

THE NEED FOR CLERGY INVOLVEMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper is an investigative attempt to understand the level of environmental awareness by the Clergy in the three Anglican Dioceses in Anambra State- Nigeria, and their involvement in educating their members on environmental issues. The main primary data source was a self-administered questionnaire that was completed during the regular diocesan Clergy workshops. Findings from the study reveal quite a satisfactory level of environmental awareness by the Clergy. However, their level of involvement in helping to provide environmental education to their members is to a very large extent, not encouraging. The paper, therefore recommends the use of oikotheology as a theological framework which would take environmental awareness beyond mere personal 'theoretical' knowledge since knowledge without practical commitment could be as useless or even as dangerous as ignorance itself. It is expected that oikotheology could inspire practical commitment to bridge the gap between knowledge and practical commitment as identified in the research work.

Keywords: Clergy, Environmental Awareness, Education, Anglican Diocese, Anambra

Introduction

Kellerman (1980) defines education as the process of teaching and training of the child. It is the imparting or acquisition of skills\ for a particular trade or profession in which applicable methods are used. In the views of Fafunwa (1983), education is all positive efforts, conscious and direct incidental and indirect, made by a given society to accomplish certain objectives that are considered desirable in terms of the individual's needs as well as the needs of the society where the programme is based. Ebong (1996) defines, education as a powerful instrument for the development of man and the society. From these definitions, education is a systematic procedure for the transfer and transformation of culture, through formal or informal training of people in a society. It deals with

the mental, physical, psychological and social development of the citizens in a given society. The goal of education is manpower development, aimed at national growth and development.

Hornby (2010) on his part, defines education as the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university. He further describes it as a process of teaching, training and learning, especially in school or college, to improve knowledge and develop skills. Hence, we have primary/elementary education, secondary education, further/higher/post-secondary education, e.t.c as examples of education. However, educational as used in this discourse, is an adjective of education.

Furthermore, Labo-Popoola, Bello and Atanda (2009) all view education as permanent change in behavior as a result of learning and consists of all efforts (conscious or incidental) made by a society to accomplish set objectives, which are considered to be desirable in terms of the individual as well as the societal needs (p.252). What this means is that the ability of education to achieve the objective of mankind development depends entirely on the government policies and the political will on the part of the government to translate the policies into meaningful actions.

However, Labo-Popoola et.al (2009) notes that starting with the colonial period, Nigeria, having been colonized by Britain adopted the British form of education, which consist of primary, secondary, sixth form as well as higher education had been in the Northern Protectorate before the amalgamation in 1914, so the Christian missionaries that came into the country through the Western Region were restricted from spreading both Christianity and western education to the Northern Region.

It was Patricia Mische who made an instructive statement that is very pertinent for churches engagement in environmental issues. Mische was of the opinion that there is need for religion, especially Christianity to interface with other disciplines working together to seek solution to the environmental challenges of the time. Her opinion was the result of her observation that science and technology alone cannot resolve ecological threats of our time neither can governments or the laws they promulgate achieve this. She suggests that sustaining the integrity of creation requires not only the external laws governments enact to deal with belligerent behaviour, but also inner governance, laws internalised in our hearts and minds and the will to live by them. In order

to achieve this, she instructs that church praxis has special relevance for the development of inner governance and a culture of ecological responsibility. This is because according to her, religions carry the archetypes, the symbols, meanings, values and moral codes around which people coalesce and define themselves, their sense of the sacred, and their relationship with each other and the natural world.⁶⁸

The above introductory statement serves to remind us of the need for the church to partner with other stakeholders and agencies involved in environmental concerns. If the church would do justice to this all important role, she definitely must involve the clergy to catechize the faithful. If the clergy must exercise this pedagogical function, then, she must possess a certain level of knowledge in environmental issues in order to be able to teach as well as conscientize the faithful, for it said that one does not give what he /she does not have.

The objective of this paper is to investigate and analyze the level of environmental knowledge and awareness among the clergy of the three Anglican dioceses of Niger, Awka, and Nnewi and to see how the clergy, using their environmental knowledge, could assist in creating environmental awareness and education in the local communities where they serve. The work is the result of field research undertaken in the three dioceses. It presents the comments, the analysis and summary of the responses of the clergy who participated in the three Diocesan workshops where questionnaire were administered.

Methodological approach

The main primary data source was a self-administered questionnaire that was introduced and completed during the regular diocesan clergy workshops. It was administered to the clergy in three Anglican Dioceses in Anambra state -Nigeria. The three dioceses are: Diocese on the Niger which was created in 1920, Diocese of Awka which was created in 1987 and Diocese of Nnewi, created in 1990. Presently there are nine Anglican dioceses in the state. We have two major reasons for choosing the three Dioceses as our study areas. Firstly, the three Dioceses are located in each of the three senatorial zones in the state. This ensures equal representation of opinions of the Anglican clergy in the state ⁶⁹ .

⁶⁸ Conradie, Ernst. 2008. *The church and Climate change*. p.64

⁶⁹. Senatorial zones are political structures (blocks) in a state which a senatorial representative to the National Assembly essentially supervises according to the political arrangement in the Nigerian nation. A senatorial zone is

The second reason is based on the fact that they are the oldest Anglican dioceses in the state, and thus have attained some level of structural, institutional and policy development.

The questionnaire was administered to more than 150 Clergy respondents from the three dioceses who participated in the clergy workshop. The total number of clergy in each diocese includes both serving and retired clergy. We are not able to distinguish from the total number those clergy who are already retired. After the administration of the questionnaire, a total of 91 respondents from the three dioceses eventually returned their completed questionnaire. We made use of a questionnaire with fifty (50) closed-answer model, and the answers were captured and analysed through the Statistical Programme for Social Sciences (SPSS). We provided some background information to the research before the questionnaires were completed by the clergy. We also entertained some questions that were raised in relation to the questionnaire.

Conducting this research afforded me an interesting opportunity to interact with clergy from the three dioceses in a unique way that I had not experienced in my previous research engagements. There was some degree of enthusiasm and willingness on the part of the clergy to participate in the research even though no financial incentive was promised. I also observed that some clergy did not return their questionnaire, and this could account for the small number of respondents recorded especially in the diocese on the Niger and diocese of Nnewi. In my effort to understand why some of the respondents did not return their questionnaire, a couple of them confessed to me on personal level that they admired the concepts of the “paper” (ie the questionnaire) and simply wanted to keep the “paper” so as to implement the ideas in their respective parishes. Another important factor that could account for the small number of clergy that completed questionnaire in the workshop is the possibility that some retired clergy may not have attended the workshop.

the combination of representative constituencies. Representative constituencies are made up of the various local governments in the state. In Anambra state, the three senatorial zones are, Anambra North, South and Central. This information was provided by Thomas Ekwealor, a Nigerian political science student at the University of South Africa.

Summary Presentation of Research Findings (General Observations)

We could observe that there are a couple of questions which we thought would have been answered in the negative by the respondents, but this was contrary to our expectation. Two possibilities could be advanced here as the reason for this. (1) Perhaps, some of the clergy were simply trying to protect the image of their diocese so that their diocese would not be seen as lagging behind in terms of environment and development issues. This therefore made them to compromise objectivity to diocesan patronage. (2) It could also be possible that some of these questions are a bit technical, i.e. specialised words/terms which are not translated in a layman's language might have been used without explanation. This suggestion however, appears a bit flimsy because none of the respondents indicated having any difficulty in understanding the questions. But, apart from a few of the questions I thought were not answered honestly, the rest were as objective as they could be.

It was interesting to note that many of the respondents exhibited an appreciable and fair knowledge, understanding and awareness of the environmental issues even more than I had imagined. This is reflected on the responses provided. However, there are many instances where the ignorance of the majority of the respondents on particular environmental issues becomes apparent. For example, we could easily observe that there are environmental issues which the respondents seem not to be familiar with in terms of how such issues contribute to the wider environmental challenges. For example, since many parishes do not have compost centres to deal with waste generation, the issue of pollution in the state in general is not going to stop if individuals and institutions who make up the state do not take pollution problems seriously. We noted that soil excavation- a wide spread practice which many poor people adopt as a survival strategy could exacerbate the erosion problem which is already getting out of control in the state. Another critical area where the poor people impact negatively on the environment is the deforestation in the state because most people are using fire wood.

From the research findings and observations based on the responses of the clergy, it was discovered that a vast majority of the clergy exhibited a high level of environmental awareness as shown in the analysis. On a different note, however, it was discovered that *action* is hugely lacking both on the part of the parishes and the dioceses in implementing environmental policies or rather in translating this supposedly environmental knowledge into practical use. As we have indicated above, there is a problem that emerges from this scenario of

knowledge without practical action—a theoretical knowledge that only exists in the minds of individuals. The real, useful and transformative knowledge is the one capable of being translated and used in practical ways to bring about a desired change.⁷⁰ It is very disappointing that most of the respondents who claimed to have environmental knowledge have nothing to show for it in terms of their being able to bring about a change in their immediate vicinity. This brings out the question that if no environmental awareness campaign or seminar is being organised in local parishes, then how are the changes going to come about. This is not in accordance with the principle of the agenda 21—thinking globally and acting locally.⁷¹ Knowledge is effective when it is able to bring about a desired change but if on the other hand knowledge does not bring a change, then it only becomes what David Goldblat calls “knowing by thinking or reasoning and not knowing by doing”.⁷² What we need in the church is knowledge that transcends reasoning for the church to be able to make pragmatic impact in the current search for solution to the environmental problems.

To elucidate on the above point, we have compartmentalized the questions each with a heading. We will now provide an analysis of the research findings based on these headings.

The following sets of questions deal with Diocesan and Parish Concerns on Environmental issues

Does your parish make annual budgetary provision to cover environment related issues?

COMMENTS: Forty-Seven respondents (51.6 %) said that their respective parishes do not make an annual budgetary provision to cover environment and poverty related issues on the one hand. On the other hand, thirty respondents 32.8 % indicated that their parishes do make annual budgetary provision to cover environment and poverty issues. However, fourteen respondents (15 %) did not answer the question.

⁷⁰ Goldblatt, David. 2004.(ed) *Knowledge and the Social Sciences: Theory, Method, Practice*. Second Edition. London and New York: Routledge in association with Open University. p.2

⁷¹ See Sitarz, D. 1994 (ed) *Agenda 21: The Earth Summit Strategy to Save Our Planet*. Boulder CO: Earth press. Agenda 21 is a broad action plan adopted at the 1992 Rio Summit to promote environmentally sound and sustainable development in all of countries of the world. Agenda 21 is not legally binding; it is a flexible guide towards the achievement of a sustainable world.

⁷² Goldblatt, David. 2004.(ed) *Knowledge and the Social Sciences*: p.2

Does your Diocese through its publications discuss environment and poverty issues to create awareness?

COMMENTS: Responding to the above question, Fifty-Six respondents (61.5 %) affirmed that their dioceses do discuss environment and poverty issues in their respective publications in order to create awareness. On the same question, Twenty-Seven respondents (29.6 %) revealed that their dioceses do not discuss environment and poverty issues in their publication. Eight respondents refused to answer the question.

Does your Diocese have an environmental group/ organisation?

COMMENTS: In response to the above question, 58 respondents (63.7 %) answered in the affirmative that their respective dioceses have got an environmental organisation or group while 29 respondents (31.8 %) indicated that their respective dioceses do not have an environmental group or organization. It is only 4 respondents (4.3 %) that did not answer the question.

Does your parish have an environmental organisation/group?

COMMENTS: The majority of the respondents indicated that their respective parishes do not have an environmental organisation or group. This is shown in the percentage of respondents who said no to the question (53.8 %). Those who indicated that their parishes do have environmental organisation or group represent 36.2 % of the respondents. Those categorized as missing value, ie who choose not to answer the question constitute 9.9 % of the respondents.

Does your parish have environmental management plan?

COMMENTS: A vast majority of the respondents (57 %) indicated that their parishes do not have an environmental management plan while 34 % showed that their parishes have environmental management plan. 8.8 % of the entire respondents did not answer the question.

Has your parish ever conducted an environmental impact assessment on any of its ongoing projects?

COMMENTS: In response to the above question, 53.8 % of the respondents admitted that their parish had never conducted an environmental impact assessment on any of their projects. In contrast to this group of respondents above, is another group of 35.2 % who indicated that their parish had conducted an environmental impact assessment on their projects. 11 % of the respondents did not answer the question.

Has your parish ever conducted an environmental audit exercise?

COMMENTS: On the question of whether the parishes had ever conducted an environmental audit exercise, 62 % gave an indication that their parishes had never carried out an environmental audit exercise while 22 % gave the indication that they had conducted audit exercise. The percentage of those who did not answer the question stands at 19.8.

Does your parish have an environmental officer?

COMMENTS: Responding to the above question, 66 % of the respondents indicated that their parishes do not have an environmental officer while 27 % of the respondents indicated that their parishes do have an environmental officer. 6.6 % of the respondents did not answer the question.

What is the commonest form of energy source that people in your parish use for cooking?

COMMENTS: The commonest form of energy source people in most parishes use for cooking is identified as fire wood-(74 %). 13.1 % indicated that people in their parish use fossil fuel for cooking. Those who indicated that people in their parish use electricity for cooking purposes accounted for only 3.2 % of the respondents. Furthermore, 1 % of the respondents indicated that people in their parish use solar energy for cooking. Those respondents who indicated that they did not know the answer to the question as well as those who omitted the question represent 3.3 % each.

We make an interesting observation here. It is worthy of note that even Niger diocese which is considered as an 'urban' diocese has a higher percentage (59.1 %) of respondents indicating that their parishioners use fire wood for cooking. Of course, this is not surprising because one of the emerging features of urbanization in Nigeria is the tendency to acquire or exhibit both the urban as well as rural characters. Some of the rural features are becoming visible even in cities in Nigeria. This incidence of high percentage of fire wood users in Onitsha lends credence to our observation.

Which of these energy sources do you think has a lowest impact on the environment?

COMMENTS: The response from this question shows that 37.3 % of the respondents indicated that the energy source with the lowest impact on the environment is solar energy. On the other hand, 22 % of the respondents

indicated that the use of fire wood has the lowest impact on the environment. 20.9 % indicated that the use of electricity has the lowest impact on the environment. The percentage of the respondents who are not sure about the question represents 9.9 % while those respondents who did not answer the question stand at 6.6 %.

Does your parish have a waste management plan?

COMMENTS: Responding to the question of whether parishes have a waste management plan, 30.7 percent of the respondents indicated that their parishes do not have a waste management plan while 37.4 percent answered that their parishes do have waste management plan. However, 9.9 percent did not answer the question.

How does your parish deal with waste?

COMMENTS: On the question of how the parishes deal with waste, 60.4 % of the respondents indicated that they burn the waste. Those who do not have any definite form of dealing with the waste they generate, (13.1%) usually dump it indiscriminately. There are also those parishes that use land fill as an alternative waste management system. This represents 15 % of the respondents. However, there are also 2.2 % of the respondents who indicated they do nothing about waste while 3.3 % indicated they recycle their waste. Those who did not answer the question are 7.7 %.

Does your parish have a compost centre?

COMMENTS: Responding to the question of whether the parishes have a compost centre, 44 % of the respondents said no, while 31.8 % said yes. 8.8 % of the respondents did not answer the question.

Does your parish engage in any tree planting programme/ campaign?

COMMENTS: With regards to the above question, 34 % of the respondents said yes to the question while 44 % said no. 7.6 % did not answer the question.

Has your parish ever organised an environmental campaign in your community?

COMMENTS: On the question of whether the parishes had ever organised an environmental campaign in their respective communities, 78 % of the respondents indicated that they had never organised any while 12 % of the respondents indicated that they had organised. 9.9 % that did not answer the question.

Has your parish ever organised an environmental workshop/ seminar?

COMMENTS The majority of the respondents, (72.5 %) admitted that their parish had never organised an environmental workshop or seminar while 16 % of the respondents indicated that their parish had organised an environmental workshop or seminar. 11 % of the respondents did not answer the question.

Is environmental education part of your church owned school's curriculum

COMMENTS: 39 % indicated that environmental education is not part of their church owned school's curriculum while 24 % of the respondents said that environmental education is part of their church owned school curriculum. It could be observed that 14 % of the respondents did not answer the question.

Analysis on the Diocesan and Parish Concern on Environment and Poverty issues

Having presented the above data (questions 1-27) which form a separate component dealing with the diocesan and parish concerns on the environment and poverty issues, we now make an analysis of the component. It is worthy of note that the dioceses have made a significant effort in trying to understand the need for the church to be involved in environment and development issues. This view is represented by the majority of the respondents who indicated that the church should be actively involved in environment and development issues and should not therefore leave environment and development concerns in the hands of governments and NGOs alone. The dioceses have also taken environment and development issues very seriously. This is reflected in the way in which environment and development issues are being discussed in diocesan publications as a way of creating environmental awareness and education (see question 5) and the way parishioners express their interest in environmental issues (see question 19) as well as the enthusiasm with which they engage in regular environmental sanitation (see question 20), including their engagement in poverty alleviation programmes (see question 16). The establishment of environmental officers at the diocesan levels shows the degree of seriousness the dioceses attached to the issue of environment and development (see question 6). The respondents' level of knowledge about the energy sources that has the lowest impact on the environments is greatly appreciated. (See question 15)

On the other hand, it seems there is no “corresponding practical commitment” to “theoretical knowledge” expressed at both the diocesan and the parish levels in terms of environment and development issues. The following examples justify our argument. In question 4, the majority of the respondents, (forty-seven respondents-51.6 %) reveal that there is no annual budgetary provision to cover environment and poverty expenses in their parishes. If provision is not made to cater for environment and poverty projects, how then could one justify the claim that the dioceses are interested in environment and poverty issues? This question is very critical because meagre financial resources were not given as a reason for this budgetary omission. This is because in question 8 which is about whether the parishes have the necessary capacity (which includes financial resources) to implement diocesan policies on environment and development issues, only 17 respondents to that question showed financial constraints as the hindrance to implementing diocesan policy on the environment. From this insight therefore, not having a budget to run environment and poverty expenses could be seen as not making environment and poverty concerns a priority.

It is equally dissatisfying that most of the respondents indicated that their parishes still burn waste (see question 22) in spite of the current global awareness and effort being made about the need for people to imbibe the culture of reducing, re using and recycling waste. If the majority of the parishes do not have compost centres (see question 23), it simply indicates that the issue of waste management is a huge problem here. Moreover, if the majority of the parishes do not engage in environmental awareness and education and tree planting campaigns (see questions 24, 25 26 and 27), then it simply shows that the issue of “collective will and commitment” to engage in environment and development issues is a big problem here.

Knowledge of Global Anglican Communion Involvement in Environmental Issues (28-32)

The Anglican Church is very much involved in environment and poverty issues in Anambra state

COMMENTS: 22 % of the respondents strongly agreed that the Anglican Church has been very much involved in environment and development issues in Anambra state while 49 % of the respondents simply agreed to the statement. The percentage of respondents who disagreed to the above statement stands at 4.4 % while those who strongly disagreed stands at 3.3 %. Another large number

of respondents representing 26.4 % indicated that they did not know the answer to the question while 5.5 % of the respondents are categorized as missing value because they did not answer the question.

The early missionaries, particularly the Church Missionary Society (CMS), were more committed to poverty alleviation than the church of Nigeria of today

COMMENTS: Responding to the above statement that the early missionaries particularly the Church Missionary Society (CMS) were more committed to poverty alleviation than the present church of Nigeria, 26.4 % of the respondents strongly agreed to this statement while 37.4 % of the respondents simply agreed to it. Another sizable group representing 23.1 % of the respondents disagreed to the above statement while 3.3 % of the respondents strongly disagreed to it. There is still another smaller group representing 7.7 % of the respondents who indicated that they did not know the answer to the question. Those who choose not to answer the question represent only 2.2 % of the respondents.

The Anglican catechism contains some basic environmental teachings

COMMENTS: In response to the above statement that the Anglican catechism contains some basic environmental teachings, a good number of the respondents representing 44 % of the entire population agreed to the above statement while 6.6 % strongly agreed to it. However, another group constituting 19.7 % of the respondents disagreed to the statement while 7.7 % with similar view strongly disagreed to it. There is also another group who indicated that they do not know whether the statement is true or not. This group represents 15.3 % of the respondents. Those who choose not to answer the question stand at 6.6 %.

Individual Clergy Understanding of Environmental Issues (Questions 33-39)

Does your parish sing hymns/songs that celebrate the wonder of creation or express our calling to care for the earth?

COMMENTS: It is clear from the answer to this question that a vast majority of the respondents indicated that their parishes celebrate the wonder of creation and express their calling to care for the earth through songs and hymns. This is reflected on the number of respondents who answered positively to the question 72.5 %. However, a small group of respondents representing 11 % of the entire population answered negatively to the question. Those categorized as missing value representing 5.5 % choose not to answer the question.

The church should be involved in environmental issues

COMMENTS: The majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the church should be involved in environmental issues. This is represented by 63.7 % of the respondents while 31.9 % of the respondents simply agreed. It is only a negligible 1 % of the respondents who strongly disagreed while 3.3 % choose not to respond to the statement.

If your answer is positive to question 34, why do we have to take care of the environment

COMENTS: The majority of the respondents who agreed that the church should be involved in environmental issues said so because according to them, God commanded us to take care of the earth. This group of the respondents constitutes 28.8 %. Those who said that the church should be involved in environmental issues because the environment sustains us in terms of its resources constitute 25.3 %. The percentage of the respondents who said that because our health depends on the ecosystems health, the church should therefore be involved in environmental issues stand at 16.5 %, while those who believed that the church should be involved in environmental issues because the earth has both intrinsic value and inherent worth, constitutes 15.3 % of the entire respondents. It is only a smaller group of respondents represented by 2.2 % of the respondents that thought that we should care for the earth in order to preserve its pristine and scenic nature. Those who choose not to answer the question categorized as missing value represent 12 % of the respondents.

The environment is not as important as human lives

COMMENTS: Those who disagreed that the environment is not as important as human lives accounted for 38.3% of the respondents while 41.7 % of the respondents strongly disagreed to this assertion. There are however those who strongly agreed that the environment is not as important as human lives as well as those who simply agreed to the assertion. They accounted for the 7.7 % and 6.6 % of the respondents respectively. Those who showed that they did not know the answer to the above statement stand at 1 %. The percentage of the respondents who choose not to respond to the statement categorized as missing value stands at 4.4 %.

Global warming is not a serious threat to environment and development

COMMENTS: It is observed from the response to the above statement that those who disagreed to it accounted for the 36.2 % of the respondents while those who strongly disagreed to it stand at 40.7 %. On the other hand, those who strongly agreed that global warming is not a serious threat to environment and

development accounted for 8.8 % of the respondents while those with the same view who simply agreed to it is only 2.2 %. There is another group who indicated that they did not know the answer to the statement while those who choose not to respond to the statement is accounts for 5.5 %.

In your opinion, how should we prioritize issues relating to environment, development and people

COMMENTS: In gaining an understanding of the respondents' opinion on how we should prioritize issues concerning environment, development and people, a vast majority of the respondents (64.8 %) indicated that environment and people should be considered on equal terms. Those who expressed the opinion that people should come first before development accounted for 18.7 % while those with the opinion that environment should come first stand at 6.6 %. Those who indicated that they are not sure about the question stand at 4.4 % while those who chose not to respond to the statement accounted for 5.5 % of the respondents.

The activities of the poor impact negatively on the environment

COMMENTS: In response to the above statement, 40.7 % of the respondents agreed to it while 13.2 % strongly agreed to it. However, 14.2 % of the respondents disagreed to it while 5.5 % strongly disagreed to it. The percentage of those who indicated that they did not know the answer to the statement is 5.5 % while those who choose not to respond to the statement classified as missing value is 11 %.

Analysis on Individual Clergy Understanding of Environmental Issues. (Questions 33-39)

There is a high level of individual understanding of environmental issues from the research findings. The responses to questions (34-39) attest to this fact: Almost all the respondents believed that the church should be involved in environment and development issues. The majority of them alluded to both prevailing anthropocentric attitudes and a weak ecological theology as the premise for this involvement. While the respondents acknowledged that the environment is as important as human beings; it is good also for us to note that a vast majority of them understand that global warming poses a serious threat to both humans and development. In this regard, the majority of the respondents recognized the need to consider the environment and human beings on equal terms while pursuing development. This, at least, implies that they are aware of the implication of development projects that are focussed on human beings

without regard to the environment. They also acknowledged that the activities of the poor impact negatively on the environment. Chapters three and four discussed exhaustively on the impact of the poor on the environment.

Indigenous and Theological Knowledge on Environmental Issues (Questions 40-50)

Have you ever read any theological book on environment?

COMMENTS: Those who responded positively to having read any theological book on the environment is 44 % while those who indicated that they had not read any theological book on the environment is 47.2 %. However, those who choose not to answer the question are 8.8 %.

Other members of the ecosystems family should be favourably considered in terms of development

COMMENTS: An overwhelming majority agreed that other members of the ecosystems family should be favourably considered in terms of development. Those who strongly agreed to this stand at 28.6 % while those who simply agreed to the above question is 59 %. Only an insignificant percentage of 3.3 indicated that they do not know the answer while 8.8 % choose not to answer the question.

The Igbo/African culture has some valuable contribution to make in safeguarding the environment

COMMENTS: A vast majority of the respondents believed that the Igbo/African culture has some valuable contribution to make in safeguarding the environment. In this regard, 41.7 % strongly agreed to this while 52.7 % simply agreed to this fact. Only 5.5 % of the respondents did not answer the question.

The synthesis of indigenous ecological ethics and biblical resources would best contribute to environmental protection in the Nigerian context

COMMENTS: It is clear from the response that a vast majority of the respondents believed that the synthesis of indigenous ecological ethics and biblical resources would best contribute to environmental protection in the Nigerian context. The percentage of those who strongly agreed to this is 24.2 % while the percentage of those who simply agreed is 62.6 %. An insignificant 1 % of the respondents maintained otherwise while 5.5 % claimed that they did not know the answer to the question. Those classified as missing value who choose not to answer the question accounted for 6.6 % of the respondents.

The cultural practice of road maintenance and erosion control headed by age grades is a valuable resource for environmental protection and management

COMMENTS: With regards to this question, a vast majority of the respondents are of the opinion that the cultural practice of road maintenance and erosion control headed by age grades is a valuable resource for environmental protection and management. This is reflected in the number of respondents who strongly agreed and those who simply agreed to this 45 % and 46.1 % respectively. An insignificant percentage of 2.2 indicated this disagreement to the opinion while another 2.2 % showed that they do not know the answer. Those categorized as missing value who choose not to answer the question constitute 4.4 % of the respondents

The practice of bush burning for either hunting or farming purposes contributes to environmental degradation

COMMENTS: The response to the above statement reveals that a vast majority of the respondents are of the opinion that the practice of bush burning for either hunting or farming purposes contributes to environmental degradation. Those who strongly agreed to this statement represent 57.1 % of the respondents while those who simply agreed represent 42.8 %. There is however a smaller group of the respondents with different views who disagreed to the statement with only 3.3 % while 2.2 % of the respondents indicated they did not know the answer to the question. Those categorized as missing value who choose not to respond to the statement is 4.4 %.

Soil excavation, though a potential cause of soil erosion and environmental degradation, could be justified as a means of economic survival

COMMENTS: It is interesting to note what looks like a more balanced proportion in the opinion of the respondents regarding the statement that Soil excavation, though a potential cause of soil erosion and environmental degradation, could be justified as a means of economic survival. Those who strongly agreed to this statement constitute 11 % of the respondents while those who simply agreed to it represent 39.5 %. Those who disagreed to the statement represent 22 % while those who strongly disagreed to it represent 15.3%. However, those who indicated that they did not know the answer to the question represent 8.8 %. Those categorized as missing value represents 3.3 %.

The use of chemicals and fertilizer could enhance agricultural productivity, however it should be discouraged because it degrades the environment and kills the soil

COMMENTS: The response indicates that a vast majority of the respondents are of the opinion that the use of chemicals and fertilizer could enhance agricultural productivity, however it should be discouraged because it degrades the environment and kills the soil. In this regard those who strongly agreed to this statement constitute 22 % while those with the same opinion who simply agreed to it represent 49.5 % of the entire population. Those with opposing view who disagreed represent 15.3 % while those who strongly disagreed represent 4.4 %. Those who indicated that they did not know the answer represent only 1 %. Those classified as missing value who choose not to respond to the question represent 7.7

Analysis on the Indigenous and Theological Knowledge on Environmental Issues (Questions 40-50)

The majority of the respondents indicate that their personal understanding of Genesis 1: 28 is that of God's absolute ownership and that humans are mere stewards of God's creation (see question 43). Almost all agreed that indigenous cultural practices and indigenous ecological ethics have tremendous contribution to make in safe guarding the environment. (See questions 44-49). Many also acknowledged that the use of chemicals and fertilizers could enhance agricultural productivity but could also contribute to soil infertility and environmental degradation (See question 50)

We note that Niger diocese has the highest percentage of clergy who had never read any theological book on the environment. This portends danger for the dioceses if a greater percentage of its clergy are not interested in theological books and resources which provide useful information on the rationale for the church's engagement on the environment and poverty issues. This observation becomes critical when we are reminded that clergy understanding of theological arguments for the church's involvement in development in general and environmental issues in particular is essential to creating awareness and mobilizing the people of God in that direction. We also note that there is a difference which exists among the three dioceses in their view on the constitution of God's family. For example, 4 of the 22 respondents in the diocese on the Niger believed that none should be excluded from God's family. 22 of the 45 respondents believed that none should be excluded from God's family while none of the 22 respondents in the diocese of Nnewi believe that all should be included in God's family. This has a very serious implication for the concept of *Oikothology*. *Oikothology* is about including all the diverse components of nature in God's one family. If all these respondents do not regard other diverse

components in nature as members of God's one family, then the anthropocentric attitude which *oikothology* speaks against will persist.

Almost all the respondents agreed that culture has integral role to play in environmental conservation. This is very interesting to our study. Chapter seven will be dealing with the role of indigenous ecological knowledge in environment and poverty initiatives. Furthermore, almost all the respondents agreed that soil excavation though a potential cause for soil erosion could be justified as a survival strategy which the poor usually rely on. In chapter two and three, we note that poverty is a driver for environmental degradation. We clarified this assertion by outlining some of the survival strategies which the poor adopt in the face of adverse economic situation. In Anambra state, the practice of soil excavation which is the digging up of top soil (especially sandy soil used in building and other construction activities) for commercial purposes, is hugely contributing to soil erosion, a phenomenon which is currently devastating the entire state.

Conclusion

In this paper we have analysed the research field work and made some general observations. The implication of these findings and observations introduces the exigency of a theological framework which would take environmental awareness beyond mere personal 'theoretical' knowledge since knowledge without practical commitment could be as useless or even as dangerous as ignorance itself. In our search for an ecotheological model which could inspire practical commitment, we recommend the use of the concept of *oikothology* as a theological model for environmental protection from the perspectives of the church. It is expected that the resources of *oikothology* would bridge the gap between knowledge and practical commitment identified in the research work.