

## Global Warming and the Church in Nigeria

Ikechi-Ekpendu, Chioma<sup>1\*</sup>, Ikechi Chidi Ekpendu<sup>2</sup>, Ufomba Eleazar Enyioma<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Babcock University Ilisan Remo, Ogun State Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Religious Studies, Babcock University Ilisan Remo, Ogun State Nigeria.

<sup>3</sup>Department of Religious Studies, Adeleke University, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria.

**\*Corresponding Author:** Ikechi-Ekpendu, Chioma, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Babcock University Ilisan Remo, Ogun State Nigeria. Email: Ikechi-ekpendu@babcock.edu.ng

### ABSTRACT

The rise in the average temperature of the Earth's climate system which is technically referred to as "Global warming" is one of the perturbed trending global phenomena that bedevils the contemporary society; posing consequential threat not only on the ecological system, but also on economic and political systems of virtually every nation in the world. Coupled with attending fear of what would become the fate of the safety of the human race. From the functionalist point of view, this paper examines the ecclesiastical role of the Christian bodies in dissuading the people from human activities that contribute to the advancement of the rapid rising of the temperature of the planet earth, as well as educating them on the hazardous effect of such development on human habitation. Stemming from the observable existing effects of global warming and attending fierce scientific speculations, this paper is raising a clarions call, beckoning for the return of moral consciousness through the application of every religious avenue in instigating into human minds the realization of the duty of refraining from the activities that truncate the ecosystem and attract the deadly result from the violation of the order of nature.

**Keywords:** Global warming, ecosystem, greenhouse, gases, church, religion

### INTRODUCTION

In our world today, there is a severe concentration on several issues. The nations of the earth seem not to draw back in the discussions and plan on how to make the planet more habitable, conducive and peaceful for the human societies. However, there seems to be ever-rolling challenges that constantly alter the relentless efforts put down to address and solve these perennial issues. In this paper, one of the universal trending causes for urgent attention and discourse that occupy the front row is the challenges thrown by and received from climate change or global warming. Since the invention of thermometer in the fifteenth century, there began the quest for the identification of the general weather condition of the environment of the planet earth. This effort gave birth to the formation of meteorological network in Italy. Consequently the report of observations made on earth's temperature was first published in 1658 (Amanda 2016). This background paved way for the arriving of the sensitization of the condition of the global surface temperature since a century ago. Today, the concern and obvious worry

about the nature of the change in the earth's temperature is evident in the routine analysis of the measurement of earth's surface temperature which features on daily basis on television and other media stations all around the globe. This paper evaluates the continuous effort made by the global society in tackling the worrisome phenomenon of global warming and strategic schemes employed in both educating and reducing causative factors that tend to increase the frequency in the change of the earth's climate and the roles the church needs to play in this global goal.

### THE EMERGENCE OF GLOBAL WARMING

The worrisome outbreak of the change in the temperature of the earth was discovered in the early nineteenth century. The discoveries made in the advanced study of changes in climate and history of the earth and series of other climatological issues placed caution on certain human activities that could increase harmful deterioration of the atmospheric system.

Davis (1995) states that scientist discovered climate change in the early 19th century when

ice ages and other natural changes in pale climate were first suspected and the natural greenhouse effect first identified. They first argued that human emissions of greenhouse gases could change the climate. In the 1960s, the warming effect of carbon dioxide gas became increasingly convincing. During the 1970s, scientific opinion increasingly favored the warming viewpoint. Prior to the 18th century, scientists had not suspected that prehistoric climates were different from the modern period. By the late 18th century, geologists found evidence of a succession of geological ages with changes in climate.

Global warming as an important environmental discourse should be all encompassing and addressed from every positive perspective, being both embrative and comprehensive. Issues that border on climate change as it were have been attracting diverse attention and standing as a contemporary fundamental issue that is responsible for certain lots of societal concerns. This is necessary since the worry on the increase of the temperature of the earth does not only bring abstract contemplation, but factual to the determinants of the safety and survival of humans dwelling on the planet called earth. Environmental issues are not just issues restricted to the environment alone, but involves biological, ecological, biotechnological, political, economic socio-cultural, religious and moral (Oyeshola 1998).

The emergence of global warming and the various dimensional views and efforts on how to bring panacea reflects on the assertion made by Mainckam (2008) as he maintains that the quest for sustainable social development must take into cognizance the utmost need for environmental preservation in which human beings must take wise and curtailng careless activities that result and contribute to factors that enhance global warming.

### FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO GLOBAL WARMING

Green house efforts which is a major issue in the discourse of global warming occurs when carbon dioxide mix with other air polluting agents and greenhouse gases meet in the atmosphere and absorb solar radiation joining with the sunlight which bounced off the surface of the earth (Amanda 2016).

Every nation on earth has their contribution in the process that result to what brings the combination of man-made factors leading to the

change in the climate system of the planet earth. For example;

In the United States, the burning of fossil fuels to make electricity is the largest source of heat-trapping pollution, producing about two billion tons of carbon every year. Coal burning, power plants are by far the biggest polluters. The country's second largest source of carbon pollution is the transport sector, which generate about 1.7 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. Emission a year (Amanda 2016).

### Emission

As hinted previously the increment of carbon emission which contemporaneous with the continuous rapid demographic growth all over the world compose one of the leading factors among the causes of climate change. However, (Lindzen 2008) opines that "Global warming is itself the product of many factors and its relevance to anything else depends on its magnitude. Emission of minor greenhouse gases is a factor but only one factor (and probably not the most important among several.

### Deforestation

Most of the African rainforests are very rich when one talks about biodiversity. However, deforestation which is human driven action to destroy forest stands and trees in order to make land available for other uses is yet another factor that contributes hugely to global warming. According to Stuart (2019), the estimation of annual rate of deforestation accumulates to about 1.3 million square kilometer is being deforested per decade. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, reinter the fact that inspite of the observable slow-down in the process of deforestation in some urban areas in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, most process of uncontrolled deforestation occurs in tropic areas where variety of forest especially from rainforest areas that are wet and hot, forests that are moist and humid and areas where diverse trees lose their leaves and withers during dry season.

While bemoaning the environmental hazards resulting from deforestation in Cameroon, Ngong (2016:27) asserts that Deforestation in Cameroon does not only carry the threat of soil erosion and depletion of water resources, but also of the loss of much of the diverse flora and fauna of the region. It is the recognition that protecting the diverse flora and fauna is important not only to Cameroon, but the rest of the world that some environmental organizations have teamed up with the government of Cameroon to designate

parts of the forest in the country as national park and forest reserves.

Ngong's assertion is supported by the observation made earlier by Nzobe and Manteel (2014) that African forests of Cameroon is saturated with the highest level of endemism, being the fifth in African continent hosting about 8,000 species of plants, 250 species of mammals, 548 species of birds, 200 species of amphibians and about 330 species of reptiles, the waters hosting about 542 species of fishes. This observation is an example of how costly and deadly the effects of deforestation could be on both terrestrial and aquatic habitats with over flowing disastrous effects that boomerang on humans and their society.

### Desertification

This is the process by which fertile lands become desert either through human activities or natural causes, such as drought, inappropriate agriculture and deforestation. Ning et al (2009) argues that desertification is caused by a lot of factors and result to climate change as well as being expanded by the reverse effect of climate change, especially the over exploitation of soil being caused by human activities.

### Over Population

The demographic growth of the world is a serious factor that one could say stands at the center points among other factors. Weneka - Wotogbe (2016:43) posits that "while globally, humans have reached this level of awareness, namely, that unscrupulous and unbounded exploitation of and development on natural resources/environments has become a serious threat to the very existence of human beings and life on the planet earth. This implies that while people are increasing in number, development on natural things increases, bringing adverse effect especially because of the way things are handled by humans even in the immediate environment.

### Armed Conflict

Armed conflicts, whether ethnic armed conflict, civil war or world war is a heinous enemy of human environment. Wariboko (2016:494) asserts that "armed conflict has devastating effects on the environment". In his view, the United Nations General Assembly sees the lamentable effects of wars on humans and their environment and declared November 6 as the International Day for preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and

Armed Conflict. The attention of the world has been drawn as the impacts of the negative results of armed conflict on environment seem to last longer than the conflicts (Okakwu 2013). The detonation of two nuclear weapons popularly referred to as atomic bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki cities of Japan on August 6 and 9, 1945 by the United States during the Second World War is a constant reminder of how deadly wars could be, not just on humans but on their environment.

## EFFECTS OF THE CHANGE IN EARTH'S CLIMATE

The activities carried out by humans which result and add more contributions in the rise of the earth's temperature creates disastrous impacts on virtually everything in the world. According to Phan (2016), the effect of global warming the fact shows in every day water results in many death and the spread of water and chemical substances. While reflecting on the comments made by Pope Francis pertaining to the miserable human conditions arising from the activities perpetrated by human which bring harmful effects on the entire ecosystem, even leading to various conflicts and clashes in diverse places in the world.

Water scarcity has caused conflicts not only in the Middle East over the Tigris-Euphrates River, and Africa over the Nile but it is also the source of potential conflicts in Asia: between Pakistan and India (the Indus River), between India and Bangladesh (the Ganges China the Salween River), and among Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, the Himalayas which is caused by global warming, will affect the waters of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, Irrawaddy, Mekong, Salween, Yangtze and Yellow Rivers. It has been said that in international economy and politics water promises to be to the twenty-first century what oil was in the twentieth century. Finally, the Pope goes on to note "the control of water by large multinational businesses may become a major source of conflict in this century" transnational water has become a highly profitable "water market" Needless to say privatizing water for profit further deprives the Asian poor of their right to safe water (Phan 2016:73).

Similarly, Wariboko (2016:494), strongly opines that "environmental hazards of violence/armed conflict in Nigeria include pollution of water bodies, crops destruction, deforestation, soil poisoning, and disruption of

agriculture, destruction of animal habitats and killing of animals.

On this note, it is important to acknowledge that a large body of scientific studies, exhaustively reviewed, has produced a long list of possibilities. But the world's climate experts almost all agree that the impacts listed below are more likely than not to happen. For some items, the probabilities range up to almost certain. Consequences will vary by region; some places will at first be little affected, except indirectly, while other places will be affected much worse than the average. The following are the impacts of warming by two or three degrees Celsius — that is, what we may expect if humanity manages to begin restraining its emissions soon, so that greenhouse gases do not rise beyond twice the pre-industrial level. Constant phenomenological reports made on global warming include;

### Rapid Changes in Global Temperature

Increased greenhouse gases and the greenhouse effect has contributed to an overall warming of the Earth's climate, leading to a global warming (even though some regions may experience cooling, or wetter weather, while the temperature of the planet on average would rise). It is the rapid pace at which the temperature will raise that will result in many negative impacts to humans and the environment and this why there is such a world-wide concern.

### Ecosystem Impacts

With global warming on the increase and species' habitats on the decrease, the chances for various ecosystems to adapt naturally are diminishing. Many studies have pointed out that the rates of extinction of animal and plant species, and the temperature changes around the world since the industrial revolution, have been significantly different to normal expectations. An analysis of population trends, climate change, increasing pollution and emerging diseases found that 40 percent of deaths in the world could be attributed to environmental factors.

### Rising Sea Levels

Water expands when heated, and sea levels are expected to rise due to climate change. Rising sea levels will also result as the polar caps begin to melt. Rising sea levels is already affecting many small islands. The World Watch Institute reports that “the Earth's ice cover is melting in more places and at higher rates than at any time since record keeping began”. (March 6, 2000).

### Extreme Weather Patterns

Most scientists believe that the warming of the climate will lead to more extreme weather patterns such as more hurricanes and drought; even longer spells of dry heat or intense rain (depending on where you are in the world).

## THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN ADDRESSING GLOBAL WARMING

The nature of the role the church should play has brought a lot of questions and reactions concerning the real interpretation of Genesis 1:28. Standing on counsel given by Pope Benedict XVI, Olumati (2016) maintains that the environment is a gift from God the creator of humans. He created and everyone should have the sense of responsibility while using the environment. A great consideration should be operative in how to secure environment even for future generations. Hence, it is the duty of the church to work towards the defense of the earth, water even the air as gift from God and educate humanity on the danger of environmental pollution which amounts to self-destruction. Fretheim (2005) asserts that in caring for creation, humans should be careful on how they carry their activities as participants and collaborators with God in matters concerning the universe. Hence, Olumati (2016) opines that the church must in the path of “Theology of partnership” in preserving the environment. This should be the prerogative of the church.

## CONCLUSION

From the studies, historical investigations and analysis, this paper discovered the origin of global warming or climatic change spanning over 200 years and has gradually continued to increase its heat. On the course of the study, it was also noticed that the major causes of climate change are greenhouse effect and human activities. Furthermore, it was found that its impact to the world cut across every aspect of human existence hence the negative effects on the political system. Global warming is seriously posing a big threat to human existence. The paper therefore affirms the National Resources Defense recommendation with little amendment as an attempt to limit or reduce to the barest minimum the effect of global warming which states as follows

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Having seen the danger of global warming the paper therefore affirms the National Resources Defense recommendation with little amendment

## Global Warming and the Church in Nigeria

as an attempt to limit or reduce to the barest minimum the effect of global warming, and also recommends the following;

- The church is vested with duty of both preaching and warning. The gospel preaching must elucidate the importance of caring for creation and not only making wealth from the natural resources alone.
- There is need for the church to encourage the planting of more trees, which is a more direct and practical way of combating global warming and climate change since forests sequester a large amount of carbon dioxide in the leaves and soil.
- Limits should be set on global warming “by formation of policies by government that will preserve vegetation and check excessive carbon emission into the air” emphasis mine.
- The use of cars that emit less carbon should be encouraged as people are helped to know that excess carbon emission from their bad vehicles contributes to the destruction of nature’s order.
- Government should build better communities and transportation network

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