

AFRICAN JOURNAL

OF CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS, EDUCATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

(AJCREES)

VOL 1 NO:1

ISSN: 2276-8394

Editor

B.A.C OBIEFUNA, PhD

AFRICAN JOURNAL OF CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS, EDUCATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY (AJCREES)

EDITED

BY

B.A.C OBIEFUNA, PhD
*Nnamdi Azikiwe University,
Awka,
Nigeria*

ISSN: 2276-8394

Vol 1 December, 2011

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Editorial Team</i>	ii
<i>Call for Papers</i>	iii
<i>Table of Contents</i>	iv
 Reforming the Education Sector in Nigeria: The Role of Alumni Associations <i>Prof D. I. Denga,</i>	 1
 Indigenous African Technology: The Loom in Traditional Tiv Textile Industry <i>Agba Terna Paise</i>	 4
 The School as a Medium of Holistic Development for National Growth <i>Egbunu, Fidelis Elejo, PhD</i>	 11
 Availability and Utilization of Educational Activities in Enugu State Secondary Schools: Implications for Educational Administration <i>Dr. C.O. Odo</i>	 15
 Teachers Perception of In-School Adolescents' Sexual Behaviour in Benue State-Nigeria <i>Anyalewa Alan-Ajonye</i>	 22
 African Religion and Environmental Protection" The Tiv Experience <i>Terna Afella</i>	 27
 Secret Societies in Traditional Africa and Secret Societies in Tertiary Institutions <i>Kuzhe D. Lasson</i>	 31
 Tiv Modern Burial Rituals and Concerns for the Physical Environmental <i>Andrew, Philips Adega</i>	 35
 Harnessing the Relevance of Traditional Governance for Political Stability in Nigeria: The Case of Attah of Igala in Kogi State <i>Okpanachi, A. Idoko & Usman, S.O</i>	 43
 Traditional Authorities in Nigeria: Relevance and Challenges <i>Ogunleye Adetunbi Richard, PhD</i>	 56
 Traditional Moral Values: An Instrument for Cultural Identity <i>Johnson Blo Malgwa</i>	 62
 The Tor Tiv Titular Institution and the Problem of Authority <i>Andrew, Philips Adega</i>	 68
 Marxism as a Tool for Social Change in Nigeria: A Theatrical Analysis <i>Dr Ben Due Iyav</i>	 77
 Dwindling Male Teachers in Enugu State Secondary Schools: Issues for Educational Administration <i>Dr. C.O. Odo</i>	 84
 Existentialism as an Ontological Formulation about Man and His Existence: An Ethical Overview <i>Egbunu, Fidelis Elejo (PhD)</i>	 89
 Art in Igala Culture: An Exercise in African Aesthetics <i>Okpanachi, Anthony Idoko</i>	 94

Chieftaincy Institutions Among Yoruba Muslims in Nigeria: Contemporary Issues and Challenges <i>Kamal-Deen Olowale Sulaiman</i>	100
African cultural Responses to Environmentally Prescribed Conditions: The Case of the Iggede of Central Nigeria <i>Victor Iyanya, PhD</i>	107
Chieftaincy Titles in Yorubaland and their Implication for Growth and Tolerance Among Christians and Muslims <i>Dr F.T. Lateju & Olusegun Oladosu</i>	115
Prophets and Profits: Pentecostalism as the New Face of Nigeria's Multi- National Corporations <i>J. M. Ayuba</i>	120
Re-Thinking Biodiversity Loss and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: The Akwa Ibom State Experience <i>Dominic A. Akpan, PhD</i>	125
Religion and Culture as Instrument for National Unity <i>Johnson Blo Malgwa</i>	130
Impact of Population Pressure on Health and Productivity in Nigeria <i>Dominic A. Akpan, Ph.D</i>	135
Inculturation of Christianity and the African Response: Insights from the Second Vatican Council <i>Meh A. Ejeh, Ph.D</i>	141
Craftsmanship, Environmental Degradation, and Planetary Sustainability: Biblical Lessons for Twenty-First Century Africa <i>Igbakua Iorjaah, PhD</i>	149
The Tiv Familyhood, Procreation and Infertility <i>Utua Terzungwe Peter</i>	156
Indigenous Approaches in Food Production and Environmental Sustainability <i>Joseph S. Gbenda, PhD</i>	160



CRAFTSMANSHIP, ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION, AND PLANETARY SUSTAINABILITY: BIBLICAL LESSONS FOR TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY AFRICA

Igbakua Iorjaah, PhD
Department of Religion and Philosophy,
Benue State University, Makurdi

Abstract

From the biblical perspective, the universe of existence is a result of God's creative activity. At the summit of this "very good" creation (Gen 1: 31), God placed man, made in his own image, to ensure its harmony and development. Man, the only being with intellect, as God's image-bearer, has rightly understood his position in the material universe as responsibility to use his intellectual capacity to control the created world for "man's good" (Gen 1: 26-31). One however, observes that human creativity oozing from man's desire to live up to his responsibility, is in discord with humanity's "authentic good", which is central in God's charge to man. Nature has been reduced to a mere object to be manipulated and exploited. This improper application of man's great advances in science, technology, the economy, and the liberal arts to the various fields of human life apparently threatens rather than enhances the dignity of man and planetary sustainability. This paper serves as a reminder and warning concerning the adverse consequences that abuse and damage made to the material universe have caused and are causing on planetary living and sustainability, and to suggest a way forward. For a methodology, the paper employs theological analysis of the biblical teaching on creation as the basis of assessment of issues involved in man's relationship to the environment.



Introduction

In our twenty-first century world there is a serious crisis in the relationship between man and the rest of the environment of existence. The nature of this crisis is that humankind have a duty to keep and till the planet earth (Gen 1: 28); that is, to maintain the health of the planet and to ensure its long term sustainability by embracing the principle of “eat to live”. Or as the Tiv of central Nigeria put it, “*ya na anmgbian*,” literally, “eat and give a brother.” Yet, what is obtained today is that humankind have undermined the health of our planet by their prevailing attitude of greed; man tends to see the earth with its resources merely as an object to be manipulated and exploited especially by means of technology, and that without regard even to the dignity of the human person (Pontifical Council 2005:250).

Scientific and technological advancements to be sure, have brought rapid positive changes in human life; they have increased both the human persons' awareness of themselves and of their environment, and have provided them with technical means of fostering their existence on earth. Man's economic fortunes have also greatly improved. Ironically, however, these advancements have been lopsided, with the less privileged of society receiving the negatives of development. Industrialization has made some nations and individuals affluent while others get poorer—at the expense of the rich ones. But when these poor people react to the injustices meted out to them by the more favoured few, say by emigrating in search of greener pastures, there is recoil on the wealthy few in terms of increase in crime rate, population explosion (in regard to wealthy nations that monopolized wealth), etc.

The problems oozing from changes in the social order have become particularly acute because they are usually accompanied by changes in attitudes, morals, and religion. These are changes which call accepted values into question, especially among the youths who for reasons of their distress become impatient and sometimes rebellious (Gaudium et Spes 1965:798). Recently, Africa has been having more than a fair share of this imbalance in man's relational attitude to the ecosystem via technology. In Nigeria, this imbalance has manifested itself in youth restiveness, the eruption of ethnic militia groups and the ugly trend of abductionism etc. in protests against the exploitation of the environmental resources. In consequence, many lives of the poor masses in the areas being thus exploited have been lost. It is in view of the negative impacts of this trend that this study examines man's relational attitude to the environment from socioeconomic and ethical perspectives on the basis of the biblical teaching. To be sure, there is a sad correlation between caring for the downtrodden and caring for a damaged earth because environmental degradation most deeply affects the poor.

Some fundamental questions then pop up: Why is humankind behaving the way it is doing? How can they develop more acceptable relationships with the

pleroma (fullness) of existence? Put differently, what can humankind do to reverse the damaging effects of human activities on planet earth? Various people have attempted different answers to these questions depending upon their backgrounds and concerns. This paper is not concerned even to mention the commonest of them; rather, it focuses on examining the root cause(s) of contemporary environmental crisis from the perspective of the Bible and the Church's social teaching. It dissects the models that govern present-day attitudes toward creation and technology. Finally, a theology of stewardship is presented, which reflects on the relationship between ecological ethics and social and economic justice and offers some suggestions on how we can develop a specifically biblical environmental ethic.

Conceptual Clarification

All over the world, there is the chorus of disapproval of environmental degradation. This concept is understood differently by various people depending upon one's perception of the term “environment”. The present writer conceives the environment holistically to include the water, land, and air with all their spatial and material content, as well as and especially, the human person with all their activities. The basis for this perception is the idea of interdependence, the idea that according to Marian Chertow (1998), “each of the parts of an environment—air, water, and soil—depends upon the others and upon the plants and animals living within the environment” with broad and diverse implications at every scale. Sallie McFague (2002:120) makes the idea sharply pointed: “human beings, while being greedy to be sure, are even more needy. After all, they, we, depend on the health of all the other parts of the planet for our very existence.” Interdependence in this perspective evinces the concepts of justice and well-being that embrace the entire planetary existence. Environmental or ecological crisis is thus, not just a question of the pollution of the soil, air and water and their consequences on man's health. It includes social and economic concerns. All of creation, including dying nature as well as oppressed peoples, is within God's “economy”, God's “household”. And this household of God, the planet earth, can only flourish when its resources are distributed justly among all its inhabitants—human and non-human alike, and on sustainable basis. This agrees with the African view of man as a microcosm in relation with the macrocosm (Ray 1976:133-35). That is the symbiosis of man, the cosmos, and the spiritual beings or regulatory forces that co-habit the universe with man. These latter impose some serious ethical demands for the maintenance of the equilibrium necessary for their co-habitation which must be respected (Imasogie 1987:50-52).

On the basis of this perception of the environment and environmental crisis, the present author understands “environmental degradation” as the abuse or damage made to any or all of the component parts of the whole environment. One ugly expression of

such damage to the environment in contemporary world pertains to the pollution of the dignity of the human person. This is the specific concern of this research; it calls to question the ethical and rational basis for the situation where a small hegemony of the technologically privileged and so more "developed" human world (20% of it) exploits the majority of fellow humans. It especially questions the degradation of the less developed or developing nations through selfish economic policies and activities that consign the less privileged humankind to inhuman conditions.

General Survey of Environmental Concerns In Nigeria

The concern of this section is to show how technology developed in the advanced nations is being used to exploit Africa, using the case of Nigeria, without giving thought to or else brutally ignoring the effects such exploitation has on the people now and on subsequent generations. As intimated above the world's environment is changing very fast due to the interactive effects of human activity which pollute the air and cause both harm to crops and human life-threatening illnesses. In Nigeria, industrial outfits, many of which are located in some residential areas, are a major factor in environmental damage. These outfits release harmful chemical waste products into the environment to the disadvantage of public health. An instance is the uncontrolled dust from Benue Cement factory chimneys that has rendered the fertile land of Mbayon people unfit for crop growth. Much of our water is being destroyed through the use of chemicals such as pesticides and herbicides and the extensive use of phosphates and nitrates as fertilizers. These first, destroy the soil and then, enter the rivers through rain water runoff and ground water seepage. They deplete the oxygen in water, resulting in much loss of life under the waters, apart from rendering such waters unfit for human consumption. There is also the subtle destroyer of environment recently introduced to our country: the Genetically Modified (GM) foods and crops. This is a recently developed technology by which genes are modified (incorporating new or removing certain genes from given organisms) to alter the characteristics of such organisms and create genetically modified organisms that can then be used to prepare Genetically Modified crops and enhance quality food production and animal species. As Dick I. Gernah (2007:4) notes in his well-articulated paper, the fact of its newness and the controversies associated with genetic engineering, especially as regards the uncertainty of their effects on the environment, make Nigeria's acceptance of the technology and its products a serious threat to the environment. "In Nigeria, there is a trial farm at IITA Ibadan for transgenic maize".

More than anything else is the exploitation and transportation of large quantities of petroleum products through land pipes and tankers. By this process oil spills from normal tanker operations and sometimes large scale tanker accidents and pipe leakages have had

disastrous effects on human life and vegetation. One only needs to refer to the 2006 mass-burning due to petroleum explosion incident in Lagos for such instances. Another form of degradation closely related to that of oil production is gas flaring, the process of burning off the high amount of gas content in Nigeria's oil reserves, which is seen by oil drillers in Nigeria as the only way possible to get rid of the gas being released during the oil drilling process. Gas flaring has serious negative health effects albeit the oil companies continuously insist on perpetrating it. This is a bird-eye's view of the human-environment relational state in Nigeria. Conversely, basic human needs are not being met; the worst forms of environmental degradation in Nigeria are, to be sure, those that reduce the quality of life for people and other living things. These take the form of social and economic pollution.

We have good cause to worry about environmental degradation in Nigeria because such abuse and damage have serious consequences on planetary living. They are a risk to human health as in the case of contaminated water and terrestrial environment that congregate to shorten life expectancy of the people. Average life expectancy for most Nigerians has remained about 55 years with a tendency to further decline over against what is obtained in places like the United States where average life expectancy has gone beyond the mid seventies. This becomes particularly disturbing when one finds no ready answers as to why, on the average, Nigerians die young and in many instances from respiratory, gastrointestinal or other inexplicable diseases. The following lament of R. S. Oluamabo (2007:11) corroborates this concern:

In Nigeria there are pockets of information of increased frequency of respiratory infections among certain category of workers. For example workers in cement factories and tyre manufacturing factories are reported to present with frequent complaints of cough and dyspnoea. In Paediatric practice in Nigeria and other developing countries, the top three causes of morbidity and mortality are malaria, acute respiratory infections and diarrhoeal disease. All three can be linked to unfavourable environmental situations. Malaria through the presence of breeding grounds of the vector brought about by an unhealthy environment, respiratory infections through air pollution and diarrhoeal disease through contaminated water.

Environmental assaults are also a risk to any nation's political health as was the case when some 45 million people of the Soviet Union who were worst affected by the pollution of that nation's over 3.5 million square kilometres of soil joined forces in protests, and environmental degradation became a catalyst for ending communist mismanagement in 1991 (Chertow 1998). Nigeria is already experiencing the pressures of "the national question" in form of ethnic militia groups like the Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC), Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Niger Delta Volunteer Force, the Chicoco Movement, the Ijaw

Youths, Arewa Peoples Congress (APC), and religious militia groups in Northern Nigeria (Adejumobi Ethnic Militia). Environmental damage levies heavy costs on a people and the worst hit are the poor and vulnerable—when for instance, they are forced to rely on imported food because of crop failures due to such damage. Above all, environmental degradation causes serious loss of human life as when Ken Saro Wiwa and his fellow activists were executed in 1995 by the repressive Sani Abacha regime, for protesting unmitigated oil pollution and consequent environmental degradation. Despite such consequences of environmental damage on planetary living, humankind is perpetrating it with impunity.

The Roots of Environmental Crisis and Present-Day Attitudes Toward Creation and Technology

This section aims to consider the first of the two salient questions of this work, namely why humankind is relating so poorly with the *pleroma* of existence. But first, a framework of the original state of the environment according to biblical records will be made to help in focusing the paper's viewpoint.

Environment in God's Creation State

What was the world like when God created it? According to the biblical portrait, the earth was in a "very good" state when it was created—"God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). The created world thus depicted is by its nature, a unity. All its components are interdependent. The phrase "heaven and earth" in the creation story of Genesis 1:1 expresses the totality of the created order—the earth and all terrestrial components, the heavens and all celestial hosts, and the waters with all its elements. Each of these components of the created order has a function in God's economy (plan) of the environment, which is of service to the others. Day and night are meant to separate light from darkness, the seas were created to collect water and make room for dry land, the earth is meant to support vegetation; vegetation and animal life in turn are meant to support human life as food and for other purposes such as respiration; the lights in the expanse of the heavens are to separate the day from the night, and to be for signs and for seasons and for days and years and to give light on the earth; the function of man in that *pleroma* of interdependent existence is to "rule over all the earth" which was entrusted to humankind (Gen 1:26).

This analysis confirms that the earth was in a "very good" state indeed when it was entrusted to humankind. Whence then comes its degraded form? From biblical records, the directive to man to—"rule over all the earth"—seems to present enormous problems to humanity in the course of their endeavour to fulfil that function. With passage of time man disobeyed God by violating the environment in his interaction with it; *he ate more than his fair share* and became accursed along with the earth that was entrusted to his care which he violated (Gen 3:17-19). Faced with the consequences

of the curse—their expulsion and the anguish of loneliness—Adam and Eve, now by themselves, resorted to environmental exploitation by cutting fig leaves to cover their nakedness of God's power and maintain their personal dignity. From thence on man has increasingly continued in these harmful attitudes toward the environment that have become great values of modern man and named technology.

The Environment in Fallen Man's Hands

It will be noticed that from the outset, the human person's relational attitude to the environment had been selfish. He cared for himself at the expense of the other components of the environment; today, this includes even fellow humans. This concern for "self" has become a motivation for man to strive to master the material universe through natural science and technology, and man has made great advances in this endeavour. Research in the empirical sciences has led to the discovery of the laws of nature upon which further discoveries in the physical world are being made. The formidable possibilities of research in the biological sciences have led to the development of new forms of animal and plant life apart from advancements in the experimentation regarding the origin of human life itself. Technology has improved man's means of transportation with the development of the automobile, aircrafts, and water ships; it has improved communication through the telephone, health provision through the wide range of machines to scan the human body system, etc. and man is today building a home in the space!

These scientific and technological advancements, to be sure, have brought rapid positive changes in human life; man has become more aware of who he is, he knows more about his environment, he has acquired technical means of fostering his planetary existence and has greatly improved his economic fortunes. However, these advancements have become the prime problem of man; or one may say have made man to become a problem to himself. Because of his advancement in science and technology owing to his intelligence and creative activities, which have transformed him socially and culturally, man has at once hope and anguish. On the one hand, science and technology have greatly increased man's power so that at times man no longer has control over such power as is evident in the several nuclear accidents that have destroyed thousands of human lives in the so-called developed nations, not to mention the more complex problems such as the devastating effects of the cold war, the battle for the world leadership by these nations etc.

On the other hand, when man probes his recesses, he is left even more uncertain about himself. He continues to fear a missing link that may be a threat to his existence. This has further set man's mind on conquering the space—an endeavour which, we noted, has been motivated by man's attempt to cope with the exigencies of his separation from God and further spurred on by his tendency towards greed. But this has

thrown man into inestimably lamentable anxiety because of continually evolving problems. One of such problems is the depletion of natural resources. As Marian R. Chertow (1998) writes,

The rapid advance of technology threatens the supply of resources. For example, the use of electrically powered machinery in the United States and other industrial countries has greatly increased factory production. But at the same time, it has reduced reserves of oil and other fossil fuels needed to produce electricity. *These fuels cannot be replaced after they are used* (emphasis mine). As power production increases, the supply of fuels decreases. Since the 1950's, power production has increased so greatly in the United States that the nation began to experience a fuel and power shortage during the 1970's.

It thus becomes clear that fear caused by man's unseen problems is a major factor of man's greed. Petroleum exploration began in Nigeria in the 1950s, and its exploitation in 1970s, just the time United States and other Western nations began to experience fuel and power shortages. The link is clear; the exploration was to find alternative source of fuel for their power engines. Today, Nigeria's crude oil is the 6th (?) largest source feeding America's petroleum refineries without genuine concern for the state of the environment of the source.

The apparent reason for this exploitative attitude is greed—the desire to have more than is necessary or fair. Human greed has led man to think and act according to the dictates of scientism and technocratic ideologies that are built upon and promote a vision of man and things which is sundered from any reference to the transcendent (Pontifical Council 2005:251). Having lain off conscience—the element in human intellect which makes man a sacred being—the result is as the World Bank Economist, Herman Daly has written, “we are treating the Earth as if it were a business in liquidation. The word ‘development’ has evolved from improving the quality of life for humans to ‘an economic activity that fed the belief in endless growth.’” Man's greed itself has a motivating factor, namely the “self” in man. Man believes that he is more important than all the other members of the ecosystem called the Earth. Thus, from a biblical scholarship perspective, the cause of humanity's environmental crisis is man's overly anxious desire to control the material universe for the betterment (called development) of the human person.

Indices point to the fact that underdevelopment prevails on the global and national levels alike because as Pope John Paul II (1987:19-20) noted, the concept “development” is narrowly conceived on economic terms—as industrialization and provision of infrastructure to overcome economic backwardness of poor nations. This perception of development is largely responsible for the widening of the gap between the poor and the rich (developing and developed) nations and between individuals. It explains why some parts of the world have abundance of goods and services whereas in parallel areas, populated by the major part of the human race, there is unacceptable absence of the production

and distribution of foodstuffs, drinking water, housing etc., and life expectancy continually shortens.

A fundamental question then throws itself up immediately: How can more acceptable relationships with the world be developed? In other words, what can be done to counterbalance the damaging effects of human activities on this planet? This question is an ethical one which to be sure, derives from the biblical perspective on man's relationship to the rest of creation. To this question, several answers have been proffered, each towing the line of the dynamic that dictates the socio-economic process of the agent giving the answer. This question will now engage our attention as we explore the biblical records for an answer.

The Biblical Position on Man's Relation to Creator And Creation: The Question of Stewardship for Sustainability

We observed that humanity's concern to master the material universe accords with God's design of creation in which man is to have dominion over the earth (Gen 1: 26-31). But we also observe that this concept has been largely misapplied if not misapprehended. All the earth over which man is to rule belongs to God (Exod 9:29; 19:5; cf. Ps 24:1; 95:4-5). He is ‘ādōn Kol-hā-‘ārec, Lord of all the earth (Josh 3:11, 13) who reigns or has dominion over it (Ps 47:2, 7 [3, 8]). According to the Psalmist, “The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has *given* to man, literally, sons of man (bnê-‘ādām)” (Ps 115:16). The idea here is that, while God owns the earth he has *entrusted* it to man so that man will *serve* (‘obdāh;) and *keep* (šomrāh;) it (Gen 2:15) for his dwelling place (Gen 1:28). Though the reference is to the Garden of Eden, the principle applies to human stewardship of the earth with all its component parts including man. Another important idea is intrinsically associated with this one; the “given” of Psalm 115:16 connotes the idea of “handing over”, but it really denotes the idea of “delegation” of the earth to man. This is clear from the fact that God “still walked” in the garden with Adam (Gen 3:8) and promised that he would “walk” in the land of an obedient people as in his own dwelling place (Lev 26:11-16) with the ultimate vision of God finally living with humanity in the new earth (Rev 21:3). Man's interaction with the *pleroma* of existence is therefore, to be one of a steward rather than that of a master, for the earth belongs to God in his sovereignty.

The creation story is thus, concerned to disclose both the nature of God and the role of man as God's steward on earth. This underlies the statement that man, created in God's image, is to *subdue* the earth and have *dominion* over its creatures (Gen 1: 26-28). “Image” and “likeness” suggest the statuettes that monarchs erect to remind their subjects of who is in power. Just as the ninth-century old Aramaic inscription from Tell Fakhariyeh describes the statue of King Haddu-yisi (Wenham 1998). So, our role is to be living reminders of the Creator who is the King of the universe.

Dominion is clearly a royal term. Thus, to

understand it from the perspective of the Israelites whose usage it is in the Genesis creation story, we should remember that Israel's kings had covenantal responsibilities to "care" for those over whom they ruled. Dominion in this biblical usage thus, does not mean to exploit or destroy, whether inanimate matter or living beings including fellow humans, but to exercise care and responsibility for God's domain particularly in the interest of those who are poor and marginalized. Yet, in our world today it is sadly the case with humankind that in the guise of development—i.e. ruling, or having dominion over nature—the developed nations fabricate economic, financial, and social mechanisms which they manipulate in their own favour and suffocate the economies of the less developed nations. Perhaps this is because the former see no iota of interdependence between them and the other "fragmentations" of the world—often called the First, Second, Third, and at times, the Fourth Worlds (John Paul II 1987:26-27). But as a Tiv wise saying goes, "*tor kpaa kwagh gbe un a nula*" "even the king needs a knitting needle." The greed-informed exploitative tendency of the more privileged and so more advanced nations in the guise of development is antithetical to the interdependence principle that the creator intended to govern planetary existence. It is above all, antithetical to the principles of stewardship and sustainability. As Pope John Paul II (1987:28) said, development that is not shared in common by every part of the world is in truth, *regression*. It is a matter of serious concern that the more privileged individuals, even among the developing world, build on this exploitative attitude and further create untold hardship for fellowmen who are worse off as the Benue Cement and Mbayion community example above shows.

The Way Forward

The preceding discussion has prepared the ground for the conclusion that man's relational problem to his environment today is a spiritual one, caused by the changing structure of his life. The painstaking search for a better world is paralleled by total absence of spiritual advancement. We can see that the complex of continually emerging problems just described above has left many people unable to recognize permanent values and apply them to recent discoveries. Thus, men continue to oscillate between hope and anguish as they wonder about the course of events and man's destiny determined by that course (Gaudium et Spes 1965:796). Thus, to positively change man's relational attitude to his environment his conscience, the sacred element in man, must be addressed. It is my opinion therefore that religion as the mother of humanities, should lead the way in reorienting man's conscience (that is resacralizing the human person) in Nigeria and indeed, worldwide toward the environment. Then, the holistic view of the environment herein espoused will take root in every person and in time the wrongs done the environment will be righted.

How then, do we go about this resacralization of

the human person? The easiest and surest way is through education of the total human person—from the sucking child to the developed adult—about the interdependence of the fullness of existence in the ecology. To this end, it is here suggested that religious bodies and the governments should collaborate to *recreate conscience* in the human person beginning from childhood.

1. Religious bodies and the Church should be in the vanguard to recreate conscience by introducing teaching to their members on interdependence of ecosystems.
2. Nigeria's school curriculum should be made such that anyone who has attained any level of formal or non-formal education in Nigeria must share in the principle of interdependence of the environmental components so that their conscience will judge them when they are about to damage any part. As N. O. Abidha (1987) has shown, this principle is already paying off in Kenya where various environmental concepts are integrated in almost all subjects at the primary school level and in related subjects at the secondary school level and inculcated in children as they take those subjects. Nigeria's school curriculum planners could develop this further such that at the tertiary education level, specialised courses/programs and even whole institutes or colleges of environmental study should be established where teachers could be schooled on environmental issues and so prepare themselves to smoothly infuse environmental concepts in various subjects. Missionary schools should lead the way to achieve this goal.
3. A special environmental study group should be constituted, which should write Books for children and adults, each book focusing on a specific environmental problem to be used in our educational institutions.
4. As another promising strategy, individuals and organizations like Nollywood Film Company could sponsor, or write, and act films on environmental protection to conscientize Nigerians in this direction. Arts and Culture ministries, through puppet theatre and drama are also promising agencies for achievement of this goal.

Conclusion

From the foregoing all indications are that it is fallen man who degrades the beautiful (very good) creation that God entrusted to his responsible care. And this happens chiefly when man, the sacred being, is desacralized. That is when he is thrust or he thrusts himself in modernism and begins to repudiate the sacred idea. But man is himself a sacred being by virtue of his being created in the image of God. That is, by virtue of his being created with an intellect and conscience. These are elements which have made him, not just a rational

creature, but particularly, a moral and ethical being. The question of man's conscience cannot therefore, be left out in the search for a solution to salient problems of humanity.

Humankind are stewards in God's creation. As wise stewards, we have to refine our knowledge of God's world through the natural sciences, environmental ethics, and a vision of sustainability. The creator has called us *to care for the diversity of life*. But as we saw above in the biblical portrait of creation, life is a biotic community and everything is interconnected. By virtue of the biblical declaration man should "rule over and subdue the earth and have dominion over its creatures" (Gen 1: 26-28). We as humans are also presented as *special members of earth's biotic community, by virtue of our conscious self-reflection capacity. In that capacity, we have the responsibility of caring first, for the non-living aspects of creation—land, water, and air—that are by their creation purpose, essential for life.* Further, our stewardship goes beyond the physical environmental plane; it also addresses the links between human poverty and environmental degradation. This has to do with the question of sustainability which incorporates both social justice and ecological restoration. This latter point must be given its rightful premier position in the question of environmental protection if the world is to experience authentic development.

Works Cited

- Abidha, N. O. (1987). "The need for Basic Environmental Education." *Basic Education and Environment*. Ed. G.A. Bennaars. 16th BERC Bulletin. Basic Education Resource Centre for Eastern and Southern Africa.
- Adejumobi, Said (2002). "Ethnic Militia Groups and the National Question in Nigeria." http://programs.ssrc.org/gsc_quarterly/newsletter8/content/adejumobi/

- Chertow, Marian R. (1998). "Environmental Pollution." *The World Book Multimedia Encyclopedia (Single Disk)*. Eds. Robert J. Janus and Dale W. Jacobs. CD-ROM. IVID Communications. Redmond: World Book.
- Gernah, Dick I. (2007). "Genetically Modified (GM) Foods: The Concept, the Controversies, and the Nigerian Perspective." Unpublished essay.
- Imasogie, O. (1985). *African Traditional Religion*. Ibadan: University Press.
- John Paul II. (1987). *On Social Concern – Encyclical Letter of the Supreme Pontiff, John Paul II, to the Bishops, Priests, and Religious Families, Sons and Daughters of the Church, and All People of Good Will for the Twentieth Anniversary of Populorum Progressio*. n.p.
- McFague, Sallie (2002). "God's Household: Christianity, Economics, and Planetary Living." In *Subverting Greed: Religious Perspectives on the Global Economy*. Eds. Paul Knitter and Chandra Muzaffar. New York: Orbis.
- Oruamabo, R. S. "The Effects of Environmental Assaults on Human Physiology (2)" *Nigerian Journal of Physiological Sciences*, Vol 20, No 1-2, 11-18. 22 Dec 2007 Bioline <<http://www.bioline.org.br/request?np05003>>
- Pontifical council for justice and peace (2005). "Safeguarding the environment." In *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa. 244-262.
- Ray, Benjamin C. (1976). *African Religions: Symbols, Ritual, and Community*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Vatican Council II (1965). "The Church in the Modern World". *Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World – Gaudium et Spes*, 7 December.
- Wenham, Gordon J. (1998). *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 1: Genesis 1-15*. Dallas: Word Books.