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CONTENTS

RELIGION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
Religion is relevant to the development of every facet of human life. This means that it can serve as a springboard for the inculcation and improvement of knowledge and values which are fundamental to achieving correct human behaviours particularly as it relates to productivity and nation-building. Religion contributes to human development in so many ways, including training and transmission of knowledge. With this understanding, this paper examines the relevance of religion to human development in Nigeria, using Christianity and Islam as the basis of the study. This is because Christianity and Islam are the two major scriptural religions, which have numerous adherents in Nigeria. The two religions have also played gargantuan roles in moral and intellectual development of millions of Nigerians, which in turn contribute to national development. It identifies religious intolerance, corruption and the current economic difficulties as some of the challenges besetting human development against which it suggests the various ways through which religion can further promote sustainable human development in the 21st century Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION
Religion is as old as human being. Some theories have been put forward that the belief in animism among early humans were the basis for the later evolution of religions. Early humans initially worshipped local deities of nature, in a form of animism. These eventually grew into larger, polytheistic deities, such as gods of the sun and moon

(Taylor, 1920). In the modern period, Christianity and Islam constitute the dominant religious climate, especially in Nigeria.

It is important to state here that whenever the issue of religion and development is raised people tend to assume that the two are not co-terminous, they have no relevance to each other and that religion is an obstacle to all forms of development (Mala, 1988). One reason for this attitude arises from the definition or meaning of development that has been forced upon us and which we have accepted without questioning and which gives the impression that development is restricted only to some specific areas (Mala, 1988).

Karl Marx once remarked that "religion is the opium of the people" by which he meant that religion was being used by some people to get the masses do what they wanted done without the masses protesting (Enomate 1988). This is very negative, wrong and pessimistic way of looking at religion. Admittedly, some had used religion in an abusive way, but is that all there is in religion? No! it could be used positively both for human and national development.

Throughout its first three or four decades, development was largely conceived of in economic terms primarily, in other words as economic development. More recently the concept of human development has come into vogue, emphasizing aspects of people's lives that go beyond the economic dimension, such as health and education. In our view, human development should be understood as including the spiritual dimension of life. Yet in many plans human development remains essentially an adjunct to the central aim of generating economic growth and the distribution of wealth. In short, development workers need to make the idea of human development a reality (Stephen and Gerrie, 1998).

In Nigeria, both Christianity and Islam have made tremendous contributions in the realm of human development. It is, therefore, against this background that this paper sets out to examine the role and the usefulness of religion in the intellectual and physical development of Nigerian people, using Christianity and Islam as the basis of the study.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

All the concepts used in this paper are quite well-known, widely used and to a large extent, self-explanatory, it may nevertheless be useful to provide definitions of the principal concepts such as religion and human development in order to minimize the possibility of misunderstanding. Thus we can proceed to explain the nuances surrounding religion and human development.

As a concept, religion has come to occupy a centre stage in both our consciousness and in academic discourses. According to Adeniyi (1993), religion is a body of truths, laws and rites by which man is subordinated to the transcendent being. Bellah (1970) understood religion as a set of symbolic forms and actions that relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence. Peter (1998) sees it as a system of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. Adefarasin (2004) views religion as the recognition of all duties as divine commands. Religion is also a system of worship.

Religion is also a social cement in the sense that it acts as a system of bonding and binding through which individuals are controlled and disciplined, as well as united in more or less homogenous groups with a collective consciousness. This level of homogeneity makes it a good factor for peace and stability (Nordas, 2007). Specifically, the philosophical base of most religion is deeply enmeshed in peace.

Religion can be understood in two related but distinct ways. First, in a material sense it refers to religious establishments (i.e. institutions and officials) as well as to social groups and involvement whose primary interest are found within religious concerns. There is also the spiritual sense, which deals with models of social and individual behaviour that help believers to organize their daily lives. In this sense, religion has to do with the ideal of transcendence, supernatural realities and the sacred; as a system of language and practice that organizes the world in terms of what is deemed holy and the ultimate conditions of existence (Egwu, 2001 and Hynes, 1996).

As religion becomes adapted to the existing social order, it serves some important social functions. First, it provides answers for the uncertainties inherent in human life. Second, it frequently encourages acceptance of prevailing norms and established social relationships. In this case, religion may contribute to the persistence of existing institutions and social relationships by the attitude towards life that it enjoins. Third, the consensus of religious doctrine and uniformity of religious practices contribute to the solidarity of the society (Salawu and Adekeye, 2003). However, religious fanaticism may lead to hostility and violent conflict as it always happens in Nigeria.

Human development is another concept to be discussed briefly. The concept of human development was originally introduced as an

alternative to conceptions of development that focused on economic growth-with or without equity considerations (Martinussen, 2000). Therefore, it may be useful to begin by briefly referring to the definition of development as advancement through progressive changes in economic, social, cultural, technological and political conditions of society leading to an improvement in the welfare of the citizens (Olomola, 1997). No society can be regarded as developed if there is a high level of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, mal-nutrition, child mortality, political instability, endemic corruption and inequality in income distribution.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1990), considers human development as a process of enlarging people's choices. This view is similar to that of Haq (1995) who posited that human development embraces the enlargement of all human choices-whether economic, social, cultural, or political. The human development school draws attention primarily to the choices in three essential areas: the opportunity to lead a long and healthy life; the opportunity to acquire knowledge; and the opportunity to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. To this was later added several other dimensions and aspects, and the name of the concept itself was changed from 'human development' to 'sustainable human development' in order to highlight the importance of sustaining all forms of capital and resources-physical, human, financial, and environmental-as a pre condition for meeting the needs also of future generation (Martinussen, 2000).

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

The role of religion in human development can be best explained using the structural functionalist theory. Structural functionalism is a sociological paradigm which addresses what social functions various elements of the social system perform with regards to the entire system. Social structures are stressed and placed at the center of analysis, and social functions are deduced from these structures. It was developed in the United States by sociologist Talcott Parsons (Holmwood, 2005).

Structural functionalism is built upon twin emphases: application of the scientific method to the objective social world and use of an analogy between the individual organism and society. The emphasis on scientific method leads to the assertion that one can study the social world in the same ways one studies the physical world. Thus, Functionalists see the social world as "objectively real," as observable with such techniques as social surveys and interviews. They believe

that rules and regulations help organize relationships between members of society. Values provide general guidelines for behavior in terms of roles and norms. These institutions of society such as the family, religion, the economy, the educational and political systems, are major aspects of the social structure. Institutions are made up of interconnected roles or inter-related norms. For example, interconnected roles in the institution of the family are of wife, mother, husband, father, son, brother, sister and daughter.

The theory is based around a number of key concepts. First, society is viewed as a system – a collection of interdependent parts, with a tendency toward equilibrium. Second, there are functional requirements that must be met in a society for its survival (such as reproduction of the population). Third, phenomena are seen to exist because they serve a function (Holmwood, 2005). Functionalists believe that one can compare society to a living organism, in that both a society and an organism are made up of interdependent working parts (organs) and systems that must function together in order for the greater body to function.

From this theory, it can be seen that religion like other parts of society like the family, education, and law has to be seen in terms of the contribution that it make to the functioning of the whole of society. Therefore, like other social institutions, religion plays important role in the development of the society, especially in the areas of education, morality and health. The extent of these contributions to human development is later be examined in this paper.

RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Religion is relevant to the development of every facet of human life. This means it can serve as a springboard for the inculcation and improvement of knowledge and values, which are fundamental to human development. For example, both the Holy Bible and Qur'an expound all that is or may be needed by mankind for the fulfillment of life or development.

To the Church, human resources constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production. Human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economical and political organizations and carry forward development (Asaju, 1988). Christianity, with its scriptures (Old Testament and New Testament) bequeaths to Christians basic scriptural and ethical or mores intended to guide people towards living an ideal life-style

through individual conduct, inter-personal relationship and attitude in or to government.

Christianity also teaches that man needs to be in good relationship with God as a prerequisite to the realization of total well-being, the utilization of his manpower potentials and the achievement of his goals for national development. The psalmist believes that his ability to attain righteousness and success in life depends on God's creation of a new (Spiritual heart in him, and he supplicates for this (Ps. 51:10-13). Prophet Ezekiel agrees with the above and declares it to be a precondition for human repentance from evil and for man's goodness (Ezek.30: 25.27).

Asaju (1988) posits that ethical nature of man can determine his productivity in labour. In the words of Jesus Christ, it can be rightly said that a bad tree cannot produce good fruits and vice-versa (LK.6: 43-45). The Decalogue in the Old Testament (Ex.20: 2-17) which serves as the basic moral code of the ancient Israelites are relevant to the desired ethical orientation of man. The Ten Commandments provide strong challenges for the ethical orientation needs of man, both in achieving the development of human character and improved contributions to the manpower needs of any nation. Stealing, adultery, corruption and other social problems are sin by Christian standards and thus are counter-productive to human development.

Like Christianity, Islam is a way of life. Islamic regulations on ethics and human development are set out in some details in the Islamic law or *Shariah*. As against inaction which is indiscriminately attached to Islam, the Qur'an invites men to labour and action:

God changes not the condition of a folk until they (first) change that which is in their hearts (Qur,'an: 11).

It is a truism that Islam places high premium on education as a veritable means of human development. The ultimate aim of education in Islam should be to facilitate the balanced growth of the total personality of man, through training of man's spirit, intellect, rational self, feelings and bodily senses (Al-Attas quoted by Muhibudden, 1988). The type of educational training for all and sundry should be such that faith in God -the Supreme Being is infused into the whole of the personality of the people and creates an emotional attachment to religion. Consequently, morality is indissolubly joined to religion while economic, political and laws are also related to religion through morality in an unbreakable bound.

RELIGION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is a religiously pluralistic State. Academically, three such religions have been identified, they are African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam. In practical terms, among the Nigerian population, two of the three religions are paramount and readily recognized by the Nigerian people; these are Christianity and Islam. The two religions have played gargantuan roles in moral and intellectual development of millions of Nigerian citizens, which in turn have contributed to nation building.

One of the areas of human development in which Christianity and Islam in Nigeria have made tremendous contribution is educational enterprise. There is no disputing the fact that the majority of primary and secondary schools in Nigeria during the 70s and 80s were established and controlled by the missionaries. These schools contributed immensely to the moral rectitude in the society before most of them were later taken-over by the governments. Today, religious organisations are also playing prominent role in university education in the country. Christian and Muslim missionaries, such as Redeemed Church of God, Catholic Church, Winners' Church, Islamic Movement for Africa (IMA), etc have established universities for moral and intellectual development of Nigerian people. According to Simpson (2006), the steady influx of religious bodies owned universities into the realm of educational system in Nigeria is widely linked to a response to the disappointments of people in the public secular universities in the country. Such disappointments, according to him, find relevance in Weeks's (1980) emphasis on the interrelatedness between education, morality and religion as well as intellectual development. The table below shows some of the Universities owned by the Christian and Islamic organisations in Nigeria.

University	Proprietor/Mission in Charge
Covenant University Ota, Ogun State	Winners Church
Bowen University Iwo, Oyo State	Baptist Church
Babcock University, Ogun State	Seventh Day Adventist
Madonna University, Anambra State	Catholic Church
Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo State	Anglican Church
Redeemers' University, Ogun State	Redeemed Church

Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Kwara State	Muslim Community
Crescent University Abeokuta, Ogun State Africa (IMA)	Islamic Movement
Fountain University, Osun State	NASFAT

Source: Researcher's, Survey, 2008

Apart from their contribution to educational sector, Christian and Islamic organisations have also played and are still playing a significant role in the development of the nation's health sector. Religious bodies have been known to be pioneers in health industry. The establishment and management of the formal health institutions (Hospital, Maternity) by Christian and Muslim organizations, such as Baptist Hospital, Catholic Health Projects, Ahmadiya Hospital, etc, are impetus to health care development of Nigerians (Ayinla, 2003).

Religious bodies in Nigeria have also contributed in no small measure to the maintenance and continued existence of manpower development by preaching love, concord and peaceful co-existence of all Nigerians. This is because Christians and Muslims know that there can be no progress and development where there is no peace. This is not saying that there is no trouble here and there, even among the religious practitioners, but the major concern of Christianity and Islam is that peace is maintained always.

THE CHALLENGES

One of the most disturbing problems facing Nigeria today is that of religious intolerance. Unwarranted rivalry and conflicts between Christians and Muslims have assumed a disturbing dimension with obvious consequences for human development. Such experiences as religious mayhem in Kaduna State in 2001, ethno-religious riot in Plateau State 2001 to 2004, Kano religious carnage in 2001, etc. (resulting into death of several people) are typical examples. Intolerance can lead to disunity, violence, vandalism and unpatriotic attitude among people. These can hamper human development.

Fanaticism by adherents of various religions in Nigeria is perhaps the fundamental reason for intra/inter religious disharmony. Religious leaders sometimes contribute to this malady through their inculcation of erroneous teachings in their followers as well as through their provocative utterances (through the media or in open air preaching) against the interest and beliefs of adherents of other religions (Asaju, 1988).

It is noteworthy that the rivalries are carried out mostly by the elite class of the respective religions. Contrary to this disposition, the ordinary citizens normally live together in harmony despite their differences in religious loyalties. It is common to find particular families in Nigeria, which are composed of members belonging to different religions. People of different religions are found working together in government, and offices and interacting in sporting activities and schools, and living together as co-tenants in houses. Many Nigerians have friends among virtually all the different religions. A gradual reversal of this interaction can be noticed in the growing awareness and practice of religious particularism and fanaticism today (Ayinla, 2003).

Corruption constitutes another dimension of threat to human development in Nigeria. Nigerians in the 60s, 70s and the early parts of 80s could be characterized as good citizens. They were good because of their uncompromising or unconditional nationalism, kindness, honesty, above all God-fearing. It is, however, unfortunate that the Nigerians of 90s and 2000s are being transformed from what used to be, good and patriotic citizens to bad and corrupt. Corruption threatens moral and intellectual development of Nigerians and stereotypes Nigerian society in the international community. Various types of corrupt practices impede the purity and the normalcy of the Nigerian society. It is a truism that the endemic nature of corruption in Nigeria today has sent millions of Nigerians to early grave and inhibits human development. As a matter of fact, a nation that thrives on corruption will no doubt be perpetually enslaved economically, socially, politically and spiritually. The human values are easily destroyed where there is the lack of trust and confidence. Where the social exchanges are based on distrust, dishonesty, ethnic chauvinism, religious bigotry, political intolerance, sustainable human development can not be achieved in concrete terms.

The current economic predicament in the country also poses as challenge to human development. The economy of Nigeria at present is unhealthy and has made life more difficult for the vast majority of Nigerians; the rate of poverty and unemployment is high. The rate of violent crimes is equally alarming. There is therefore little impetus for people to perform maximally in their work, when they are under-nourished and live in hardship and in fear of possibility of retrenchment by their employers. The danger thus exists whereby with the increasing hardship of Nigerians to live comfortably there is tendency of early death. All these pose as challenges to human development in the 21st century Nigeria.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the foregoing, we have attempted to establish the place of religion in human development, using Christianity and Islam as our basis. The role of religion in the moral and intellectual development can not be underestimated. This is because religion touches comprehensively and directly on the essence of man (body, soul and spirit). The various problems, which pose as challenges to human development in Nigeria, are equally discussed. Based on the above premise therefore, it is apposite to make the following recommendations:

The religious bodies should create a social welfare department with a committee set up to oversee welfare projects for human development. Besides, religious organisations in the country should embark on more social welfare services to alleviate poverty and prevent human catastrophe in Nigeria.

The ethical codes in religions should be taken to be an encouragement and a possible impetus for the quest towards inter-religious harmony. The utilization by different religious adherents of their respective ethical norms can result into the development of the physical, mental, psychological and spiritual potentials of Nigerians in order to facilitate effective nation-building.

We equally posit that the Church and the Mosque are duty bound to raise the standard of living of the entire Nigerian masses. Besides, Christians and Muslims have divine responsibility to achieve a better and more fully integrated human life for their people. Nigerians cannot expect to have a self-respect based on self-reliance if the two religious communities do not cooperate with other Nigerians to develop the people. We also realised that religious bodies have been known to be pioneers in health, education and industry and such development projects should be resumed now that millions of Nigerians are facing abject poverty and massive unemployment. Lastly, religious bodies have a responsibility to supplement government serious and genuine efforts to raise people's living standards, extremely hampered by limited resources. This they can do by providing their own services and cooperating with the government on every possible area.

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