

## ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION: ADOPTING FRUGALITY AS AN ECO-THEOLOGICAL APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY

Alokwu Cyprian Obiora

Department of Religion and Human Relations  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

### Abstract

*Environmental degradation remains a pressing global challenge, threatening ecosystems, human livelihoods, and future generations. This study explores frugality as an eco-theological approach to sustainability, emphasizing the role of religious teachings in promoting responsible consumption and environmental stewardship. Anchored in Stewardship Theory, the research adopts a qualitative method, analyzing religious texts and case studies of faith-based environmental initiatives. Findings reveal that many religious traditions advocate for simplicity, moderation, and mindful resource use as a moral and spiritual duty. Faith-based organizations have initiated various sustainability efforts, including waste reduction, conservation programs, and climate advocacy. However, challenges such as limited awareness, financial constraints, and resistance to change hinder their impact. The study suggests greater integration of eco-theological principles into religious teachings, enhanced collaboration between faith communities and environmental organizations, and stronger policy advocacy to promote sustainable living. By embracing frugality as a spiritual and ethical value, faith communities can contribute significantly to environmental conservation and global sustainability efforts.*

**Keywords:** Environmental degradation, frugality, eco-theology, sustainability, stewardship theory, faith-based initiatives,

### Introduction

Environmental deterioration is an international crisis whose hallmarks are deforestation, pollution, loss of biodiversity, and climate change. Nigeria, the largest country in Africa (UNICEF, 2022), is hit by environmental concerns due to urbanization, industrialization, and unsustainable consumption patterns (Ohwo & Abotutu, 2015). Natural resource exploitation, air and water pollution, desertification, and accumulation of waste are still hazards to the ecological integrity of the nation, posing threats to human health, food safety, and economic stability (Olowoyeye, 2021). Addressing these issues requires a multidimensional approach integrating scientific, economic, and ethical perspectives. One such approach is eco-theology, which emphasizes humans' moral and spiritual responsibility to care for the environment. Within this framework, frugality, the conscious reduction of excessive consumption and waste, emerges as a critical principle for achieving sustainability.

The concept of **frugality** is deeply rooted in religious and ethical traditions, advocating for moderation, self-restraint, and responsible use of resources (Westacott, 2024). Many religious teachings emphasize stewardship, a principle that calls for the protection and preservation of the environment as a divine creation. In Christianity, for instance, the biblical injunction in Genesis 2:15 entrusts humanity with the duty to “work and take care of” the Earth. Similarly, Islamic teachings promote “**Mizan**” (balance) and discourage wastefulness, as reflected in the Quranic verse, “**Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils**” (Qur’an 17:27). According to Alifa (2023), indigenous African spiritual beliefs also uphold harmony between humans and nature, advocating for reverence and sustainable interaction with the environment. Despite

these religious imperatives, Nigeria continues to experience **environmental mismanagement**, with a culture of excessive resource consumption, indiscriminate deforestation, poor waste management, and dependence on fossil fuels. The unchecked exploitation of natural resources for economic gain, coupled with inadequate environmental policies and enforcement, has led to widespread degradation (Budnuka, Clinton & Agi-Ottoh, 2015). For example, oil spills in the Niger Delta have polluted water bodies, destroyed farmlands, and displaced communities. In the northern regions, desertification caused by deforestation and overgrazing threatens agricultural productivity, leading to food insecurity and forced migration (Ogunbode, Oyebamiji, Sanni, Akinwale & Akinluyi, 2024). Urban areas such as Awka, Onitsha, Lagos, Abuja and other major cities in Nigeria grapple with **excessive waste generation**, inefficient recycling mechanisms, and severe air pollution, largely fueled by a consumerist lifestyle.

Adopting **frugality as an eco-theological approach** presents a viable pathway toward **sustainability in Nigeria**. By promoting a culture of moderation and mindful consumption, frugality encourages individuals and communities to adopt sustainable practices such as waste reduction, energy conservation, and responsible use of natural resources. Religious institutions play a crucial role in shaping public attitudes and behaviors, making them powerful agents for advocating environmental stewardship. Faith-based organizations can integrate frugality into sermons, teachings, and community initiatives, encouraging ethical consumerism, tree planting, waste management, and renewable energy adoption (Achunike, Yilben, Gotau & Asadu, 2024). Additionally, **eco-theology can influence policy-making**, inspiring the government to implement laws that align economic development with environmental preservation. This study seeks to explore how **frugality, as an eco-theological principle, can serve as a strategic tool for combating environmental degradation in Nigeria**. It will examine religious teachings on environmental responsibility, analyze the impact of excessive consumption, and assess how faith-based institutions and policies can foster sustainable environmental practices.

## Research Method

This study used a qualitative research method, focusing on content analysis of religious texts and case studies of faith-based environmental projects. The content analysis involved examining holy books such as the Bible, the Quran, and traditional African religious texts to find teachings about caring for the environment, using resources wisely, and living sustainably. These texts were studied to identify common messages about protecting nature and being responsible stewards of the earth. Additionally, case studies of religious groups involved in environmental protection were analyzed. Examples include the Catholic Climate Covenant, the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, and some African indigenous movements. These case studies helped to understand how religious organizations put their teachings into action by promoting conservation, influencing environmental policies, and encouraging sustainable living. The qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of religious perspectives on sustainability, capturing the moral and ethical dimensions that quantitative methods might overlook. By analyzing both doctrinal teachings and real-world applications, this research provided a holistic understanding of how religious traditions contribute to sustainability efforts.

## Concept Clarifications

### Environmental Degradation

Environmental degradation refers to the process by which the natural environment deteriorates, leading to a decline in biodiversity and overall ecological health. This process can occur

naturally or be intensified by human activities. According to the **European Environment Information and Observation Network (2021)**, environmental degradation involves the weakening of ecosystems, which results in a loss of species and a reduction in the environment's ability to sustain life. **Maurya, Ali, Ahmad, Zhou, da Silva,, Khan and Ali (2020)** describe environmental degradation as the deterioration of the environment caused by the depletion of natural resources. These resources include both biotic elements, such as plants and animals, and abiotic components like air, water, and soil. The depletion of these resources disrupts ecological balance and contributes to widespread environmental issues. **Yadav, Banerjee, Jhariya, Meena, Raj, Khan, Kumar and Sheoran (2022)** emphasize that environmental degradation is a growing global concern, particularly in the 21st century. It poses challenges across multiple dimensions, affecting not only the environment but also economic stability and social well-being. The increasing severity of environmental problems threatens sustainable development and requires urgent attention from governments, organizations, and individuals worldwide. **Bentley, R. (2022)** further explains that environmental degradation occurs when ecosystems are damaged, wildlife populations decline, and essential natural resources such as air, water, and soil are exhausted. The destruction of these environmental components leads to long-term consequences, including climate change, food and water shortages, and loss of biodiversity.

### **The Concept of Frugality**

Frugality is the careful and mindful use of resources to avoid waste and promote long-term sustainability (Wang, Bai, Zhao, Hu & Li, 2023). It involves making thoughtful decisions about consumption, prioritizing needs over excessive wants, and finding ways to extend the usefulness of products and materials. Beyond being a financial strategy, frugality fosters a lifestyle that values efficiency, resourcefulness, and environmental responsibility. The role of frugality in sustainable environmental practices is significant, as it encourages responsible consumption, waste reduction, and conservation of natural resources (Song, Lee, Mutha & Kim, 2023). By using water, energy, and raw materials wisely, frugal individuals help minimize unnecessary depletion and contribute to the long-term availability of essential resources. A frugal approach also emphasizes reducing waste through reusing, repurposing, and recycling materials. Instead of discarding items after limited use, people can find alternative ways to extend their usefulness, thereby decreasing pollution and landfill accumulation.

Energy efficiency is another way in which frugality supports sustainability. Simple practices such as using energy-efficient appliances, turning off lights when not needed, and relying on renewable energy sources help lower overall consumption and reduce carbon emissions. Additionally, frugality promotes sustainable consumption by encouraging the purchase of durable, high-quality, and environmentally friendly products instead of disposable or short-lived alternatives. This reduces the demand for mass production, which is often linked to environmental degradation. The idea of frugality also aligns with simple living and minimalism, where individuals focus on owning only what is necessary (Guru, 2024). This mindset helps limit excessive consumption, lower waste production, and reduce pressure on natural resources. Supporting locally made and eco-friendly products is another aspect of frugal living, as it reduces the environmental impact of long-distance transportation and supports sustainable community economies.

### **Effects of Environmental Degradation on Global and Local Sustainability Efforts in Nigeria**

Environmental degradation poses significant challenges to both global and local sustainability efforts in Nigeria. The depletion of natural resources, pollution, deforestation, and loss of biodiversity undermine initiatives aimed at achieving environmental, economic, and social sustainability (Ibimilua & Ayiti, 2024). The adverse effects of these environmental issues are evident in various sectors, impacting livelihoods, public health, and economic development. One of the major consequences of environmental degradation in Nigeria is its impact on agriculture and food security. Soil erosion, desertification, and deforestation reduce the availability of arable land, making it difficult for farmers to produce sufficient food. As a result, food shortages and higher prices become more prevalent, affecting both local and national economies (Ogundipe, Obi & Ogundipe, 2020). Additionally, poor land management and industrial pollution contribute to water contamination, which affects irrigation and drinking water supplies.

The loss of biodiversity is another critical issue that hampers sustainability efforts. Nigeria's forests, wetlands, and marine ecosystems are home to diverse plant and animal species, many of which are endangered due to deforestation, poaching, and habitat destruction (Olaoti-Laaro et al., 2024). This loss threatens ecological balance and weakens the ability of ecosystems to provide essential services such as carbon sequestration, water purification, and climate regulation. Environmental pollution, particularly air and water pollution, has severe health implications for communities in Nigeria. Industrial emissions, vehicle exhaust, and waste mismanagement contribute to poor air quality, leading to respiratory diseases and other health problems. Water pollution, caused by oil spills, industrial waste, and improper sewage disposal, affects drinking water sources, increasing the risk of waterborne diseases (Kodiya, Modu, Ishaq, Yusuf, Wakili, Dayyabu, Jibrin & Babangida, 2025). These health issues place additional strain on Nigeria's healthcare system and reduce overall productivity.

Climate change, which is closely linked to environmental degradation, further complicates sustainability efforts. Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall patterns, and extreme weather events such as floods and droughts threaten food production, displace communities, and damage infrastructure. Coastal erosion and rising sea levels endanger coastal communities, particularly in the Niger Delta region, where livelihoods depend on fishing and agriculture Akpan, Robert & Robert, 2024). On a broader scale, environmental degradation affects Nigeria's ability to meet international sustainability goals such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Efforts to promote clean energy, combat climate change, and ensure sustainable economic growth are undermined by ongoing deforestation, pollution, and poor waste management. International investors and development partners may also be reluctant to support sustainability projects in regions where environmental risks are high, limiting opportunities for green economic growth. Despite these challenges, local and global sustainability efforts in Nigeria continue through policy interventions, environmental conservation programs, and awareness campaigns. However, achieving meaningful progress requires stronger enforcement of environmental regulations, investment in clean energy, and greater public participation in sustainable practices. Addressing environmental degradation is essential to ensuring long-term economic stability, public health, and ecological balance in Nigeria and beyond.

### **Eco-Theological Perspectives on Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability in Nigeria**

Eco-theology is a field of thought that connects religion with environmental care, emphasizing the spiritual and moral responsibility of humans to protect and sustain the natural world. In Nigeria, religion plays a central role in shaping people's beliefs and behaviours, making eco-theology an important perspective in addressing environmental challenges. Christianity, Islam,

and indigenous African religions all provide teachings that promote the responsible use of natural resources and discourage environmental destruction.

In Christianity, the concept of stewardship is a key principle that guides the relationship between humans and nature. The Bible teaches that God created the earth and entrusted it to human beings for care and preservation. Genesis 2:15 states that God placed humans in the Garden of Eden to "work it and take care of it," highlighting the duty to maintain environmental balance (Geneva College, n.d.). Other biblical passages warn against greed, wastefulness, and exploitation of nature. Many churches in Nigeria integrate environmental messages into sermons, urging members to plant trees, manage waste properly, and avoid pollution. Some Christian organizations also participate in environmental campaigns and partner with government agencies to promote sustainable practices. Islam also teaches environmental responsibility, viewing humans as *khalifah* (stewards) of the earth. The Qur'an emphasizes that the world is a trust from God, and people must use its resources wisely. Islamic teachings encourage conservation of water, protection of animals, and respect for the land (Bsoul, Omer, Kucukalic & Archbold, 2022). In Nigeria, Islamic scholars and organizations often educate followers on sustainable living, encouraging them to avoid excessive consumption and protect the environment as an act of faith. Many mosques promote cleanliness, proper waste disposal, and tree planting as religious duties. Traditional African religions also recognize the sacredness of nature. Many indigenous Nigerian communities believe that forests, rivers, and mountains are spiritual entities that must be respected (Geneva College, n.d.). Some traditional customs include taboos against cutting down certain trees, hunting endangered animals, or polluting sacred rivers. These practices serve as natural conservation methods that have helped preserve biodiversity for generations. While modernization has weakened some of these beliefs, many local communities still rely on traditional knowledge to manage their environment sustainably.

Despite the rich religious teachings that encourage environmental care, Nigeria faces serious environmental challenges, including deforestation, pollution, climate change, and desertification. Economic hardship, weak government policies, and industrial activities contribute to environmental degradation. Many people cut down trees for firewood and farming without replanting, leading to soil erosion and loss of biodiversity. Industries release toxic waste into rivers, harming aquatic life and reducing the availability of clean water (DGB Group, 2023). Urbanization and population growth also put pressure on land and resources, making sustainable living difficult. Another challenge is that while religious leaders promote environmental awareness, their impact is sometimes limited due to a lack of funding and technical support. Many religious organizations focus more on social and economic issues, with environmental concerns receiving less attention. Additionally, some people prioritize immediate economic survival over long-term sustainability, making it difficult to implement eco-friendly practices.

### **Religious Teachings and Faith-Based Initiatives in Promoting Frugality as an Ecological Responsibility**

Religious teachings across different faiths emphasize the importance of frugality, not only as a personal virtue but also as a moral responsibility toward the environment. Frugality, which involves the careful use of resources and the avoidance of waste, aligns with ecological sustainability by reducing the pressure on natural resources and promoting long-term environmental health. Faith-based initiatives, inspired by religious principles, encourage individuals and communities to adopt frugal lifestyles that support environmental conservation and responsible consumption.



In Christianity, frugality is closely linked to the concept of stewardship. The Bible teaches that humans are caretakers of God's creation and must use resources wisely. Genesis 1:26-28 describes how God gave humans dominion over the earth, but this dominion is not a license for exploitation, it comes with the duty to care for and sustain the natural world. Jesus also promoted simplicity and contentment, warning against material excess in passages like Luke 12:15, where he says, *"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."* Christian teachings encourage believers to live modestly, reduce waste, and practice generosity rather than excessive consumption. Proverbs 21:20 states, *"The wise store up choice food and olive oil, but fools gulp theirs down,"* warning against wastefulness. The story of Jesus feeding the five thousand (John 6:12) also highlights frugality, as Jesus instructs his disciples to collect all leftover food so that nothing is wasted. Many Christian communities today integrate these teachings into their environmental efforts by promoting recycling, conservation, and sustainable living. Islam also promotes frugality and responsible resource management. The Qur'an teaches that humans are stewards (khalifah) of the earth and must avoid extravagance. In Surah Al-A'raf (7:31), Allah commands: *"O Children of Adam! Dress well whenever you are at worship and eat and drink, but do not waste. Surely, He does not like the wasteful."* This verse highlights the importance of moderation and the prohibition of wastefulness. Islamic teachings also emphasize the sustainable use of water, food, and other resources, urging believers to consume only what is necessary. Traditional African religions, including those practiced in Nigeria, also uphold the principle of frugality. Many indigenous belief systems consider nature sacred and teach that overuse or exploitation of resources leads to imbalance and misfortune. Communities practicing traditional religions often follow rituals and customs that limit excessive hunting, farming, and deforestation. Sacred forests, rivers, and animals are respected, and wastefulness is discouraged through cultural taboos and community-based resource management.

### **Faith-Based Initiatives Promoting Frugality and Environmental Sustainability**

Many religious organizations and faith-based groups actively promote frugality as a means to protect the environment. Churches, mosques, and other religious institutions run awareness campaigns and programs encouraging sustainable living. For instance, Christian organizations worldwide, including those in Nigeria, have launched initiatives that promote eco-friendly habits such as tree planting, waste reduction, and energy conservation (Aminu, 2025). Some churches encourage their members to buy less, donate excess belongings, and use resources responsibly as an act of faith. Islamic organizations also support frugality and environmental sustainability through community projects. In many Muslim communities, mosques encourage water conservation, sustainable agriculture, and ethical consumerism. The concept of *zakat* (charitable giving) and *waqf* (endowments) promotes the redistribution of resources, ensuring that wealth and goods are not wasted but instead used for the benefit of the needy. Some Islamic environmental movements advocate for green initiatives, such as using renewable energy in mosques and promoting waste-free Islamic celebrations. Indigenous faith-based groups also play a role in environmental conservation through traditional ecological knowledge. Local communities practicing indigenous religions often pass down sustainable farming techniques, water conservation practices, and responsible hunting traditions that minimize waste and preserve biodiversity. These practices reflect a deep respect for nature and an understanding of the need for balance between human activity and the environment.

### **Theoretical Underpinning**

This study is based on Stewardship Theory, which was developed by Donaldson and Davis (1991 & 1993) to explain the relationship between ownership and management in organizations (Scott, 2023). The theory suggests that individuals, especially leaders, are naturally inclined to

act in the best interests of the group or organization rather than for personal gain. Menyah (2013) describes Stewardship Theory as a framework that views people as being motivated to work for the benefit of others or for organizations to fulfill their responsibilities. Unlike theories that emphasize self-interest, Stewardship Theory argues that individuals are collective-minded and pro-organizational. This means they work towards achieving the goals of their group or society because doing so gives them a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction. In the context of this study, Stewardship Theory helps explain how religious leaders and faith-based organizations promote environmental sustainability. Their actions are driven by a sense of responsibility and duty toward their community and the planet. They see themselves as caretakers of the environment, working not for personal benefit but for the common good. This perspective aligns with many religious teachings, which emphasize care for creation and responsible resource management.

### Discussion and Analysis

The findings of this study highlight that theological doctrines across various religious traditions strongly advocate frugality as a means of ensuring responsible resource management. Christianity, Islam, and indigenous African religions emphasize the importance of avoiding waste, practicing moderation, and stewarding resources wisely. Biblical teachings stress prudence and contentment, while Islamic doctrines explicitly discourage extravagance and overconsumption, reinforcing the belief that resources should be used efficiently. Similarly, African Traditional Religions promote harmony with nature, discouraging exploitative practices and emphasizing the sacredness of the environment. These religious perspectives align closely with modern sustainability principles, showing that ethical consumption and environmental responsibility have long-standing theological foundations. The Bible promotes frugality through several passages:

1. Proverbs 21:20 states, *"The wise store up choice food and olive oil, but fools gulp theirs down."* This verse encourages prudent resource management, discouraging excessive consumption.
2. Luke 12:15 warns, *"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."* This aligns with the principle of sustainable living by advocating contentment and minimalism.
3. The parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) teaches the importance of wisely using resources, reinforcing the idea that wastefulness is irresponsible.
4. Early Christian traditions, including monasticism, embraced frugality as a path to spiritual purity, emphasizing a simple lifestyle and minimal material possessions.

The Quran and Hadith provide guidance on sustainable living:

1. Quran 7:31 states, *"Eat and drink, but do not be excessive. Indeed, He does not like those who commit excess."* This verse directly warns against wastefulness.
2. Quran 17:26-27 advises, *"Do not squander wastefully. Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils."* This highlights the ethical and religious consequences of overconsumption.
3. The Prophet Muhammad emphasized frugality in daily life, encouraging the conservation of food and water. He is reported to have said, *"Do not waste water, even if you perform ablution on the bank of a flowing river."*

Many indigenous and African spiritual traditions emphasize harmony with nature and responsible resource use:

1. Traditional African religions teach that nature is sacred and must be respected, discouraging wasteful practices.

2. Indigenous knowledge systems promote sustainability by ensuring that resources are used in a way that preserves them for future generations.
3. Rituals and taboos often restrict over-harvesting of natural resources, reinforcing community-based conservation efforts.

Religious organizations play an instrumental role in promoting sustainability by integrating their doctrinal teachings into practical environmental initiatives. Faith-based organizations such as the Catholic Climate Covenant, the Anglican Communion Environmental Network, and the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences actively engage in sustainability advocacy, policy influence, and community-driven ecological projects. These organizations use their moral authority and large followership to champion environmental causes, influencing millions of people worldwide to adopt sustainable living practices. In addition, they collaborate with governmental and non-governmental organizations, demonstrating that religion and environmental activism are not mutually exclusive but can be complementary forces in addressing ecological crises.

### **Catholic Organizations and Sustainable Living**

The Catholic Church has taken significant steps in addressing environmental issues, emphasizing sustainability as part of moral responsibility.

1. Laudato Si' Movement: Inspired by Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, this global Catholic network promotes ecological justice, climate action, and sustainable development. The movement encourages renewable energy adoption, waste reduction, and responsible consumption among Catholics.
2. Catholic Climate Covenant (USA): This organization educates Catholic communities on environmental justice, helping parishes reduce their carbon footprint through energy conservation and advocacy for policies addressing climate change.
3. Caritas Internationalis: A global humanitarian organization affiliated with the Catholic Church, Caritas promotes sustainable agriculture, disaster resilience, and environmental justice for vulnerable communities.
4. Franciscan Action Network: Inspired by St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology, this organization focuses on ecological spirituality, sustainable policies, and grassroots environmental action.

### **Anglican Organizations and Environmental Stewardship**

The Anglican Communion has also emphasized sustainability as a key aspect of faith, promoting responsible environmental management through various initiatives.

1. Anglican Communion Environmental Network (ACEN): This global network of Anglican churches advocates for climate justice, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development policies. It encourages churches to adopt renewable energy, reduce plastic use, and engage in environmental advocacy.
2. The Church of England's Environment Programme: The Church of England has committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030. It promotes sustainable church buildings, ethical investments, and eco-friendly policies within congregations.
3. Green Anglicans Movement: Active in Africa, this initiative encourages Anglican communities to plant trees, clean up the environment, and educate members on sustainable living.



### **Other Christian Denominations and Environmental Action**

Beyond Catholicism and Anglicanism, various Protestant and evangelical groups advocate for sustainability.

1. World Council of Churches (WCC): The WCC promotes ecological justice and sustainability through its *Eco-Justice Program*. It supports climate action, biodiversity protection, and sustainable agricultural practices among Christian communities.
2. Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN): This U.S.-based organization mobilizes evangelical Christians to address climate change, promote renewable energy, and encourage sustainable lifestyle choices.
3. Lutheran World Federation (LWF): The LWF advocates for climate justice and sustainable development, working with communities to promote ecological responsibility.

### **Islamic Organizations and Environmental Sustainability**

Islamic organizations promote sustainability through Quranic teachings on environmental responsibility and conservation.

1. Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES): This UK-based organization educates Muslim communities on environmental ethics, emphasizing frugality, conservation, and eco-friendly lifestyle choices.
2. Green Muslim: A U.S.-based initiative encouraging environmental awareness, energy efficiency, and sustainable food practices among Muslim communities.
3. Eco-Islam Initiative: Promoted by various Islamic scholars and mosques, this movement integrates Islamic teachings on responsible consumption and climate justice into daily life.

**African Traditional Religious Movements:** Indigenous faith leaders promote conservation by enforcing sacred forest protection, sustainable hunting, and communal environmental management.

### **Comparing Religious and Secular Approaches to Sustainability**

A comparison between religious and secular approaches to sustainability reveals notable differences and intersections. While religious sustainability efforts are often rooted in moral responsibility and divine stewardship, secular approaches are typically guided by scientific evidence, economic considerations, and regulatory frameworks. Religious institutions tend to focus on community engagement through teachings and moral persuasion, whereas secular sustainability efforts rely heavily on policies, legal enforcement, and corporate strategies. However, both frameworks increasingly intersect, particularly in faith-based environmental movements that work alongside international organizations and policymakers to achieve sustainability goals. The collaboration between religious groups and secular entities highlights the potential for a holistic approach to environmental conservation, where ethical, spiritual, and scientific perspectives complement one another.

### Religious and Secular Approaches to Sustainability

Aspect	Religious Approach	Secular Approach
<b>Motivation</b>	Rooted in moral responsibility and divine stewardship	Driven by scientific evidence, ethics, and economics
<b>Strategies</b>	Sermons, religious teachings, faith-based activism	Policy-making, regulations, and corporate sustainability
<b>Community Engagement</b>	Influences millions through religious networks	Uses education, advocacy, and institutional reforms
<b>Challenges</b>	Theological differences, resistance to modern sustainability concepts	Political barriers, corporate interests, slow policy implementation
<b>Collaboration</b>	Faith-based initiatives work with governments and NGOs	Governments and international organizations collaborate with faith groups

**Source:** Table created by the researcher based on analysis of collected data.

Frugality, as emphasized in religious teachings, serves as a practical tool in mitigating environmental degradation. By promoting sustainable consumption, reducing waste, and conserving energy, frugal living contributes to a lower ecological footprint. Many religious communities actively encourage minimalism, discouraging material excess and fostering a culture of mindful consumption. This approach aligns with broader sustainability efforts that advocate for reduced resource exploitation, renewable energy adoption, and responsible waste management. In particular, religious teachings on frugality support sustainable agricultural practices, water conservation, and ethical consumer behavior, reinforcing the idea that small individual actions, when guided by faith and ethical convictions, can collectively lead to significant environmental benefits.

### Conclusion and Suggestions

This study examined the role of faith-based organizations in promoting environmental sustainability, using Stewardship Theory as the foundation. The findings suggest that religious teachings and principles play a significant role in shaping attitudes toward environmental responsibility. Many faith-based groups see themselves as caretakers of the earth, driven by a sense of duty rather than personal gain. Through various initiatives such as tree planting, waste management, and advocacy for sustainable practices, these organizations contribute to environmental protection.

However, challenges such as limited funding, lack of awareness, and resistance from some religious groups hinder their effectiveness. To enhance their impact, the following suggestions are made:

1. Faith-based organizations should partner with government agencies, non-profits, and environmental experts to strengthen their sustainability efforts.

2. Religious institutions should integrate environmental teachings into sermons, workshops, and community programs to promote eco-friendly practices.
3. More financial and material support from donors, government bodies, and private institutions can help expand faith-based environmental initiatives.
4. Religious leaders should use their influence to push for policies that support environmental conservation and sustainable development.
5. Encouraging local participation in environmental programs will foster a sense of collective responsibility and long-term commitment to sustainability.

## References

- Achunike, H. C., Yilben, D. R., Gotau, A. K., & Asadu, G. C. (2024). Role of the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) in ensuring environmental sustainability in Plateau State, Nigeria. *Nsukka Journal of Religion and Cultural Studies*, 12(3), 54–60. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/njrcs/article/download/286718/270132/669493>
- Akpan, U. E., Robert, U. U., & Robert, I. U. (2024). Vulnerability of coastal livelihood to sea level rise and climate change in Eastern Niger region of Nigeria. *Journal of Global Ecology and Environment*, 20(4), 12–28. <https://doi.org/10.56557/jogee/2024/v20i48856>
- Alifa, S. (2023). *African traditional religion and its relationship with nature*. *NJIKO: A Multi-Disciplinary Journal of Humanities, Law, Education and Social Sciences*, 1(1), 81–93. <https://www.acjol.org/index.php/njiko/article/download/3991/3910>
- Aminu, M. D. (2025, February 12). The role of faith-based organisations in climate advocacy. *Premium Times Nigeria*. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/773854-the-role-of-faith-based-organisations-in-climate-advocacy-by-mohammed-dahiru-aminu.html>
- Bentley, R. (2022, October 5). Types, causes and effects of environmental degradation. <https://www.internationalscholarsjournals.com/articles/types-causes-and-effects-of-environmental-degradation-91958.html>
- Bsoul, L., Omer, A., Kucukalic, L., & Archbold, R. H. (2022). Islam's Perspective on Environmental Sustainability: A Conceptual Analysis. *Social Sciences*, 11(6), 228. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11060228>
- Budnuka, A. C., Clinton, A., & Agi-Ottoh, C. (2015). The effect of unplanned exploitation of environmental resources: Nigeria's experience. *Journal of Environment Pollution and Human Health*, 3(2), 39–45. <https://doi.org/10.12691/jephh-3-2-3>
- DGB Group (2023, March 8). Deforestation in Nigeria: Causes, effects, and solutions. *Green Earth*. <https://www.green.earth/blog/deforestation-in-nigeria-causes-effects-and-solutions>
- European Environment Information and Observation Network (EIONET). (2021, December 6). *Environmental degradation*. General Multilingual Environmental Thesaurus. Retrieved from <https://www.eionet.europa.eu/gemet/en/concept/15154>
- Geneva College (n.d.). Christians and the environment. [https://www.geneva.edu/community/environmental-stewardship/why\\_care](https://www.geneva.edu/community/environmental-stewardship/why_care)
- Guru, T. (2024, November 27). Frugal living and minimalism: Embracing simplicity for a fuller life. *Medium*. <https://medium.com/@qaisarmahi/frugal-living-and-minimalism-embracing-simplicity-for-a-fuller-life-b81151b47b6b>
- Ibimilua, F. O., & Ayiti, O. M. (2024). Environmental problems and sustainable development in Nigeria. *Research and Reviews: Journal of Environmental Sciences*, 6(2), 41-50. HBRP Publication. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10985739>

- Kodiya, M. A., Modu, M. A., Ishaq, K., Yusuf, Z., Wakili, A. Z., Dayyabu, N., Jibrin, M. A., & Babangida, M. U. (2025). Environmental pollution in Nigeria: Unlocking integrated strategies for environmental sustainability. 30-50. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/388581996> *Environmental Pollution in Nigeria Unlocking Integrated Strategies for Environmental Sustainability*
- Maurya, P. K., Ali, S. A., Ahmad, A., Zhou, Q., da Silva Castro, J., Khan, E., & Ali, H. (2020). An introduction to environmental degradation: Causes, consequence and mitigation. In *Environmental Degradation: Causes and Remediation Strategies* (pp. 1-20). <https://doi.org/10.26832/aesa-2020-edcrs-01>
- Menyah, K. (2013). Stewardship Theory. In: Idowu, S.O., Capaldi, N., Zu, L., Gupta, A.D. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Corporate Social Responsibility*. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-28036-8\\_107](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-28036-8_107)
- Ogunbode, T. O., Oyebamiji, V. O., Sanni, D. O., Akinwale, E. O., & Akinluyi, F. O. (2024). Environmental impacts of urban growth and land use changes in tropical cities. *Frontiers in Sustainable Cities*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.3389/frsc.2024.1481932>
- Ogundipe, A., Obi, S., & Ogundipe, O. (2020). Environmental degradation and food security in Nigeria. *International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy*, 10(1), 316-324. <https://doi.org/10.32479/ijeep.8083>
- Ohwo, O., & Abotutu, A. (2015). *Environmental impact of urbanization in Nigeria*. *British Journal of Applied Science & Technology*, 9(3), 212-221. <https://doi.org/10.9734/BJAST/2015/18148>
- Olaoti-Laaro, S. O., Muritala, D. S., Odebunmi, C. A., Alagbe, A. V., Bamgboye, A. M., Agboje, I., Fadoyin, A. S., Bamigboye, O. A., Obakpolor, V., & Haastrup, N. O. (2024). Biodiversity conservation in Nigeria: Prospects and challenges. *Journal of Research in Forestry, Wildlife & Environment*, 16(2), 68-75. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jrfwe/article/view/275353/259915>
- Olowoyeye, T. (2021). *A review of the environmental impact of deforestation and industrial activities in Nigeria*. 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.12984.98564>
- Scott, E. (2023, August 3). What is Stewardship Theory in Management? - emily scott - Medium. *Medium*. [https://medium.com/@emily\\_scott/what-is-stewardship-theory-in-management-648a8ed4057f](https://medium.com/@emily_scott/what-is-stewardship-theory-in-management-648a8ed4057f)
- Song, C. S., Lee, J. Y., Mutha, R., & Kim, M. (2023). Frugal or sustainable? The interplay of consumers' personality traits and self-regulated minds in recycling behavior. *Sustainability Science*, 15(24), 16821. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su152416821>
- UNICEF (2022). *Country Office Annual Report 2022: Nigeria*. <https://www.unicef.org/media/136256/file/Nigeria-2022-COAR.pdf>
- Wang, H., Bai, R., Zhao, H., Hu, Z., & Li, Y. (2023). Why does frugality influence the recycling intention of waste materials? *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.952010>
- Westacott, E. (2024, August 10). Frugality: from the good life to the good society. <https://journals.openedition.org/factsreports/7405>
- Yadav, S. K., Banerjee, A., Jhariya, M. K., Meena, R. S., Raj, A., Khan, N., Kumar, S., & Sheoran, S. (2022). Environmental education for sustainable development. In M. K. Jhariya, R. S. Meena, A. Banerjee, & S. N. Meena (Eds.), *Natural resources conservation and advances for sustainability* (pp. 415-431). Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-822976-7.00010-7>