

Prayer for Rain

A Pentecostal Perspective from Kenya

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Abstract

Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, has a population of 3.5 million people. The concentration of Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Nairobi, as in other African cities, has more than doubled since the 1970s. The Kenya meteorological department in June 2016 forecast poor short rains in 2016. By December 2016, the Thika Dam (Ndakaini), which provides 85 percent of the water used in Nairobi, was below the 50 percent level. This led the Nairobi water and sewerage company to issue detailed water-rationing programmes effective 1 January 2017. With dry taps across the city, actual effects of depressed rains were visible. Using fieldwork data, this paper examines the response, if any, of three Pentecostal churches in Nairobi in two separate month-long periods, July 2016 and January 2017, to the meteorological department and Nairobi water and sewerage alerts. Three services for each Pentecostal church were sampled, bringing the total number of church services to nine. From fieldwork data, a vibrant African Pentecostal eco-theology emerges, which is the greening of all of God's creation on earth. Using typologies available for defining the relationship between human beings and nonhuman nature identified within public theology discourse, I find that two of the congregations align themselves with utilitarian anthropocentrism and nature-centred approaches, while the other defies plausible positioning.

Pentecostal Christianity in Kenya traces its roots to the East Africa revival,¹ with the Balokole movement that spread from Rwanda into western parts of Kenya. According to Allan Anderson, the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement can better be

¹ Philomena Mwaura, "Gender and Power in African Christianity: African Instituted Churches and Pentecostal Churches," in *African Christianity: An African Story*, Perspectives on Christianity, series 5, vol. 3, ed. Ogbu Kalu (Pretoria: Dept. of Church History, University of Pretoria, 2005), 411–45.

understood as one concerned primarily with the practice of spiritual gifts and the experience of the working of the Holy Spirit. More recently, a distinction has been made between classical Pentecostals and newer Pentecostals. Yet common to these churches is that they all respond to existential needs according to an African worldview, offering a personal encounter with God through the power of the Spirit, healing from sickness, and deliverance from evil in all its manifestations.²

It is generally agreed that there are three broad categories of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in Kenya, namely classical, independent, and the Charismatic/neo-Pentecostal church types. The Charismatic/neo-Pentecostal churches are younger church movements, with relatively younger members drawn from across the Pentecostal landscape, and are characterized by an emphasis on salvation, deliverance, and lively worship. The classical Pentecostals uphold their links to early American and European Pentecostal churches, and stress faith healing, exorcism, speaking in tongues, spontaneous prayer, and prophecy, as well as emphasizing visions and dreams.³ Independent Pentecostal churches, like those founded by Africans themselves, are self-funding, self-propagating, self-supporting, and have limited or no links to Western-founded churches.⁴ Nairobi, like other African cities, has seen the concentration of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches more than double since the 1970s.⁵

In June 2016, Kenya's meteorological department forecast a poor short rainy season, indicating that the short rains in Kenya would generally be depressed.⁶ The Ndakaini dam in Muranga, Kenya, provides about 85 percent of the water used in Nairobi. For the dam to continually supply water, water levels have to be at least 60 percent. Due to failed rains, by December 2016 the level was 47 percent.⁷ A rationing programme of 16 percent was implemented to ensure consistent water supply to April 2017.⁸ In this

² Allan Anderson, "The Newer Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches: The Shape of Future Christianity in Africa?" *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 24:2 (2002), 167–84.

³ Damaris Parsitau, "The Civic and Public Roles of Neo-Pentecostal Churches in Kenya (1970- 2010)" (Unpublished PhD thesis, Kenyatta University, 2014).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Gwyneth H. McClendon and Rachel Beatty Riedl, "Individualism and Empowerment in Pentecostal Sermons: New Evidence from Nairobi, Kenya," *African Affairs* 115:458 (2015), 126.

⁶ Kenya Meteorological Department, *Review of Rainfall during the "Long Rains" March to May (LAM) 2016 & June-July-August (JJA) 2016 Seasons and the Outlook for the October-November-December (OND) 2016 Season*, Issue Date 5/9/2016, Ref. No KMD/FCST/5–2016/SO/03.

⁷ Ndakaini dam has a capacity of 70 million cubic metres. However, at the start of 2017, it only had 32.7 million cubic metres.

⁸ See the entire weekly programs, https://www.nairobiwater.co.ke/images/public_notice/WATER_RATIONING_PROGRAM.pdf.

article, I consider Pentecostal congregations' responses to the meteorological forecast and water-rationing announcements in the months of July 2016 and January 2017, asking: How may we discern their responses to poor rains and the subsequent dry spell?

Protestantism does not have a single eco-theology,⁹ and neither does Pentecostalism. This leaves room for several creative possibilities on the African continent. The question of what a Pentecostal eco-theology might actually look like has been attempted, and one position advanced in detail is a Pentecostal eco-theology from a pneumatological perspective.¹⁰ In other circles, this has been amplified by emphasizing a reading of contemporary environmental concern as a response to the prophetic voices of nonhuman nature, and in that sense as a movement of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the cry of the earth, given out and heard in the Spirit, is seen as the effective prophecy.¹¹ Kenyan Pentecostals add to this answer by attending to the dimensions of space perceived by Africans, which, according to Kalu, include (1) the sky, wherein the supreme being is manifested as the sun, thunder, lightning; (2) the earth, with the earth deity responsible for human, plant, and animal fertility; and (3) ancestral spirits or the spirit world, in which physical nature such as rocks, streams, and trees are imbued with divine power. All realms of life are sacralized and there is nothing in the visible world that has not been predetermined in the invisible realm. This organic worldview in which the three dimensions of space are bound together generates a tendency to seek divine intervention, cure, or diagnosis.¹²

Method

In this study, participant observations were made across three Pentecostal churches in Nairobi in two separate month-long periods, namely July 2016 and January 2017.¹³ Recordings of messages and prayers during services were made and transcribed.

⁹ Robert Fowler, *The Greening of Protestant Thought* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 3.

¹⁰ Digging deeper into the theological paradigm of Pentecostalism, Swoboda identifies four pneumatological themes which he utilizes as the framework of a Pentecostal eco-pneumatology. These themes include spirit baptism, the spirit of charismatic community, the holistic spirit, and the spirit of eschatological mission. See Aaron Jason Swoboda, *Tongues and Trees: Towards a Green Pentecostal Pneumatology* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2011), 35.

¹¹ Rachel Muers, "The Holy Spirit, the Voices of Nature and Environmental Prophecy," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 67:3 (2014), 323, 336–37.

¹² Ogba Kalu, "Preserving a Worldview: Pentecostalism in the African Maps of the Universe," *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 24:2 (2002), 119–22.

¹³ Extensive fieldwork was carried out in two of the selected Pentecostal churches in 2016 and 2017, as they formed part of a research project in which I took part and whose focus was on Female Pentecostal-Charismatic (PC) Preachers in East Africa.

The month of July 2016 was selected because this was the month following the meteorological department's warning of poor rains. January 2017 was sampled because it was the month in which water rationing took effect. An analysis of messages, prayers, and remarks referring to the water shortage and failed rains was made. In general, this study made a critical analysis of variant responses, if any occurred, to the meteorological warning and the resultant water rationing. Three services for each Pentecostal church were sampled, bringing the total number of church services sampled to nine.

The three selected Pentecostal churches were Jesus is Alive Ministries (JIAM), Faith Evangelistic Ministry (FEM), and Parklands Baptist Church (PDC). According to Philomena Mwaura, FEM and JIAM are examples of neo-Pentecostal churches that gained prominence in the 1990s, are Pentecostal in character, and are influenced by international Pentecostalism.¹⁴ PBC has not been satisfactorily classified within Pentecostal typologies.¹⁵ In the ensuing analysis, Pentecostals' responses to poor rains and water shortage were discerned from three suggested typologies for defining the relationship between human beings and nonhuman nature identified within public theology discourse:¹⁶ (1) utilitarian anthropocentrism, (2) a nature-centred approach, and (3) anthropocentrism of responsibility.¹⁷

¹⁴ Mwaura, "Gender and Power." Ogba Kalu suggests that influential women in African Pentecostalism may be categorized variously as temptresses, pastor's wives, and founders and leaders of support ministries. Further, he identifies Wairimu and Wanjiru as founders. See Ogba Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹⁵ Clearly, there are differences between Baptists and Pentecostals. Baptist theology emphasizes the adult decision to become a Christian, the importance of water baptism, and joining a particular congregation as a sign of conversion having a particular historic experience. See Brian Howell, *Christianity in the Local Context: Southern Baptists in the Philippines* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 179. Indeed, it has been aptly argued elsewhere that there are Baptist communities around the world that have been greatly influenced by Pentecostal growth. As such the *practice* of the Baptist faith in different contexts varies, presenting a variety of shades under the same umbrella. An in-depth analysis of this phenomenon in Argentina has been done already: see Hans Geir Aasmundsen, *Pentecostals, Politics, and Religious Equality in Argentina* (Boston, Mass.: Brill 2016), 140–44.

¹⁶ Key features of public theology include its interdisciplinary character and its engagement with contemporary issues, such as the ecological crisis. There is a general consensus that the term "public theology" is disputed. Further, a diversity of theorists are occupied with public theology, and there is no single normative way of undertaken it. See Eneida Jacobsen, "Models of Public Theology," *International Journal of Public Theology* 6 (2012), 1, 8. Foundationally, public theology presents an opportunity for theologians and other scholars working to pursue interdisciplinarity of theological inquiry into contemporary public issues. See Will Storrar, "A Kairos Moment for Public Theology," *International Journal of Public Theology* 1 (2007), 1, 5.

¹⁷ Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, "Tilling and Caring for the Earth: Public Theology and Ecology," *International Journal of Public Theology* 1 (2007), 2.

Jesus Is Alive Ministry (JIAM)

JIAM was founded by Margaret Wanjiru in September 1993. In 1997 she was ordained pastor, and in 2002 she was ordained bishop by Bishop Arthur Gitonga of the Redeemed Gospel Church. Wanjiru is the first woman to be ordained a Pentecostal bishop in Kenya. She can be said to have challenged the conservative Pentecostals that restrict the levels of women's ritual status.¹⁸ Although Wanjiru started street preaching in the early 1990s, she moved to her Haile Selassie premises in 1998. In the same year, she began her televised show, *The Glory Is Here*.¹⁹

Faith Evangelistic Ministry (FEM)

FEM is a ministry started by Rev. Teresia Wairimu. In the early 1990s, she became the first female preacher to hold regular revival crusades at Uhuru Park grounds. It was estimated that the venue was home to an audience of no less than 300,000 people every month.²⁰ FEM metamorphosed into a family church. On 14 August 2016, the FEM church building in Karen, Nairobi, was dedicated, costing more than one billion Kenya shillings.²¹ The opening of the building was highly publicized and aired on Kenyan national TV channels such as K24, Citizen TV, and NTV.

Parklands Baptist Church (PBC)

PBC began in 1967.²² From 1993 to 2000, a sanctuary that seated 3,500 was constructed in Westlands and was dedicated on 16 April 2000. PBC has a team of pastors led by the senior pastor, Rev. Ambrose Nyangao, who is assisted by associate pastor Rev. Simon Mwangi. According to Daniel Kinyua, there is significant numerical and qualitative growth at PBC. He estimates that the depth of discipleship at the church is

¹⁸ Ogba Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 151–52.

¹⁹ See Damaris Parsitau, "Arise O Ye Daughters of Faith: Women, Pentecostalism and Public Culture in Kenya," in *Christianity and Public Culture in Africa*, ed. Harri Englund (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2011), 131–45; and Loreen Maseno, "The Glory Is Here! A Critical Appraisal of Slogans Used by Kenyan Female-Charismatic Church Leaders for Self-legitimation" (Unpublished paper presented at the Glopent Conference, University of Uppsala, Sweden, 10–12 June 2016).

²⁰ Damaris Parsitau and Philomena Mwaura, "God in the City: Pentecostalism as an Urban Phenomenon in Kenya," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae: Journal of the Church History Society of Southern Africa, University of Pretoria* 36:2 (2010), 95–112.

²¹ Loreen Maseno and Christopher Odhiambo, "Contesting the Framings of Congregational Space: Contrastive Narratives on Faith Evangelistic Ministry (FEM) Sanctuary" (Unpublished paper presented at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 22–23 March 2017).

²² Daniel Kinyua, "The Impact of Discipleship on Church Growth: A Case Study of Parklands Baptist Church, Nairobi" (Unpublished Master's thesis, Daystar University, 2000).

such that it covers all ages and status of church attendees.²³ PBC operates based on the practices of the Southern Baptist Convention of the USA.²⁴

Praying for Rain at JIAM, FEM, and PBC

Pentecostals' attitudes to the environment are varied. Much of their environmentalism, similar to fundamentalist Protestants, is based on the concept that science and technology are the cause of the ecological crisis, while at the same time taking science as an authority on matters of ecology. Neo-Pentecostals, like fundamentalist Protestants, consider the great commission to be of utmost importance: this should be the primary focus, given that God shall, in the end, make a new heaven and a new earth, bringing all creation to a new order.²⁵ This line of thinking was demonstrated through the cases of JIAM and FEM. The muteness of FEM, however, does not mean that there is no emphasis on other things that seem important to their cause, such as evangelism. It would appear that they consider that what God has ordained for this world shall eventually come to be, and that they should trust in God. This is unlike PBC, where the congregants to some extent attempt to articulate environmental concerns.

The three services sampled at JIAM include the services of 8 January 2017, when Bishop Wanjiru preached on the topic of setting goals; 10 July 2016, when she spoke on blessings and curses; and 24 July 2016, when she preached on breaking demonic vows.

Cumulatively in these services, little reference was made to meteorological reports. Indeed, neither of the services in July 2016 acknowledged the situation in the country or in Nairobi. The services mainly focused on preparing the congregation for the sermon of the day, presented by Bishop Wanjiru. The 8 January service at JIAM did contain explicit reference to weather patterns, but rains were mentioned in reference to the planned outdoor evangelistic meetings organized by the ministry. During the church service, Bishop Wanjiru encouraged members to give offerings and tithes, and also to give toward the evangelistic open-air meetings that the ministry was holding across Nairobi. She then called out:

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Greg Horton and Yonat Shimron, "Southern Baptists Change Policy on Speaking in Tongues," CharismaNews website, 15 May 2015, <http://www.charismanews.com/us/49661-southern-baptists-change-policy-on-speaking-in-tongues>.

²⁵ Fowler, *The Greening of Protestant Thought*, 3–46.

Where is Rev. Duncan gone to? He is the man who understands all the weather. He is the weatherman in this church. Yes, weatherman, Father Duncan. *Mvua imeisha tuingie crusade ama ni aje? ... Imeisha? ... Hakuna Kumesha tena? ... Imeisha until April? Sawa.* Good. (Have the rains stopped so that we [can] get to the crusade grounds? Or how is it? There are no more rains? ... The rains have ended until April? Fine. Good.) Yeh, he knows when it rains, when it will stop – he is the weatherman. Me, some of those things I don't even understand. They catch me unaware. No umbrella and – *sbo!* – it's raining. Duncan will always know that soon there will be rains. I don't know: short rains, long rains, eh. So we can resume the crusades now the rains are over, and the Lord bless us as we go to – I think its Kasarani and Roysambu, one of those areas. God bless you as we move together.

JIAM's response to the onset of rains shall be examined in the context of the three suggested typologies for defining the relationship between human beings and nonhuman nature²⁶ identified within public theology discourse. According to Bedford-Strohm, utilitarian anthropocentrism sees human beings as the centre of creation and overwhelmingly views nonhuman nature as a “thing” of purely instrumental value for use by human beings. This perspective emphasizes human power over nature, firming up the biblical idea of human beings' dominion over nature. At the same time, the milder form of utilitarian anthropocentrism does not regard nature as a “thing” anymore, but recognizes the value of a sustainable natural environment, while still basing this value on human needs: for example, the desire to leave the earth to our children in a condition that will sustain them.²⁷

Bishop Wanjiru's focus was on getting the church to carry out crusades in different regions of Nairobi. This being her priority, she did not let the issue of the rains disrupt her meetings, but rather used it to further her projects. There is no reference to “dry taps” in her statements of 8 January 2017, even after a water-rationing schedule had been effected in Nairobi. This may be explained variously: perhaps she lives in a region of Nairobi where water shortage is not acute because it has access to reserve water; perhaps the effect of rationing had not been felt in her residential area by 8 January; or perhaps rationing was not something new to her and her congregation, and hence did not merit much attention.

However, her discourse places human beings at the centre of creation in asserting that all forces should work toward the good of humans. Through the crusades, she is reaching out to fellow humans who, as her evangelistic crusade mantra holds, are crucial.

²⁶ The notion of a relationship between humans and nature has been problematized as one that fosters a logical disconnect. See Ernst Conradie, *An Ecological Christian Anthropology: At Home on Earth?* (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2005), 211–12.

²⁷ Bedford-Strohm, “Tilling and Caring for the Earth,” 235–36. For a sustained discussion on Christian anthropology, see Conradie, *An Ecological Christian Anthropology*.

The importance of human beings in this case overrides that of the environment in terms of rains or weather patterns, and as a result, other forms of creation are subject to the whims of humankind. In this case, she is firm in her belief that because there will be no more rains until April 2017, this is good. Although crops and livestock and other creation need some rain, it is not important in her overall programme.

On the other hand, it is notable that Bishop Wanjiru demonstrates that she does not even understand some of these issues (related to weather patterns). She further states that she is not familiar with problems such as long rains or short rains. This position may be understood within the framework of utilitarian anthropocentrism: one cannot ignore the lack of direct concern and clear disinterest in her statements above.

It is also important to note Bishop Wanjiru's role as a gubernatorial candidate for Nairobi county in 2017, and as a result needing to get out to meet the voting population all around Nairobi. As she spreads the gospel, she also uses the same platform to campaign and seek out votes. In this way, her priority is not the dry spell in Nairobi, but her political aspirations and reaching the masses.

Faith Evangelistic Ministry (FEM)

The three services sampled for FEM were on 10 July, 17 July, and 31 July 2016. In these services, the preachers were, respectively, minister Raymond Muthama on the topic "Arise quickly"; Erastus Maina on the topic "From here to there"; and pastor Pauline on Joshua 3:14.

In these services, little reference was made to the impending failed rains. This could perhaps be because the specific preachers were not directly affected or did not have direct concern about the issue, or because they had limited time to speak on their given topics. In all three meetings, Rev. Wairimu was invited onto the stage right after the sermon to sum up, and in her concluding remarks – whether a call to more prayer or prophetic declarations – she made no reference to the poor rain forecast. It may also be that the sampled services were the ones in which she did not make any mention of this subject.

In general, this specific Pentecostal congregation provided little evidence of the topics of the environment, climate, water, and rain situation in the country. This could also pass as outright disregard of matters related to rains. Such a conclusion would be in line with findings from a survey across 100 Pentecostal church sermons in Nairobi between August 2013 and June 2014, whose content analysis

provided five common topics, none of which included the environment or climate change.²⁸

According to Jeffrey Goins, Pentecostals express little concern about environmental problems as a result of the Pentecostal worldview, which values the supernatural and sees nature as subordinate, dependent, and temporary. He asserts further that the environmental crisis is not a pressing issue for Pentecostals because they view the natural environment as only of relative value, due to be destroyed ultimately. In sum, he notes that the reasons Pentecostals lack concern about the eco-crisis can be found in the Pentecostal tradition, their views of human and natural history, and their interpretation of scripture.²⁹

Parklands Baptist Church (PBC)

The three services sampled took place on 10 July 2016, 8 January 2017, and 15 January 2017. During the service on 8 January 2017, the preacher was senior pastor Ambrose Nyangao on the topic “Theme 2017.” Nyangao stated,

In 2017, God is the sufficient one. My brother was talking about the needs you have, the school fees you have and all the kinds of business you have, and this is an interesting month because sometimes it can be very hot and there is no rain and there are farmers who need water upon their gardens. Let me say this, when you see these kinds of things sometimes you just look for a verse. Let me give you one verse – Zechariah 10:1 – especially for the farmers right now. Zechariah 10:1 is an interesting verse for them. And we shall be praying for rain. This is what the Bible says: “Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.” So I want to declare this, for those farmers who are listening to me right now in Jesus’ name: may the Lord give you rain. We are not only talking about the real rain but we are also talking about God’s favour raining in your life, especially in the month of January, when some people are looking for jobs as they don’t have jobs.

²⁸ A detailed study of Pentecostal church programmes and sermons in Nairobi revealed that these congregations emphasize the following topics: “Faith, Overcoming Victim Mentality”; “Money through Giving, Praise, Investment”; “Abundant Future through Purity”; “Fighting”; “Suffering and Perseverance.” In sum, the sermons pointed to mental transformation, individual capabilities, self-worth, the need for perseverance, and spiritual warfare for success. See McClendon and Riedl, “Individualism and Empowerment in Pentecostal Sermons,” 133–40.

²⁹ Jeffrey Goins, “Expendable Creation: Classical Pentecostalism and Environmental Disregard” (Unpublished Master’s thesis, University of North Texas, 2007), 8–21.

During the service on 15 January at PBC, associate pastor Simon offered this prayer:

As we lift our hands to God, may we together ask for rain because God is the rainmaker and the streams of God are full of water. My God, we pray very quickly that may you send rain in the name of Jesus because you are able. My God, may you fill our dams again, may you fill our rivers again. May you fill our farms again with water. May we see green everywhere all over this country. Lord, we ask for rain today and we know you hear us and will answer us.

These statements make clear that PBC leadership is aware of the failed rains and the effect of water rationing. The words thus imply that they are in touch with the real-world situation. At the same time, their outlook is that in which the farmers, the crops, the garden, and dams are well watered. The Nairobi people's water is supplied by the dams: and when the dams are watered, the supply in the city should return to normal. Bedford-Strohm asserts with reference to the nature-centred approach that human life is embedded in nature and both are an expression of God's creative power. The orientation is toward the earth as a whole and all its parts, whether they are alive or not. In this approach, reference is further made to honour God's continuing creation and God's continuing presence in creation.³⁰

Pastor Simon's prayer clearly calls for the greening of the whole country. The prayer anticipates that all dry areas be made green and that rains will come, as God is the rainmaker. Simon's prayer demonstrates God's activity in the affairs of humans and God's continuous intervention in creation. The reference to God as a rainmaker in the prayer opens up parallels with African Traditional Religions. Pastor Nyangao recognizes farmers' need for water, which allows the crops to grow and provides food for many people in Kenya. The dependence of humans on the earth and vice versa is clear in all its parts. Further, he makes a metaphoric use of the word "rain" with reference to God's favour.³¹

A vibrant African Pentecostal eco-theology, taking from Pastor Nyangao, makes declarations of what it envisages. Along with taking comfort in the Bible, we see a clear demonstration of authority and direction through declarations that differ from prayer. At the same time, African Pentecostal eco-theology adds to the debate of whether the Bible is a cause or cure for ecological crisis by asserting that the Bible is part of the cure for the crisis, as seen in its usage at PBC.

³⁰ Bedford-Strohm, "Tilling and Caring for the Earth," 237.

³¹ One consequence of highlighting rain as metaphor is that this may displace attention from actual ecological concerns.

An African Pentecostal eco-theology considers the greening of all of God's creation on earth. Pastor Simon's reference to the greening of the country suggests that this is what is actually envisaged all the time, in contrast to the spells of drought the country has experienced. Such green theologies can be gleaned within African Pentecostalism and point to two things: (1) stewardship, wherein PBC evinced references to the farmers tending to their crops, pointing to care of the crops and nonhuman nature for the good of all creation; and (2) ecofeminism, with its rejection of subordinating any part of creation to demonstrate that all creation is important.

One similar feature in all the churches considered here – JIAM, FEM, and PBC – is the fact that their environmentalism is oral in nature. There is a marked emphasis on oral tradition, especially in third-world forms of Pentecostalism. Indeed, it has been noted that African oral theologians are less likely to publish theology, and rather allow theology to remain rooted in the oral traditions of their community of faith. This does not lend itself to synthesis with ecological issues, which are traditionally deeply informed in written tradition.³²

Conclusion

The responses of Pentecostals to meteorological alerts and poor rains in Nairobi are clearly varied – ranging, as shown through this contribution, from those who are aloof to the issue to those who show some concern. These findings have some limitations, in that the sampled services in each case may not have captured all positions held by the congregations. Nevertheless, it is clear that even across one city's Pentecostal landscape, we can find a range of responses to environmental issues.

In these cases, I discerned at PBC a sensitivity to the concept that humanity is embedded in nature and in some way equal with other parts of creation. In the case of FEM, the lack of any mention of the subject in the sampled services seemed evidence of a disregard of the matters. And at JIAM, the leadership revealed a somewhat casual attitude toward environmental problems. In cases where actual prayer was made for rain, this only occurred much after the actual water rationing was in effect. While one might argue that the prayers should have started much earlier, this fact demonstrates a lack of serious consideration of meteorological alerts in all three congregations.

Contrary to the general assertion that Pentecostals have no concern about environmental problems, these cases present a continuum in levels of basic concern. The effectiveness of their concerns, besides prayer, needs also to be demonstrated clearly in the

³² Swoboda, *Tongues and Trees*, 114.

context of a public theology discourse. Such a discourse would engage Pentecostal sensibilities to provide an African Pentecostal eco-theology that counters the criticism of Pentecostals' seeming delinquent attitude toward the environment.

Protestants in Nairobi are cognizant of environmental science, as demonstrated by the use of words such as “weatherman,” or even the phrasing “rains to fill the dams and green the country.” Science is therefore alive in their parameters of thought. However, disagreements do occur: not on what science says, but on how to conceptualize the Pentecostal ecological agenda and, further, on how to act on it.