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Editorial Office:

AL-ALBAB, Gedung Saifuddin Zuhri

Pascasarjana IAIN Pontianak,

Jalan Letjend Suprpto No. 19, Pontianak Selatan

Pontianak 78122, Kalimantan Barat, Indonesia.

Phone: (62-561) 734170 Fax: (62-561) 734170 ;

Handphone/WA: +6281256738348

E-mail: redaksi.bjrs@gmail.com

Website: <http://jurnaliainpontianak.or.id/index.php/alalbab>

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REORIENTING ECOLOGICAL PARADIGM FOR HARMONIZATION OF HUMANS AND NATURE: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Johanna Silvana Talupun

Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Ambon

Email: talupunj@yahoo.com

Eklepinus Jefry Sopacuaperu

Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku, Ambon

Email: ekleteologi@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The ecological crisis that is very alarming at the moment is caused by, among others, the “poor” ethics in the relationship between humans and the universe. Humans tend to see themselves as high and mighty, also the most decisive (superior). Conversely, nature is perceived as less important, of lower class, not human (inferior). Inequality in the relationship between humans and nature has further worsened the “ethical poverty” and the relationship is increasingly immoral. Thus, ethical poverty forms paradigm disorientation, dysfunction of action and disintegration of relations. Therefore, this article aims to reorient the paradigm, and to encourage the creation of harmonious relations based on a paradigm shift in favor of life. Everything begins with a search for social ethics that observes the events of the ecological crisis, investigates in-depth and hears various calls for a paradigm shift, identifies ethical-ecological principles and seeks a hermeneutical-biblical ethics as a religious interpretation that goes beyond the anthropocentrism of interpreting the holy scriptures. The method used in this research is a literature study. Data related to the issue of the ecological crisis was collected and then an in-depth analysis was carried out and finally conclusions were made. The issue of ecological crisis used as a reference in this research is the case of mining on Romang Island. This case is analyzed with a social ethics and a religious ethics approaches. The results of the analysis serve as a reference for transformative actions.

Keywords: Reorienting Ecological Paradigm, Harmonization of Humans and Nature, Maluku

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as a country of extraordinary mega-biodiversity because it is one of the countries with the richest biodiversity in the world, and its geographical structure has a very high endemism or the uniqueness

of ecology and organisms. All of this can become the basic capital of sustainable development. However, bear in mind that there has been serious environmental damage and alarming ecological degradation that threatens the sustainability of Indonesia in the future (Bagir, 2006). Data from the Global Footprint Network (2022) show that Indonesia is listed as one of countries that faces an ecological-biocapacity deficit by 38%. Meanwhile, the Global Forest Watch (2022) reported that in 2001 Indonesia had 93.8 Mha of primary forest covering 50% of its land area. However, in 2021 there was a loss of 203 Kha or equivalent to 157 tons of CO₂ emissions. The figures that show an increase in the environmental damage mean that there is a wave of ecological crisis that is hitting Indonesia both at the national and regional levels, in the provinces, districts and cities to the rural areas. This includes the province of Maluku which is an island province that has also been hit by ecological crises with regard to mining issues on Romang Island with various implications for environmental damage. The issues of mining on Romang Island is a portrait of reality that tells a miserable story of the ecological crisis in Maluku that should be seen not only as a socio-economic issues but also a question of the ethical dimensions that arise and ethical attitudes towards the ecological crisis that occurs. The social ethical perspective used to view the environmental crisis will focus on 2 approaches, namely the theoretical approach (social, philosophical, ethical theories), and the morality approach (law, ethical principles, values, norms).

A social-ethical perspective on the ecological crisis is needed because environmental ethics in religious (Christian) theology has long been neglected, since biblical eschatology has become a misinterpreted focus, at least at the popular level. The hope of the coming of the Last Day (Escaton) which is the orientation of religious life, often leads to a notion that the “current world” will be destroyed and a “new world” will come. Therefore, maintaining the “current world” is considered unnecessary, even futile. The future salvation will not involve the environment, as it will end the current world with all the ecological diversity in it (Mandaru, 2011). Therefore, the ethical response to the ecological crisis is very important not only as a manifestation of the moral-ethical responsibility of religions (Körtner, 2016), but also the religious public’s role (Sunarko, 2019), and it serves to empower religion (Sudiarja, 2006). The complexity of the ecological crisis must be approached collectively by involving multiple perspectives (Meylahn, 2015), including religion (theology) and philosophy (ethics) (Qodir & Singh (2021). Buitendag (2018) wrote that *“Many perspectives, including those derived from religion and philosophy, are needed in the important task of rethinking human-earth relations (ecological-harmonious relations)”*. The development of social ethics

in the ecological crisis is part of religious efforts to direct people to regular moral actions, and seek equality and avoid violence and brutality against the environment (Servatius Lon, 2020).

The current ecological crisis when viewed from an ethical point of view, is caused by the lack of ethical content in human relationship with nature. The lack of ethical content is because humans only value nature as a means to be exploited so that nature or the environment has no intrinsic values (Borrong, 1999). The “poor” ethical content in the relationship between humans and nature is viewed by Johan DeTavernier as having implications for the emergence of a “conflict of interest” between humans and nature, and therefore DeTavernier sees an ecological or environmental crisis as follows:

“Environmental crisis refers to mutual conflict between groups of people and nature as a consequence of human action such as can be considered undesired by people and undesirable for nature and animals”(DeTavernier, 1994).

The emphasis on the consequences of human action or behavior (as a consequence of human action) in the definition expressed is in line with the thesis put forward by A. Sonny Keraf who believes that environmental problems are moral issues, or the issues human action. He argued that today’s environmental issues inevitably stem from irresponsible human action that does not care about nature, and is only selfish (Keraf, 2010).

The two main pillars that contribute to the current ecological crisis are; first, the development paradigm that prioritizes economic growth, so that nature is only viewed as an economic value and not an ecological one. Second, exploitative-destructive behavior which is closely related to disproportionate consumption patterns (Borrong, 1999). Therefore, it is appropriate to say that ecological destruction is the negative facts of the globalization process that manifests in disproportionate consumption patterns. (Aria Dewanta, 2003). From here, the issue of consumption ethics also arises; especially regarding how to organize a proportional and non-consumptive pattern (Niemandt, 2015). Thus the current ecological crisis is merely the tip of iceberg of modernity in the fields of ethics, social, culture and spirituality (Callaway & Crisp, 2022). Solving the ecological crisis is not only limited to efforts to reduce CO2 emissions or reforestation of land that has already been burned, but it is broader than that, as the solution must address the relationship between humans and nature. The restoration of human relationship with nature must not only stop at the stage of restoring social relationship but also moral-ethical relationship. Because the real ecological crisis is not only a reality of the social conflict between

humans and nature in social space but also a moral conflict, a moral-ethical issue. (Bayu Risanto, 2016).

In addition, Anthropocentrism-Triumphalism also legitimizes destructive behavior towards nature which is viewed as a non-human. Dzwonkowska (2018) suggests at least two types of anthropocentrism that perpetuate acts of destroying nature. First, ontological-anthropocentrism which assumes humans as the center and the owner of a special position on earth. Humans are superior to biotic and abiotic creatures. Second, ethical anthropocentrism that limits intrinsic values only to humans, that nature has no intrinsic values, because nature is valuable insofar as it is used by humans. Thus, the ecological crisis has become a socio-religious-ethical issue that must be addressed wisely by involving the content of social ethics. Social ethics shows a very strong correlation between context and ethics (*ethics*) (Elsbernd, 2005), so that building social ethics is inseparable from the context of ethical-moral issues and how to communicate them with ethical dimensions or ethical aspects that are elaboratively dialogic (Folarin, 2011). In other words, it can be stated that there is no social ethics that does not start from a certain context, and there is no social ethics that does not consider that particular context. It means that building a social ethical response is in fact building a contextual theology.

In the context of Indonesia, the task of social ethics is to tell between good and evil, right and wrong, with three main motivations that characterize it, namely; first, to understand what is good and what is bad in this country. Second, so that bad and evil conditions will change for the better. Third, so that we change and become good people in the harsh reality of today or any future reality (Adeney Risakotta, 2003). Ethical (social) contribution to environmental issues as ethical-moral issues (Körtner, 2016)(Rossing & Buitendag, 2020) includes; (1) providing relevant ethical views and beliefs; (2) instilling basic and general ethical principles; (3) emphasizing the importance of a good inner attitude in humans who are responsible for their conscience; (4) introducing appropriate ethical norms. In the same tone, Bernard Adeney Risakotta (2003) emphasizes six methods of social ethics, namely: (1) moral rules and laws; (2) ethical principles; (3) social sciences; (4) inner transformation; (5) practice of virtue; (6) true stories. Social ethical response measures according to Mary Elsbernd (Elsbernd, 2005) are; (1) Taking into account the history or background of events/stories, (2) focusing on the problem, (3) setting the framework in responding to the situation, (4) searching for ethical-theological-biblical sources, (5) identifying ethical principles, (6) planning concrete strategies and establishing specific ethical norms.

SOCIAL ETHICS AND ECOLOGICAL CRISIS ON GOLD MINING IN MALUKU

There are three frameworks in environmental ethics (Elsbernd, 2005) namely: first, case study method; second, the inter-disciplinary approach; third, the religious ethical framework. The first framework views the problem of the ecological crisis that occurs on Romang Island, Maluku. The case study method used as a framework views the situation (context), the history of the problem or the root of the problem, then looks at the relevant ethical theoretical framework by considering existing government policies. After that, a social analysis is conducted to bring up ethical principles to guide the transformative actions. The ecological damage described through a case study on the mining activities on Romang Island, Maluku can be seen in the following facts.

PT. Gemala Burneo Utama was closed in 2017 by the Governor of Maluku Said Assagaf through the Governor's Decree. The Maluku Provincial Government closed PT GBU's mining activities due to environmental pollution and strong resistance from the community regarding customary rights which resulted in a court process. However, the company was back in operation, allegedly the new Governor of Maluku Murad Ismail gave a recommendation for PT GBU to resume exploration on Romang Island. (jpnn.com, 30 May 2021). The problems on Romang Island since the presence of PT. Gemala Borneo Utama have been very complex. Starting from the rift in the customary order due to the pros and cons of landowners, environmental damage caused by the excavation of mining pits, economic constraints due to a plants belonging to local residents in the mining area being destroyed, allegations of human rights violations as well as the threat of conflict and genocide. Findings by a team appointed by the University of Pattimura that showed that most of the residents in the village in Romang, namely the Hila, Jerusu and Solat, rejected the mining activities. The data collected by the Save Romang Coalition showed that 2,300 people out of a total of 2,560 Romang residents voted in the 2015 Regional Parliament Elections also rejected the presence of the company (*Save Romang*, <http://www.michr.net/save-romang.html>).

KontraS (Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence) reported that mining on Romang Island has been carried out for quite a long time. From 1988 to 1992, PT Muswell Brook Mining in collaboration with PT Ashton Mining conducted explorations on Romang Island but there was no continuation. Furthermore, PT GBU, which is a subsidiary of Robust Resources, entered into a contract agreement to explore a mining area of 25 thousand hectares of the entire Romang Island in 2008. The people of Romang

Island in the southwest region of Maluku Province, who mostly work as fishermen and farmers, feel disadvantaged by the gold mining activities of PT Gemala Borneo Utama, (GBU). The mining activities, which have been going on for about 10 years, are thought to have damaged the environment and contaminated the water in their place of residence. The water becomes cloudy, and the plants dry up.

KontraS found a number of alleged violations as a result of these mining activities. The staff of the KontraS Economic, Socio-Cultural Rights Advocacy Division, Rivanlee Anandar, said that the mining activities have caused damage to several types of vegetation, such as cloves and nutmeg. In addition, the previously abundant seaweed, now no longer exists. This mining activities, he said, is also thought to have an impact on reducing honey yields around the mining site due to the noise from mining equipment. Even though the majority of the people there work as farmers and fishermen, they are very dependent on nature (Pratiwi, 2016). In addition, there are also drilling errors that have a fatal effect on the quality of drinking water people consume, because it is not in accordance with the drilling guidelines issued by the government based on Law No. 1/2014 concerning Amendments to Law No. 27/2007 concerning Coastal Area Planning and Small Islands (small islands have an area of less than 2,000 km²) PT GBU, a subsidiary of PT Robust Resources Ltd, uses the forest area by obtaining a borrow-to-use forest area permit (IPPKH) from the Minister of Forestry in 2012. Based on KontraS report, exploration is not in accordance with IPPKH because the number of drill locations is more than 60 and the distance between holes is less than 10 meters (Buano, 2021). It is necessary to conduct an Environmental Impact Analysis (AMDAL) because of they use of chemicals such as mercury, etc. to break rocks and dig soil (wells). The residue of Mercury is mixed with water. Water is contaminated with these chemicals flows from the forest into people's plantations, polluting crops and long-living trees (Buano, 2021).

ADDRESSING THE THEORETICAL AND MORAL-ETHICAL ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

SOCIAL (ENVIRONMENTAL) ETHICS: THEORETICAL APPROACH

There are several theories of ecological ethics, namely: anthropocentrism (shallow ecological ethics), Biocentrism, Ecocentrism (Deep Ecological Ethics), and Ecofeminism (Keraf, 2010). Based on these ethical theories, it can be seen that the ethics of anthropocentrism characterize the ethical behavior (actions) of the companies that run mining activities on Romang Island, Maluku. Of the 9 emphases that Borrang uses as an ethical anthropocentrism group, there

are 4 emphases that become the company's orientation; (1) the main norm is profit and loss, (2) prioritizing short-term plans which are the interests of the company and do not consider long-term issues; (3) emphasizing economic growth and ignoring ecological concerns; (4) management of natural resources is for the human benefit (Borrong, 1999). In line with Borong, Keraf also classifies the activities of the PT. GBU company in conducting mining on Romang Island into "anthropocentric ethics or shallow ecological ethics" for 2 main reasons: First, the company ignores environmental issues that arise and have an impact on the people of Romang Island. Second, the company's focus is on short-term interests, especially economic interests (profit making). Negative impacts and long-term environmental damage are not a concern of the company (Keraf, 2010).

In addition, the actions of the companies that run mining activities that are not ecologically (environmentally) friendly and do not bother to address environmental pollution have made it difficult for the companies to be classified into biocentric and eco-centric ethics groups. Because a biocentric or eco-centric ethics according to Johan DeTavernier aims to find a way out of the conflict of interest that occurs between the human community and nature, among others through the Christian ethical way. The attitude of respect for nature is a fundamental attitude in the ethics of biocentrism and ecocentrism. This is not found in the companies' actions (DeTavernier, 1994). Regarding the case of gold mining carried out by PT. GBU, it also shows that changing awareness of the ecological-ethical framework is not enough because it requires another approach, namely "political ecology". This "political ecology" approach is interesting because efforts to study environmental change are seen as more complex than just bio-physical systems and it also concerns the distribution of power in a society. The "political ecology" approach helps to better understand the causal process of environmental degradation and why there is inequality in the control and use of resources. This approach also views environmental management from the perspective of environmental rights and justice (Bagir, 2006).

On the basis of the principles of rights and justice for the environment, there are two strategies that can be applied as part of "political ecology", namely: First, making structural changes to the legal framework and political practice of natural resource management, especially those that provide more opportunities and control for the regions, local communities and farmers/fishermen to access natural resources. This strategy is very crucial, especially with regard to changes in the legal substance concerning Natural Resources which are in favor of small, local communities, farmers/fishermen. Second,

strengthening local community institutions and farmers/fishermen. The process of agrarian politics, mining and other resource-based business issues have so far been more profitable for investors, company owners and state development politics that are not in favor of small communities, farmers/fishers and local residents who are victims, oppressed and powerless. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen local community institutions.

SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL ETHICS: MORAL APPROACH

Through the moral approach, the ethical principles can be developed and it paves the way to see the normative or legal-formal considerations of state law. Ethical principles that can be developed in responding to the current ecological crisis are as follows (Keraf, 2010):

First, an attitude of respect for nature. As moral actors, humans should have a moral responsibility to respect nature. Respect for nature is a basic principle for humans in building life in the order of the cosmos. Second, the principle of responsibility (moral responsibility for nature). The principle of responsibility is not only individual but also collective. The principle of moral responsibility requires humans to take real joint initiatives, efforts, policies and actions so as to preserve nature as a shared responsibility. Third, the principle of cosmic solidarity. Humans in viewing themselves as part of the whole universe evoke a sense of solidarity, a sense of shared responsibility as fellow beings in the cosmos, which is called cosmic solidarity. The principle of cosmic solidarity encourages humans to side with nature, be in solidarity with nature and oppose any actions that destroy nature. Fourth, caring for nature. Caring for nature is based on the fact that as fellow members of the ecological community, all living things have the right to be protected, nurtured, not hurt and always cared for.

In addition to the ethical principles, there are also several ecological principles suggested by Capra as put forward by Keraf (Keraf, 2014). First, the principle of interdependence. This principle aims to emphasize the essential reality in nature that ecological communities in nature, including humans, exist, live, and develop in a single chain that is inseparable from each other in the life's network of relationships. Second, the principle of partnership, the principle of interdependence can only be sustainable if there is partnership and cooperation among members of the community of life. Human community only develops sustainably in partnership with all components of life. Third, the principle of flexibility; this principle allows nature to adapt to various changes and conditions that arise in the process of natural development itself. With this principle, nature easily returns to maintain and sustain its balance and

integrity when dealing with or colliding with various deviations (anomalies).

Fourth, the principle of diversity; this principle is based on the attributes of nature and life in diversity. It is this diversity that allows nature and life to develop as they are, including opening up to independence and flexibility, accepting and absorbing various external influences while still influencing the development of other forms of life. The higher the diversity of life in nature, the more resilient the ecosystem is to various shocks and obstacles.

Ecological principles require the creation of a sustainable human community, based on the principles that apply in the ecological community. Therefore, the human community that has been mismanaged due to abandoning ecological principles must be reorganized, so that it is in line with the principles of ecological community life. Through this path, efforts are made to build a sustainable ecological community (Meylahn, 2015).

BREAKING DOWN ANTHROPOCENTRIC ETHICS AND BUILDING A PRO-LIFE PARADIGM

Proper ecological awareness is in fact only possible if there is a paradigm shift. Because the basis of ethical attitudes towards the environment must rest on a change of anthropocentric paradigm by not making humans the only central element of existence but seeing each microcosm with its intrinsic values. This sort of courage should constitute the basis of ecological appreciation (Callaway & Crisp, 2022). One of the uncivilized acts in this country is in terms of environment (ecology). The word “uncivilized” is contrasted with “civilized” which is closely related to the behavior of civil society which is concerned about nature (Binawan, 2007). So far, the “anthropocentric” notion has been accused of being one of the causes, even the main cause of the environmental crisis we are currently experiencing. The ecological crisis occurs because human behavior is influenced by the “anthropocentric” perspective (Keraf, 2010).

This “anthropocentric” view perpetuates “exploitative” efforts and actions against nature, even legitimizing various greedy actions that cause humans to take all their needs from nature without thinking and considering its preservation. By recognizing humans as the center, humans can freely take any action against nature; nature becomes constrained by destructive, exploitative and selfish human freedom. Humans and their interests are considered the most decisive in the ecosystem order. Humans and their interests have the highest value while everything else in the universe will only get value and attention insofar as it supports human interests. Therefore, nature becomes an “object”, a tool and a means to fulfill human needs and interests, and thus

nature has no intrinsic value.(Dzwonkowska, 2018).

In light of the above discussion, it appears that the current global crisis and ecological disaster are in fact caused by the crisis of the anthropocentric paradigm (Meylahn, 2015). Therefore, the paradigm shift will be used as a framework to find a new paradigm that serve as an alternative solution and an offer to replace the old paradigm which has experienced a crisis and can no longer explain the existing reality.

In response to the current ecological crisis, there are various calls for a paradigm shift as a form of solidarity with nature. Calls for a paradigm shift were heard, among others, first, ethics and morals. Studies on ethics and morals have shown that the environmental crisis actually stems from fundamental-philosophical errors in the understanding or perspective of humans about themselves, nature and the place of humans in the whole ecosystem. The error in this perspective originates from anthropocentric ethics and anthropocentric moral theological paradigms, which view humans as the center of the universe while the universe and other creations are only instrumental to humans. Even humans are viewed as rulers over nature who can do anything to nature. This perspective and paradigm give rise to exploitative attitudes and behavior towards nature. Because the problem is a perspective or paradigm of thinking, the improvement must also be about improving the perspective and changing paradigms (Kerf, 2010).

Second, the economy. Suryamaatdja argues that nowadays various environmental problems emerge due to human error in treating the economy and ecology. Humans follow an economic way of thinking that considers the natural environment (ecology) to be free, assuming that humans can do anything in terms of production. The emphasis on economic principles whose main concern lies in the productive function forms a mindset that prioritizes “the rate of economic growth” without paying attention to the consequences of ecological changes. The focus of humans on exploiting nature with this kind of economic principle for their own benefit and ignoring nature is one of the causes of the current ecological crisis. Therefore, it is high time we called for the importance of adopting a change in the value system, namely the exploitative economic perspective (paradigm).(Harun, 2013).

Third, biblical hermeneutics. The origins of the current ecological crisis are partly due to the biblical hermeneutics of the book of Genesis which places too much emphasis on anthropocentrism, rather than other aspects of nature. (Manus & Obioma, 2016). In this regard, Lynn White criticized the hermeneutic study of scripture in his 1967 article, *The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis*, which revealed that the historical root of the current

ecological crisis is the very view of Christian theology (Judeo-Christianity) which is anthropocentric and ignores nature. Christian teachings about human power (anthropocentrism) over the earth in Genesis. 1:28 resulting in today's alarming ecological crisis (Stanislaus, 2001)

In addition to Lynn White, there are other names such as Frederick Ferre who mentions two reasons as an ecological crisis, namely; theological roots which are a logical consequence of biblical hermeneutics and the roots of knowledge as a radical consequence of the development of science and technology in the western world, and also H. Paul Santmire who argues that there is a spiritual motive or impetus that moves humans to reach God in order to achieve salvation; because of that goal, nature is only a means of salvation and not an important thing; isn't nature important to be saved as well? Is it true that nature will also be saved along with humans? These views encourage revisiting the paradigm that has been prevalent so far (Harun, 2013).

Furthermore, John Cobb argues that science and Christianity cannot be contradicted because science is trying to find out what is in the universe and the events that occur in it. This shows the closeness between the Christian tradition and the world of modern science. Because of that closeness, Christianity has become less concerned with the impact of scientific and technological advances that destroy nature. Robert Setio criticizes Cobb's opinion by following the argument of Richard Dawkins who argues that between religion and science there is a sharp difference; the work of theologians and the church (religion) maintains the existence of mysteries while science uncovers mysteries, so that the way of thinking between religion and science is different (Setio, 2013).

Furthermore, Setio argues that perhaps the problem lies not in the fundamental similarities between Christianity and science, but in the dichotomous way of thinking: heaven vs earth. In the dichotomous way of thinking, heaven is viewed as the ideal and not the world, because the ideal is in heaven, the world is viewed as temporary so that nature becomes unimportant. The dichotomous-dualistic way of thinking that makes a distinction between spiritual phenomena (heaven) and physical phenomena (world) which sees the spiritual phenomenon (heaven) as more important, more noble, superior and even better than other phenomena (world). As a result, nature is placed inferior below heavenly phenomena, and because nature is in an inferior position, humans are free to treat nature arbitrarily. (Setio, 2013).

The anthropological concept of the universe is also very strong in Christian frame of thought which is influenced by the stoic philosophical idea which highly favors humans as the most noble creature because they have *pneuma* (spirit) implanted in the *physis* (body). *Pneuma* which is the emanation of

the *logos* will direct humans to have a *kathekon* (something more appropriate function) for human life itself. The universe only helps humans to reach human achievement. This stoic concept is also supported by the hermeneutic biblical view that humans are given the power to “rule over nature”. (Mali, 2008). The three appeals mentioned earlier indicate an imperative to move towards a paradigm shift from the old to the new paradigm. Because if our paradigm has not changed towards respect for all creatures, it will be very difficult to eliminate the dominative-destructive-exploitative attitude of humans towards nature. In this crisis people begin to question the “single paradigm”. At this stage, scientists no longer undergo the normal phase of science, because they are faced with the choice to maintain or return to the old paradigm or switch to a “new paradigm” to solve problems. Should the choice be switched to a “new paradigm”, a paradigm shift will occur and then a “scientific revolution” will also occur (WESSELS, 2020).

The ecological crisis is a result of the anthropocentric paradigm in the current global ecological crisis situation. And the “anthropocentric paradigm” is a paradigm that has been adhered to and has so many loyal followers, or is no longer able to explain the reality of the ecological crisis, then anomalies emerge. When these anomalies arise and cannot be explained by the existing paradigm (anthropocentric paradigm), then a crisis will form (paradigm crisis). And when there is a crisis of understanding and the existing paradigm (normal science) in this case the “anthropocentric paradigm” can no longer explain the crisis, at this point there is an urge to find a new explanation and understanding of a reality and the problems (the reality of the ecological crisis) with a “new paradigm”. The paradigm shift here involves not only fundamental changes in thought, understanding and perspective, but also changes in values and behavior based on a new particular paradigm (Keraf, 2014).

BEYOND INTERPRETATIONAL ANTHROPOCENTRISM OF RELIGION: A CHRISTIAN PRESPECTIVE

The hermeneutic biblical roots that contribute to the “anthropocentric” paradigm perpetuate the exploitative efforts towards nature through the textual legitimacy of the story of creation in Genesis 1 which tends to see humans as the “crown of creation” or “ultimate” creation of God. It must be admitted that the anthropocentric paradigm is dominant in the Bible, but that doesn’t stop us from blaming the Bible entirely. Because the problem often arises not in the Bible itself but in how to interpret it or in ourselves as readers (Setio, 2013). When Genesis 1 is used as the basis for generating an anthropocentric perspective, then the story of creation according to Genesis 1

must be interpreted in its entirety. The story of creation according to Genesis, Chapter 1, does not stop at the event of human creation (Gen. 1:26-27) but continues until Gen. 2:4 “This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created”(Folarin, 2011). After the creation of man on the 6th day, the story of creation did not stop but continued on the 7th day, and “By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work” (Gen. 2:2). Manus & Obioma, 2016) state that, “the creation hymn ended in seven stanzas” or it was in the seventh stanza that the creation hymn was ended by the creator. Furthermore, Stanislaus argues that the Divine Sabbath becomes a model for the human Sabbath, so that humans in carrying out all their work observe the “sabbath over nature” that is, to stop exploiting nature without limits. This is, as Stanislaus argued, an alternative answer to addressing the ecological crisis (Stanislaus, 2001).

Therefore, the “anthropocentric” paradigm which views humans as the center cannot be maintained and must be shifted and even transformed to a paradigm that makes God the center (theocentric) of all events of creation. Martin Harun (Harun, 2013) is absolutely right when saying that in the story of creation, there is in fact no absolute “anthropocentrism” or that it is separated from “theocentrism”. The “theocentric” paradigm becomes an alternative solution in responding to the ecological damage caused by the “anthropocentric” paradigm that has been adopted so far. The “theocentric” paradigm which sees God as the center, encourages changes in attitudes and behavior towards nature, from indifference to partiality. The act of partiality should be in favor of the sustainability of the created world (pro-life), because God who is the center is God who gives life and is in favor of life (Stanislaus, 2001).

Darmaputera (1996) reveals that siding with life is noble, even very sacred. According to him, in the dilemmatic choice between economics and ecology, it does not have to be responded with rejection or acceptance of one of the two. This means that ecological choices do not necessarily sacrifice the economy, or vice versa. Therefore, it he also emphasizes that we must go beyond the two choices, towards a more noble choice of life. It is explained in detail about the choice of “life” (pro-life) which is more than just “existing” physically but also “being” here, namely living in all its fullness quantitatively and qualitatively and not limited to only human life, but the life of all creatures, life that is *being for others* (Darmaputera, 1996). The “pro-life” paradigm in religious interpretation (Christian perspective) inspired by the “divine sabbath” in Gen. 2:2-3 (Manus & Obioma, 2016) brings about changes in life values and the relationship between humans and nature, from subject-object relationship, subordinate relationship, asymmetric relationship, even domination

relationship and human power relationship with nature, to relationship that are just, liberating and pro-life.

The principle of the “just” relationship between humans and nature is rooted in the “manna” story (Ex. 16:22-30). Epistemologically the term “sabbath day” first appears in the story of “manna” through the prohibition of collecting manna on the Sabbath. The story of manna according to Margaretha Hendriks-Ririmasse shows the dimension of ‘justice’. According to her, the theme of ‘justice’ framed the text of Ex. 16:22-30 which derives from the principle of taking as needed or in moderation. Therefore, the “theocentric” paradigm inspired by the “sabbath” is also a paradigm with the principle of “justice”. Anyone who observes the Sabbath should display justice in all aspects of life, including justice for nature and fellow creatures by not taking and destroying them arbitrarily.

According to the book of Exodus 20, the Sabbath commandment originates from the creation sabbath in Gen. 2:2-3. This is seen in verse 11 “For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.” It is clear that the divine sabbath became the pattern for the observance of the human sabbath. The two verbs that are typical of the Sabbath law according to Exodus are; “remember” (*zakar*) and “consecrate” (*qadas*). It can be further explained that the consecration of the Sabbath is intended to set the Sabbath apart from other days. However, the Sabbath according to the D school (Deut. 5:1-22) uses the word *shamar* --to keep/guard) which has more social motives than the Deuteronomy version which tends to be religious-liturgical. The basis of the Sabbath in the D school is the event of the liberation of the Israelites from slavery (Deut. 5:15). The idea put forward by the D school of thought is interesting because the Sabbath not only cover religious or liturgical aspects as in version E (Ex. 20). Stemming from God’s liberating work, the Sabbath in version D is a pro-life or liberation Sabbath. Sabbath is not only limited to humans, livestock but also the universe (earth). The earth created by God is freed from all actions of exploitation due to human greed. The response to God’s work of liberation must also be actualized through the liberation of all creation, so that the universe and the earth are also freed from humans’ cruel actions.

CONCLUSION

Humans’ understanding of nature affects the attitude they display. The anthropocentric paradigm is a paradigm that has been developed by humans towards nature and has contributed to the ecological damage that is taking

place globally, nationally and locally. In fact, the anthropocentric paradigm is considered the main cause of the current environmental crisis. Consequently, a paradigm shift (paradigm reorientation) is needed from an anthropocentric paradigm to a pro-life paradigm. This research recommends the importance of a pro-life paradigm that views life in all its fullness both quantitatively and qualitatively. The pro-life choice is interpreted as more than just “existing” physically but also “being” here. Nature must be treated as having intrinsic values and not merely instrumental values for humans. In Christianity, this paradigm shift can be achieved through a profound understanding of Christian teachings that originate from the Holy Scriptures (Bible). Good apprehension is largely determined by how to read and interpret the Bible. In fact, Christian teachings originating from the Bible have taught about harmonization between humans and nature. Harmonization must be applied in building the relationship between humans and nature.

The study of biblical texts, especially the Old Testament, shows that God wants humans to apply the principles of justice and liberation, and pro-life ethics. It aims to free nature from exploitative actions due to human greed. Humans must be able to take advantage of nature in moderation, and avoid excessive exploitation so as to properly maintain the balance of life between humans and nature.

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