

The Impact of Christian Teachings on National Development

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Abstract

National development is about improving a nation to improve the living standards of the people within that nation. This can be achieved when the people are provided with basic livelihood requirements such as employment. It is indeed a process that creates growth, brings in progress and positive changes. Christian teachings refer to the specific teachings of the Bible on various subjects which include: uniqueness of Jesus, one God (trinity), necessity of the cross (salvation), resurrection and second coming of Jesus and inspiration of the scriptures. From time immemorial, christian teachings had made tremendous impact on national development. The objective of this work, therefore, is to elucidate the impact of christian teachings on national development. In view of its historical nature, the work employs historical method in its analysis. The findings of this work, however, reveal that the moral and ethical atrophy being witnessed in the nation can be curbed through christian teachings and adherence to them will enhance rapid national development.

Keywords

national development;
christian teaching; living
standard; impact; growth;
achievement



I. Introduction

The word “Christian” literally means “follower of Christ”. Christianity is a religion among the religions of the world but the claim is sometimes made by the adherents that Christianity is not a religion (Adesogan, 2011). The adherents, however, anchor their claim on the fact that religions are human constructs and Christianity is a God-given faith (Baton, 2013). This appears as an illegitimate attempt to solve a complex problem in one’s own favour by a simple process of an arbitrary definition. The Christian theologian needs to ask about the relation of his study to the study of other religions (Jean, 2016).

Christianity is a belief and practice established on the foundation of ethical principles anchored on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Christianity is committed to upholding social justice, equality and “people’s welfare”. Christian teachings revolve around the central teachings of traditional Christianity which encompasses that Jesus is the son of God, they are embodied in the Christian scripture known as the “Bible” specifically in the old and new testaments (Adesogan, 2011). Christian teachings are simply the beliefs of Christians. It is the totality of what the Bible has to say on one particular subject. There are therefore, what can be described as the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of God, and the doctrine of the Church. All these refer to what Christians believe about these subjects. Christian teachings consist of the teachings about Jesus Christ, found in the Bible. The source of these teachings was God, the father. Jesus told the religious leaders where the doctrine originated.

Then Jesus answered them: ‘My teaching is not mine but his who sent me. Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own.’ (John 7:16-17) (Baton, 2013)

II. Research Methods

This section delves into historical method in its analysis. Historical analysis of some concepts are examined

Systematic Exposition of Christian Teachings and their Impact on National Development

Before examining the impact of Christian teachings on National development, it is imperative to examine what national development entails. (Adesogan, 2011)

The term “National development” can be described as the willingness and the ability of the country to raise the standard of living of its populace. It can be achieved by providing individuals with basic livelihood requirements and supplying them with employment. Development involves a process that creates growth, brings in progress and positive change. It can be viewed from two perspectives; Economic and Social (Baton, 2013).

Economic growth or increase in people’s income will lead to the increase in the standard of living of the citizens. When there is increase in income, people will like to acquire more properties and invest more.

The social perspective gives more room for social progress which includes literacy, health and the provision of public services. National development takes place when there is development in rural areas; increase in agricultural outputs, enlargement of economic knowledge; growth in urban areas and eradication of poverty at all levels (bujus.com/question.ans).

National development is also said to have taken place when there is human, infrastructural and socio-political developments. National development encompasses a lot of things. It entails all facets of an individual’s life as well as the life of a nation. It is the improvement of a country in all areas, such as the political, economic, social, cultural, scientific and material spheres. We shall now examine Christian teachings and how they have influenced National development (Jean, 2016)

III. Results and Discussion

The findings of this work reveal that Christian teachings on some basic concepts and doctrines will curb many ethical atrophy being witnessed on daily basis.

Sexual immorality that has destroyed many lives may eventually become a thing of the past if biblical injunctions as analysed in this work are adhered to. The work also reveals that money and wealth that have been the root of all evils can be source of development and progress if biblical principles are followed.

Uncontrollable desire for achievement, power and success can be checked through adherence to biblical and christian teachings while, right attitude to work as analysed in this study will bring unimaginable progress

3.1 Sexual Immorality

Both Old and New Testament books strongly denounce and kick against sexual immorality. Leviticus (18:6ff) lists some instructions given by God to the Israelites:

You must never have sexual relations with a close relative, for I am the Lord

Do not have sexual relations with any of your father’s wives, for this would violate your father

Do not have sexual relations with your sister or half sister's daughter or you mother's daughter whether she was born into your household or someone else's.

Do not practice homosexuality; having sex with another man as with a woman. It is a detestable sin. A man must not defile himself by having sex with an animal and a woman must not offer herself to a male animal to have intercourse with it. This is a perverse act.

As the Old Testament upholds sexual purity, the New Testament gives stern warning against sexual immorality

You have heard the commandment that says: 'You must not commit adultery. But as I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. So if your eye causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. (Matthew 5: 27-32).

From the Bible passage above, we can see that Jesus heightened the standard expected of the Christian. According to Jesus Christ's teaching, sexual impurity is not restricted to engaging in sexual intercourse alone; it also includes harbouring lust in the heart. Sexual impurity is so terrible that Jesus advises cutting off offending hands and gouging out eyes that lure us into sexual sins.

Paul in his epistles also admonishes believers (Christians) to keep themselves pure. Do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure (1Timothy 5:22)

He also uses strong words like "Flee youthful lusts" (2Timothy 2:22); "Flee sexual immorality" (1Corinthians 6:18) to convey his message on sexual immorality.

From the passage above, it is very obvious that Bible also condemns pre-marital and extra-marital sex. Homosexuality, Bestiality and Incest are also seriously condemned. It is also clear that sex is good if it is practiced within the ambit of the law. It is not in itself nasty. It is, therefore, when sex is abused that it can bring untold hardship upon the people involved. Abuse of sex has robbed many people of their marital bliss. Many people have lost their jobs.

In 2021, for instance, Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) dismissed three lecturers from the departments of English Language, International relations and Accounting over sexual harassment of students. The Kaduna State University, in January 2021, announced the dismissal of a lecturer in the department of Geography for sexually assaulting a student. The Rivers State College of Health, Science and Management Technology suspended a lecturer for three months for sexually harassing a low level female student. The Federal University, Oye-Ekiti suspended a lecturer in the department of Media and Theatre Art in June 2021 for sexual misconduct (Kolawole, 2022).

In the examples cited above, some of the people involved in sexual harassment lost their jobs. Some of them, if not all, are breadwinners of their family. With the loss of job, they lost their means of livelihood this invariably affect the development of the nation as the rate of unemployment increases and the nation's poverty level also increases.

If biblical injunctions on sex are adhered to by all and sundry, the citizens will live peacefully among themselves, loss of jobs will be minimized and the nation will witness economic growth and development at every sphere of life.

3.2 Money and Wealth

Even though, money and wealth are so important to the extent that their usefulness and benefits cannot be overemphasized, the desire to possess them can inspire murderous instincts. The desire to be rich is so all-consuming that some people will commit murder to have and accumulate money. People, for instance, engage in ritual murders and hired

assassinations to get rid of business partners or anyone who is perceived to be enemy of progress.

The Bible succinctly describes the love of money as the root of all kinds of evil (1Timothy 6:10). Possessing a lot of money has a sad irony to it. Money can breed lack of contentment; the affected individual becomes greedy and develops insatiable appetite for it. The desire to accumulate more and more can be so strong that, one may decide not to part with any of it unless it is absolutely necessary. In such a condition, the owner finds it unacceptable to spend enough money to enable him eat well and buy good clothes for himself. His thought is usually preoccupied with protecting what he has and making more money. (Adesogan, 2010). It is at this point that one can without any iota of doubt submit that the individual involved has become slave to money.

Money can exert a lot of pressure and poor influence. Wealthy youths directly or indirectly use money to oppress and intimidate poorer ones by the way they spend money. The poor ones can develop negative reactions to what they see while some poor ones because of intimidation may decide to acquire money at all costs and develop the art of stealing; others may become temperamental or angry at the slightest provocation or become irritable and violent.

Bible, as mentioned above, teaches that the “love of money is the root of all evils.” (1Timothy 6:10). Christians are therefore warned not to love money. They should also see money as a gift given to them by God. Paul asserts: What do you have that God hasn’t given you? And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift? (1Cor 4:7) It is also written in James 1:17 that: “Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God It is therefore clear, that whatever we have should be seen and considered as gifts given to us by God and must be used to glorify God. This teaching has affected many Christians positively. Instead of using money to oppress, intimidate and subject their fellow citizens to untold hardship, they used the money to invest in the lives of others.

This impacts investment which is investment that is not only with the intent of making money for the investor but , also to create a measurable benefit to society has greatly contributed to National development since it has created employment for the people and consequently increase their standard of living.

Wealth is defined as a large amount of money and other valuable possessions. The Bible also teaches that wealth is a blessing from God. The Bible makes us to realize that Abraham was God-fearing and wealthy (Gen 13:2). Job served God and was very rich (Job 1:1-3). God endowed and blessed Solomon with great wealth (1Kgs 3:13; 10:14-29). The Psalmist affirms that wealth and riches will be in the house of God-fearing people (Psalm 112:1-3). From the above passages, it is very obvious that wealth is real and must be used positively. Christians are however warned in 1Timothy 6:17 not to be arrogant or to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth but, on God who richly gives all they need. Christians are further admonished by Paul in 1Timothy 6:18ff thus: Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. By doing this, they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life (Baton, 2013)

Though wealth of the rich is their fortress (Prov 10:15), nevertheless, Christians are made to know that “wealth from get-rich-quick schemes quickly disappears” Prov 13:11. We need to assert here that, biblical teachings on money and wealth as elucidated above, has exerted positive influence on many people. Citizens are now conscious of their attitude towards money and wealth. This consciousness has assisted millions in our time. People work hard to get money and wealth and part of the money are spent on investment, savings and accumulation of capital which in turn enhances the purchase of goods that drive production.

If more wealth is produced, the society becomes richer, the total stock of wealth increases. This development has tremendous and positive effect on national development (Jean, 2016)

3.3 Ambition

It can be defined as a strong, intense and uncontrollable desire for achievement, wealth, power or success. It is an irresistible passion to be someone with great popularity, influence and fame. Ambition can be categorized into two: healthy and inordinate ambition. Ambition is said to be good when it is goal-oriented, focused and success-driven. It is an intense drive for success and power; a desire to achieve. Basically, one would have submitted that there is nothing wrong with healthy ambition. Being ambitious, in and of itself, is not wrong, it's what we esteem that can be a problem. The Bible even teaches that we should be ambitious; "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness and every other thing shall be added unto you. (Matthew 6:33).

Paul in his epistle to the Thessalonians admonished the believers: "Make it your ambition to lead your quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands. (1Thessalonians 4:11, Philippians 1:17). Jesus condemned the attitude and wrong ambition of mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee when she demanded that he sons be given the privilege to occupy the best position in his kingdom. Christ then, taught his disciples that whosoever will be first should be ready to become a servant (Matthew 20:26-28; Matthew 23:11-12). Paul further warned believers not to be selfish in their ambitions... "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves." {Philippians 2:3). According to James, to be selfishly ambitious is to be earthly, unspiritual and even demonic (James 3:14-17). Selfish ambition is never satisfied but Christians find their rest in God.

In the Parable of the Talents in Mathew 25, Jesus teaches that ambition is a good thing when we use God's gifts for his glory. It is recorded in the passage thus ; But he that had received one talent went and dug in the earth and hid his Lord's money And I was afraid and went and hid thy talent in the earth; lo, there thou hast that is thine (Matthew 25:18, 25) (Baton, 2013).

The action of the servant in the above passage was not only condemned but was followed by sanction; Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers and then at my coming, I should have received more usury. Take therefore the talent from him and give it unto him which had ten talents And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 8:12) (Jean, 2016).

God confounded the language of the inhabitants of the world then because they had the wrong ambition to build the Tower of Babel to enable them have direct and unhindered access to God. Consequently, men began to speak diverse languages, which brought about disunity and discord among men. From this incident, one can submit that wrong and inordinate ambition can lead to disaster.

Job, while considering inordinate ambition opined that "the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite, but for a moment. Though his excellence mounts up to the heavens and, his head reaches to clouds; yet he shall perish forever like his own dung: they which have seen him say, where is he? He shall fly away as a dream and shall not be found: Yea, he shall see him no more; neither shall his place anymore behold him." (Job 20:5-9).

As earlier stated above, it is good to be ambitious but wrong ambition is dangerous because it leads to vanity. Inordinate ambition is associated with different kind of crimes such as: corruption, murder, embezzlement, stealing, forgery, arson and so on which inhibits national development.

If all and sundry can adhere to the Christian teachings on ambition as taught by the scriptures. Criminal practices being witnessed in our clime today will reduce to the barest minimum and there will be peace and tranquility everywhere in our society.

3.4 Work

Bible teachings on work are very explicit. Several portions of the scriptures highlight the divine purpose of work. We shall examine some of them in both old and new testaments. The Lord God placed the man in the garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. (Gen 2:15).

God from outset being aware of the significance of work placed the first man he created in the Garden of Eden and instructed him to 'tend' and 'watch' it. Though everything needed by man was in the garden yet, he knew it would be disastrous for man to remain idle.

“Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. You have six days each week for your ordinary work but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord, your God. On that day, no one in your household will do any work. (Exodus 20:8-10).”

The Israelites in the above passage were specifically instructed to use six days every week to work while the seventh day will be used to rest. It is therefore very obvious that God hates idleness.

The divine command that makes work a necessity is even extended to all other creatures on earth. You made the moon to mark the seasons and the sun that knows when to set. You send the darkness, and it becomes night when all the forest animals prowl about. Then the young lions roar for their food but they are dependent on God. At dawn, they slink back into their dens to rest. Then people go off to their work where they labour until evening shadows all again... (Psalm 104:19-24) (Baton, 2013)

The creation of all creatures according to the passage above is not by accident. God created all to fulfill his purpose. For instance, God created both the moon and the sun to mark the season. The forest animals are not left out. They prowl (work) before they get their food. “The people go off to their work. They labour until the evening shadows fall again.” Since God himself worked for six days and rested on the seventh day, he wanted man to follow suit. The commandment to work was also stressed in the Decalogue handed over to Moses on Mount Sinai hence, it is recorded.

To further emphasize the dignity of labour, the author of Ecclesiastes affirmed: “So, I saw that there is nothing better for people than to be happy in their work. That is our lot in life and no one can bring us back to see what happens after we die” (Ecclesiastes 3:22).”

In this passage, the writer makes us to know that “work” is not only essential but it is the reason why we exist. He therefore advises: “Whatever you do, do well. For when you go to the grave, there will be no work or planning or knowledge or wisdom.” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Diligent and competent workers according to “Proverb 22:29” will not work for ordinary people but will rather serve Kings. It, however, implies that a man shows his qualities and mettle by his attitude to work. The work man does is a vivid portrait of his worth in life.

The New Testament authors are also unapologetic about man’s obligation to work. In his second epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul posits that a Christian who doesn’t work should not eat. “Even while we are with you, we gave you this command; ‘those unwilling to work will not get anything to eat’ (Thessalonians 3:10).”

We can therefore infer from the Biblical teachings on work as examined above that Christians are not expected to be idle and if employed, they should see their employment as a God-given privilege and an opportunity to glorify God. Loyalty to their employers is expected as they work conscientiously to meet every obligation required of them in their places of work.

Even though work in our present world has been subjected to all forms of abuse and reduced frequently to an instrument of exploitation and oppression which has made national Development a mirage, a strict and uncompromising adherence to Christian teachings is expected. National Development is possible when the needed change is allowed.

Apart from the moral teachings examined above, there are still others like uniqueness of Jesus Christ; Concept of trinity; Salvation; Resurrection of the dead; Second coming of Jesus; Inspiration of the scripture and so on.

The conception, birth, and death of Jesus Christ attest to his uniqueness, The Bible while referring to Mary affirms; ... “that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 1:20). His birth attracted the attention of the wise men from the East. Paul in his letter to the Philippians while describing the uniqueness of Christ says: “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every other names”. Christians’ adherence to teaching on the uniqueness of Christ will make them to view the world the way he (Christ) views it. Viewing things the way Christ does will bring the needed national development.

The resurrection of the dead and second coming of Jesus Christ as taught in the scriptures point to the fact that Christians should not be greedy or self-centered since everything one acquires or accumulates here on earth shall be left at death. The teaching therefore creates the consciousness of eternity in believers. If all and sundry irrespective of tribe, religion and status can adhere to the above teachings, there will be development at all levels.

Christian teaching on the inspiration, infallibility and inerrancy of the scriptures cannot also be underestimated. Paul asserts that all scriptures is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches how to do what is right. (2Tim 3:16).

The bible where all Christians’ teachings and doctrines emanate according to the passage above has no error. If the mistakes and error of both the leaders and followers can be corrected by the scripture, the age long blunders most especially those committed by leaders that have made the country almost uncomfortable for people to live would have become things of the past and National development that involves a process that brings positive change would have been achievable.

IV. Conclusion

If Christianity is a religion built on the foundation of moral rectitude, Christians are therefore expected to live lives of unimpeachable rectitude and integrity. Christian teachings have the potency of making National development a reality if everyone irrespective of age, sex, tribe and status can adhere tenaciously to its teachings as elucidated above. Despite the Nigerian Christians expected contribution to National Development; the nation is enmeshed in crisis. For instance, in a democracy, National Security is determined by elected officials and not the security operatives whose input will nonetheless be cardinal to the articulation of national security policies (Duyile, *The Sea Factor in Nigeria's National Security*, 2015). So many of those elected members are so called Christians hence Nigeria still remains in crisis today. It has been argued that excessiveness in religion is considered to be a great danger threatening both the nation and religion and leads to total destruction The Boko Haram crisis was part of this fall out. Boko Haram threats include attacks on the environment, food, supply, mental harassment, wanton disregard for people’s rights-Kidnapping, bombing...etc (Duyile, Adu, Jegede, & Buhari, 2020 (Duyile, *A Prelude to the Boko Haram Insurgency: A Doctrinal Interrogation*, 2023) Christian faith also plays down female roles in the society.

The Christian faith for instance subdues the woman. These could be traced to the Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures. A critical study of Mathew 15:28, Luke 7: 37-47 and John 4: 7-27 lend credence to the assertion that Jesus was a strong promoter of women liberation and dignity (Duyile, Nwachukwu, Ediagbonya, & Olofingbaika, 2020). However, Paul one of the notable apostles that shaped the course of Christianity after Jesus Christ found it difficult to detach himself from the Jewish culture.

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