

**VIRTUES OF RELIGIONS: THE CHALLENGE TO COMMUNITY  
RESPONSIBILITIES AND MODIFICATIONS OF WAYWARD  
BEHAVIOURAL PATTERNS**

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**Abstract**

This paper examines the virtues of religion and the challenge of community responsibilities to modifications of behavioural patterns throughout the world. It surveys the virtues of religions which would certainly encourage community responsibilities to sharpen behavioural patterns to achieve responsible leadership in all departments of economic living, thereby, eliminating wrong desires like: greed, prostitution, armed robbery, kidnapping activities, drug abuse and so, which are known to perpetrate vices against the common good of citizens. When they are adequately streamlined, the aggregated efforts of the United Nations to solve endemic problems commonly referred to as “evil-doing” in different communities, would yield faster results through doing good for the benefit of living human beings in an environment. The paper further elicits that the various world religions certainly have one thing in common which is “loving ones neighbours as much as we love ourselves” and it mainly involves solving problems and finding better ways of doing things and they are the greatest instruments of uplifting the entire humanity to an appreciable standard of living. It concludes that when every human being is able to drop evil-doing by modifying it with goodness, then, promoting nation building would be sustained in Nigeria and other countries of the world.

**Introduction**

Religion is very unique to all the races of the world, and it is also an integral part of all cultures. All of them are members of one religious group or the other. Some powerful religions have also swallowed some weaker ones because of their advanced ethical standards and behavioural patterns, thereby, making them to abandon their so-called weaker

religious practices. It is for this reason that religion has come to be taken as an essential part of human social change in any environment.

In this regard, Hornby (2006) defined religion as “the belief in the existence of God or god.” In this vein, God is seen as “supreme” or “Almighty”, to create or kill a life. While Otite and Ogiwo (1981) saw religion as “belief

systems and may be charged emotionally” and they weren’t further to say that religion is a cultural institution that is supposed to be used to satisfy various degrees of need.

In this regard, while religion dwells on the relationship between man and God, moral is concerned about the relationship between man and his fellow man through the influence of love.

### **Virtues of Religions**

Saraydarian (2005) explained that the Ageless Wisdom has revealed that there are twelve major religions in the world and all of them originate from the same source but at different periods of human evolution. India is known to be the *Mother of all Religions of the world*.

In this regard, all religions of the world have revealed the same message, that is, “Love your neighbour as much as you love yourself.” They also revealed that within every man and woman, there is *evil* and *Holy Spirit*. They are in energy forms, and this is why you cannot see or touch them when you use a knife to dissect a human being. So whenever a person consciously or unconsciously awakens the *evil* spirit or energy within him or her through negative thinking and actions, that person will be tortured, tormented by its negative potencies. Also, whenever a person consciously or unconsciously awakens the *Holy Spirit* within him or her through positive thinking and actions, all the Goodness of God will begin to manifest. Hence, we are the architect of our own life – *as we sow so we shall reap*. So, the major world religions emerged in

this order: *Hinduism, Shintoism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Taoism, Confucianism, Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and Bahaism*. Of these twelve World Religions, eight of them belonged to the Orient (East) and four of them to the Occident (West).

Saraydarian (2006) explained that of the twelve world religions, four of them are more powerful. These four religions in order of their seniority are: Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. So anywhere one is born in the world, any of these four religions must influence one’s life.

<b>Sacred Book and Religion</b>	<b>Age</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> Bhagavad Gita (Hinduism)	5000 years old
2 <sup>nd</sup> Lotus Sutra (Buddhism)	2500 years old
3 <sup>rd</sup> Holy Bible (Old Testament was	2000 years
Before the New Testament but was not Compiled until 90 AD. But the New Testament Is 2000 years old) (Christianity)	2000 years old
4 <sup>th</sup> Holy Quoran (Koran) – Islam	1500 years old.

### **Global Community Cooperation with the Activities of the United Nations:**

The genesis of using specialized agencies in solving problems and improving on standards of living of humanity through different communities started when the United Nations (UN) was founded on the 24<sup>th</sup> October, 1945, following the aftermath of two World

Wars of 1914 – 1919 and 1935 – 1945, respectively. The beauty of it all is that all religious nations in the world dropped their differences so as to achieve a global effort. Hence, it was the spiritual efforts of the representatives of China, the USSR, the United Kingdom and the United States of America which yielded the fruits of drawing up a charter for uniting the nations with the following knowable terms:

- (a) To save succeeding generation from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime, has brought untold sorrow to mankind.
- (b) To reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations, large and small;
- (c) To establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained; and
- (d) To promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.
- (e) To be tolerant of each other.

**United Nations and Its Specialized Agencies, Like the UNESCO**

Bailey (1986) asserted that since the birth of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, which have been established to cater for the welfare of various nations in the world, it is worthy of note that more than eighty per cent of the organs are community-based and

vocational and technical skills-oriented. As example is the UNESCO.

*United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):*

According to the Americana Encyclopedia (2001), UNESCO plays an extensive role in promoting education, science, culture and communication in all countries of the world. It was established on November 4, 1946. Here are some of its responsibilities:

**Responsibilities**

It promotes international collaborations in the fields of education, science, culture and communication.

It promotes the advancement of universal respect for justice and for the rule of law.

It promotes fundamental human rights and freedoms of all peoples that are affirmed in the United National Charter.

It makes unrestrained efforts in combating ignorance and prejudice through improved international cooperation and understanding because it is believed that “wars begin in the minds of men.”

It discredits the theories of racial inferiority.

It promotes the democratization of education, science and the arts by increasing their availability through programmes of mass education and mass communication.

7. It undertakes world-wide campaign against illiteracy and unemployment.

8. It supports and emphasizes the link between expanded human potential

and national development in the Third World.

9. It promotes major educational programmes through elimination of illiteracy and improved training in basic skills.
10. It is very active in teacher education projects.
11. It embarks in the act of advising various governments on educational planning, curriculum, reforms and the production of textbooks and other educational materials.
12. It assists in the design of low-cost and practical school facilities.
13. It also promotes opportunities for women in the field of higher education.
14. Under UNESCO sponsorship, the United Nations University was established in 1973 in Japan to foster intellectual interchanges on global problems.
15. It assists Third World countries in the application of science and technology to development and encourages the protection of the environment and the rational use of natural resources for the benefit of mankind.
16. It is very active in science, engineering and agricultural education, natural resources and ecological research;
17. It studies natural disasters and the establishment of a World Science and Technology Information System.
18. It has endeavoured to build bridges between countries by creating international professions in the fields of comparative law, sociology, political science and economics, as

well as by sponsoring travel programmes.

19. It also plays a major role in the preservation of world's cultural heritage.

### **Cultivating Good Virtues**

Cultivating a good virtue, according to Bailey (1986), is a great spiritual event of the Christ, so as to be ready in the daily practical life to pass tests from being devils to become angels. As one can sift the fact from Nigeria's political, economic, social and religious terrain, it is no longer hidden that both leaders and followers in the present democratic set up, are tilting their consciousness towards being devils of Satan rather than Angels of God.

Hence, we have been taught by the Ageless Wisdom that man is dual in nature, that is, he is both the Angel of God and the devil of Satan within himself. And it is his task to overcome evil and become a redeemer of himself, and subsequently, make himself to redeem humanity by starting from his family, environment, state and country. This cannot be achieved without the "spiritual will" which is a positive virtue in each one of us.

This is not an easy task because passing any test from the domain of the devil to that of an angel within the human being is not achieved by miracles or by wishful thinking but through spiritual will. Saraydarian (2006) explained that spiritual will is *discipline*. He went further to say that Discipline is the ability to bring our inner-most fire into manifestation and it is

the core of each human being. This is what causes transformation from a state of foolishness, waywardness, stupidity, greediness or self-centredness towards an advanced living in the form of positive thinking, discipline and righteousness as mentioned earlier. Let us remember that when God created man, He did so in His own LIKENESS. This is why man "is a replica of Universe." This means that each of us is fire, is a spark, is a flame, and is a spark of that Cosmic or Universal Flame. Nobody can give it to us but we are to give it to ourselves through a serious working upon ourselves in daily discipline to overcome foolishness, stupidity, pride, greed, armed robbery, prostitution, kidnapping activities, drug-abuse, sexual pervasion, etc., and achieve selfless service for our neighbour, office or business environment and country. This is what ends up in abundance and prosperity in the form of money, property, belongings, creativity, ideas, beauty, love, compassion, vitality and enthusiasm to make Nigeria great.

On the other hand, if we do not have spiritual will, all that we accumulate as money and material prosperity will work against our own interest to make Nigeria united as a country and eventually know us down. This is what we are seeing in our contemporary life today in Nigeria. Most of what we have discovered and possessed is endangering our survival through poisoning and polluting Nature through crude oil explorations, through radioactivity, depressions, crimes, and in all forms of corruption. What is the result now in Nigeria? We are now paying for

all that our leaders and followers have done against Nature through the pains, suffering, ignorance, poverty, disease, unemployment, election rigging, kidnappings, money-laundering, and delay on the path to God. All these must be stopped by Nigerians themselves, not by miracles and wishful thinking, but through mustering of the spiritual will in all of us. If we cannot change, the answer is very simple. It means that many Nigerians have accepted many types of masquerades or veils to cover themselves and have made many of them to continuously live and enjoy the devil within themselves while the Angel of God in them has become the 'sleeping giant'. They have led man from the real to unreal, from immortality to death and from synthesis to chaos; instead of the other way round. They are wrong desires or tests which man must pass everyday so as to graduate from satanic world into the House of God which is popularly known as the Kingdom of God. It is this kingdom which we have to take by "violence" according to the *New Testament of the Holy Book*. "Violence" in this respect means "clear thinking, discipline and righteousness" as exemplified by Abraham who established the Kingdom of God in his family, environment, and eventually gained eternity. People of the world (including Nigerians) have to establish this Kingdom on nation building which Christ has unveiled to us by following His "footsteps".

Mahatma Ghandi (1869 – 1948) during the struggle for India's Independence in 1947, recognized the

ravaging influence of wrong desires and told the people to avoid the following, and can be applied to Nigeria's economy:

- (a) Wealth without work
- (b) Politics without principles
- (c) Commerce without morality
- (d) Knowledge without character
- (e) Religion without sacrifice
- (f) Science without humanity
- (g) Pleasure without conscience

These vices of glamour of wrong desires are plaguing Nigeria today (including other nations of the world) and will continue to do so unless bold steps are taken by Nigerians themselves to counteract them by passing the tests. It is when tests are passed that we will then be ready to accept Christ when He reappears and walk among men and women again.

Sigmund (2009), quoting May East's *Practical Wisdom* she wrote on the *Paradox of Our Age* as a result of wrong desires.

We have bigger houses but smaller families;  
 more conveniences, but less time.  
 We have more degrees but less sense;  
 more knowledge but less judgment;  
 more experts, but more problems;  
 more medicines but less healthiness.  
 We've been all the way to the moon and back,  
 we have trouble in crossing the street to meet our new neighbour.  
 we built more computers to hold more copies than ever,  
 But have less real communication;  
 We have become long on quantity,  
 but short on quality.

These are times of fast foods but slow digestion;

Tall mean but short characters;  
 steep profits but shallow relationships.

It is a time when there is much in the window,  
 but nothing in the room.

It is a time when there are big cathedrals of all faiths with colourful titles; but decaying characters growing the weeds of cultism, greediness, separativeness, sexual pervasion, election rigging, political thuggery/god-fatherism, examination malpractice, youth and militant restiveness, prostitution, armed robbery, kidnapping, money laundering, terrorism, wars, etc.

So, these are the crises that have come out of wrong desires. They have become heavily anchored in every department of human life in Nigeria today. Can we allow our wrong desires to continue?

### **The Way Forward to Better Community Responsibilities**

In this regard, Bailey (1986) and Saraydarian (2005:302) have formulated virtues which have been in vogue down the ages, on religions that are intended to strengthen community relationships throughout the world. Some of them are:

- It is crime to convert people into your own beliefs by force or by bribery of any kind.

- Each religion has a distinct message, and all of them complete the message for human conduct and relationships. We need to cultivate tolerance, understanding and respect and not force people, bribe them, or threaten them into accepting the things we believe.
- We are to shine our light and let people see our light, and express our own faith in a graceful way, and not make it the only way to fly.
- The best way to encourage our children in our faith is not with Sunday School and forceful lectures but through a life of beauty. Only beauty can lead our children towards the treasury of our religion.
- A religion is like a flower. It reveals itself petal by petal or level by level through spiritual will and righteousness as we proceed on the path of virtues and on the path of transformation from doing evils to become angels.
- People can understand their religions through their level. It is useless to impose a higher-level revelation on a person of a lower level.
- Degeneration in religious teaching starts when levels are mixed or confused.
- Religion has seven levels. They are:
  1. Physical level
  2. Emotion level

*NOTE:* In both physical and Emotional levels, religious leaders undertake the preaching of prosperity and well-fare like: miracles, riches, wishful thinking, seeing visions, using mediums, etc. The masses and flocks of people are found here.

3. Mental level: This is what makes us to obey laws and rules to shift from doing evil and achieve holy discipline. This is the level which many religions supposed to achieve by now, and there would have been no problem of social vices, poor governance and the share of resources or treasuries by few people to the detriment of the general good.
  4. Intuitional level – This is where the hidden side of religion is revealed.
  5. Actualization level – This is where our beliefs become a knowing experience.
  6. The level of sacrifice – This is where the Divine inspiration makes our life to become a shining light for the environment and the world.
  7. Divine level – This is where we contact and cooperate with the Spirit that inspired the religion and assist us to become transfigured.
- It is impossible to impose higher levels on people who are still wandering in low levels, or to force our level on people whom you want to convert.

- As we go higher levels, disagreements in various religions would disappear. This means that religious harmony cannot be achieved by imposing dogmas and doctrines but by transforming our life through the suggested levels.
- We must create or reveal the COMMON GOOD or GOAL for all and invite all religious people to work for that common goal. Any effort to create religious hatred is an action against the future unity of communities and the entire humanity.
- People must enjoy their religious freedom. Religious freedom means to respect the religions of others. Only through respect can we begin to understand each other's religions and proceed towards cooperation throughout the world.
- When we attain illumination, perfection or holiness, religion will not limit us; dogmas and doctrines will not limit us. We will not be caught in any scripture, but will make us to base our life on principles and laws, and above all, on our experience with God within us and the god in the Universe. This is the reason why St. Paul said that "Christ in you, the hope of glory." We should not boast about our religion but we should shine out our LIGHT of Self-Actualization and God-realization.
- To try to create uniformity in religions in a futile effort. No two

men have the same faith or belief. Even in one religion, there are many conflicting interpretations or disagreements. Our effort is not to create uniformity in religions but harmony between religions and cooperation between religious people throughout the world "loving our neighbours as much as we love ourselves".

### Conclusion

In the light of this paper, the author discovered that the virtues of religion have a role to play in community responsibilities to their behavioural patterns as exemplified by observing the rules and principles of the various religions. They would certainly mould harmonious relationships between communities. In the same vein, religious ethical standards would assist every man and woman to drop the satanic behaviours and imbibe the angelic ones which are known to promote nation building throughout the world.

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