



## Moral Values, Sanctity of Life for Nation Building: A Biblical Perspective

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**Abstract.** Nigerians from the onset, have a peculiar culture which is known in their ways of life. Their values and norms as elements of this their ways of life are embedded in moral education. However, in Nigerian society today, there is a high rate of negligence of societal moral values while many vices such as: dishonesty, disrespect of elders, insecurity, kidnapping, banditry, raping, corruption, bribery, and many others prevail. In light of the above, this paper examines the role of moral values and the sanctity of life in nation-building. Moral education is a means through which individuals are formed and reformed through qualitative training and retraining of human beings who are agents of development in society. The paper also considers moral education as a means of regenerating these norms and moral values. Again, the paper discovers among other things that moral values which are seen as behavioural conduct and attitude, should be displayed and encouraged by members of the society to build and revitalized the nation. Several recommendations were made and emphasis was laid on the need for moral values taught in moral education, with the collaboration of parents and government by imparting good moral values on the Nigerian Citizens.

**Keywords:** Moral Values, Education, Sanctity of life, Nation Building.

### 1. Introduction

Nation-building, as one may see can only come in an atmosphere where moral values and the sanctity of life prevail. Every nation has its peculiar challenges which may be ideological, economic, social, or political. Such challenges especially social are pointer to dynamic social life and constitute phenomena of living and growing human societies. Moral values and sanctity of life that make one be matured on the part of the citizenry of a nation are requisite for the country. This is due to the fact that there can be no nation-building if the populace is morally bankrupt and underdeveloped. Moral values and the sanctity of life for nation-building must precede economic

development through modern technology. Even though of truth that modernity has altered the belief and moral values of Nigerians, there is a need to regenerate the moral values of people, such as the sacredness of human life which is found in the scripture Exos. 20:13, Gen. 4:10-11 and Gen. 9:4 will bring sanity to the country which of course will promote and bring development to the nation. Ubrurhe (2000) observes that all concerned Nigerians are crying due to the present state of insecurity in the country, kidnapping, arm robbery, ritual killing, banditry/raiding, bombing, and destruction of property which have made many Nigerians and foreigners to lose their property and lives. Moral values and cultural decline in Nigeria have made nation-building a major concern in our society today. Such moral decadence like insecurity gave birth to thousands of deaths of innocent souls. In line with the above, Imhonopi and Urin (2012) accentuated that the insecurity problem which has taken diverse measures has forced the nation's political and economic managers and in short, the entire country to have a great loss of their loved ones, investments, and non-safety in most parts of the country. The number of violent crimes such as kidnappings, ritual killings, suicide bombings, ethnic clashes, religious killing, politically motivated killing and violence, banditry, and many others has increasingly become the order of the day in Nigeria since 2009. In a situation where moral values and sanctity of life concerning fundamental human rights in both public and private sectors have been violated, the people and government will live in an environment of instability and insecurity that will not give way to nation-building.

### 2. Conceptual Framework

#### 2.1 Moral Values

One cannot speak of moral without first understanding what moral and moral education is. "Moral"

according to Education Encyclopedia (2010), comes from a Latin root “Mores” meaning code or customs of a people, the social values that defines how individual should live together in a society. For one to be morally sound means adopting principles to guide one’s actions and conduct in the society. Moral education could be a direct or indirect programme that teaches the people with right conduct and to abhor that which is evil in the society. Moral education by Okorodudu (2002) simply is a process which is aimed at promoting in the individual a desire to gain the greatest possible knowledge of his ability that will enable the individual within the framework and interest. For him, moral education entails the internalization of the societal values in relation to the dos and don’ts of a given society.

Moral values can also be seen as acceptable, valuable, good and worthwhile qualities that are necessary in developing and building up a sound character. This behaviour should be central to the orderly nature of the society. Kalusi (1996) states that value refers to our desires, wants, needs, interest and aspiration. In other words, value could be simply put as the function of everything or practice that makes desirable and acceptable to the society and maintained by the society (Ohwovorone, 2008). Thus, moral values are seen as behavioural conduct, attitude, displayed and encouraged by members of the society for the reasons that the behaviours are both good and desirable to mankind generally as opposed to non-conformant behaviours condemned and discouraged. For example, Obedience, honesty, hard work, integrity, truthfulness, tolerance respect, loyalty, fairness, equality, faithfulness, justice and so on.

## 2.2 Sanctity of Life

Generally Speaking, Africans and Nigerians in particular believe that human life is holy as God Himself is holy since we are made in his own likeness and image. Christ demonstrated this to the world by saving the lives of Jarius's daughter that has died, and the woman with the issue of blood for good twelve years. Christ never wanted any life to be lost hence he went about healing, curing, and saving lives because life is precious and needed to be preserved (Wisdom, 1:13-15, 2:23-24, Cor. 8:7, 9:13-15, Mk. 5:21-43).

In other words, the right to live is the most fundamental of all human rights. Even, it takes one to live in order to carry out his day-to-day activities. Hence, Razag (2010), the European Convention of Human Rights 1953 reiterated in section one of Article Two that “everyone’s right to life shall be protected by law. No one shall deprive

another of life intentionally, save in the executions of a sentence of court following conviction of a crime for which the penalty provided by law”. In accordance with this, it shows that man naturally has a full right to life. Even in creation, man is made sacred and nobody should share his blood because scripturally, blood belongs to God and Him alone has the power to take life.

## 2.3 Nation Building

Nation building according to Hornby (2000) asserts that it is the act of making a group of people living together, sharing the same culture, language, and history, and inhabiting a particular area become stronger socially, pontifically, culturally, and economically for the aid of achieving common goals. Thus, a process of constructing or structuring a national identity using the authority of the state by coming together so that political stability and socio-economic viability are achieved (ask com, 2014).

Nation building as defined by Amustulz (1990) states it is the name given to all the different processes involved in the growth and development of a nation. In line with this, Omolade (1998) remarks that nation-building is a concerted effort to promote the survival of a nation and to build a good and dynamic nation. Thus, nation-building is an effort to put together, all the potentials of the nation, human and natural resources for the welfare of the people of a nation. Nation-building also entails the contributions of individuals, groups, and organizations in the sphere of politics economies, religion, society, and culture. This means basically that the survival of every nation is largely dependent on the commitment and dedication of the populace. Therefore, nation-building is not an invisible entity but a physical, practical, and visible commitment of a people toward the development of their nation.

Biblically, nation-building was found and initiated by God in (Genesis 12, 2-3) when God made Himself known to Abraham to live with his father’s kindred and to go to a place He would show him. There, He will make him a “Great nation”. He will bless those who bless him and him who curses you I will curse, and by you, all the families of the earth shall bless themselves”. Abraham was able to accomplish this great nation based on his obedience and faith.

## 2.3 Moral Decadence and National Development

The state of unethical values and norms perpetuated in Nigerian society today in all spheres of life cannot be

imagined with the moral lives of Nigerian Citizens many decades ago. Such moral decadence of national security which infringes in both high and low-level places of indiscriminate killings of people throughout the country shows unethical degeneration and moral depravity that leads to the systematic and rolling away of personal collective peace, safety, stability, and harmony with the nation (Imhonopi & Urmi (2012) Osajie (2016) had made this observation when she said that insecurity is one of the factors that impedes development in Nigeria society. That, the problem of ethnic militia as well as religious/political intolerance has brought much crisis in Nigeria. The negative and unproductive activities of these sects of human beings – Boko Haram and Militants in the Niger Delta region has continued to undermine development and progressive efforts in the nation. This is due to the fact that insecurity scares investors which more or less of course leads to under development which Aghalor (2011) avers that “any country that cannot provide security for its people is sliding into anarchy and a situation where might is right”.

Misplacement of values and mismanagement of valued facilities have contributed to moral degeneration in Nigeria society. This is to say that these variables have made many of our leaders fail in their responsibilities. Hence, Achebe [1993] said the trouble with Nigeria is a failure in leadership. There is nothing wrong with Nigeria land and climate. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or ability of the leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are hallmarks of true leadership. Concurring with the above, (Fountain, 2000) cited in (Ikani, 2015) observed that leadership is a critical factor in nation building and it should be understood in two good ways. Leaders are to have personal qualities of integrity, honesty, commitment, and competence while the second measure is that they must have qualities of a common vision to be focused and the charismatic desire for the development of the people. He went further to say that leaders who have no vision for their people always lead them to unemployment, violation of human rights, marginalization, political victimization, selfishness, and so on. It is expected of a leader to have the interest of his populace in mind which today is not their priority hence many Nigerian people went astray and lured them into committing evils that are not favourable to nation-building.

Corruption, and irregularities among others in Nigeria are the major problems of growth and nation-building. These practices and challenges are seen in every sector of human endeavour, both high and low levels in the country. Corruption has bred mistrust,

greed, insecurity, injustice, and poverty in millions of people to the extent that they do not see evil in perpetuating this provided the outcome of it puts food on their table. These leaders have misled and heeded not the cry of the people, the common good, stability of the nation and have equally hindered many people from economic growth and chances due to their race, lack of skill, greed, and power. Thus, Lipset and Lenz (2000) remarked that corruption is tied to poverty and income inequalities. And they often create hindrances to future growth and vision of the nation.

The highest challenge in this situation of National life unveils the act of distended corruption and avarice as expressed by Nigerians in both high and low levels, rivalry and confusion in diverse communities and regions, selfishness and pervasive lawlessness in the conduct of daily life as the guiding principles of human social interaction (CDHR). Nigerian society has become a home for the promotion of everything evil, immoral, venal, and bloodthirsty. Lack of moral leadership even with the coming of civilian and democratic administration has contributed irreparably to the discount atmosphere of moral decadence. Consequently, the goodies which the people expected to get from the government have plummeted while the transfer of a culture that lacks morality and values by the military, and politicians that had occupied the Nigerian political space for almost forty years has continued to affect moral sanity and integrity of the people (Imhonopi and Urim, 2011). The rate of insecurity in the country has been affected by a dwindling economy, lack of hospital infrastructure and health services, lack of pipe-borne water, transportation and fuel challenges, unemployment, and so on. These and many other facilities for a good living which the government failed in giving to the populace lured many into criminal acts in order to survive. Thus, creating violence, criminality and lawlessness in the country that has resulted to incessant killings, kidnapping, rapping, bombing etc.

### **3. Importance of Moral Values and Sanctity of Life to Nation Building.**

For purposeful nation-building to be achieved, moral values and the sanctity of life should be respected and inculcated into the lives of the citizenry. In concurring with the above statement, Omoregbe (1993) remarks that “no society can live without morals”. In other words, morality is crucial to the proper functioning of society. Therefore, society’s morality is those standards of behaviour that the reasonable man approves. A nation without morality is a nation without values and norms. Morality moulds a good

man and the good man moulds a good nation and society. The manner in which these anomalies and evils perpetuated in this country could be resolved and regenerated since both high and low-level members of the people are involved through re-direction and re-orientation of priorities towards our personal and social values. Hence, Omoregbe still observed this phenomenon that shows itself in mass corruption among Nigerians as a moral sickness affecting both society and the people in it. Against this background, the possible solution to this situation in the country is by inculcating of morals and it is also not out of place if the big heads in authorities and highly placed individuals should desist from this evil behaviour to good behaviour.

Specifically, moral values and sanctity of life intimates' man's attention to a tie with the supernatural being which makes him exercise the fear of God in his dealings with his fellow mates and the environment he finds himself. In accordance with this, the scripture (Proverb 22:6) states "Train up a child in the way he should go so that when he is old, he will not depart from it". Invariably, this statement is as valuable not only to the child but as it is to the adults. In a situation where development continues to take place and societies quickly move with remote development styles, it will be necessary for the populace to hold on to moral values learnt in their childhoodness. Thus, in the Nigeria society today, where there is no respect for the elders and the authority as well as killings, kidnapping, rapping, bombing etc have become the order of the day, moral values build and mould in people the spirituality that respects individuals, life and nature. Such character will enable the youths and adults to respect one another and eventually imbibe the respect for life, nature and environment (Attansay, 2006). Human life is a precious gift from God (Rasaq 2010). It is necessary to appreciate it as a kind source of that gift. God's interest in human life thus seen in his admonishment to maintain a gentle spirit and to abstain from immoral acts that can lead to the destruction of life.

The diminishing standard of living and determining social infrastructure like roads, educational systems, refineries, and hospitals have all contributed to a nation of hopeless people (Onyegbule, 2000). This in a bid to meet up with day – to day activities commits themselves in an immortal act thereby loose the sense of moral values that will enable him to think better and act better. Buttressing, further, was the need for an examination of the ethical basis of the problematic social relations in Nigeria which was affirmed by former President Olusegun Obasanjo in his October 1999 National Day speech, where he drew the

attention of a worried nation to the value of regenerating moral foundations of all actions and continue to quest for the conditions that would make Nigeria a just, free and wealthy society (Obasanjo, 1999). This statement confirms that Nigeria was yet to have the much-desired ethical requirement for sound social relations which could be assured for maintenance of security, peace and tranquility in the country (Ujomu, 2001). To regenerate the moral values and sanctity of life, Nigerian people need urgent attention to overhaul their behaviours and conduct in order to safeguard the future of the nation. In line with this, that, Amaele (1998) reiterates that a true moral value is one that upholds respect for human beings and individual freedom. That the sum total of the moral values of a society is its likeness to humanity. The real moral value is considered the sanctity of human life which serves as the overall value of human life.

#### 4. Conclusion

From the work thus far, it was been observed that moral decadence in Nigeria is as a result of laxity and nonchalant attitude towards conformant moral values. For effective nation-building, moral values and the sanctity of life have to be accorded due respect in society. The research equally states the efficacy of moral values and the sanctity of life taking vital roles in nation-building. Moral values aid with the transmission of skills, attitudes, and knowledge to make the populace responsible and effective functioning members of society. This is due to the fact that when the society gives the people proper and right teaching of moral values, their thought and mindsets will be focused and fine-tuned for national building.

Therefore, moral values and the sanctity of life should be given preference in our schools since it helps to curb social and political vices in our polity. Little wonder, Megasa (1997) accentuated that the regeneration of Nigerian moral values is inevitable for mad society chooses to build its future on foreign culture, values, and systems. So, Nigerian society should be obliged to quest deep into morality in order to revitalize values on which its development and transformation should be based in order to bring sanity to the society and facilitate national building or development.

#### 5. Recommendations

- Moral values should be taught in schools in order to inculcate them in the youths and children. Parents too should abide by societal norms and values in the society for the children to imitate in order to reduce the

moral laxity and decadence for the nation to move forward.

- The social deviants who have corruptibly enriched themselves, the kidnappers, rapists, banditries and so on should not be given the place of recognition and respect in society, rather, should be brought to the book to serve as a deterrent to others.
- The governments, the community leaders, and the school authorities should sanction the social deviants to serve as a deterrent to others too.
- Nigeria needs sound moral values and leadership that is rooted in respect, service, justice, and honesty to really clean up the bad leadership in society. In support of the above that Northouse (2004) states that leaders who place fairness at the centre of decision-making, including the challenging task of being fair to individuals as well as to the common interest of the community they serve.
- Moral instructions should be introduced at all levels in the school curriculum starting from Nursery, Primary, Secondary, and tertiary institutions as a way of imparting moral self-discipline, love, patriotism, and commitment among the people.
- The home, church, society, and government should educate the citizens on good human relations to abhor moral decadence in the country.

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