RELEVANCE OF CHRISTIAN TEACHING AS PANACEA FOR MORAL DECADENCE AMONG THE NIGERIAN YOUTHS

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Abstract

One major problem besetting the youth in the Nigerian society is moral decadence. Indeed, the region has been plagued with youth restiveness and this phenomenon has continually taken a heavy toll on human and material resources, peace and development. The study employs both historical and analytical methods in its studies. Suffice to say that it has given the region a toga of notoriety. Expectedly, one of the pressing and obviously daunting challenges facing political leaders and policy makers alike has been ways of stemming the preponderance of youths who seem to have taken militancy as a pastime. The Nigerian society has a large group of Christian who tend to be serving God but yet the moral upbringing and behavior are poor which are assumed to be caused by illiteracy, poor parental upbringing, low level of income and lack of sound Christian teaching in the churches spread across the metropolis. It is observed that with sound Christian teaching, most of this menace will be put to rest as in line with the Biblical teachings of training up a child in a way he should go so that when he is old he will not depart from it. Nigerians are naturally religious; it becomes evident that providing religious education to youths would go a long way in resolving the phenomenon of youth militancy. The study submits that religious emphasis on

rectitude, spirituality, good neighbourliness, brother's keeper, compassion and forgiveness for the ultimate aim of building conscience and molding personality, will go a long way to offer a veritable panacea to the problems of youth moral decadence.

Keywords: Relevance, Christian Teaching, Panacea, Moral Decadence, Nigerian Youths.

Introduction

From time immemorial, the quest for moral principle is an intrinsic phenomenon which makes social life governable and blissful. As such, every person, irrespective of age, colour, sex or social standing is subject to the dictates of the moral principle. This is because the concept of morality serves a holistic function as it serves as the bedrock upon which the edifice of a truly righteous and egalitarian society rests. Implicitly, moral principles form a fundamental aspect of every culture as it outlines comprehensively, codes of behaviours or conducts for the individual on the one hand, and the society on the other.

However, technological development orchestrated by globalization and civilization have attenuated and grossly affected our moral ethos. This has brought about a breakdown of the social structure on which society rests. Patrick (2014) notes that civilization had and is still having a lot of negative impacts on the life of the Africans most especially Nigerians. The problem of decline in public morality and national discipline in Nigeria is very alarming. Every sphere of life is not spared by this cankerworm which has eaten deep into every facet of the society. This prevailing situation has been incisively portrayed by Iwe (2008) who surmises that "over-concern with one's self-importance and pre-occupation with self-aggrandizement naturally lead to total indiscipline or moral decadence from the self to the society" (p41). Nigeria especially youths has experienced and is still experiencing its share of moral laxity and vices especially as depicted in political instability, corruption in high and low places, drug trafficking, smuggling, advanced fee fraud popularly known as 419, increasing crime wave, theft, robbery, religious and ethnic violence, unemployment, injustice etc. Abogunrin (2009) states categorically that "there was never a tie when humanity was so degraded and spiritually blind as is evidence in the madness we see around us daily in Nigeria" (p51). Apparently, therefore, meaningful development has been halted and the nation is in the throes of disintegration.

Christian teaching is therefore seen as a tool for conveying the message of peaceful and holy living among youths in Nigeria. The teachings involve exposing the punishments for those engaging in various evils. Teaching can generally be thought of as the transmission of values and accumulated knowledge of a society. It is a societal instrument for the expansion of human culture, which may be formal, non-formal and informal. Some people regard Christian teaching as information giving, some regard it as a preparation for life, while others regard it as a process which provides the children with knowledge, skills and values that a society believes to be necessary.

However, Nyerere (2008) sees education as a tool for social development as well as a tool for social change. In other words, if a community or a nation desires to bring about a new social order, a new thinking, a new philosophy, a new orientation, then the vehicle for such a change is education. Education in essence, involves the upbringing, training and instruction of children according to acceptable standards of the society. It is therefore the process of learning

and of preparing an individual, from birth and all through his life through encouragements and participation, for hap0py and useful membership of the society in which he lives sand helps to advance its good value system.

In essence, the survival of value education becomes imperative because of the nostalgia of the past, disappointment of the present and hope for the future generation. Value education includes all kinds of activities in the schools in which students learn or develop values and morality which are pertinent for the society (Taylor, 2006). Value is the major determinant of accepted behaviour and guiding principle for interaction in all human societies (Olyai, 2005). It is the extent to which a behavior conforms to the value system of the people that determines the acceptability of such behavior.

It is against this background that the research advocates for Christian teachings as panacea for moral values. Attention will be placed on some of the moral problems which militate against youth development with view to finding lasting solutions to them. In addition to this, we seek to examine the extent to which a solid moral foundation is indispensable towards actualizing our collective goals for a speedy national growth and development and that this desire for development is contingent on moral discipline of every citizen in Nigeria both the leaders and the led.

The Teaching of Moral Values among Nigerian Youths
The Teaching of Moral Values
Morals are principles or standards of good behavior. According to the Wikipedia free Encyclopedia (2008), morality (from the Latin moralitus "manner, character, proper behaviour) has three principal meanings. In its first descriptive usage, morality means a code of conduct held to be authoritative in matters of right and wrong. Morals are created and defined by the society, philosophy, religion, or individual. In its second, normative and universal sense, morality refers to an ideal code of conduct, one which would be espoused in preference to alternative by all rational people, under specified conditions. To deny 'morality' in this sense is a position known as moral skepticism. In its third usage, 'morality' is synonymous with ethics, the systematic philosophical study of the moral domain.

Morals define the pattern of behavior that the society wants from the people. Certain behaviours are considered to be undesirable. For most societies, however, morals are not written in stone, or proclaimed by God above, but instead reflect local sensibilities. Different societies have different ideas about what is acceptable and not acceptable. There are only a relative few behaviours (usually including murder, and various forms of abuse, including incest and adult-child sexual contact of any sort) that are universally despised by stable societies (Dombeck and Wells-Moran, 2008).

People are not born with automatic understanding of their society's morals. Instead, these understandings develop and mature over time. According to Kohlberg, cited in Dombeck and Well-Moran (2008), infants have little or no moral sense, because they are not born with an understanding of the nature of human relationships. As children reach elementary school age, they enter into the first major stage of moral understanding, known as the pre-conventional stage. Pre-conventional children are essentially selfish in orientation. They do not think about what behaviours will serve the greater good, but rather think in terms of what will most

benefit them. They respond primarily and think of morality as a matter of following rules so as to avoid punishment.

As children grow into adulthood, they typically enter into the stage of conventional moral understanding. Some children will experience delay in their moral growth and becomes adults who have the moral understanding of children. We call them sociopaths, narcissists, and ant-social personalities. The majority of people that do make it to the conventional moral understanding stat thinking in terms of duty; a duty to promote the greater good. They orient towards behaviours that are most likely to gain other people's respect and admiration. Part of conventional morality is the duty to behave lawfully. Some people take this duty further and understand it as a duty to conform to what other influential people around them want.

Many adults never actually achieve the final stage of morality, known as post-conventional morality, mostly because in order to get there, people have to throw off their sense of duty to what others around them wants, and reinvest their moral sense in higher principles, such as (but not limited to) "honesty", "reciprocity", and "social welfare". Such people become willing to take unpopular stances and make unpopular decision simply because those decisions represent the right thing to do.

Every society, primitive or modern, has established means of inculcating in the young ones, the acceptable values of the society. This is the reason Falade (2010) argued that the Yoruba, like other communities in Africa adopts multidimensional approaches in inculcating moral values that are cherished in the society. The teaching of moral values in the school system has become an important area of focus in recent time in Nigeria and some other parts of the world. Education, which is a lifelong process, is a tool for human moral development. In trying to curb the negative trend of morality among children in the society, the home and school have the stronger influence than the church or mosque, to reduce the non-adherence to morality in the society to manageable level, a vital constituent of an effective moral learning experience need to be developed for schools (Ajere, 2006). The responsibility of inculcating values in the youth rests squarely on the nation's school. The schools curricular are expected to articulate learning experiences that can promote moral values in the student (Iyamu and Otote, 2003). This is the reason the teaching or morals, values and social norms has been integrated into different school subjects like religious study, social studies, civic education and health education.

Christian Moral Education

Christian moral education is the process of guiding the behavioural development of an individual in Christian moral principles so that the person can reason appropriately and perform what is right and acceptable in the society. Moral value may look clearly attractive in terms of looking reasonable and logical which in the long run serve selfish ends, and bring to bear on persons consequences that are detrimental to human existence. This form of attraction does not represent moral values in Christianity. The form of moral value which have values in Christianity are those that are unselfish, in determination, seek to improve human welfare and in the process achieve all of those within interest of God. Thus, actions that expunge God's interest in content lose its moral significance. All human behaviours standards and principle that are cynical to God's interest have no moral values. God's interests begin from the point

in which people act as dangerous impediments to the well being of others (Akanmidu, 1993: Pp149-160).

There is supernatural disclosure that does not allow Christianity to give up its basis in a transcendental revelation and, therefore can neither surrender its moral requirements nor compromise them in the cultural prejudices and corruption of the day. Christianity's administration provides laws, rules, and regulations, which govern the conduct of its members. Christianity inculcates moral values through its associations, for example, Boys Brigade, Girl's Brigade, Fellowship of Christian students, Christian Union, Scripture Union, Nigerian Federation of Catholic Students, Young Men's Christian Association of Nigeria, etc. Through the families, Christian moral ideals are introduced to children. Christian leaders also exert influence in shaping the moral judgments and practices of fellowship. The Christians have the Bible as guard for inculcating Christian ethical principles, failure of which could lead to the expulsion of the member or member from the church. However, various other punishments could also be taken upon the person.

Causes of Moral Decadence among Youths in the Nigerian Society
The following are the causes of moral decadence among youths

The Influence of Cultural Backgrounds
Generally, the typical African man is very inseparable from his cultural background. Cultural background influences peoples' cosmology and perception of things around them. The religion called Christianity was imported into Africa through the activities of 20th century European Missionaries. To a huge extent, the African people were receptive of Christianity on one hand, but could not shake off the influences of their cultural backgrounds on their view and practice of Christianity on the other hand. The practice of Christianity in Nigeria is no different. Most cultures in which Christianity is practiced in Nigeria have certain influences on the people's perception, and practice of Christianity. This stems from their cultural values, beliefs and practices.

To be particular, Jalingo people's cultural beliefs, for example, greatly value wealth, glory, titles, fame, adorations and achievements (Achebe, 1958 and Onwu, 2006). Among the people, failure is greatly avoided while fame, wealth, achievement etc. are highly glorified. Youth love for traditional titles and fame is exemplified in the question a court messenger asked the elders of Umuofia in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: "We see that every pauper wears the anklet of title in Umuofia…" (p.138). however, most Nigerian cultures, like that of the Jalingo people, revere wealth, glory, achievement and honour (Amujuri, 2002 and Eze 2002).

The effects of these cultural values and beliefs on Christian morality have been great. This is further given impetus by high reverence and glory the church itself gives wealthy Christians. The source of wealth no longer means anything to the church in Nigeria. this may be the reason David-West, earlier referred to in this work pointed out recently that they (the church) shy away from telling corrupt leaders the truth when they go to church with a lot of camera men (Ebhomele and Atebe, 2013). The church has lost the moral power to fight against the powerful influences of ill gotten wealth in her midst. These to a huge extent encourage debasement of Christian morality more. For instance, a poor Christian who attends church services where Christian cheats and cons flaunt their ill-gotten wealth to the praise and glory

o the church, may not be blamed if he engages in nefarious activities in pursuit of wealth and honour which will consequently earn him the glories of the church tool after all, a lot of known "ritual money makers" abound in churches in Nigeria who churches sing their praises. It is in this line of thought that Ejezu (2008) pointed out that a lot of Christian cheats and criminals abound in churches in Nigeria who are applauded by the church for their monetary contributions to the church. It is in line with these that it is argued that cultural backgrounds in Nigeria greatly contribute to the steady decline of Christian morality in Nigeria.

Poverty; A phenomenal problem in Nigeria

It is highly appalling that 53 years of independent rule in Nigeria, there is not improved standard of living in Nigeria. in other words, poverty is a glaring phenomenon in Nigeria (Ngele and Uwaegbute 2013). A lot of Nigerians are wallowing in abject poverty. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) recently pointed out that about 67.1 percent of Nigerians live below poverty line. In other words, according to National Bureau of Statistics, 112 million Nigerians out of the total population of 198 million live below poverty level line today (Premiumtimesnigeria.com, 2013).

This is further corroborated by the World Bank in its Economic Report on Nigeria in May 2013, which indicted President Goodluck Jonathan' current administration for failing to tackle the menace of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria (Bangudu 2013). The United Nations currently ranks Nigeria at 153 out of 188 countries as long as human development index is concerned. These all show practical problems of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria. This situation makes Nigerians desperate. Christians, very much inclusive. Desperate times call for desperate measures. This may be why a lot of Christians throw Christian morality to the wind in a bid to break the yoke of poverty. The church itself has become a huge source of making easy money. In fact, with psychology, perfect timing and sweet tongues, one can make cool millions through the establishment of churches or embezzlement of church funds. Fraudulency, cheating, deceit, false pretence and corruption, have become the order of the day in Nigerian church (Iheanacho, 2010 and David-West in Ebhomele and Ateba, 2013). Any denial that the problems of poverty and quest for materialism are not behind the current multiplication of churches in Nigeria is fallacy of the highest order. Equally, that Christians engage in crimes and criminality, prostitution, ritual murder, etc all have the problems of poverty behind them. The claws of poverty are long. It is therefore no surprises that these problems are found among Christians who are in desperate struggles against poverty. It is in this regards that the phenomenal problem of poverty in Nigeria fans the embers of immoral behaviours among Christians in contemporary society today.

The Pentecostal Menace

Any denial that Pentecostalism has become a phenomenal brand of Christianity in Nigeria is erroneous. In the same vein, to deny that Pentecostalism has contributed a lot towards a revival of first century apostolic Christianity in Nigeria is to deny the good work of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. Pentecostalism is a renewal of movement within Christianity, places great emphasis on personal experience of God through the Holy Spirit (Blumhofer, 1989).

Pentecostalism has a rich and colourful history in Nigeria. However, the emergence of the Neo-Charismatics/Neo-Pentecostals in the 1980s as Komolafe (2011) pointed out, added

impetus to present Pentecostal movement in Nigeria. On the other hand, the spread of Pentecostalism in Nigeria has greatly contributed to the debasement of Christian morality in Nigeria without any bias, it must be pointed out here that the spread of Pentecostalism in Nigeria made it possible for one person to win, control and direct a church. In this regard, a lot of things began to go wrong. We must acknowledge the fact that commercialization of churches today, has a link with the above statement. Equally, the current multiplication of churches in Nigeria and the emergence of self made pastors, bishops, Archbishops, seers, faith healers, miracle pastors in Nigeria today are direct influences of Pentecostalism on Christianity in Nigeria. some of the churches that spring up every day in Nigeria engage in immoral practices in bid to make money. Scholars like Obiora (1999), Ude (2000), Ugwueye (2002), Ituma (2000) and Iheanacho (2010) have in various ways pointed out the problems associated with the rise, spread, and unschooled some practices of some Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. The problems of tithing, marathon offertory sessions, seed sowing, arranged miracles, claim of fraudulent academic titles, deceit and lies were all pointed out by these scholars.

And what is more. The rise of prosperity preaching in Nigerian Pentecostalism has, in more ways than one, helped the cause of moral decadence in Nigeria. Onwu (2006) investigated the problems of prosperity preaching among the Pentecostals in Nigeria. Onwu links the rise of prosperity preaching with harsh realities of poverty, unemployment and the challenge of the convention of the centrality of the cross and Christian poorly lifestyles as part of Christian witness. In contemporary Pentecostal theology, wealth is believed to be synonymous with Christian witness. To be wealthy is the goal of every Christian while poverty is regarded as a curse. The means of getting wealth therefore amounts to nothing. This, to a huge extent, has penetrated the mainline churches in Nigeria. With this belief, it is no longer a surprise to see Christians indulging in corrupt and unwholesome practices in Nigeria in pursuit of riches. Cases, for example, have been documented of Pentecostals who embezzled their employers' funds and used part of the proceeds to make donation to the church. This is where David-West cites the case of a Pentecostal Christian who embezzled the funds of Sheraton Hotel which ran into millions, and used part of the proceed to donate to Christ Embassy Church (Ebhomele and Ateba, 2013).

The Influence of Western Education and Westernization
Western Education is the system of education that was brought to Africa through Western civilization and colonialism. This system of education is typical of what obtains in western educational system. Westernization is conversion to or adoption of western traditions or techniques (Meriam-Webster Dictionary, 2013). Both western education and westernization are in full swing in Nigeria today. The influences of these phenomena on morality have been massive. Scholars like Madukwe and Madukwe (2011) and Ariwolo (2010) have shown the disastrous effects of western education and westernization on morality in Nigeria.

Ariwolo holds that westernization is responsible for the high sexual immorality among youths in Nigeria. The prevalence of sexual promiscuity among youths in Nigeria, in the context of Christianity in Nigeria, this also applies. The liberalization of Christianity and Christian morals has links with influences of western education and westernization in Nigeria. That sex and human sexuality, for example, have become liberalized, are the effects of western education and westernization. This is further given impetus with current decline of Christian

morals in western Christianity. It is very funny to think that the west which labored to sow the seed of Christianity in Africa lhs now turned round to promote absurd immoral Christian behaviours. Some Christians in Nigeria emulate these. The contentious issues of homosexuality and homosexuality rights in Europe and America, for example, are slowly creeping into the church in Nigeria. so far, about four Pentecostal pastors in Nigeria have been jailed for the offences related to homosexuality and other deviant sexual practices (The Daily Sun Newspaper, August 2,2012 and Online Nigeria, 2013). Practical observations show that though homosexuality is still repressed in Nigeria, Christian youth still engage in it. This also applies in issues of nudity and indecent dressing among some Christian females today. These and more, we all have the influences of western education and westernization to thank.

The Challenges of Urbanization
Urbanization may be defined as the physical growth of urban areas as a result of migration and suburban concentrations into cities particularly the large ones (Wikipedia, 2012). The link between urbanization and the debasement of human morality is well documented. Researches like those of Schweneke (2002), Abass (1998), Hellandendu (2004) and Global Planning Education Association Network (2009) have shown that urbanization corrodes human morality. Of course, some social problems that manifest themselves in urban areas include: the problems of poverty and human exploitation, gangsterism, prostitution, risky sexual behaviours, alcohol and substance abuse, and poor gainful employment opportunities. Some of these are fanned by frustration especially on the part of rural-urban immigrants who are in search of better opportunities. These also apply in the context of urban areas in Nigeria. That prostitution, for example, has become a social problem some urban areas in Nigeria relates to some females evolving ways of survival in urban areas where human exploitation, harsh realities of poverty and gainful job opportunities are very elusive. Equally, that crimes have become part and parcel of urban areas in Nigeria has a link with the challenges of surviving in urban areas.

Faced with these harsh realities, some Christians have no other options than to engage in nefarious activities in desperate bid of survival. It is fallacious for one to think that "Christians" do not face temptations.

Modern societies increasingly have to deal with disturbing trends both within schools, and in the wider society. The term moral value is ambiguous and requires some definitions. It signifies the specific values that particulars cultures generally hold in regard. Such value varies among cultures; during World War II, Japanese who loved his homeland was likely to be hostile to Americans, and vice versa. Values conflict among nationals and ethnic lines are common although most cultures treat the characteristics we call – patriotism as a moral value and treat – treason with opprobrium. In sum common – moral values are the vital common beliefs that shape human relations to each culture. Often these values – as in the Ten Commandments – have what is popularly called a religious base. Whether their base is religious, traditional, or secular, however, such values are expected to be widely affirmed under most circumstances. Thus, moral is defined as right conduct, not only in our immediate social relations, but also in our dealings with our fellow citizens and with the whole of human race. It is based upon the possession of clear ideals as to what actions are right and what are wrong and the determination of our conduct by a constant reference to those ideals. In other

word, each society defines for itself what is right or wrong. Therefore, moral is defined as right conducts as guided by or defined by the respective society.

Specifically, the following are the roles of religious education in the life of the youth:

Formation of Good Character
Formation of good character is fundamental in Christian moral education. It does not only recognize, but also require a discipline in a formation of character and points to self-discipline as an ideal norm (Wycliff Bible Encyclopaedia, 1975). For example, Christians are urged to live good and righteous life for the well being of the society, "Seek good and not evil that you may live; Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate" (Amos 5:14,15). "Follow justice and justice alone". … (Leviticus 19:35) while (Proverbs 14:34) writes: "Righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach".

The sixth commandment condemns stealing, hence, (Deuteronomy 5:19) says: "thou shall not steal". Dishonest acts and lying are also condemned: "if you have not been faithful in that which is another, who will give you that which is your own". On the danger and consequences of lying, the Bible says that: Everyone who has practiced falsehood have heir abode in hell fire. "Do not lie to one another, for he who pours out lie will perish" (Revelation 22:15; Rev. 21:8). A false witness will not go unpunished and he who litters lie will not escape (Proverbs 19:5)…."Do not swear at all … let what you say be simply yes or no, anything more than this comes from the devil" (Matt 5:33-37).

The Bible urges individuals to be upright in their duties, "You shall not take bribe for bribe blinds the officials and subverts the course of those who are in the right" (Exodus 23:8). The Bible warns against irresponsibility using the parable of the ten virgins in the Gospel of Matthew, … but at midnight, there was a cry,… watch therefore for you do not know the hour" (Matt 25:1-13). Injustice is also seriously condemned, "Do not pervert justice or show no partiality (Amos 5:7). In social relation, honour both the rich and the poor… (James 2:1-6). From the above Biblical injunctions, bad governance which is portrayed in acts such as: nepotism, bribery corruption, embezzlement of public funds, ethnicity, electoral malpractices and other social injustices etc. are all negative character attributes and contradicts Christian moral education. A true Christian ensures that he or she is guided by these scriptural principles which are essential attributes of good governance.

Respect for Human Rights and Dignity
According to Scott (1989) "human right has its origin from creation. Man has never acquired them nor has any government or other authority conferred it. Man has had them from the beginning. He received them with his life from the hand of his maker. They are inherent in his creation. They have been bestowed on him by his creator" (p.31). The dignity of human beings is asserted in three successive sentence in (Genesis 1:27, 28). First, 'God created man in his own image.' Secondly, Male and Female he created them…' Therefore, every person, regardless of race, sex, age, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, employment or economic status, health, intelligence, or achievement is worthy of respect. Thus, human rights are at base the right to be human, and so to enjoy the dignity of having been created in God's image and of possessing in consequence unique relationship to God himself, to fellow human beings and to the material world. William Temple quoted in Scott (1989:163) states:

> There can be no rights of man except on the basis of faith in God. But if God is real and all men are his sons, that is, the true worth of every one of them. My worth is what I am worth to God; and that is a marvelous great deal, for Christ died for me. Thus, incidentally, what gives each of us his highest worth gives the same worth to everyone; in all that matters most we are all equal.

Hence, equality of all comes from the essential dignity as children of God. Treating equal equally is one way of defining justice, and justice in turn means that we render to each person his or her due, which is the attribute of good governance. While each person is different, while each culture and customs varies, while talents vary, discrimination because of these differences goes against the more basic principle of human dignity. This brings to fore the issues marginalization in the distribution of natural resources in Nigeria. This has no doubt engendered a lot of conflicts in the Nigerian polity. Just social structure is inevitable in the allocation of resources in the country and should not be based either by religious, ethnic or political inclinations.

Promotion of Common Good

In the catechism of the Catholic Church (Schineller, 2002), the common good is to be understood as the "sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more full and more easily. A proper concern for the common good is the antidote to unbridled individualism, narrow mindedness and self centeredness. Working for, and serving the common good involves three basic elements: respect for the human person; and the social well being and development of the group. Jesus Christ begins his preaching by proclaiming that the kingdom of God is at hand. His kingdom, open to all and for all is a kingdom of truth and justice, peace and love.

In Nigeria, public officers squander and loot the money meant for the common good of the masses. In fact, the cancer called corruption which can be found in all spheres of Nigeria life is largely responsible for the stunted economic growth of the country and for the mass poverty that reign in the land (Suleiman, 2011).

Protection of the Poor and Vulnerable

Schineller (2002) observes that a society is measured and evaluated by its treatment of the weak and the powerless. The common good, the good society as a whole requires preferential protection to those affected by the absence of power. The heart and hand of Jesus went out in compassion to the sick, the hungry, the leper and the outcast. Jesus told the disciples of John the

Effects and Control of Moral Values among the Nigerian Youth
Effects of Moral Decadence on the Youth

It is very clear that the greater the social vices of a nation are the bigger and more magnifying the problems of that nation. Though Nigeria, as a developing nation, is struggling dynamically to achieve its developmental goals, the problems created by various unethically social vices, discussed above, cannot but be nightmarish to progressive development. For example, foreign investors tend to be jittery in their intention to start business in Nigeria. The reasons for this are not farfetched. There is the fear of falling into the hands of dupes (419)

during an initial business arrangement. Like other industries, the problems of electricity supply which appear to intractable, presents enough fear. Armed robbery constitutes enough menace while cases of kidnapping are viewed with great discomfort and unease.

Some of the above discussed social vices also affect tourism, thereby robbing Nigeria of some capital which would have accrued from this. The economy of Nigeria has been tremendously weakened by hundreds of fraudulent people who daily pirate the works of artists and writers who are the worse for this. The Copyright Commission, in spite of serious efforts to check this fraud, has not been able to achieve its objectives despite over two decades of war over piracy. For this reason, many creative artistes have been pirated out of business.

Smuggling has also led to the total collapse, or weakening of many industries. Though the government also has stiff laws against the importation of certain items, the smugglers have rendered this law ineffective through their nefarious activities. Nearly all the textile industries in Nigeria have collapsed because of smuggling, and the economic implications are very obvious.

Nigeria is also littered with inferior smuggled or imported goods that do not merit the inflated cost of these products. For example, many electronic and other contrivances have not been able to give the type of performance expected of good quality products. For various manufactured or fraudulent reasons, many government workers also do not render the full service expected of a day's job because they rarely stay on their jobs; going about other private businesses. Unlike the private ventures, money collected by workers in government enterprises rarely finds its way entirely into government purse. This is because fraudulent practices will not make these workers render the correct amount. According to an informant, this was why Toll Gate was dismantled in Nigeria, because more than half of the money collected in each Toll Gate usually went into private pockets (Okonkwo, 2010). There are more economic implications of moral inadequacies, but it is good to also briefly discuss the social aspects.

For example, many Nigeria youths have been wrongly lured into accepting such lifestyles that can, at best, be injurious to their present and future aspirations. Such lifestyles include smoking, drinking, obsessive womanizing and cultism, among others. Fake drugs have also damaged the biological systems of many people, while many have lost their lives because of this. There is now, also, little room for recreation because of many unpredictable situations which include theft, car snatching or even assassination. Night clubbing, for these same reasons, among others, seem to be a forgotten experience. On the campuses of many Nigerian institutions, social events are made to stop at 6 p.m., whereas in the distant past, many of these events used to be an all-night affair. There are more social implications of moral degeneration, but these cannot be accommodated here.

Effects of Moral Decadence on the Nation

It is quite unfortunate to state unequivocally here, that the high level of religiosity experienced in Nigeria today has not been properly translated into the high level of moral standard expected of a religious booming society like ours. The legitimate godliness is quite appreciable, but the gradient of morality is fast depreciating. In Nigeria today, one find many expressions in different practical dimensions of life by which one can prove the low level of

morality. This menace has equally affected the pace of development one expects from Nigeria. The religious boom with attendants upsurge in moral decadence breed corruption, which has been described as systematic in Nigeria. The unwholesome consequences are myriad. Corruption, an offshoot of moral decadence breeds inefficiency and diminishes productivity in both private and public sector of the economy. It discourages investment, fuels capital flight, increases unemployment and inflation, creates an acute degree of poverty and reduces the quality of life of life expectancy in Nigeria.

Moral Decay in Religious Life

Religion is today becoming a commerce ad avenue to rise to power. Audi (2002:102), citing Oladipo (1999:8), noted that "in West Africa (including Nigeria), there are people who assume religious leadership as one chooses a business for financial gains". Prayer houses exist where religious leaders administer religious services and totems, requesting beneficiaries to make supplies that include foodstuff, wears, money, labour, and physical lust satisfaction of the self-made leader (Audi, 2002). Some of these religious leaders at times manipulate the psychology of these members through religious persuasions and insinuation to actions, violent or non-violent. The results of these actions are numerous. When these people realize that their sources of economy and livelihood, dignity and worth of humanness (in a situation where one is sexually abused) have been tampered with, such a person may be psychologically affected and he/her role in nation building restricted. Today people kill, maim, destroy, and cheat in the name or religion. This is a moral lapse, and can only degenerate the society instead of making way for even development.

Moral Decay in Economic Life

In business transaction in Nigeria, either out of desperation or oppressive intent, one finds an attitude of taking advantage of human crisis to make the best financial gain. A good example is during the incessant fuel crisis we experiences in Nigeria. Another instance is during religious festive periods and holidays like Christmas, Easter, and "Ramadan" holidays. Rather than allow the care for the less privileged in the society to find joyful attention, the little in their hands is taken for their unavoidable needs. Here is a capitalist mentality. This results in hoarding or refurbishing the outside of the needed commodity to make it look new but whose quality is below recommendation for the lowest possible output. Price hike, inflation, artificial scarcity of essential commodities or exploitation of its citizens during economic crisis. It is quite unfortunate that these occur mainly during religious festivals.

Moral Decay in Societal Life

Socially, beginning with major realities like ethnic grouping of communities, one finds the promotion of selfish sectarian exhibition in relationships. People very often see no problem in classifying a group of socially different people as less than human. The Nigerian situation in this respect is quite obvious. Constant agitations based on ethnic and religious affiliation have not only affected the politics of this nation but have also dwindled the pace of development in Nigeria. Indeed, the religious expectation of accommodating people even for the sake of proselytism gets lost at the slight opportunity to talk ill of others (Audi, 2002).

Moral Decay in Academic Life

In Nigerian academia, there is evidence of people forging results in order to seek employment or admission into higher levels of studies, including Seminaries and Bible Colleges. Similarly,

people are often found writing examinations for their siblings, cousins or friends. You do find people also who will be prone to bribing the instructors in order to have good results or the instructor expecting such whether in "cash" or in "kind" of the student. Unfortunately all these actors are highly religious people in a booming religious society. The problem of this type of moral lapse in national development is endemic. Universities and Colleges will continue to turn out academic mediocre and inefficient manpower. Many unprofessional and quacks will be employed in both government and private offices who will end up creating problem in the nation's economy.

The Problem of Corruption
Corruption in Nigeria is endemic. It has gone deep into all the sectors of the Nigerian society. Agbom (2010:13) lamenting on the mess this evil of corruption has plunged the nation into said, "Corruption gives rise to people consciously doing what is wrong or what is not allowed." It makes it possible for one to get what one is not qualified for or be denied of what one is qualified to get. It creates room for dishonesty, non-patriotism and involves betrayal of social trust, sabotage, lack of respect for human reason and human integrity. Our nation Nigeria has become lame, dumb, and deaf because of corruption. Reports of panels on corrupt charges were never implemented. No government in Nigeria has boldly caught and disciplined the "big fish" as a deterrent to others. Instead the government prefers political solution to corruption rather than judicial solution. No nation can develop in a situation like this; but there is a way out.

Christian Teaching a Panacea for moral decadence
Religious and Christian religion in particular plays a significant role in inculcating values. Hence Eluu (2001) sees Christian religion as an instrument for the development of spiritual, moral and mental growth of the pupils or students. In essence Christian religious knowledge impart in children an understanding of the universe and the interpersonal relationship between human beings and the supreme being. The importance of Christian religion in inculcating value is found in the claim of personal and spiritual knowledge of God through Jesus Christ, the son of God. It is a stabilizing factor in the individual personality. Christian religious knowledge trains the students morally and instills in them the desire to do good and be virtuous. This is also the trust of value education.

Obilom (1989:15), while affirming the aims and objectives of Christian religious knowledge, states that the aim of teaching Christian religious knowledge is "to educate the Nigerian children both morally and intellectually, and instill in them the desire to be good citizens". It is through guidance and supervision of their conduct, the children are encouraged to develop a right attitude towards life, their environment, inter-personal relationships and community living. This is in agreement with the stated objectives of values education, hence the teaching of Christian religious knowledge in schools which gives impetus to values education leads pupils to raise fundamental questions relating to life and existence. For example, who is God? Does God exist? Where is God? Why am I here? What is going to be my end? What am I supposed to do? Etc (Eluu, 2010). The transmission of acceptable moral standards and values education in the society cannot be over emphasized, hence through the teaching of these subjects, children are encouraged to express their faith and to develop their talents and thus prepare themselves for useful living in the society (FRN, 2004).

Religion is a major force in the lives of most Americans. Indeed, international studies continually report a comparatively high level of religious practice among Americans. Because religion is above all, a meaning system, it naturally speaks to its adherents about right and wrong, good and bad. For many Americans, the first and foremost moral guide is their own religion. While the theological doctrines of religions differ substantially, there is a great deal of overlap in moral theologies, particularly in their everyday applications. Historically, moral teachings have been central to all religion. For instance, historically speaking, since the time of the Bible, moral teachings have been central to Judaism. The Bible is, at its core, a book of ethical teachings. Talmudic sages are seen as moral exemplars, and medical writers such as Bahya ibn pakudah and Maimonides, Moses Haylm Luzzatto in the 18th century and the Musar Movement of the 19th century developed a systematic approach to the ethical teaching of the Bible and Talmud in order to teach morals. The same goes for the Islamic religion. Religious institutions have a way of imparting morals lessons in their adherents and this is no more news to many in our country today. In fact, the present focus of both national and international organization to the exploration of involving and using religious leaders in the campaign against the hydra-headed monster called HIV/AIDS is because it is believed that the religious leaders exercise a significant level of control /influence on many people's thought process and decision. This further confirms the importance and relevance of the religious organization in the moral development of the child.

Christian teaching specifically helps in moral upbringing in the following ways:

To Teach the Bible
Christian teaching as an academic field of study aimed at teaching the student the Bible contents. Rani in Ugbo (2003) opines that the Bible is the master textbook and in fact, in most times, the title given to the subject was Bible.

To Teach Morals
The teaching of morals has been a long-standing aims recommended for teachers of Christian religious studies in secondary schools and other institution of learning (Nwachukwu, 2010). Morality is very important concept especially in this era of moral decadence all over the world. Moral education as over the years impacted largely through literature in the forms of legend about the gods and heroes of Greece (Gotan, 2005). Gotan admitted that in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the link between morality and religions has been so close that people still regard them as inseparable. Gotan (2005) maintains that to admit logical distinction between religion and morality does not however, mean that they are antagonistic realm of human experience or that their objectives are mutually exclusive.

To Teach Catechesis or Christian Nature
The view that Christian Religious Studies (CRS) aims at teaching catechesis or Christian nature underlies the frequent demand by the various churches that Christian Religious Studies (CRS) in schools should be given to their adherents by teachers who are members of their own religious denomination. The view seeks to awaken, nourish and develop ones personal belief and to hand on the received tradition so as to build up the ecclesial community (Mangan, 2006). Although, most religious educators today, however, insist that confessional teaching of religion is not appropriate in the school content, its parochial nature offers scope for dealing with the practical problems of religious diversity in modern pluralistic societies.

Obilon in Eluu (2009) states that the aims of teaching Christian religious studies in Nigerian schools is to educate the Nigerian children both morally and intellectually, and instill in them the desire to be good citizens. So through guidance and supervision of their conducts, the children are encouraged to develop a right attitude towards life, their environment, interpersonal relationship and community living. Christian religious studies aims at making the children have faith in God, speak to Him in prayers, ad trust Him for all their needs as they work and pray. Through the teaching of Christian Religious Studies, students take decisions and develop their mind on how to withstand the emotional problems associated with every day-to-day life. Christian Religious Studies therefore, becomes a worthwhile school activity because of the values it has for the society. The teaching of Christian Religious Studies in school also leads pupils to raise fundamental questions relating life and existence. The transmission of acceptable moral standards in the society cannot be over emphasized. Through the teaching of CRS subject, children are encouraged to express their faith and to develop talents and thus prepare themselves for useful living in the society (FRN, 2004). Ali and Akubue in Njoku (2009) maintained that the curriculum aims of CRS is to develop and foster in the life of the students Christian attitudes and values such as respect for life, obedient to constituted authority, responsible self, selfless services to God and humanity. They further said that CRS is an academic discipline that aims at providing a learner with moral and spiritual transformation.

In schools today, there are still different terminologies for the subject. Some prefer Religious Studies. In some cases they are used interchangeably. Scott (2008) says that no consensus exists today on the nature scope and role of Religious Studies. The above named scholar believes that current search to identify revolves around different usage of key terms like Religious Education, Religious Knowledge, Religious and Moral Instruction. Other problem is that since Religion deals with values, judgments and feelings, everyone in the society will agree with it.

The way forward and conclusion
  i. There is urgent need to promote an educational system that motivates and stimulates the tradition and values of respect for humanity and human dignity, for legitimate authority and dignity of labour, and respect for positive moral and religious values.
 ii. Sustain environmental and social conditions, enhance the quality of life, and produce responsible citizenship and ordered society. Enhance the efficient management of human and material resources through the transformation of indigenous technology, design-resources and skills.
iii. To eradicate moral decadence in Nigeria and achieve objective freedom for the people, the government should strive to ensure the de-criminalization of political leadership in the Nigerian society.
 iv. It is important for our leaders to learn the importance of showing good example in an attempt to mould character.
  v. Moral education should be introduced as a compulsory course/subject from primary to tertiary institution in order to inculcate moral values, character and civil responsibilities into students.
 vi. Research shows that those who grew up under a corrupt system tend to be corrupt. Therefore, all leaders (various associations and organizations, including teachers, public office holders, politicians and parents) should lead by example.

vii. The inculcation of moral value should not be left on the shoulders of government alone; parents, teachers, religious leaders and community leaders are expected to contribute to the trend.

viii. Nigerian media should not only be focusing on negative stories such as bomb blasts, corruption, kidnapping, crises, crime, etc. and giving less attention to developmental issues.

ix. Conflict begins at home; children should learn that conflicts are to be resolved through dialogue and eventual consensus. Hence, adult populations should desist from such bad behaviours in the society.

x. Provision of the right education/training for the youth. The right education and training that will ensure the possession of a state skill suitable for youth to enhance youth participation in social orderliness and national development.

xi. Poverty alleviation programme of Federal Government should be made more realistic to benefit vulnerable citizens who are really in need.

Conclusion

This research work revealed that Christian teaching is one of the oldest issues in Nigeria. The subject aims at inculcating in the learners some cherished values in the society. Among other things, the conventional teaching method adopted by secondary school teachers has hindered the acquisition and demonstration of expected values by the learners. Values clarification, collaborative and involvement in informal school clubs can help learner to develop and manifest values like honesty, respect, trust, obedience and forgiveness.

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