



Religiosity and Morality in Contemporary Churches in Nigeria: Critical Points of Disconnections Between Faith and Praxis

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Abstract

This paper discusses the critical disconnect between displays of religiosity and morality in contemporary churches in Nigeria. The paper examines whether religiosity has enhanced the spiritual and moral formation of Christian adherents in terms of curbing corruption as a major moral cancer that affects all aspects of human life. The writer subsumes all the moral issues under corruption. Some Nigerian churches are bedevilled by corrupt practices such as greed, fraud, adultery, fornication, and other moral vices against which they preach. Pastors embezzle church funds, engage in financial fraud, and engage in all forms of sexual immorality and abuse. The authors used books, journals, bulletins, and internet articles relevant to the study. The findings of the study revealed five major indicators or barometers of spirituality through which adherents of the Christian religion in Nigeria display religiosity: pilgrimage, worship, regular attendance, fasting, and media production. This paper argues that these displays of religiosity have not been translated into the spiritual and moral formations of Christian religious adherents. The paper concludes by recommending to all Christians and churches in Nigeria the need to return to the practice of ethical and moral codes contained in the Bible, the theopneustic book of Christians.

Keywords: religiosity, morality, corruption, churches, Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria is a country replete with religiosity. No doubt, Nigeria is a religious society, considering the avalanche of religious activities cascading daily on Nigerian soil. This lends credence to the apothegm that "Nigerians are religious. There are three major religious groups in Nigeria: Christianity, Islam, and the African Traditional Religion (ATR). Every religious group has its moral code. That of the Christian religion is contained in its revered and *theopneustic* (divinely inspired) book called the Bible. The Bible says "... a life of moral excellence leads to knowing God better" (2 Pet 1:5, New Living Translation)¹. Thus, it is practically impossible to talk about religion without morals. Dele Ilesanmi (2014) states that religion and morality are inseparable entities. Citing Lord Develin, he says "No society has yet solved the problem of how to teach morality without religion". Ilesanmi stressed that talking about Christian morality without the God of the Bible is an aberration, an intellectual blunder, a theological embarrassment, and a biblical misconstruction. This clearly shows the unbroken cord of the nexus between religion and morals.²

Nigeria is only one of the numerous societies suffering from the universal issue of moral deterioration. Nigerian society is undergoing a severe moral crisis, particularly about family, education, and public and religious life. Because of social evils, including a general lack of discipline, violence, promiscuity, vandalism, corruption, high crime rates, and similar phenomena, the media is constantly reporting incidents of moral breakdowns.

The vital question on which this study focuses is: What is the impact of the religiosity of Christian religious adherents on their moral and spiritual formations vis-à-vis the transformation of Nigerian society? This paper's understanding of societal transformation and national development relates to curbing corruption and regaining lost trust in Christianity as a promoter of moral and spiritual values. To answer this question, this paper focuses on four important issues. The first is the concepts of religion, religiosity, morality, and corruption; the second is the way Christians exhibit religiosity; the third is the critical points of disconnection between the acts of religiosity and moral practices of Christians and the church; and the fourth is a set of recommendations on how religiosity and morality combined with praxis can help to combat corruption, transform Nigerian society, and promote value formation and development.

The paper submits that the bogus displays of religiosity among Christians in Nigeria have not been commensurate with their moral practices in society; hence, their religiosity has not enhanced moral and spiritual formations and development that will help curb corruption and solve other moral problems, which will ultimately translate to societal transformation, national development, and the restoration of the lost glory of the Christian churches in Nigeria.

This study only discusses Christianity as a gauge of other religious groups in Nigeria and five major indicators or barometers of spirituality through which the adherents of the Christian religion in Nigeria display religiosity, namely: pilgrimage, worship, regular attendance, fasting, and media production. This paper investigated whether religiosity has enhanced the spiritual and moral formations of adherents in terms of curbing corruption as a major moral cancer that touches on all aspects of human lives. This paper subsumes all moral issues under the three S's of corruption. The authors argue that all moral issues are subsumed under "three-S corruption" or "the three S's of

¹ All Scriptural quotations are from the King James Version, except otherwise stated.

² Ilesanmi, Dele A. *Religiosity without Morality: What can Christian Educators Do?* (Overcomer, a publication of RCCG, Kings' Zone, 2014)

corruption". The three S's of corruption are sexual corruption, system corruption, and self-aggrandisement corruption. All these are moral issues that the Nigerian churches preach against.

The Bible and Morality

When asked, what is the Bible? George Herbert, a seventeenth-century parson and poet, a man of deep and sensitive faith, a Christian of mature understanding, answered: "The book of books, the storehouse and magazine of life and comfort, the holy Scriptures" (Robert C. Walton, 1970:3). The Bible as a *theopneustic* (divinely inspired) sacred book of Christians remains the major "formative and normative" authority for character, spiritual development, and moral decision-making (Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter, 2014:45, cited Birch and Rasmussen, n.d., pp. 14–16). Walton said the Bible is more than "a slab of ancient history in archaic language". It contains different types of truth. It is a sourcebook for the history of the social life of Israel and Christians worldwide. Without this book, the religion of Israel's nation cannot be understood. What is more, it contains the standards and values that Christians are expected to uphold. In *Ministerial Ethics*,³ Trull and Carter stated that some ethical issues, such as divorce and war, seem to be both condoned and condemned in the Bible. They argued that several modern moral concerns, such as artificial insemination and media morality, did not exist in biblical times. Thus, in their view, proper application of the ethical teachings of the Bible to these and other similar moral issues requires skilful exegesis and sound hermeneutics. These two contemporary ethicists strongly believed that the Bible has a rich vein of ethical gold to be mined by the minister of God, "who rightly handles the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15), and that, in summary, the Bible is the primary source for ethics (pp. 45). Indeed, the Bible remains the veritable tool by which our ethical and moral standards can be judged and measured. Indeed, Christians' moral and spiritual values are judged by biblical standards because of their reliability, dependability, inerrancy, and infallibility.

The word "morality" has been found to mean different things to different people; some writers view this concept of morality as an individual's perception of what is right or wrong. Other schools of thought believe that such a definition is inadequate. They argued that values such as goodness, justice, truth, honesty, fair play, love, respect for authority, and a host of others are accepted as universal concepts that do not depend on individuals' opinions. Morality involves what society dictates to be good or bad at a particular time. It is the accepted code of conduct in society. Indeed, values are attached to morals, which are called "moral values" (Ekemini Uko-Aviomoh, 2004, cited Oyedokun, 2001). "Morality just like ethics involves the idea of good or right conduct and is utterly hostile to bad or wrong conduct. Morality involves a more or less articulated set of beliefs about the nature and conduct of man" (Chinedu Jonathan Dick, Victor Ifeanyi Ede, and Ozioma Faith Chiaghanam (2020). Denga (1986) summarised morality as resistance to temptation or inhibition of behaviours that are unacceptable even if they are pleasurable or profitable to an individual. In his view, Olaniyan, J.O. (1997), called "moral values" those things in human character, conduct, and social relations that are judged as good or bad, right or wrong. For Hill (1997), "moral values" are ideas we believe in and rate high enough to live by.

³ Trull, Joe E and Carter, James E. *Ministerial ethics: Moral formation for church leaders*, Gospel Press and Literature international, 142, New Lagos Road, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, 2004.

Morality and Biblical Christian Values

What are the values? Trull and Carter (2004) explained that values are moral goods to be realised in our society. They are values society considers morally good. For example, in the United States, freedom and justice are important values, and in Western Nigeria, Yoruba land, respect for authority, elders, parents, and people and handwork are of great value. In Ekiti, the eastern Yoruba, honesty and education form the major values of the people in addition to industry and respect for people. When one acts contrary to an accepted value, the unifying beliefs of that community are weakened and threatened, and such behaviour is considered moral pervasion. According to Biodun Ogunyemi (2000:173) "All human activities, including teaching and learning, revolve around values"⁴. He said values are standards or judgements in human behaviour (p. 175). Values are intricately related to what the individual has come to accept as the guiding principles of living (Ogunyemi, cited in Palmer, 1964). Ogunyemi believed that values influence actions, and similarly, the consequences of actions in turn influence the values held by individuals and groups. He said that all human actions (and inactions) are determined by values. Thus, our interaction with the environment is value-laden. This is because the question of "values" comes into play whenever people make decisions, make choices, or express preferences (Ogunyemi, 2000:175; Villanueva, 1977; Akinpelu, 1991; Ogunyemi, 1994).

In Scripture, the words "good", "godliness", uprightness," and "virtue" are considered to be moral or spiritual values or excellence. Biblical writers often use these words to identify moral and spiritual values (Micah 6:8; Phil 4:8; 2 Pet 1:3, 5, 7; 1 Tim 2:10; 3:16; 4:7, 8; 6:5, 6, 11; 2 Tim 1:5; etc.). One of the ways we discern the "good" we follow as Christians is through our understanding of God and His will. If one practices good theology, one cannot be spiritually right and still be morally wrong. If such a disconnection exists, then there is a disconnection between our religiosity and morality. If our faith or religiosity cannot produce good morals, there is something wrong with our biblical theology and practice. What the Bible considers moral and spiritual values are dotted on every page of the Bible. For example, Exodus 20:1–17 and Galatians 5:19–25 tell us what is morally and spiritually right and wrong. The flesh produces what is morally wrong, while the Spirit (Spirit of God) produces what is morally and spiritually right. Whatever the Bible considers morally good is spiritually good, and vice versa.

Values can be worldly or spiritual. Worldly values are not always the same as spiritual values. What the world sees as values, at times, contradicts the Biblical stand on values. All biblical values are godly or spiritual values that Christians must embrace in their spiritual walk with God. What the people of the world value is what the Bible warns Christians against. The world places much emphasis on riches, wealth, power, pleasure, revenge, fame, and vanity status; these are worldly values. These are the most important things to people who perceive no power or purpose beyond themselves. Worldly values promote lies, jealousies, resentments, and conflicts among people per the purposes of their master and father, Satan (John 8:44; Acts 5:3; Rom 16:17–20; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:1–3; 4:25–32; 2 Tim 2:22–26; 1 John 3:8–10). What the Bible teaches about values is often the opposite of worldly values, such as kindness and respect for all people instead of power; humility instead of status; honesty and generosity instead of wealth; self-control instead of self-indulgence; and forgiveness instead of revenge. Indeed, Christian values promote peace and goodwill among people by God's purposes.

⁴ The view of Ogunyemi, Biodun here supports the Ilesanmi Dele's Biblical Value Observation Model (BVOM). What we place our on value determines our priority. And our priority determines the level of our spirituality. All human activities, such as learning, teaching, preaching, praying, etc., revolve around values.

In Christian religion, values are principles for living that are emphasised most strongly in the Bible. The figure below shows us the major tripartite value systems.

Some Key Values found in Christianity

Live a Moral Life	Worship God Alone	Be Generous
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love your Neighbours • Be Humble • Don't Fight People • Self-control <p>Major Scriptures: Exo 20:1-7; Matt 5:27-28, 15:18-19; Cor 6:19-20; Matt 22:36-40; cf. John 3:16; 1 John 4:8-21.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faithfulness to God • Don't be Self-righteous • Obey God Almighty • Practice what you Preach <p>Major Scriptures: Exo 20:1-6; Matt 6:24; 1 Sam 15:23, Matt 6:31-34; Jam 1:25; Rom 2:1-4; Is 5:21; Mic 3:11-12.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be Kind to Everybody • Forgive Others Quickly • Maintain your Integrity • Self-sacrifice <p>Major Scriptures: Lev 19:9-10; Prov 14:21; Is 58:10-11; Matt 5:42, 6:1-2; Jn 13:33-34; Eph 4:32.</p>

Figure 1: Christian Values Grid

Other Biblical Christian values include dedication, cooperation, self-sacrifice, righteousness, teamwork, long-suffering, peace, joy, holiness, prayer, fasting, mercy, fair play, respect, honour, thankfulness, truthfulness, godliness, self-control, and so on.

The Ten Commandments, found in Exodus 1-17, encapsulate the Biblical values that Christians must obey. God listed these values for Israel's children when He brought them out of Egypt, the place of bondage. God spoke all these spiritual and moral values to Moses, who received them on two stone tablets. These laws of the Old Testament are the Ten Commandments of Moses. These are the most recognisable laws of God to His people in the Old Testament. Here is a condensed version of these Old Testament biblical values⁵:

1. You shall have no other gods before Me.
2. You shall not make idols.
3. You shall not take the name of the LORD, your God, in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.
5. Honour your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

⁵ Ten commandments encapsulate biblical values upon which a Christian must be judged morally and spiritually to determine the level of his or her spirituality. This also includes Galatians 5: 16-25.

10. You shall not covet.

Other different biblical values can be grouped under both moral and spiritual values in both the Old and New Testaments. All of these are still significantly relevant to our lives today. For example, the value of wisdom in the Book of Proverbs (Prov 1:7; 3:5; 4:23; 16:3; 22:6; etc.); the values in the Beatitudes that Jesus preached to a large crowd on the Mount (Matt 5:3-12); and the value in the Gifts of the Spirit, which are the fruits (values) of the Spirit, as recorded by apostle Paul.

These fruits (values) are love, joy, peace, long-suffering (patient endurance, forbearance,), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22-25). When the Holy Spirit controls our lives, He will produce all the values or fruits mentioned here in us (Gal 5:22, Life Application Bible for Students, 1992). All the worldly or bad moral values are also pointed out by Paul. They are values of the flesh or worldly values that produce evil results, such as impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, spiritism (that is, encouraging the activity of demons), hatred and fighting, jealousy and anger, constant effort to get the best for yourself [at the expense of others], complaints and criticisms, the feeling that everyone else is wrong except those in your little group, envy, murder, drunkenness, wild parties, and all that sort of moral issues. And anyone who engages himself or herself in this kind of life will not be inherent in the Kingdom of God (Gal 5:19–21, LABS). Biblical Christian values continue to flow from the pages of the New Testament, as mentioned earlier. All these morals are extensions and expansions of the Ten Commandments. It should be noted here that, in the Bible, all moral "goods" and spiritual "goods". That is, whatever is morally wrong is spiritually or religiously unacceptable, and vice versa.

For this study, it is therefore important to state clearly that spirituality is used as a synonym for religiosity. This connotes acts and practices of piety or godliness exhibited by religious adherents, depicting their unalloyed and avowed devotion and commitment to such a religion or faith (Ezekiel O. Ajani, 2018). Ajani argued that the level of religiosity or spirituality of individuals cannot be measured but can be observed, and this can be done through the actions and practices of such individuals, which stem from their religious or faith afflictions. In truth, the religiosity or spirituality of a person may be very difficult to measure, yet this is observable. Hence, the authors use moral and spiritual values as typified in the Bible as an **observation model** to judge the spirituality or religiosity of Christians. This is called **the Biblical Value Observation Model (BVOM)**⁶.

Religion, Morality and Religiosity Nexus

If the question of what religion is asked in a class of fifty students, each representing a country, we are likely to get fifty different answers. The reason is not far-fetched. This is probably because the word "religion" is a polymorphous concept that cannot be pinned down to a single definition. According to Omobola Cecilia Odejobi (2014, citing Bhatt, 2012), religion is considered by many people as an organised system of beliefs, ceremonies, practices, and worship that centres on one supreme God or deity, which provides groups of men with a solution to the question of ultimate meaning. She even said that no particular God or gods are worshipped in some religions. In other words, to some, religion is not God's worship, gods, or any deities. Odejobi also considered religion a collection of cultural systems, belief systems, and worldviews that relate humanity to spirituality and, sometimes, to moral values. She emphasised that religion is a necessity and a significant part of

⁶ This term is coined by Dele A. Ilesanmi to measure the behavioural change of a Christian with respect to his or her religiosity. This is to determine the value priority of a Christianity. We set the Bible as a standard of value judgement. The following texts can give a direction (Col 3:1-3; cf. Gal 5:16-25; Phil 3:19; 1John 2: 16-17).

our lives. It is believed that many would find it very difficult to live without religion or spirituality. This implies that religion is essential to human existence.

Furthermore, Odejobi stressed that most religious adherents believed that the world was created by a divine power and that this had an influence on their lives. R. W. L. Moberly (2009) explained that religion in the modern West is often used to mean a generic kind of thought, piety, and practices, quite different from those of politics, economics, and the natural sciences; it describes what happens primarily in an inward, subjective, and largely private realm, distinct from what happens in public. Thus, religious people who transgress these distinctions tend to encounter strong opposition.

The World Book Encyclopaedia (1990) identified five characteristics that are completely or partially shared by most religions, such as (1) belief in God or deity; (2) doctrine of salvation; (3) code of conduct or ethics; (4) usage of sacred stories; and (5) rituals or religious acts and ceremonies. In addition to these five characteristics, these authors identify three other characteristics of religion: (1) worship or adoration of a God or gods (goddesses); (2) giving or performing sacrifice; and (3) periodic remembrance of a God or gods (goddesses), etc.

Moreover, it will be very difficult to divorce religion from culture. Even though religion is different from culture, the two are connected in many ways. For example, in the area of worship, the cultural values and behavioural patterns of religious adherents are demonstrated, such as the way they dance, dress, and speak, their music, drums, trumpets, and other communication devices, and the art objects of worship. All the objects of worship in our churches are elements of culture. Therefore, culture is a vehicle for religion, and religion is the driver. The two entities are different but connected in many ways. Our morals are a part of our cultural and religious values. Culture is the totality of people's ways of life. It is a collective name for all behavioural patterns, socially acquired and transmitted with symbols. It is a name for distinctive achievements of human groups, which include language, tool making, industry, art, science, religion, morals, laws, government, and material instruments or artefacts that embody cultural achievements by which intellectual features, such as building, tools, machines, communication devices, art objects, etc., are given practical effect (Odejobi, cited Amponsah, 2010:597). Culture shapes the way we see the world, but religion connects us to the supernatural. Our Cosmosophy is rooted in our religious and cultural consciousness.

Similarly, the term religiosity has a diversity of meanings. It is not only polymorphic but also a complex concept. Ajani (2018, citing Barbara Holdcroft, 2006:89) stated that Holdcroft's conclusion on the complexity of the term "religiosity" is based on two premises. First, the precise nature of this term in English is unclear. This term is synonymous with other terms such as piety, devotion, belief, faith, and orthodoxy. Second, the perceived complexity of this concept is due to the fact that interest in the study of "religiosity" cuts across disciplines, with each approaching the concept from diverse vantage points. For example, a theologian could approach the discussion on religiosity from the perspective of faith and adherence to dogma or doctrine. On the other hand, a psychologist might approach this concept from the standpoint of devotion and acts of piety. A sociologist could approach it from the viewpoint of church membership and attendance.

In addition, according to Ajani, Russell Spittler (2003:1096) views religiosity as a cluster of certain acts and sentiments that are informed by the beliefs and values that characterise a certain community. Such acts are focused on the pietistic habits of different individuals. More so, religiosity is an aspect of religion that seeks to foster a healthy relationship with the divine. This is often

characterised by obedience and submission to God's will. In his view, E.O. Gbadegesin (2004) opines that religiosity is concerned with spiritual matters or devotion to spiritual things. Since religiosity is a complex concept that can be viewed from diverse perspectives with its varied synonyms, it is therefore important to delineate how this term is used in this paper. In this study, the concepts "religiosity" and its popular synonym "spirituality" are used interchangeably.

Since morality has been discussed earlier in this work, what then is the nexus among religion, morality, and religiosity? To begin with, religiosity is the quality of being religious or pious, which has much to do with the spirituality or religiousness of the adherents of a religion. Religiosity is the zealousness about a religion, faith, or religious activities, such as worship, fasting, teaching, preaching, participating in holy pilgrimages, attending worship centres, etc., that can bring about spirituality. In this case, religiosity and spirituality are synonymous, as used in this paper. Therefore, religiosity is the art of practising religion piously with a high level of morality. Moral embellishment in religion is a quality of religiosity.

In his view on morality and religion, Agha (2010) stated that morality and religion have had a close connection since the history of the human race. Tradition holds that morality and religion are inseparable entities. He posited that both emphasise personality in their relationships and are concerned with conduct. Therefore, the destruction of religion will automatically lead to the destruction of morality. He stressed that when people lose their hold on religion, nothing but moral confusion and decay will ensue. It was generally assumed, according to Gaukroger (2012), that between the 17th and 19th centuries, religion provided the unique basis for morality, and without religion, there could be no morality. No wonder Develin argued that no society has been able to solve the problem of teaching morality without religion. In furtherance of the discourse on morality and religion, Childress and Macquarie (1986) have the following to say on the concept of morality and religion as cited by Dick et al. (2020):

Many religious people believe that morality and religion are the same and inseparable; for them, either morality is part of religion or their religion is their morality. For others, especially non-religious people, morality and religion are distinct and separable; religion may be immoral or non-moral, and morality may or should be non-religious. Even for some religious people, the two are different and separable. They may hold that religion and morality should be moral, but they agree that they may not be (pp. 400–41).

Other schools of thought, such as secular humanists, maintain that the decay of morality cannot bring about religious decline, or vice versa. They declare that religion and morality are two different entities that can be detached from each other. They argued that the claim that religion and morality are twin brothers and therefore inseparable cannot be validated. Secular humanists claim that moral duty is towards man, not God (Dick et al., 2020, cited Agha, 2012). No matter the vacillation of the moral and religious pendulum, Agha (2012, p. 44) observed three main reasons that signify the nexus between morality and religion:

1. The world religions give us actual examples of the age-long life's ideas and goals. Traditional views see morality as an outflow from religion, indissolubly bound up with it.
2. The theories of philosophical morality are known and consciously followed by a comparatively small proportion of the human race, while the world's religions number their followers in the tens and hundreds of millions. Without religion, there can be no effective morality because morality has its roots in the supernatural, just like religion.

3. Moral philosophy must go hand in hand or side by side with religion. Therefore, moral decay is the logical consequence of religious decay.

According to Dick et al., religion plays a significant role in the lives of most Nigerians. Naturally, religion teaches its followers about good and bad, right and wrong. The primary source of moral guidance for many Nigerians is their faith. While there is significant harmony in moral theology, there are significant differences in the theological principles of religion. Honesty, our interactions with one another, respect for property, and a plethora of other moral problems are all areas of broad agreement. As a result, it can be said that occasionally there is no difference between a moral code and a code of behaviour promoted by religion. Religious individuals uphold their moral standards as a form of adoration of God, while non-religious people strive to live morally upright lives as a duty to society. In essence, morality and religion cannot be separated from each other. Where there is a disconnection between these two entities, corruption is inevitable.

Exhibition of Religiosity or Spirituality in Christianity in Nigeria

We have noted earlier that this study revealed five major indicators or barometers of spirituality through which the adherents of the Christian religion in Nigeria display religiosity: worship, regular worship attendance, fasting, pilgrimage, and religious scrambling in media space.

Worship and Regular Attendance

One of the best and most noticeable ways in which adherents of religion exhibit and seek to enhance religiosity in the world, particularly in Nigeria, is in the area of worship. Ajani (2018, citing Justin Okoroji 2006:86) defines worship as an act of adoration and reverence frequently directed towards the Supreme Being or the divine. He said that in worship, people express their trust, loyalty, and devotion to the object of worship. He argued that all major religions in Nigeria have one form of worship. For example, he cited Ralph Martin (1977:1062), who stated that since the first century, the church has been a worshipping community of believing men and women. Ajani also cited John Mbiti (1990:58), who stated that worship is constantly performed among indigenous African people as a way of responding to the spiritual world around them. He emphasised that worship among African people is controlled by both immediate needs and inherited practices.

The major acts of worship in the Christian religion in Nigeria include all or some of these elements: prayers, dancing, singing, drumming, sacrifices and/or offerings, incantations, invocations, supplications, pastoral or priestly declarations, etc. The Scripture commands all Christians to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy by dedicating it to God (Exo 20:8–11). Generally, the Christian Sabbath day is regarded as Sunday because the work days of the week begin on Monday and end on Saturday, the sixth day, and Sunday is the seventh day—the day of rest as commanded by God, wholly dedicated to God. If our work day begins on Sunday, then your Sabbath will be on Saturday. If you start working on Tuesday, your Sabbath day is Monday.

To measure the degree of religiosity in Nigeria today, one will examine the diverse modes of prayer. Prayers are no longer limited to private homes and churches. Contemporary Christians in Nigeria now hold all manner of prayer meetings in open spaces such as stadia, public vehicles, work places, on mountains, hills, under trees, in motor parks, market places, event centres, etc. All these types of prayers are held at different times, such as mornings, afternoons, evenings, and nights. Some churches have megaphones attached to their buildings, from which prayers are aired loudly. Every day of the week has been occupied by churches in Nigeria for worship. From Monday to Sunday,

churches in Nigeria have been occupied by religious activities to show the extent of religiosity in the country. For example, some Christian denominations, such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), hold services on Sunday mornings and evenings. The morning service is held between 7 and 11:30. After the service, the church may still hold other group meetings, such as the Good Women Meeting, the Excellent Men Meeting, and the Youth Meeting. This may last for one to two hours. Members of each parish (or church) meet at different House Fellowship Centres for evening service or fellowship. This evening fellowship is held every Sunday except on the first Sunday of every month, when the church normally holds its Workers' Meeting/Holy Communion service. This is held at different centres of the church area or zonal headquarters between 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Furthermore, the church holds mid-week services, such as Tuesday Digging Deep (Bible Study), Thursday Faith Clinic (Prayer Meeting), vigils held on Fridays, choir rehearsal, and Sunday school review or preparatory class hold on Saturdays. Mondays and Wednesdays are also occupied for special activities. All these programmes are for the spiritual growth of church members and are barometers for spirituality or religiosity. Regular worship attendance is taken very seriously in all these spiritual activities. Members who attend these meetings or services regularly are considered spiritually serious. This is one way to measure the spirituality of Christians coupled with their moral display.

Religious Fast

Fasting is another important way in which Christian religionists demonstrate spirituality. In Christianity, though there is no direct command to fast, it is considered one of the ways by which a Christian can grow to trust God and have victory over the flesh. Jesus demonstrated the importance of fasting to a willing victor when he fasted for forty days and forty nights (Matt 4:1–11). According to Ajani, for many centuries Christians have participated in lent (period of fasting), during which biblical and religious teachings, preaching, exhortations, and so on are held in some churches or parishes, particularly in the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Anglican, and Catholic churches. For instance, all branches of the RCCG⁷ are commanded by the authority of the mission to meet every day in their various parishes for at least one hour for prayers. The National Prayer Department of the Church produces a prayer booklet for this spiritual exercise. The church may ask members to fast for 40, 50, or 100 days. This also demonstrates the spirituality of the church.

Holy Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land of Israel is considered important among Christians. Christians participate in pilgrimages to Israel not as a prerequisite for salvation and spiritual blessings because nothing of such is stated in the Bible but for personal spiritual revival and for the confirmation of some historical events in the Bible. Many Christians in Nigeria go to this holy land every year, and many churches and governments spend millions of naira on pilgrimage annually. Some Christian pilgrims add the suffix "JP" (Jerusalem Pilgrim) to their names. It is also considered a sign of spirituality.

Religious Scramble for Media Space

Another way to display spirituality among contemporary Nigerian Christians and churches is through the scramble for media space in the area of media production. Churches in Nigeria have inundated media houses and the global media space with their programmes. For example, print,

⁷ RCCG is an acronym of "The Redeemed Christian Church of God". The church places high premium on the spirituality of members, particularly in the areas of fasting and prayers.

audio, audio-visual, and other social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, etc., are replete with Christian programmes. These can be in the form of advertisements for upcoming programmes, preaching, teaching, musical renditions, film shows, drama, etc.

The Three S's⁸ of Corruption as a Moral Issue in Nigeria

As stated earlier in this paper, all moral issues are subsumed under the three-S corruption or the three S's of corruption. The three S's of corruption are sexual corruption, system corruption, and self-aggrandisement corruption. All these are moral issues or problems against which the Nigerian churches preach. Sexual corruption, which can be classified into adultery, fornication, and rape; system corruption, which is categorised into bribery, illegal collections, and giving or payments, such as illegal collections by school authorities from primary to university; illegal collections by the Nigeria Police Force, Federal Road Safety Corps, Nigeria Customs Service, and other paramilitaries on highways; illegal collections by the government and politicians; illegal collections and payments by other organisations, groups, associations, etc. self-aggrandisement Corruption, which can be classified into stealing, hypocrisy, greed, fraud, lies, child abuse, false measuring, and other moral vices.

The term corruption has been used in diverse ways by different authors. In Gabriel O. Akinlade-Daniel's (2018) *Corruption in Contemporary Church*, he cited author George Ehusani (2003), who defined corruption as an "indication of an absence of human values." Florence, cited in Kelvin Onongha (2014), sees corruption as "the abusive use of power to satisfy personal or group interests"; and in his view, De Graaf, as also cited in Onongha, sees corruption as "the behaviour of public individuals that deviates from accepted norms to serve private end". Corruption can simply be defined as the absence of God's fear and moral and spiritual values.

Many people appear curious as to what is causing this moral deterioration and how it is negatively affecting Nigerian society. The following are some of the many causes or reasons for moral decay in Nigerian society: decline in parental authority and domestic values; collapse in religious and moral values; decline in church discipline and Biblical Christian values; lack of biblical education; influence of science and technology; materialism; poverty; poor youth empowerment; greed; etc. All these have damaging effects on our integrity among the community of nations, national socio-economics, political life, and religious life.

Critical Points of Disconnection between Religiosity and Praxis

Despite the continued preaching and teaching by churches in Nigeria against the three S's of corruption, some Nigerian churches are bedevilled with corrupt practices such as sexual abuse by church members and pastors, embezzlement of church funds, hypocrisy, greed, fraud, lies, adultery, fornication, and other moral vices against which they preach. The vital question on which this study focuses is: What is the impact of the religiosity of Christian religious adherents on their moral and spiritual formations vis-à-vis the transformation of Nigerian society? Here, the writer observes some critical points of disconnections between religiosity and morality concerning Christian praxis. He also reveals and argues that these displays of religiosity have not translated into the spiritual and moral formations of Christian religious adherents. Among others, the following are the areas of

⁸ "Three S's of Corruption" is a term coined by Dele A. Ilesanmi to explain the classifications of corruption. The three S's of corruption are sexual corruption, system corruption, and self-aggrandisement corruption. All these are moral issues or problems against which the Nigerian churches preach.

critical disconnections: disconnection between morality and spirituality in relation to love and kindness to others; and disjunction between spirituality and morality in relation to patriotism, governance, trust, and national development. All of these will be discussed succinctly here. It has been said earlier that it is practically impossible to divorce morality from spirituality or religiosity. One cannot claim to be spiritual and morally perverse. Morality is largely related to the right or ideal actions that should govern human relationships and conduct. Spirituality should not be divorced from the right conduct or good behaviour. As Christians, our morality should be a function of our spirituality if what we claim to be is authentic. Religious spirituality without appropriate moral and ethical behaviour and right human relationships is unbiblical. Thus, we cast doubt on the claim of our spirituality. The parable of the Good Samaritan told by Jesus (Luke 10:25–37) to illustrate His teaching clearly demonstrates the disconnection between religiosity and Christian moral praxis. In this parabolic teaching, the priest (pastor) and the Levite (minister) did not link spirituality with morality (kindness, mercy, and love). On the other hand, a Samaritan who was not "spiritual" could show a high level of morality. This clearly tells us that morality is possible without spirituality, but it is practically impossible to be spiritual without having good morals because morality is imbedded in spirituality. You cannot talk about spirituality without morality, but you can talk about morality without spirituality. The cause of this disjunction is a lack of biblical and theological understanding.

The same can be said of the disconnections between spirituality and morality in relation to patriotism and national development. It has been observed that many Nigerian Christians have not been able to establish any link between their religiosity and their love for their country (patriotism). But what governs their religiosity is self-centeredness. This attitude cannot move Nigeria forward. For example, Matthew Ojo noted that most of the development thinking in Africa has been imported from the West, with those in need of development based in Africa (Ajani, 2018). In other words, there has been a disconnection between Christian spirituality and thinking about the appropriate ways of developing the ailing Nigerian economy. What about a clear disconnection between spirituality and good governance? Most Nigerian leaders are products of Christian mission schools, yet most of our leaders have been accused of corruption. Furthermore, the disconnection that exists between some Christian pastors' spirituality and their moral praxis is alarming. The news about the corrupt practices of Nigerian Christian leaders and pastors is on the pages of newspapers every day. The bogus displays of religiosity have not translated to spiritual and moral rectitude and formations of Christians given the spate of bastardisation and commercialisation of Christianity. The churches in Nigeria have lost their appeal as promoters of moral and spiritual values because of the corrupt practices of their adherents and leaders. Pastors and members embezzle church funds, engage in financial fraud, and engage in all forms of sexual immorality and abuse.

Recommendations on Reconciling Religiosity with Good Moral Praxis and National Development

Given the above major critical points of disconnections between spirituality and morality with praxis, it is important to recommend the following:

Christians should have a proper understanding of the Christianity they practice; Christians should study their Bibles very well to discover the biblical moral values listed in this paper; there should not be any disconnection between Christian spirituality and biblical Christian morality; pastors and teachers should practically teach spiritual morality as exemplified in the Bible; in other words, pastors, teachers, and other church leaders should practice good morals in whatever they do; and the church should ensure that spirituality and moral praxis lead to character formation and national development. All Christian religious adherents in Nigeria need to return to practising the ethical and

moral codes contained in the Bible to make the church the centre of trust and promoter of truth and spiritual and moral values, not only in Nigeria but also in the entire world.

Conclusion

This paper discusses the concept and meaning of morality, religion, religiosity, and spiritual and moral values. It subsumed all moral issues under the three S's of corruption, such as sexual corruption, system corruption, and self-aggrandisement corruption. The study also revealed five major barometers through which adherents of the Christian religion in Nigeria display religiosity: worship, regular worship attendance, fasting, and media production. The paper argued that these displays of religiosity have not translated to the spiritual and moral rectitude and formations of Nigerian Christians. The paper recommended that all Christian religious adherents in Nigeria return to practicing the ethical and moral codes contained in the Bible, the *theopneustic* book of Christians. This will help in no small measure not only to reconcile spirituality with morality but also to bring about Christian character formation, the restoration of the lost glory of the church as a promoter of truth and moral and spiritual values, and the epicentre of national development.

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