



Religion and Sustainable National Development: The Moral Burden of the Church in Nigeria Today

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ABSTRACT

Religion is one of the strongest and most significant phenomena in human experience with influences in the areas of socio-political development, economic and educational progress, interpersonal and international cooperation, mutual dialogue and understanding among people. Development as an encompassing word, also embraces the socio-cultural, economic, political and technological advancement. As a very religious nation, the edifices of Churches and mosques that adorn our streets and neighborhoods, the high tempo prayers that emanate there from, along with the ecstatic religious gatherings seen everywhere, and the display of traditional religious practices, are clear indicators of the value Nigerians place on religion. The nation is equally blessed with an array of human and material endowments. Despite these, she remains on the fringe of development with little advance in domestic and foreign policy frameworks. Studies have identified several factors which explain this dangling and seeming stunted growth. This study adopts the phenomenological and historical approaches, noting that religion is a two-edged sword which can cut either way with serious consequences. It is posited here that for there to be sustainable development, there has to be the profound involvement of the Church based on the Charter of Christ's mission (Luke 4: 18-19) and the manifest tripartite mission of the Church: upward mission to God, self and the world. This paper recommends the application of Christian ethics in addressing national concerns through eschewing discrimination, intolerance and fanaticism and imbibing the virtues of service, hard work, entrepreneurship, reorientation, quality scriptural teaching and leadership development.

Keywords: Religion, development, Church, moral burden

Introduction

There is no gainsaying the fact that religion is a universal concept in principle and practice. Thus, there is hardly a society without a religious inclination the nomenclature notwithstanding. For this reason, it has become an important factor in the social, economic, political, educational, moral and psychological lives of adherents. With particular reference to Nigeria, before the emergence of Islam and Christianity, the multi tribal ethnicities which made up the nation had varied religious experiences and expressions in their cosmogonic and theogonic persuasions as may be seen in their belief systems in God, divinities, spirits, ancestors, mystical powers, sorcery, magic and medicine. The implication of the foregoing is

that religion functions for individuals and societies. According to Owete and Odili (2008), it functions for individuals by providing meaning to life and existence and a sense of belonging or identity. Being fundamentally critical to societal existence, it bolsters both its structure and culture. Furthermore, it has been observed that there are functions and dysfunctions of religion, that is, it is a double-edged sword which can make or mar society. To this extent, religious beliefs have shaped the history of the world in various ways in relation to cultural development, politics, works of arts and literature and moral codes.

The church as a particular religious group derived its structure, ethos and principles from Jesus Christ. Described as the body of Christ who is also its head (Eph.1:22,23), it is said to be a living, functioning, organised body which receives instructions from him, made available through prayer and the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13) (Havlik 1976). Motivated by the great commission (Matt. 28:18-20), backed by the great commandment (John 13:34-35), its spread is attributed to the intensity of the Holy Spirit and the propensity of men. Thus, the church as envisioned by Jesus Christ has a mission which according to Peters (1981) is three fold: upward mission to God, upward mission to self and upward mission to the world.

Nigeria as a multi ethnic configuration is being plagued today by a variety of issues of development. Blessed with abundant human and material resources, these do not translate into an upsurge in her chequered existence in domestic and foreign policy framework. Studies have identified several factors which explain this dangling and seeming stunted growth. This study adopts the phenomenological and historical approaches and examines the providential role of the church in achieving sustainable national developments. Guided by a variety of factors which stifle its growth, this paper examines the issues of her development from a wholistic perspective. It specifically discusses what development is, factors impeding her development, what the mission of the church is, biblical and theological basis for the church's involvement in sustainable development and practical steps the church could take in realising this. It is contended that for there to be sustainable development, the church has to be profoundly involved in its daily life through discouraging indolence, intolerance and fanaticism with all its colourations, encouraging virtues of service, hard work, entrepreneurship, reorientation, quality scriptural teaching and leadership development.

Conceptual Clarification

Religion

Religion as an academic discipline, as a system, as a phenomenon and as a tradition does not need any lengthy introduction. Perhaps, what one should mention here is that attempts by scholars and practitioners to define it are as variegated as its typologies and apologists. It follows that these definitions show how incomprehensible religion like the supernatural can be: the finite human mind's inability to describe or fathom the divine infinite. As a result, it has been discovered that definitions of religion have incorporated phenomena which may not be thought of as religious. These definitions may be grouped into two approaches: those that are functional and those that are substantive. According to Haralambos and Horton (2004), the functional definitions tend to be too inclusive while the substantive ones tend to be too exclusive (406). The functional definitions view religion in terms of the contribution it makes to the wellbeing of a group, community, society or individuals while the substantive definitions on the other hand deal with the content of religion like beliefs, symbols, etc, rather than its

functions or purpose. It is pertinent to note here that all definitions emphasize certain aspects of religion, broadly either the secular or profane (human, worldly) or the sacred (spiritual, unseen).

Concerned by the enormity in defining religion, Wotogbe-Weneka (2005) advances two reasons why more scholars do not wish to dabble into its definitions, namely, due to endless controversy and debate as to which or what constitutes a proper or acceptable definition and the unresolved confusion caused by earlier attempts to define it. On the whole, it is probable that divergent views of mankind about what constitutes the ultimate reality and what level of relationship and dimension of actions (practices) among mankind that could be considered religious-oriented are further explanation to this cautious approach by scholars.

Johnstone (1996) traced the word religion to a Latin root but observed that there exists disagreement as to which more expressly conveys the meaning. They are *religiare* meaning *to bind together* (as in a group) or *relegere* meaning *to rehearse, to excite painstakingly* (as in the repetitious nature of liturgy). He acknowledged the universality of religion in terms of definition and practice and went ahead to offer its five characteristics:

- i. It is a group phenomenon
- ii. It is connected with the sacred and supernatural
- iii. It involves a body of beliefs
- iv. It involves a set of practices
- v. It involves moral, prescriptions (7-13).

He defined religion *as a system of beliefs and practices by which a group of people interprets and responds to what they feel is sacred and, usually supernatural as well* (13).

Omogbe (1999) stated that religion is a universal phenomenon which infiltrates every human society and hence cannot be ignored. Yet, he noted that though it has no universally accepted definition, men turn to it in answer to certain fundamental questions of life such as its meaning, purpose, origin and ultimate end (3). Accordingly, he traced the word religion to a Latin root, *ligare* (to bind), *relegare* (to unite, to link together) and *religio* (relationship). Thus, *religion is usually a relationship, a link established between two persons, a human person and a divine person believed to exist*".(3) He went further to state that it is a bipolar phenomenon—the human pole and the divine pole and that religion is what goes on between these two poles. In the context of this paper, religion is seen as what man does based on his belief in a supernatural agency/entity in addressing his challenges and in relationship with his fellow man.

A discussion of the role of religion in development addresses first and foremost the purpose of religion: is it for the personal benefit of its practitioners or is it primarily a vehicle for social change in society?

Development

One of the cardinal issues in nature is that of increase. Every created thing has the potential of growth expansion, a directed change and advancement. This quality applies to human societies and their subsidiaries such as institutions. It is therefore expected that human efforts and activities would experience a leap, a progression or simply an ontogenesis for the good of humanity and society in achieving a set target or goal. When these are attained in the right direction or proportion, development is said to have taken place. Thus, Owete and Odili (2008) quoted Nwosu to have said that development has to do with

some improvement in the human conditions in a given community;

an improvement which would either enhance the general welfare of mankind, or which does not at least hinder such welfare in any way, as society advances towards the goals it has set for itself, connotation of materials, social and spiritual advancement (17).

In as much as the index for development appears to be economic, we state here that it is rather a wholistic concept which encompasses other dimensions of society. For a nation to be said to be developed or not, is a product of the combined forces or aggregate of its configuration. From a broader perspective, scholars of development studies and social scientists view development as *the totality of human beings; the enhancement of the freedom and well-being of the people* (Okoli 9).

Adesina and Adefolaju (2004) also supported this position when they observed that:

Development involves all facets of human life - economic, social, cultural, technological... Development would have occurred therefore when there has been an important improvement in basic needs of people and when economic progress has contributed to a greater sense of self-esteem for the country and individuals within it. It would have also occurred when material advancement has expanded the range for individuals (123).

According to Babawale (2007), development involves two basic processes which are the improvement and refining of what is already in existence and adapting same to meet contemporary needs and finding solutions to new problems or finding new solutions to old problems (14). Development basically has to do with three key elements: The human society, human condition and basic resources. Thus, the possession by the human society of the basic resources required and the capacity to utilize same to improve the human condition is a pointer to what development is: Human society (HS) + Basic Resources (BR) + Human Condition (HC) = Development (D).

Sustainable development may be viewed as the ability to meet the needs of the present without necessarily compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Babawale then defined sustainable development as :

a deliberate and systematic policy of ensuring the survival of a state in such conditions that the social, economic and political necessities that are imperative for the enjoyment of the good life and ensuring the greatest good for the greatest numbers are available now without this constituting a denial of the capacity of being able to enjoy the same benefits to generations yet unborn in the foreseeable future (15).

In achieving sustainable development, there are two factors that must be taken into consideration: the responsible use of the resources in a way that allows the next generation to benefit from same and social order which checks the excesses of members of that society, which would in the long run bring about peace, orderliness, trust and respect. Thus, development is understood from the individual and societal perspectives. Akinyemi (2008) cited Rodney who observed that development from the individual perspective *implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being*. From the social perspective, it *implies an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships* (128). From the foregoing discourse, a few facts may be deduced.

First, development is not based on material and economic prosperity. Secondly, the shift from individual and societal perspectives of development to that of national creates a vacuum whereby the participation of individuals is questionable as to ameliorate their conditions because they appear handicapped in the protection and promotion of the necessary resources required.

Church

According to Wotogbe-Weneka (1997), the word church derives from the Greek *ecclesia*, which simply means Church. He observed that

How and when the word came into usage has been a serious debate over the years among biblical and ecclesiastical scholars...the summary of their debate reveals that the church began with and was founded by Christ himself who is equally the owner, founder and head of His body (16).

He further posited that the church simply means *the church of Christ* or *Christian congregations*, with Christ as both its head and body. For him, “there is not a church because there are Christians, but there are Christians between there is a church (17). Similarly, Willmington (1981) wrote that *ekklesia* (a variant spelling) is derived from the verb *ekkaleo*. The compound *ek* means *out* and *kaleo*, *to call* or *summon*. Put together, it means *to call out*. This fact is corroborated by Barnes (1987). According to the encyclopaedia of world religions (2006), the term church is used in a dual sense to refer to the universal church (all Christians) and for its national and local congregations (the various denominations). Again, born on the day of Pentecost, it is characterised by holiness, which, finds expression in worship, teaching, mission and good works (197). For Peloubet (1986), church derived from the Greek *kuriakon*, meaning *belonging to the Lord*.

Furthermore, that *ecclesia*, the Greek word for church, originally meant an assembly called out by the magistrate or by legitimate authority. He submitted that it was in this sense that the word was adopted and applied by the New Testament writers to the Christian congregation (117). The Harper Collins Bible dictionary described the New Testament church as a group of people, either all the Christians in a city, or those gathered for worship in a particular house or all Christians in all the churches, or the whole church but never referred to a building or denomination (183). According to the truth for today world mission school as cited by Amakiri (2005), the word church appears 79 times in the New Testament, in 17 of the 27 books excluding Mark, Luke, John, 2 Timothy, Titus, 1 & 2 Peter, 1 & 2 John and Jude (5). Among the characteristics of the church are a hierarchical bureaucracy, employment of professional, full time clergy and gaining of new members through natural reproduction and socialization of children into it (Johnstone 90).

Moral Burden

To say that something is moral refers to its being either right or wrong and the distinctions between them (The new Webster’s dictionary of the English language). Howbeit, used in the context of this paper, moral has to do with right action or upright conduct. Burden refers to a moral obligation which one puts on oneself or on others or is put on one by others. It follows then that moral burden has to do with willing assignment, action or activity which by

one's judgement is capable of proffering a solution to or stabilising a situation or event. It is described simply as a task to be done or undertaken or the prosecution of certain assessed or accepted values, standards or principles which bring about the good of society or individuals. To say that sustainable national development is the moral burden of the church in Nigeria today means that it is an assignment, a mission, charge, duty, calling or responsibility of the church to bring about or contribute to the advancement of Nigeria as a nation in all its ramifications guided by universally accepted Christian values or ethos.

Issues in National Development

The very slow and sometimes clumsy growth of Nigeria has been on the front burner at many fora, secular and spiritual. The causes are well known, multi-faceted and widespread that people appear to accept it as normative, since they appear insurmountable. They include corruption, low level of technological advancement, terrorism and ethnic tensions, religious bigotry, poor leadership, ineffective government policies, social injustice and misapplied and unused skilled and trained manpower. Fashola (1988) also identified these issues as bribery and financial mismanagement, extravagance and import-oriented materialism, increasing debt serving burden and extreme income inequality (116).

The Church in Sustainable National Development

The thesis on the moral burden of the church today in sustainable development discourages the cancerous acquisition of material wealth even in its fold (What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his soul? Matt. 16:26; Mark 8:36); the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6: 10) and points to a regeneration of the moral, intellectual and spiritual content of the citizenry. This position is not opposed to economic development but takes into consideration a development with a human face. There are reasons for the church to be involved in national development. Ilori (2010) identified these to include

- i) God's wish for Nigeria to be peaceful and prosperous(Isaiah 61:1-2)
- ii) Christians are an integral part of the Nigeria society. The Christian is first a citizen.
- iii) To promote the human dignity of every Nigerian. All Human beings are equal in the sight of God.
- iv) It is the Lord's mandate to Christians (the church), to be the salt of the earth and light of the world (Matt 5:13-16)

Other factors include its affinity with the political and economic structures of society which it reinforces in addition to satisfying the many personality needs of individuals at all levels of the society; the popular *Charter of Christ's mission* as in Luke 4:8-19: ¹⁸ *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,* ¹⁹ *To preach the acceptable year of the Lord* (KJV); Christ's purpose for the church which Warren (1995), identified as loving the Lord wholeheartedly, loving one's neighbour as oneself, going and making disciples, baptising them and teaching them to obey (103-106). These he summarised with the words manifesting, mission, membership, maturity and ministry (107); and the great commandment (Matthew 22:37, 38; John 13:34-35).

Principles in Sustainable National Development

The church is both a physical and organic institution. As such, it has certain functions for which it was established to pursue and to do same in the present milieu. According to Adegbite as cited by Ampitan (2012),

The development of the society, besides spiritual foundation, is a responsibility of the church... the church could not pretend to be unaware of happenings in the society, hence its duty to add value to the people and the country. We cannot keep talking while we do nothing to improve ourselves (235).

Practical steps the church could adopt in this regard are as highlighted:

1. Poverty Alleviation and Communal Living: The scripture in Acts 4:34-35 exemplifies this. Many of the early Christians were poor; this is not to say that there were no rich members. These altruistic members were willing to come to the aid of the less privileged, hence their communal life, in supplying the needs of their poor brethren. The experience today shows that the rich rather than assist the poor flaunt their wealth to the amazement of the less privileged poor members, who in their poverty, contribute to their wealth through offerings and other sundry non-material services. The poor sometimes feel ostracized as members of the church following the way they are treated. A nation with a large number of the poor cannot be said to be developed or developing hence, the church today should emulate this character of the early church. Establishing entrepreneurial centres and training members in skill acquisition would be beneficial in a wholistic manner. However, beneficiaries should also be properly groomed on how to manage and sustain whatever they gain as the church's assistance.

2. Hard Work and Entrepreneurship and Empowerment. Rather than sit and expect the biblical manna from heaven, the church should encourage its members to engage in hard work. "An idle mind is the devil's workshop" is a popular adage. Laziness and free money syndrome must be discouraged. Apostle Paul admonished in 2 Thessalonians 3:7-14 that Christians should engage in work and demonstrated same in Acts 18: 1-3, being a tentmaker. Skills acquisition programmes should be put in place as part of its welfare policy for members including giving financial packages as take-off grants for those who successfully undergo such training. It would also not be out of place for the church to set up cooperative societies from which individuals especially the needy ones could draw from with very minimal interest or outright interest free to boost small scale businesses. These have multiplier effects on individuals and to the church as a body of believers because when people work judiciously at different ends, they contribute to meaningful development.

3. Provision of Social and Physical Infrastructure: The church is called upon to engage in these areas in order to promote national development as done by the early missionaries to Nigeria. It may not be normal for the church to spend millions of naira to purchase parcels of land and erect edifices without access roads or expect government to construct roads for them. Notice is however taken of the efforts of some denominations in addressing these. In Port Harcourt, Nigeria, the Salvation ministries of Pastor David Ibiyeomie, has been undertaking the maintenance and construction of some roads which lead to its buildings particularly in the Mini-Orlu area. Also, the Deeper Life Christian Ministry of Pastor Kumuyi recently built a hospital

in Lagos with over one thousand bed spaces, which offers free services to people irrespective of religious affiliation. The Omega Power Ministry (OPM) of Apostle Chibuzor Chinyere has embarked upon the provision of free education for pupils in Rivers and Abia states irrespective of denominations. The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) Region 5 has launched a campaign on environmental cleanliness tagged *pick that trash, don't add to it*, aimed at raising people's consciousness on the need to properly dispose of waste and stop the littering of streets with refuse. These are commendable examples of what the church could do to strengthen national development.

4. Quality Spiritual (Biblical) Teaching. The church is supposed to be a symbol of love, self-sacrifice, goodness, hard work and other values that are oriented towards the upliftment of humanity. It is a common experience that the various denominations rather engage in the "scramble and partition" of adherents to their advantage, through the institutionalisation of church founders, verbal attacks on each other, heightened emphasis on prosperity without scriptural basis. Ampitan pointed out certain slogans which are dished out from the pulpit but which are very deceptive to include

As I succeed, you will succeed;
As I make it, you will make it;
As I prosper, you will prosper;
As I progress, you will progress;
Everywhere I get to, you will go there;
All of us will celebrate victory at the mountain top;
It is well;
Bless you etc (234)

Other slogans are: I am rich; I am strong; for better for better; see you on top. These clichés become recurring decimal without much to show for it except that the GOs keep increasing their financial fortune. Physical items such as olive oil (anointing oil), handkerchiefs, holy water, etc, are also sold to the gullible worshippers with unending promises of prosperity. Rather than teach members to face the reality of their situations and address them frontally, many of them engage in endless prayers and fasting sometimes to the neglect of their businesses and jobs. Another worrisome practice is the demonization of every ill human experience without adequate medical diagnosis or introspection. There are many reports of women who die in labour in churches and prayer houses; students who fail examinations while praying and fasting instead of reading; broken homes; increase in accusations of witchcraft with mother-in-laws, housemaids, (house helps), neighbours, etc as victims. Cases of isolation are often noticed among people who are not of the same denomination. Such lopsided teachings encourage discrimination, intolerance and fanaticism and are buffers to underdevelopment. It is expected that preachers should undergo sound and quality theological training.

5. Social Justice: Justice is a universally established and agreed standard of fairness. Injustice is its opposite. That injustice invades the nation is not in doubt. This manifests in misuse of power abuse of people's rights, neglect of one's duty to others and the nation. The church should assume its prophetic role to the nations and declare like prophet Amos of old: *But let justice run down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream* (Amos 5; 24, NKJV) even as God forbids injustice (Deut. 16:19; cf Prov. 20:10; 22:22-23). The church must not only be seen to be clamouring for justice, it must be a model in its body of what justice should be. One

of the effects of social injustice is the preferment of mediocrity to meritocracy and corruption in all shades of human endeavours. Injustice leads to strife, conflicts, destruction and violence. It should not limit its outcry for justice to only when its leaders or members are treated as this is selfish complaint.

6. Protection of the Rights of Citizens especially the less privileged irrespective of religious persuasion, political divide, gender, tribal affiliation and profession. The constitution of the Federal republic of Nigeria (1999) chapter IV, section 33 to 45 outlines the inalienable rights of citizens. Where these are violated by government, her proxies, individuals or institutions, the church could seek for redress on behalf of the persons affected in appliance with section 46. When this is done, it would engender a sense of confidence in the people to contribute their quota towards national development and checkmate deviant behaviours.

7. Reorientation. This is another area the church needs to do more, especially in the civic education of her members. It is expedient that Christians be reoriented on their civil responsibilities which they owe the society and government. Such include payment of taxes, utility bills, casting of votes, respect for leaders, obeying rules and regulations such as traffic, sanitation etc. It is a misnomer for Christians to refuse or reluctantly carry out their civic responsibilities in the belief that they belong to the heavenly kingdom by reason of being born again. Jesus Christ himself carried out his civic responsibility of paying tax (Luke 20:21-25; Matthew 17:24-27). These were further expatiated in the Pauline and Petrine epistles: Romans 13:7: *Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, custom to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour*” and 1Peter 2:13-15: *Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the King as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the appearance of foolish men.* It is in this way that patriotism is demonstrated. No nation can develop without a patriotic citizenry.

8. Holding National Thanksgiving and Prayer: Despite the multiplicity of problems facing the nation, she has been able to navigate the tidal waves and remained as one. This calls for appreciation to God. Such could be done by all denominations and also by groups and individuals in the similitude of Gowon’s *Nigeria Prays* especially in the current experiences of killings by terrorists and terror gangs.

9. Leadership Development: The central factor in Nigeria’s shaky development is that of leadership, which Chinua Achebe described as *the trouble with Nigeria*. Leadership is the ability to effectively harness the multi-national resources (human and material) towards the achievement of the desired goal. Nigeria has been plagued by leadership crisis through military to civilian eras hence the not-too-impressive efforts at growth. This is an area that the church needs to strengthen. It is only effective leadership that can bring about an effective resource capacity management. From the scripture, we learn that akin to leadership development is mentoring which is *the impartation of knowledge, skills, and know-how to a less experienced and often younger person for his personal development and progress in a chosen field of human endeavour* (DNDN 2016 Adult Study School manual). It is the absence of this that results to a recycling of leaders which has so far proved anti-progressive. Christian leadership development guarantees effective continuity in a given pursuit. There are examples of Moses and Joshua

(Numbers 27:15-20); Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21); Paul and Timothy (1Tim. 1:18-19); Paul and Titus (Titus 1:4-5). For there to be national growth, the leadership question must be addressed especially as the 2019 general elections draw near. Unless capable, experienced, efficient and God fearing people are elected into public offices, the desire to develop as a nation might just be a mirage, as leadership in the principal thing.

10. Another factor that is essential is that of **Realisation of Common Problems/ Destiny**. The church must situate national problems in the right perspective. As said, no man has a monopoly of violence or knowledge. Issues of corruption, tribalism, religious bigotry, fundamentalism, etc, cut across all divides. The church should then engage other religious leaders in a dialogue towards addressing them. Christianity is a religion of peace and the church thrives in an atmosphere of tranquillity. Inter-religious dialogue would not be a bad idea as it could also help in dousing religious tension.

11. The next factor is that of citizens' **Interdependence and Common Interests**. These should motivate the church to strive to be an agent of national development, because all men are created by God equal and deserve to live in peace and unity, which ultimately leads to growth. The current wave of kidnapping and killing in the nation by militants, Boko Haram faithful and herdsmen, knows no boundary and shakes the unity of the country.

Conclusion

There is hardly a society without a religious inclination, the nomenclature notwithstanding. Nigeria is a multi-religious nation blessed with human and material resources but experiences stunted growth. Identified indices which contribute to Nigeria's under development include poverty (living below the one dollar a day bench mark), unmitigated violence, psychotic looting of public funds, poor governance, political and economic mismanagement, social upheavals, nepotism, religious fanaticism and ethnocentrism and general decay in infrastructure. Notwithstanding, the quest for national development is a recurring decimal on various fronts. Among the elements that could be involved in this regard is the church which role has been discussed. This is in agreement with the position of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) as cited by Gotan (2007):

Out of this religious mission itself comes a function, a light, and an energy which can serve to structure and consolidate the human community according to the divine law...she can and indeed should initiate activities on behalf of all men especially those designed for the needy, such as the work of mercy and similar undertakings (109).

It is our contention that the church would bring about the promotion of the human good, psychological fulfilment, peaceful coexistence, social justice and leadership development. The church as a body of Christians irrespective of denominational cleavages thus has to be profoundly involved in national development as this is biblically and socially justified. This could be by organising conferences on burning national issues, monitoring the electoral processes, use of commendation and condemnation as a check and balance on its members in positions of authority, offering quality advice to any government of the day, developing its members in skills and the intellect and engaging in introspection of its activities among others. This position is predicated on the purpose of Christ for the church, mission of the church to the

world, the popular charter of Christ's mission (Luke 4:18, 19) and the great commandment which were further buttressed in the Pauline and Petrine epistles. Harnessing the church's effort in this regard would lead to the discouragement of ill acquisition of wealth, intolerance and myopic leadership and enhance a rejuvenation of the moral, intellectual and spiritual energies of the citizenry towards sustainable national development. Doing this involves the application of the ethical principles of Christianity and adherence to spiritual values. Therefore, failure of the church to do so would be considered immoral and a colossal failure and dereliction of its mandate.

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