in return, receive sacrifices from them.

In short, these Dictionaries set a gulf between the living and the dead, so that neither of the two parties is able to interface with the other. Therefore, any hope for interaction between them can occur only when the dead have been restored to life. Some texts in both the Old Testament and the New Testament recognize the gulf between death and life. They indicate that the gulf will remain until the reinstatement of the dead to life, which these Scriptures term resurrection [Daniel 12: 2; 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18].

However, to Xhosas the gulf between the living and the dead is not as wide as the Scriptures put it. Indeed, the dead are removed from the living for they can no longer be seen by the naked eye. But, in a sense, they are still with their living loved ones because they still interface with them. Obviously, this concept of death impacts on the Xhosa understanding of the resurrection. Resurrection to them is likely to have a different meaning from that of the Scriptures, since, in essence, there is no difference between death and life.

Three concerns have been raised regarding the Xhosa worldview of the relationship of humankind and nature. These are the humanization of animals, the representation of ancestors by animals, and the performing rituals for the ancestors through animals. Starting with the humanization of the animals, the Biblical record states that each created object falls under a particular order. More than five times the writer of the creation record in Genesis declared that God created each created object after its kind or species [Genesis 1: 11, 12, 21, 24, 25]. It is likely therefore that God would prefer that each of these creatures function and fulfill the purpose of its existence within its order. For example, if it is the human beings who are to protect or punish their households, then they are the ones to do so, and not elephants, leopards and snakes. The animals have their own designated roles in God's act of creation. Therefore, there is no need to humanize animals in order for them to do some service to humankind.

The second concern is the representation of ancestors by animals. In this context, this process means the death of the ancestors in the flesh and their reappearance in the form of other creatures [Hammond-Tooke 1974:33]. This suggests an interchange of status between humankind and animals. This representation is definitely in conflict with the creation record presented in Genesis 1 and 2, where humankind was created in God's image and likeness, and not coming from animals. Animals also were created according to their species, and were not derived from human beings. In this passage there is total denial of any interchange of status between humans and animals.

Regarding the last concern of performing rituals for the ancestors through animals, it has already been pointed out that animals cannot take the place of human beings. Therefore to

offer sacrifices to them, either thanking them for the favours that they are said to have rendered, or appeasing them for anger and punishment that they have shown is senseless. These sacrifices are rendered to creatures for something they have not done and are incapable of doing.

In conclusion, the critique of the Xhosa worldview of the relationship of humankind and nature reveals elements that harmonize with some Biblical texts, as well as, those that are in conflict with them.

As indicated above, it is the elements that are in harmony with the Biblical worldview that will be adopted in this dissertation. Following are these three elements: the first one is the holism of humankind and nature that recognizes no word *nature* or its equivalence, with its effect of dividing the two entities.

The second element is the assigning to nature such dignity as to elevate it from being merely something to be used, machine to be manipulated, and a stage on which humankind are to act. Instead, there is an expression of a strong dependence of humankind on nature.

The third element is a strong interaction between humankind and nature, which results in both of the two entities impacting strongly on the other with its actions or results of those actions.

The incorporation of the three elements above will occur in Chapter 5 where the proposed alternative model of the interrelatedness of humankind and nature will be addressed.

However, before the incorporation of these elements into the model of worldview that we are to propose in that chapter, we need to exegete Psalm 8 in order to validate our claim that this passage suggests oneness or holism of partnership of humankind and nature which leads to this humankind and nature influencing each other with their actions or results of those actions. The reason for starting with this exegesis is that the model we are to propose will be based on the results of this exegesis.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE EXEGESIS AND INTERPRETATION OF PSALM 8.

#### 4.1 Introduction.

In Chapter 1 we cited Psalm 8, which we said would be exegeted in order to verify what it seems to be communicating namely, the relationship between humankind and nature. We pointed out there that this relationship suggests oneness and partnership between the two entities, and this oneness and partnership leads to interrelatedness between humankind and nature. In this chapter we address this relationship.

The motivation for preference of this Biblical passage above several other passages that seem to bear the same message was presented. Reasons such as its importance in the Hebrew Hymnal [Terrien 2003:132], the prominent role it has played in the issue of the relationship between humankind and nature according to Brueggemann [1984:36], its representing of the Priestly Theology and Wisdom Theology, both of which hold a high position in the Old Testament [Francisco 1977:62; Jensen 1978:106], and its popularity among Adventists, were proposed.

Despite the popularity of this passage among Adventists it does not appear that any proper exegesis has been done on it, at least, not in the literature that has been explored for this dissertation. The only article that was written by Shea in the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* on this psalm was rather more of a commentary than an actual exegesis

[2000:432, 433]. Shea ignores the important dimension of the oneness of humankind and nature, so crucial in this psalm.

It is hoped, therefore, that the exegesis of this psalm will achieve, at least two things for the benefit of Seventh-day Adventists. First, it will provide an opportunity of exegeting a psalm that seems so popular among these people, yet appears to be exegetically neglected. Second, its exegesis will highlight a dimension of oneness between humankind and nature, which seems to be ignored in Seventh-day Adventist theology.

Finally, the exegesis of Psalm 8 will also be for the benefit of Old Testament scholarship in general. While this psalm appears to have attracted the attention of a good number of Old Testament, their exegeses tend to focus on such issues as creation [Brueggemann 1984:36]; the majesty or the awe of God [Sabourin 1974:177]; the state of humankind [Childs 1969:20,21; Mays 1994:511; Terrien 2003:129-30]; and other aspects, but not necessarily on this oneness.

As was stated in Chapter 1, this dissertation will employ a close-reading approach which we will define below.

The Hebrew text that is to be used for this exegesis is the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. This text is based on the oldest preserved manuscript of the Hebrew Bible and has been described as reliable and critically edited [Kaiser & Kummel 1981:5].



## 4.2. Close reading of Psalm 8

To exegete this psalm we follow a close reading approach, which refers to the study of the language in the text, the style of the writing, the metaphors, and the relation of these things to one another [Clines 1983:33, Kawale 1998:81].

### 4.2.1 Textual Variants in Psalm 8.

The *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* apparatus presents several textual variants in this psalm in a number of areas. It is therefore necessary to establish these variants and attempt to give answers or explanations to them. Following are such variants:

In verse 2a, for אֲשֶׁר תִּתֶּנָּה the Septuagint has “οὐρανῶν ἐξουσίαν”. Symmachus has οὐρανῶν ἐξουσίαν which reads as נְתַתָּה, and proposals have been made that the word should read נִתַּן or תִּתֶּנָּה.

It seems that נְתַתָּה, which is the 2<sup>nd</sup> pers. sing. masc. meaning *You have given*, is the suitable verb because it is in accordance with the context of the sentence that goes before it, namely, *O Lord, how majestic is your name*, which is also in the second person.

For the word עֹז in verse 3a the Vulgate reads *gloriam tuam, Your praise*. This alternative meaning of the Hebrew term is supported by BDB [1979: 739]. It seems that *praise* is a better option than *strength*, which has been adopted by standard translations such as the

RSV and KJV, because it is more closely associated with the mouth than *strength* is. Besides, *praise* is in harmony with the theme of this psalm, which is *to praise*.

In verse 3b the suffix of the צוֹרֵרִיךְ in the Vulgate reads as singular. Perhaps the author wanted to be in agreement with the following two nouns namely, *enemy* and *avenger*, both of which are also singular.

For אֶרְאֶה in verse 4a the Peshitta Translation implies the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural. However, the singular form is preferred here because the אֶ which is the prefix of רְאֶה in this sentence represents a singular imperfect and not a plural imperfect [Kelly 1992: 127, 128; Davidson 1993: 44].

In verse 4b the Septuagint omitted the suffix of שְׁמִיךְ, so that it reads *the heavens the work of your fingers* and not *your heavens the work of your fingers*. However, the absence of this suffix after *the heavens* does not seem to make any change in the thought that the heavens belong to God, because that possessiveness is still expressed in the phrase *the work of your fingers*.

Verse 4c in many manuscripts, as well as in the Peshitta the word מַעֲשֵׂי appears as מַעֲשֶׂה (with no vowels) and is singular. It is possible that the reason is that though these *heavens* are many, they form one work of God. Nevertheless, we keep to the plural form of this word as it appears in BHS for it agrees with the plural *heavens* that it describes.

In verse 6a the Septuagint, Peshitta, and Vulgate omit the copula. Consequently, in these writings you have *glory and honor* and not *and glory and honor*. Indeed, if that copula is merely to combine the two nouns namely, כְּבוֹד [glory] and הֹדָר [honor], then it is not necessary to have two of them. The copula before הֹדָר [honor] is sufficient. Therefore, the change that has been made by the sources above is in order.

In verse 7a the word תִּמְשִׁילָהּ reads וְתִמְשִׁילָהּ compared with the Septuagint and Peshitta. The two sources cited have added the copula וְ to combine the two verbs תִּמְשִׁילָהּ and תַּעֲטִירָהּ to point to the two acts of God. However, this copula does not seem to be needed here, because תַּעֲטִירָהּ has already been combined וְתַחֲסִירָהּ with a copula that comes before כְּבוֹד.

Verse 7 at b: The Targum, several manuscripts, and the Syriac have בְּמַעֲשֶׂה which is singular for בְּמַעֲשֵׂי. This seems to be consistent with verse 4c where the same documents treated the same word as singular. A change here is accepted.

In verse 8a some manuscripts have צֹאנֶה (with no vocals) in the place of צֹנֶה which may imply small stock, in contrast to אֲלָפִים which refers to large cattle [BDB 1979:838].

Conclusion. As mentioned before, some textual variants have been identified, although they were relatively not very minor. To identify and deal with these variants has been necessary, not only to highlight any existing textual problems in the passage, but also to discover as far as possible the words of the original writer which may have been altered in the process of

copying and recopying of the Biblical text [Harrison 1977:26; Gillingham 1999:159; Hill & Walton 2000:573].

#### **4.2.2 Translation of Psalm 8.**

The following translation is mine.

1. For the choir director on a music instrument. The Psalm of David.
2. Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
  
    You who have set your glory above the heavens.
3. From the mouth of small children and sucklings you have  
  
    ordained praise for the sake of your enemies, to silence your enemy  
    and the avenger.
4. When I contemplate your heavens, the work of your fingers, moon and  
  
    stars, which you have set in place,
5. What is man that you always remember and the son of man that you  
  
    always care for?
6. And you have made him lack a little less than God and with glory and  
  
    honour you have crowned him.
7. You have made him rule in all the works of your hands; you have placed  
  
    everything under his feet,
8. All flocks, and oxen, and also the animals of the field,
9. The birds of heavens and the fish of the sea that pass through the

paths of the sea.

10. Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

#### **4.2.3 Verse by verse discussion of Psalm 8.**

Verse 1. There is a great deal of speculation about the word *gittith* which appears in the title of this psalm. One view is that *gittith* is a musical instrument from Gath [Plumer 1975:120]. Another view suggests that this word refers to a musical tune or setting [Craigie 1983:105]. There are also other views that identify *gittith* as “style of performance, or beginning of some famous and well-known song” [Plumer 1975:120]. While the actual meaning of the term will probably remain uncertain, yet it seems that this is one of the suggested meanings.

The author of Psalm 8 has associated the psalm with David. However, to suggest that David is the author of Psalm 8 only on the basis of לְדָוִד, which is the phrase that has been translated as *of David*, can be misleading. The reason is that לְדָוִד may also mean *to, for, away from, or about David* [K & B 1995:508].

Somehow, many exegetes of the psalm seem to be divided on the issue of authorship. While scholars like D Kidner [1973:67], WS Plumer [1975:120], J Philips [1988:64] and M Wilcock [2001:8] attribute the authorship to David, basing their proposition on factors that include the title of the psalm itself לְדָוִד [Plumer 1975:120], others such as Gillingham [1999:233] and Tourney [1991:109] suggest an author who lived during the post-Exilic

period. Another group of these exegetes have chosen to be silent about this authorship [Brueggemann: 1984: 36-38; Gerstenberger 2002:286-293; Mays 1994: 511-520; 1987:169].

It seems the assigning of authorship of this psalm to David based on the strong support from different scholars mentioned above; the fact that the psalm has been part of the early collection of the psalms that were attributed to David [La Sor 1992: 511]; and the claim of the title of the psalm itself that David is its author, may be a better proposition.

Verse 2. The opening thought in verse 2 is repeated in verse 10, thus the two verses form what is called “envelope structure” [Nichol 1977:648].

The expression “Oh Lord, our God” or “יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ” introduces two different names of God. יְהוָה is His proper name [Craigie 1983:107] which really means “He who causes to be” [Terrien 2003:12]. This is the name through which He introduced Himself to Moses from a burning bush (Ex. 3:15-16) and which is so numinous that to evoke it carelessly is forbidden (Ex. 20:7).

The second name אֲדֹנָי “our Lord” is a title which in the Old Testament is a characteristic address for the king (1 Kings 1:11, 43, 47) [Kraus 1988:177]. Because of the respect accorded to God’s name by the Jews, this title was used to represent His name [Craigie 1983:107].

The combination of the two names is a formula that Eissfeldt associates with speeches and prayers. When it is used it emphasizes Yahweh’s rule over all the world [1974:62, 63].

Indeed, the concept of name as relates to God is critical because the name is more than a mere tag by which He is identified. It represents His very character [Abba 1980:508; Perdue 1985:685; Dillard and Longman III 1995:10]; it is the revelation of Himself [Craigie 1983:107].

The psalmist describes the name of God as majestic. The adjective *majestic* is preceded by an exclamation *How*, which is “an outburst of strong emotion, showing that the mind was already full of matter” [Plumer 1975:122]. The Hebrew word which has been translated as *majestic* refers to splendor and dignity that God wears as a king [BDB 1979:217]. This word also describes His power [Terrien 2003:127]. In fact, God’s name and His majesty are poetically synonymous [Craigie 1983:107].

The *power*, the *majesty*, the *splendour*, and the *dignity* all of which are embedded in God’s *name* are said to be *in all the earth*. The earth represents the entire world (Gen. 1:1; 2:1) and the people (Gen.23:7) [Schmid 1997:173, 174, 175; BDB 2000:76].

Verse 3, specifically the expression *From the mouth of the small children and sucklings* poses challenges to scholars. The first challenge is the syntactical connection of this expression with the text in which it occurs. It is not clear whether the phrase is to be connected with verse 2 before it, or with the rest of the words that follow in verse 3. The two options result in a different meaning of the passage. For example, if it is connected with verse 3 before it, it will read thus: *You who have set glory above the heavens with the mouth of the small children and the sucklings*. (At least, the REB follows this direction). Whereas,

if it is connected with the words that immediately follow it in verse 2, it will be *from the mouth of the small children you have ordained strength or praise because of your enemies, to silence your enemy and the avenger*. This is the view of the NIV and is supported by scholars such as Plumer [1975:120]; Craigie [1984:105]; and [Kraus 1988:178].

The GNB and the RSV combine the two verses with some alterations. For example, the RSV reads thus: *Thou whose glory above the heavens is chanted by the mouth of the babes and infants, thou has founded a bulwark because of thy foes ...*” verses 2 and 3. Gerstenberger supports this view [1988:68].

The syntactical challenge of these words have led some scholars to describe this expression as a strange and a foreign element to the poem [Kraus 1988:181].

Another challenge is the meaning of the phrase *mouth of the babes and infants*. It is not clear whether the phrase is to be interpreted as literal or figurative. Some scholars attach a literal meaning to it [Phillips 1988:66]. Others treat it as figurative [Craigie 1983:107]. Still others regard it as both literal and figurative [Plumer 1975:123].

The passage presents two pairs of nouns that are seen by Craigie as contrasted parties [1983:107]. The first pair is *children and infants* and the second one is *the foe and the avenger*.



עוֹלָלִים וְיִנְקִים, translated as *children and infants*, are synonyms for both of them carry the same meaning, namely, *children, nursing infants, sucklings* [BDB 2000:732; Holladay 1986:131, 266]. יִנְק has also been used in Numbers 11:12 as a simile. In that context it seems to suggest helplessness.

The second pair of nouns is אֹיֵב וּמִתְנַקֵּם. אֹיֵב refers to an enemy of an individual (Ex. 23:4) or of a nation (Gn 49:8) [K&B 1994:39]. There are instances where the term has been used in reference to the enemies of God (Job 13:24; Ex 15:6, 9) [Williams 1997:367].

מִתְנַקֵּם is a participle built around נָקַם and which means the avenging one [BDB 2000:668]. The revenge here may be human vengeance (Ju 16:28) or divine vengeance or retribution (Is 34:8) [K&B 1995:721].

God is said to ordain עָז *from the mouth of the children and the infants*. עָז may be translated both as praise [BDB 2000:739] and strength [Holladay 1986: 269]. This praise or strength is to be used against God's enemies. Both meanings seem to fit in the context of the passage. Firstly, it may be praise, since the whole passage entails praise to God's name for His greatness and power revealed in creation. Those from whose mouth *He has ordained praise* are those who acknowledge Him as Creator. On the contrary, the ones who are probably identified as enemies are those who do not acknowledge God's greatness as revealed in creation by praising His name. Incidentally these enemies of God happen to be mentioned each time when God's name is exalted in the context of creation (Ps 104:35; 97:3, 4) [Kraus 1988:181, 182].

Second, with regard to strength, God empowers the weak and the helpless who are dependent on Him with strength in order to fight the enemies. However, their strength comes through praising God's name. The conquest over enemies through the praise of God's name was experienced by Jehoshaphat and his army when they went out to fight the Ammonites and Moabites. "After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendour of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army. ...As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated (2 Chronicles 20:21, 22).

Verse 4. The act of praise on the part of the psalmist was engendered by contemplating God's work of creation. The verb אֲרַא has a deeper meaning than a mere casual look at something. It means to gaze at it, observe it, watch it, and look at it as if to learn something about it [BDB 1951:907-907]. It is this intensity that characterized the psalmist's look that led him to appreciate the awesomeness of God's creation.

The moon and the stars reflected in the passage suggest that the incident took place in the night. Indeed, if it is David who wrote this psalm, as a shepherd spending days and nights in the field, he had ample opportunity to admire the heavens.

אֲרַא is an imperfect tense of רָאָה. One usage of the imperfect is to express repeated, habitual, or customary actions whether in the past, the present, or the future [Kelly 1992:130]. Therefore, it is possible that the psalmist did not look at the sky once, but did so

several times. Indeed, the admiration of God's creation was a subject that David loved to dwell upon as it is testified in other psalms that are ascribed to him like Psalm 19.

As if to deny any possibility of the creation evolving on its own, the psalmist, referring to God as its Source, says, "*your heavens, the work of your fingers*. To describe creation as the work of God's *fingers* seems to be a mere poetic expression for God does not have physical dimensions [Craigie 1983:108]. Therefore, the expression might not only suggest God's mark on creation [Kraus 1988:182], but "a task at once enormous and minute. It is comparable to the art of a sculptor whose fingers, even more than his hands, fashion and mold the intricate designs of the Milky Way" [Terrien 2003:129].

God has set the moon and the stars in place. The Hebrew verb used to express this divine act of God suggests durability, permanence or a lasting state [Holladay 1988:153]. Indeed, "recent studies ... have shown that throughout ancient literature the heavens, moon and stars, as well as the sun, served as similes for length of days, permanence and eternity [Tigay 1987:170]. Even the Bible itself has used these heavenly objects to convey this thought. God, referring to the covenant that He made with David, said, "... his line will continue for ever and his throne endure before me like the sun; it will be established for ever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky (Ps 89:36, 37).

The creation of the moon and the stars has appeared in Genesis 1 where the two created objects not only form part of the creation but they are intended to give service to other created objects (Gen. 1:14-19).

God is not only identified as the Source of creation, but He, whose name has been described as majestic in the preceding verses, is its Ruler.

Verse 5. The Hebrew particle מה that begins the verse and that is translated as “what” also appears in verse 2 and 10 where it is translated as “how”. Keck suggests that its purpose is to connect two issues, namely, the identity of God and the identity of humanity which are inseparable in this poem [1996:711]. Indeed, “the character of God’s sovereignty cannot be understood apart from the knowledge that God does choose to be ‘mindful’ and to ‘care for’ humanity; the identity of humanity cannot be understood apart from this relationship with God” [1996:711].

אָנִישׁ not only refers to the male gender, but may also apply to humanity in general irrespective of gender [Throckmorton, Jr 1985:525; Clines 1993:334].

The term suggests several meanings ranging from explicitly or implicitly contrasting people with God (Dan 2:10; 3:10; 4:16); human hardships in life (Job 7:1); to be weak, feeble, and incurable [Clines 1993:44]; a maggot-like or worm-like existence (Job 25:6) [Hamilton 1997:454]; brief tenure on earth (Ps 103:15) or transitorieness or mortality (Ps 144:34).

The notion of human frailty or powerlessness (Ps 146:3), being ephemeral (Ps 89:48), and insignificant (Job 25:6) [Caragounis 1997:667] is further stressed in the phrase וְכַךְ-אָדָם which also refers to what is feeble, earthly, and mortal [BDB 1951:9; Kraus 1988:182]. The usage of וְכַךְ-אָדָם seems to be very common in Ezekiel where it occurs as often as 93 times. Here

Caragounis suggests that man represents the product of God's hands, being created in his image (Genesis 5:1), while the son of man represents the product of fallen man, produced in human likeness (Genesis 5:3). Not only is man as humanity the object of God's anger, but he or she is also the object of his grace (Ps 8; 31:20; 80:17-19; 144:1-3; 145:8-12 [1997:675]).

There are places where **בְּהֵמָה** has also been used consistently in combination with **אָדָם**. Some of these places are Genesis 6:7; Numbers 3:13; Job 36:6; Psalm 135:8; Jeremiah 21:6; Ezekiel 14:13; Jonah 3:7; and Zephaniah 1:3. Whereever this combination appears, namely, *men and animals*, it seems to follow the same pattern throughout the Old Testament. In most cases it appears in a context where God intends to destroy every living being. To express this total destruction the speaker has used the expression *men and animals*". "Men" in this expression seems to represent human beings, while "animals" represent non-human beings. The expression seems to emphasize unity between humankind and the rest of nature, on one hand, while on the other hand it seeks to point out their differences within this oneness.

The psalmist in asking the question "What is man?" is probably not seeking information about the identity of humankind. Instead, he describes the insignificance of this humanity when seen in the light of awe and wonder that is displayed in God's creation [Craigie 1984:108]

The two lines, namely, *man that you remember him* and *the son of man that you care for him* seem to form a synonymous parallelism that occurs when the second line of a poetic verse repeats what has been expressed in the first line [Harrison 1977:966].

The verb *תִּזְכֹּרְתָּ*, which is the 2<sup>nd</sup> pers. sing. masc. of the verb root *זָכַר*, refers to the act of God of remembering or being thoughtful of humankind. This word has been used in twenty-eight of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament [Plumer 1975:126]. Passages such as Exodus 20:5; 32:34; Job 35:15; Psalm 89:32 and others suggest that this word may be used in a bad sense, namely, to punish. However, there are just as many texts where it is used in a good sense. Following are a few such texts: Genesis 21:1; 1:24, 25; Ruth 1:6; 1 Samuel 2:21; Psalm 65:9. Psalm 8 seems to be one of the passages where *זָכַר* has been used in this latter sense. The imperfect tense in which this verb appears in this passage suggests the continuous act of God of remembering or being thoughtful of humankind whether in the past, present, or future. Therefore it can be translated in one of the following three ways: *you always remembered*, or *you always remember*, or *you will always remember*. This is in accordance with Kelly's comments on the translation of imperfects: "Imperfect verbs may be used in a variety of senses and the context must often be consulted in order to determine the same sense that is intended" [Kelly 1992: 129-130]. Confirming this sentiment, Craigie observed, "It is evident that there can be no simple rule of thumb with respect to the appropriate English tense which may be indicated by the forms of the Hebrew verbs. In practice, the context is the principal guide to determining the most appropriate translation" [1984:111].

The next verb **הִפְקִדְתָּנוּ** which is also in the imperfect tense is derived from the root **פָּקַד**. According to Tyler F. Williams, there is probably no other Hebrew verb that has caused translators as much trouble as **פָּקַד** [1997:658]. Some of the proposed meanings of this term are *attend to with care, take note, look at, carefully observe, worry about* [1997:658]. When put in the imperfect tense this word, among other things, may express the repeated action of God's caring for humanity. The context here suggests that the psalmist may be referring to God's caring in the past. Therefore, the correct translation may be *You have continually or always visited or cared for him*.

Strikingly the psalmist is led to know about the nature of God and His care of humanity through creation. Indeed, to lead humankind to know God is the function of nature [Dederen 2000:441].

Verse 6. The expression a little less than **אֱלֹהִים** has adopted varied interpretations partly because of the challenges which faced the translators or interpreters. Two of these challenges are that **אֱלֹהִים** has several meanings. [A brief discussion on this aspect has been presented on p. 7]. Therefore, each translator selects a meaning that he or she deems the closest to the context. Hence, the translation of this word ranges from God, to gods, heavenly beings, or angels. [Plumer 1975:127]. The second challenge emanates from the respect that is accorded to God. In an attempt to avoid comparing Him with human beings, some translators, out of modesty, have preferred angels to God or divine beings [Craigie 1984:108].

The phrase *little* can be understood in two ways. It can refer to either the *degree* to which humankind has been made *less than God* or the *time* in which it has been made *less than God*. These two connotations are embedded in the Greek word βραχυ which has been used by the translator of the Septuagint as he translated Psalm 8:5. Consequently some translations, at least the New American Standard Version, translate Hebrews 2:9, which is really an adaptation of Psalm 8:5, in the following manner: “But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, ...” [Childs 1969:24-25].

The affinity of Psalm 8 with Genesis 1 and 2 which has been noted by several scholars [Weiser 1962:140; Kidner 1973:65; Plumer 1975:127; Craigie 1984:234; Gerstenberger 1988:68; Kraus 1988:180; Day 1996:40] and even the identification of Genesis 1 and 2 by other scholars as the source of Psalm 8 [Gillingham 1999:234] cause us to regard *God* as the most appealing interpretation of אֱלֹהִים, for this interpretation is thought to be the one that fits Genesis 1 and 2 [Kraus 1988:183].

The psalmist describes humanity as having been *crowned with glory and honor*. The pair of nouns *glory and honor* has been used elsewhere in reference to royal dignity (Ps 21:5; 45:3) [Plumer 1975:12]. God *crowned* humanity *with glory* (כְּבוֹד) or splendour, which rests on it like a crown on a king [Kraus1988]. This glory is coupled with honour (הֹדָר) or ornament or splendour [BDB 2000:214]. The same glory that is ascribed to God and which has been portrayed as covering the heavens (verse 2) is now given to humanity who is described here in royal language (Ps 8:2; 29:1-3, 9; 145:5, 12) [Keck 1996:711, 712].



Verse 7. Humankind appears in the middle of the account of nature. Humankind is presented in this verse as a ruler over the work of God's hands. The position of rulership tallies with the kingly expression *crowned with honor and glory* that has gone before. The verb *קָשַׁל* which expresses this rulership has also been used in reference to the function of the moon and the stars in the sky (Gen 1:16). This governing or rulership of these lights seems to suggest a service that they provide to the rest of creation, namely, to provide light.

The same word has also been used to express the work of Joseph in Egypt for Pharaoh and his household. Referring to this service, Joseph declared to his brothers: "But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt" (Gen 45:7, 8).

The putting "of everything under his feet" suggests victory over one's enemies. Indeed, in several places where this expression has occurred it has been associated with God overcoming His enemies (Psalm 18:9; 110:1; Micah 7:10; Malachi 4:13) [Freeman 1972:459-460].

The expression itself seems to reiterate the rulership that humankind is to exercise over the rest of creation. In fact, the two verbs, namely, *to rule* and *to put under feet*, seem to form a synonymous parallelism, that occurs when the second line of a poetic verse repeats the thought expressed in the first line [Harrison 1977: 966].

Even though the putting of everything under one's feet sounds negative, as mentioned before, the rulership represented by מָשַׁל suggests service rather than domination. In fact, referring to this service-oriented dominion, Mays observed, "...The ideal king was one who was expected to rule for the sake of his subjects. Power was given to him to provide protection, administer justice, and plan for the prosperity of his people. This idea is implicit in the images of the psalm. Humankind is called by God to use the power given it in obedience to the reign of God and for the sake of all the other creatures whom its power affects" [1993:518].

Verse 8. A pair of nouns צִנֹּה and אֶלְפִים is introduced in this verse. The term צִנֹּה refers to a wide range of situations such as small live stock consisting mainly of sheep and goats collectively in possession [Hamilton 1997:33; Waschke 2003:198]; sheep only with the exclusion of goats (1 Sam 25:2; Gen 31:19; 38:12-13; Deut 15:19); lambs and kids (Gen 30:32; Lev. 1:13); individual animals of small livestock (Ex 12:5); and to animals that give milk such as those that suckle [Waschke 2003:199].

אֶלְפִים with which צִנֹּה is paired refers to a docile lamb (Jer 11:19) [Holladay 1988:18], or oxen [Kraus 1988:184; BDB 2000:48]. The two nouns focus on domestic animals as opposed to the *animals of the field* which also appear in the verse.

The expression *the animals of the field* seems to refer to all animals "beyond the areas of human dwelling and pasturage" [Kraus 1988:184]. The phrase reiterates the stereotypes found elsewhere in the Scripture (Ex. 9:19; Deut. 7:22; Is. 56:9; Jer. 12:9). In the psalm

these animals are also regarded as part of the animal kingdom belonging to the rulership of humankind, as is the case in the Genesis creation (Gen. 1:26).

Verse 9. The Hebrew word representing *the birds of the heavens* appears 40 times in the Old Testament [Kiuchi 1997:837], and its meaning ranges from *birds* to *winged creatures* as a collective group (Gen. 7:14; Deut. 4:17). The word can also be used for an individual bird (Lev. 14:5-7; Ps 11:1) [K&B 1996:107].

Out of the 18 appearances of *fish* in the Old Testament, 15 of these appear in the plural form [Botterweck 1978:139]. Along with these fish are *all that pass through the paths of the sea*, which may imply an all-embracing way of describing marine life” [Craigie 1983:109]. The psalmist declares that all of these are under the rulership of humanity.

The same creatures appear in Genesis 1 and in other places where they were intended to be of service to humanity, for example, by means of sustenance (Gen 1:29); used by humankind as sacrifice to God (Lev. 5, 6, 16) [Rodríguez 1981:134; Thompson 1996:321]; provided labour for humankind (Gen 22:3; 1 Sam 6:7, 10; 9:3; 1 Kings 1:33; 19:19) [Thompson 1996:205, 206]; and served as payment for firstborns (Ex. 13).

Verse 10. The psalmist closes this poem in the same manner as he began it. The exaltation of God’s majestic name that began the passage now ends it. The attention that was directed to God who is the centre and the focus of this poem must again be redirected even reverted to Him.

#### 4.2.4 Form and literary style of Psalm 8.

In talking of the *form* of the psalm, we refer to such elements as the literary style or theme, content, and the setting of the passage [Hayes and Holladay 1973:83; Krentz 1979:53; Stuart 1980:110].

Regarding the literary style or theme of Psalm 8 many scholars agree that this is a *hymn of praise* [Day 1995: 40; Weiser 1962: 140; Kidner 1973: 65; Gerstenberger 1988: 68; Craigie 1984: 106]. However, some scholars are also quick to point out gray areas that challenge this view. For example, they contend that Psalm 8 does not conform to the characteristics of a psalm of praise or a hymn as given by Gunkel. According to Gunkel, a psalm of praise or a hymn has three basic parts; I) a call to praise God; ii) the reason for praising Him; and iii) a repeated call to praise God [Tullock 1987: 336]. Psalm 8, on the contrary, does not open with call to praise as is typical of the hymn. Instead, the psalm begins and ends with an invocation [Gerstenberger 1988: 97].

We also support that Psalm 8 is a hymn of praise. In response to the opinion that this psalm does not strictly conform to the characteristic of a hymn of praise given by Gunkel, the psalm does, at least, open with praise in verse 3 [Tullock 1987:338], although it does not begin with an invitation to praise. Besides, there are other psalms that are classified as hymns of praise, yet do not have all these ingredients. Psalm 19 is one of them. This psalm is classified as a psalm of praise, yet the call to worship that should begin and end the psalm is absent [Westermann 1965: 139; Day 1995: 40].

The appearance of *the choir director* in the title, and the alternation between *our Lord* in verses 2 and 10 and *I see* in verse 4 suggests that this was a communal song sung by a group even if it had started as an individual song [Craigie 1983:106].

Regarding the content of Psalm 8, scholars recognize the challenge of attaching any particular classification to this psalm because of the mixture of elements that appear in it. While hymns generally contain only material that are hymnic in nature, Psalm 8 reflects a mixture of elements such as hymnic material, wisdom material, and lament material [Craigie 1984:106]. This mixture of material has caused Phillips to associate this psalm with royal psalms [1988:64], while R Albertz, as noted by Day, identifies it as a development of lament [1995:41]. We are also unable to categorize this psalm in terms of content. We concur with Craigie who confessed that “it has an originality and distinctiveness which defy any attempt to categorize the psalm with respect to precise forms and substance” [1984:106].

With regards to the setting of Psalm 8, opinions vary. Some scholars suggest that this psalm is based on a Canaanite song sung by a royal representative of the cultic congregation. This view is based on the royal ideology present in the psalm [Kraus 1988:179].

Another view, which advocates Davidic authorship of this psalm, maintains that Psalm 8 emerged from the victory that David had over Goliath. Phillips, who is the proponent of this view, bases this opinion on the phrase “The death of the champion” appearing in the title of Psalm 9, which he suggests that, that actually belongs to chapter 8. As far as Phillips is concerned, David must have included the psalm later in the temple music when he ascended the throne as a king of Israel [1988:64-65].

According to Kraus, Psalm 8 must have been sung in the festivals at night for such worship at night was prevalent in the nation (Ps 134:1; Isa. 30:29; 1 Chron. 9:33) [1988:179]. The idea of associating this psalm with a particular occasion seems to be supported by Craigie who goes on to say that if the psalm were initially cultic, it would have been appropriate for use in the Feast of Tabernacle. However, this scholar is careful not to confine its use to one occasion but suggests that there might also have been other occasions it was used [1984:106].

With the mixture of elements in Psalm 8 we also find it difficult to associate the psalm with any particular festival. We support the Davidic authorship of this psalm and that it is likely to have been used at night. We also think that this psalm was later sung by a group of singers, as the title *the choirmaster* suggests. However, concerning its association with specific festivals, we prefer not to make that limitation.

#### **4.2.5 God in the center of Psalm 8.**

The focus of Psalm 8 is God or the Lord. His names “יְהוָה אֱדֹנָיִנוּ” open and close this psalm (verses 2 and 10). In verse 7 He appears again as אֱלֹהִים. Besides, His personal pronoun *You* and relative pronoun *Your* appear almost throughout this passage (verses 2 - 7). (The concept and the significance of God’s name have been discussed on pages 131-132).

The psalmist attributes majesty and splendour to the name of God. The awesomeness of the name has manifested itself in what God has created, namely, humankind and nature. In fact, it is the awesomeness of God's name that has brought forth this praise.

#### **4.2.6 Oneness or holism and partnership of humankind and nature in Psalm 8.**

Around God who is the centre of the psalm are humankind and nature which form oneness or holism and partnership.

##### **4.2.6.1 Oneness or holism of humankind and nature in Psalm 8.**

Psalm 8 reflects holism or oneness of humankind and nature. This is manifest, at least, at three levels, namely, in the participation of humankind and nature in the same creation, in their sharing of the same glory from God, and, in their rendering of service to each other.

##### **4.2.6.1.1 Oneness or holism of humankind and nature in their partaking of the same creation.**

The first area where humankind and nature show oneness or holism is in their partaking of the same creation. The psalmist identifies them both as the products of this same miracle. Consequently, several prominent scholars see this passage as rooted in the creation tradition of Genesis 1 and 2 [Weiser 1962:140; Kidner 1973:65; Plumer 1975:127; Briggs 1976:61; Craigie 1984:234; Gerstenberger 1988:68; Kraus 1988:180; Mays 1994:66-67; Day 1995:49; and Gillingham 1999:234] where the two entities appeared together in the context

of creation. In fact, Childs dared to say, “In spite of the specific reference to his nightly meditation, the psalmist did not create his material simply from the inspiration of the moment, but was dependent on the tradition of the priestly writer which is reflected in Genesis 1” [1969:21]. Indeed, the language used by these two pericopies to express God’s work of creation shows strong similarities [Sabourin 1974:178]. First, except for vegetation, the created objects that appear in Genesis 1 and 2 also appear in Psalm 8. Following is a diagram that displays these created objects:

Heaven	הַשָּׁמַיִם	Gen. 1:1	Ps. 8:1, 3
Earth	הָאָרֶץ	Gen.1:1,17	Ps. 8:1, 9
Sea	יָמִים	Gen. 1:10	Ps. 8:8
Moon	יָרֵחַ and הַמָּאֲרָת	Gen. 1:16	Ps. 8:3
Stars	כּוֹכָבִים	Gen. 1:16	Ps. 8:3
Birds of the air	עֲפֹרֹת שָׁמַיִם	Gen. 1:20	Ps. 8:8
Water containing the living Creatures	וְדַגֵּי הַיָּם	Gen.1:20, 21.	Ps. 8:8
Wild animals	בְּחֵמֹת שָׂדֵי	Gen. 1:25.	Ps. 8:7
Man	אָדָם and אִנּוֹשׁ	Gen. 1:26	Ps. 8:4.

Besides the fact that this diagram reflects the created objects that the two pericopies have in common, the list of these created objects also to reflects the Biblical tripartite view [Tsumura 1997:160; Kawale 1998:52, 83] to which we referred in chapter 1. For example,



the psalmist refers to the moon and the stars that represent heaven, the field animals that represent the earth, and the creatures in the waters that represent the sea. Moreover, it is noteworthy that while the psalmist has united all the created objects in this passage, he does not lump them together as one entity and give them a blanket name. Instead, within this unity, he recognizes their individual differences and uses the names or categories that were given in Genesis 1 and 2.

Not only do the two passages reflect affinity regarding the created objects that appear in both of them, but even the terminology that portrays God as the producer of these created objects shows similarity. Genesis uses such expressions as *He created* (בָּרָא) the heavens and the earth (1:1), *made* (עָשָׂה) great lights (1:16), *set* (נָתַן) them in the expanse of the sky (1:17).

The same language of *making*, *setting*, etc., which endorses the creatorship of God, is repeated in psalms such as 19, 104 and others, all of which carry this theme of creation.

In Psalm 8 too, the psalmist portrays God as *setting in place* the moon and the stars (verse 3). The verb כָּנָן which means *to establish* or *set up firmly*, [Clines 1998:372-376] suggests permanence, which is, in fact, what some scholars allege that the heavenly bodies symbolize [Tigay 1987:169].

The work of God's *fingers* (verse 3) or His *hands* (verse 6), which is another expression of the psalmist, not only presents the mode of creation, but suggests an artist who executes "the

finest kind of work by the artistic skill of his fingers” [Briggs 1976:63]. While this task of creation is enormous, it is also minute [Terrien 2003:129].

As mentioned above, these features, namely, the list of created objects and the creation terminology in the two pericopies, suggest a close relationship between the creation tradition in Genesis 1 and 2, and the creation theme in Psalm 8. Both passages reflect the oneness of humankind and nature, a oneness embedded in their belonging to the same act of creation, coming from the hands of the same Maker, and being products of the same material (Genesis 1 and 2).

#### **4.2.6.1.2 Oneness or holism of humankind and nature in their sharing of the glory of God.**

The second level at which humanity and other created objects are united is in their sharing of God’s glory. The psalmist declares that God has set this glory above the heavens (Ps 8:1). The preposition *לְ* may be translated not only as *above* but also as *over* or *on*, which means that the glory beheld by the psalmist could have been on the heavens like a garment on a person [Holladay 1986:272-73]. Indeed, a few times the glory of God has been portrayed in psalms as being not only above the heavens, but also above the earth, dwelling in the earth, and even filling the earth (57:5, 11; 72:19; 85:9; 108:5; 113:4; and 148:13).

The same glory [BDB 2000:458] enjoyed by the heavens has also been extended to humankind (Ps 8:5), according to the psalmist. “The splendor of Yahweh set above the heavens is reflected in His image, man, whom He has crowned as His representative to rule

over the earth” [Briggs 1976:64]. God *crowned him with glory* (כְּבוֹד), or splendor, which rests on humankind like a crown on a king [Kraus 1988:183]. This glory is coupled with honor (הֹדָר) or ornament or splendor [BDB 2000:214].

According to the psalmist, all of this covering of humanity with glory and honor emanates from God’s continual care and regard for humankind (Ps 8:5). Humans enjoy this divine favour because they are created in His image (Gn 1:26) or made just a little less than Him (Ps 8:6).

Having highlighted the importance of humankind in the eyes of God, namely, being the subject of His care and thoughtfulness, and having been made a little lower than God, both of which underscore the exalted form of humankind, yet the psalmist brings in another aspect regarding this humankind. This is its creatureliness, fragility and finiteness (Genesis 3:19; Psalm 90:3; 104:29; 144:4). This humble state of humankind is just as real as its exalted form, which the psalmist has just portrayed. In fact, to introduce it the psalmist exclaims מִה אֶנוֹשׁ. Tigay states that this expression “became a topos in the Hebrew Bible and apocryphal/pseudepigraphical literature”, although, according to him, it expressed not the insignificance of humankind but its mortality and transience [1987:170]. However, such scholars as Kraus [1988:182] and Mays [1994:511] see it as referring to both the humble position of humankind and its transience. (For the discussion on אֶנוֹשׁ and יֶבֶן-אָדָם refer to pages 8, 9, 137, 138, and 139).

The dichotomy created by the psalmist here, namely, the exaltedness of humankind versus its frailty and its humble position, should be seen in the light of the responsibility given to it to govern the rest of creation. While enjoying this power, humans should continuously recognize that the dominion they have is undeserved for they are not divine beings, but are earthly for they were “shaped from the dust of the earth before (they) received the breath of life (Gen 2:7)” [Terrien 2003: 131]. They are not different from the nature that they are to govern, but are very much part of it [Hargreaves 1981:9]. In fact, in some respects they are “inferior to other creatures. (They are) not so long-lived, so strong, so active, or in (their) gait so elegant as some beasts over whom at creation God gave (them) perfect dominion, and over whom to some extent (they) still (have) authority” [Plumer 1975: 126]. Consequently, Tigay, referring to human transience, observed, “In reading the psalm closely one can detect a possible implication that the psalmist would have expected God to assign such rule (תַּמְשִׁילָחוּ) to the heavens, moon, and stars, because of their permanence, rather than to a transient creature like man” [1987:170].

Human beings occupy the rulership position as “representatives of the reign of the Lord to the other creatures” [Mays 1994:69]. Theirs is a “unique but ambivalent position; (their) responsibility toward the soil means that (their) “dominion” over the earth ... shall never be abused” [Terrien 2003:131].

So, humans who have been so exalted despite their being so frail and finite, share the same glory with nature. God has brought together humanity and nature under the divine garment.

However, this glory is to be returned to God who is its source (Psalm 8:2, 5). Indeed, it was God's purpose that as He gave this glory to humanity, the same humanity should in return give that glory back to Him. He created sons and daughters for His own glory (Isaiah 43:7). Nature also exists in order to "declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1).

#### **4.2.6.1.3 Oneness of humankind and nature in the service that they render to each other.**

Belonging to the same process of creation, and having received the same glory from the Creator, are not the only factors that have united humankind and nature, according to the psalmist. God has further drawn the two entities even closer by making them serve each other.

Even before the psalmist portrays humanity as ruling the rest of creation and having everything else put under its feet (Psalm 8:6), the writer of Genesis 1 and 2 presented this humanity as naming animals (Genesis 2:19), which is an act of authority, denoting possession, responsibility, and protection for some person or object (2 Sam. 12:28; Ps 49:11; Is 4:1) [Myers 1987:747]. Later, specific instructions regarding the treatment of these animals became necessary (Ex. 23:4,5; Deut. 22:1; 25:4).

Humanity was also placed in the garden to till the soil (Gen 2:15). עבד, which is the root of the verb that the writer of Genesis used to describe this role of Adam, refers to service, or to serve as a slave (Ex 21:6; Job 39:9) [Holladay 1988:261; Kawale 1998:211]. It appears that the rendering of this service, namely, the tilling of soil, was to be a regular activity.

Not only was humanity to till, serve or service the soil, but it was to keep it (Gen 2:15). To express this keeping, the writer has used שָׁמַר (verse 15) which also means to support, aid, and protect (Gen 28:15, 20; Ex 23:20) [BDB 2000:1036, 1037]. This protection would later also entail the provision of time for the soil to rest (Leviticus 25:5).

The rulership suggested by the psalmist seems to be that of service, as the same word has been used to express the function of the heavenly bodies such as the sun, moon and star in the sky. This term has also been used to express the service of Joseph among the Egyptians. God Himself is the One who has granted the privilege to humanity to govern or serve the rest of His creation.

So, humanity does not only rule as a representative of God, meaning that it is answerable to the One whom it represents, but it also rules as part of nature [Hargreaves 1981:9], a ruler among or a service-provider to fellow-creatures.

Nature, too, returns the service rendered to it by humankind, and it does this in various ways. While some of these ways are covered by the psalmist, others are not. The first evidence of this service rendered by nature occurred in Genesis 1 and 2, the two passages which we have repeatedly identified as the source, or one of the sources, of Psalm 8. In these passages God makes what grows from the soil to provide subsistence to humankind. “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food” (Gen 1:29). Later on, in other passages,

when the soil on which humankind depended for its support was devastated by the Flood, God made available certain animals for humankind to live on (Lev 11).

In fact, these animals did not only provide food for humanity, but they also became a means for sacrifice to God (Lev 5, 6, 16) [Rodríguez 1981:134; Thompson 1996:321]. Some of them were even used for labour (Gen 22:3; 1 Sam 6:7, 10; 9:3; 1 Kings 1:33; 19:19) [Thompson 1996:205, 206], or served as payment for firstborns (Ex 13).

While Psalm 8 only presents these animals without addressing their functions as mentioned previously there are a host of functions that were associated with them. These functions were, in fact, what formed the bond between the animals and humankind.

There is another function, though, that Psalm 8 presents which further strengthens the ties between humankind and nature, and that is that nature connects humankind with its Maker. The psalmist presents nature as drawing humanity to God, its Maker, through its beauty and awesomeness. It is the consideration or observation of God's heavens, the work of His fingers, the moon and stars, that impelled the psalmist to exclaim, "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" (verse 3). Not only is the psalmist overwhelmed by the grandeur and the awesomeness of God's creation, but the fact that God could place humanity in charge of this great work is a further demonstration of His mindfulness and care for humanity.

The psalmist observation of God's handiwork is likely to have been careful and continual, as the Hebrew verb suggests. Indeed, such a devotion would not have been difficult for David

to depict (if, in fact, he is the author of this psalm), as it is evident in other psalms such as Ps 19 which have been attributed to him.

Not only does nature help humans to come closer to God, it also leads them to discover themselves. In fact, “in the Bible the revelation of God and man’s understanding of his own existence are intimately bound up with each other (cf. Ps. 144:3ff and Is. 6)” [Weiser 1962:142].

Indeed, the service that is exchanged between humanity and nature is not only limited to these two entities, but each created object extends this service to others. The moon and the stars that appear in Psalm 8 are presented in Genesis 1 as giving light to the rest of creation (verse 15). The animals listed in the psalm are made to feed on every green plant in order to survive (Gen 1:30). In fact, there is so much interfacing between the created objects that White observed, “No bird that cleaves the air, no animal that moves upon the ground, but ministers to some other life. There is no leaf of the forest, or lowly blade of grass, but has its ministry. Every tree and shrub and leaf pours forth that element of life without which neither man nor animal could live; and man and animal, in turn, minister to the life of tree and shrub and leaf. The flowers breathe fragrance and unfold their beauty in blessing to the world. The sun sheds its light to gladden a thousand worlds. The ocean, itself the source of all our springs and fountains, receives the streams from every land, but takes to give. The mists ascending from its bosom fall in showers to water the earth, that it may bring forth and bud” [1940:20-21].



Psalm 8 and its supportive passages portray humankind and nature as locked together in the service that each has to give the other for both of them to survive. The Creator seems to have designed that each entity should be connected with the other, not only by virtue of both being rooted in the same creation, and sharing the same divine glory, but by their very existence being intertwined. This psalm seems to be a strong advocate of this unity.

#### **4.2.6.2 Partnership of humankind and nature in Psalm 8.**

Not only does Psalm 8 and its supporting passages emphasize oneness of humankind and nature, but these passages present a partnership of the two entities. First, the act of creation presents humanity and nature standing together side by side participating in this act of creation (Gen 1, 2; Ps 8). Second, they are both partakers of God's glory, which they are both to display to the world as an honour to Him (Ps 8:1, 5). Finally, they are bonded by the fact that their existence depends on the service that they are to give to each other (Ps 8:6; Gen 2:15,19; Ex 23:4, 5; Deut 22:1; 25:4). This constitutes their partnership.

##### **4.2.6.2.1 Human representation in the partnership of humankind and nature.**

One aspect of this partnership is the representative position that humanity occupies, and this representativeness has been noted also by scholars like Mays and Moltmann. To Mays humanity represents God to nature. "God didn't just make us; God made us both a representation and representatives of the reign of the Lord to the other creatures. The status belongs to the role per se, not to individuals or groups. It can be carried out only in identity with the whole and ultimately fulfilled only by the entire species" [1994:69].

As mentioned above, this human representation is supported by Moltmann, albeit, to him, humanity does not only represent God to nature, but it also represents nature to God. “He [man] stands before God as the representative of all other creatures. He lives, speaks, and acts on their behalf. ... They [human beings] intercede before God for the community of creation” [1985: 185- 190].

While Psalm 8 itself is silent about many examples that testify to this human representation, Genesis 1, 2 and other passages that share this interrelatedness of humankind and nature with Psalm 8, reflect this representation.

First, the entrance of sin in Eden did not bring death upon humanity alone, but that death became a phenomenon of all life [Genesis 3:19; 4:8; 7:21].

Second, the widespread corruption of humanity before the Flood was not only described as the corruption of all בֶּשֶׂר - which refers to both human and nonhuman created beings [BDB 1979:142] - but even the punishment that came upon the earth as a result of that corruption affected all בֶּשֶׂר, namely, both humans and nonhuman created beings (Genesis 7:21).

Third, after the Flood God made a covenant with humanity in which He promised never to destroy all life with water again. This covenant was also extended to include the rest of creation since humankind had entered into this covenant as a representative of creation (Genesis 9:9-13).

Unfortunately, one of the effects of human sin was, and still is, the strained relationship, that exists not only between humankind and other created beings, but even among these created beings themselves. The correction of this situation is anticipated only at the final restoration of everything. Then “the wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper’s nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” [Isaiah 11: 6-9].

These examples of the effects of human behaviour on the rest of creation are only a sample of many examples that not only underscore the unity of humankind and nature, but also endorse the representativeness of humanity in creation.

However, it seems that this representation of humankind does not remain unchecked by other partners. Many Biblical narratives suggest that nonhuman created beings have been used by God to call humankind to order when it goes against God’s will. First, when Adam sinned, the earth that had theretofore been at peace with him now produced thorns and thistles. From now on whatever he would get out of the earth would require toil and sweat from him (Genesis 3:18).

The same earth demonstrated its disapproval of Cain’s act of murdering his brother, Abel. “When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you” (Gen 4:12).

The apostasy of Israel in the days of King Ahab caused the sky to withhold its rain, and the sun to unleash its anger in scorching the earth. Consequently, drought, famine and death reigned on the earth for about three years [1 Kings 18:1].

Later, when the people who repopulated Samaria after the Israelites had been deported by Assyria mixed the worship of the true God with idolatrous practices, lions came to attack them [2 Kings 17:26]. In general, the sinful behaviour of humanity would cause that “the fear that all land, air, and water animals have, would not exclude their occasional rebellion against man’s dominion over them. They would sometimes rise and destroy man. Indeed, God used them, at times, to administer divine justice” (see Ex. 8:6, 17, 24; 2 Kings 2:24; 2 Kings 17: 25-28) [SDABC 1976: 262, 263].

In fact, God had forewarned the Israelites before they entered the Land of Canaan that any corrupted behaviour that they displayed in the land would invite reaction from nature. “And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you” [Leviticus 18:28].

Clearly, for human beings to hold such a great responsibility as that of representing this vast creation, calls for a close monitoring of their actions, for on those actions not only is their own destiny dependent, but there rests also the rise and fall of other members of the creation family. The two “are so integrally joined that what takes place in one sphere or realm has consequences on the other” [Kawale 1998:212].

#### 4.2.6.3 Conclusion

We stated at the beginning that we select Psalm 8 for exegesis because the psalm reflects holism or oneness and partnership of humankind and nature. To establish this fact we employed a close-reading approach which entails the scrutiny of the language, identification of the style of the passage, and the studying of the metaphors used by the writer.

Regarding the style of the psalm, we concluded that this is a hymn of praise where in the psalmist raised his voice in adoration of God's majesty which is manifested in His work of creation. Later this hymn could have been adopted by a singing group, as the phrase "choirmaster" in the title suggests. We pointed out though that there are grey areas which were raised by some scholars regarding our conclusion. But those concerns were addressed and explanations were provided.

Concerning the language, key words, such as the nouns that pertain to *humankind* and *nature*, in Psalm 8 were given attention in our verse to verse discussion. There are also nouns which are put into the addendum. Those nouns were considered and placed there because, even though they themselves do not appear in Psalm 8 they belong to the semantic fields of the nouns that appear in the psalm. Besides the nouns, there are also key verbs and adjectives that have been given attention. The psalmist has employed several metaphors to express his sentiments. He portrays nature as being the product of *God's fingers*, which does not only endorse God's mark of ownership of nature, but also expresses the carefulness and meticulousness that He displayed at creation in order for nature to reflect its orderliness and intricacy.

In addressing the important question, “what is man?”, the psalmist presents two sides of humankind by using at least three metaphors, namely, *the small children and sucklings*, *man* and *the son of man*, and *the ruler*.

*The small children and sucklings* concept highlights the helplessness, the feebleness, and the frailty of humankind. The condition is further emphasized by the concept of *man* and *the son of man* which do not only express human frailty but also express its transitoriness. However, just as *the small children and sucklings* derive their strength from the praise of God, which enables them to silence enemies, humanity also acquires its strength in this way. It is as humanity turns to God who continually cares and remembers it that it discovers that it is not only frail, feeble, and helpless, but it is also a ruler, and a creature that is akin to its Maker. Everything has been brought under its feet. The feeble nature and the elevated nature of humanity are put in juxtaposition. In God humanity finds an answer for questions around its identity. But, separated from Him, it remains a stranger to itself.

Not only does the connection of humankind to God help it to understand itself, but it also helps it to know its relationship with nature. God has bonded humankind and nature with ties that make it difficult for either of them to survive without the other. By being the products of the same creation, sharing the same divine glory, having been made to serve each other, and having other aspects that unite them together, God who is the center of this psalm has locked humanity and nature into holism or oneness.

God through humanity His representative reaches out to nature to govern and care for it. On the other hand, through nature He reveals Himself to humanity and shows His care for it. Neither of the two can survive without the other. Nor can they survive without God who is their center and the One who has enveloped them into holism or oneness with His majesty.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION AND A PROPOSED ALTERNATIVE MODEL OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMANKIND AND NATURE.**

#### **5.1 Conclusion.**

The problem that triggered this research was that a close study of Psalm 8 reflects a relationship between humankind and nature and this relationship suggests interrelatedness between the two entities.

The hypothesis that guided our study is that humankind and nature form oneness or holism, and partnership. Concerning the oneness or holism of humankind and nature, we mean that, while the two entities show differences, there are also similarities that unite them. Being in partnership means that they have certain things in their existence in which both of them participate. This oneness or holism and partnership has resulted in the interrelatedness of the two entities.

The results of the exegesis of Psalm 8, with support from Genesis 1 and 2, (which have been identified as the source of Psalm 8) and other cited texts that refer to the relationship of humankind and nature, suggest that there is indeed holism and partnership between humankind and nature. The holism revealed by the two entities is both uniting and at the same time differentiating between them. It unites them in that it recognizes their common



source of origin which is the creation, their sharing of God's glory, and the service that each is to give to the other in order for both of them to survive.

It also differentiates between them in that it recognizes human beings as different from other created objects. In fact, it not only distinguishes between human beings and other created beings, but it also makes a distinction among created objects themselves. These created objects are categorized as moon and stars; flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field; and fish and all that swim the paths of the seas (verses 3, 7, 8)

Humankind and nature are also portrayed as partners by the psalmist, for not only does their sharing of a common origin and God's glory unite them together as one, but it also makes them partners. The partnership that stems from their sharing of creation and God's glory seems to be intensified by their exchange of service with each other, which is crucial for both of them to survive.

This holism and partnership has confirmed our hypothesis presented in chapter 1.

## **5.2 A Proposed Alternative Model Of The Relationship Of Humankind And Nature.**

The results of our exegesis compel us to suggest another model of the relationship of the two entities. The reason is that the two models, namely, Seventh-day Adventist and Xhosa models, which were discussed in this dissertation and which were to inform our understanding of the relationship of humankind and nature, do not seem to reflect the exegetical findings of Psalm 8 in every sense.

As pointed out in the discussion, the Xhosa worldview of the relationship of the two entities presents oneness or holism that tends to ignore any difference between humankind and nature. For example, there is delegation of human roles to animals, so that these animals are made to represent human beings. They are also portrayed as providing protection, giving punishment, and even carrying messages from dead people to living ones. Some of them are even feared and revered as if they are human beings.

On the other hand, while the Seventh-day Adventist worldview of the relationship between humankind and nature has been shown to have a tendency to recognize unity and separation between humankind and nature at the same time, there are also other tendencies in the same tradition that seem to emphasize unity between the two entities such as to play down any separation between them, or to uphold that separation to the extent of denying any unity between them.

The model that we propose below is rooted in Psalm 8, and also reflects elements of the Seventh-day Adventist and Xhosa perspective, while it eliminates those areas in these worldviews that do not appear to harmonize with our interpretation of this passage.

This model has two characteristics, namely, oneness or holism, and the partnership of humankind and nature.

### **5.2.1 Oneness or holism of humankind and nature.**

The holism, which is a strong element of this proposed model, is derived from the Xhosa perspective of the relationship of humankind and nature. In the discussion of the Xhosa perspective we argued that these people have a holistic approach to life. Consequently, even their approach to the relationship of humankind and nature reflects this perspective. In other words, where other worldviews emphasize differences between humankind and nature, these people see holism of the two entities.

In some respects, however, the model we propose is also different from the Xhosa perspective. Its difference lies in that it recognizes a separation of the two entities within their oneness or holism. Humankind remains basically separate and different from nature and there is never an exchange of status between the two such as representation of humans by animals. One of the reasons for this difference is the fact that humans are created in the image of God, while other created beings are created according to their species (Gen 1 and 2).

Clearly, this interpretation of the relationship of humankind and nature is in conflict with the Xhosa perspective, which reflects this exchange of status and representation of humanity by animals.

This model has the support of one of the Seventh-day Adventist worldviews in chapter 2, which emphasized both unity and separation of humankind and nature. It is also rooted in Psalm 8, which presented the oneness or holism of the two entities because of their sharing

the same creation, the same divine glory, and rendering service to each other (Gen 1, 2; Ps 8:1,5).

These two entities began their journey of life together. The journey they began at creation continued through the sinful fall of humanity, and the results of that fall were also shared by both entities (Gen 3:17). The flood that was the punishment of sin, and which destroyed humankind, also affected nature [Gen 6, 7). The covenant that God made with humanity, that He would never destroy the world by water again, was also extended to nature (Gen 9). For the misbehaviour that humankind displayed, nature has been affected, or has reacted to it (Ex 8:6, 17, 24; Lev 18:28; 2 Kings 2:24; 2 Kings 17:25-28).

In fact, the two are so intertwined that an attempt to separate them would seemingly only make life impossible.

### **5.2.2 Partnership of humankind and nature.**

The second characteristic of this model is partnership. The relationship of humankind and nature shows partnership. A partner is a person involved in a common activity with another. Partners are two or more persons working together [Webster's New World Dictionary 1982:1036]. This is the kind of relationship of humankind and nature portrayed in Psalm 8.

First, the partnership happens because humankind in our model holds nature in high regard. It accords dignity to it. This dignity is rarely found in the worldviews of the West, which formed the Adventist background. The predominant attitude of humankind in the West, as

pointed out in chapter 2, is that nature is not only inferior to humanity, but is a machine to be manipulated, something to be subdued and overpowered. However, in our model nature is a partner and a neighbour with which to share life, cherished, cared for and protected.

As we indicated, this model is rooted in Psalm 8, in which we suggested at least two significant characteristics are revealed namely, the service-orientation of the relationship of humankind and nature, and the representation of humanity in this relationship.

#### **5.2.2.1 Service orientation of the relationship of humankind and nature.**

Concerning the service-orientation of the relationship of the two entities, we did not only indicate that these entities render a mutual service to each other, but we also demonstrated how each of them executes that service. (Refer to page 147). This disposition of service rendering appears to be embedded in the very nature of the two entities, according to White. “No bird that cleaves the air, no animal that moves upon the ground, but ministers to some other life. There is no leaf of the forest, or lowly blade of grass, but has its ministry. Every tree and shrub and leaf pours forth that element of life without which neither man nor animal could live; and man and animal, in turn, minister to the life of tree and shrub and leaf. The flowers breathe fragrance and unfold their beauty in blessing to the world. The sun sheds its light to gladden a thousand worlds. The ocean, itself the source of all our springs and fountains, receives the streams from every land, but takes to give. The mists ascending from its bosom fall in showers to water the earth, that it may bring forth and bud” [1940:20-21].

#### **5.2.2.2 Human representation in the relationship of humankind and nature.**

The second significant characteristic in the partnership of humankind and nature is the human representation. The human role of being a representative in creation has been noted by scholars such as Mays [1994:69]. These scholars have recognized that the governance or rulership role given to humanity in Psalm 8 entails this representativeness. Humans have been called to exercise rulership over nature as the representatives of God. This means that they are to govern as God would govern, were He Himself in their place. Care, justice, fairness, and mercy are some of the qualities that characterise God's attitude towards His creatures (Gen 1:15; Deut 11:15; 22:10; 25:4]

Second, to rule in the place of God also means that humans should exercise that rulership recognizing that they are not the owners of nature but merely representatives or stewards who are to give an account of their rulership to God, the true Owner of what has been entrusted to them.

Humans do not only represent God to nature, but they also represent nature to God [Moltmann 1985:185-190]. It seems that one of the ways in which humanity can represent nature is for it to live and act in a manner that will have a positive impact on nature. We pointed out in our exegesis of Psalm 8 that humans could not act in isolation from the rest of creation. Their behaviour, whether positive or negative, had an impact on nature. The sins that they committed affected it (Gen 3), the punishment that was intended for those sins, was shared by nature (Gen 6, 7), the covenant that was entered into with humans was also

extended to nature (Gen 9). There are many other examples that we cited that endorsed the representativeness of humanity for nature to God.

As has been mentioned, it is not only the negative actions of humanity that influence nature, but also the positive ones. God has promised that a total dedication of hearts to Him will result in the falling of rain, refreshing of grass, and the provision of food for animals (Deut 11:13-17). This healthy relationship between Him and humans will also result in a healthy relationship among natural objects themselves (Is 11:6-9).

Clearly, for human beings to hold such a great responsibility for representing this vast creation calls for a close monitoring of their actions, for on those actions is not only their own destiny dependent, but there also rests the rise and fall of other members of the creation family.

This is the model of the worldview of interrelatedness between humankind and nature that this dissertation proposes.

### **5.3 A brief reflection on the theological implications of the proposed alternative model on Seventh-day Adventist teachings.**

It was indicated in Chapter 1 that this dissertation will identify and highlight any theological implications of the relationship of humankind and nature that resulting from the interpretation we attach to Psalm 8 reflected in that chapter. The assumption there was that a shift in the understanding of the relationship of humankind and nature would inevitably

have implications for the current interpretation of certain theological teachings that are closely associated with humankind and nature. In this section we look at those implications.

As has been alluded to above, the discussion of these implications will be confined only to the theological teachings that are closely related to themes of humankind and nature, and this discussion will also occur in the context of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

### **5.3.1 The nature of humankind.**

The first theological tenet to be addressed is *The Nature of Humankind*. The point that we need to consider here is the dominion of humanity over nature. The issue is how this dominion fits into our proposed model. Since human dominion is often associated with the “image and the likeness of God”, which is said to be the context in which humankind was charged by God to rule creation [ Johsson 1988:130-31], we may address this “image and the likeness of God” as well.

It is true that the appearance of the two ideas, namely, the image and the likeness of God and the human dominion over other creatures [Genesis 1:27-28] in the same passage might have been intended to emphasize the influence that they were to have on each other. In other words, to have the image and the likeness of God would necessarily impact on the nature of rulership that humankind would have over nature. However, it is also true that the appearance of these expressions one after the other might just be a coincidence. One idea might have appeared in one passage, and the other elsewhere without affecting the purpose of their being included in this passage. The point is that for humankind to have the image of



God did not necessarily make it a ruler. In fact, the same phrase of *image and likeness* appears elsewhere with no association with rulership. “When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in *his own likeness, in his own image*; and he named him Seth” [Genesis 5:3].

It seems that the point of this expression, rather than addressing the question of rulership of humankind over nature, is to distinguish human species from other species that are also mentioned in the same chapter. Its utterance is very much in line with and achieves the same purpose as the expression *according to their kind* which appears five times, once after each item of creation, in the same passage [Genesis 1:11, 12, 21, 24 and 25]. This phrase *according to their kind* seems to be merely distinguishing each created object from other created objects by stating that that particular object is created after a particular kind. If this is true, then the phrase *being created in the image and the likeness of God* is merely distinguishing the human species from the other species that are in the same passage, by mentioning God after whom humanity is created. So to imply that this has anything to do with the *dominion* that follows, would probably be to read too much into this text. Truly, for humanity to be created in God’s image is elevating it higher than anything else that is created according to the species that have been mentioned in this chapter. Bearing this image would also influence their rulership positively. But this *image and likeness* does not need to be part of the rulership package.

Concerning the concept of human *dominion* over nature, the Book of Genesis says that humanity was charged with this responsibility. The Hebrew word used in Genesis 1:28 which is רָדָה and which is translated as “rule”, “subdue”, and “trample”, suggests a negative

kind of rulership [BDB 1979:921]. However, P.J Nel, as well as other scholars, suggests a positive rulership firstly, because the one who is a ruler here bears the image and the likeness of God. Therefore, that rulership needs to reflect this divine image. Secondly, רדו, an Akkadian word which shares the same root with רדה carries a positive meaning. The meaning of רדו is “to walk”, “to drive (animals)” or “to guide”. Its noun is רדוּם, which may be an attendant, an army or a troop of police [Nel 1997:8096]

Certainly, if indeed there is any relationship between these two words, then this suggests a sympathetic rulership of humankind. It is a rulership that is characterized with guiding and protection, rather than subduing and trampling upon. In the context of our model where humankind is ruling in partnership, this kind of rulership is fitting.

### **5.3.2 Sin and punishment.**

Regarding sin and its punishment, it has been pointed out that since human beings are in partnership with other creatures, the effects of their sin and its punishment do not affect them alone, but affect the whole body. [This issue has been given sufficient attention above.]

### **5.3.3 Stewardship**

This model lays great emphasis on the responsibility of human beings towards other creatures. Human beings are the stewards of these creatures. However, they do not carry

out this stewardship as people who come from outside the body, but they do their work as part of the body. Theirs is not just the fulfilling of a mandate. Rather, they carry out their stewardship with joy, for they realize that the interdependence that exists between them and the other creatures is such that what they do for the body will ultimately benefit themselves as well. For them to care for other members in the partnership to which they themselves belong is indirectly caring for themselves. Tilling the land and caring for animals and other creatures ensures their own sustenance, for these members of the partnership will in turn serve them.

Stewardship in this model is more than merely looking after a little forest here or there for the promotion of tourism. Rather, it is the taking care of the whole body of creation with which human beings are partners. The abuse or destruction of any created beings by human beings is an act of disloyalty to the partnership. It is a betrayal of the trust that other members have on the one who betrays them. Moreover, for humans to undermine the safety of these created beings is tantamount to undermining their own safety.

#### **5.3.4 Sabbath.**

The Sabbath teaching is another theological tenet that is very much intertwined with humankind and nature. Many times the keeping holy of the Sabbath seems to focus more exclusively on human beings. The model of partnership that we propose emphasizes the inclusiveness of this injunction. In other words, it is not humanity alone that is included in this injunction but other creatures too are considered. As people remember this day by resting on it, they are to release creatures under their jurisdiction from toil so that they also

participate in this rest. “But the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals. ...[Deuteronomy 5: 14; Exodus 20: 8-11]. Obviously, these creatures may not experience the fellowship with God and experience other blessings that the Sabbath brings in the way that humans do. Nevertheless, these animals are still not any less entitled to the Sabbath rest.

It is not only to human beings and the animals that God intends to give this rest. Even the land is expected to enjoy this rest for recuperation. “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a Sabbath to the Lord. For six years sow your field, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. But in the seventh year the land is to have a Sabbath or rest, a Sabbath to the Lord. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards’”, God said, [Leviticus 25: 2-4].

Therefore, humankind, as well as the rest of creation display holism or oneness and partnership in the manner in which they relate to the observation of the Sabbath. The Sabbath that is important to humanity is similarly important to the rest of creation.

### **5.3.5 The new earth.**

Even God’s final purpose of establishing a new earth, where the promised bliss will be attained, does not leave other creatures outside or limit itself to human beings. This humanity, which came all the way from creation in partnership with other created beings [Genesis 1, 2], suffered from the sin effects together with them [Genesis 3], were rescued

from the Flood together with them [Genesis 6, 7, 8], and entered into covenant with God together with them [Genesis 9], must complete this long pilgrimage together with them. The longing of humanity that is expressed in the words of the Psalmist: “Our God comes and will not be silent; a fire devours before him, and around him a tempest rages. He summons the heavens above and the earth, that he may judge his people: Gather to me my consecrated ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice” [Psalm 50: 3-5], is also shared by the rest of creation. “The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God”, says Paul [Romans 8: 19-21]. Indeed, when this glorious moment comes, humankind and nature will participate in it together. “The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper’s nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea”, says Isaiah [Isaiah 11: 6-9].

Not only humankind and animals are to participate in this change of things. Rather, other aspects of nature will also experience the moment of transformation and greatly rejoice therein. “The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.

The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendour of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendour of our God” [Isaiah 35:1-2].

So, to emphasize a glorious future for humanity alone, but fail to see the same future applying to nature, is a serious omission. These two entities equally share the same destiny.

In conclusion, as it was indicated earlier on, it must again be emphasized that the purpose of the above exercise is to prevent the Church from viewing the relationship between humankind and nature from only one theological angle. Instead, it must be aware that there are other angles as well, and this is one of them.

#### **5.4 A brief reflection on the ecological implications of the proposed alternative model.**

This study also has ecological implications. Here we refer to the manner in which human beings are to relate to their geographical environment. This environment involves water, vegetation, and other aspects of life. How human beings relate to this environment may be constructive or destructive.

The worldview proposed in this dissertation promotes a healthy coexistence between humankind and nature. This involves plants, water, animals, birds, heavenly bodies, and everything else that has been mentioned above and which comes under the influence of human beings.

The motivation in this relationship with nature arises from the awareness that nature is not just material for humankind to use, a machine to manipulate, a stage on which humanity is to act, but is also a co-member in partnership, and forms oneness with human beings. As was shown earlier on, human abuse of nature is tantamount to a betrayal of trust on the part of humanity, which other members of the partnership have in it. Moreover, this abuse leads to destruction of nature, which in the end destroys human beings themselves because of the interdependence between the two entities.

So, as a responsible copartner, a true representative of the group, and also for its own survival, humanity needs to maintain a healthy relationship with nature. This is a relationship not motivated by selfish reasons but stemming from love and also manifesting itself in the service of love.

### **5.5 The contribution of this study towards the current debate on the relationship between humankind and nature.**

*Humankind* and *nature* as themes have been studied intensively both separately and jointly. Regarding humankind, such aspects as the *image of God* [Jonsson 1988:1], *corporate personality* [Robinson 1981:7], *individualism* [Sherlock 1996:84-87], and other human aspects of special interest to scholars have been researched and studied.

Nature has also received similar attention, and issues such as the very idea of nature [Collingwood 1960: 1], *creation*, and *evolution* have all been areas of focus.

Even the studies on the relationship of the two concepts appear in a great deal of literature. Some scholars have expended their energy trying to prove the superiority of humankind to nature [Tillich 1951:168; Wright 1952:43; von Rad 1966:131-43; Berkof 1976:183 Childs 1985:199]. Many times this sense of superiority of humanity to nature has been seen to encourage the abuse of nature by humanity [Hefner 1984:204].

On the other hand, there are others who have elevated nature above humanity. And that also had its challenges in that many times nature ended up being venerated or worshipped [Smith 1936:42-44].

In all of these studies, the oneness or holism and partnership of humankind and nature does not seem to have been considered, particularly from a Xhosa point of view. It is this perspective that this dissertation is attempting to advance. It is saying that there is another way of looking at the question of the relationship of humankind and nature. It is hoped that this alternative will enrich the theological debate on this theme, and strengthen the continued endeavour of seeking Biblical truth.

## **5.6 Areas for future research.**

This study has highlighted areas that need future research. These aspects are as follows:

### **5.6.1 The origin of the Xhosa sacrificial system and its parallel with the Bible sacrificial system.**



**5.6.2** The possible belief in the existence of reincarnation in the Xhosa culture.

**5.6.3** Western influence on the modern Xhosa with regard to the concept of the relationship of humankind and nature.

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## ADDENDUM

The semantic field of humankind and nature.

### **Humankind.**

אִישׁ

אִישׁ, is rich with varied nuances. Starting with the definition on which most dictionaries agree, אִישׁ refers to a man as a human being or person Genesis 2:44 [Bratsiotis 1977:233]. This aspect is further emphasized when a contrast between God and human beings, and also between human beings and animals is being emphasized, Genesis 32:29; Exodus 11:7 [Kuhlewein 1997:104; Bratsiotis 1977:233]. In the preceding cases אִישׁ does not concern itself with the sexual distinctions in humanity but focuses on humanity as an entity or being.

However, there are Biblical instances where this distinction is the focus. A distinction made between a man and a woman in Genesis 2:24 is a good example [DCH 1993:222]. The second example is where this same distinction is made between a husband and wife in Genesis 3:16 [Bratsiotis 1977:233]. Another example is where Scriptures differentiate between the maleness of a child in Genesis 4:1 [BDB 1979:35, 36] and that of an animal in Genesis 7: 2 [Hamilton 1997:388, 389].

There are further nuances which are highlighted by some dictionaries, but receive no attention from others. There are at least two examples of this phenomenon where Bratsiotis

alleges that אִישׁ denotes an adult as contrasted with יָלֵד as shown in Genesis 4:23 [1977:233].

KB say that אִישׁ also denotes people of high rank as opposed to those of lower rank as shown in Psalm 49:2; 2 Samuel 10:6 respectively [1994:43].

In brief, while there are instances, as shown above, where אִישׁ refers to humanity in general and thus becomes synonymous with אָדָם [Isaiah 2: 9, 11], it seems to have a strong emphasis on the maleness of the noun which it represents.

## אִשָּׁה

According to most dictionaries, אִשָּׁה carries several nuances. Following are where these dictionaries agree: first, where a woman is contrasted with a man [Genesis 2:23]; second, where a wife is contrasted with a husband [Genesis 34:8] third, where אִשָּׁה refers to a step-mother [Leviticus 18:11]; and, fourth, where a distinction is made between a male animal and a female one [Genesis 7:2].

In addition to these uses DCH suggests that אִשָּׁה can also mean a concubine Genesis 30:4 [1993: 409]. The only concern with this rendering is that if it is applied here, it will have to be applied also to the second wife of Abraham, Keturah [Genesis 25:1] and the wives of Lamech [Genesis 4:23] for the same word has been used in all these cases. Perhaps, to maintain consistency and avoid confusion, it is better to keep “concubine” as a translation for פְּלִגְשָׁה and wife for אִשָּׁה.



Kuhlewein brings in the figurative use of אֶשָׁה to express cowardice Isaiah 19:16 [1977:188,189]. This seems to contrast strength and courage that is associated with אֲנָשִׁים in 1 Samuel 4:9.

Having considered all the meanings implied by this word, it seems that its main emphasis is to differentiate a female from a male.

### גִּבּוֹר

There is a consensus among the dictionaries about the meaning of גִּבּוֹר that it is a strong young man Proverbs 30:19. BDB point out that the emphasis of this term is to distinguish this strong man from women, children and non-combatants whom he is trying to defend [1979:149, 150]. The גִּבּוֹר without power is as good as dead Psalm 88:5. The strength referred to in גִּבּוֹר seems to go beyond just the physical strength of a man, but extends to his status, as is shown in the superior position afforded Jacob by Isaac over Esau [Genesis 27:29, 37]. Kosmala further adds a spiritual dimension of this strength, as it suggests that a man is called גִּבּוֹר when he stands in an intimate relationship with God [1977:379]. The emphasis of גִּבּוֹר seems to be on the male gender which symbolizes strength as opposed to the female gender.

### גִּבְיָה

גִּבְיָה refers to mistress, lady, queen mother Genesis 16:14; 2 Kings 5:3; Isaiah 24:2 [KB 1994:173]. This mistress may be in relation to the maid-servant Genesis 16:4 [Hamilton

1997:801]. The focus of גְּבִירָה is on the female gender, since the male gender would take a different form namely, גִּבּוֹר.

## זָכָר

זָכָר, in most dictionaries, refers to a man as opposed to a woman [Genesis 1:27]. This maleness can also be that of a child [Leviticus 12:2] or even that of an animal, especially a ram [Exodus 12:5]. Judging from all its occurrences, it seems that the emphasis of this term is on the maleness of the noun that it describes [BDB 1979:271].

## זָקֵן

זָקֵן is used to refer to either an old man or an old woman. Used as noun or an adjective, זָקֵן occurs 174 times in the Old Testament.

There is also a specialized sense in which זָקֵן is used and this is in reference to an *elder*. The elder was recognized by people for his gifts of leadership, wisdom and justice [Unger & White 1980:110].

## מְתִים

The meaning of מְתִים is “people” or “persons” Genesis 34:30. While the BDB suggests that מְתִים usually has less emphasis on gender [1979:607], Hamilton maintains that this is exactly

what **מָהוּם** means [1997:1147]. In fact, that emphasis denies it any synonymity with **אָדָם** that refers to humanity in general irrespective of gender [1997:1147].

This observation sounds strange because the texts like Genesis 34:20 and Job 11:3 which have used **מָהוּם**, seem to address humankind in general, which is one function of **אָדָם** rather than the gender of the person. If that is true, then **מָהוּם** is synonymous with **אָדָם**, at least in this particular respect. This is without denying the other aspect of **מָהוּם** which is the emphasis of the maleness of the person it addresses.

#### **נֶעֶר**

**נֶעֶר** refers to a male person at all stages of childhood. This is applicable before birth Judges 13:5, soon after birth 1 Samuel 1:22, on becoming a boy Genesis 19:14, and at the marriageable age Genesis 13:14 [Hamilton 1997:124].

This term is also regarded as denoting household servanthood Numbers 22:22 into which a free person enters by choice [TDOT 1977:483]. The emphasis of this word is on youthfulness. Its use is limited to the male gender, since it assumes another form, **נַעֲרָה** when it indicates the feminine gender.

#### **נַעֲרָה**

**נַעֲרָה** means a girl - young or of marriageable age Judges 19:3 and Genesis 24:14 - and a maid servant Genesis 24:61, according to most dictionaries. Some dictionaries suggest that

this girl can be a virgin, concubine or prostitute Judges 21:12; 19:3; Amos 2:7 [BDB 1979:655]. However, it is difficult to judge whether the נַעֲרָה in question is a virgin, concubine, or prostitute because there is no such description in the word itself. What leads the translator to give such qualifications is either the adjective that goes with נַעֲרָה itself e.g. בְּתוּלָה [virgin] or another indication in the text.

The emphasis of נַעֲרָה is the femaleness of the noun as opposed to נַעַר which represents the male sex.

#### נִקְבָּה

The word נִקְבָּה represents female. The following texts show that this can refer to a child, a woman, or even an animal: Genesis 1:27; Jeremiah 31:22; and Genesis 6:19 [BDB 1979:666]. נִקְבָּה seems to represent female sex in general and thus in this particular respect is synonymous with אִשָּׁה, נַעֲרָה, and גְּבִירָה.

#### פְּלִגֶּשׁ

The majority of dictionaries concur that פְּלִגֶּשׁ means concubine [Genesis 22:24]. Being a feminine noun and also associated with women in every Biblical text that deals with it, פְּלִגֶּשׁ seems to emphasize the femaleness of the noun it represents.

## NATURE

### Heaven

Below is the semantic field of שָׁמַיִם.

#### אֲגָדָה

The first word used to explore in the semantic field of שָׁמַיִם is אֲגָדָה. The meaning of אֲגָדָה is vault of heaven Amos 9:6 [BDB 1979:8; KB 1994:11]. It also implies what is firmly held together and tends to be used in reference to Yahweh's heavenly place on the earth or heaven [Hamilton 1997:253]. אֲגָדָה appears once in Amos 9:6, and besides this appearance there does not seem to be any indication of the number of its other occurrences. This appears to imply its insignificance in the Canon.

#### רָקִיעַ

The second word to investigate is רָקִיעַ. Some of the appearances of this word are in Genesis 1:6 and Job 37:18. Most dictionaries define רָקִיעַ as firmament, expanse, vault of heaven, which is regarded by Hebrews as solid and supporting water above it [BDB 1979:986; KB 1996:1290; Tsumura 1997:1198]. There is clearly synonymity between רָקִיעַ and אֲגָדָה above. This means that, while אֲגָדָה seems to stress the loftiness and firmness of God's dwelling place, רָקִיעַ emphasizes the flatness and the solidity of the firmament to support the water above it. Very much like אֲגָדָה above, רָקִיעַ too, does not seem to show any

significance in terms of the number of its occurrences for it appears only 17 times [Hayden 1997:83].

שָׁחַק

שָׁחַק, is the third word in our list. This word refers to the dust, clouds, sky, and heavens [Isaiah 40:15; Deuteronomy 33:26; Job 37:18; [KB 1999:1464; BDB 1979:1007]. Its characteristics such as the “sky” and “heavens” give it a strong affinity with שָׁמַיִם although שָׁמַיִם has a wide range of nuances, as shown above. Concerning the appearance of שָׁחַק in the Canon, this word has only 21 occurrences [Mitchel 1984:27].

## Earth

Below are the words that belong to the semantic field of אֶרֶץ.

אֶדְמָה

There is a consensus among most dictionaries on the significant nuances of אֶדְמָה include the ground or soil that produces plants Deuteronomy 7:13; property of land Genesis 2:5, 9; territory or country Genesis 47:19; the realm of the dead Genesis 4:11; and the whole earth or inhabited earth Genesis 12:3 [BDB 1979:9, 10].

The word אֶרֶץ and אֲדָמָה share a number of common features. For example, characteristics like ground Genesis 18:2; land, territory and country Genesis 10:10; and the totality of the world Genesis 2:1 that are expressed by אֶרֶץ are very much associated with אֲדָמָה as well.

However, אֶרֶץ also has other features that are missing in אֲדָמָה. As it was pointed out earlier, אֶרֶץ has frequently been used in combination with שָׁמַיִם Genesis 1:1, and even with שָׁמַיִם and יָמִים Job 9:8; Exodus 20:11; Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 69:34 to express the totality of created order [Schmid 1997:173; Tsumura 1997:160].

## תָּבֵל

The term תָּבֵל refers to the whole world as in Isaiah 14:17, and is a synonym of אֶרֶץ, [BDB 1979:385]. This term appears exclusively in poetic form [Wright 1997:272].

## חֶלֶק

The meaning of חֶלֶק is a portion of land, piece of ground, tract or territory [BDB 1979:324]. Biblical texts where this term is found are Genesis 33:19 and Joshua 19:9. Sometimes this חֶלֶק is used for a land apportioned to a particular tribe [Joshua 11:23]. According to the above definition, the emphasis of חֶלֶק is more on the fact that the particular land in consideration is a portion, rather than on the land itself.

## Sea

Following is the semantic field of יָם

גַּל

The first word in this semantic field is גַּל which refers to a body of water, or waves [Grisanti 1997:589]. Following are some of the Biblical texts where these two concepts are conveyed: Ps. 65:7; Ps. 89:9; Ps. 107:25, 29; Is. 51:15; Jer. 31:35; Jer. 5:22; Job 38:11.

The presence of גַּל seems to be very insignificant even though the actual number of its occurrences is not clear. Wherever this word has been used it seems to emphasize strength, power, and abundance [Grisanti 1997:589].

חֹל

חֹל is the second word in the semantic field of יָם. חֹל occurs 23 times in the Canon and it may be found in the following texts: Genesis 32:12; 41:49; Joshua 11:4; Judges 7:12; 1 Samuel 113:5; 2 Samuel 17:11; 1 Kings 4:20; Job 78:27; Psalm 78:27. Its meaning is mud and sand, and in almost all the texts presented above חֹל has been used symbolically to express the vastness of something [Grisanti: 1997:273].



חריפות.

The last word to deal with is חריפות which means grains of sand. חריפות appears only twice in the Scriptures and seems to refer to something crushed with mortar and pestle [Grisanti 1997:273]. Perhaps this small number of occurrences suggests its insignificance in the Canon.