

BIBLICAL ETHICS AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING

Tayo Raymond Ezekiel Eegunlusi & Marcel Ikechukwu Onyibor*

Abstract

The pollution of the environment through anthropogenic activities is a global issue requiring a concerted effort from the global community, because of its negative effect on health, existential condition, and the survival of humanity. Regurgitating on this, this paper argues that biblical ethics, especially as based on the ideas of holiness, sanctification, the golden rule and communitarian existence, is significant in promoting global environmental wellbeing. It equally debates that the neglect of these ideas on which this ethics rests, or their being outrightly consigned to mere religiosity, contributes to global environmental problems. Exploring certain basic biblical texts, using conceptual and empirical approaches, the work argues for the importance of adopting biblical ethics in solving global environmental problems. For several centuries, variegated views and interpretations on the ideas of holiness, sanctification, brotherly kindness/fellow-feeling and shared existence, have been expressed in many texts, in relation to human conducts and relationships. This work examines the Judeo-Christian perspectives to these ideas. In assuming material and metaphysical dimensions, Judeo-Christian understanding emphasises relationships with God and men while stressing the necessity of responsive and responsible daily communal and other-regarding existence. Though modern minds attempt to divorce man from such metaphysical existence involving God on grounds of empirical justifications, this work seeks to examine the connecting point and the influence faith has in promoting ethics and the necessity of operating with the ideas emanating from faith enterprises to ensure global environmental order. Thus, this work maintains that giving adequate attention to the salient ideas of biblical ethics can promote healthy environment for mankind.

Keywords: Biblical ethics, Environment, Faith, Golden rule, Holiness, Mankind, Sanctification.

Introduction

Ethical problems account for part of the degradation of human environment and why humans wallow in squalor. This implies that some environmental problems can be avoided through giving attention to ethical issues. In order to avoid getting entangled in convoluted ethical approaches to handling the problems of the human environment, this work argues that biblical ethics, especially as based on the ideas of holiness, sanctification and the golden rule, is significant in maintaining global environmental wellbeing. It asserts that a neglect of these ideas, or their being discountenanced as merely religious, adds to why some global environmental problems linger. Biblical texts clearly spell out moral and practical conducts expected of people in human community. Apart from articulating ideas on some means of achieving spiritual purity, Judeo-Christian ethics emphasises giving attention to sanctification, holiness and fellow-feeling (Exodus 29:33-39; Deuteronomy 15:7-15). This position is significant because it underscores the metaphysical and physical dimensions to situating biblical ethics: relationships with God and fellow human beings. Though largely influenced by a metaphysical orientation, biblical ethics shows the goal of good human conduct and interests to be the promotion of viable interrelationships towards enhancing human welfare. While this

study gives attention to certain important questions relating to biblical ethics, it adopts conceptual and empirical approaches to argue that promoting biblical ideas concerning holiness, sanctification and fellow-feeling can promote healthy environment for mankind (Exodus 19: 6, 10).

Social Environment and Global Environmental Problems

Scholars have often made distinctions between the social environments and nature (Jamieson, 2008: 6-7). In these descriptions, the social environment is thought of as partly natural and partly artificial. For instance, a man-made house is part of the social environment without being natural while planting of flowers is a man-made activity that promotes nature. At the same time, the existence of rocks is part of nature and part of social environment while the existence of a star is part of nature though not part of social environment. The concept “social environment” is itself deceptive in our present usage because man is not the only social thing in existence. There are others, such as the social insects like termites and honey bees and social birds like flamingos and swallows, which are part of nature but also interact or exist together in groups (Heal, et al. 2005: 63-64, 71). In different ecosystems, the human social environment can be distinguished because of the nature of human interaction. The human social environment is very necessary for human existence. As it is, it comprises other living things in the social environments or ecosystems in the biosphere, which directly or indirectly influence humans.

There are different environmental problems that ravage human communities all over the globe as the result of anthropogenic activities such as deforestation, different types of pollution, global warming and depletion of ozone layer. These result in hazards as desertification, acid rains, greenhouse effects, health problems, extensive poverty and starvation in different parts of the world (Eegunlusi, 2004: 17-18). These problems, no doubt, cause untold sufferings. There are many causes of these problems. A major one is the industrial/economic cause. Factors such coal mining, industrial emissions, waste disposals, deforestation are responsible for some environmental problems. Coal mining has been found to have led to the filtering of acids into water table in some environments, thereby polluting the people’s source of daily water needs, for both drinking and using, which, invariably, is injurious to their physical and mental health states (McIvor and Johnston. 2007: 64-89). Besides this outcome, lands under coal mines sometimes cave in, leading to loss of lives and properties. In cases where these do not cave in, there is a high risk of infertility resulting from the pollutants from the mining processes (Mohanty and Mahananda, 2015: 967-970). Altogether, these issues pose real dangers to human health through amplifying possibilities of lung infections, its attendant health risks and spread of various diseases. As part of industrial mining process, there is deep ocean mining, especially in the Pacific Ocean. Oil drilling exploration, though not primarily classified as mining, is one of the ways of getting mineral deposits from the sea bed which seriously affects the environment. Although the consequences of oil drilling may not be as much as coal mining, other activities resulting from exploration of crude oil, such as gas flaring and oil spillage, harm human environment (Saro-Wiwa, 1995). Emphatically, emissions of carbon dioxide through activities such as coal burning and gas flaring contribute to the depletion of the ozone layer. At the same time, emissions of carbon monoxide through these activities may sometimes shorten human lifespan or lead to avoidable deaths.

Industrial emissions have led to widespread air pollution in many countries. For instance, emissions of sulphuric acid from British industries have travelled several miles in the air to cause acid rains in Norwegian environments with expansive adverse effects on their farms

or, generally, their agricultural industries. Also, emissions from the energy and automobile industries in places like Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary have caused acid rains within them and in their neighbourhoods. Apart from these emissions, litters from packaging activities and operations from industries where war weapons are devised are equally great sources of pollution (Protopsaltis. 2012: 93-96). For instance, it is common knowledge that international arms contests and drive for accumulation of war weapons, especially during the cold war, led nations to proliferate war weapons in their struggle to outmanoeuvre one another. In these efforts, testing of weapons at habitable locations and releasing of harmful gases to the communities had deleterious consequences for such environments. An instance was the repeated Soviet nuclear tests at different locations in Kazakhstan which exposed the inhabitants of those regions to radiation while their water beds and soils were equally heavily polluted. Thus, with energy radioactivity and water pollution, the people suffered troubling mental and physical health challenges which demeaned their social esteems and human dignity.

In some cases, indiscriminate felling of trees for commercial purposes without replanting leads to environmental problems as desertification, which result in negative effect of water erosion, violent wind and general despoliation of arable land. Some nations like Haiti suffered from soil erosion as a result of deforestation (Lewis and Covey, 1985: 158-160; Boahene, 1998: 247-258). In Afghanistan and Laos, in South East Asia, cutting of wood for commercial purposes, clearing and burning of bushes for planting and fetching of firewood for sustenance resulted in soil erosion which contributed to deforestation (Groninger, 2006: 426-428; Koch, 2017:7-9). In Kenya and many African nations, wood gathering activities also led to deforestation and desertification.

Apart from the above, agricultural activities such as unrestricted irrigation, grazing, and excessive use of pesticides contribute to environmental problems. Relentless irrigation leads to salt accumulation on the irrigated surface thereby causing poor productivity of farm lands or non-flourishing of farm plants. In cases where salt filters through the soil to the water table, concentrated salt also hinders the growth of plants, leading to poor harvests which create poverty risks. Too much grazing equally destroys lands and affects farm produce. This is most common in places where nomadic herdsmen allow their animals to graze without restraint (Czeglédi and Radácsi. 2005: 29-33). For instance, in places like Kalahari Desert, overgrazing and animal overpopulation is a threat to limited plants covering the area. This, therefore, threatens human existence and the continuous existence of other things living in the region. In some places in the world, overuse of pesticides has equally led to water pollution. Apart from threatening humans, these situations sometimes threaten aquatic life.

Some social factors also contribute to environmental problems. One of these is improper location of sewage disposal, especially placing sewage disposal below water table level, which cause water pollution or infiltration. In this situation, impurities find their way into waters which become unhygienic for drinking. Lack of discipline and attention to proper hygiene, especially in some third world countries, make this worst (Afangideh, Kinuabeye and Atu, 2012: 26). For instance, in attempts to dispose domestic wastes or clean their environments, some people in congested cities in Nigeria often pour refuse in gutters during rainfall. The aftermath is that such gutters become blocked over time or the wastes find their way into the communities through water erosion or flooding (Adi, 2009: 7-20). Also, in some cases, open burning of refuse is done without incinerator, thereby making air pollution the norm. These cases and similar ones not highlighted here pose serious threats to human social environment.

Efforts to Address Global Environmental Problems

In the past, several efforts have been made to address global environmental problems. These include: governmental legislations, creating awareness, adoption of different methods of waste disposal and cleaning up of environment. For instance, in Laos, the government made laws to combat environmental problems, especially the protection of wildlife. Groups such as the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), environmental task forces, drug administrations, information agencies and media, and many other agencies the world over, make concerted efforts to limit environmental hazards through controlling anthropogenic activities causing harm in the environment. Though these efforts are good, they appear insufficient on the ground that not all inhabitants of the world are morally responsible in taking care of the environment. It is this moral ground that this work seeks to address by arguing for a global application of Biblical ethics.

Generally, ethics have been adopted at different times to address environmental issues. The conflicting conceptual standpoints of ethical principles make adopting an ethical principle without creating philosophical arguments difficult. For instance, the utilitarian ethicist who holds a teleological position on human actions and believes that human actions should be focused on what yields greatest good for the greatest number of people will differ in approach from the moral egoist who believes that an action is a morally right one if it satisfies human interests or helps a person to adequately cater for his interest whether or not the interests of others are satisfied (Crisp, 2007: 77-82; Frankena, 1963:14-19). Similarly, the attempt to address global environmental problems by a rule-deontological ethicist who thinks that human actions ought to be rule-based with these rules of action held sacrosanct will differ from the perspective of a situation ethicist who thinks that the justifications for human actions are the circumstances of their occurrence and the situations that warrant such actions (Kant, 1997:31-45; Fletcher, 1997: 23-37). In these instances, a utilitarian ethicist may think that an action is justified if it sacrifices the interest of the minority for that of the majority, a moral egoist may think of protecting his interest before that of the global community and the situation ethicist will think certain actions are justified in certain circumstances, say pouring garbage into the gutters, if they protect the interests of certain individuals even though others may be disadvantaged by the choices such individuals have made. Yet, these ethical positions are few instances of many that exist. In proposing Biblical ethics as a solution to global environmental problems, this paper will lay emphasis on biblical core ideas of sanctification, holiness, the golden rule and communitarian relations. The above view is similar to deontological ethical view that the survival of humanity requires certain sacrosanct and non-negotiable principles. If humanity fails to live based on strict rules of existence, extermination is imminent (Holmes, 2007: 50). This is not what the world wants. Thus, rules must be obeyed. In this light, we turn to an analysis of biblical ethics and the significance of adopting its principles to address global environmental problems. Our assumption in this regard is that the Bible contains some universally applicable norms and virtues expressing love as the universal motivation for humanity to fulfil their duties as God's stewards of the environment.

A cursory Look at Ethics: Defining Biblical Ethics

Briefly, in relation to human daily activities, ethics refers to a way by which humans conduct themselves. As a branch of philosophy, it is an area that studies the principles of morality. By this, it relates to the nature and sources of morality and human assessments of things as either right or wrong. Morality deals with standards of judging human conducts as either right or wrong, or good and bad (Kant, 1997: 7- 44; Plato 2008: 86-98). This is the sense

in which ethics is normative. Apart from normative ethics, there are two other types of ethics: meta-ethics and descriptive ethics (Tzafestas. 2016:13-15). Though there are overlaps between the boundaries of the three aspects of ethics, meta-ethics has a lot to do with the sources from which ethical terms are derived and their meanings as well as the considerations of the linguistic, metaphysical and mental/emotive interpretation of events. Descriptive ethics relates to non-normative description of issues. For instance, to say that “People ought to give to a worthy cause” is to endorse that “a worthy cause” is good. Also, to say that a table, a chair or a dog is good is to attribute goodness to such non-human entities.

Several orientations and perspectives about ethics exist that are rooted in people’s philosophies, cultures and manners of assessing conducts. This diversity is sometimes influenced by major perspective shifts and philosophical leanings and either remain rigid or fluid based on whether or not the societies they represent constantly change or seek to remain static in their views overtime. In this regards, as members of certain generations cling to traditions they consider dear and the moral views underpinning them, others accept dynamism. Thus, ensuing are conflicts between rigid and flexible ethical perspectives. This is the sense in which thinkers over the centuries make divides between ethical issues and bring to fore ethical dualities or morally antithetical positions as the divide between moral relativism and moral universalism, which implicitly are perspectives regarding moral diversity and moral absolutism respectively (Fletcher, 1997: 23-37; Kant, 1997:31-45). In their broad senses, these, no doubt, admit multiple cultural and moral ideas with variegated metaphysical and epistemological underpinnings that dictate the understandings we have about them. This is the sense in which we have, for centuries, seen diverse moral worldviews and perspectives such as Chinese ethics, Yoruba ethics, Christian ethics and Islamic ethics (Leaman, 219-231). Our focus is on Biblical ethics, which is a subset of Christian ethics.

Biblical ethics may be difficult to classify without first attempting a definition of Christian ethics (Hollenbach, 2002: xii). Etymologically, the word “Christian” was derived originally from the Greek *Χριστιανός* in the 1st Century AD, and later rendered as *Christianós* (*Christianus*) in its Latinised form (Hvalvik, 2007:181). According to Marvin Vincent (1887), the word was initially adopted to refer to business and every day dealings. With respect to these dealings, it means “to give audience to” or “to answer, from which comes its use to denote the responses of an oracle; a divine advice or warning...Later, it acquires the meaning to bear a name; to be called, with the implication of a name used in the ordinary transactions and intercourse of men; the name under which one passes.” In its present form, it is a referent to a votary or disciple of Christ or, in some sense, an aficionado or devotee of his ways of doing things. Vincent’s (1887) description of people’s acknowledgement of the “avowed devotion of the disciples to Christ as their leader” in Acts 11:26 (where it was said that “the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch”) corroborates this.

Just as seen in our view on ethics above, there are varying perspectives in defining Christian ethics. Writers such as Arthur Holmes (2007:58, 81) view it as the ethics which is different from other types, thereby informing his categorisation of ethics into “Christian and non-Christian ethics.” Considering its theological evolutions and leanings, this is an obvious assertion. Also, many thinkers consider it to be series of views of Christians and Christian cultural orientations and practices across several centuries since Christianity existed. In this light, they consider and hold as significant the writings and works of the early church, the early and later church fathers, the ideas of the renaissance period, the writings of philosophers and theologians on Christian issues, the views and works of various Christian denominations and Christian events up to the present age (Wulf, 1924: 149-178). Most of the doctrines emanating from these positions variously reinterpreted and redefined the bible to suit the intellectual

development of the church in Europe and elsewhere as scholars considered ways of explaining what they thought to be important truths. For instance, the works of the church Fathers leaned on or responded to Western or Eastern philosophical views. St. Augustine jettisoned Persian-originated Manichaeism to embrace Christianity because of the influence of Plato's philosophy while St. Aquinas was influenced by the ideas of Aristotle which he sought to reconcile with the views of the church (Augustine, Aquinas, 401 AD, 2002: 130-155). Based on these kinds of ideas, practices from early Christian periods through to other Christian humanistic and religious descriptions of the events of the renaissance and modern periods are regarded as Christian because they are thought to be laden with or represent Christian conceptions.

Besides the above conceptions, Christian ethics is thought by some to be the views expressed in Judeo-Christianity in which various doctrines, rules and principles were outlined to regulate human conduct. In this regard, biblical ethics deals with the principles, rules and texts of the Bible that define how humans ought to live. It is against this backdrop that we consider biblical ethics and limit our work to the definition of Christian ideas that deal directly with human conduct. Thus, we define biblical ethics as the ethics of the bible, its moral views as written in the original biblical texts as informed by the linguistic tones in which it is written. In other words, we treat it as the ideas of the bible without mixing other individuals' ideas or interpretation with it. Considering this, it will then be a subset of Christian ethics since Christian ethics is also taken by scholars to be based on biblical doctrines and ideas. Taken more explicitly, this work thinks of biblical ethics in the light of this Judeo-Christian part of the description of Christian ethics. We, hence, focus more on examining some original ideas of the bible and how they are applicable in solving global environmental problems.

Biblical Ethics and Global Environmental Problems

Several scholars have viewed the bible as antithetical to environmental laws. Mainly, as pointed out by Eric Katz, they think this way because they consider the bible from the perspective of Judaism. 1. They argue that Judaism promotes a God-centred view more than the views concerning the sustenance of the physical world by directing the attention of Jews on the studying of God's word more than the study of the physical world. Based on this, they maintain that the Jews pay too much attention to the physical world which may put the human soul in danger (Katz, 2001: 81-86). 2. They debate that the Torah's command in Genesis 1:28 to "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" expresses dominion over the earth by humanity and shows the whole of nature to be merely useful for helping humans to develop and nothing more. For the holders of this view, while man subdues nature for his growth and multiplication, his dominion is limited because he merely serves as a custodian or steward of nature that is owned by God (Katz, 2001: 81-87). Regarding 1 above, the people's view is significant to the practitioners of Judaism and gives them the nudging not to live carelessly and corrupt natural and moral orders. On 2, the scholars interestingly do not seem to have taken note that a problem with their position is that it excludes considerations of other parts of the Torah where humans are expected to cater for nature, such as God putting Adam "in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it" (Gen. 2:15). The importance of replenishing the earth, which we may not necessarily limit to the proliferation of the human race, is sacrosanct since other things (such as the plants that yield food and sustain man and animals) can equally proliferate in the natural environment.

With respect to deriding the bible as not being protective of the environment, scholars think that the bible is replete with accounts of harsh treatments of the environment. Among other reasoning, they cited conditions such as the prosecution of war under which it was

sometimes difficult to preserve the environment. Unfortunately, a reasoning error is committed here. Modern environmental scholars write as if the same milieu existed between the bible's world and our modern world. On the basis of this, they expect conformity to same standards of existence, forgetting that the then global order was vastly different from the modern one. In the then world, though there were great civilizations, the situation of Hobbes state of nature prevailed: Nations and peoples were always against themselves because of diverse interests relating to material possessions, different moral and spiritual convictions, the urge for supremacy and power, and a host of other overt and ulterior considerations such that human life was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes, 2002: 58).

The attacks on the bible as that which contains views that do not protect the environment are, in part, essentially viewed from the perspectives of the mosaic laws (that required the Israelites to exterminate their enemies and the cities of corrupt Israelites) (Deu. 13:1-17) and depend on the activities of some warriors of Israel who completely destroyed their enemies (whether within or outside Israel), either justifiably or unjustifiably. As an instance, Abimelech the son of Gideon became tyrannical to the extent of fighting those who opposed his enthronement and rule. He destroyed Shechem and spread salt on its ruins as a means of preventing growth of plants and the rebuilding of the city (Jud. 9:15, NKJV). A more virulent and cruel approach was adopted by the Midianites against Israel when they destroyed their livestock and crops with the mind to totally annihilate them. The Midianites dealt with the people of Israel that they "hid their food in caves and places that were hard to find" (Judges 6:2, ERV) However, the condition did not assuage. The Midianites "did not leave anything for the people of Israel to eat. They did not even leave them any sheep, or cattle, or donkeys" (Judges 6:4, ERV). Anytime the Israelites planted, the Midianites raised camps around Israel, "brought their families and their animals with them," "as many as swarms of locusts. There were so many of those people and their camels that it was not possible to count them. All of these people came into the land and ruined it. The people of Israel became very poor because of the people of Midian" (Judges 6:2-6, ERV). Interpretatively, while the Midianites' strategy may be perceived as being aimed at total destruction of the Jewish tribes due to hatred, competition and race hegemony, the intention of Moses, the law giver of Israel, and the warriors of Israel in adopting the strategies of occasionally destroying cities with everything found in them was deterrence, to warn the enemies of Israel and their allies to avoid fights with Israel and to the Israelites to prevent corruption. On close scrutiny, it will be observed that the perspectives and war strategies of the ancient times continued into modern era until the peace talks after the first and second world wars. A more monumental destructive strategy was adopted in the use of nuclear weapons over Hiroshima and Nagasaki to end World War II and serve as deterrence to the rest of the world (Davis. 2001:6, 11-12, 273). We cannot deny that this situation hurt the environment of the Japanese territories even though the world has become wiser that mutual destruction is possible and, hence, coalesce to protect the global environment to avoid the extermination of the human race. The above ancient situation similar to Hobbes' state of nature is different from events in the modern world order where nations operate by rules of accountability and there are moral demands of peace on nations of the world, as far as their socio-cultural, political and economic relations are concerned. Thus, limited are possibilities of war and more room for nurture and survival of nature as people see more reasons to cultivate and sustain natural aesthetics (Davis. 2001: 162). Reconsidered, one would realise that the attacks on the bible as not being protective of the environment may not really be justifiable on three grounds. First, though Moses made provision for deterrence in the laws, the laws given for environmental protection and their consequent human sustenance outweigh the deterrence laws. While occasionally hurting the environment, the deterrence laws

were implemented as last resort and necessary efforts towards producing results that will culminate in long term environmental benefits. At the same time, the mosaic law of environmental protection were intended for producing stronger protection of the environment and human sustenance. For instance, Moses instructed the Israelite soldiers to protect the environment. To make it clean and prevent the outbreak and spread of diseases, he said, "...you shall have an implement among your equipment, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and turn and cover your refuse...your camp shall be holy..." (Deuteronomy 23:3-14, NKJV). Also, so as not to terminate human existence through indiscriminate felling of trees that can lead to loss of means of livelihood and deforestation, he said:

When you besiege a city for a long time, while making war against it to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them; if you can eat of them, do not cut them down to use in the siege, for the tree of the field is man's food. Only the trees which you know are not trees for food you may destroy and cut down, to build siegeworks against the city that makes war with you, until it is subdued (Deu 20:19-20, NKJV).

A balance of the mosaic laws of deterrence and environmental sustenance leaves us with a utilitarian midpoint, a position that deterrence can promote overall great good. Second, adoption of war strategies by the warlords of Israel may not necessarily have been based on mosaic views. Besides, though their activities portrayed examples for others to follow, the principles guiding their actions and those actions may not necessarily be taken as biblical ethics, instructed by the bible, as in the case of Abimelech who fought viciously against his perceived enemies and was thought to have contradicted mosaic laws and the ethics of human relations by his people, as he unjustly killed several people in his attempt to attain and retain the throne (Deuteronomy 17:14-20, NKJV). Third, environmental scholars sometimes judge the principles and events of the bible by the Old Testament alone, which was where they think that the mosaic laws and the wars between Israel and other nations, which they claim harm the environment, are just the perspectives of the bible. There are also New Testament ethical standpoints that are essential in preserving the environment.

Two biblical moral laws or principles, which appeared several times both in the Old and New Testaments, are considered fundamental and so essential that all other bible scriptures are based on them. These are:

'...And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these' (Mark 12:30-31, NKJV).

The first provides a metaphysical basis for biblical ethics while the second, called "royal law" by the writer of the book of James (James 2:8, NKJV), forms the basis of the golden rule which says, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them"(Matthew 7:12, NKJV). By this, Jesus expects people to treat one another with a sense of moral worth and dignity and be held accountable for the consequences of their actions accordingly. Thus, to justify the actions of those who act right towards others and uphold their dignity, he affirms, "...for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me.'...'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these

My brethren, you did it to Me.” Obviously, such actions as these are expected to be performed towards persons that are disadvantaged, destitute and in want for the sake of their humanity. Consequently, this form of ethics imposes on man the moral duty to uphold the humanity of others irrespective of their status, class and background, and maintain brotherly relations among men, a position some may counter as being only acceptable to people holding Christian belief (Matthew 25:35-40, NKJV).

However, to extricate the golden rule from religious bias, it was rendered in logical form by Immanuel Kant. In what became known as the doctrine of “end in itself,” a formulation of his categorical imperative, Kant (Kant, 1997:45) said, "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end." In another formulation, as he expects of every man from the perspective of the “law of nature,” he argues, "Act as if the maxim of your action were to become, through your will, a universal law of nature" (Kant, 1997:31). By the various formulations of the categorical imperative, Kant expects individuals to treat one another as kingdom of ends. By this, each person in the world is to treat others as members of a kingdom in which all members are devoted to seeking one another’s interests and are abhorrent of conditions that take advantage of individuals without their consent. Though several cultures have ideas of the golden rule, there is high possibility that this fundamental doctrine of Kantian ethics essentially derives its inspiration from the teachings of Christ, the prophets and lawgivers of Israel. Obviously, it directs attention to the conditions for human mutual and communitarian existence. Jesus expected Christians to relate as members of a community with moral duty to one another and, through this moral duty, to become morally responsible to one another, holding one another in high esteem. By a moral duty based on brotherhood relations and good relations among humans, four essential things are obvious which have direct bearing to global environmental protection.

First, Christians are expected to operate based on rules of self-preservation through which they are not just to sharpen their instincts for survival but to avoid whatever can render them impure thereby endangering the human race. The statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 10:31, NKJV), implies first loving oneself and then loving others with the same degree of love. Considering this, self-love or protection of self-interest ought to be prior to, as well as be, the yardstick for measuring love for others. Ordinarily, nobody expects a person that hates him/herself and deals harshly with him/herself to love others, since he/she cannot give what he does not have or possess. Operating based on the idea of self-love, everyone owes himself the duty of self-preservation and protection of self-interest. For instance, it is the duty of everyone to preserve him/herself from contacting diseases. It is also everyone’s duty to preserve him/herself from things than can cause others to be saddened by evil occurrences to him/her or grieve his/her loss in case of any mortal harm. Thus, the necessity of the two essentials of self-preservation: sanctification and holiness.

Sanctification and holiness both have metaphysical as well as physical dimensions. In relation to human (ontological) status, sanctification and holiness deal with the cleansing and continual purity of the human soul. Through sanctification, an individual attains cleansing and frees himself from immoral thoughts and lifestyles while, through holiness, he continues to live a morally free life and a life of constant assessment so as avoid the pitfalls of immorality (Haggai 1:5.7, NKJV). This is the sense in which he is expected to regurgitate over the issues concerning him and seek ways of maintaining morally good conducts. In physical existence, sanctification relates to outward cleaning of the body or ensuring sanitation of what is external to man and his essence. In other words, this talks of human cleanliness and the cleansing of the environment in practical terms. Physical holiness then is the continual sustenance of this

cleanliness. Thereby, all known methods of sanitation can then be adopted to clean and sustain the cleaning of the human environment. Though the (ontological) descriptions of sanctification and holiness are significant because those who conquer poor moral conducts will certainly keep healthy environments, we will limit ourselves to the physical descriptions here. If each member of the human community pays attention to self-preservation and do something about ensuring well sanctified and clean environment, within his domain and its boundary with others' domains, the human environment will be clean. This is when the rule of self-preservation translates to the rule of mutual preservation, which is the second stage of preservation derivable from acting on the golden rule and brotherly relations.

At the stage of mutual preservation, each member of the human community takes notice of others, their interests and mutual profiting and sustenance. This is the stage of considerations of bilateral existence, the stage of actually "loving your neighbor." As described in the events involving the interplay between the actions of Cain who killed his brother, Abel, bilateral relations entail that each person be his "brother's keeper" (Genesis 4:9, NKJV) and be "kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another"(Rom 12:10, NKJV). When this is duly allowed, individuals pursue one another's interests without ulterior intentions and possibilities of bias that can ruin brotherly relations and breed mistrust. As seen in Acts 2:44-46 (NKJV),

...all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.

The ideas of sanctification and holiness are also applicable to mutual preservation. Orientation towards intersubjective sanctification and intersubjective holiness develop as each member of the community plays his role in achieving personal and communal neatness and not relenting on these. A good development of the orientation for mutual preservation and its actualisation equally develops to a third stage of preservation: communal preservation. Communal preservation is achieved when people develop the orientation for mutual preservation through intersubjective sanctification and intersubjective holiness. At the stage of communal preservation, every member of the community seeks the interest and preservation of the community and holds these prior to personal interests in the overall interest of all. As noted above, Acts of the Apostles Chapter 2 reports that the early disciples of Jesus, in unity, shared "all things in common" without anyone laying claim to any private property but giving up all properties as belonging to all. In this situation, none was in want as "they distributed to each as anyone had need" (Acts 4:32, 34, 35, NKJV). The oneness of mind, transparency and honesty of the people's dealings qualify as their intersubjective sanctification and intersubjective holiness. In an instance, this intersubjective sanctification and intersubjective holiness were violated by the acts of Ananias and Sapphira, a couple, who sold their landed property and attempted to deceive the others by declaring only a portion of the proceeds even when they benefitted from full declaration of the proceeds of the properties of others which they willingly surrendered for the common good of the then nascent Christian community (Acts 5:1-13, NKJV).

Obviously, the above events and ideas form part of what became the foundational tenets of the socialist-communist orientation about the society, even though the scholars expounding the principles on which socialism and communism rest may not actually have acknowledged this. While our focus is not on communism, we think of prioritisation of the human community

above individual interests. In giving attention to this, shared-meanings, shared understandings, shared values and shared ideals are elevated. The most basic argument against this communitarian perspective has been that the individual will be lost in the community while the community overrides his interests. We are not particularly certain if this consideration of domination by the majority informed the deception of Ananias and Sapphira. However, as appealing as the idea may be, a good reflection will reveal that individualism will not be lost in a community where the individual seeks the welfare of all because of the common protection provided by attention to the common good. In the waves of the Biblical scenarios of Acts 4: 32-37 (NKJV), as often is the case with individuals who distinguish themselves to ensure the survival of the community, Joses was distinguished and named Barnabas or “Son of Encouragement” by the disciples (Acts 4:36, NKJV) mainly because of his contributions. Communities where active individuals contribute their quotas develop faster. Following from this, it is important to note that joint individual actions become an effective community action where each community member plays his role well. Community action is required for advancing human society.

Community action ensures mutual preservation. As such, each individual ought to see himself as a preserver of the human environment and see the human community as endangered if he does not obey the rules of self-preservation leading to mutual preservation. We must, thus, prioritise the community and embark on community action for the survival of the human social environment. Self-preservation without considerations for our general survival is dangerous. For instance, the outbreak of the Ebola virus in 2013 ought not to have threatened the Nigerian community if Sawyer had not decided to hide the secret of his contact with the virus from Nigerians. This case was simply that of a person who flouted the rules of self-preservation and considered sacrificing a whole nation as his guinea pig. But for the brave acts of the doctors, one of whom paid the ultimate price of death through Sawyer’s deliberate smearing of his body fluid on her to infect her with the disease, he would have contaminated the entire Nigerian community. Self-centred people only think of self-preservation without considerations for mutual preservation and communal preservation. Every human effort ought to focus on making practical and concerted efforts to preserve the human environment.

The above three rules of human preservation develop to a fourth one: intergenerational preservation, which is the continual sustenance of humanity. Looking at global intergenerational environmental changes and protection, Callahan (2000:1-323) argues that humans cannot stop the global environment from changing because it has always changed from time immemorial. He, however, maintains that only its deterioration can be stopped. According to Brian Barry, “those alive at any time are custodians rather than owners of the planet, and ought to pass it at least no worse shape than they found it in” (Barry, 1977:284). The emphasis of justice between generations is the necessity of acting justly to ensure that the world is preserved for the benefit of future generations. It is, thus, unjust for the present generation to live in a manner that will destroy the present world by creating environmental problems for the coming generations. It is important for the present generation of inhabitants of the earth to act justly and jointly to preserve the earth and keep it beyond their own existence.

Communitarian Existence and Environmental Wellbeing

For the world to solve global environmental problems, attention must be given to developing a communitarian relation and people must be willing to exist based on the ideals of shared meaning and shared understanding of social and moral goods within the global community. This would mean that individuals have similar orientations or conceptions concerning the meaning and the understanding of the meanings of social goods such as love,

brotherly kindness, liberties, rights, income and wealth (Walzer, 1994:104-109). The moral aspect of communitarianism centres on people's attention to a moral obligation that is based on shared ideals and values. The interaction between humans and their understanding of an inter-personal/mutual sense of duty, whereby they seek one another's good and believe themselves to be sharing a common fate, define this moral obligation. As a response to liberalism, communitarianism does not deny the existence of the individual but prioritisation of the things that are common to individuals and the community, above personal considerations. A communitarian understanding then will be one in which individuals have and hold on to rules of agreement as far as social goods and moral issues relating to the preservation of human life on planet earth concerned.

One problem to take seriously regarding this communitarian understanding is the possibility of having divergent moral rules in environmental protection that may hinder communitarian ideals of shared meaning and shared understanding. As earlier noted, differences in conceptualisation of morality sometimes cause conflicts in the way we view environmental protection. For instance, the justification of a situation ethicist which favours acting according as the situations we find ourselves in dictate may make people lead lives that injure the environment as they consider ethical their response to the situations, which others find extremely injurious on the overall. Also, a utilitarian ethicist may marginalise the minority by his moral rules or actions. However, our proposed way out of these is the adoption of a communitarian standpoint (that will accommodate the divergent views) by the global environmental protagonists constituting themselves into an epistemic community of people interested in global environmental protection and wellbeing and acting based on an epistemic understanding deriving from their mutual agreement (Smirnova and Yachin, 2015: 646-651). With the epistemic community arriving at a common understanding and objective concerning how to save the global environment through discussion, as the aftermath of this dialogue, a rule of engagement will emerge. This rule of engagement should be moderated by the golden rule such that all global inhabitants can consider the protection of the global environment in the interest of all and be empathetic and sympathetic towards one another's interests and welfare (Cross, 2013: 137-140). By this epistemic relation and consequent agreement, a shared meaning and a shared understanding of the terms adopted and issues involved in global environmental protection will be clear. Thus, with the prevalence of the idea of golden rule whereby people treat one another with dignity and consider one another's overall welfare, cooperating to protect the global environment, a foundational rule for mutual environmental protection will be established. Also, the communitarian view sought here is one with deeper communal cohesiveness which allows for a well-knit association between members of the global community as they pursue their interest and act based on the golden rule.

In line with our discussions above, communitarian ideals of shared meaning and shared understanding should include the common meaning and understanding of the golden rule as that which requires persons to follow the rules of self-preservation, mutual preservation, communal preservation (with necessary community actions) and intergenerational preservation and allows people to protect their own interests as much as they can, value or relish the interest of others and the global community with the orientation not to allow damage to the environment within or outside their immediate domains (Cross 2013: 137-138). It must also require individuals to deal with one another with rules of mutual respect which, invariably, prioritise the preservation of individuals and the community of individuals in the global community. In these, everyone's duties must be towards helping one another to survive and the global community to be preserved both for the present and the next generation (Haas, 1992: 187-224).

A shared meaning and shared understanding of the fact that it is everyone's duty to preserve human existence, through preserving the environment, will occasion the wellbeing of the inhabitants of the global community. These ideals must also be shared concerning sanctification and holiness and their inter-subjective relevance in the global community. Based on the ideas of holiness and sanctification, communitarian existence will become significant in promoting global environmental wellbeing. This is because as each member of the human community keeps himself clean and sustains the clean state, environmental purity as well as clean lifestyles, and smooth and cordial interactions with other humans would be enhanced. This can further stimulate others to act in the best interest of all, and on the long run, the global environment and community will yield good benefits for the global inhabitants while the human race is sustained as each succeeding generation of global inhabitants strive to leave the global community a better place for coming generations.

Conclusion

In this paper, we distinguished between biblical ethics and Christian ethics, relating biblical to Christian ethics as its subset, the distinction which many writers conflate. Besides this, after identifying some environmental problems in the world, we argued that the principles of biblical ethics are applicable in solving global environmental problems. Adopting both conceptual and empirical analysis and descriptions, we based our arguments on both physical and spiritual understanding of biblical terms, holiness and sanctification, interpreting and focusing on their physical significance to explain the importance of personal, joint and intergenerational involvement in environmental preservation and consciously making efforts to combat global environmental problems. Emphasising the importance of moral duties and being morally responsible, we debated that the rules of preservation which hinges on the golden rule (the foundational idea for biblical ethics) should be obeyed so that global environmental problems can be addressed and humans' overall/best interest and wellbeing can be catered for in the world.

*Tayo Raymond Ezekiel Eegunlusi, PhD

General Studies Department, School of Sciences'
Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria
Email: kingadetayo@yahoo.com

Marcel Ikechukwu Onyibor

General Studies Department, School of Sciences,
Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria
Email: mionyibor@futa.edu.ng, marsjoe@gmail.com

References

- Adi, Joro Jikenwu. 2009. *Influence of Knowledge of Environmental Sanitation on Health Practices of Senior Secondary School Students in Taraba State*. A Thesis Submitted to the Postgraduate School, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in Partial Fulfilment of the Award of the Degree of Master of Education (M.Ed) in Health Education.
- Afangideh, Asuquo.I., Kinuabeye. U. Joseph and Joy.E. Atu. 2012. "Attitude of Urban Dwellers to Waste Disposal and Management in Calabar, Nigeria." *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, Vol. 1, No. 1. pp. 22-34.

- Ajaegbo, Emmanuel. 2012. "The Determinants of Littering Attitude in Urban Neighbourhoods of Jos." *JORIND*, Vol. 10, No. 3., pp. 82-94. From www.transcampus.org/journals, www.ajol.info/journals/jorind. Retrieved 7th Feb., 2019.
- Aquinas, Thomas. 2002. *The Treatise on Human Nature: Summa Theologiae la 75-89*. Robert Pasnau (trans). Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
- Asian Development Bank, Progress Report on Tranche Release Program Number 34543, Loan Number 1867, June 2006, pp. 1-13. From <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-document/67107/34543-lao-ptr.pdf>. Retrieved 7th Feb., 2019.
- Augustine, 426 AD. *The City of God*, Book V. J. J. Smith (trans.). <https://ambry.pw/item/detail/id/5c63f7fa50b425397897dd38>
- Augustine, 426 AD. *The City of God*, Book I. Marcus Dods (trans.). <https://ambry.pw/item/detail/id/5c63f7fa50b425397897dd38>
- Augustine, 426 AD. *The City of God*. Vols. IV, XVII, and XVIII. George Wilson Glenluce (trans.). <https://ambry.pw/item/detail/id/5c63f7fa50b425397897dd38>
- Barry, Brian. 1977. "Justice Between Generations." P.M.S. Hacker and J. Raz (eds). *Law, Society and Morality: Essays in Honour of H.L.A. Hart*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Boahene, K. 1998. "The Challenge of Deforestation in Tropical Africa: Reflections on Its Principal Causes, Consequences and Solutions." *Land Degradation & Development*, Vol. 9, pp. 247-258.
- Callahan, Joan. R. 2000. *Recent Advances and Issues in Environmental Science*. Arizona: The Ornyx Press.
- Crisp, Roger. 1997. *Mill On Utilitarianism*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Cross, Mai'a K. Davis. 2013. "Re-thinking Epistemic Communities Twenty Years Later." *Forthcoming Review of International Studies*, Vol. 39, Issue 01, pp. 137-160.
- Czeglédi, Levente and Andrea Radácsi. 2005. "Overutilization of Pastures by Livestock." *GYEPGAZDÁLKODÁSI KÖZLEMÉNYEK*, Vol. 3. From <http://www.agr.unideb.hu/kiadvany/gyep/2005-03/06Czegledi.pdf>. Retrieved 21st Feb., 2019.
- Davis, Walter A.. 2001. *Deracination: Historiocity, Hiroshima, and the Tragic Imperative*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Easy-To-Read Version (ERV). 2002. In Rick Meyer. ed. *e-sword version*. 7.8.5. (2000-2007). www.esword.com. Retrieved 29th May, 2009.
- Egunlusi, T. R. E. 2004. *Globalization and the Establishment of a Just World Order*. Unpublished M.A. Project Submitted to the Department of Philosophy, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, pp. 17-18.
- Fletcher, Joseph. 1997 (1966). *Situation Ethics: A New Morality*. Westminster: John Knox Press.
- Frankena, Wilhelm. 1963. *Ethics*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Groninger, John W. 2006. "Forestry and Forestry Education in Afghanistan." *Journal of Forestry*, Vol. 104, Issue 8, pp. 426-430. From <https://doi.org/10.1093/jof/104.8.426>. Retrieved 21st Feb., 2019.

- Haas, Peter. 1992. "Banning Chlorofluorocarbons: Epistemic Community Efforts to Protect Stratospheric Ozone." *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 1, pp. 187-224.
- Heal, Geoffrey M. et al. (eds.). 2005. *Valuing Ecosystem Services: Towards Better Environmental Decision Making*. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press.
- Hobbes, T. 2002. *Leviathan*. The Project Gutenberg Ebook.
- Hollenbach, David S. J. 2002. *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Holmes, Arthur F. 2007 (1984), *Ethics: Approaching Moral Decisions*, 2nd ed. Illinois: InterVarsity Press.
- Hvalvik, Reidar. 2007. Jewish Believers and Jewish Influence in the Roman Church Until the Early Second Century." Oskars Karsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (eds.). *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.
- Jamieson, Dale. 2008. *Ethics and the Environment: An Introduction*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1997. *Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals*. Mary Gregor (trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Katz, Eric. 2001. "Judaism." Dale Jamielson (ed.). *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*. Blackwell.
- Koch, Sebastian. 2017. "The Struggle Over Lao PDR's Forests: New Opportunities for Improved Forest Governance?" *Pacific Geographies*, Vol. 47, pp.4-13.
- "Lao People's Democratic Republic: Environment and Social Program (Loan 1867 -LAO)." *Performance Evaluation Report*, Independent Evaluation Department, Asian Development Bank, November 2010. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-document/67107/34543-lao-ptr.pdf>. Retrieved 21st Feb., 2019.
- Leaman, O. 1995. "Christian Ethics in the Light of Muslim Ethics." C. Rodd (ed.). *New Occasions Teach New Duties?* Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, pp. 219-231.
- Lewis, L. A. and W. J. Covey. 1985. "The Continuing Deforestation of Haiti." *Ambio*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 158-160.
- McIvor, Arthur and Ronald Johnston. 2007. *Miners' Lung: A History of Dust Disease in British Coal Mining*. Hampshire and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company.
- Mohanty, Bidut Prava and Malaya Ranjan Mahananda. 2015. "Reproductive Health Hazards of Coal Mine Male Workers in Lakhanpur Open Cast Mines." *International Journal of Biomedical Research*, Vol. 6, No 12, pp. 967-971.
- Plato. 2008. "The Republic." *The World's Greatest Books 14: Philosophy and Economics*. Arthur Mee and John A. Hammerton (eds.). Project Gutenberg Ebook.
- Protopsaltis, C. 2012. "Air Pollution Caused by War Activity." *WIT Transactions on Ecology and the Environment*, Vol 157, pp. 93-98.
- Saro-Wiwa, Ken. 1995. "Complete Statement by Ken Saro-Wiwa to Ogoni Civil Disturbances Tribunal." From, <http://www.ratical.org/corporations/KSWstmt.html>. Retrieved 2nd September, 2017.
- Smirnova, Marianna Y. and Sergey Y. Yachin. 2015. "Epistemic Communities and Epistemic Operating Mode." *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, Vol. 5, No. 7, pp. 646-649.
- The Holy Bible, New King James Version (NKJV)*. 1996. Nashville: Tennessee: Broadman and Holman Publishers. pp. 64-65.
- Tzafestas, Spyros G. 2016. *Roboethics: A Navigating Overview*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

- “U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: FY 2013 Annual Performance Report, FY 2015 Annual Plan.” https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-03/documents/2013_dqrs_certified.pdf. Retrieved 7th Feb., 2019.
- Vincent, Marvin R. 1887. "Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament." <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/vnt/acts-11.html>. Retrieved 26th Feb., 2019.
- Walzer, Michael. 1994. “Complex Equality.” Markate Daly (ed.). *Communitarianism: A New Public Ethics*. USA: Wadsworth.
- Wulf, Maurice de. 1924 (1922). *Philosophy and Civilization in the Middle Ages*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.