

THE RELEVANCE OF CHRISTOLOGICAL TEACHINGS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NIGERIAN NATION

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Abstract

Undoubtedly the need for entrenching the right values that would secure sustainable development in Nigeria is a desirable and burning issue in the nation. This is natural for no country can aspire to join the committee of developed nations when it overlooks the ethical core or attitudinal values which forms the foundational or moral infrastructure on which the superstructure of development is anchored. This paper identified the ethical anomalies that are hindering the development of Nigerian nation and then went further to examine the place of Christological teachings in nation building. The qualitative method of data collection was used in gathering data for material for this work while content analysis technique was employed for data interpretation.

Nigeria is a pluralistic society made up of many ethnic nationalities and three different religious groupings namely Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion. Unfortunately the historical experience of the nation has been one driven by extreme ethical anomalies in her various levels of national life such that the nation has over the years remained under the crushing weight of poverty, insecurity, ethnic prejudice, corruption, injustice and underdevelopment. Hence, Ogbonnaya (2005) avers that lack of moral fiber driven by sound ethical culture has continued to derail various efforts of developmental programmes put in place by present and past administrations geared towards entrenching development in Nigeria. What this means is that as long as Nigerian leaders continue to mortgage their conscience for pecuniary benefit or material wealth by promoting the values of greed, dishonesty, selfishness, injustice, ethnic prejudice, mediocrity, favouritism and corruption, the country would remain cut off from the map of highly developed nations. This is because no nation attains greatness when it is run with principles or values that run counter with those driving highly developed nations forward. From the foregoing national development is not created outside moral and religious platforms that undermine ethical standards. It is against this backdrop that this work seeks to examine the relevance of Christological teachings to the development of the Nigerian nation.

The theoretical framework adopted for this work is the human capital theory which according to Adam Smith upholds that education increases the productivity and efficiency of people by increasing the level of their knowledge stock or reservoir on which socio-cultural values can be exploited for sustainable development. This theory is corroborated by Hobbison (2010) who states that what serves as the ultimate basis that promotes the wealth of nations or national development is the quality of their human capital. He affirms that though the tangible financial capital serves as the effective instrument for promoting national growth the human capital as demonstrated by rich moral ethos, good laws and the quality of governance are the integrative whole that promotes comprehensive national development.

Definition of Terms/Concepts

The three terms that will facilitate our objective understanding of the paper are Christological teachings, development and nation. Both conceptual and operational definitions of these terms will be applied to drive home our points.

Christological Teachings

According to the *New Dictionary of Theology*, the word Christology is defined as the doctrines of Christ, His person and nature. Thus the concept refers to the study of or the science that relates to the philosophical teachings of Christ. The term comes from two Greek words namely *Christos* and *logos*. While *Christos* relates to Christ, the savior, the anointed one, *logos* refers to word, logic, science of verbal expression and argumentative reasoning. Therefore as used in this context the term Christological relates to that which unveils the thought and expression of Christ. It is an enquiry of some ethical truth as revealed by Jesus in the Christian Bible that are relevant for nation building. Ekwunife (2010:68) in his own contribution states that Christological has to do with the teaching of Christ the Lord. It is the Christocentric consciousness which seeks to discover the mystery of kingdom of God on earth as revealed in the person and works of Christ.

Teachings

For Wilhot and Ryken (2001:45, 58) the word teaching refers to process of promoting the conditions under which learning will flourish. They state that teaching has to do with the act of guiding, stimulating and directing the learner. The words Christological teachings as used in this work therefore relate to the teachings of Christ as revealed by his life and times with his disciples while on earth. It is an examination of the values that Christ not only taught but also unveiled to his disciples through his incarnate life as the Son of God.

Development

The term development according to Rodney (1974:3) refers to “an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships”. He observes that development is not a purely economic affair, but an overall social process which is dependent upon the outcome of man’s effort to harness his natural environment. Pat (1990) and Udabah (2013:474) state that the term development relates to a multidimensional process involving the re-organization and re-orientation of the entire economic and social systems. Hence they submit that while development embraces the idea of economic growth reflected in improved conditions of living, it also relates to creation of social environment that fosters greater human dignity, security, justice and equity. Against this backdrop development as used in this work refers to the growth of the material and non-material or spiritual values of society embracing economic, institutional, infrastructural, social processes that secure the means of increasing better life or improved conditions of living. Put simply, it refers to the increasing growth in the levels of economic infrastructure and superstructure as well as greater access to the cultural and spiritual values that serves not only to promote material well-being but also to enhance individual and national self-esteem.

Nation

According to Oji (1997:54), the term nation refers to a union of people with similar ancestry, ideology and goal. In this context the word nation refers to the political entity called Nigeria. It refers to the various ethnic nationalities bonded geographically, culturally, socially, economically and politically by the entity called Nigeria. It refers to the government, the people and the land of Nigeria.

Development Challenges in the Nigeria Nation

National development according to Agubamah (2009) is a process of evolving, and implementing appropriate policies and work for the growth and wholistic development that embraces political, economic and socio-cultural dimensions of a given society. From the foregoing perspective of development, one may ask whether any meaningful development has been recorded and sustained by the Nigerian nation? And if the answer to the above question is no, what has been responsible for this negative development? Can Christological ethical teaching provide the answers for re-engineering the Nigerian developmental challenges forward? This paper attempts to address this issue since it is the main

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thrust of the study. Nzekwe (2005) reacting to one of the above questions posits that it is quite disheartening that Nigeria is lagging behind in terms of development. According to him everywhere in Nigeria today there is uneven development, injustice and inequality even as most things now appear unfair and ungodly.

Bamigboye (2010:9) captures the above truth when he states that the sustained underdevelopment that has subsisted over many decades in Nigeria is not unconnected to the moral deterioration that has continued to exert a massive retrogressive influence on the nation. The above submissions no doubt underscores the very ugly picture portraying the depth of our underdevelopment. Nigeria's quest for development is consequently being somersaulted by her ethical bankruptcy which is the non-material or ethical platform on which economic growth and material property of development driven society is built. No nation drives the vehicle of development forward when the engine of morality is dead. Adeyeri (2012) and Ogundele (2000) corroborate the above view when they opine that it is quite clear that Nigeria business organizations with current unethical practices cannot be expected to compete advantageously in the global market where practices demand ethical behavior. This is because no nation can hope to align with the committee of developed nations when the first, middle and last concern of her citizenry be it at public or private enterprise is how to extract ultimate personal material benefit from routine transactions. In an era of increasing moral decay at our individual and collective life this work seeks to underscore the need for rediscovering the fundamental ethical principles as revealed in Christological teachings as veritable tools for fostering national development in Nigeria.

Christological Teachings and National Development

In this section the author shall examine some Christological ethical teachings and their relevance to national development. This work shall limit itself to the following Christological teaching on the following subject matter. Social justice, love, leadership, honesty, respect for life and community consciousness.

Social Justice

According to Mole (2013:317) national transformation is a gamut of social, economic, political and cultural change. The role of social justice to national development is catalytic, as it serves as the fulcrum on which qualitative and quantitative human and national development is anchored. Anyadike (2014:117) is in agreement to the above submission when he states that the need for social justice in human society is predicated on the problems of discrepancies, man's inhumanity to man, inequalities and the need to create a peaceful, progressive and a secured world. According to Nwankwo (2012:362) though the ideals preached by Christianity are taken by many as simply impracticable ideals, the idea of injustice dates back even to the Biblical times and the need to harness justice in fostering national development therefore remains an unchanging imperative. For instance he notes that the prophecy of Amos, underscores the danger of neglecting social justice in the midst of pursuing other issues in national life. No wonder he called Israel in the height of her political, economic, social and religious oppression and injustice being meted to the weak to heed divine warning by building a nation that is driven by justice for all. (Amos 5:21-24)

According to Opeloye (2014:159) divine justice and love constitute the nature of God upon which the bedrock of his gracious disposition to humanity rests, thus he affirms that injustice and partiality are contrary to the nature of God. That is why the Psalmist declares as follows: "the Lord is good to all and His compassion is over all that He has created". (Psalm 145:9).

This informs the various teachings in the Old Testament which enjoined men to be just towards one another and for judges to ensure justice for all in their adjudication of disputes as well as for business transactions and leadership to be carried out in truth, honesty and fairness, (Deut 16:18, Lev. 19:36, 2 Sam 23:3).Sule (2014) puts the above view tersely when he posits that one of the cardinal problems militating against the sustainable development of Nigeria nation is injustice which has promoted all kinds of vices in the contemporary times. He submits that for Nigeria to develop, she must embrace the truth that the world can never be governed by force, fear and power but by the power of the mind which he

notes is conquered by justice. Besides she must develop an educational system that entrenches justice not as an elitist right but as an essential value that both the rich and the poor can access easily and promptly at minimum cost.

Consequently justice in the context of Christological teaching has to do with breaking of those walls of divide that promote our unequal and unjust treatment of one another. It relates to the bridging of the several things that divide the average Nigerians from one another which unfortunately creates nursery bed for the promotion of oppressive and unjust treatment. Therefore the need to treat one another justly is at the core of Nigerian attitudinal change that must be promoted by all if we must galvanize one another as one nation with common destiny.

Love

Love as defined in Johanne writing is revealed as God's reconciliatory tool for promoting divine harmony. This is adduced from the biblical statement which states that the love of God made him to send his only son to serve as sin bearer and reconciler of humanity to God. (John 1:39, 3:16). Love in divine economy is a self-giving capacity that elevates another to a positive or a higher dimension of living. . What this means is that God's love as revealed by Christ is his beneficent nature that helps to create a blending of divinity with humanity. This view is corroborated by Odomena (1996:10) when she posits that God's love has to do with over-flowing disposition of divinity that enables divinity to share harmony with humanity. Moreover she submits that love is the basis or foundation on which God creates government on the earth. True love must begin or precede from the top to the bottom, hence the assertion that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. When God took initiative to control or win back humanity to himself the Christological teaching states that he gave his only begotten son on account of his love for humanity in order to execute a salvation agenda for the drifting humanity. What this means in divine economy is that for leadership to win her subjects and spur same to height of great excellence and capacity it must be devoid of manipulation and trickery. It must be characterized by true self-giving that is ready to make great sacrifices to the object of love. This is where the root word "agape" is synonymous with love meaning unconditional self-giving of one to another.

Unfortunately the government system of Nigeria and the mentality of most Nigeria leaders and her citizenry is not what they would do to make Nigeria great but what Nigeria would do to make them great. This no doubt has remained a cancerous cell undermining the spirit of sacrifice and selfless love that is the basis for national development. For instance, what has continued to fuel America to great height of political, social and economic development has been resident on the singular love they have for their nation. This love is summed up by the statement which states "don't think of what America would do for you but what you would do for America". Driven by the spirit of love, self-giving and passion Americans continue to move against the tide of nature and history to marshal positive energy for sustainable development. This is what Nigeria needs for forging a sustainable developed nation.

Moreover love in the doctrine of Christ is revealed as a person as well as a principle. As a person Christ was revealed as the one who incarnated God who the Bible describes as love. (John 3:16, 1 John 4:16). Jesus Christ is the gift of God's love to humanity. In him God who is love per excellence is revealed perfectly to mankind. Several Biblical passages corroborate the truth that Christ is the perfect revelation of God to humanity as shown in the following. (John 10:30, John 14:9b, Colossians 2:19). Furthermore Christ revealed that love is not merely an emotion but a principle of living driven by obedience. It is not just an emotional drive but a volitional component of our personality that demonstrates our affection or commitment to an object, idea, person or a cause. (John 14:15, 15: 10, 1 John 5:3). Jesus exemplified obedience to His father by His sacrificial death on the cross.

By creating a harmony in the vertical relationship of humanity with the divine alongside the horizontal relationship of man to man, love serves as the engine that blends into a functional whole all the structural components of the society for the promotion of peaceful and harmonious existence for national development. In other words love for God as well as love for man constitutes the fundamental dimensions of love that provides strong foundation for building stable and progressive society. From the foregoing we see that the redemptive or developmental capacity of love as revealed by Christ has to do with a "being

and doing”. This being has to do with character development or dispositional capacity building while the doing as revealed in his obedience relates to his conduct.

Leadership

According to Evans (2006) “virtually every institution in our culture is revealing how far off target we have become”. Leadership and management skills are fundamental (and well rewarded) elements of human capital as they contribute to productivity by improving resource allocation thereby providing the conducive environment for fostering national development. Unfortunately bad leadership has remained a recurring problem hindering sustainable development in Nigeria. This is predicated on the fact that the Nigerian citizenry has witnessed too many performances or administrations that do nothing but make a lot of promises that do not translate into any positive impact on their subjects. For African and indeed Nigerian leadership the idea of leadership by example is an exception rather than a norm.

Leadership by example is the Christological leadership style taught by Jesus Christ. By exemplary leadership the author means an accountable and God-fearing use of authority or power. In Christology Christ was revealed as a Rabbi or teacher, a master or leader of men. (John 3:3, John 13:13-15). However his concept of leadership was that of humility, service, sacrifice and truth. By his humility he was subject to His Father’s authority. According to Him he came to the earth not to do his own will but the will of him who sent him. (John 6:38, John 8:28, 49-50). From here we learn that divine pattern of authority operates through submission. It was this submission of Christ to the rules or standard of his father – the Almighty God that led him to pay the ultimate price of dying for humanity even though as a man he detested same. The Scriptures affirm that though he was equal with God he humbled himself and became obedient to death and so become a standard by which leadership can be measured for all ages. (Phil 2:6-10).

This submission though costly provided a paradigmatic shift in leadership which shows that development or bringing about a positive change in a society does not come by the instrument of lawlessness or lack of respect to rules but by submission to divine and human authority. The second dimension of leadership by example as embodied in Christological teaching is accountability. For Christ Leadership is about operating in integrity such that at any point in time the leader will not be afraid to be investigated or detest being called to account for his stewardship. Thus when Christ made the following statement: “can any of you prove me guilty of sin? (John 8:46) he was laying claim to accountable leadership, by challenging the Jews to fault him, his mission as well as his character. The place of accountability as a critical measure of exemplary leadership needed for national development cannot be over emphasized. The above view is corroborated by Hayford (2003:32) when he states *inter alia*: “the idea of being investigated may sound threatening to leaders of 21st century but notes however that leadership at any level cannot avoid being watched by her community, congregation, family, friend and even other nations if it hopes to command a quality “followership”. According to him the key question to ask in defining a developmental driven leadership is whether it is accountable enough to an extent that it could command followership. This was equally the view of Ahovi (2014:14) when he states that to stop the unending drift of Nigeria in all frontiers of her national life the leaders must come to term with accountable leadership.

Another dimension of Christological leadership is his love or passion for service and development of his subject. Christ brought a paradigmatic shift in leadership when he introduced his developmental mission on earth as a call to die for humanity it was a mission driven by highest level of love for according to the scripture greater love has no man than to lay down his life for his friends. (Mark 10:45). It was a paradigmatic shift in development perspectives taking cognizance of the fact that the Jews of his time scolded him as a demonic or mad fellow when he told people that he came to die.

Though mocked for his idealistic posture on excellent leadership by the Jews yet his approach of total self-giving, self-giving, and selflessness has remained a universalistic basis for assessing quality leadership. What this means is that parents, churches, schools, the media, government and non-governmental agencies must create a platform through which exemplary leadership is propagated both theoretically and practically in order to create a citizenry that have passion for service driven leadership.

The commitment of Christ to his developmental paradigm on earth was so total that both his enemies and friends admired his unwavering passion. It is this passion that made it possible for him to bring about a great ethical re-engineering of the world with merely 12 apostles who believed in him unto death because he believed in his mission unto death. By implication our educational system must integrate professionalism into our leadership studies such that accountability, service, humility and obedience to the codes of leadership define the basis on which quality leadership can be evaluated professionally.

Respect for Human Life

One of the vital teachings of Christ is his value for human life and personality. He not only cared for each individual life, he came to bring total healing to the endangered personality of the human family. In his encounter with the demonized man of the Gadarene, he reveals his passion to liberate humanity from deformed personality. (Mark 5:1-20). In the above Bible text Jesus encountered a demoniac abandoned at the grave yard because his people could not bind him with fetters as he constantly broke every chain and fetters used to restrain him.

The symptoms of deformed personalities abound, however from the above text we see the above demoniac manifesting the following features:

- Shamelessness and loss of self respect: He had lost all sense of shame and the parallel account in Luke 8:27 states that for a long time he had worn no clothes.
- Morbid fear and anti-social behavior: Like some drug addicts he probably felt frightened by other people such that he avoided society by making his residence in the lonely places on the mountains and in the tombs.
- Self-loathing and self-destructions: He would constantly inflict cut on himself with stones and violently opposed any attempt to restrain him for his own good.

Jesus intervention that brought about the liberation of the demoniac underscores his concern for human dignity and freedom. It could therefore be adduced that Christ came not just to re-engineer human ethics for quality living but also to restore broken personality by addressing the spiritual dimension to our enslaved humanity, thereby restoring mans dignity and freedom. Consequently he, Christ, disentangled the demoniac from the evil powers that were dominating him, banished the evil powers and set the man's personality free.

The implication of the revelation is that many anti-social behaviors cannot be resolved at the ethical education level. Society must promote spiritual education and consciousness that will enable individuals to confront and dethrone evil powers that dehumanize somepeople in the society. Medical and psychiatry education in as much as they contribute in addressing sickness ridden humanity have their limits. Thus our educational system must promote education that emphasizes the need of harnessing divine lordship or spiritual authority in checkmating the expanding coast of evil powers that overwhelm our modern society. Such authority Christ reveals can be accessed through praying and fasting. Biblical praying must be taught and promoted in our educational system in helping to contain the increasing surge of evil powers that are dehumanizing many.

The Christological teaching of Christ reveals that each individual is of great value to God. According to his parable on the good shepherd, Jesus revealed that though a shepherd may have a hundred sheep that all look alike to a stranger, yet the good shepherd knows every of his sheep by name, its character, its strength and its weakness. Christ is just such a shepherd as he knows all his sheep by name, its character, its strength and its weakness. (John 10:3) The implication of the above truth is that God loves us not simply as mankind in general but as individuals. (John 6: 38 – 39, John 10: 27-28)

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The above truth underscores the place of human dignity in divine economy. Christ reveals that each individual counts and is eternally treasured. Hence his commitment to redeem every soul from eternal ruins and shame. This concept of human worth is fundamentally lacking in Nigeria where majority of the citizenry are left to wallow in ignorance, injustice, poverty and all kinds of subjugation by the ruling class, such that by perpetuating structural injustices the ruling class continues to mass produce the army of poverty stricken youths that are easily deployed with minimal financial inducement to serve as ethnic militia to secure their illegal hold on power. What this results to is that the access rights of the majority to basic necessities of life are sabotaged at the altar of greedy and self-serving leaders thereby perpetuating the vicious cycle of our underdevelopment.

When Christ rebuked his disciples not to discourage children from being brought to him, he revealed his concern for the protection of the welfare of children (Luke 18:15-17). Moreover his teaching that parents should be honoured by their children implied that they should not only be treated with respect and reverence, but also they should be protected financially when they are old and can no longer fend for themselves. (Math 15:1-9). Furthermore Christological teaching reveals that Christ cared greatly for the protection of the rights of widow. Jesus showed his special concerns for widows when he denounced in strongest terms the activities of those who took advantage of the helpless widow by cheating and oppressing them (Luke 7:11-17, 18:1-8, 20:45-21; 4). But more than that Christ ministered to their material needs when he feed the poor and healed the sick thus showing his regard for the total welfare of those that came around him. What this means is that in applying Christological concept for respect for humans life, the government as well as non-governmental agencies should promote human rights education in our educational system. However such education became developmental or Christological driven when institutions that protect and promote overall human rights and welfare of the weak are put in place.

Community Spirit/National Integration Consciousness

The Christological teaching of Christ promoted community spirit and/or national integration consciousness. The above view is corroborated by Agang (n.d.) in his work when he posits that Jesus table fellowship underscores his respect for community and the brotherhood of all men. According to him it revealed his theology of political inclusive when he accommodated in his company the tax collectors, the prostitutes and sinners, an action which was vehemently condemned by the Pharisees of his day. Thus he avers that Jesus ate with these categories of people not because he sanctioned their sins but because he chose to identify with the truth that they bore the image of God in them and therefore has potentials to be transformed. For Jesus he saw them as sick and in need of healing which can be dispensed to them not through building walls of segregate on or exclusives but in an inclusive society. Furthermore he submits that the present looting of Nigerians economy as well as the hijacking of the political class over the years has reduced the nation to exclusive development state (where the economy is only in the hands of the few).

It is against this backdrop that this work is proposing the integration of Christological theology of inclusive society as a paradigmatic shift in re-engineering Nigeria nation forward developmentally. Our educational system must be designed to promote education for all as well education for national integration and brotherhood. This no doubt would demand that those structures that are built to keep the majority of Nigeria from accessing quality education and equal opportunity for all round development of their potentials should be dismantled if we are going to entrench the type of education that is driving advanced nations forward.

Conclusion

This paper has been able to examine some of the dimensions of Christological teachings that are relevant for promoting development in Nigeria. These were listed as love, justice and leadership and community consciousness. The work noted that several factors have continued to promote underdevelopment in Nigeria such as injustice, greed, corruption, tribalism, political and economic subjugation amongst others. It equally observed that quality education defines the pace and level of

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development of any society and therefore made a case for the adoption of Christological teachings on love, justice and leadership, respect for human life and community consciousness as a paradigmatic shift in our educational system for a way forward. It equally addressed the question of protection of the rights of the individual as well as the vulnerable people not only through human right education but also by putting in place institutions that give flesh to such education such as social welfare schemes and robust judiciary system.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are therefore highlighted:

1. Love should be nurtured in our educational system both by word and deed. Our school system, families as well as all stake holders in human developmental education must challenge people with love education both at the level of intellectual development and experiential level of development.
2. Justice education must be commenced early and this must be grounded on universal dimension of divine concept of justice. This concept of justice should ensure that the law is not used to serve the interest of the few or the powerful at the expense of the majority or the weak.
3. Quality Leadership must be defined by degree of its submission to both divine and human standard of authority. Leadership education must codify the standards by which a leader can be held accountable irrespective of his culture or society.
4. Human rights education should be promoted in the nation starting from cradle to the tertiary level of our school system. Moreover such education should integrate spiritual empowerment that provides human resources who can help in addressing spiritual dimension of endangered personality that does not respond to mere ethical education.
5. The government should establish social welfare schemes that will help to secure the rights of the weak and highly vulnerable people such as the unemployed youths, the physically challenged, mentally challenged and the elderly.
6. Our judiciary system should be strengthened so that people can enforce their rights when they are breached.

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