

Religious Interpretations and Re-Interpretations of Space and Environment in Nigeria: Implications for Interreligious Conflicts

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Abstract

The paper posits that beyond the scientific definition of the environment as evident in previous works on the environment, the religious definition of the term has not received the expected attention in science and the environment discourse the world over. This is the gap this work intends to fill as it explores definition and re-definition of the space and the environment from religious point of view. This becomes expedient given the relativist and absolutist definitions of the environment garbed in religious tradition and values especially as such have led to religious bickering, struggle for public space and the environment. Methodologically, this situation, when assessed critically from the ambit of functional cum conflict theories has implications for interreligious conflicts in Nigeria and other African countries. The work hopes to offer a new definition of the environment, which on the one hand would encourage religious practitioners develop new orientation and positive attitude to the environment, the type that would meet global expectation. On the other hand, such definition would be suitable for religious practitioners because on the long run, the new orientation could possibly help to stem the tide of incessant interreligious conflicts in Nigeria and Africa.

Introductory Remarks

Environment as a term or word means many things. What it stands for depends on who defines it. But in the context of our discussion, environment strictly refers to the surroundings in which a person, animal, or plant lives. But from ethical point of view, what we do to or with the environment has implications for those living in the said environment. This explains justification for the global concern for the environment on the basis of how people use it in the light of social change with its capacity to influencing and affecting positively or otherwise people's knowledge of and attitude to the environment and its uses in Africa and by Africans. The concern is also apposite in view of prevailing environmental problems which manifests in environmental degradation, deterioration, contamination and littering the Earth among others. Alluding to the seriousness of this matter with much magnitude Jardins rhetorically remarks that:

At the start of the twenty –first century, it is fair to say that we face environmental challenges unprecedented in human history. Largely through human activity, life on Earth faces the greatest mass extinction... the natural resources that sustain life on this planet - air, water and soil – are being polluted or depleted at alarming rates (DesJardins,2001:vii).

One of the inferences we can draw from Jardins observation is that environmental problems is manmade and not God or devil made. And if we must avert dangers associated with it, we need to examine how individual or group of individuals have consciously and unconsciously aggravated environmental problems so that all of us individually or corporately would work towards preventing further damage of the environment as well as resolving the problem. Granted that the church and Mosque are social institutions, it is important to alert them about their responsibility towards the environment. The fundamental questions to be asked are: does the church contribute to environmental problem? , If the answer is in the affirmative, how does it happen and if the answer is no, why do we think the Church and Mosque should be involved in the campaign for prevention or reduction of environmental problem which is a problem facing the contemporary global society? Our concern in this direction is an examination of the religious activities and its overall implications for the environment that calls for caring and protecting. Since the Church and the Mosque are part of society and of course social institutions existing and operating in a given environment, they could not afford to remain silent in the environmental debate; this is the thesis of this essay. Our findings would help us place the contemporary Churches and Mosques in a position where they would contribute their quota towards prevention or reduction of environmental problems. We are approaching this from the standpoint of religious definition and re-definition of the space and the environment in Nigeria and its implications for interreligious conflicts. Ordinarily, scientist defines the environment as the complex of physical, chemical, and biotic factors (as climate, soil, and living things) that act upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival.

But a cursory look coupled with painstaking attention paid to the attitude of Church and the Mosque to the environment in terms its uses and understanding suggests prevalence conflicts in the religious definition and understanding of the environment and definition of the environment by religious practitioners'. This is the thrust of this paper. The conflict has tendency to cause interreligious conflict because the way Muslims and Christians define the environment in terms of their usage differ. We shall return to this later. Meanwhile, this study would cover the following: theoretical background, scope and methodology of the study, the concept of the environment in Christianity and Islam, Christians and Muslims and Muslims and Muslims use of the environment in practice, implications of Christians and Muslims and Muslims and Muslims, use of the environment for interreligious conflicts, matters arising, recommendation and conclusions.

Scope and Methodology of the Study

Methodologically, the work is strictly an examination of the attitudes of contemporary Nigerian Christians and Muslims with reference to their religious activities in the Church and the Mosque and their implications for the environment. Therefore, the approach which is both descriptive and argumentative is derived from Christian and Islamic ethics, which consists of the standards of behaviour for Christians and Muslims as laid down in the Bible and Qur'an (Smith, 1991:17) This definition provides basis for some of the questions often asked by Religio-environmentalists such as: Should religious people continue to affect the environment by generating noise pollution through indiscriminate use of technological devices? Should religious people continue fell all the trees in the forests and in villages and towns for the sake of cleansing the environment of evil spirits? And what environmental obligations do we need to keep for future generations? Is it right for humans to knowingly cause the extinction of a species for the (perceived or real) convenience of humanity?

Theoretically, Religious ethics where we locate Christian and Islamic ethics is deontological because it holds that actions are right or wrong in terms of whether or not they are fulfillment of duty. Relating this to the environment, the religious ethics presupposes that Christians and Muslims are and ought to be trustees or stewards in caring for the creation including the environment that is the natural world which God pronounced as "very good" in the opening chapters of Genesis.

One of the tools employed for doing this is Environmental Impact Assessment or EIA, which is of American origin. It is a formal process of evaluating how the activities of people in an environment affect everything therein in it. The advantage of this tool is that it would help us to fashion environmental policy that would enhance good environment desirable for all. The measurement is done through interviews conducted in selected residential areas of Ibadan. It is important to note, that there are seven major resident districts in Ibadan - the core, older suburb, newer eastern suburb, newer western suburb, post 1952 suburb, Bodija estate and reservations (Mabogunje, 1962: 56 – 77).

In recent time, several resident districts have sprung up at Agbowo (opposite the University of Ibadan). The core district, which is the high-density area, occupied mainly by the indigene of the town; there is no layout of buildings, and road networks in this area. The older suburb, shares virtually the same characteristics with the core district except that more Yoruba immigrants may be found there.

The newer eastern and Western suburbs and the post 1952 suburb are characterized by lower housing density. Districts consist of people who can be regarded as middle-class. The GRA, Bodija Estate and Oluyole Estate may be regarded as low-density areas. The Agbowo area is occupied by a few low to medium income groups working mainly in the University, at Ojoo along Oyo road and along Ife, Abeokuta and Ijebu Ode roads. Thus, information derived via this channel is supplemented by my personal observation and experience, which span over a decade. In the end, the information would be content analysed within the ambit of religious environmental ethics.

Theoretical Background

The study of the environment over the ages has brought about the emergence of theories of the environment particularly from ethical point of view in the light of which we speak of environmental ethics, which is a field of applied ethics concerned with those issues that arise when human beings interact with the natural environment. Environmental ethics which does not only seek to evaluate past and present attitudes and practices, but aims also to offer guidance as to how people ought to think about, and conduct, their relationship with the natural environment. For example, environmental ethicists debate whether the natural environment is simply an exploitable resource for human interests, or whether it has significance independent of any use that might be made of it, a value that ought to constrain certain practices. A few of these environmental ethical theories are Libertarian theory which extends human rights to non human beings especially animals; this brings about theory of animal rights which presupposes that animals have intrinsic rights that should be guaranteed in the same way as those of human beings are. Ecology theory places emphasis not on human rights but on the fundamental interdependence of all biological and non biological entities and their essential diversity. Conservation, theory looks only at the worth of the environment in terms of its utility or usefulness to humans. Others include Anthropocentrism theory which is concerned with the future of human beings as objects of moral responsibility, and finally the holistic ethical theory which holds that people have moral responsibilities to collections of (or relationship between) individuals rather than (or in addition to)those individuals who constitute the whole. A critical exploration of these theories has brought to the limelight the works of environmentalists such as Rachel Carson (DesJardins, 2001:214), Lynn White (White, 1967: 1203-1207) Garrett Hardin (Garrett Hardin, 2006) and Aldo Leopold (Aldo Leopold, 1949: 237-264), It is important to note that some of the theories have several versions resulting from critical evaluation of them by contemporary environmentalists, the likes of Baxter (Baxter, 1974:), Taylor (1986), Botkin (1990), Callicott and Nelson and Martin (1998).

Religious Interpretations of the Environment

With reference to the Qur'an and Hadith, the major sources of information for the Muslim on the environment among other issues, the environment is defined as the totality of the earth which is regarded as a sanctuary in which mankind was made to dwell in comfort. In other words, the vast oceans, forests and mountains that make up the bountiful planet have been subdued by God for man's enjoyment and productive use. However, God compels Muslims in the Qur'an to respect and revere the environment when He says, "Greater indeed than the creation of man is the creation of the heavens and the earth." (Surah 40:57). What we can infer from the above is that Islam teaches that Allah created the environment. Allah gives freedom, but expects us to choose wisely. Furthermore, Allah ordered human beings not to do mischief on earth, after it hath been set in order. Doing mischief on earth consists of: destroying the soil and establishing settlements on it, contributing to the erosion of the soil, and desertification, and not flattening the soil after the extraction of mines from it, etc. Our interpretation of the above Qur'anic injunctions is that man has dominion over the environment while he also has responsibility for maintaining it. Thus we have two schools of thoughts; the first suggests dominionship and the other stewardship.

In Christianity like Islam, the environment is interpreted as the earth which in its totality belongs to God. However, Gen. 1:26 states, that man should have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over everything that creeps on earth. There is another instruction which seemingly modifies the force of "have dominion" and "subdue it" from Genesis 1:26, 28. This reflected in Genesis 2:15 which reads: 'the Lord took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend it and keep it' There are two key words underlying this passage viz: 'tend' and 'keep' are interpreted by Christian environmentalists cum theologians to mean that Adam who today represents humanity was to look after, care for, watch over and keep an eye after the garden (Ritenbaugh, 1999). By implications, Adam was likened to a Care-taker who has a duty of maintaining and not destroying the garden more importantly that he would give account of his stewardship. This perhaps explains partly one of the reasons while Adam and his wife were driven out of the Garden of Eden for violating what apparently looks like landlord-tenant agreement. It is within this premise that contemporary Nigerian landlords (owners of rented apartments) do drive away tenants who refused to maintain their apartments as stated in the tenancy agreement. What we are saying in essence is that man is taken as a tenant on earth (because the earth is interpreted to belong to God) who has responsibility to take care of it. This, therefore, bestows on man responsibility of taking care of his environment.

Re-Interpretations of the Environment

What we intend doing here is to discuss how religious practitioners re define the space and the environment through their activities. We rely on the field work report to prove our assertion that through religious activities, religious practitioners could have been adjudged to have reinterpreted the meaning and the essence of the environment. This assertion is demonstrated through fieldwork reports which cover the underlined issues as discussed below.

Sitiny of Churches and Mosques in Ibadan

In sitting of Churches and Mosques, two environmental oriented questions are often raised regarding the location of the religious centres. One, does the sitiny has implication for the aesthetic of the environment? Two, is the Church or Mosque sited in accordance with the lay out made by Town planners? In terms of sitiny of Churches, we discover that in there are not less than seven to ten Churches and Mosques are located in an average street in residential areas in places like Ajibode, Molete, Beere, Oke Ado to mention a few. Statistically, an average residential area of Ibadan city has 50% of Churches and Mosques housed in rented flats, 20% are domiciled in kiosk and a few shades in front of residential buildings and 30% domiciled in approved church building. In other words, today Churches and Mosques are increasingly springing up in residential areas, which under the law and normal circumstances should not be so. Because ordinarily residential areas are places that are designed with concern for the aesthetics. There is always lay- out and the houses to be built there should be residential with right to serene environment. We found out that builders in residential areas usually get approval for building their houses in residential areas with all conditions associated with it met. Such conditions include not making noise or infringe into the privacy of other co- residents .But we discover that after a while, part of the building so approved as residential is converted first to fellowship centre which will later metamorphosised to church building. All these happen in the name of church planting which over time has resulted to what scholars call proliferation of churches (1998).

It is important to note that the sitiny of the Churches and Mosques is contrary to the environmental law. Because in history church building were located at the outskirts of the town or city where its activities would not disturb anybody. And when people who had one reason or the other to do have any business at the outskirts of the city such as performance of rituals, which sometimes involved drumming and singing, they would maintain absolute silence whenever they got to Churches and Mosques premises which already had the sing post reading “*Dake ilu ati ariwo* meaning, “stop drumming and singing”.

Littering of the Environment

Occasioned by drive for membership many Churches, through advertisement litter the environment with bill boards and posters in public places like banks, post offices and motor parks. And, these acts on the long run destroy the aesthetics of the environment. The present scenario has numerous implications for the environment. One, it destroys the aesthetics of the environment because under normal circumstances Churches and Mosques should not be located in residential areas, which have right to serene atmosphere devoid of noise pollution for that matter (Abumere 1997:86-88.) The question we should entertain is that who gives licenses to these churches if they actually have? The town planner of course! It means there is deal among the church planters and officials of town planning and those in charge of erecting of billboard and pasting of posters which consequently lead to de- beautification of our environment. This singular fact raises question of social and moral irresponsibility on the part of the church and the officers in charge of environmental management. The happening is what Adula defines as manifestation of corruption in management of Nigerian cities (Adula, 2002:177).

Deforestation

In the history of Christian and Islamic religious propaganda in Nigeria, Christian and Islamic missionaries engaged in deforestation of the environment in many villages and towns especially the grooves and shrines in their bid to rid the places of evil spirits and demons. They alleged that grooves and shrines were abode of evil spirits. Though the exercise has had its positive side, we must not lose sight of the fact that forest has its own usefulness. For instance, it acts soaks up rainfall brought by tropical storms while anchoring soils and releasing water at regular intervals. This regulating feature of tropical rainforests can help moderate destructive flood and drought cycles. Now with forest loss, the local community loses the system that perform valuable but often underappreciated services like ensuring the regular flow of clean water and protecting the community from flood and drought.

Liturgical Activities

It is observed that many of liturgical practices of Churches and Mosques in Ibadan earlier mentioned directly or indirectly affect the environments. For example, most of such activities are accompanied with the use of drum-sized microphone during morning, afternoon and evening services. This results to air pollution and social noise, which affects everybody especially infants and those on admission in hospitals who ordinarily might be expected to be on bed rest. On the menace of noise pollution in Nigeria, Soni-Ehi observes that: Residents of big cities are increasingly going through process of partial deafness. Their sensitive eardrums are daily being bombarded by a continuous barrage of environmental noise overflowing from ear shattering drum –size speakers of markets, mosques and churches (Soni-Ehi 2006).

Corroborating the above, experts in Noise studies, notify that the problem of noise pollution would at first be temporary, but progresses because of repeated exposure to loud noises and in due course exposure to hazardous sounds can damage the inner ear's cells. Furthermore, it is believed that potentially hazardous sound levels may make it difficult for a person to hear conversation and may cause him or her to hear ringing in the ears or muffled sounds. In other words, many people suffer from permanent or temporary hearing loss. A study by the National Centre for Environmental Health in Atlanta in 2006 found that 12.5 per cent suffered from noise-induced hearing problems that muffled certain high frequency sounds (<http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/nigenv/html>).

Though this development is not peculiar to Ibadan, because the story is the same almost everywhere in Nigeria, the outstanding issue is that Nigerians are not pleased about the situation. This explains why some Nigerians have called for an end to it as reflected in one of the Nigerian newspapers as follows:

It is high time that the government should invoke relevant sections of its orders on churches, mosques and music vendors in order to maintain the acceptable noise across the state. About time is all I can say! I wish Bola Tinubu would get this done in Lagos State where you can be kept awake all night by the sound of one religious group or another blasting out "Praise Worship" next to your pillow. Why are people so unreasonable and selfish? (http://community.nigeria.com/nspace/noise_pollution_Cross_River_State_Governmet)

The Churches and Mosques make use of generating plant, which generate noise and air pollution (This is a serious problem in Nigeria because studies carried out by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) in 2001 show that Nigeria emitted 23.5 million metric tons of carbon, slightly down from a high of 27.7 million metric tons of carbon emitted in 1996 but still an overall increase since 1980, when the same figure was 18.9 million. Emissions from natural gas accounted for 12.5 million metric tons (53.3%) of that total, with oil emissions making up 11.0 million metric tons (46.6%) coal for the remaining 0.04 (0.1%)(<http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/nigenv/html>), (18th July 2006).

Apart from the above, our study shows also that some Churches and Mosques in the name of street evangelism are fond of barricading major and minor streets. At times some of the religious activities take place in the Lagos-Ibadan highways. The development often lead to road diversion thus causing hardship for road users including pedestrian and motorists. The Churches and Mosques claim that they always take permission from the constituted authority but upon investigations, this fact is not always true.

The bottom line is that the practice always causes disaffection for those affected. I witnessed an occasion in which some people argue that the practice of barricading street is a violation of right of others to the use of public property like road. To our mind, if care is not taken it could generate to interreligious conflicts especially in Nigeria where religion is always a volatile issue(Ogunbode 2006, Onikoyi, 2008).

Evaluation of the Reports

Exploring what the Churches and Mosques are doing to the environment is one thing, probing into factors that could be responsible for their activities are equally important in order to work towards solutions. Through interview with church planters regarding the proliferation of Churches and Mosques in residential areas, two reasons are said to have been responsible for the church activities earlier reported.

One, they argue that one of the major missions of the church is evangelism, which must be communicated in the manner that everybody would hear¹. The argument is not justifiable in the context of Biblical ethics, which teaches act of showing concern for the other as evident in the Golden rule and love for neighbours. The questions one could ask are: Does it matters to care about what we do in our environment especially as such affect people in our surrounding? Do we care about how what others do in our surrounding affect us? Does anybody have any rights regarding the use of the environment? Do the man, atmosphere, plants and animals, birds and fish have rights to be protected in our environment even within the context of dominion theory?

The second reason the church proffers is that it has divine mandate to use the way they like the environment as a God given gift to humanity. This stand could be interpreted as an appeal to anti environmental school of thought, which presupposes man's dominion over the earth with little or no responsibility for caring for it. The basis of their philosophy is Genesis 1:28 God where God said:

Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

The anti environmental theologians interpreted this passage to mean that God gives man freedom to do anything he wants to the planet including —bending or twisting it to satisfy his desires. And if the need arises, he can abuse or rape it of all its beauty and diversity as long as his wants are met. To our mind, this approach to environment is negative and if it is pushed further we can see that it has some problems inherent it.

¹ I got this information from Pastor Alo who has a church in part of his residential building in Ajibode, Ibadan on Jan 10th 2009

For example, if every man were free to exploit the environment to meet his desire, there would be conflicts among people who have the same ambition and right to exploring the nature. Under such practice, the nature itself would be destroyed within a short time. Such will return man to his former state of nature, which according to Hobbes is characteristically solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” and that it is “a war of all against all” (Hobbes, 1946).

One would find it difficult to reconcile the purpose of God’s creation of the earth with complete dominion of the earth (which often goes with sense of irresponsibility in handling the environment) in such state of disorderliness. Furthermore, the word “dominion over nature” does not imply that man could use his God-given authority over nature to degrade and destroy it rather it presupposes that bestowment of responsibility towards maintenance of the environment.

Conversely, it is important for the Christians and Muslims and Muslims who believe in the Dominionship theology to know that every coin has two sides, meaning there are also some Biblical passages which suggest care for the environment; this brings about what is called to pro-environmental school of thought, which interpretes Genesis 2:15 which reads: ‘the Lord took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend it and keep it’ to mean that man should care for the environment. It interpretes the two key words underlying this passage viz: ‘tend’ and ‘keep’ to mean that Adam who today represents humanity was to look after, care for, watch over and keep an eye after the garden (Ritenbaugh, 1999).

By implications, Adam was likened to a Caretaker, who had a duty of maintaining and not destroying the garden more importantly that he would give account of his stewardship. This perhaps explains partly why Adam and his wife were driven out of the Garden of Eden for violating what apparently looks like landlord - tenant agreement. It is within this premise that contemporary Nigerian landlords (owners of rented apartments) often drive away erring tenants who refused to maintain their apartments- (environment) as stated in the tenancy agreement. The point we are making is that man is taken as a tenant on earth (because the earth is interpreted as a possession of God) and therefore, he has responsibility to take care of his environment. This by implications, therefore, bestows on man responsibility of taking care of his environment. To back up this argument, some other biblical passages are cited such as: Exodus 21:33-34, where there is a Covenant made towards protection of animals from human-produced problems and Exodus 22:6 which guards against careless handling of environment and payment of compensation to those whose environment were destroyed. The aspect of compensation or restitution is lacking in the relationship between the Church and people affected by church activities.

The book of Deuteronomy in chapter 20:19-20 provides insight to solving problem of global warming, Deut 23:13-15 highlight what can be called anti pollution laws. Leviticus 19:23-25, God gives laws regarding the growth and production of fruit trees designed for the mutual benefit of man and tree and in Leviticus 25.

He outlines also how man should make use of the land, particularly cultivated lands to avoid degradation. From this point, we can begin to appreciate the importance of land ethics, which according to Leopold connotes morally conscious use of land; this is not merely soil but a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soil, plants and animals. On account of this thesis, he concludes that a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community while it is wrong when it tends otherwise (Aldo Leopold, 1949).

Summarily, our findings show that, most of contemporary Churches and Mosques in Ibadan are not making good use of the environment. They must have colluded with town planners in creating bustling and non-environmental friendly atmosphere, which is an issue in environmental management as earlier mentioned. In our estimation, this suggests that the Churches and Mosques are not altruistic in their operations given the effects all their activities have on the environment; this calls for further remedy.

Making the Church Responsible and Responsive to the Nigerian Environment

In making the Church responsible and responsive to the Nigerian environment, the church as a social cum moral community ought to have taken the lead in fostering an environment devoid of pollution. The need to be socially responsible according to Baarcallow, is considered as part of the 'contract' every person makes (implicitly) when one becomes a member of society and it is what makes life in society possible (Baarcallow, 1994). It is equally important for Nigerian Churches and Mosques to learn a big lesson from Bartholomew, II – the patriarchal of Eastern Orthodox Churches and Mosques who says:

Care of the environment constitutes a most urgent question for each and every human person... From this we can conclude that to commit a crime against the natural world is a sin: For man to cause species to become extinct, to destroy the integrity of the Earth by causing changes in its climate, stripping the forests or destroying wetlands are sins (Taylor, 1986: 307-310).

Nigerian Churches and Mosques should also borrow some leaf from the 'Christian Friends of the Earth'- a non-profit environmental advocacy organization in the United States of America, which is fighting to protect the environment and helping communities, protect themselves. This is a part of friends of the Earth International, which by all standards is ranked as the world largest environmental advocacy network with members groups in several countries
http://www.webdirectory.com/General_Environmental_Interest/Friends_of_the_Earth/html>
(10th July, 2006).

In 2003 its president remarked at a conference in Collegiate, New York that:

...there is a need for all major religions today to halt the alarming destruction of all the Earth' magnificent ecosystems and to begin the challenging process of restoration and rehabilitation in the US and worldwide

It is not too much for Nigerian Christians and Muslims to join the Christian Friends of the Earth if they have not done so. And if they were members already, one would expect them to demonstrate in practical terms the philosophy of the association in Nigeria.

In addition to this we suggest that Nigerian government, individuals and corporate institutions should help sensitize and orientate Nigerian Christians and Muslims toward development of good conception, use and management of the environment. This task becomes urgent as the contemporary environment poses threats to human survival in which the very survival of the human species is at stake. Thus, in the words of Arthur Dyck, the appeal for survival should inform formulation of government policies for controlling and preventing environmental pollution (Dyck, 1977). Such policy should ensure that those affected by environmental pollutions are duly compensated while future generation should not be harmed in the name of church planting and technique for membership drive. In other words, Christian and Muslim organisations, across the country have to create and promote educational awareness among their members about appropriate way they should deal with the environment on the one hand and solve problems associated with environmental pollutions on the other hand. In other words streets evangelism should be done with little or bearable noise. It is not always important to use drum –sized loudspeaker for the sake of those that would be affected by church activities. We propose that those concerned with town planning and environmental management should discourage sitting of Churches and Mosques in residential part of the city. Perhaps special area could be created for building of religious centres, to include churches, mosques and shrines, as has been the practice in some tertiary institutions in Southwestern Nigeria. The FEPA should wake up to her responsibility of enhancing good environment.

In all, Christians and Muslims need to live by example starting with disengagement from noise pollution often associated with their liturgical activities and sitting of their Churches and Mosques. On this note, it is good to conclude with the recommendation of the World Council of Churches towards formation of moral - oriented environment which states that:

All elements of the God's earth are his creation and are to be treated responsibly. All of God's creation has value and is to be treated with reverence for the sake of its maker who accounted it good. We are commended to be good stewards of God's world. We are held responsible for it. It is not ours to do with them, as we please; rather we are it for the Lord (Albrecht, 1979).

Failure to respond responsibly to the environment is to render redundant the Bible and Quran (which is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good works) on the one hand and the biblical tenets regarding caring for and sustaining the environment on the other hand. The time to do so is now.

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