

## Theological Evaluation of Christians' Attitude to Environmental Preservation in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos

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### Abstract

The issue of environmental preservation is crucial for the human race. In Lagos State, environmental preservation has become a serious problem. Lack of environmental preservation has remained a significant cause of untimely death. Therefore, this paper conducts a theological evaluation of Christians' attitude to environmental preservation in Alimosho Local Government, Lagos. The basis for the evaluation of this study is biblical teachings and position on environmental preservation. A thread of environmentalism running through the Bible, calls Genesis 2: 15 the first earth-keeping principle. Thus, relying on the Hebrew translation in this verse, we are called to serve and preserve the Earth. Man's responsibility to take care of the earth is not accidental but is designed for man to be answerable to God concerning how he uses the earth's resources. In other words, man is answerable to the one who appointed him to be vice-regent. The study adopted a quantitative study, using simple percentages to analyse the data. One thousand, one hundred and fifty (1150) copies of the questionnaire were administered across the Local Governmental Area in Alimosho. One thousand (1000) copies were retrieved and subjected to simple analysis while the remaining one hundred and fifty (150) copies of the questionnaire were void. 765 (76.5%) respondents agreed that church members contribute to littering and environmental degradation of Alimosho Local Government Area while 235 (23.6%) respondents disagreed. The paper reveals that uncontrolled population growth, technological abuse and the exploitation of natural resources have caused pollution, global warming, and climate change in Alimosho Local Government Area. It concludes that the church should create awareness among its members through preaching, teaching and practical demonstration of the fact that not taking good care of the environment is a grievous sin against God and nature.

**Keywords:** Alimosho, Environment, Ethics, Evaluation, Preservation, Lagos.

### Introduction

There is a serious claim in Christian theology about environmental stewardship being committed to the human race from the beginning of Creation. This claim is seen in Genesis 1: 27 – 28, where it was claimed that God has assigned a man to be the caretaker of the environment and the entire ecosystem. Thus, the idea of environmental preservation and national development both of which are somewhat intricately linked is seen as part of what has been termed a "dominion mandate." However, owing to centuries of devastating human exploitation of the earth and its resources, the issue of Christians' attitude towards environmental preservation greatly comes to the fore. Indeed, it can be said that there has been such a huge negative effect of human abuse of the environment and of his race that will continue to have a negative consequence both on the posterity of the earth and the human race as a whole (Wood and Carpenter 72).

It was the renowned Chemist, Paul Crutzen who gave a vivid description of the impact of humanity on the earth. He equates it to a geological force which can be seen as *Anthropocene*. As noted by Mike Pope, his summary of the impact of humanity is startling. To quote the words of Mike Pope verbatim:

Over the past three centuries, the population has increased tenfold to nearly 6 billion and is projected to reach 10 billion this century. Humans exploit about 30 – 50% of the land surface and more than half of all fresh water. The tropical rainforest is being cleared at an alarming rate, allowing stored carbon dioxide to contribute to global warming, as well as leading to species extinction via habitat destruction. The population of domestic cattle has risen to about 1.4 billion, releasing tonnes of methane into the atmosphere. Energy usage has grown 16-fold during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, resulting in an

increase in carbon dioxide emissions by more than 30%. Energy production has also released more than 160 million tonnes of sulphur dioxide, which produces acid rain. The use of fertilisers in agriculture has resulted in more fixed nitrogen being added to soils than occurs naturally (Elsdon 2).

The concept of dominion has been misunderstood and in biblical terms is stewardship, not exploitation. Regardless, the attitude and perspectives of Christians towards the issue of environmental preservation have varied even in the context of Lagos Nigeria. Indeed, it has been observed that in Lagos as well as other places in Nigeria, the level of pollution in the environment is increasing; these can be observed in various ways, such as noise pollution, air pollution and water pollution to mention but a few. The above-mentioned environmental pollution has caused hazards and havoc to human lives, ranging from untimely death to different diseases. In some instances, environmental pollution has caused sorrow, agony, bitterness, sadness, premature death and sudden death to some families through air pollution which was caused by carbon monoxide when they are using generating sets.

This study is to correct Christians' passivity towards the preservation of the earth as it affects the posterity of the human race. It will abundantly prove that the church has a significant role in preserving the earth and is of such high responsibility, as she will give account on the Day of Judgement.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The issue of environmental preservation is always crucial in every human society. Several scholars have examined these issues from different angles using different methodologies. In fact, after the claim of Lyn White in 1967 that human abuse of the environment was tied to western Christian traditions, several volumes have been written both in support and refutation of this claim. However, most of these volumes are concerned with environmental preservation and what is or should be the Christian attitude and theologies towards it. Indeed, the appraisal of Christians' attitude towards environmental preservation has not been thoroughly examined, particularly in the Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State.

In the context of Lagos State, it has been earlier established that environmental preservation has become a serious problem. Lack of environmental preservation has remained a significant cause of untimely death in any society. The government has tried all it could with little results; churches are not sufficiently involved in educating their members on being a steward of God's creation. To add to this, Christians' attitudes towards this appear passive.

The sad scenario of environmental degradation is that churches and some other Christian organizations seem to be unconcerned about the issue of preservation and pollution in the society in relation to Alimosho Local Government. It is this sorry state of affairs that gives the motivation for this research.

### **Conceptualising the Environment**

The concept of the environment has been viewed from diverse perspectives and defined in various ways (Singh 203). The variety of definitions and conceptions of the environment is closely linked to the fact that the study of the environment is multi-disciplinary, and thus each discipline tends to develop and adopt definition(s) in line with its interest. This multiplicity of definitions, concepts and usage of terms in various disciplines was clearly captured by Abraham in the statement:

The multiplicity of the usage and concept of the term environment have resulted in a variety of adjectival forms which include social environment, molar environment, physical environment, home environment, psychological environment, behavioural environment, and geographical environment (99).

For instance, a sociologist, Bain defined environment as all the external and non-personal conditions and influences that determine the welfare of a people in a given area (73). On the other hand, a geographer, Hagget, defined environment as the sum total of all conditions that surround man at any point on the earth's surface (Efobi 94). Nigeria's Federal Environmental Protection Agency states that the environment includes water, air, land, plants, animals, and human beings living therein, and the inter-relationships that exist among them (67). However, a more comprehensive and all-embracing definition of the environment was offered by Keller in Efobi the:

The total set of circumstances that surround an individual or a community; these circumstances are made up of physical conditions such as air, water, climate and landforms; the social and cultural aspects such as ethics, economics, aesthetics and such circumstances which affects the behaviour of an individual or a community (67).

According to these definitions, the environment can be viewed as all physical, non-physical, external, living and non-living situations surrounding an organism that determine its existence, development and survival at a particular time. It encompasses constantly interacting sets of physical (natural and man-made) elements and non-physical, living and non-living (e.g. social, cultural, religious, political, economic) systems, which determine the characteristic features, growth and sustainability of both the component elements of the environment and the environment itself (Johnson 92). Hence, sustainability in this context relates to the ability of the ecological, economic and socio-cultural systems in a manner that does not limit the possibility of meeting the present and future needs of the various components and aspects of the environment. It can also be viewed as the carrying capacity of the supporting ecosystems (Johnson 98).

#### **Brief Historical Background of Alimosho LGA**

Alimosho is a Local Government Area in the Ikeja Division, Lagos State, Nigeria. It is the largest local government in Lagos, with 1,288,714 inhabitants, according to the official 2006 Census (however, the Lagos State Government disputes the official Census figures and claims a population within the LGA of more than 2 million residents). Alimosho is presently subdivided into Local Community Development Areas (LCDA). The LCDA structure kicked off after the administration of Bola Ilori who was the last chairman of the old single Alimosho Local Government. The six sub-divisions created out of the old Alimosho are Agbado/Oke-Odo LCDA, Ayobo/Ipaja LCDA, Alimosho LG, Egbe/Idimu LCDA, Ikotun/Igando LCDA and Mosan Okunola LCDA. The LGA contains the urban area of Egbeda/Akowonjo. Alimosho is located within Lagos Metropolitan Area and coordinates 6°36'38"N, 3°17'45"E. The current chairman of the Local Government and the Head of the Local Government Council is Jelili Sulaimon (Omolaye 8).

Alimosho was established in 1945 and it was under the then western region. The majority who dominate Alimosho were the Egbados. The area is very rich in culture, prominent amongst which are Oro, Igunnu and Egungun Festivals annually celebrated. Aside from the cultural heritages, the majority of the inhabitants of the council area are Islamic and Christian faithful. However, the Yoruba language is widely spoken in the community. The source of Alimosho is the Alashua River, which is located on the axis of Oki and Alaguntan in Alimosho. The most recognized Baale is the late Chief Kokumo followed by Lateef Sekoni, while the present Baale is Afuwape. The royal family includes Folarin, Kokumo, Ogunbowale and Afuwape. The Central Mosque in Alimosho is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mosque in Lagos after the Badagry Central Mosque and the Lagos Central Mosque. The First Court is now known as Alimosho Town Hall, which is not recognized anymore by the incumbent government, and the Baale of Alimosho, which is not also recognized by the government due to political reasons (Omolaye 8).

#### **Governmental Policy and Laws on Environmental Preservation in Alimosho LGA**

The basis of environmental policy in Nigeria is contained in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Pursuant to section 20 of the Constitution, the State is empowered to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the water, air and land, forest and wildlife of Nigeria. In addition to this, section 2

of the Environmental Impact Assessment Act of 1992 (EIA Act) provides that the public or private sector of the economy shall not undertake or embark on or authorise projects or activities without prior consideration of the effect on the environment. The Federal Government of Nigeria has promulgated various laws and regulations to safeguard the Nigerian environment (Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Act n.p). These include:

- Federal Environmental Protection Agency Act of 1988 (FEPA Act). The following Regulations were made pursuant to the FEPA Act:
- National Environmental Protection (Effluent Limitation) Regulations;
- National Environmental Protection (Pollution Abatement in Industries and Facilities Generating Wastes) Regulations; and
- National Environmental Protection (Management of Solid and Hazardous Wastes) Regulations.
- Environmental Impact Assessment Act of 1992 (EIA Act).
- Harmful Wastes (Special Criminal Provisions etc) Act of 1988 (Harmful Wastes Act).

The Federal Ministry of Environment (FME) administers and enforces environmental laws in Nigeria. It took over this function in 1999 from the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA), which was created under the FEPA Act. FEPA was absorbed and its functions were taken over by the FME in 1999. The Federal Ministry of Environment has published several guidelines for the administration of the FEPA and EIA Acts and procedures for evaluating environmental impact assessment reports (EIA Reports). Other regulatory agencies with oversight over specific industries have also issued guidelines to regulate the impact of such industries on the environment such as the Environmental Guidelines and Standards for the Petroleum Industry in Nigeria (EGASPIN) 2002, published by the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR).

However, pursuant to the FEPA Act, each State and local government in the country may set up its own environmental protection body for the protection and improvement of the environment within the State. Each State is also empowered to make laws to protect the environment within its jurisdiction. All the States have environmental agencies and State laws; e.g. Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory has issued the Abuja Environmental Protection Board (Solid Waste Control/Environmental Monitoring) Regulations 2005 (the Abuja Environmental Protection Board Regulations) which principally governs solid waste control in Abuja.

In Lagos State, the Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency Law was enacted to establish the Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency (LASEPA). LASEPA's functions include monitoring and controlling the disposal of waste in Lagos State and advising the State Government on all environmental management policies. Lagos State has also enacted the Environmental Pollution Control Law, to provide for the control of pollution and protection of the environment from abuse due to poor waste management (Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Act n.p).

The EIA Act was promulgated principally to enable the prior consideration of environmental impact assessment of public or private projects. Any person planning a project/activity which may have an impact on the environment is statutorily required to prepare an EIA Report, and the Report must set out the potential impact of the activity on the environment and plans for preventing/mitigating the same, as well as clean-up plans. All such Reports must be approved by the FME. Attached to the EIA Act is a schedule of activities and industries for which environmental impact assessments are mandatory. These include Agriculture, Airport, Drainage and Irrigation, Land Reclamation, Fisheries, Forestry, Housing, Industry, Infrastructure, Ports, Mining, Petroleum, Power Generation and Transmission, Quarries, Railways, Transportation, Resort and Recreational Development, Waste Treatment and Disposal, and Water Supply. Any person who fails to comply with the provisions of the EIA Act commits an offence and is liable on conviction, in the case of an individual, to a fine or to a term of imprisonment for up to five years; fines are also imposed on guilty firms or corporations (Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Act n.p).

Furthermore, the FEPA Act empowers the FME to require the production for examination of any license or permit granted to any person, to enter and search any land or building, and to arrest any person whom they have reason to believe has violated any environmental regulation. The approach of regulatory agencies is the prevention of environmental damage, the regulation of potentially harmful activities and the punishment of willful harmful damage whenever this occurs. The environmental agencies also adopt the approach of engaging individuals and communities at risk of potential environmental damage in dialogue. The EIA approval process adopted by the FME involves a system of public hearings during the EIA evaluation process and interested members of the public are invited to such hearings. The respective State environmental agencies in Nigeria, e.g. the Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency (LASEPA), also take the same approach (Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Act n.p).

### **Challenges of Environmental Preservation in Lagos**

Physical and environmental challenges in Lagos can be viewed from both socio-economic and environmental perspectives. An increase in the urban population has resulted in the proliferation of slums and shantytowns. The proliferation of these shantytowns results in the unwieldy expansion of the urban centres, which poses a major planning problem as the provision and management of roads, drainage and sewage systems among other infrastructure, proves very difficult. Furthermore, shantytowns generate a high rate of poverty, diseases and epidemics, environmental pollution, urban conflicts and crime as typified by Mushin, Ajegunle, Isale-Eko, Makoko, Oshodi, Ojo and Orile amongst others. Addressing the problems of the Lagos Metropolis requires a holistic approach. The prevalent problems are physical/environmental, cultural/sociological and managerial (Mabogunje 81). Incidentally, UN-Habitat outlines these problems to be the major challenges to poverty reduction in Nigeria. Therefore, these issues must be the fulcrum for any meaningful intervention in the urban development problems of Lagos State.

### **Physical and Environmental Challenges**

Physical and environmental challenges in Lagos State include conflicting land uses such as the infiltration of commercial land uses on housing as the case in Festac town; competition for succession on Allen Avenue and Awolowo roads; poor aesthetics and unsightly cityscape, high building density and high rate of building collapses such as the recent one at Ebute-Metta, and invasion of informal shanties in planned areas. Infrastructure problems include narrow and poorly constructed roads, mostly without provision for drainage. Other environmental problems include traffic congestion, pollution (Noise, atmospheric and water), flooding and ocean surge etc. These problems are particularly prevalent in areas that are inhabited by the poor. Due to the rapid population expansion and rapid urbanization being witnessed in the metropolis, more people, especially the poor inhabit ecologically vulnerable areas such as Ijeh, Amukoko, and Makoko amongst others. Atmospheric pollution is high in Olusosun and Ojota; Ajegunle and Orile are prone to flooding while building collapse is high in Ketu, Ebute-Metta, Ajegunle and Orile. Although the Lagos State Public Health Bye-law recommends a room occupancy rate of 2 persons per room, as of 2004, occupancy rates vary from 1.4 in low-density Apapa to 3.6 in medium-density Surulere and 8.0 in high-density Mushin (Mabogunje 81).

The environmental challenges include legislative bottlenecks, technical inadequacies and lack of manpower, lack of public participation and corruption. Furthermore, the loopholes in the Land Use Decree of 1978 are yet to be revised, close to three decades later; selective implementation of the Urban and Regional Planning Decree 88 of 1992, paucity of qualified officers on the field and the inability of the government to remunerate workers adequately. Community participation is also not fully implemented. Planning is still basically "for the people," rather than being "with the people." Therefore, planning ends up not being unsustainable as the people do not feel a sense of responsibility to their environment (Bookless 114).

Furthermore, the problems of the Lagos Metropolis are compounded because Lagos is a city that does not have citywide administration. There is an overlap of functions and activities by all levels of government, and consequently, there is friction, conflicts and waste of public funds. If constituent local governments of a large metropolis plan and manage their own sections of the area, there are bound to be conflicts and narrowness in outlook. Overlap of functions of the various environmental management agencies is also an issue. The case

of Lagos State Traffic Management Authority, Federal Road Safety Corps and Federal Road Maintenance Agency is an example. The populace has also lost confidence in their elected representatives and so many of them do not have a sense of responsibility to their environment or communities. Vandalism and destruction of government projects are quite pronounced, especially in the slums and shanties. It is obvious that in the Lagos Metropolis, Ikorodu, Epe and Badagry among other urban settlements in Lagos State, poverty has a dire effect on the general environment. In summary, the major challenges confronting physical planning and development in metropolitan Lagos include the following communication gap, non-integration of socio-economic goals with physical development planning objectives, fragmentation of planning and planning-related agencies, low level of application of information technology in the planning process, and need to showcase good practices (Mabogunje 82).

### Christians' Attitude towards Environment Preservation in Alimosho Local Government in Lagos

In order to evaluate Christian attitude towards Environment Preservation in Alimosho Local Government, the study adopted a sociological approach which primarily involves the administration of questionnaires. One thousand, one hundred and fifty (1150) copies of the questionnaire were administered across the Local Governmental Area. One thousand (1000) copies were retrieved and subjected to simple analysis while the remaining one hundred and fifty (150) copies of the questionnaire were void.

**Table 1: Gender of the Respondents**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	671	67
Female	329	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Table 1 shows the gender of the respondents. 671 (67%) respondents are male and 329 (33%) respondents are female.

**Table 2: Age Range of the Respondents**

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18 – 24 years	128	12.8
25 – 30 years	322	32.2
31 – 35 years	275	27.5
36 – 40 years	125	12.5
41 – 45 years	68	6.8
46 – 50 years	47	4.7
51 years above	35	3.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

The age distribution showed that those between 25 – 30 years have 32.2%, followed by 31 – 35 with 27.5%, the age range 18 – 24 has 12.8% and the least was 51 above at 3.5%. This age distribution showed that the Local government has a teeming youthful population.

**Table 3: Status of the Respondents**

Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Pastor/Priest	75	7.5
Members	504	50.4
Others religious adherents	421	42.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

The position of the respondents revealed that 75 (7.5%) of the respondents are priests or pastors in their respective Christian denominations. Christian members respondents are 504 (50.4%) and other religious adherents are 421 (42.1%). The larger population of Christian respondents is due to the fact that more copies of questionnaires were distributed in churches than in other places.

**Table 4: In Alimosho Local Government, Churches are committed to Human Development**

Items	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)
Strongly Agreed (SA)	112	11.2
Agreed (A)	411	41.1
Disagreed (D)	360	36
Strongly Disagree (SD)	117	11.7
Total	1000	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

From the above table, 112 (11.2%) respondents strongly agreed that in Alimosho Local Government, Churches are committed to human development. 411 (41.1%) agreed, 360 (36%) disagreed and 117 (11.7%) strongly disagreed. 52.3% of the respondents agreed that the churches are committed to human development. Most of these respondents are of the view that the churches in the areas have been organizing programmes centred on the development of human capabilities towards social transformation and economic well-being.

**Table 5: Pastors in the Local Government have proven themselves to be good environmental stewards**

Items	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)
Strongly Agreed (SA)	52	5.2
Agreed (A)	398	39.8
Disagreed (D)	459	45.9
Strongly Disagree (SD)	91	9.1
Total	1000	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

From the above table, 52 (5.2%) respondents strongly agreed that pastors in the local government area have proven themselves to be good environmental stewards. 398 (39.8%) respondents agree that this is so. 459 (45.9%) disagreed and 91 (9.1%) strongly disagreed with the notion. In the end, 550 (55%) respondents disagreed that pastors in the local government area have proven themselves to be good environmental stewards.

**Table 6: Christians contribute to Littering and Degradation of Alimosho Local Government Area**

Items	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)
Strongly Agreed (SA)	264	26.4
Agreed (A)	501	50.1
Disagreed (D)	131	13.1
Strongly Disagree (SD)	104	15.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

264 (26.4%) respondents strongly agreed that Christians contribute to littering and degradation of Alimosho Local Government Area. 501 (50.1%) respondents agreed and 131 (13.1%) disagreed and 104 (10.4%) respondents strongly disagreed. In nutshell, 764 (76.4%) respondents agreed that church members contribute to littering and degradation of Alimosho Local Government Area.

## Theological Evaluation

It is obvious that the commitment of Christians toward environmental preservation is relatively low. Biblically, this is not right when considering the position of the Bible. There is an aspect of Christian ethics that borders on the preservation of the environment. Environmental preservation and movement from Christian ethics have reawakened appreciation of the truth that, through the created gifts of nature, men and women encounter their Creator. The Christian vision of a sacramental universe, a world that discloses the Creator's presence by visible and tangible signs can contribute to making the earth a home for the human family once again. Pope John Paul II has called for Christians to respect and protect the environment so that through nature people can "contemplate the mystery of the greatness and love of God." Reverence for the Creator present and active in nature, moreover, may serve as a ground for environmental responsibility. For the very plants and animals, mountains and oceans, which in their loveliness and sublimity lift our minds to God, by their fragility and perishing likewise cry out, "We have not made ourselves." God brings them into being and sustains them in existence. It is to the Creator of the universe, then, that we are accountable for what we do or fail to do to preserve and care for the earth and all its creatures; "For the Lords are the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it," (Ps 24: 1). Dwelling in the presence of God, we begin to experience ourselves as part of creation, as stewards within it, not separate from it. As faithful stewards, the fullness of life comes from living responsibly within God's creation.

Stewardship implies that we must both care for creation according to standards that are not of our own making and at the same time be resourceful in finding ways to make the earth flourish. It is a difficult balance, requiring both a sense of limits and a spirit of experimentation. Even as we rejoice in earth's goodness and in the beauty of nature, stewardship is placed upon our responsibility for the well-being of all of God's creatures. Respect for nature and respect for human life are inextricably related. "Respect for life, and above all for the dignity of the human person," Pope John Paul II has written, extends also to the rest of creation. Other species, ecosystems, and even distinctive landscapes give glory to God. The covenant given to Noah was a promise to all the earth, "See, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you: all the birds, and the various tame and wild animals that were with you and came out of the ark," (Gen. 9: 9 – 10).

The diversity of life manifests God's glory. Every creature shares a bit of divine beauty. Because the divine goodness could not be represented by one creature alone, Aquinas tells us God produced many and diverse creatures so that what was wanted by one in the representation of the divine goodness might be supplied by another, hence the whole universe together participates in the divine goodness more perfectly, and represents it better than any single creature whatsoever. The wonderful variety of the natural world is, therefore, part of the divine plan and, as such, invites our respect. Accordingly, it is appropriate that we treat other creatures and the natural world not just as means to human fulfilment but also as God's creatures, possessing an independent value, worthy of our respect and care. By preserving natural environments, protecting endangered species, labouring to make human environments compatible with local ecology, employing appropriate technology, and carefully evaluating technological innovations as we adopt them, we exhibit respect for creation and reverence for the Creator.

Fundamental to a proper Christian environmental ethic, then, are the Creator/creature distinction and the doctrine of man's creation in the image of God. Some environmentalists, especially those in the "Deep Ecology" movement, divinize the earth and insist on "biological egalitarianism," the equal value and rights of all life forms, in the mistaken notion that this will raise human respect for the earth. Instead, this philosophy negates the biblical affirmation of man's unique role as steward and eliminates the very rationale for human care for creation. The quest for the humane treatment of beasts by lowering people to the level of animals leads only to the beastly treatment of humans (Yassi et al 56).

Christians as stewards under God are morally accountable to him for treating creation in a manner that best serves the purpose of God, but both moral accountability and dominion over the earth depend on the

freedom to choose. The exercise of these virtues and this calling, therefore, require that Christians should act within the ambit of considerable freedom; not unrestricted, but freedom exercised within the boundaries of God's moral law as revealed in the Scripture (Exod. 20: 1 – 17; Deut. 5: 6 – 21; Rom. 2: 14 – 15).

### **Concluding Remarks and Recommendations**

It has been established that Christians' attitude towards environmental preservation is negative. Most churches are not giving teaching or sermons on the subject. Uncontrolled population growth, untamed technological advancement and the exploitation of natural resources have caused pollution, global warming, and climate change. Though some environmental protection measures had been identified to save the earth a massive and conscious effort on the part of the masses, government and religious institutions especially the churches is needed to cope with the environmental crisis efficiently. It has been noted that the rate of environmental pollution is higher in urban areas than in rural areas and that the rural populace is often more obedient to environmental laws than urban dwellers. Moreover, it is established that an environment that is dominated by literate people is less prone to environmental pollution than a society with more illiterate people.

It is therefore recommended that the church should create awareness among its members through preaching, teaching and practical demonstration of the fact that not taking good care of the environment is a grievous sin against God, just like the sin of idolatry, murder, adultery or robbery. Second, churches should also improve the state of the environment. This is necessary to encourage believers and unbelievers in society. Third, environmental education should be given priority. Every sector of society must be involved since they are all stakeholders. The teaching can be done anywhere; schools, churches and mosques, clubs as well as in social and political gatherings. Churches should organize regular seminars on the role of Christians in sustaining a good environment. Christians should serve as watchdogs against environmental polluters. They should serve as agents of environmental policy promotion.

Also, the government should regulate processes and the use of equipment or technology that undermine the environment. Society in general should cooperate and pull resources together towards improving the environment for better and healthier living for its subjects. Government should make good laws and policies that will guide the use of the environment. Environmental experts are to spearhead the campaign for the use of the environment. Government should be proactive in punishing the environmental polluter without fear or favour. All stakeholders should join hands together in promoting the preservation of the environment.

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