

CHRISTIAN MORAL EDUCATION AS INSTRUMENT FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A CONTEXT OF HIGHER INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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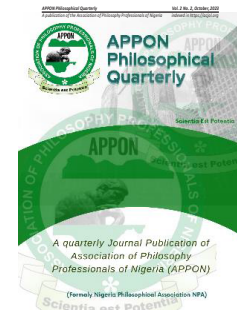
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Abstract

There is a growing moral decay in the society and in our higher institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. These moral decadences are some of the obvious antisocial behaviours inherent and exhibited by the youths in our societies today. Some of these antisocial behaviours which include: prostitution, armed robbery, cyber-criminality or “yahoo yahoo”, examination malpractice, cultism, drug abuse etc., are the menaces that have characterized various higher institutions in Nigeria. This is worrisome and a big threat to both our political, economic, social and cultural development in Nigeria. This is because there is no nation in the world that can succeed if her youths- the economic manpower, political and social strength of the nation - are plagued with all forms of antisocial and immoral behaviours that project a negative image of their nation to the world. It is against this back drop, that it becomes necessary to examine the role of Christian moral education in higher institutions in Nigeria and its potency at checkmating youthful exuberances. It is needless to say that Nigeria is notoriously and incurably religious, nevertheless, there is still high level of moral decay all around from the street to our campuses. This paper therefore, argued that if Christian moral education is correctly position in higher institutions in Nigeria, there is the tendency it would become an instrument for modeling particularly the youth for national development. Development in this study is conceived as a 'whole', one that speaks to every aspect of national life, be it economic, political, educational and socio-cultural. Using the prescriptive method, the study adopts secondary sources and draws its conclusions from existing works that are related to the topic under investigation. The

findings from the study revealed that Christian moral education, using the Holy Bible as a tool, is a potent instrument for moral transformation that will translate into national development. It then recommends that further study be carried out on the moral nature of education and the role of teachers as moral agents in higher education in Nigeria..

Keywords: Christian moral education, higher institution, National Development, Nigeria

Introduction

Lately, societies globally have been plagued with increasing antisocial behaviours generally traceable to youths in higher institutions. Some of these antisocial vices inherent among the young people include crimes such as cyber-crime, examination malpractices, cultism, drunkenness, smoking, drug abuse, sexual debauchery and prostitution. These vices are not limited to students of higher institutions only but includes also many others who are out of school and those roaming the streets of Nigeria. The effects of these behaviours are obvious in the academic performances and on the moral lifestyles of students, which eventually have negative effect on the socio-economic, political and spiritual wellbeing of the nation since “the youths

are the leaders of tomorrow”. Therefore, there is the need to urgently tackle this menace and proffer sustainable interventions before we suffer great loss as a nation. These menace, are taking new dimensions in human societies which are regularly becoming helpless and “this is because, for a very long time, Christian moral values have been neglected.”¹ The consequences of this neglect have strengthened the idea of *secularism*, which is the total or complete separation of religion from state intervention. In order words, it is a situation where the state attempts to distance itself from religion and to treat religion as a merely personal and private matter.²

It is rather unfortunate that education has been narrowed down to just the acquisition of secular skills and knowledge without the interference of moral values, which ought to produce the affective side of education in the life of the learner. Azuakor corroborated this fact when he posited that “education is a society's contrivance for transmitting to its younger generation the totality of the way of life of that society.”³ Education should therefore, go beyond acquiring secular skills and knowledge to rather empowering the child with the totality of life, including morality. In this sense, education becomes an instrument for

¹. Doina Toma, Patricia Runcan, and Remus Runcan, “The Role of Christian Moral Education in Preventing Antisocial Behaviour.” *Proceedings book. Taras Shevchenko 6th International Congress*, Kiev, Ukraine. (2021): 928.

². Vikramendra Kumar “Understanding secularism in global politics.” *International Journal of Development Research* 3, (2018):192

³. Okwuchukwu P. Azuakor, “Religious Education and Societal Development: The Nigerian Context.” *World Journal of Education* 4, (2019): 146, doi:org/10.5430/wje.v9n4p146

engendering positive developments of citizens, particularly in Nigeria where little or no priority is giving to education.

The poor attitudes toward education in Nigeria is of grave concern and have formed the major reason the Academic Staff Union of University (ASUU) has continuously gone on strikes up to the last one in 2022 that lasted for eight months. There is no country in the world that pays little or no attention to the education of her citizens and builds a great future for her youths. The National Policy for Education 2004, as quoted by Uzoechi intimated that education plays key roles not only in the secular but also in the moral, ethical and spiritual development of human beings and nations as summarized thus:

It contributes to national development through high level relevant manpower training,
Develops and inculcates proper values for survival of the individual and society and
Develops the individual capability to understand and appreciate their local and external environment etc.⁴

Consequently, we can conformably say that education is “the entire process of handing over values and codes of conduct in society and makes it uncontroversial to

posit that education is unavoidably a moral enterprise.”⁵

Christian moral education as taught in the Holy Bible is useful for the shaping of individuals, particularly young people in higher education and in the society at large. The Bible says “train up a child in the way he / she will go.”⁶ The emphases is on the young persons. Within the Nigerian context, young persons make up over 75 percent of the population and there are a good number of them in the universities and other higher institutions of learning and with some who are roaming the streets. Therefore, the engagement of Christian moral education as a significant instrument, has the capability of shaping and mending the minds, attitudes and orientations of the youth in Nigeria, hinging on the Holy Scriptures just as it has been witnessed in Europe as observed by Llorent-Bedmar, & Cobano-Delgado, that “for a significant period of time in Europe, Christianity formed the cultural and ethical backbone of society.”⁷ Permit me to note here in the words of Njoku that, “the sudden renewal of interest in the study of moral education arises as a result of the rampant materialism and decline in moral behaviours of school pupils, breakdown of social discipline and clash

4. Ben C. Uzoechi, “Evaluation Techniques in Higher Education Institution in Nigeria.” *Keffi Journal of Educational Studies*. 1, (2012):144

5. Anthony I. Kanu, and Ejikemeuwa J. O. Ndubisi, “Religious and Moral Education in Nigeria: A Complementing Search for Development,” *Journal of Moral Education in Africa* 3, (2017):1.

6. N.I.V. Holy Bible, Proverbs 26:2.

7. Vicente Liorent-Bedmar, Veronica Cobano-Delgado and Maria Navarro-Granador,” School leadership in disadvantaged contexts in Spain: Obstacles and Improvements. *Sage Journal of Education Management Administration and Leadership*, 71 (2017):147, doi:10.1177/1741143217728084

of cultures and values prominent among young people in Nigeria,⁸ was the debacle that reignited the interest of moral education in Nigeria.

Christian moral education therefore, involves the teaching of values, norms, ethics and practices that influences lives of people in their everyday existence. This is because moral education deals with fostering within man, a growing understanding of himself and relationship with the society as well as appreciating man's culture and tradition. Toma, Runcan and Runcan, raised grave and pertinent concerns when they argued that “all negative aspects of moral and spiritual degradation greatly affect the institution of the family, which underlies any society, and affect the schools as institutions which are meant to participate actively in the process of shaping the younger generation.”⁹ What they mean to say is that the intentional neglect or exclusion of young people from the deliberate inculcation of moral education has great consequences not only on the immediate families that made up of the society but also the institution and the nation at large because family begets society just as society begets a nation.

In this article, we seek to explicate the role of Christian moral education on higher

institutions in Nigeria and how it can engender national development at all levels. This is because it is impossible to talk of development when our young people are not informed about the values, goals, aims and objectives of education through the lens of morality. It is also apt to remind educators of their core role, which is to provide moral education to tomorrow's leaders in higher institutions in Nigeria.

Conceptual Discourse

It is imperative to define some concepts in order to aid our understanding and appreciate the perspective of this paper. The terms to be defined are: education, Christian moral education and national development.

Education

It is a fact that there exist different conceptions of education, depending particularly on what an individual perceives about the subject matter. For example, Aslanbek argued that “education is the socially organized and regulated process of continuous transference of socially significant experience from the previous generations to the followings.”¹⁰ Thus, the later imply that education is the process of transmitting and receiving or vice versa of something significantly valuable that has the capacity of

⁸. Nkechi C. Njoku, “Improving Teaching of Christian Moral Education in Secondary Schools in South East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria through Commitment in Teachers' Behaviour.” *British Journal of Education* 14, (2016):117

⁹. Toma, Runcan and **Runcan**, “The Role of Christian Moral Education in Preventing Antisocial Behaviour.” 928.

¹⁰. Aslanbek Naziev, “What is Education?” International Conference and the Future of Education, (2017): 1.

transforming the receiver. To buttress further, what is being transmitted and what is being received is important in the definition of education and this is because the outcomes (knowledge) should be a continuous conscious outcome, in other words, one that possesses longer life span in affecting character from one generation to another. Therefore, since the meaning of education can be derived from what one perceived, Anwuluorah and Okafor-Udah described education as “the development of a person spiritually, morally, intellectually, physically and emotionally or as the process of socialization that enhances a person's adaptability to society and to his/her or cultural environment.”¹¹ Education therefore, is an essential instrument for equipping and modeling individuals or persons to lead a successful life in any society through wholistic contributions toward positive social, economic, technological, scientific, cultural and political development of their nation. Without understatement, education is a major instrument that can be used to bring about national cohesion and integration that will lead to national development if it is properly deployed.

Christian Moral Education

Christian moral education has its foundation in Christian ethics, which focus generally, is to build moral character using the Christian Holy Bible as its

ultimate source of teaching and instructing young people. In other words, it is the means through which the human soul connects with eternal values. In a general sense therefore, it is the process whereby students of Christian moral education systematically transmit learned values and acquired information on Christian moral values and principles into life's realities. Again, Toma, Runcan and Runcan corroborated these facts when they stated that “Christian moral education is the process of guiding the behavioural development of an individual in Christian moral principles so as to reason appropriately and perform what is right and acceptable in a given society for the betterment of all.”¹² What they are inferring is that students of Christian morals systematically transmit valuable Christian moral principles that are rewarding and have social and moral approvals transforming their known and common spaces in the society. However, moral values may look attractive in terms and maybe due to the fact that it looks and sounds reasonable or logical but let me say that it may also, in the long run, serve selfish ends or purposes, and bring to bear on persons, consequences that may be detrimental to human existence.¹³ Let me reiterate that Christian moral education is all encompassing and devoid of selfish goals because of its divine influences and if it is to be effective, its goals must reflect

¹¹. Ogugua P. Anwuluorah, and Samuel.C. Okafor-Udah, “The Perspective of Christian Moral Education for Good Governance in Nigeria.” *African Journals Online*, 1, (2015): 64

¹². Toma, Runcan and **Runcan**, “The Role of Christian Moral Education in Preventing Antisocial Behaviour.” **929**

¹³. Anwuluorah, and Okafor-Udah, “The Perspective of Christian Moral Education for Good Governance in Nigeria.”65.

biblical precepts among which modesty and chastity are paramount.¹⁴ Therefore, any human behaviours, standards and principles that are taunting to God's interest have no moral values inherent in them in the sense that “moral education involves the teaching of values, norms, ethics, practices that influence people's everyday life.”¹⁵

National Development

The term 'national development' is comprehensive in the sense that it includes every aspect of national life and it will be inappropriate to talk about national development from one stand point due to its multidimensional nature in terms of usage. Therefore, in this paper, we shall be conceptualizing national development as a double-edged physical and spiritual concept. According to Rico, the term 'national development' is the “the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people e.g by improving social amenities like quality education, portable water, transportation infrastructure, medical care etc.”¹⁶ However, to stress his point further, we wish to say that national development permeates every aspect of human national life in the ways it positively affect her

citizens' political, economic, social and cultural wellbeing in the society. Consequently, the elusiveness of the concept has made it difficult for scholars to agree on a particular definition, however, national development can be broadly seen as the reorganization and reorientation of an entire political, economic and socio-cultural system of a country. It is the improvement in income and output, which typically involve radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structures, as well as in popular attitudes and sometimes customs and beliefs of a country.¹⁷ Many elites held and are still holding misconceptions about development in which they equate consumerism and flamboyant lifestyle to national development. Nnoli argued that development is “a dialectical phenomenon in which the individual and society interact with their physical, biological and inter-human environments transforming them for their own benefits and that of humanity at large.”¹⁸ For the purpose of this study therefore, development implies improvement in human relationships in society through raising morally sound individuals who will then transform immoral societies, using the significant instrument of

¹⁴. Samuel P. Ango, "Towards a Methodology for Contextualizing Christian Education" *Religious Forum Academia* 8, no. 9 (2009): 50

¹⁵. Njoku, “Improving Teaching of Christian Moral Education”, 116.

¹⁶. Alcolor Rico, “What is national development”. Accessed December 12, 2022 <https://www.slideshare.net/ricoalcolor/what-is-the-development.html>

¹⁷. Michael P. Todaro, and Stephen C. Smith, *Economics Developing 11th edition* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 2012).

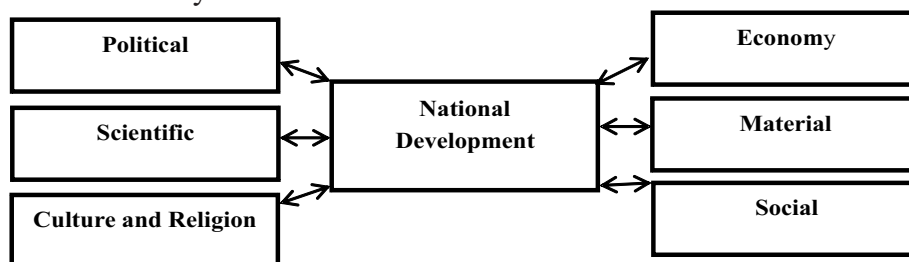
¹⁸. Okwudiba Nnoli, “Development/underdevelopment: Is Nigeria developing?” In *Issue in Contemporary Nigeria Development*, edited by Okwudiba, Nnoli. (Dakar: Coderia book series, 199), 264.

Christian moral education.

Furthermore, since national development permeates and suggests to mean all-round transformation or a *whole transformation*, Lawal and Oluwatoyin have described the

concept of the “whole” as an “overall development of a country or a nation.”¹⁹

This whole that characterizes national development is what we have tried to illustrate or model in the diagram below:



In a critical examination of the 'whole' that makes up national development from the above diagram, we can begin to see the significance, value and importance of Christian moral education in the development of the agents in various agencies of human society, translating into national transformation. The whole components or agencies of national development require human interactions, therefore, the need to encourage the inculcation of Christian moral education particularly among young people in higher institutions due to its long-term effects on both moral and attitudinal change in the society.

Significance of Christian Moral Education in Higher Institutions of Learning

Christian moral education is significant in higher institutions of learning for the

following reasons:

Christian moral education is an investment: With Christian moral education, Christian moral values and other societal values are inculcated in the youths and transmitted from one generation to the next, this way, the future of young people is preserved as well as the future of the nation, since the youths are the leaders of tomorrow.

Christian moral education expands sensitive hearts: This can be achieved by working through issues and negative influences with students of higher education in a practical way using the Bible as a basis. In the light of this, Bawa and Itulua-Abumere argued that “Christian education confronts things like humanism, evolution, dishonesty, greediness and influences that are

¹⁹. Tolu Lawal, and Abe Oluwatoyin, “National Development in Nigeria: Issues, Challenges and Prospects.” *African Journal of Political Science* 11(2011): 3.

basically promoted in some state schools or society.²⁰

Christian moral education produces the difference in students' behaviour: it serves as an antidote against antagonistic environments that may likely negatively influenced good moral conducts among young persons in the society. It therefore helps to produce sound individuals with good moral behaviour that can transform society and the nation at large by replicating the same values and beliefs in their societies.

Christian moral education recognizes the power of God Almighty over the dealings of men: this is what Akanmidu stressed when he observed that “All human behaviours, standards and principles that are cynical to God's interest have no moral values. This is because God's interests begin from the point in which people act as dangerous impediments to the wellbeing of others.”²¹

A Brief History of the Different Educational Traditions in Nigeria

Three different educational traditions have operated in Nigeria namely,

indigenous, Islamic and Western styles of education. Indigenous education was the earliest type of education, which was offered in the pre-literate era, within the community, by community members who possessed specialized skills or abilities in various fields of human endeavors. In this type of education, boys were mentored by their fathers, or other masters in learning various vocations and etiquette like farming, trading, craftwork, fishing, cattle rearing, wine tapping, traditional medicine and black-smiting, etc for the purpose of making livelihood. Girls, on the other hand, were expected to stay back at home to learn domestic and other chores such as cooking, sweeping, weeding the farmlands, hair weaving, decorations of the body, dye production; and the like from their mothers.²² This form of education is sometimes referred to as pre-colonial or informal or community-based education as the case maybe.²³ At this material time, there were no schools, professional teachers and there was the absence of students/pupils with uniforms, including the regimentation and permanent teachers as we have it today in Western education.

^{20.} Yaro. J. Bawa, “The Necessity of Christian Religious Education in Nigerian Secondary Schools as a foundation for good Governance and political stability,” *African Journal of Management* 21(2020): 143. Also see, Friday Itulua-Abumere, “The Significance of Religious Education in Local Primary Schools: Specific Reference to Christianity”. *IOSR Journal of Humanity and Social Science*, 6(2013): 69-94.

^{21.} Raphael. A. Akanmidu, “Christian moral values.” *Studies in Religious Understanding in Nigeria*. R. D. Abubakre; M. T. Yahya M. O Opeloye et al. (Eds.), Ilorin: Christy-David: Nigerian Association for the Study of Religion, (1993):150-160.

^{22.} Miracle Ajah, “Religious Education and Nation-Building in Nigeria.” *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 2 (2015):263, <http://dx.doi.10.17570/stj.2015.vln2.a12>

^{23.} Ajah, “Religious Education and Nation-Building in Nigeria.” 264

The second type of educational tradition was that of Islam. Importantly, it is worthy of note that learning had been established in Nigeria before the arrival of the Western type of education in the 19th Century. In the early 14th Century, Islam was brought into Hausa land by traders and scholars who came from Wangarawa to Kano in the reign of Ali Yaji (1349– 1385).²⁴ Since then, Islamic education has been in Northern Nigeria long before Christianity found its way into the sub-Saharan Africa. The arrival of Islamic education brought along with it, Arabic learning since the Qura'an itself was written in the Arabic language. Arabic and Islam were taught simultaneously in primary schools just the same way the early Christian missionary employed English Language to teach native Africans as they made effort to introduce Christianity to the locals. As a result of the political and social influence which Islam and Qura'anic learning conferred on those who possessed it, many rulers employed Islamic scholars as administrators in the running of their day-to-day activities.²⁵

The third traditional education to be introduced was the Western-style of education. This style of education came into Nigeria through the effort of Christian missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century. The development of this western type of education in Nigeria preceded the political unity of the nation in 1914 and

subsequent independence in 1960. The Wesleyan Methodist missionaries arrived in 1842, establishing a mission and a school, and in 1878, when the first boys' school was established in Lagos and a girls' school by 1895. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) established schools at Abeokuta, Badagry, Lagos and Ibadan from 1846-1949. The Holy Ghost Fathers (The Catholic Mission) established schools at Onitsha on the east of the Niger and convent schools at Abeokuta in 1886-1892. The United Free Church of Scotland (CSM – Presbyterian) founded the famous Hope Waddell Training Institute at Calabar in 1895 in the south east. They also had an extensive educational system that covered most of the middle and lower Cross River valley in the 1900s. The Presbyterians missionaries were consistent in believing that “concerns about equality of opportunity and about the rights of individuals, particularly girls, should not be neglected especially the rights of the child, which are fully consistent with the ideals that are at the heart of Christianity.”²⁶ The school gave to the girls a new self-realization and equipped them to earn their own living as teachers, nurses, etc. This act released them from cultural restrictions and in so doing, made them self-determining in choosing their life careers, husbands and in running their family affairs.

The different Christian missions in Africa

²⁴. Babs A. Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigerian* (London: George Alien & Unwin Ltd, 1974), 53.

²⁵. Ajah, “Religious Education and Nation-Building in Nigeria.” 265-266.

²⁶. William H. Taylor, *Mission to Educate: A History of the Educational Work of the Scottish Presbyterian Mission in East Nigeria 1846-1960* (New York: Leiden E. J. Brill, 1996)

used school as an organ of religious instruction, character formation, skill acquisition and initiation into the three basic elements of reading, writing and arithmetic. Among other crucial roles of the missionary enterprise were the establishment of mission hospitals and leprosy settlements; agriculture and farm settlements and providing worthwhile training and jobs for Africans. Education was moreover the primary reason for any professional training. Besides general education, this gave the educated Nigerians the prospect to secure the white-collar jobs and exceptional schools made available opportunities for professional training and advancement. These Europeans missions instituted Teachers' Training Colleges, Nursing, primary and secondary schools, which turned out teachers, nurses and clerks correspondingly among Nigerian natives.

The Imperative of Christian Moral Education as an Instrument for National Development in Nigeria

Christian moral education possesses all the appropriate attributes and values that it takes to engender national development in Nigeria. This is through attitudes and values formation in citizens as follows:

Development of Good Character: The core of Christian moral education in higher institutions in Nigeria is good character formation among youths and at the same time, they are expected to use

such acquired virtues to bring about positive changes in the respective environments. In this context, the Holy Bible is the primary tool for the development of good Christian character because it speaks volumes on the necessity of it. As observed by Anwuluorah, and Okafor-Udah, "good character is fundamental in Christian moral education. It does not only recognize, but also require discipline in a formation of character and points to self-discipline as an ideal norm",²⁷ particularly if it makes life meaningful in human society. The Holy Bible admonished people to "Seek good, not evil.... Hate evil and love good... work toward establishing justice in the gate,"²⁸ "Avoid using dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity" (Leviticus. 19:35), and "Righteousness exalts a nation... (Proverbs. 14:34), "You shall not steal" (Deuteronomy 5: 19). The Holy Bible, further warn Christians on the dangers and consequences of lying and practicing falsehood (Revelation. 22:15). It also urges individuals to be upright in their duties and warns them about the dangers of taking bribes (Exodus 23:8). It canvases for what is right in opposition to bad characters that are portrayed in acts such as: nepotism, bribery and corruption, embezzlement of public funds, ethnicity, electoral irregularities, cyber criminality, youth restiveness, examination malpractices, and other social injustices notable with human beings were all

²⁷. Anwuluorah, and Okafor-Udah, "The Perspective of Christian Moral Education for Good Governance in Nigeria." 66.

²⁸. Amos 5:14-15 (NIV).

named as negative characters and are contrary to what is thought in Christian moral education. Just as Jesus Christ upheld morality speaking against evil and defending the poor and vulnerable during his time on earth, so also, Christians are called upon to be moral reformers, ensuring that their acts and actions are guided by the Holy Bible which presents the essential moral attributes for good governance and national development.

Respect for human life: Every human being is created in the image of God, hence, the reason for the premium and dignity or sanctity God places on the human life. Every human being, regardless of color, sex, race, nationality, religion or belief, sexual orientation, employment or economic status, health, or wealth, intelligence, or achievement is worthy of respect and this is the goal of Christian moral education. It is important to note that man was not created just to relate with God, but to self and to the world around him/her and this is because human potentials can be realized only in the context of man-to-man relationship.²⁹ Whatever gives each of us his highest worth gives the same worth to everyone; in all that matters most we are all equal before God.

Dr. Hassan Matthew Kukah,³⁰ in his Christmas day message, describe the worrying rate of injustice in Nigeria as a caste system where some groups are more favoured economically than others. He further questioned how we got here, and the negative consequences this is breeding for our national unity and development. The Bishop canvases for the ideals of treating one another equally and fairly as the beginning of how we should define justice. Anwuluorah, and Okafor-Udah buttressed this point further when they argued that justice means “we should render to each person what is due him/her as an attribute of good governance.”³¹ Our diversity can be seen not only in our individual outlooks but also in our customs and cultural disposition. Therefore, any form of discrimination on the ground of the later speaks ill of moral basic principles of human dignity which fan the embers of marginalization in the distribution of natural resources as we have witnessed in today's Nigeria. This has, no doubt, ignited most of the lethal violent conflicts in our country today. Kukah, again, in his message, alluded to the evil our political class are wielding using social structures where the allocation of resources in the country is done based on either tribe, religion,

²⁹. Eneola. Nihinlola, *Theology under the mango tree: A handbook of African Christian Theology*. (Lagos: Fine Print & Manufacturing Ltd, 2013), 71.

³⁰. Hassan Matthew Kukah, is the Bishop of the Sokoto Catholic Diocese of Nigeria. Kukah, is known for his fearless criticism of Nigerian government for his political and economic policy and strategies as they affect particularly the Church and Christian community in Nigeria. See Jonh Ogunsemore, “Bishop Kukah's Christmas Message; Nigeria: Let us turn a new page”. Accessed December 28, 2022, <https://www.herald.ng/full-text-bishop-kukahs-christmas-message/>

³¹. Anwuluorah, and Okafor-Udah, “The Perspective of Christian Moral Education for Good Governance in Nigeria.” 67.

ethnicity or political inclinations as it is the case today in Nigeria.

Dignity of labour: The Holy Bible in the book of Proverbs 14:23 says “All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.” Christian moral education is loaded on the matter of values and it encourages dignity of labour, be it paid or unpaid, skilled or unskilled. However, there are many jobless youths roaming the streets who prefer not to do anything but would desire to eat without paying the price of hard work. Several youths are involved in all forms of illicit businesses and they are those former President Muhammadu Buhari had at a time in a television broadcast described as “lazy Nigerian youth” who wish to become rich without due labour. These youths have taken to all manner of crimes such as “kidnapping, armed robbery, prostitution, banditry, cyber-crimes etc”³². The discourse on the *dignity of labour* has become an outdated gospel today in Nigeria, one that is no longer appealing to the youth anymore. Again, the Bible urges Christians severally never to be idle as in Paul's epistle to the Thessalonica where he admonished them “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from every brother who is idle (1 Thess. 3:6). Finally, Christian moral education teaches the

value of hard work hard and the dignity in hard work and the need to embrace it.

Advancing our common good

Common good is the sum total of social conditions which allow individual members or a group of people to attain their goal for national development. In other words, it refers to “those facilities whether material, cultural or institutional that members of a particular community provide to one another in order to fulfill a relational obligation they all have in common.”³³ Christian moral education advances these common good of all citizens, one that is devoid of self-centeredness but rather advances the common interest of all in the society. According to Anwuluorah and Okafor-Udala, the term can be understood, as “working for, and serving the common good which involves three basic elements: (1) respect for the human person, (2) individual social well-being and (3) the development of the group.”³⁴ The ideal of the common good is an essential attribute of good governance in a correct society. However, in Nigeria, what is referred to as the common good or national cake in some quarter is in the hands of few individuals and their family members. Permit me to reiterate by referring to Bishop Kukah's Christmas day message in

³². Gabriel. O. Obomese, Elfarouk. A. Ahmed, and Olusegun. A. Adeyemi, “Youth empowerment, security challenges and the imperatives of peace in Nigeria.” *RUBICON Journal of Philosophy and Religious Studies*,1 (2019): 45.

³³. Hussain Waheed, “The Common Good.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. ed by N. Z. Edward, (2 0 1 8) : 1 . Accessed December 11, 2022 <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/commongood/>.

³⁴. Anwuluorah, and Okafor-Udah, “The Perspective of Christian Moral Education for Good Governance in Nigeria.”⁶⁷

which he described Nigeria as a caste system in which majority are struggling to survive and other members of the caste smile in the comfort of their safe heaven.³⁵ He added that money and resources meant for the common good of the masses are squandered and looted by few public officers and it is definitely obvious that corruption seems to have assumed some official status because the federal and state parastatals have become the conduit and drain pipes for carting away the nation's wealth.³⁶

Protection of the poor and vulnerable in the society

The idea of the common good is incomplete if the protection of the poor and vulnerable in the society is not given due consideration by all and sundry in the society. We all must come to the point where we see life as meaningless without others and these are the ideas of Christian moral education in the human society, to provide tolerable opportunity for one another irrespective of colour, race, background, religion or cultural orientation. The Bible teaches that “Religion that God our father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress...” (James 1:27). Jesus' heart has always gone out in compassion to the sick, the hungry, the leper and the outcast during his time on earth and he has always admonished his

followers to keep it up. Therefore, if we all imbibe Christian moral values, particularly among the youth, politicians and policy makers in our societies and our higher institutions as they carry out their duties and responsibilities for the betterment of humanity, it will surely serve as an instrument that will engender national development in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Religion has been manipulated by some leaders in Nigeria for political and economic gains which has led to violent conflicts resulting in mass killings and desecration of human life. “Religion in Nigeria has succeeded in breeding corruption, conflict-prone, and deprave crop of individuals who carry 'loyalty' to God and the devil on the same voyage.”³⁷ Notwithstanding, Christian moral education, as already exposed in this paper, has the potential for engendering national development through its teachings particularly in higher education in Nigeria. The major aim of Christian moral education is to remind individuals of the rich values of religious tutorship and its significances in the transformation of the young who made up very good number of the population in our higher institutions. All hope is not lost as Nigeria can still achieve national development but only when the potentials inherent in Christian moral education are integrated

³⁵. Jonh Ogunsemore, “Bishop Kukah's Christmas Message; Nigeria: Let us turn a new page”. Accessed December 28, 2022, <https://www.herald.ng/full-text-bishop-kukahs-christmas-message/>

³⁶. Gwamna. D. Je'adayibe, *Perspectives in African Theology*. Jos: (African Christian Textbooks, 2008), 187.

³⁷. Jack Otonko, “Bogus religion and empty spirituality in Nigeria: Reconnecting the Disconnect.” *Nasara Journal of Humanities* 2(2015): 87

into our higher educational system. Therefore, we wish to also recommend that beyond the Christian Religious Studies (CRS) taught in primary and secondary schools, Christian Moral values should be incorporated into the General Studies component of curricular of higher institutions in Nigeria. Further studies should also be carried out on the moral nature of education and the role of the teachers as moral agents, as this will help address the disconnection we see between teachers of higher institutions as role models and the Nigerian societal experience.

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