
HOW SHOULD WE THEN LIVE? AN ETHICO-THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE QUESTION OF CITIZENSHIP AND INTER- ETHNIC RELATIONS IN NIGERIA

BY

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ABSTRACT

Every nation is grappling with challenges of national cohesion and growth. Finding an overriding principle that will keep a country in steady growth has been one provocative issue. Such challenges are compounded for a country of ethnic and religious diversity. Since the creation of Nigeria as a country, this kind of diversity has been its biggest problem. The country is perplexed by disunity as well as the collapse of values that could build, grow and sustain it socio-economically and politically. The question that Francis Schaeffer raised for his American society is valid and applicable in the Nigerian situation today: *How Should We Then Live?* This research assumes that the right answer and adapting to it could help to change the situation in Nigeria. This research follows Schaeffer's suggestion that the application of God's standards for our society should be our defining principle, the virtues required for which can be inculcated through two primary structures, namely, the family and the school. The study also recommends the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural policies that Australia has practiced effectively with great results.

Keywords: unity, fragmentation, national consciousness, Australian model

INTRODUCTION

Schaeffer's thoughtful reflection upon the state of affairs in the Western world in the mid-1970s, especially the degradation of values and principles of conduct, resulted in his book *How Should We Then Live?* He laments the "cultural upheaval of the 1960s" and its implications for the "future of the church and Western culture" (Dennis 9). There are cultural and intellectual forces arising from "art, music, literature and film" that impinge upon the "moral, spiritual and intellectual" components of Western society with serious consequences (Dennis 9). These forces occasioned the destruction of moral and intellectual values so that people are "left with no basis for meaning or truth, or hope in life," which further leads to self-help methods that are not in the best interest of the generations that would follow (Dennis 10). Certain "arbitrary absolutes" such as "abortion 'rights'" and sexual ethics are imposed with the aid of the professional elite. All this development, which has spanned some centuries with devastating effect, leads to Schaeffer's reflection in the face of "growing disintegration and decline of truth and morality throughout our world" (Dennis 11).

The scenario in the West over some centuries, beginning with the period from the collapse of the Roman Empire to the Enlightenment, has given rise to persecution of fellow human beings on the grounds of intellectual and religious disagreement. Social life has taken on a terrifying dimension with the surge of cruelty, promiscuity and animalistic propensity for

violence, complacency in intellectual life, economic and political instability, expensive government, obsession with power and control and high-level insecurity both external and internal. In the midst of this turbulence, the church has experienced an upheaval by challenging injustices in society. Christians who failed to act in Europe and America were exposed as hypocrites who were not faithful to the biblical principles they professed. Exploitation of weaker races and labour, with the attendant unfair gaps in living standards, became the order of the day from the post-Reformation time to the nineteenth century.

Nigeria is going through a similar experience to what happened during the Roman Empire. The question to ponder is, What can be a reference point upon which our values and principles of conduct could be regulated in order to create a vibrant and sustainable society? In this research, the Australian model has been chosen because of its practical positive results.

ADIACHRONIC AND SYNCHRONIC ANALYSIS OF THE NIGERIAN SITUATION

Nigeria is in a state of navigational gridlock because it seems that nothing is working well to that nation out of its present social and political quagmire, and it may be that we can get out of it only with the collective force of intellectual and moral revolution. With a population of about 200 million people and about 500 ethnicities (Findlay; see also “Demographics of Nigeria”), Nigeria is a highly fragmented nation in terms of social, political and economic cohesion, the destructive consequences of which make citizenship existentially a useless category.

In Nigeria, diversity plays out negatively. The nation is characterized by gross political and economic inequality, economic corruption, bitter ethnic divisions, ethnic cleansing practices and subordination, religious discrimination and violence, and political instability and economic consequences. With the loss of moral values, which makes the rule of law weak and selective in its application, social crimes are on the rise, with everyone living in fear and uncertainty. No one can categorically define what actually holds the fabric of this nation together, since ethnic groups are living in suspicion and fear of one another due to the imbalances that are created within the system.

Many scholars have X-rayed Nigeria's problems. Ozumba (148) identifies seven issues that are confronting the life of Nigeria as a nation:

1. Lack of national consciousness and identity
2. Tribalism
3. Inequality through the attitude of birth-rightism to rulership
4. Widespread poverty engendered through corruption and self-centredness
5. Bad leadership
6. Precept rather than example
7. Disoriented value-system

Some have given up hope of a better Nigeria because those who have hijacked its welfare have also caged it in its failed status quo. Okonjo-Iweala expresses this frustration and hopelessness when she alludes to the situation of Nigeria as “incorrigible,” “unreformable” and “hopeless” (ix). It is apparent that Nigeria is at war with itself, and the battle against the soul of Nigeria is total; it is far more ideological, ethical and spiritual than it is political.

The ethnic and religious fragmentation of the pre-colonial era was compounded by the colonial system, which, instead of inculcating national consciousness and uniting the people of Nigeria, heightened the unfortunate divisions. An interesting study would be on the question of

whether that was the plan by the colonial powers all along: divide tribes between “nations,” make “nations” of incompatible tribes—*divide et impera*—buy off those they made rich and powerful and continue to exploit the land and the people. The ethnic and religious diversity, instead of serving as a vast pool of human resources, has become highly detrimental to the existence of Nigeria as a nation (Adeyanju). Unlike in some of the advanced countries, where ethnic diversity becomes a pool of resources for national development from which the rulers can take the best brains from each group, in Nigeria, the ultimate qualification for being given any sensitive responsibility is to come from one of the dominant ethnic groups—Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba, or Igbo—or to be a Muslim, which is the politically dominant religion. On a sincere note, Nigeria does not have clearly defined cohesive national ideals that bind all the ethnic and religious diversities as one ideological and existential whole. The divisions are individual and regional when national questions come to play.

Unfortunately for Nigeria, in the 21st century there are still “statesmen” who continue to judge issues based on parochial vested interests. The so-called elders who sound regional and tribal voices and refuse to give room for youth to unite for the progress of Nigeria serve as a threat not only to the success of the conference but threaten the very existence of the country as one indivisible nation. Tribal and regional warlords such as the Arewa Consultative Forum, the Ohaneze Ndigbo and Afenifere are unconstitutional but powerful elite organisations that sail the Nigerian ship towards divisions and disintegration. (Cheri 38)

Nigeria lacks collective will and a purposeful definition of its own identity and destiny because of religious and ethnic fragmentation. This has led to total apathy by citizens toward all aspects of civic responsibility to shape our existence as a nation. The effect of this is devastating: our “contemporary African society does not take the current economic immorality and crimes which involve fraud, embezzlement of public funds, corruption and abuse of office seriously. Many people instead tend to 'praise' and protect their own relatives and friends who use those economic crimes to uplift their own areas and people” (Colson and Pearcey 377). On this note, we have lost honesty, impartiality, integrity, accountability, transparency and truthfulness as social values that help to build a civil society. Even when politicians promise to put these values into practice, they only pay lip service to them so they can garner the people's confidence and also divert attention from scrutiny. These values have actually lost meaning on the Nigerian platform.

Today, all ethnic groups in Nigeria boast of cultural artefacts and materials that represent their heritage or legacies, but whether these take into consideration moral and intellectual values that add up to enriching and preserving the identity of a people remains contestable given the erosion of character in all communities. But a culture that is reduced to only identity of language, dress, music, arts, dancing and work without real guiding principles of conduct is unproductive and dangerous even to its own existence; it has no hope of fostering a united spirit with other ethnic groups for a common purpose.

Nigeria has shared in the failure of the entire African system with setbacks in development and growth due to many factors. There has been a total collapse of cultural, social and spiritual values that make up a great and stable society. This is due to the lack of a national definition of who we are and what we want. The frustration of citizens living together in a country from which they feel more alienated every day by powerful elements is a serious

problem in and of itself. This scenario plays out at various levels, and even some powerful elements are outwitted by shrewder ones. Anwar shares his political frustration, which is representative of the entire Nigerian clime: the “betrayal, greed and treachery that often characterise Nigerian politics” is replete in governance, business and all fabrics of existence in Nigeria such that everyone feels the dashed hopes for a better and progressive nation (quoted in Alkali xiii). The failure of Nigeria as a united nation today is due largely to the faulty foundation of the past, and it will confine us to perpetual ignominy if we are unable to reinvent ourselves as a nation.

We are living in times in which people have been shown to be morally indifferent, in which, as Colson and Pearcey wrote about America, the best Christian values are scorned and “immorality in high places is not only ignored but even rewarded in the voting booth” and in which “violence, banality, meanness, and disintegrating personal behaviour are destroying civility and endangering the very life of our communities” (ix). The above description accurately fits the picture of Nigeria. And very sad too is the fact that “people who cannot restrain their own baser instincts, who cannot treat one another with civility, are not capable of self-government” (372).

While Colson and Pearcey's analysis focuses on America, its reality is being replicated currently in Nigeria in the most awful form. When the nationalists fought hard to earn independence, the impression was that of people who were fully mature and prepared for self-governance to a level comparable to that of other nations that were backward at that time, such as the Asian Tigers. But after independence, a selfish mentality took over political leaders and the spirit of national consciousness acquiesced, thus paving the way for an ethnic and religious consciousness that has had devastating consequences. Certainly, “national consciousness in Nigeria has become a fragile travesty of what it might have been, leading to a situation in which the nation is passed over for the race, and the tribe is preferred to the state. Any meaningful move to consolidate Nigeria as a nation must consider the psychological forces of pride and shame in play in ethnic nationalism” (Onwuegbuchulam and Mtshali, 75). Under such a state of affairs, this poses a great dilemma. On the one hand, why would a Muslim want Christians diluting the Muslim values of his tribe? Why would a Christian want his family subjected to Muslim or animist values in the name of national unity? On the other, how can we forge a nation of mutual unity where we see ourselves as one, irrespective of such differences? Can we look at certain national values that bind us together while our private values are reduced to our narrow contexts?

CREATING A VIRTUOUS SOCIETY: THE FAMILY AND SCHOOL CONTEXTS

In getting the crux of this paper right, we need to understand what virtues and values are so that we can take them as indispensable to attaining true nationhood where there are equity and fair play. For our purposes, “Virtues and values are commonly treated as synonyms, but there is a distinction—virtues are lived values, values in action, values which are achieved on a dependably regular basis, while values by themselves are ideals or goals which tend to be more aspirational and not uncommonly fail to be achieved on as regular a basis as desired” (Krupansky). Morality is a key instrument in human flourishing whose most important formation period is early childhood.

In Africa, as in other cultures, moral formation “is given to children right from the tender age in order to acquire the habits, attitudes, beliefs, skills and motives that enable a human being to fit into the community” (Krupansky). There are two primary structures, the

family and school, where the above qualities could be instilled. Since these two institutions are essential to the formation and growth of a child, these institutions must have undiluted standards if they are to ensure the well-being of the child and the society in general.

The Family

The family, where children grow, is the foundation of the future of the society. First, the family is the primary cultural setting, and one of the primary responsibilities of parenthood is to raise great citizens. “In a nutshell, parents are the best teachers of every child. Kids learn moral values, manners, disciplines, everything from their home. It's their good upbringing which helps them succeed in the future” (Williams). If properly done, childrearing builds into a child a strong sense of virtues which include social integration and national consciousness. Nigeria needs a sense of national consciousness for unity where all life, property, and truth pertaining to innocent people are considered sacred. Ethnic and religious consciousness cannot be eradicated, and they are not bad in themselves; however, when they become avenues for the perpetration of evil, their emphasis should be diminished. National consciousness should take precedence when it comes to the life of the nation. Ozumba argues in a similar vein:

The important concepts here are awakesness, awareness, bonding, identity and destiny. A nation is supposed to have one soul, one driving spirit headed towards one destiny through the same identity. It is the consciousness that forges the identity which in turn drives the spirit of the nation to national greatness. Consciousness binds us, welds us to the metaphysical and physical life of the nation and urges us to identify with the nation in all its travails because it is in its survival that we gain our survival. (Ozumba 149–150)

Generally, everyone, whether literate or illiterate, believes in morality as one of the keys to a healthy society. Whether we agree or disagree on our concepts of morality, it is undeniable that “moral principles form a fundamental aspect of every culture as it outlines comprehensively, codes of behaviours or conducts for the individual on the one hand, and the society on the other” (Obasola 1). Fafunwa argues that for children, culture “is not taught; it is caught” (48), and Idang concurs with him (99).

However, this perspective is too narrow to yield the needed result. Standard practice shows that children are enriched when they emulate practices they observe and are taught. There are responsibilities for both children and adults; this implies that while children are required to learn and imbibe practices, adults are to provide learning opportunities through teaching and actions for children to imbibe. In many cultures, these are some of the concerns at the foundational level of character formation.

Regarding children in the Jewish culture, which follows the old Mosaic traditions (Exo. 12:26–27; Deut. 4:9; 6:7; Josh. 4:6–7, 21), Rosen writes that they “are regarded as the hope of the future in every society, yet among the Jewish people, this concept is enhanced by the view that children are a Divine trust and guarantors of the future” (Rosen 1). Children are nurtured in moral discipline primarily so they can “survive natural dangers as well as to earn a living and be self-sustaining” in tough situations (Rosen 1). Preservation of culture lies in the diligent instruction of children in the values that define and shape the identity, history and future of a people. Calvin explains this concept of children as a divine heritage and our responsibility to it: “It is also to be added, that unless men regard their children as the gift of God, they are

careless and reluctant in providing for their support, just as on the other hand this knowledge contributes in a very eminent degree to encourage them in bringing up their offspring” (Calvin *Commentary on the Psalms* 672).

The School

The second most important structure for human development and growth is the school, which complements the family setting. Parents and school authorities complement each other in the production of a great child who will grow up with strong educational and moral virtues which will add value to the whole society. “The academic performance of a child depends on the quality of parental involvement in its life, which is called family social capital; however, the quality of the school is also needed, which is called school social capital” (Williams). This explains why a child is an object of investment for both parents and school authorities. On this note, it is incumbent for us to know with commensurate action that “education is an investment, and one of the most critical investments we can make” (Duncan).

Great and enlightened leaders know that education is the bedrock of a serious, progressive nation. Ideally, culture and morality are nurtured in the family and refined in the school. It is, therefore, critical for education to always be at its best. This forms the basis on which Calvin established his Academy in Geneva: the development of every good nation stands on this philosophy, as Hall confirms: “Historically, education, as much as any other single factor, has fostered cultural and political advancement” (Hall *The Legacy of John Calvin* 15). This statement presupposes good quality education which prepares men and women to be problem solvers. The value of education can only be assessed if leaders prove that their education is capable of solving the problems that their nations face. Many who have professed this in advanced countries have also worked assiduously to actualize it.

The ancient Greek intellectual culture placed a high premium on education as a vehicle for driving moral and intellectual virtues. The Aristotelian approach teaches that while moral virtues are imitated, intellectual virtue such as prudence is acquired by teaching (Frame 75). The human will and reason possess moral and intellectual virtues, respectively (Frame 75). This ancient philosophy did not invent morality, but it stressed its importance by reflecting deeply on how it could positively impact society. The entirety of Greek philosophy was heavily concerned with human happiness, which could be achieved through good principles of conduct in society. As a “settled disposition,” virtue involves “a practical knowledge about how to bring it about” (“Ancient Ethical Theory”), and this is what makes Greek civilization a reference point in human history. However, it should be noted that values are a free depository in the human intellect, but “living out those values is another story. For individuals and groups to *get credit* for possessing virtues, they must first *earn* that credit through their *actions* over time as they *consistently live* those values” (Krupansky).

However, the current negative state of affairs in Nigeria on both family and school fronts raises a fundamental question as to the kind of formation that parents and schools are giving children. The spate of social crimes like corruption, injustice, cultism, drug abuse and trafficking, kidnappings, armed robbery, violence and mass murders across Nigeria has put these essential structures on trial for very serious charges. Many families either have no good values or have lost them, and in the same way, our academic institutions at all levels have not only collapsed in quality but have also become factories for baking criminal elements into society. These are the concerns that every Nigerian speaks about, yet there is no commensurate action to change the situation.

RULE OF LAW AND MORALITY

In many advanced nations, the rule of law is very strong because it stands on the shoulders of morality. Waliggo highlights law and public morality as important anchors of national values that have affected Africa as a whole and Nigeria in particular (Waliggo). However, the elders of our time do not show serious commitment to building virtues into children and youths, though they lament when they suffer disgrace from them. The failure of families and elders to take up their responsibilities has serious consequences for our society even as many adults “have been personally victimized with the heinous words and physical abuse of children and adolescents. Respect has not been properly taught or enforced in a considerable amount of today's youth and it is consequently shaping today's society in detrimental ways” (Homin).

Virtues are indispensable in any society that wishes itself well because “without virtue, a society can be ruled only by fear, a truth that tyrants understand all too well” (Colson and Pearcey 372). In Nigeria, many unvirtuous leaders have emerged over the people with the telling result that socio-economic and political agonies have spiralled in the land. They hold on to power through harassment and intimidation.

What is more worrisome is the debasement into which our elderly persons, who are supposed to be the custodians of the old values in which Africa always prided itself, have descended. Many of those who have taken over leadership positions are persons in their 70s and 80s, from whom youths are supposed to learn civility and self-control. Unfortunately, they not only fail to provide exemplary lifestyles, but they also recruit youths for nefarious activities that destroy all good morals.

Who then can promote these virtues for the transformation of our country? How can we achieve the virtues that could shape our country as one community or village in any real sense? With the current situation, our country is facing a bleak future. “But the truth is that a virtuous society can be created only by virtuous people, whose individual consciences guard their behavior and hold them accountable” (Colson and Pearcey 377). Within the religious context, what is needed is teaching that not only emphasizes salvation by grace through faith but also what it means to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God (Mic. 6:8) in measurable terms. These virtues can be replicated in homes and workplaces, which will impact healthy development in the areas of education, economy, security and transportation infrastructure. This is the only way of reducing the stress on our security outfits, which are saddled with combating crime.

THE AUSTRALIAN MODEL

The Australian model, which has worked in that country effectively, can also be effective to change our attitudes and actions in order to create a healthy Nigerian nation that will give meaning to the question of citizenship and inter-ethnic relations. Borowski advocates the Australian model of creating a virtuous society; it answers the challenge of multicultural society positively, adding to the relative stability and peace in that country (Borowski 459).

Australia is one of several polyethnic and consociational states that have formulated policies that help in stabilizing those nations. Others are the former Yugoslavia, the former Czechoslovakia, Indonesia, Belgium, Switzerland, Lebanon, the USA, Canada, and New Zealand. While some of these nations have had ugly periods of history, most of them have recently moved to levels of stability and national cohesion. What is special about Australia is that its policy engenders and reinforces virtues that birth and sustain liberal societies with great

success (Borowski 461; see also Birch 253). In the twenty-first century of advanced civilization, Australia offers a very important model that Nigeria could emulate. Being a liberal polity does not mean abrogation of right values; rather, it is an openness to revolutionary trends that creates a more tolerant and compatible atmosphere among different ethnicities.

Worthy of emulation is what has been adopted by Australia, which could “be regarded as a liberal polity because it is a diverse society which provides a wide range of individual opportunities and choices to its citizenry; it has representative national, state and local governments, its economy is predominantly a free enterprise market economy, and it has a substantial and strongly protected sphere of privacy and individual rights” (Galston, 1991; Borowski 462). This policy explicitly outlines certain virtues that are critical to attaining the vision of the country. Virtues such as these build a consciousness for nationalism:

(1) *courage* – the willingness to defend one's country; (2) *loyalty* – the developed capacity to understand, to accept and to act on the core principles of one's society; (3) *independence* – the disposition to care and take responsibility for oneself and to avoid becoming needlessly dependent on others; (4) *the work ethic*; (5) *adaptability*; (6) *law-abidingness* – the individual propensity to obey the law; (7) *tolerance* – the settled disposition of each individual to minimise interference with the strivings of others; (8) the capacity to discern, and the restraint to respect, the rights of others; (9) the political leadership virtue of having the *capacity to forge a common purpose* in a fragmented society; (10) the political leadership virtue of being able to *resist* the temptation to earn popularity by pandering to *immoderate public demands*, and (11) the political leadership virtue of having the capacity to *narrow the gap* between popular preference and wise action. (Borowski 463; see also Galston ch. 10)

These liberal public policy virtues are definitive of a democratic and progressive society that is not doomed to redundancy, and adaptation to them makes Australia's national cohesion stronger; this has greatly helped in reducing tension, social crime, and conflicts considerably. This theoretical framework underpins the veracity of national consciousness so that all citizens work for the overall greatness of the nation. Birch opines that despite its limitations and problems, the concept of nationalism has been the most successful political ideology and practice in human history (Birch 25, 221). Similarly, Australia set up a National Agenda with special focus on three important aspects (Borowski 468):

1. Cultural identity: the right of all Australians, within carefully defined limits, to express and share their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion;
2. Social justice: the right of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity and the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender or place of birth; and
3. Economic efficiency: the need to maintain, develop and utilise effectively the skills and talents of all Australians, regardless of background. (Office of Multicultural Affairs, 1989, p. vii).

The National Agenda further introduces additional non-negotiable policies to galvanize the above virtues (Borowski 468):

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1. Multicultural policies are based on the premise that all Australians should have an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia, to its interests and future first and foremost.
 2. Multicultural policies require all Australians to accept the basic structures and principles of Australian society: the Constitution and the rule of law, tolerance and equality, Parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and religion, English as the national language and equality of the sexes; and multicultural policies impose obligations as well as conferring rights: the right to express one's own culture and beliefs involves a reciprocal responsibility to accept the right of others to express their views and values (Office of Multicultural Affairs, 1989, p. vii).

One of the most important virtues that could heal a fragmented society such as Nigeria is for the political leadership to be “willing to forge a sense of common purpose in the diverse society which it governs” (Borowski 469). The implementation of this kind of framework has been a success in Australia, and the failure to implement it has been Nigeria's pitfall. Equally important as the Agenda itself to Australia's success has been the leadership's “capacity to narrow the gap between, on the one hand, what may be popularly preferred, as expressed in public opinion and, on the other hand, what constitutes a wise course of action” (Borowski 470).

In Australia, these virtues are actualised “through family socialisation, through the media, the civic education received in schools, and, of course, social policy[;] they need to be reinforced” through public or civil service (Borowski 471). The major problem with Nigeria may not even be ideological bankruptcy: many excellent suggestions have already been made by various commissions of inquiry with accompanying government white papers to change the current situation (Afolabi, 1993). The problem is lack of implementation of those wonderful concepts due to the deeply seated selfish goals of the various ethnicities that believe in their right to subjugate other groups. The intention of those few powerful individuals is to allow the prevailing gaps to thrive so they can fulfil their own desires whatever the consequences for others. If this should be the invariable state of Nigeria, then it is doomed to destruction.

HOW SHOULD WE THEN LIVE?

When Schaeffer posed this question for the American society of the mid-1970s—and Colson and Pearcey reiterated it with a slight modification in 1999 in *How Now Shall We Live?*—he proffered a comprehensive scope of structural reorientation which hinges on “commitment to God's Word as truth” (Schaeffer 11; Colson and Pearcey 379). This commitment pushes for Bavinck's earlier call for “a compassion for culture” and a “commitment to the costly practice of truth in the midst of the intellectual, moral and philosophical battles of our day” and “living in the power and reality of the God who is there, bearing the witness of His truth across the full spectrum of life and culture” (Bavinck 205).

The failure of Nigeria to adopt principles that have helped other nations handle their similar challenges warrants a biblico-theological alternative, which this paper presents. This theological option is justified because “Christian teaching, properly expressed, advanced science, instilled concepts of political and social and economic freedom, fostered justice, and provided the greatest single source of inspiration for the magnificent achievements in art, architecture, music, and literature that we treasure to the present day” (Maier 8). Though the church in Nigeria has not been doing enough to change this situation, it still has vast resources for dealing with corrupt human nature, as exemplified by the history of the impact of

Christianity globally. Teaching and leading by example are the best practices that believers should consistently uphold. Accordingly, it should be noted that “Christianity brought about a great change in the theory and practice of education” (Bavinck 205). Through education, Christianity has produced great citizens, and it has also exerted a “most powerful influence on all of life in society and state, in science and art, and also on education and nurture” (Bavinck 205).

Calvin taught that the civil government is a creation of God and those who rule in it must understand its holy nature and therefore do so with reverence (Calvin *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 2:1489–1492). He insisted that believers must accord its leaders due honour, obedience and prayers. This understanding derives from the fact that after creation, God summoned Adam to participate in the running of the world in its material form and needs on behalf of God, having imbued him with all the mental faculties needed to make sound decisions and policies for the smooth administration of the world. This is what theologians call the cultural mandate, and much has been written about it as the basic framework for understanding human activities in the world (e.g., North; Smith; Hoekema; Ryken; Grimmond; Schmutzer and Mathews). Man is seen as a vicegerent; as such, he stands in his vocation vertically in relation to and accountable to God and horizontally in relation to and accountable to fellow men and his entire environment. Having been placed by God in his own context, he is dependent upon God functionally and instructionally.

For such a system to be stable for citizens to enjoy freedom as Calvin propounded it, there should be checks and balances (Calvin, 1960, 1493). The Nigerian system destroys these checks and balances through the gimmick that is prevalent among the executive, judiciary and legislative arms of government. Since the practitioners of politics and administration in Nigeria are far from seeing the system as holy unto God, it has been marred by human selfish manipulations, and all forms of evil are exhibited in the polity, thus making it dangerous to everyone subject to it. In Calvin's perspective, religious moral principles should be involved in governance so that believers who are serving in it can “exemplify virtues” for political reforms (Hall, *Calvin in the Public Square*, 92).

Going by our experience in Nigeria, it is evident that there can be no human rule of conduct upon which we can base our policies and actions because we have a tendency for bias that would favour either our ethnicity or our religion; this is what has prevented us from becoming a better nation. But since “the very idea of right and wrong makes sense only if there is a final standard, a measuring rod, by which we can make moral judgments” (Colson and Pearcey, 379), and since even for moral and religious people, knowing right and wrong alone does not automatically result in compliance, we need to turn to God in sincerity so that his Holy Spirit will empower us to live right.

The Christian world view places itself on the standard given by God, whose word is the final rule of faith and practice. On this note, we could help “build a good society by cultivating ethical knowledge,” which is required of all human beings (Colson and Pearcey, 381). The cardinal rule that governs human society well is love of God and love of other people. Having been created as religious beings, humanity stands in a dual relationship, vertical and horizontal. The rule to love our fellow men is critical if human society is to flourish well in its diversity. However, for the love of other people to stand firm and keep the society healthy, it needs another foundation; it needs to stand on the true love of God, which necessarily results in loving other people truly. Calvin argues this point well:

For, since every man is devoted to himself, there will never be true charity towards *neighbours*, unless where the love of God reigns; for it is a mercenary love which the children of the world entertain for each other, because every one of them has regard to his own advantage. On the other hand, it is impossible for the love of God to reign without producing brotherly kindness among men. (“Commentary on Matthew 22:39,” 41).

As a nation, we should recognize that God means well for human society when he demands that justice and mercy should flow in our midst (Amos 5:24; cf. Mic. 6:8). Christians should be more tolerant among themselves and people of other faiths and show practical love, which is the real strength of the Christian gospel. This alone can be a demonstration of the distinctiveness and truth of the gospel as of God. Religious organizations, and especially the church, should lead in creating a new sense of nationalism, and mutual respect for the sanctity of life that bears the image of God should replace the existing negative trends in our society. While we remain here on earth, we should work the kingdom of God and its benefits for our collective good. All the diverse ethnicities and cultures in Nigeria should be given their beautiful coloration from the perspective of God, who is the originator of diversity.

CONCLUSION

Political leaders should draw excellent lessons from the best practices of other nations around the world that have advanced through storms of life. For instance, ancient Egypt in the time of Joseph was facing very critical times that would drain the lives of the people. The Pharaoh at that time demonstrated two important things, namely, good planning, which enabled his nation to survive a time of uncertainty, and proactiveness, which kept ethnicism from beclouding his thinking. Pharaoh went for the best brain, the most organized man—who though by human standards should not have been considered, having been not only a foreigner but also a slave—and appointed Joseph as the second in command of Egypt because Joseph showed intellectual clarity and had a good plan (Gen. 41:38–45).

We also have to appreciate that human diversity has its glory in the eschatological reign of Christ, and this should inform our mutual inter-ethnic relations. In Revelation 7:9, God gives us a summative all-inclusive picture of the grand metanarrative of the new humanity in His presence (*coram Deo*) at the end of the eschaton, showing representatives from every nation, ethnicity, language and culture. While the diversity of humanity is preserved to eternity, its unity is also underscored as they are presented as standing together and indeed working together to the glorious praise of God in the new heaven and new earth.

This theological understanding should guide the approach that has been applied in Australia, replication of which this paper advocates for in Nigeria. The nation should not be made the property of one dominant culture, ethnic group or groups, or religion, but its diversity should be well explicated to the advantage of everyone.

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