

CHRISTIAN ETHICAL VALUES AND THEIR RELATIONS TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Dr. Osaji Olasupo Jacob

Department of Religions
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria
jacobosaji59@gmail.com
08035618204

Abstract

Many states in Africa including Nigerians are still living in confusion as a result of the influence by the Boko Haram insurgency and bankruptcy. In actual fact, today, Nigerians real capital comprises the peasant masses, thousands of jobless youths and graduates, the homeless, the armed robbers, the sick and the destitute who struggle daily for survival. Thus, the majority of the people have remained permanently marginalized by the current vicious cycle of poverty and dependence. Unfortunately however, successive Nigerian leaders have been using religion, culture and ethnicity as an instrument of playing divide-and rule game, rather than as a springboard for the inculcation and improvement of social ethical values which are fundamental to achieving correct human behaviour as it relates to productivity and nation-building. This paper, therefore, examines the place of Christian religion in the development of Nigeria with a view to generating new ideas that will contribute meaningfully to the search for democratic principles.

Keywords: Christian Ethics, values, sustainability, and development.

Introduction

To attain sustainable and authentic human development through Christianethical value, there is a need to consider the influence of religion in our society. The reason for this stems from the divisiveness and intolerance among various religious groups. This occasionally results in violent conflicts which hamper, if not destroy, the projects and precipitate the decline of nations. Developmental institutions and agencies often refer to wars of religions and their attendant consequences as reasons for a total neglect of religion in discourse, or for preferring civil religion devoid of creed, code and cult – committed humanism – as a partner in development.¹ In addition, when religion is involved through faith-based organizations in alleviating hunger by various forms of charity, contemporary development discourse finds itself in a dilemma as to what form their relationship with religion ought to be, in promoting development, especially at the grassroots level.

Christianity can be involved in influencing the progress of a better world. In view of its innumerable adherents and its common belief in the dignity of the human person under God, Christian ethical values are committed to the promotion of the human good so as to provide basic human needs, guarantee protection of human

rights and promote integral development of the globe. Thus, neglecting religion, the source of normative meaning that grounds the architecture of infrastructural and superstructural institutions of society, is misunderstanding the world process as a whole for religious people. As long as secular discourse continues to exclude religion in its analysis of globalization, progress and development of people, the results of its analysis will always be defective. As Max Stackhouse asserts: "The neglect of religion as an ordering, uniting and dividing factor in a number of influential interpretations of globalization is a major cause of misunderstanding and a studied blindness regarding what is going on in the world."²

George asserts that African countries have entered the twenty-first century with multitude of developmental problems.³ He reinforces his argument with illuminating examples such as stagnation in areas of national development, widespread poverty, destructive ethics mobilization, insecurity and a wide range of social ills to back up his claims.⁴ In collaboration to the above, Dambisa opines that most African countries are now faced with major developmental challenges revolving on leadership, corruption, insecurity of varied degrees like terrorism, kidnapping, child industry, ritual killing, armed robbery among others.⁵ The most endemic problem which is poverty is also wrecking. There is no denying the fact that all these indices of backwardness are similar to what is operating in Nigeria today. Nigeria economic prospects are now in grim, while corruption is on the high side devastating every aspect of the government. For instance, social capital is somehow debilitated, there are tyrannical rules in some of the States of the Federation, Boko Haram insurgency with its gruesome consequences are on the increase, infrastructural facilities in both public and private sectors lay in ruins. Also, armed robbery and other crimes of any kind have become daily routine.⁶ Although, despite all these ugly events there are still signs that warrant a silver of optimism. This is because, there is one cardinal factor that is at the core of the Nigeria revival, but which has been neglected. The factor is the internalization of religio-ethical value and its application towards the concept of national development in Africa with particular reference to Nigeria. The cornerstone of development hinges on moral inclination of leadership and bold vision towards economically responsible and accountable government for the advancement of humanity.

There are some insinuations in some quarters regarding the interrogation of the two terms, that is, religion and development on whether they are coterminous or not. Along this line, Mala observes that whenever the issue of religion and development are raised many Nigerians feel both words (Development and Religion) are not compatible,⁷ The Nigerian experience including religious people tend to assume that the two concepts are not coterminous; hence they have no relevance to each other, because religion is often regarded as an obstacle to development.⁸ According to Mala, the reason for such attitude arises from two major premises. One, that the meaning of the term development has been forced

upon humans and accepted without questioning, which gives an impression that development is restricted only to some specific areas. Second, that faith is the pivot upon which religion rotates and tends toward giving assurance for the life beyond.⁹

Based on the above, it is justifiable at this austere time to take a serious look at the two issues in order to discover what role Christian ethical values can play in national development of the country. One of essential components of development is that it participates or involves in national, state, and local decision making. Therefore, when development is mentioned, it is suicidal to ignore the contributions of religious adherents and groups such as African traditional adherents, Christians, Muslims and other secular ideologists. These religious communities become the key determinants of the history and destiny of their nation and her vast population. Various religious adherents decide the course of development and nation building of the country, because they are part of the nation and people to enjoy the developmental changes.¹⁰ To this end, the paper highlights some concepts, the challenges confronting ethical development in Nigeria, Christian ethics and human ethical principles to be followed in making development happens in Nigeria, and the citizens' responsibilities in attaining meaningful development, biblical ethical teachings on social order for nation building and possible way forward to enshrine and accentuate meaningful development in the country. In fact, there are three major religions in Nigeria which are Christianity, Islam and African traditional Religions apart from Asian-oriented faiths and secular ideologies. However, the paper lays more emphases on Christian ethics and this is not discrimination but a necessity for an in-depth examination of the topic under discussion. The same argument applies to other religions, namely, African Traditional Religion and Islam.

Christian Ethics

The Bible does provide a useful set of norms to govern man's relationship with God and mankind. Scripture reveals basic norms against which all men, policy makers and policies can be measured. The scriptures notes that the social and natural sciences provide insight about creation, on the basis of natural revelation, and therefore have a vital role to play in informing Christian thinking. Mason and Schaefer, argued that the "foundations of Scripture's social, political and economic ethics all are laid in the Pentateuch, and are intended to inform all peoples" (Gen. 18:18).¹¹ "The Mosaic law-code" is "the foundation for normative Biblical insight" from which moral principles are to be induced and held up as "light before the nations," what might these Biblical norms be? Justice, righteousness and stewardship in all relationships and behavior are at the bottom, the traditional Christian answers. To go from these bedrock Biblical norms to specific policy recommendations requires some kind of intermediate set of norms, about which there is a surprising amount of agreement among Christian scholars.

Mason and Schaefer call these “subsidiary norms” Hay calls them “derivative social principles.”¹² Focusing only on those intermediate norms which seem to have the most relevance for cordial relationship one would highlight the following:

1. Concern for the poor. A just and righteous society should display “a special concern for those who are in need because of circumstances beyond their control,” including at least “a level of assistance sufficient for need.”
2. Concern for wealth creation. A just and righteous society should display ample opportunity for the application of individual talents in settings which encourage stewardship and investment for long term prosperity, and which honor and reward work.
3. Concern for the sanctity of covenants, honoring contracts, and not bearing false witness in any context.¹³

The Nature of Sustainable Development

In this study, an understanding for the nature of sustainable development has been influenced by the Brundtland Commission and Max-Neef’s definitions. Firstly, in the Brundtland Commission, sustainable development is the “capacity to make development sustainable-to certify that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.¹⁴ The implication of this definition has led many scholars and practitioners of development to perceive the issue of sustainable development as having a major focus on peace, freedom, and equitable distribution of resources. Secondly, Max-Neef perceives sustainable development from the angle of the human factor capacity. He contends that “Development geared to the satisfaction of fundamental human needs cannot, by definition, be structured from the top downwards. It cannot either by law or decree. It can only originate directly from the actions and creative and critical awareness of the local themselves. Instead of being the traditional objects of development, local people/the affected people must take a leading role in development.”¹⁵

Borrowing from the Brundtland Commission and Max-Neef’s definitions of sustainable development, African societies should be seen following the same conceptual framework. This explains that for development to be sustainable, it must be a phenomenon that keeps going for a life time. For development to be fruitful, it must be initiated by the locals for the local’s themselves.¹⁶ Therefore, this corpus will demonstrate how African Initiated Churches grapple with the Brundtland Commission and Max-Neef’s definitions to sustainable development by empowering its members in both the material and spiritual terms.¹⁷

There are two ways of interpreting development in Africa: first, from the purview of underdevelopment which emphasizes Africa’s material poverty in comparison to other highly developed economies; second, from the viewpoint of Africa being

part of the developing world. In the sense of the former, African underdevelopment reveals that the continent is almost synonymous with poverty, malnutrition, disease, political instability, violence, dependence, corruption and injustice.¹⁸ In the book, *The Triple Heritage*, Odozor asserts: "Things are not working in Africa. From Dakar to Dar es Salaam, from Marrakesh to Maputo, institutions are decaying, structures are rusting away. It is as if the ancestors had pronounced the curse of cultural sabotage."¹⁹ The Report of the African Commission corroborates this and asserts: "Today Africa is the poorest region in the world. Half of the population lives on less than one dollar a day. Life expectancy is actually falling. People live,"²⁰ the challenges of Africa's underdevelopment are systemic. Things are going wrong on all corners. There are problems arising from poor governance and economic mismanagement, corruption and embezzlement of public funds. There are social upheavals arising from distorted border demarcations and the combination of incompatible people. Another problem is the decay of the infrastructure and/ or a total lack thereof, making it difficult for Africa to compete profitably in the global market. This leads to greater dependence on food importation. These problems are worsened by unequal relationships in terms of trade, debt and aid with the rich countries of the World.²¹ As a developing part of the world, there are positive signs of improvement in African continent on the whole. Many African countries now boast of democratically elected leaders although much still needs to be done to ensure free and fair elections into representational governance.

Development

Ogugua observes that the concept development permeates every aspect of human life, be it individual, group, or a nation; development is a datum of life and a function of life. He goes further to say that the term is elusive, and this has made it difficult for scholars to agree on a particular definition.²² For Todaro, he states that development involves: The reorganization and reorientation of entire economic and social systems. In addition to improvements in incomes and output, it typically involves radical changes in institutions,²³ and administrative structures, as well as in popular attitudes and sometimes even customs and beliefs.²⁴ Many elites held and are still holding misconception of ideas on development, thinking that it is related to consumerism and flamboyant living style. From Onyibor's perspective, he explains that development involves the ascent of man, the maturation, growth and creativity of all human potentials achieved at the lowest possible cost in sacrificed values and human suffering.²⁵ For Nnoli, development involves a dialectics. He says: 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 benefit and that of humanity at large and being transformed in the process.²⁶

Walter Rodney argues that development has many sides. He informs that at the level of the individual, development implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being.²⁷ He remarks that some of these categories would be really difficult to evaluate; therefore he stresses that they are tied to the state or the society in question. All the above notwithstanding, development is a must in life and it is an unavoidable datum of life, and life itself consists of the ability to discharge force.²⁸ The concept development can therefore be conceptualized as an activity, a process of actualization of potentials or deeds. Thus, development as an action of being capable of self movement, thought and decisions having a philosophy to organize the process.²⁹ lucidly sums up the message on the conceptualization inter alia that: Development is the progressive unfolding of the inner potentials of a given reality. It is to de-envelop, that is, to bring out to light existential, functional and epistemic, what was enveloped, folded or hidden. As it applies to people, development is the integration of various givens: natural, physical, acquired and human, of a people towards the full working out, permanently and cumulatively, of their being as persons, of their community and of their real productivity.³⁰ In the context of this paper, development is a process whereby thought, idea and effort are integrated and made whole for the improvement of persons, groups and/or the system. In collaboration to the above, one cannot but agree strongly with³¹ that development is a broader concept, and is multi-dimensional. It may mean forward and backward; sideways; upward and downward movements. Therefore, it is when development is upward, or forward thrust that progress may be said to be taking place.³¹

Christian Ethical Values

Christian ethics is a branch of Christian theology that defines virtuous behavior and wrong behavior from a Christian perspective. Systematic theological study of Christian ethics is called moral theology. Christian ethics is a branch of Christian theology that defines virtuous behavior and wrong behavior from a Christian perspective. According to D. Stephen Long, Jewish ethics and the life of Jesus figure prominently in Christian ethics, but "The Bible is the universal and fundamental source of specifically *Christian* ethics", Long also claims "Christian ethics finds its source in diverse means, but it primarily emerges from the biblical narrative.". Childress and Macquarrie state that "Many Christian ethicists have claimed that Jesus Christ is the center of the biblical message in its entirety and the key to scripture".^[relevant? - discuss] Other Christian ethicists "prefer a more Trinitarian rendering of the message of scripture".^[relevant? - discuss] A brief definition of Christian Ethics: (1) A system of values based upon the Christian Scriptures, (2) principles of behavior in concordance with the behaviors of Christian life (Life pertained after Christ doctrines). (3) standards of thought and behavior as taught by Jesus.

Most people identify themselves as religious and/ or spiritual, and for many, their faiths call them to live in ways that respect and care for all life, present and future, and to focus on being more, not having more, after basic needs are met. In the context of the ongoing global dialogues on sustainable development and Christian values for sustainable development, religious and spiritual communities should play a critical role in advancing a strong framework for sustainable development that includes the spiritual dimension of life, and that contributes examples of educating for sustainable living.

UNESCO recognizes that faith communities have much to contribute to our understanding of sustainable development, and have been educating for sustainable living for many years, often centuries, before the concepts of sustainable development (SD) and education for sustainable development (ESD) were invented in our modern, globalized era.³²

Representatives of a diversity of faith traditions were looked upon for enlightenment and a way out. They were expected to shed light on the following questions:

- What are the linkages you see between your faith tradition and the concept and purpose of sustainable development?
- What are the most important values in your faith that connect to sustainability?
- How does your faith teach and communicate the vision of sustainable development?
- How can Christian values for Sustainable Development and the Earth Charter be part of those processes?
- How do you see your faith tradition contributing to the transition to a sustainable world?
- What tools can your faith contribute to national development? What tools from national ethics can contribute to our national development.

Evelyn Tucker points to the challenges and opportunities for religious traditions (Christianity) to bring their core values into our debates over sustainable development, emphasizing the common religious values of “reverence, respect, restraint, redistribution, responsibility, and renewal”.³³

Sustainability

“...Sustainability development is defined as follows, development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”³⁴ To honour God is to also care about the impact of what we do on others, and share in preserving God’s gifts to humanity, both present and future. Therefore, the notion of inter-generational solidarity and responsibility are part and parcel of Christian Stewardship.

Christian Stewardship has two dimensions. The first dimension is “responsibility” – using the earth’s resources to God’s glory. In the “parable of the talents”,³⁵ Jesus added a second dimension which is “accountability” – implying that how we discharge our responsibility matters, coming to terms with the impacts of our action or inaction.

A Christian approach to sustainable development is therefore anchored on these two cardinal principles of responsibility and accountability towards how we use the earth’s resources and the resulting impacts. Above all, sustainable development is holistic, encompassing four dimensions: social, economic, ecological and political.³⁶

The nexus and inter-linkages between these four elements can be rendered intelligible in the context of the biblical idea of interdependence and the relationship between the body and its parts, which Apostle Paul described in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. Verse 26 (NIV), “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.” The relationship between the four elements follows this analogy, and therefore we cannot afford to neglect any of the four elements if we want to achieve sustainable development.

Christian ethics also goes a long way in helping Christians to cultivate sustainable lifestyles. We do not have to wait until there is a law to compel us to act responsibly; our ethical values and principles should help us to make right choices. The inner self-regulating mechanism as an ethical framework for sustainability underscores that our conscience plays a crucial role in the way we relate to our global interdependence and individual responsibility. For example, a law may not limit how much we consume or waste, but we need to set the limits for ourselves. This inner self-regulating mechanism comes from the awareness “... that when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more.

From his African Christian perspective, Yakubu notes that “Sustainable development is holistic, it encompasses four dimensions: social, economic, ecological and political.³⁷ The nexus and inter-linkages between these four elements can be rendered intelligible in the context of the biblical idea of interdependence and the relationship between the body and its parts, which Apostle Paul described in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. Verse 26 (NIV) says, ‘If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.’ ”

Challenges of Development in Nigeria

According to Awopetu³⁸, he argues that the greatest evil threatening the existence of Nigeria today is the leadership phenomenon. At all levels, and everyday, this threat manifests itself. Whether one is talking of public policy, the disposition of those in power to ordinary Nigerians and the public carriage or image of public and political office holders, what comes through is that those in power are people who have no idea of the potency of power for social change and the constraints that power demands³⁹. Today, corruption vis-à-vis organized crime is the biggest business, apparently bigger than the Nigerian government. Organized crime, with its syndicates, underworld racketeering and the mafia, is in control of almost every area of life, thereby corruption is increasing with such rapidity that is close to open rebellion and anarchy. In most cases, corrupt leaders are proclaimed heroes and worshipped. Unfortunately, the biggest corruption emanates from the sacred cows. The corruption statistics is astronomically high and no one appears to have the answer and it is gradually becoming another flame out of control. Corruption, rebellion and lawlessness in the country are presently on large scale such as we never knew before. Nigerians live in the midst of crises, danger, fear, violence, destruction and death. Can there be no exit out of this human dilemma? This corruption includes pen robbery, embezzlement of public funds, bribery, greed, indolence and negligence, dishonesty and fraud. In consequences of these vices, poverty, hunger, joblessness and other forms of suffering have become common experiences of the majority of the people. Invariably, all these indices are cog in the wheel of development and the nation-building. One of the most disturbing problems facing Nigeria today is that of religious insurgency, uprising and onslaughts. These have assumed a disturbing dimension. Boko-Haram uprising and onslaughts started since 2009 to-date resulting into deaths of several people. Equally unhealthy is the tension and fear of imminent armed robbers which are very devastating to the peace and stability in Nigeria. This has led to disunity, violence, vandalism, and unpatriotic attitude among people. These have hampered the development of ethical values in the society. The cost of democracy in Nigeria is too much.

Nigerian politicians of the past two Republics left bad records of abuse of office, mismanagement, fraud and chaos. There are series of undue financial management in the country. Aluko reports that between 1999 and 2009, the sum of N4.2 billion was disbursed by INEC to the various political parties.⁴⁰ In the 2010 proposed budget before the National Assembly, N630 million was budgeted for disbursement to the political parties to bring their cost to the nation's Federal treasury to about N4.87 billion since 1999. The total grant to INEC since 1999 is about N133.27 billion. In spite of the myriad of political parties, only one party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has dominated the political space, since 1999 till 2015, posing a threat to the democratic posture of the country.⁴¹ More importantly, another instance is the cost of the legislatures. Aluko argues further

that there are 109 senators, 360 members of the House of Representatives, making a total of 469 members of the National Assembly. There are 990 members of the 36 states Houses of Assembly. The total Legislators in Nigeria today are 1459. He informs that in 2008, actual recurrent expenditure on the 469 National Assembly members was N51.6 billion or N110million per member. It is estimated that in 2010, it will rise to N118.9 or N253.5million per member. The actual capital expenditure on the National Assembly in 2008 was thus N143.3 million. It is expected to rise to N294.3million in 2010. The rapidly increasing cost of the National Assembly is alarming. There are 990 members in the 36 States Houses of Assembly. The actual recurrent and capital expenditures on them in 2008 were about N76.5billion or about N77.3million per member. It is expected to rise to N87.5billion in 2010 or N88.4million per member. However, the total actual recurrent and capital allocations to the 27 Federal Universities in 2010 is N118.1 billion, compared with N225.5 billion for the 1,459 National and State Legislators. When we compare what a National Assembly member earns as salary per-annum which is about N88million, with what a Professor in the university earns per annum which is N3.5 million, one can see the undue financial incentive that Nigeria gives to its legislators. In the USA, a Senator earns \$169,000 or N25.4 million per-annum. A university professor earns an average of 116,000 dollars, or N17.4 million. The differences are obvious between the legislator and the professor in America and in Nigeria.⁴² It is noteworthy that many Nigerian youth nowadays commonly confess their life ambition to amass wealth if opportuned in future to occupy influential official positions in government service. Some other Nigerians may be tempted to resign themselves to pessimistic convictions such as the impossibility of having righteous and faithful rulers in Nigeria henceforth. This attitude is in a way due to low level of efficiency and the increasing corruption among the youth. Often times, honesty and hard work are neither rewarded nor appreciated by the government and other constituted authorities. Better qualified persons may sometimes be unemployed while influential but underserving mediocre may be put in positions of power and leadership. Towards achieving this ends, some people may readily exploit religious and tribal sentiments. The attitude of some Nigerians to work is discouraging. Lateness to work, absenteeism from office, insult to enquirers and consumers, willful neglect of official duties, delay of official processes, bribery before service, insubordination, unwarranted interference in the course of justice, gross indiscipline and lack of dedication to work have become the bane of Nigerian workers. These vices undoubtedly hamper efficiency, ethical development and increased productivity especially in the economic sense bearing in mind the present bad state of Nigerian economy. The economy of Nigeria at present is unhealthy. Scarcity and inflation have made life more difficult. For the vast majority of Nigerian people; the rate of unemployment is high while the prices of food stuffs and the cost of rent and accommodation are high. The rate of armed robbery incident is equally high. There is therefore little impetus for people to perform maximally in their work.

Many are under-nourished and live in want, hardship and in fear of possibility of retrenchment by their employers. The poor management of the nation's financial resources by the government sometimes does not challenge the people in general to adopt the virtues of patriotism. The danger thus exists thereby with the increasing hardship of Nigerians to live comfortably, the tendency to adopt corrupt ways of acquiring wealth may be adopted such as fraud and bribery.⁴³

Recommendation

Religion is the most important of all the many ways in which Nigerian citizens "get involved" in the life of their community and society. Therefore, our religious life particularly Christian values must equally impact our social, cultural, political and economic life. But how can Christian values really sustain our national development?

1. We must let religion especially Christianity play its powerful influence not only on individual character and action but also on our communal life as a people. Putting what is read in the Bible into a practical living, stop stealing, lying, love our nation.
2. We must be willing to recognize the fact that Christian values are the foundation for a just economic transformation. Religion provides the needed ingredients for sustainable business ventures in the world: love, justice and peace. Christian ethics helps persons in their pursuit of profit to abstain from unscrupulous activities that are in many cases detrimental to human flourishing. Religion, if wholly understood in all its truth, encourages justice, love and peace in all human relationships.
3. Through worshiping God Christian ethics ushers the worshipers into a way of life that encompasses economic perspectives. To fear God, love our neighbor as we love ourselves, be industrious, for if one loves his neighbor, he will not kill him for rituals. As Robert Bellah et al observes,⁴³ Worship also reiterates the obligations that the community has undertaken, including the biblical insistence on justice and righteousness, and on love of God and neighbor, as well as the promises God has made that make it possible for the community to hope for the future.... through reminding the people of their relationship to God, it establishes patterns of character and virtue that should operate in economic and political life as well as in the context of worship.⁴⁴ Therefore, in order to reposition religion for a sustainable national development we must be willingly to relate the biblical faith and practice to the whole of our contemporary life—cultural, social, political, and economic—not just to personal and family morality.⁴⁵
4. Christian values if properly harnessed help us to realize that hoarded wealth breeds frustration because the victims always feel humiliated. This humiliation is the key to all kinds of violence. As the author of the bestseller book, *The World is Flat*, Thomas Friedman argues, "It is when people or nations are humiliated that they really lash out and engage in extreme violence."⁴⁶

5. True and pure religion promotes peace which is an important ingredient in economic matters. Harold Coward and Gordon S. Smith have correctly pointed out that “The failure to recognize the place of religion particularly (Christianity) in the dynamics of economics and peacemaking has too often resulted in misunderstandings, inappropriate and sometime disastrous policies and actions, and most importantly, missed opportunities”.⁴⁷ So the author advises the rulers and the Nigerians at all level to imbibe Christian ethical values in their governance.

6. We must therefore realize that repositioning religious (Christian) values for the economic transformation of Nigeria is the responsibility of all and sundry. For example, Coward and Smith argue that the “Responsibility for discerning and developing appropriate and effective roles for religion and religious actors belongs jointly to political, religious, and nongovernmental organizations and their leaders” (Coward and Smith, 2004:280). Coward and Smith believe that “Expanding the community to which religious principles and virtues are applied is critical to the achievement of world peace.”⁴⁸ Repositioning religion for a sustainable economic transformation in Nigeria would entail encouraging interfaith and interdenominational interactions. Interfaith and interdenominational activities offer opportunities to collaborate, share the work of economic development that results in peace building. “Teaming up with other religious and nonreligious actors (entrepreneurs) also models the behaviors required to promote peace”. Interfaith initiatives also offer opportunities for the personal and interpersonal transformation required to build peace” which is a necessary ingredient in economic transformation.⁴⁹

Conclusion

This paper calls on Nigerians, particularly the political leaders to pay attention to the role that religion plays particularly Christian ethical values in many people’s lives in this country. They need to understand how religion permeates belief and behavior and factor religion into their thinking, economic policies, and actions. “Political leaders should give careful thought to integrating Christian values as a force for economic peace into political and civic life, and then try to develop constructive roles for religion and its adherents in making and executing policy”.⁵⁰

It is important, to stress the fact that economic transformation depends very much upon cultural or religious (Christian) values and not just upon the application of methods, models, theories and tools. Christian ethical values in particular can influence economic transformation and sustainability in the following ways:

1) Religious prescriptions of conduct, especially the more realistic ones, could have a direct impact on economic activities; it can be said that to have a meaningful and authentic sustainable development, religious values, particularly Christian ethical values cannot be overemphasized. The biblical teaching, love,

justice, peace and hard work, if sincerely applied, we unite Nigerian and help us to fear and man, which will lead us in developing our nation.

2) Religious ideas could be a source for the legitimization of social and political institutions, and

3) Through religious sanctioning, human motivations and interests might be channeled in the direction of different types of goals which can positively affect the paths to a sustainable economic transformation. If Nigeria truly wants national development and a sustainable economic transformation, "Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the Lord" (Lamentation 3:40).

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