

Religious Ethics and the Environment: A Quest for Sustainable Development in the Modern World

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Abstract

The concept environmental degradation and sustainable development have come to occupy a central position in the contemporary discourse among scholars of various disciplines. However, little or no attention has been given to religious ethics in resolving the problem. Unfortunately, the world is still in a state of disarray, a state in which living organisms can no longer survive on their natural habitat because the biotic support has been damaged in the name of human, economic and social development. This sorry state of affair is majorly as a result of human encroachment into the natural resources. The impacts of unabated human activities in ecosystem have ensured removal of wildlife habitat, causing loss of nutrient rich soil and slow soil regeneration in the forest. Hence, sustainability of the ecosystem has been pushed to the periphery. Industrialization has equally maintained a record of environmental pollution; while generation of acid rain, also leads to constant reduction of wildlife population on account of reproductive failure. The paper, therefore, seeks to investigate and examine the basis and role of religion in the conservation of the natural resources and the purpose of commissioning by God. It gleans over the relevant religious tradition on the conservation of the environments and ecology. The paper inquires into the environmental values, causes of environmental degradation, impacts and challenges on human activities. Finally, viable suggestions are proffered.

Introduction

In the ancient world humans were seen as the instruments of nature or the gods (Nicholas and Brendan, 2002: 1). The Book of Genesis informs that after God created the light, the firmament and the waters, He put forth vegetation and plants in order to yield seed and bear fruits according to its kind upon the earth (Genesis 1:11-12). This arrangement was made for the benefit of humanity; and intimate relationship was established with God; and with each other like plants, animals, birds, fish and their environment (Genesis 1:29). Today, the position has been reversed because a disenchanting 'nature', has become an infinite pool of resources to be made into things of use to humanity; while the relationship between humans and the rest of the natural world is again being redefined. The development of the scientific knowledge, new discoveries and innovations served as the major basis of existence.

The concept 'environment' seems hardly adequate to describe that to which we are attached. For example, the planet, and indeed the universe, seems much more than the surroundings of a human person to be defined only in relation. Yet, the experience of nature is necessarily localized; and everybody within their social and geographical area could experience their own small part of 'nature' which they look on, interact with, breathe, eat, drink, touch, hear and smell. Some people live and work in delightful environments while others exist in oppressive and ugly environments. It is quite unfortunate that there are instances of what was once a harmonious and healthy relationship with their environment but transformed suddenly into a risky and dangerous zones. Adegboyega (1997) defines environment as the aggregate of man of the physical and biological entities outside the man and supporting the existence of man whether on land, water or air. In other words, Jimoh and Afolabi (2000) describe the environment as surroundings of an object; a place where organisms interact with the physical elements in an ecosystem. It implies that environment refers to all natural things, that is, things that exist external of an object or organism. Such natural things may encompass all living and non-living things existing on earth and in space.

In the context of this paper environment is used to refer to a place where organisms interact with the physical elements in the realm of religio-cultural, socio-ethical, eco-political and health perspectives. Here, environment connotes everything that exerts influence on the aggregate of man of the physical and biological entities outside the man, and supporting the existence of man (Afella, 2011:28).

There is no denying the fact that environmental ethics assumes a societal or even global concern. This paper takes an approach which situates the discussion of religious influences, connections, values, attendant challenges and a search for sustainable development in the modern world. In view of this development, the paper investigates and examines questions which commonly point to the following issues from both religious and secular realms. Does the capacity of the earth's resources continue to support its human population in years to come? Industrialization has maintained records of environmental risk through distribution of toxic wastes in the name of human socio-economic development. What is the solution now? How can we address the issue of exploration of the environment of the poorer nations to maintain the lifestyle of the richer nations? These questions among others are addressed in this paper. Religious ethics can be explained as an attempt to determine what conduct is good and what is bad, or what ought to be approved and disapproved within the ambit of religious beliefs. It explains why one should act in one way or the other. Religious ethics is descriptive, and also prescriptive because it stipulates what to be done by the community, including how to behave in every situation (Ayantayo,2009:22). Sustainable development implies the development which meets the needs of the future without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Conclusions are then drawn about the kind of society we have to develop to prevent environmental degradation for the society of our common future (Brundtland, 2002:2 cited in Nicholas & Brendan).

Religious ethics and Conservation of the Environment

This section gives a brief connection between some selected religions in the world and their position towards the environment, namely, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Indigenous religion, Hinduism and Buddhism. Oyeshola (1998) informs that the Creator stands in a personal relation to his creation. For example, it is said in the book of Jeremiah that, *Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of host is his name* (Jer31:35). The continuous power of God is necessary to uphold and renew the creatures (Ps104:29-30). The Bible begins with the account of the creation of the heavens, the earth and the creatures on earth, culminating in the humans (Gen 1-2). God is concerned for the whole of creation. Instructions are given for the land itself to rest. The book of Leviticus informs that even God who gives people land, also instructs that the land itself must observe a Sabbath to the Lord (Lev25:2). It is equally establish further that, *The fiftieth year shall be a Jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the unintended vine* (Lev 25:11). However, failure to let the land rest and rejuvenate itself will lead to banishment (Lev 26:35; Chr 36:21). More importantly, the land is to be kept undefiled and unpolluted. *So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it. Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel* (Num 35:33-34). The Scriptural account of creation reminds us that God's creation is both reliable and fragile. *'As long as the earth endures, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease'* (Chr 8:22). But God's creation is reliable only for the reason that God guarantees its order. The Book of Psalm confirms this that everything on earth owes its life to God's faithfulness. Everything depends upon God; He feeds, provides, and gives people their fill. Also, he is in position to take back their breath and die, and reverts to dust (Ps 104:27-29). In Judaism the world plays a central role in Jewish law, literature, and liturgical practices. Within the diverse realm of Jewish thought, beliefs vary widely about the human relation to the environment. However, there are contemporary thinkers who emphasize that a central belief in Judaism is that man whose root comes from earth should keep the earth in the same state as he received it from God, that is, its actual owner. (Wikipedia, Religion and Environmentalism). The people should avoid polluting the earth and keep it clean for the future generations. This opinion reinforces the fact that Judaism is clearly in line with the principle of environmental protection and sustainable development. In Jewish law (*halakhah*) ecological concerns are reflected in Biblical protection for fruit trees, rules in the *mishnah* against harming the public domain, *talmudic* debate over noise and smoke damages, and contemporary response on agricultural pollution (Elizabeth 2008 :531). The earth must be cared for as there are other inhabitants both presently as well as in the future, that will be living there.

Similarly, Christianity has a historic concern for nature and the natural world. Ecological concerns operate in tension with anthropocentric values, such as the biblical notion of human dominion over the earth which states that, when God blessed them and said, *Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reigh over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground* (Gen1:28). Theological implication for stewardship for man through biblical references includes passage from the covenant which states that it pleases God that he has given all these things unto man but not to excess, neither by extortion .

For Islamic religion, the Holy Quran and the prophets equally make the environment to be sacred. Quran 17:78 informs that Muslim believers should establish regular prayers at sun's decline till the darkness of the night, and the morning prayer and reading in the morning carry their testimony'. God did not create the environment for a random reason, but rather a reflection of truth. Many chapters in the Quran refer to the beauties of nature as well as the headings of many chapters indicating the importance of it such as: *Fajr*: prayer service at dawn is between 5.30 and 5.45 a.m. *Zuhr*: prayer service at noon between 1.10p.m and 2p.m. *Asr*: prayer service in the afternoon between 3.30 p.m and 4p.m. *Maghrib*: prayer service between 6.45 and 7p.m. *Isha*: prayer service at nightfall 7.30 p.m downward p.m. In Islam, the concept of a *hima* or 'inviolable zone' refers to a piece of land that has been set aside to prevent cultivation. An environmental ethics is in the Quran but leaves an opening for Muslims to incorporate creative and innovative solutions in the contemporary context.

There is an understanding of the place and position of primal religion in the local environment and ecology. African indigenous adherents and native Americans believed that there are spirits in nature and the environment that need to be taken care of. Anybody who analyses primal religion as a separate system of beliefs and ritual practices without identifying kinship, language, governance, and landscape has misunderstood primal religion. The respect for nature and the environment is present and well established among the indigenous people. There are series of sacred mountains, rivers, forests, trees, well revered by the indigenous people across the world. What is evident, however, is wherever indigenous peoples have endured, they have maintained a loving experience of place and an understanding that spiritual forces capable of leading humans into both utilitarian and self-understanding abide in all of these places. There is a spiritual relationship with nature and sacred duty to care for it. Nature is valued in religious systems.

Encyclopedia of African religion reports that in African religion, the landscape was considered to be part of the divine realm. For example, the Kikuyu believe that their first ancestor was awarded his terrestrial home by *Mogai*; divider of the universe, from atop mount Kenya (*Kere-Nyaga*). In Yorubaland, the spirits of hills are prayed to for fertility in the surrounding region, such as *Orosun* deity/ Idanre hills which constitute one of the highest elevated parts of southern Nigeria . Idanre hills are located 20km at the southern part of the capital city of Ondo State with elevation ranging from about 600ft (182.88 meter) and 2980ft (883.92 meters) above sea level (Oladipo, 2012:6). Awolalu and Dopamu (1979) corroborate the above that among the Igbo people of Nigeria *Ala* is known as the earth goddess , otherwise called *Ale, Ane, Ani or Ana*. She is regarded as the great mother goddess who is the spirit of fertility, the Queen of the underworld, the nearest and dearest of all the divinities to man. In Igboland it is believed that *Ala* is powerful and beneficent; and also a custodian of public morality in association with the ancestors .Some of her statues represent her as carrying a child in her arms or on her knees. Thereby depicts her as the goddess of fertility and of increase in all departments of life. Besides , the spirit of *Ala* controls the earth, and farmers usually take permission from her before they till the ground. The Igbo people say that : *Ala is our Mother, and our god, all that we have from her, and without her gifts we must be lost* .*Ala* (earth goddess) is very close to man because it is on her that human beings move, walk, sit, sleep, and plant their crops (Awolalu and Dopamu, 1979 :91-92). Similarly, the hero *Mbona* is worshipped on the site of his deification, by many ethnic groups in the Matundu Hills of Southern Malawi; to provide fertility to the region. Among the Zulu, a hill might be known as the holy hill of the Lord-of-the-sky (*inthaba encwele yenkosi yamazulu*), where priests might pray for rain or healing. Numerous peoples of the upper Nile, such as the Nuer, Dinka, and Lou, construct sizable artificial earthen mounds or hills. The mounds are designed to pull the might of a divinity to earth and empower the prophet who spoke for him or her (Tishken, Joel E, Encyclopedia of African Religion, 429-430).

Hinduism relates to the powerful natural world. Ecological sensitivity is based on the relationship between humans and how they respect the gods and goddesses relate to the earth .In Hinduism, traditional approaches are found to the natural environment in such concepts as *dharmic* ethics or *prakrti* (materials creation), the development of *ayurveda*, and reading of (*vedic literature*).

For Buddhism, despite the fact that traditional Buddhism regards human life over that of animals, there is presently the recognition that all life forms should be respected equally. As humans we got ourselves into this ecological/environmental crisis and we are the ones that need to get ourselves out.

Religion and Environmental Values

Dopamu (2005) argues that throughout ages debate about God occupied the attention of human beings. There are those who take God's existence as a reality, and there are those who think they cannot believe because there is no proof of God's existence. Thus in the beginning of human existence, discussion would take the form of teaching people about God, and informing them on how to worship him. This was the responsibility of the priests, priestesses, king or ritual elders in society. Then religion was the means of understanding the universe and the human place in it. As time went on, the notions of religion about the universe are rendered inappropriate by the knowledge afforded by science (Dopamu, 2005:2-3). For example, Darwin's theory proved that the universe did not need a creator as expressed by Christianity and other religions. The aim of this paper is not to go to the foundation for contention between religion and science, but rather to show the fundamental value of religion about the environment and ecology in the service of humanity; particularly, how it has better answers to some puzzling questions about the fine-tuned universe because of the divine self-disclosure of God's initiative. Christianity of all the world religions was the first to be in conflicts with science, but most of the Christian views shared by other religions also suffer the same fate.

The book of genesis chapter 1 says that God created the world and all that is in it during a six-day period. In terms of bringing a new perspective to the development of ideas on religion in the world, science has done well. The fossil record in the world closely in line with the general order of the appearance of living forms in the book of genesis. In religion, the created order and man's link with God is through divine self disclosure in spite of the radical turning point of scientific knowledge. Anselm (2004) affords us illuminating examples of how the world is so well-ordered by God. He submits that everything fits so well together that one cannot but marvel at the wisdom of God. He observes that the earth rotates round the sun in perfect equilibrium; and that if the earth had been a little bit closer to the sun, it would have been too hot for habitation. On the other hand, if the earth had been a little bit farther away from the sun, it would have been too cold for habitation. Human beings and the plants exchange oxygen and carbon dioxide in such a balanced way that life can continue. In this system, therefore, human beings, plants, animals, and spirits co-exist as harmonious vibrations of the music of life (Anselm, 2004:202-203).

Looking at the creation in the Bible, we see an order which has been imposed by the Creator. Everything that human beings would need to survive was first created (such as the light, the firmament and the waters, the vegetation and plants, animals, birds, fish and their environment) before bringing human beings into existence. God in his wisdom did not create human beings first because the earth would not be comfortable for them to live in. It is interesting to say that Anselm's argument is equally in tune with the scientific story of the universe which states that human beings appeared in the universe billions of years after the Big Bang, and after other living things had appeared (Dopamu, 2005:6-9).

More importantly, a truly human life is that in which there is harmony in the horizontal and vertical levels. The fullness of life includes harmony or non-alienation from God, due control of the senses and passions, harmony in relationship with other human beings and harmony with nature or the environment. In other words, we are expected to use creation with some respect to worship God and for our own good. A correct use of the elements of creation can help to promote the welfare of men and women (Anselm, 2004:10).

In the modern world, our environment has been polluted not just with toxic wastes but also with unhealthy noise. The music played in our churches is nothing more than cacophonies of organs, guitars and jazz bands, which give immediate gratification but does not satisfy (Anselm 2004:27). Anselm suggests that one should go to the river bank, to the forest, to the valley, away from the noise of television, radio, and jazz bands, so as to appreciate pure sound from the creator. Or that one sit in a secluded place and listen to one's heart beat, breath and blood circulation, one would note that one's body was governed by a certain rhythm. Human body is a living entity, an intelligent being with its own laws; the wisdom of the cosmos is reflected in the body. According to him, body itself is a musical composition with different forms of sound such as the human voice, sound of nature, sound of music, carry waves for certain kinds of energy, which they impress on us. Thus when these energies are negative, we become sick, if positive, we become harmonious (Anselm, 2002:28).

At the beginning, there was nothing; and God said, let there be light and 'there was light', God uttered the world into existence. God created the world through sound and when we sing we re-echo the creative sound by which the world came into being. All these are works of nature and it link us with our beginning with life with God.

In a similar but different perspective, many people can no longer admire the beauty of nature: the sky, the sea, the flowers, and the animals. People now lament the speed of diseases all over the world, diseases that can be cured by plants growing within our environment. The truth is that natural medicine is highly potent and it is a sustenance of life, and it should not be allowed to die or waste. Natural medicine is not just about increasing the physical life force of the individual. It is a call to a total liberation of the whole person, this is an attempt to break loose the chains of ignorance and mental slavery as well as to boost human consciousness to become what we are (Anselm 2001:35). For Awolalu and Dopamu (1979) Ala (earth goddess) is a reflection of God's holiness because oaths and covenants are made in her name and they must be fulfilled. Crimes such as adultery, stealing of yams, murder, poisoning and abominations such as giving birth to abnormal children like cripples are regarded as offences against Ala, and they must be purged by suitable sacrifices. In the traditional morning prayer among the Igbo people, Ala is mentioned next to Chukwu, in this order: *Chukwu (God) , come and eat kolanut ! Ala, come and eat kolanut ! Ancestor, come and eat kolanut !* Sacrifices are offered to Ala before the planting of crops, at the first fruits, and at full harvest (Awolalu and Doopamu, 1979:92-93).

There are various gifts from nature within our immediate environment. For instance, health benefits of bitter leaf include solution for stomach-ache, skin infection, diabetes, loss of memory, prostate cancer, pneumonia, insomnia, stroke, arthritis among others (Anselm, 2002:41-45). Also, the pawpaw plant can be used for malaria fever, convulsion, asthma, piles, impotence and bronchitis. Besides, to many people coconut plant is an ordinary plant, but the coconut plant is a blessing and a gift of nature. Every part of the plant is medicinal that can be used to cure fibroid, toothache, skin rashes and hepatitis. Aloe vera is also a wonder plant that can be used for various ailments, while mistletoe is another nature potent cure all for hypertension, heart problems, insomnia, and infertility. The healing powers of garlic cannot be overemphasized (Anselm 2002: 53-83)

Causes of Environmental and Ecological Hazards

Many of the environmental problems have stemmed from human activity. Rita (2011) identifies that human activities are the causes of environmental pollutions such as: gas flaring which depletes the ozone layer and oil-spill as exemplified in the Niger Delta by oil-producing companies, deforestation and cattle over-grazing in the north, dumping of refuse in water drainages and erecting buildings on water channels. Afella (2011) corroborates that most activities of man have impacted negatively on the environment which includes pollutions of the air land and water. There is also the destruction of large expanse of land through wild fire, massive land clearing for construction or farming activities, logging, tree selling, over harvesting of wild life, use toxin chemicals in fishing, use of toxic chemical for agricultural purposes. Also, the release of dangerous gases in the air, dumping of refuse and sewage disposal is other problems. All these have constituted risks to man. There are other pollutants that have taken over the society that constitute an eye-saw, such products that have outlived their producers and users like plastics, bottles, electronic gadgets, metal, aluminum, sachet of water and nylon bags. These activities coupled with release of gasses, use of chemicals and indiscriminate falling of trees have led to the problems such as depletion of the Ozone layer (Afella, 2011:29). This is a demonstration that man is a major agent of environmental pollution through his activities. In addition, the attempt by the people to achieve urbanization with the attendant industrialization and mechanized agriculture activities constitute another major cause of environmental hazards.

The coordinator for the African region, Samantha Bailey, says that the harsh weather conditions witnessed in Nigeria and other part of the world is caused by the general rise in the level of carbon emissions produced by individuals, industries and government as a whole. According to her, she says that the reason why there are more frequent natural disasters such as floods is due to the increase in atmospheric carbon from 350 parts per million (which is the maximum the earth can handle) to the present state of 390 parts per million. She affirms that our planet is already 40 parts per million above the capacity the earth can handle. This is because we have crossed that boundary; and the earth's climate will no longer be stable, while human survival rate from natural disasters will continue to decline until we reduce carbon emission to 350 (The Nation, 2011:18).

Natural disasters like droughts and flooding are not new again and the change in climate is now increasing the severity and speed. For example, countries like Ethiopia that used to experience droughts every ten to fifteen years now suffer from far worse droughts every two years. Nigeria has just begun to experience these harsh impacts of climate change in the frequent flooding, desertification in the north and ocean surges around the coast. Nevertheless, all over the world environmental changes and climate change seem to have taken a new twist. For instance, flood in China, mud and landslides in Nepal, hurricane in United States of America, and cyclone threats at every corner of the world. The United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, also remarks that there is the need to step up action to fight global climate change. He confirms that the phenomenon is responsible for the debilitating drought that is ravaging the horn of Africa, and also cause severe flooding in Australia. Ban Ki-moon observes that there is a big challenge ahead because by 2050, the world population will reach nine billion, and this will amount to 50 per cent increase compared to the present situation. By that time, the carrying capacity will have to reduce green house emissions by 50 per cent. The question then is, is there any hope of rectifying this with the present negative human activities and population explosion?

The Impacts and Challenges of the Environmental Degradation on Humanity

Elizabeth (2008) opines that the environmental crisis now encompasses the entire earth. The destruction of the sacred quality of nature by modern man is dominated by religious and secularist perspectives which are directly responsible for the catastrophe. The vast majority of the human beings, whether participating directly or indirectly in the havoc wreaked upon the natural environment still live within a worldview dominated by religion. The impacts of environmental degradation are always socially and spatially differentiated. They may end up affecting the global environment, but first they damage small parts of it. These local effects frequently transgress national boundaries. For example, acid rain from England damages Danish and Norwegian forest, water pollution from Switzerland destroys the ecology of the Rhine in Germany and the Netherlands. Then international distributional questions reach the public areas, and international law becomes involved (Nicholas and Brendan, 2002: 19).

In 1995, three incidents occurred which inform something about the nature of environmental conflict. The first was the unsuccessful attempt by the Anglo-Dutch transnational corporation, shell to sink one of its obsolete oil rigs in the North Atlantic. The second was the conduct by France of a series of underground nuclear tests in pacific atolls. The third was the mining of metallic ores by the Australian transnational corporation Broken Hill Pty Lt (BHP) in Papua New Guinea. The focus of the issue was the distribution of risk rather the production of risk, a critical ecological distinction. (Nicholas & Brendan, 2002: 2-3). There are many other examples of what might be called environmental insult in West and East of the world. It is obvious that the production of knowledge about the environment plays a pivotal role, not only in the production of material goods and material effects like pollution, but in the production of modern society itself (Nicholas & Brenda, 2002: 11).

Similarly, Rita (2011) equally writes on the unending fury of rains in Nigeria where chaos struck in the ancient city of Ibadan and other places. More than one hundred lives were lost, scores of children were declared missing, while properties worth millions of naira were destroyed. The Nation (2011) also reports that the environmental damage occasioned by Royal Dutch Shell (Plc) on the village of Ogale in Ogoni land, Rivers State, cannot be over emphasized. The Ogoni village had even filed one billion suit against shell in United States America. In August, 2011 shell accepted liability for two oil spills in Nigeria, prompting the oil giant to face a bill of hundreds of millions of dollars after accepting full liability for two massive oil spills that devastated a Nigerian community of 69,000 people and which may take at least twenty years to clean up. Ogoni land is a small region of the Niger Delta which threw out Shell in 1994 for its pollution but then saw eight of its leaders, including the writer, Ken Saro-wiwa, executed by the government. Moreover, the crude oil that gushed unchecked from the two Bodo spills, which occurred in 2008 has clearly devastated the twenty square kilometer network of creeks and inlets on which Bodo and as many as thirty other smaller settlements depend for food, water and fuel. Oil pollution in Ogoniland is much more terrible, having such deep into the water table. Many spills have not been cleared up since 1970 and the effects on the local economy, health, and development have been severe (The Nation, 2011:2)

The most basic choice we confront is between maintaining the quality of the planetary environment, and its exploitation for the production of commodities for human use. Sustainable development, as Jacobs (1991) argued, involves conflict of interest between different industries and those who depend on them. It involves conflict of interest between developed and developing nations, and it involves conflicts between the interests of generations.

These conflicts demand just solutions because sustainable development without environmental justice is an empty formula designed (Nicholas and Brendan, 2002: 14). Justice as respect for human rights has been a major concern of series of international organizations but there is a problem regarding considerable differences in the interpretation of the idea of human rights as embedded in different cultural contexts of industrial capitalism, socialism and the Third World. This is a major challenge towards resolving the dilemma in the modern society. However, despite all the damages already inflicted through natural and artificial environmental hazards, it is not too late to be committed to the restoration of the environment .In view of this, Watkins(1994)'s submission is relevant here that:

We cannot re-create ancient forests, but we can restore an environment in which the processes that do create them can function. We cannot make estuaries, but we can clean the filth from them. We cannot re-invent the complexity of a wetland, but we can at least build primitive marshes. We cannot make a river but we can free it of poison and remove at least some of the concrete that has stopped its flow .We cannot probably ever remove all the toxic wastes we have produced since the industrial revolution, but we can operate as if we could and in the process get rid of as much as we can. We humans cannot conceive a spotted owl, not even in a laboratory, not yet, but we can make sure that the bird has a place in which to add its own bit to the diversity of life that sustains us all .This is the only challenge in which the future of all jobs lies. It is the over arching task that has any possibility of guaranteeing the security of human life in future. (Walkins, 1998:164cited by Oyeshola).

The above submission connotes that this world is a common heritage for future generations. Based upon the serious impacts of climate change and self-made problems, it may be considered as irresponsible to delay action in resolving environmental hazards. Response is incumbent now in order to ensure that the world remains healthy and habitable for all of us .In fact, climate change with its gruesome consequences is a global phenomenon, so cooperation from all sides of the globe to save the planet is what the above assertion inclined upon; notwithstanding, the politics of West-East or North-South relations .Although, consequences of climate change (ozone depletion and global warming) are no respecters of national boundaries. Ozone depletion underscores the danger of over-stepping the earth's ability to absorb our waste products. In addition, population size, consumption patterns and technology choices are pointing to the fact that we have surpassed the planet's carrying capacity. These human activities, that is, damaging and reducing the earth's carrying capacity are now threatening the survival of the world. Yet, human, scientific and technical development cannot be suspended at any given point in history (Hurrell and Kingburry, 1998:38).

How to Achieve Sustainable Management of the Environment

Oladeji (2012) opines that the realization management of environment requires an integrated decision making framework and multiplicity approach. This is because it entails involvement and collective collaboration of all the stakeholders. Making the World environment sustainable requires change at the individual, community, organization, and urban level. In the context of sustainability it is expedient that the modern world should change their consumption pattern to more sustainable conscious life. Instead of engaging in acts capable of jeopardizing species composition and distribution in and around the people should embark on sustainable and alternative economic activities such as wild animal's domestication, aquaculture, bee keeping and planting of trees especially those that serve as food and medicinal values(Oladeji 2012:9). Furthermore, the rich cultural diversity of the environments epitomized by their unique cultural festivals, art and crafts and other cultural acts associated with their traditions and beliefs must be guided against adulteration resulting from modernization and globalization. Every society should see their cultural and natural environmental resources as symbols and things of pride thus they should strive to create forum and discussions where environmental ethics is impacted to the upcoming generations.

More importantly, the cultural and natural features of every environment if properly maintain and preserve have propensity to attract high value visitors. For instance, local knowledge and traditional practices have great cultural significance and their applications have been found to be relevant in studies relating to contemporary medicine , food production, biodiversity conservation and management hence they should be maintained in a manner that ensure that the future generations live to witness them. Environmental challenges such as erosion, biodiversity loss, flooding and pollution can be addressed through improve drainage pattern and engaging in environmental friendly activities such as environmental sanitation exercise and formation of Environmental Conservation Organisations (Oladeji ,2009:11).

In fact, recent studies have shown that natural and cultural resources in the environment are being threatened by increasing rate of anthropogenic activities as identified above like hunting, logging, illegal fishing, water pollution, mining, harvest of plants of medicinal values, charcoal and firewood collection, indiscriminate dumping of waste, grazing, honey harvesting, farming, illegal entry, aiding and abetting vandalism are predominant. While other challenges include poor land use planning and mismanagement. All these have serious negative environmental impacts especially those associated with pollution, inaccessible observation trails all the year round, flooding, poor drainage pattern and biodiversity lost. Then, anthropogenic activities arising from man's quest to satisfy socio-economic needs remain predominant challenges facing the environment across the world. Hence, man's involvement in planning and management of the environment cannot be jettisoned in order to achieve sustainable development.

Concluding Remarks

Religion and the environment are intertwined in that they have had a history as exemplified by religious traditions across the world and that religions would continue to have a role together in the future. This may be one area where science and religion can find a common ground. The two concepts, that is, science and religion have the environment in their best interest and work together to find a solution to the current environmental crisis. As religious traditions and scientific knowledge have shaped human values and behaviors towards the environment in the past, this is one possibility for working towards positive environmental attitudes for the future. There are areas of immediate attention as an attempt to face environmental degradation. Some of these include: redirecting technology, policy formulation and change of attitude. There is an urgent need to establish a policy instrument for encouraging more sustainable and efficient means of production. For example, the institution of environmental taxes would help to correct the failure from the concerned marketers companies and individuals. There should be a setting targets for reducing greenhouse gases, this is an indispensable area of an urgent action. To promote sustainable development, there is need for improvements in the exploitation of forests and wood use. For example, reduction in wood use and paper waste, but to divert attention to non-wood pulp such as hemp, bamboo, and jute (A World Watch Institute Report, 1994:15).

Justice as respect for human rights has been a major concern of international declarations after the Second World War. All human beings should demonstrate true spirit of love, brotherhood, and justice towards one another. In respect of the environment, the Christian conscience should no longer be dominated by the idea that, after all, the world is passing away and that it is not necessary. Anybody with such attitude should better tidy up the earth for future generation. We need to pursue the road of human development in the direction of a personal and cosmic togetherness, therefore, people should make their destiny and that of the world possible. It is the duty of every government to insure and protect the basic rights of all persons to life such as: a decent standard of living, security, dignity, identity, freedom, truth, due process of law, and justice; and of its people to existence, sovereignty, independence, self-determination and autonomous cultural, social, economic and political development are manifested. Humans are intertwined with natural systems, damage done upon the earth is also harm done to humans. Religious adherents should play an integral role in linking people to the natural world, imbuing people with the knowledge and values that make caring for the environment.

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