Moral Degeneration in Nigerian Society: Overt Cases and Implications.

By

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Abstract

This paper discusses moral degeneration in Nigerian society from the perspectives of conceptualization, overt cases and their implications. This study was necessitated by the morality status of Nigerian society believed by a greater number to be decadent, desiccated and declined. The findings of this work, inter alia, show that moral depravity is evident in the country. The curiosity of the research was heightened by the divergent distance between the heavy religious pluralistic presence and scarce religious spirituality in the country. The orchestrated crusades, pilgrimages, holy grounds and edifices have not borne the corresponding requisite fruits of moral virtues in many citizens; and this explains the gross erosion of moral values in the society. On daily basis, heinous crimes against persons and their properties are committed with bravado and impunity with the government looking frail and fragile most often in the face of these incidents and moral decay. In fact, on the average score, many believe that the ineptitude of governance contributes to these woeful situations. The study recommends, among others, the use of the instruments of teaching and of the law to enthrone morality in the country. The methodology employed in this work is historic-descriptive which means that moral degeneration in Nigerian

society was studied over time and their implications drawn from the backgrounds of the irreplaceable powers of moral values.

Keywords: Morality, Degeneration, Nigerian Society, Overt Cases, Implications.

Introduction

It is indubitably true that the present Nigerian Society is facing the hydra-headed challenges of moral degeneration, global economic crises, political instability, terrible cultural erosion and materialism that *thingifies* man and commoditizes him. Describing the situation, Iyidobi (1994:4) wrote that, "The lifestyle and value system of Nigerians over the years have changed and are continuously changing: from a veritable sense of unity to an indisputable spirit of discord; from a strong traditional political set up to an uncomfortable imbroglio; from a communalistic and spiritualistic society to an individualistic and materialistic one; from a people with a scrupulous moral mentality to an almost lawless, profligate group of persons; from a people who understood the value of education and hard work to a people who loathe education; loafers who wish to do or get things only through unacceptable but facile means. The list is interminable". In the same vein, Abba (2015:2) wrote: "The moral decadence in our society has reached such a level that calls for concern. Any society that is not morally sound is bound to witness all sorts of social menace". From the foregoing, it is palpable that our contemporary generation is suffocating in the hands of various shades of ethical aberrations fashioned by morally bankrupt deviants who enthrone moral depravity over and above the precious moral riches and virtues of our traditional systems and the hallowed teachings of religion.

A very important chapter in the history of our time is the obvious presence of religion. This age has recorded the most explosive religious crusades, the most populous religious pilgrimages, the most resurgence of the phenomenon of proliferation of churches and the most dynamic witness of concrete structures and flamboyant edifices that manifest the existence and

physical vitality of various faiths. Yet the Nigerian society of this "religious" magnitude launches itself into self-destructive forces of moral degeneration as evidenced in the bizarre facts of indecent dressing modes, armed robbery/banditry, terrorism/extreme violence, drunkenness, sexual abuse, 419 syndrome/yahoo syndicates menace (duping of people), cattle rustling, kidnapping of people for ritual and/ or ransom purposes, self-kidnapping for ransom to mention but these.

The sacredness of human life has been compromised variously; the usurpation of the nation's common wealth for selfish ends is an obvious phenomenon, religious intolerance and the enthronement of mediocrity over meritocracy are recurring facts in more spheres than one in the country.

In tandem with the above viewpoints, Agha (2003: iii) traces the history of these moral problems thus: "Since the end of the civil war, 1970 (Nigeria-Biafra War) and oil boom, 1977, men have been forced by the circumstances of the above incidents to face and experience new and urgent moral problems that seem to defy all possible solutions. The aftermath of the Civil war has been evident in the Nigerian Society, which is believed to be the most developed country in black Africa. People go about their business with fear and sleep at night with one eye open. The struggle for survival and pursuit for wealth have eroded people's morality. Men are no longer guided by their moral conscience". From the above viewpoint, it is evident that the instinct to survive prompted by unfair distribution of the country's wealth has made many to play down on the moral values.

Karl Marx for instance persuades us to focus on the importance of understanding the basis of morality against the backdrop of all these social vices that are prevalent in our contemporary society. The constant moral instructions at home, schools, churches, mosques and elsewhere may not yield the much-desired results when something fundamental is amiss; namely: the infrastructure of society. And this infrastructure is the economy. Religion in Marx's thought is a superstructure.

Igbo (2003:3) presenting Marx's thought wrote that the basis of society and the engine of progress is the material economic condition in a society. Marx refers to this economic realm as the "infrastructure" of society, and defines it quite broadly to include:

1. the conditions an forces of exchange e.g. the structure of the market and the organization of commerce
2. the conditions of production, which include resources and the historical setting
3. the forces and mode of production, which include scientific knowledge, the means of production e.g. machines, capital, and the organization of labour and ownership and
4. the relations of production which means the relations between those who own and control the means of production and those who actually produce the goods and services.

The basic determinant of the level of appreciation or depreciation of moral values in the society is the economic system according to Marx. The status of moral generation or degeneration of any given society depends therefore on the way the society produces, distributes and exchanges the wealth in its economic system. One can say, following Marx's thought, that there is a correlation between harsh conditions and crime waves, arguably though. For instances, a police man may take bribe, the unemployed youth becomes an armed robber and a poor undergraduate girl turns into a prostitute in order to satisfy the needs arising from bad conditions of living. Ordinarily, if living conditions were to be normal and conducive, most criminals today could have been saints.

However, man is not only an economic being as elaborated by Marx but also a moral being guided by values beyond matter and the mundane. This explains why some people in more adverse conditions worse than the economic woes painted above remain righteous and spiritually holy.

Colonialism with its modern values, globalization with its own brand of morality, greed which is a form of idolatry, thuggery, ritual murder and assassination of character and of life that truncate the moral order and

distort the democratization principles and processes of our great nation have dramatically changed very largely the inherent moral values got from the hallowed backgrounds of our traditional society. The traditional societies that make up the modern Nigeria had cultural and moral values which, even though had the economy of peasant variety enjoyed peace and harmony because there was social justice and sacredness in religious affiliations and observances. On this note, Ugwu (2002:191) rightly observed that: "Corruption…was not loudly pronounced in our traditional societies because of the inseparable attachment the people had with religion which permeated all spheres of their lives and made them dissociate themselves from anything evil or corrupt. However, in their traditional setting, the spate of corruption was not as high as we have it today". Traditional societies had sacred rules in their religious metaphysics which all observed as sacrosanct. The violations of these taboos (*nso ani*) were believed to attract the wrath of the earth goddess and other gods.

The main thrust of this work is, therefore, to present some overt cases of moral degeneration in Nigerian Society. It also highlights the obvious implications of these evils if its citizens who pursue immorality with vigor and embrace same with impunity do not retrace their ugly steps and change their attitudes for the better.

Definition of Terms

The key concepts in the title will be defined or explained in this section for the purpose of clarity and enhancement of better understanding. "Moral degeneration" is a compound concept of two components; namely: "moral" and "degeneration". "Moral" has its etymological root in Latin words "mos' (singular) and "mores" (plural) which means "custom". Custom means way of life (culture), wisdom and conduct. According to Hastings (1981:10), custom "is any norm of voluntary action that has been developed in a natural or tribal community". For Okwueze (2003:68), custom means "usages, practices, standards and codes which are common to certain

groups or classes of people and which regulate their actions in social and religious obligations". Walker (2003:826) quoted in Echeta (2007:185) defined "moral" as "that pertaining to character and behavior from the point of view of right and wrong obligation".
Morality in the words of Okwueze (2004:242) is seen "as a specific form of social consciousness or awareness of your relatedness to others without which societal life would be impossible". The concept "moral" is the equivalent of "ethics" which is derived from the Greek "ethos" or the Latin word "ethicus" which means "custom" or "mores", that is the customary way of acting. Aristotle, from this etymology sees ethics as "the manner of acting which a particular society approves or disapproves as helpful or harmful to the common interest, that these patterns admit of no explanation except as mere facts" (*Nicomaohean Ethics, BK* 1, 1102a 5 -111b 25).

"Degeneration" according to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* is defined as "the process of becoming worse or less acceptable in quality or condition: social/moral degeneration. Degeneration from etymological analysis shares the same meaning with "corruption".
Onuh (2000:30) cited in Ugwu (2002: 191-192) wrote that, "Corruption has its etymological root from the Latin *corruptio* …which means, to decay, to be depleted, to rot, to degenerate, to desiccate, to waste away. With regard to the society, it is a situation which results from the neglect of justice and fairness as principles of life. It is abuse of the true essence of contract whereby parties renege and found the contractual will on the shifty basic that it will not be kept by either party. It is a crime against love, charity and law. It is deprivation violating the rules of equity. Eze (2002:1-2) sees "moral degeneration" with other social evils like dishonesty, wickedness, selfishness, embezzlement, bribery, insatiability, covetousness as manifestations of corruption.

"Moral Degeneration" when defined *via negativa* (by way of what it is not) is simply the opposite of "moral generation", which is a situation whereby

moral norms and values are kept, and celebrated through structures and incentives that promote the continuity of good and right behavior in the society. But "moral degeneration" defined *via positiva* (by way of what it is) is a situation of moral depravity and moral decay in gross proportions or immorality in large recurring decimals and multiple complexities.

"Society" according to Igbo (2003:32) "is an organized group of individuals who occupy a definite geographical area and who are joined together by relationships and patterns of behavior (culture) which distinguish them from other groups or individuals who do not share these relationships, or who have different patterns of behavior. In the words of Marshall (1998:625), society means "a group of people who share a common culture, occupy a particular territorial area, and feel themselves to constitute a unified and distinct entity". However, society could also mean a network of relationship, hence religious society, Red Cross society, and even a type that refers to a group of people bound together by secret oath and pattern of behavior, and it is called "Secret Society". This network of relationship has no definite boundary even though people are united into an association, organization, guild or club.
In context, therefore, society as applied in this study refers to a definite geographical Nigerian Society with interest on its morality status as a people and country.

Overt Cases of Moral Degeneration in Nigeria
Nigeria has become, in escalated volumes, a beehive of social vices and an abattoir for human ritual in its contemporary history. Regrettably, overt cases of moral degeneration abound in Nigerian society. The morality status of Nigerian society is no longer on trial since judgement has been passed and it is in its lowest ebb. The actions and inactions of its leaders that shirk responsibility and the absence of needed responsiveness either by commission or omission on the part of the subjects are enabling factors that led to moral decadence. It is necessary that responsibility in governance

or otherwise gets a commensurate responsiveness from the followers, the ruled. Responsibility and responsiveness from appropriate quarters encourage focus, accountability, checks and balances on both sides. Overt cases of moral degeneration are many and they include:

Indecent dressing/ rape/ prostitution/ commercialization of sex/ sexual violence/pornography/sexual abuse, deviants' sex choices – homosexuality, lesbianism, necrophilia, masturbation, infantophilia, etc./ abortion, incest, fornication, adultery, exhibitionism, masturbation.

Armed Robbery/ armed banditry/ terrorism, extreme violence/gangsterism/thuggery/ ritual and political murder/assassination/extra-judicial killing

Drunkenness/truancy/micro and macro cheatings/ theft/ forgery/impersonation/fakery/drug addiction

Advance fee fraud- 419 syndrome/ yahoo boys or girls/trickery/examination malpractices

Tribalism/ nepotism/ favouritism/ embezzlement/ pen robbery/ clannishness/ rigging of electoral results/violation of the constitution/ religious intolerance/social injustice

Kidnapping of others/ kidnapping of self-self-kidnap/ suicide/cattle rustling/trespass and usurpation of land

Laziness/greed-avarice/sales of babies/child trafficking/conspiracy/domestic violence/ghost workers' syndicate;

The list of the overt cases of moral degeneration in the country is interminable. Let us discuss some of them briefly below:

Indecent dressing modes

Indecent dressing "simply means deliberate exposure of one's body to the public. This practice is contrary to the norms and values of the society. Indecent dressing is the major cause of various assault and sexual harassment recorded in the society, over time. Dressing in a manner that parents, society and religion frown at is not civilization" (Oyeleye and

Lawal, 2019:1). Onyekuru (2008:7) cited in (Ele: 2009:10) lamented that "dressing code and habits are nowadays often treated with disdain. This is as a result of many wars universally waged on code and values. The traditional authorities have been challenged, indeed. A trip to most social or religious centers leaves no one in doubt of these facts. People put on all sorts of things in the name of dressing. Dressing is the first thing that tells much about someone's personality. It is proactive and postactive as it supplies what one can amply do". This evaluative idea of a correlation between dress and personality is captured in the maxim which says that "one is addressed the way he/she dresses". In urban and rural areas of Nigeria, along the streets and in the house, in the church or higher institutions, in public places and private corners, it is very common to see sane people go almost naked in the name of modern fashion. These parade themselves without any iota of shame or remorse as they expose the vital organs of their physical frames to lookery, lustful looks.

It is not only the ladies who dress indecently today in Nigeria, as even boys do. The boys for instance wear their belts below their buttocks instead of their waists to expose their lower abdomen and buttocks. Those who have hair on the chest expose it to attract the opposite sex. Some print and electronic media that are in shackles of materialism project loose women who have thrown overboard their feminine dignity for the reasons of money-making and pleasure. The worst part of the matter is that indecent advertisements of naked women on the television screen or pages of newspapers and magazines are considered exciting and termed modernity. It is an evidence of moral depravity to consider indecent dressing from head to toe as a good way to go.

Armed robbery/ armed banditry

In Nigeria, the ancient theft induced by hunger, satisfied by the stealing of fruited pumpkin, bitter leaves, fowls, cassava, dried cocoyam, maize, bread fruit and other food items now belong to the past. The crime in vogue is armed robbery and armed banditry whose instruments of operation

include sophisticated firearms. These armed thieves do not tip toe or stealthily steal without violence. In some cases letters of notice are issued in advance to their prospective victims and the operations carried out as scheduled sometimes in broad daylight leaving them dispossessed of the precious properties while others are left raped, maimed, injured or dead. The experience raises questions about the country's security architecture. The gang of robbers could break into business centers, homes, banks and even churches and mosques. At some other times, they block the high ways and make innocent travelers their victims. Sometimes, their operations could last for hours undisrupted by the state security operatives.

Armed banditry as a crime includes armed robbery and other violent crimes against persons. The use of force, threat, intimidation and often with weaponized instruments of mass destruction to realize the intention to rob, rape or kill explains the characteristic of banditry. In Nigeria, banditry has escalated in recent times due to a good number of factors such as lame judicial framework and its attendant ineptitude to provide robust social justice administration against bandits, porous borders that encourage mass, unchecked migration into the country, proliferation of arms on the African continent due to conflicts and wars, struggle for natural endowments like the mining sites in Zamfara State or the oil-rich region in Niger-Delta, ungoverned forests that bandits escape into as their shield and base, religious intolerance, global network of terrorism, unemployment of the youths, political thuggery, cultism, disorientation of non-state security apparatus, poverty, drug abuse, improper handling of *Almajiri* Qur'anic system of education and the failure of the state to address administrative deficits (Ele, 2019: 48-51). All these aforementioned factors and their root causes when critically analyzed depict evidences of moral degeneration in more senses than one.

Drunkenness/ Drug abuse

The soil of Nsukka zone, Enugu State Southeast Nigeria brews good, nutritious and fresh palm wine tapped on daily basis and in commercial

quantities in Enugu Ezike, Ohodo, Ukehe, Umunko, Diogbe and in its other communities. One can as well get palm wine in other parts of the country which have scientifically-proven health benefits when taken in moderate measures defined by individual capacities and medical recommendations. Unfortunately, some Nigerians are now addicted to drinking chemically composed drinks such as local gin (*"kai kai" or "ogogoro")* which have adverse health effects and negative social implications. To this end, Agha (2003:87) observed correctly that: "Drunkenness has become the national vice in Nigeria of all classes of people. Alcoholism is not a compulsion to drink. It is a compulsion to go on drinking. It is this that makes it a genuine illness and not just a moral lapse. There are those drinkers who can be described as "heavy drinkers" who will deteriorate to the chronic stage unless something positive is done to help them. Experience shows that alcoholics come from a wide-range of occupations – doctors, housewives, parsons, teachers, skilled workers, civil servants, farmers and traders". It is a step in the wrong direction to see pockets of alcoholic bars around motor parks or students' hostels. The rule of "if you must drink, don't drive and if you must drive, don't drink" should be strictly enforced by the appropriate competent authorities like the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) and the security, military and para-military operatives. The establishments of drinking bars around the hostels of tertiary students have produced bad effects in some of the youths who became drunks, school drop outs and confused individuals. The adverse consequences of drunkenness include the loss of jobs, good health and family joy and in some cases, death. Some bar attendants have been indicted as they drug their customers in order to rob them.

Many Nigerians have been lost to drug addictions. In the words of Ele (2019: 50), "Drug abuse is a world-wide issue where people especially the youths escape into false emotional balances by snuffing unnutritious substances, smoking every grass that suffocates the operations of right reasoning and drinking every liquid that intoxicates and pushes the addict to wrong sides of life, doing shameful things and embarking on destructive

actions". Drug abuse is an evidence of moral degeneration in many ways. It is a conscious self-harm; it destroys human life; it is an illegal business whereby money is made out of the immoral situation and most often, the fight against drugs have been compromised or politicized by relevant agencies and government in many countries of the world. In Nigeria, our viable option is to support the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) with suitable helps, establish functional rehabilitation centers for the addicts and very importantly, activate and sustain the legal frameworks that decisively punish offenders found guilty at every stage of its complicity in order to serve as deterrent to others. The chiefs and traditional institutions have grass root administration and therefore very close to our communities where everyone is known by one and by all, therefore, the fight against drug abuse and other indices of moral degeneration should be taken seriously at this level. The multiplicity of autonomous communities should be an ample opportunity to work with women groups, age grades, town unions and the elders to enhance the needed morality in our urban towns and rural villages.

Prostitution/sexual immorality

The growing number of hotels, guest houses and lodging inns in Nigeria as we have them today may not be in line with the traditional value of hospitality or the advancement of outfits for tourism industry. The discovery reveals that some syndicates of commercial surrogacy for the sale of babies and commercial sex hawkers otherwise called prostitutes use hotels as business centers. According to Peschke (2009), "if sexual intercourse is offered for money, it is called prostitution. One distinguishes female and male prostitution, whereby the latter is less frequent." The commercial sex workers have a national body in Nigeria and could declare sex for free to mark some national sports or electoral victories. Yet prostitution is not a legal business in the country. Prostitution is not women empowerment; if anything, it is making women vulnerable to powerlessness, ridicule and erosion of their dignity.

Bestiality means a type of sexual deviation defined as having sex with beasts; it is sexual intercourse between a human being, male or female, and an animal. Human persons have had sex with cattle, sheep, goats, dogs, monkeys and in some cases, fowls. Some herders or sex deviants engage in bestiality as if animal husbandry means that human beings should be the husbands or wives of animals. Some deviant morticians and ritualists sex corpses and this is called necrophilia. In the word of sex deviants, there are full grown adults whose sex orientation is towards minors, that is the under aged infants or children whose psyche is destroyed completely through life by this sexual abuse. This act is known known as infantophilia; it is becoming rampart in the country. Some night guards have apprehended some cultists having sex with mad women to get fame, power or wealth. These at some instances have impregnated mad women in the markets or street corners; one begins to wonder who is actually mad between the two – the randy ram or the mentally challenged put in a family way. Incest is sexual intercourse between those related in consanguinity; it is sex between the blood relations in a family circle. The rate of abortion, sex scandal, use of contraceptive pills and exposure to sexually transmitted infections/diseases (STIs/STDs) are high due to sexual promiscuity in the Nigerian society.

The sorting with sex for marks is a brand of moral degeneration that has tarnished the image of many institutions and pulled down the reputation of some academics. The sanctity of the education sector has suffered violations because of illicit sex. There is campus marriage where male and female students live as one, truants engage in prostitution and waywardness. This has given rise to unwanted pregnancies, proliferation of baby factories and dumping of babies on campus in its refuse bins/sites, toilets and conspicuous corners. Sexual immorality has been found to be perpetrated everywhere – in the fields and factories, offices and palaces, government and religious houses, at home, hostels and hotels, cars and parks, *et cetera.*

Illegitimate sex has broken down the nuptial ties of families as some are heading to the hospitals for Deoxyribonucleic Acid –DNA tests to confirm or deny paternity of the so called child/ren while others are filing suits in the courts for divorce. Marital infidelity is an example of moral degeneration that has inflicted painful, incurable wounds in some homes. It is good to know that rape, homosexuality, lesbianism, masturbation, fornication, adultery, pre-marital and extra-marital sex are evils that show moral decay and should, therefore, be avoided.

Inordinate quest for material wealth

Men and women of advance fee fraud, that is, 419ers, dupers and those who obtain by trick invade every nook and cranny of Nigeria. These economic fraudsters come with different styles using divergent platforms. Even though this crime occurs on daily basis across the country, people should be more alert during the "ember" months that is towards Christmas. They come in the guise of pastors, preachers and men/women of God. Some in the camouflage of business executives but others come as beggars or travelers who are in difficulty. They invade private homes, schools, churches, business centers, markets and motor parks. They are everywhere they feel they can record success and go scot free. On this note, Ele (2005:42) observed that "In the local markets for instance, one cannot be certainly sure of the measures used to sell items like grains, foodstuff, etc. The same fear is expressed over the quality of goods. Around the mechanic workshops, on retailers' table, inside the wholesalers' warehouse and in the manufacturers' factory cases of falsified measures and the supply of fake goods have been established and frequently too. The forgery of invoices and receipts is a common phenomenon. At 12noon every day, the angelus is said in most local markets …and masses said at various times in the year for them in the markets. Yet ten cups of garri as measured in the market for example may turn eight cups or even less when re-measured correctly at home. The motor parts supplied as the "original" turn out to be fake parts yet they were supplied at the cash value of the original. Only very few

sellers in these markets are honest". The same unbridled ambition to acquire material wealth has led to ritual murder, hired assassination, cattle rustling, embezzlement of public funds, looting in low and high places, struggle for electoral seats and political positions, chieftaincy tussles, land trespass and grabbing, ghost workers' syndrome, certificate forgery, bribery and corruption among other manifestations of this malady whose proper name is materialism. Many in government circles are not there to serve the people put to enrich themselves, their families and friends. At some rare opportunities, their cronies, choristers and sycophants, stooges and allies may get some crumbs from their tables. The philosophy behind the establishment of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent corrupt practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) for examples is excellent but the danger is that these agencies may become willing tools in the hands of any incumbent administration to fight the opposition. And to that extent of abuse and dependency, the aim is defeated and moral degeneration will increase in kind and number.

Kidnapping of people for ritual or ransom

When one hears of kidnapping or abduction, the mind races to the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria where it was used as a tool for agitation against environmental degradation and an instrument to press hard their wish for resource control. However, in recent times, kidnapping has become notorious with incessant cases of kidnapping for rituals and/or ransom purposes. Kidnappers have the methods of tracing victims on target or random picking style. In the former a particular person could be traced monitored, and kidnapped while in the latter a victim could be any unlucky person whisked away from anywhere to somewhere and put in their custody. The third method is that self-Kidnap whereby he/she asks his/her family to pay ransom. Of course, he or she could conspire with people to achieve this; in this method, some have faked self-kidnap so that their desires especial financial could be met by sympathizers. Victims of kidnappers could be a hunch back, an albino, a celebrity, religious

personnel, humanitarian worker, security operative, civil servant, politician, business man, the aged, the young, school children, male, female and anybody for that matter.

Kidnapping is an immoral act that violates injuriously the dignity of the human person. The proceeds of kidnapping is linked with other heinous crimes such as terrorism, murder, armed banditry, drug abuse, rape to mention but five. The kidnapping bravado and impunity as experienced in Nigeria tell us more about the status of our security alertness as a country and the truest condition of our judiciary but very significantly the way our state is weak, fragile and faring with culpable deficits. The above overt cases briefly discussed inform us only but little about the level of moral degeneration in the Nigerian society.

Implications of Moral Degeneration

Moral degeneration has implications for the individual, the religions that serve as the custodians of moral values and the society at large.

a. **Individual:** The individual who sets aside the principles of God, religion and good morals to go after the desires and devices of his or her criminal heart and bad acts may not attain true happiness. This is because the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23; Genesis 3:19). The perpetrator of immorality may never be at peace with him/herself, the immediate cosmos, fellow citizens and God. The drunkard is perpetually sick and the family and friends do not enjoy his presence or benefit from his contributions to family welfare as he/she has none to make. The armed bandits/ robbers or the 419ers are always on the run to evade the just arms of the law while the rapist is jeered at and his company abhorred by well-meaning citizens. Every immoral vice has negative implication for the morally bankrupt person who embraced it ranging from physical health to career upward mobility and eternal destiny.

   In line with eternal destiny, an atheistic disbelief in God does not eclipse his existence nor make him not to exist because God is a

Metaphysical Necessity who cannot not be; He is not a being like that of a logical proposition but *Being* whose primary attribute is existence. Hence, he calls himself *"I am who am"* (Exodus 3:14). Therefore God's eternity is the teleology of our mortality, he is the *fons et culmen* (source and end) of our humanity. We have to abide by the demands of morality in order to fulfill our purpose on earth so that his divinity will give soteriological meaning to our eschatological worth in the fullness of time.

b. **Religions in Nigeria:** Nigeria has three major religions; namely: Christianity, African Traditional Religion and Islam. Each of these faiths has a commanding influence on its adherents and practitioners. It is also believed that each religion has moral codes which constitute part of the critical components of its doctrines. It is therefore unwholesome to see that people with religious affiliations are morally depraved. The implication for religions is that spiritual leadership which they should offer is compromised or so it seems. The worst moral degeneration which could be found in any religion is intolerance. This immoral vice can lead to religious violence which Nigerian history has in abundance. This also contributes to unconstitutional actions of those leaders in civil government who consciously suppress other faiths in order that theirs may thrive. This is a moral evil. The secularity of the constitution of Nigeria should not be jettisoned in order to favour one religion or the other and worse still the use of the resources of all to advance the selfish agenda of one. Each religious leader should advance the course of holiness in themselves, enthrone social justice in their institutions and enlarge the morality coasts of their followers.

c. Nigerian Society: The facticity of moral decadence in Nigerian society has turned the country into a butt of international sarcasm. Nigeria consistently maintains a conspicuous apex position in the chart of corrupt and immoral nations. The whole project of re-branding the Nigerian image as championed aggressively by late

Professor Dora Akunyili's Ministry of Communication and information had moral degeneration in our society as its proximate cause. The Nigerian society is no longer safe for anybody - the weak and the strong, the merchants of moral degeneration and their victims. Nigeria has acquired a bad image all over the world and every Nigerian is a suspect. Investors are scared and the level of poverty has continued to worsen.

d. **Nigerian Government:** The Nigerian government at all levels has to look inwards in order to give a fresh direction to itself. Most average Nigerians see the woes of moral degeneration as caused by the government. It is a common saying that if the government has done this right, that moral decay would not have reared up its ugly head. Therefore, the leaders of this great country should stamp their feet and brace up their political will to make things go right and by that token stamp out wrong deeds. The erection of National Orientation Agency (NOA) is a good development in the right direction and should be made to deliver on its mandate maximally. It is good also to fight corruption but it should not be used or perceived as a clamp-down on real or imaginary enemies. As the fight for corruption is raging on, it is a good idea to reward excellence and give incentives to those who strive to go to equity with clean hands. In like manner meritocracy should be our virtue while mediocrity should be put behind us in the dustbin of history.

Recommendations

In order to generate moral values among Nigerians, the following are recommended:

(1) The religious bodies in Nigeria have to ensure that their adherents, leaders, adherents and practitioners hold tenaciously to scriptural values such as honesty, personal integrity, contentment, hard work, true love of God and neighbor.

(2) The religious leaders should eschew the places of honour they accord the notorious election riggers who upturn the mandate of the masses and fraudsters who loot public property and embezzle public funds; they should avoid criminals during their fund raising ceremonies.
(3) The legal judicial process should be encouraged by all levels of government to punish culprits like ritualists, cultists, murderers, kidnappers, armed robbers/bandits, 419ers, rapists, etc accordingly and legislate strongly against prostitution, sexual deviation, baby sales and close down brothels and administer justice in the face of offenders without fear or favour.
(4) Those entrusted with governance and the political class should deliver democracy dividends to the citizens. The improvement on the standard of living will surely reduce crimes in the Nigerian society.
(5) The youth have to be admonished without ceasing on the need for decent dressing. Parents in the home, teachers in the schools and the religious leaders in the churches, mosques and shrines are all stakeholders in this matter.
(6) Dressing code should be enforced in the public places tertiary institutions and colleges in the country for the sake of decency. Those who expose their seductive body parts should be arrested and prosecuted. People have the right to dress the way they want but they have no right to expose their bodies for desecration because our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (! Corinthians 13: 15-20).
(7) National Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) should bring to justice not only those are involved in the complicity of drug business but also the drunkards on the streets and those of them behind the steering of moving vehicles, that is, drinkers who are drunk. The Federal Road Safety Corps should clear the road of drunks.

(8) The project of re-branding the image of Nigeria should be supported by all through the cultivation of good moral values and virtues by all Nigerians.

(9) Religious Leaders should respect their vocations and lead the people by good examples. They will win more souls by their lives more than their words.

(10) Traditional rulers should mobilize their subjects for community-based strategy of fighting moral degeneration. They should live above board as custodians of traditional institutions and morality. The conferment of chieftaincy titles to unworthy sons and daughters for selfish or pecuniary reasons should be avoided.

(11) The stakeholders in the field of the academia should stamp out all manners of examination malpractice, sorting with bed or bank inordinate interests and the conferment of honorary degrees on people with questionable character known as such in the public eye. This will maintain the sanctity and integrity of the education industry which is the power house of integral and sustainable development.

(12) Believers and all should pray to God who is omnipotent for he can change any situation. He changed water into wine at Cana (John 2:1-11) and can change the situation of the Nigerian Society from moral degeneration to moral rectitude.

Conclusion

Moral degeneration in the Nigerian society has become notorious, atrocious and awful. The overt cases of this evil index are crippling injuriously the godly sanity of Nigeria and tarnishing its image. The Holy Bible teaches that we should not model our lives according to the ways of this fading world nor after our ungodly natural inclinations. Hence, "The world and everything in it that people desire is passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever" (1 John 2:17). And in another text we read: "Do not deceive yourselves; no one makes fool of God. People reap what they sow.

If they sow in the field of natural desires, from it they will gather the harvest of death; if they sow in the field of Spirit, from the Spirit they will gather the harvest of life"(Galatians 6:6-8). We should therefore maintain self-discipline and live upright lives in this present world and preach good behavior modelled after healthy doctrines. "Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you" (James 1:21). The prevalent moral decadence in the society should not dampen the flame of one's authentic Christian life and good citizenship. In this light, we are admonished in these words: "Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God – what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect" (Romans 12:2). Christians should face the challenge heroically and remain the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13-14). Even non-Christians have the moral dictates of their religious affiliations that encourage them to become morally sound members and good Nigerians. The cultivation of moral virtues by all is necessary because Nigerian society cannot survive without good morals. Morality is very essential in every society. The instruments of teaching and of the law should continue to be used to maintain citizens' *Moral Awareness*. Morality helps raise good citizens who contribute to the morality significance of the country and its beauty.

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