RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND MORAL EDUCATION AS HALLMARK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AN INDUSTRIAL AGE

Cosmos B. Wule and Danjuma N. Wapwera
Department of Religion and Philosophy
University of Jos, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Religion unites, binds, gives hope and saves, but in its diverse forms when incorrectly indoctrinated and misapplied divides, disintegrates, and destroys. Therefore its application has both positive and negative impact on life. However, the right practice of religion and religious freedom, as genuine freedom of conscience, and the virtues of ethics and morality are keys to positive social-cultural transformation as symmetrical activity synonymous with core human values for the progress and building of nations. It is not uncommon to agree with scientific researches that there is high propensity for positive transformational relationship between religious freedom, ethical values and moral education on one hand, and socio-economic, political, cultural and mental advancement of peoples, on the other. Religion, ethics and religious freedom are divine sciences designed to enhance attitudinal and moral change, and when appropriately taught, imbibed and applied, have tangible and positive impact on the mission of industrialization.

Drawing conclusions from the inevitable relationship between religious freedom, ethical values, moral education and social change, the questions to be answered include, inter alia, what

is the connection between religious beliefs, freedom, Christian ethical values, and socio-economic development and good governance in a democratic society? Can religion and its ethical values agree with technological advancements and the rush for unhealthy competitions inherent in human nature? How could religious freedom, Christian ethics and moral education influence economic equitability, political stability and sustainable development in the face of corruption, as in the case of Nigeria, for example? What ethical questions control the production of technologies that waste resources in the process of competitive struggles and those that conserve energy, resources and general wellbeing of societies? Yet, how could religious freedom, ethics and moral education impact positively on science and technology as concrete values for human capacity building and national development?

This paper seeks to respond to these questions and to survey and expound the concept of religious freedom, Christian ethical values and moral education to bear on sustainable development, social, political and cultural transformation of concrete living States for the promotion, protection and enhancement of the quality of lives and property of citizens in an industrial age.

INTRODUCTION
Managing and transforming human life, conduct and conscience in relation to the treatment of God-given properties and the material environment has always been the most difficult and challenging attributes of human action and policy within a

nation's polity, either on the spiritual or the corporeal altitude. A discussion on the role of religious freedom, ethics and moral education as major factors in regulating social, economic and political action for the attainment of the common good is a timely, well deserved and relevant discourse in an age of science and technology. Religion and religious freedom, rightly applied, are sine qua non factors for establishing security, mutual respect, welfare, stability, and a prosperous and fulfilled life in a nation's religious and political arrangement. Ben-Oni Ardelean (2010, p. 185) has argued that by its methodology, "religious freedom is not just a legal or state issue, but is mainly a matter of combination of moral principles for a society that favors faith manifestations. Even a debate over law is an intrinsically moral debate…If the moral principle is taken out of the law, there is no law.

Thus, a debate on religious freedom is basically an ethical debate." In other words, there is a basic connection between religious freedom, politics, morality and the natural and manmade laws. It is for this reason that in other to meet the needs of the citizens of the state, the crux of this paper addresses how religion and the freedom of beliefs and praxis in society can impinge on the nation's social, cultural, political, legal, economic situation, and the spiritual fiber of individuals for nation building. Rather than accept the erroneous philosophy that science and technology has no connection with religion and ethics, this paper affirms the contrary by drawing attention to the meeting point between religious ethics, moral education, freedom of conscience and industrial development. Undoubtedly, researchers have come to the conclusion that religion and its ethical backbone exerts profound influence on all societies and countless of the

world's peoples. History has proven religion to be the primary force, source and prima facie of social progress, motivating persons, groups and individuals to develop spiritual qualities or attributes like tolerance, compassion, love, justice, equity, humility, trustworthiness, courage, sacrifice, and dedication to the wellbeing of others and the uniting force of society, which are fundamentals of progressive and industrialized civilizations. The universal spiritual principles that lie at the heart of religion, namely, ethical values, when correctly applied empower the moral fabric and texture of persons to sacrifice for the common good, ensure the benign extraction of natural resources, and equitable distribution of goods and services to contribute to the betterment of their societies.

However, at any point of which any or all of these religious principles are perverted, misinterpreted and misapplied, religion itself becomes a primary resource for social disintegration, intolerance, hatred, sexism, xenophobia, poverty, insecurity, repression, destabilization, corruption, instability, destruction and inevitable underdevelopment. Religious intolerance, hatred, incitement, mishandling and coercion are fundamental fountains of religious perversion responsible for many of today's intractable problems associated with the instability and underdevelopment of many nations. Thus, if religion and its practice are to help meet the manifold challenges confronting human societies like Nigeria, it must be free of ignorance, prejudice, animosity, hate, blind fundamentalism, compulsion, and other forms of unethical practices (Baha'i International Community 1 of 2). Consequently, for religion to exert positive influence on social transformation its practice must be free, fair and just, thus the significance of the religious freedom project, ethical

values and moral education for the building of sane nations of which Nigeria is one.

Nigeria, we know, is a land of great opportunities, richly blessed and endowed with natural and human resources well balanced and strategically positioned for technological transformation and development. The emergent trend of social and political advancement in Nigeria and many other nations today depends much on the availability of natural assets, technical knowledge, industrial evolution, and ethical manner in which human and natural resources are exploited and applied. Nigeria is a partaker with other world communities in this moral pedestal for knowledge and quest for sustainable development and security. Basically, the process of industrialization is not just rooted on the availability of the raw materials, mineral resources and human capital growth but on the moral freedom to exercise and maximize the peoples' potentials, the acquisition of sound moral knowledge, which propels people to see all peoples, irrespective of their religious, social or ethnic affiliation as partners in the recreation and progress of one united nation and family. Thus Nigerians who are gifted with technical knowledge empowered with a moral backbone are positioned to manage, recreate and harness both human and natural resources by transforming them into humane personalities and potential goods for the benefit and security of their communities, states, nations and humanity in general and, indeed, to God's glory. This ideology is incontestable because for man to sustain the spirit of common humanity, and brotherhood of all peoples and the entire ecosystem he should invest more on the production of spiritual, ethical and moral knowledge that impinge positively on the psyche of

humanity and the world. Accordingly, Ion Croitoru and Heliana Munteanu (2155) argued that moral-religious education has profound educational connotations, because the knowledge of one's values represents a kind of cultural guarantee and sign of civility and civism. Therefore, the reconsideration of the goals of moral-religious education finalities reflects the educational ideal in relation to the transition from a narrow and subjective vision to a wide one, with an extensive opening, and objective compass for practical action.

Interestingly however, and despite the abundant gift of nature whose benevolent exploration would have naturally benefited humanity, the unethical manner in which these resources are uncaringly exploited, managed and selfishly utilized invariably translate into needless destruction of human lives and property. The Nigerian situation is a gory sketch of this reality. But there is no doubt that every moral culture and knowledge affects the whole person's willpower and attitude to do what is right and avoid evil, so as not to embarrass the Creator and giver of all good things required for life's sustainability. Thus in this research I carefully selected Christian ethics and moral education, but not in complete isolation from other religious ethical values, to plot out the religious freedom project and industrial development for the transformation of the Nigerian society, where deep rooted attitudinal change devoid of pseudo-religiosity and pretext is actually vital for nation building. The Christian ethical-moral focus supplies the window which obliges the Christian heart to peep into God's mind to seek direction in the process of making informed and right decisions about the whole issues of life, its sustainability and security. This reality is achievable through the most correct forms of

ethical-moral education, which transcends just scientific and technological knowledge. To this end Arisi posited that education is the key to a nation's ability to develop and achieve sustainable development, especially when it is directed to improving agricultural productivity, providing skills for work in new industries, enhancing the status of women, promoting environmental protection, developing capacities for informed and ethical decision making, and improving the quality of life for all (248). Consequently, technological and scientific education injected with the fabrics and fibers of religious freedom and religious-moral education become the corner stone for the foundation of sustainable development of any nation in an industrial age. This point takes us to the philosophy of understanding the ethics behind freedom of religion, moral education and industrialization, particularly within the domain of Nigeria's industrial evolution.

Focus on Religious Freedom, Christian Ethical Values and Moral Education

Resume:

> *We are committed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant human rights covenants and international instruments…We emphasize the need to promote tolerance, respect, understanding, moderation and religious freedom which are essential to the development of free and democratic societies, and recall that respect for the dignity of all human beings is critical to promoting peace and prosperity* (Open Doors Report, World Watch 2015)

A focus on the Freedom of Religion is an important aspect of universal rights meant to be enjoyed by all men, as human

persons under the law, without discrimination, fear or favor, thus a significant starting point in considering the place of this paper in our bit to transform the Nigerian nation socially, spiritually, culturally, economically and politically. This fact of life takes us to the question, what is the focal point of the declaration of human rights on religious freedom and how does it translate into national transformation, sustainable development and industrialization? How is this related to the ethical values and moral education that underpin the functionality of socio-economic and political revolution?

The declaration on Human Rights:

The General Assembly noted with precision what the declaration of human rights entails and denotes as it states:

> Considering that one of the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations is that of the dignity and equality inherent in all human beings, and that all Member States have pledged themselves to take joint and separate action in co-operation with the Organization to promote and encourage universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion... proclaim the principles of non-discrimination and equality before the law and the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief,

> Considering that the disregard and infringement of human rights and fundamental freedoms...have brought, directly or indirectly, wars and great suffering to mankind, especially...kindling hatred between peoples and

nations…Convinced that freedom of religion and belief should also contribute to the attainment of the goals of world peace, social justice and friendship among peoples and to the elimination of ideologies or practices of colonialism and racial discrimination…Resolved to adopt all necessary measures for the speedy elimination of such intolerance in all its forms and manifestations and to prevent and combat discrimination on the ground of religion or belief…

Article 1sub-section1-3 specifically reads concerning the freedom of religion the following code of conduct, which reads: "No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have a religion or belief of his choice".

It is important to observe here, without any undue sentiments, that:

> The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 [General Assembly resolution 217 A](#) as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected.
> (file:///C:/Users/user/Desktop/The%20Universal%20Declaration%20of%20Human%20Rights%20_%20United%20Nations.htm).

The original paradigm of religious freedom, which was centered on the belief and worship in the Supreme Being, has

been expanded over the past two centuries in two basic directions: first, to protect non-transcendent religions and beliefs; and second, to protect so-called "freedom from religion", especially the coercion of one religious tradition by another. By and large, the advance of globalization reflects the diversity of world religions and beliefs (Abrahamic religions, Eastern religions, religious eclecticism, private beliefs, aboriginal and indigenous spiritualities, etc). It also considers the corresponding need to expand the religious paradigm to extend coverage to all kinds of religious and non-religious beliefs and creeds. This expansion was firmly adopted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (art. 18) and in the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (art. 18), and recognized by the most important international documents, notably the 1981 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. "There was no question that in a world in which believing in God was no longer axiomatic, historical monotheism could not be the key to the right to religious freedom. The extension of the protection of the paradigm of religious freedom to non-transcendent religions and beliefs was, therefore, an eminently understandable position on the part of liberal democracies". In view of this extension, the foundation of the right to religious freedom was not based on the existence of God and the free exercise to worship Him, but in the exercise of the human sacred power as a dimension of his or her inherent dignity to act in a certain way (Rafael Domingo 2014, pp. 226-228; cf. n. 63).

This understanding covers the scope of human reasoning and the freedom of the exercise of conscience everywhere and anywhere. Thus, accordingly, Pope Paul VI re-echoes in

DIGNITATIS HUMANAE (1065), that the foundations of the right to freedom of religion should include foremost what is an unrestricted value to the dignity and wellbeing of humanity. He therefore concludes that such rights entail without any sense of contradiction a sense of the dignity of the human person, which has been impressing itself more and more deeply on the consciousness of contemporary man, and whose demand is increasingly made that men should act on their own judgment, enjoying and making use of a responsible freedom, not driven by coercion but motivated by a sense of duty.

The Pope further made succinct declaration by observing, in agreement with the Vatican Council documents, that the demand of the right to freedom of religion has ethical force which entails:

...that constitutional limit should be set to the powers of government, in order that there may be no encroachment on the rightful freedom of the person and of associations. This demand for freedom in human society chiefly regards the quest for the values proper to the human spirit. It regards, in the first place, the free exercise of religion in society. This Vatican Council takes careful note of these desires in the minds of men. It proposes to declare them to be greatly in accord with truth and justice. To this end ...Religious freedom, in turn, which men demand as necessary to fulfill their duty to worship God, has to do with immunity from coercion in civil society...This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or

publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits…the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person as this dignity is known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself…However, men cannot discharge these obligations in a manner in keeping with their own nature unless they enjoy immunity from external coercion as well as psychological freedom. Therefore the right to religious freedom has its foundation not in the subjective disposition of the person, but in his very nature… the care of the right to religious freedom devolves upon the whole citizenry, upon social groups, upon government, and upon the Church and other religious communities, in virtue of the duty of all toward the common welfare…

In this respect, genuine religious freedom projects are codes enshrined in all religious traditions even though with different underpinning projections and forces of application but with the same aim, objectives and mission. It is imperative to consider, for our purpose, the Christian philosophical landscape and Biblical exposition of the accounts of religious freedom, Christian ethics, and moral education vis-à-vis other religious traditions, in order to determine their relevance and significance for application as roadmap in national transformation and development in an industrial age.

Religious Freedom, Christian Ethics, Moral Education and Industrialization

> *Everything that is really great and inspiring was created by the individual who could labour in freedom* (Albert Einstein)

This philosophy of Einstein conforms to the biblical passage which says, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor. 3:17). However, the injunction is clear that as children of God called to be free, we should use our freedom to serve humanity and the sustainable world in humility, tolerance, respect and love (cf. Gal. 5:13-14). It is therefore improper to use our freedom to undermine the value of life and oppress other persons who are not related to us either by our religious affiliation, ethnic or cultural relationship. Neither is humankind expected to recklessly and unjustifiably exploit the natural order for selfish and immoral intensions. The Christian liberty of belief, labour and action in the Lord's vineyard is to improve the freedom, security and wellbeing of others and the earth, thus create a free and healthy society where religion, natural science, technology, politics and economics work perfectly together to fulfill God's purpose for making and recreating the sustainable world.

A close analysis of the Nigerian situation and many secular societies reveal a seeming contradiction between religion, morality and spirituality on one hand and science, technology and sustainable development on the other. But, why is it so? This prevailing hallucination and misplaced ideology, I believe smacks of a contradiction and the poverty of critical hermeneutics and exegesis of religious beliefs, tenets, written or unwritten codes of conduct and practice by the ill-informed and poorly educated in life enhancing matters. Yet, what accounts for this erroneous misunderstanding and abhorrence for open support of religion as a different and complementary science for sustainable development? Is it mischief or mere pretence from people who believe in the

supremacy of science and technology, hiding under its knowledge which they have been graciously endowed through scientific education to the detriment of spirituality and religio-moral education, while in actual sense they also remain highly committed to particular religious beliefs and organizations?

It is commonsensical to reason also that pseudo-scientists and historians of science who have never invented one technology to improve the quality of human and environmental life, for example, often deny the value of religion as source of sustainable development and/or refute its place in contributing to national life and security. Austin Cline (1 of 4), considers the embarrassment associated with the denial of relationship between religion and technology as either due to ignorance or unfounded skepticism and criticism. But researches have proven that many engineers are creationists and to the marvel of the atheist many people in high-tech industries display high-energy religious motivations with sound moral background and knowledge. It is a fact that religious foundations for technological innovation are either ignored or deliberately hidden away like awkward relatives. Thus technology has proven itself capable of causing terrible crises for humanity, perhaps because people are ignoring their religious and ethical impulses. But if we are to reason that nothing we see in existence happens as an accident or mere colliding of forces, then we are already in the realm of a cosmic religious belief that everything was fashioned and ordered to work in harmony by an intelligent mind, namely, God or the Creator. Based on this seeming acceptability that God created everything for a purpose, He did not just create a universe and everything in it for its own sake, but set in

motion certain principles or laws to govern His creation in order to benefit the creatures, hence the need for its treatment and use with utmost care and precision (cf. Gen. 2: 4; Ex. 20: 11; Ps. 24:1; 29, 36; Amos 4:13).

The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs contends that from researches conducted on recent developments in world affairs, there is positive correlation between levels of religious freedom across countries and measures of economic, social and political development. The force of this argument is re-affirmed by Azeez (219) who believes that the political culture and authority of many African societies is derived from the rural community's moral obligations where there is emphasis on collectivity, respect for culture and elders, language, ethnic concerns and human freedom even in the distribution of available resources. These moral obligations derive their force and life from religious beliefs and praxis. Hence, Ogbonnaya Joseph (1-4) connected religion unconditionally with sustainable development, negative or positive. His submission is that whenever contemporary discourses on ways to attain sustainable and authentic human development are considered religion is stripped of its influence on these important matters. This attitude of exclusionism is due especially to the divisiveness and intolerance among various religious sectarians, which occasionally results in violent conflicts with destructive consequences on the socio-economic projects precipitating the decline of nations. However, religion is known to be that grinding force which if properly directed plays very vital role in the sustainable development of Africa despite conflicts or violence arising from its misapplication by some overzealous adherents. Consequently, religion can influence the progress

of a better world, and given its innumerable adherents and its common belief in the dignity and destiny of humanity under one Supreme God, it is committed to the promotion of the common good and to the provision of basic human needs. It is against this background that he quoted Max Stackhouse as saying, "...neglect of religion as an ordering, uniting and dividing factor in a number of influential interpretations of globalization is a major cause of misunderstanding and a studied blindness regarding what is going on in the world" (57). He concludes by agreeing with James Wolfensohn's position (xvii) that religion is an omnipresent and seamless part of daily life and has an effect on many people's attitude to everything, including issues relating to savings, investment, forces of production and a host of economic decisions and services. It inevitably influences vital areas for successful development such as schooling, gender equality and health care delivery services. Religion therefore could be an important driver of social change, yet it could equally be a break to progress and social relations.

The point on the role of religion in the transformation of society leads us to the conviction that the freedom of religion as well as Christian religious ethics and moral education govern and fortify the pedestal for sustainable development everywhere and anywhere, rather than deter it. A quick examination of Christian thoughts on religious freedom suffices for our purpose in this respect. There is therefore an inevitable connection between religious freedom, Christian ethical values, industrialization and sustainable development. This relationship is connected by the Christian philosophy of the human conscience and man's right attitude to life and security. According to Hugh Whelchel (1 & 2 of 4), the

categorical statement, "Thou shalt not encroach upon the religious liberty of your fellow citizens" is not found in the Bible, however, it has its scriptural base on the idea of the human conscience and the natural moral law. The Bible has a lot to say about the exercise of conscience as a moral law because it clearly states that "in the beginning" God wrote his laws on Adam's heart, and Paul explains to the Romans in2: 14-15 which says that God's law is not something alien,...but woven into the very fabric of creation. There is something deep within them that echo God's yes and no, right and wrong, good and bad. Having been created in God's image and likeness human conscience, despite our fallen status, is capable of moral regeneration and change, and this conscience still has an instinctive knowledge of the true God and the understanding of right and wrong as well as the choice to act in certain ways. Thus this universal sense of right and wrong is an imperative call *Natural Law*, which could be seen from and determined by the observation of human behaviors. As a categorical imperative, it is valid for every sensible mind. It is for this reason that people can choose to do good and avoid evil, in the sense in which murder, theft, hate, disrespect for parents and/or corruption are all recognized across cultures and the world as being destructive to the common good, while attitudes like fairness, freedom, justice, tolerance and love are considered beneficial virtues and supportive of the common good. We can therefore claim that religious freedom has its foundation in the Christian scriptures, especially when we consider the teachings of Jesus on social ethics.

It is a general belief that religion influences and determines human actions in given societies, which include the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religious beliefs as well

as sustainable ethical standards. Ardelean (181-185) considers the history of freedom of religion to have taken shape in the Bible which includes numerous examples of interaction between God's faithful people with other religious traditions. This interaction nurtured the reflexes and attitudes of Christians in their spiritual and social relations over time. He cited the persecution of the early Christian church during the reign of Emperor Nero (see also, Bunaciu 20, Branzei 24, Popovici 180) in which Christianity was considered a *religioprava* or a decadent and elicit movement. However, Christians developed the idea of state authority as a theme closely associated with religious freedom.

Thus from Christ's command in Matthew 22:21: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's", the Christians understood the separation between Church and State. Meanwhile, another concept linked with religious freedom is the idea of the good citizen expressed in Paul's letter to the Romans (Rom. 13:1-2) on respect for constituted authority established by God. Although the Christians lived in the *Civitas Terrena*, they should strive to make it a *Civitas Dei* characterized by love and self-sacrifice for the neighbor. Yet the teachings of St. Augustine support the permanent spiritual battle between Satan's servants and the Christians, which he believes should be carried to the political arena where the *militia Christi* can use force to fight infidels and Satan's servants. This philosophy created in effect lack of tolerance for those outside the church believed to be children of damnation without any hope of salvation. Consequently, this *corpus Christianum* and the rigid attitude toward non-Christians alongside the poor exegesis of some Old Testament texts led to the Inquisition and Crusades with

dangerously damaging effects on lives and property. Not too long after the sharing of these thoughts within Christendom, some Protestant Reformers the Anabaptist Claus Felbinger rejected the idea of the *corpus Christianum*, by stating: "God does not want servant-hood imposed by force. On the contrary, He loves a heart that is free and open; that serves him with a soul that joyfully does what is right" (cf. Friedmann 149).

Further, other proponents of freedom of religion based on their understanding of Scriptures include Hubmaier who says, "a Turk or a heretic is not convinced by our deeds, neither by sword or fire, but only by patience and prayer", and Roger William who affirms of religious freedom by defending the separation of Church and State reasoned that "They have the right to fall into error"; while John Locke became the first to introduce the principle of separation of Church and State by declaring religion to be a private matter "between the individual's soul and the Creator" (cf. Estep 214; Vedder 85-88; Stayer 141-146; Little, Kelsaz and Sachedina 23; Oberman 15).

To build on the value of life in our societies sustained by freedom of religion and Christian social ethics, Thomas Johnson categorically stated that society must be marked by true freedom of thought, conscience, and religion for it to attain orderliness and safety for its inhabitants. He agrees with Guinness that the much older paradigm of Christian social ethics found in both classical Protestant and Roman Catholic sources rooted in the Bible distinguish "between the realm of relating to God by faith in Christ and the realm of

relating to each other in society on the basis of moral law…a significant knowledge of the moral law was given by God to all people, regardless of their faith, through God-given general revelation in scriptures or "the light of nature" and the moral knowledge…was to provide the basis for life together in society". Consequently, the penultimate social and moral norms related to the recognition of the human dignity of our neighbors should provide the basis for civility, peace and security in society (8, 9).

The Church Fathers have resonate with the biblical truth that nothing which is true and holy in the non-Christian faiths [Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism or any other tradition]should be rejected or regarded an anathema in so far as it is not condemned by God but there is much good and moral worthiness therein, because He has spoken to men in their various cultures, beliefs and experiences to choose what is right for practical living. Thus the Church believes with Saint Paul in his letter to the Ephesians (Eph. 2:14-16) that, "Christ who is our peace has through his cross reconciled Jews and Gentiles and made them one in himself" (Robert George 42-43).To further support the principle of religious freedom and liberty which engenders moral attitude to act rightly in building nations and societies, the Bible has supplied ample evidence as source for consideration of the Christian social ethics.

Accordingly, Daniel Bell concludes that for any social ethics to be considered Christian, it must be essentially related to the person and work of Jesus Christ. Thus a Christian social ethic which includes respect for the worth of individuals or groups, and freedom of religion, cannot legitimately apply Jesus' command to love one's enemy to contemporary life situations

until it explores what it means for the poor and underprivileged to experience oppression, denial and subjugation. No doubt, Jesus' message of love and forgiveness was directed toward the disinherited, intimidated, marginalized and deliberately impoverished. Yet, affirming with Howard Thurman (109), Bell argues that the privileged and underprivileged stand on the same pedestal with equal right before God, given the principle that all people were created in the image and likeness of God and so must be respected as having equal worth, rights and potential. The belief in humanity's equality and worth is further strengthened by the doctrine of the incarnation. Thus, if God took up human flesh in the person of Jesus "all humanity has been raised up and given the opportunity to participate in the divine nature", bearing equal worth and spiritual dignity by virtue of their humanity to a common sharing in mutual reverence and love of neighbor (Winter 2012). Based on the principle that biblical anthropology is rooted in the creation story of Genesis 1:27; 5:1 revealing the truth of God's image and spirit in all human beings, the moral code which defines human dignity as inevitably tied to the divine nature commands the human psyche to favor and respect the construction of an intellect and atmosphere favorable to religious freedom, which is built on this principle of moral dignity. The book of Genesis introduces the primary human condition of equality between men and women without distinction. The two free individuals received specific punishments with equal distribution of suffering without specific immunities. The two progenitors were to share the project of creation being equal partners to create an environment of common living in peace and harmony. Chapter 4 of Genesis further opens our eyes to the idea of freedom,

especially to choose to do evil in the example of Cain's will to disregard God's intervention and his immoral choice to murder his brother. Consequently, the moral and religious freedom guaranteed by God finds expression in the choice of Adam and Eve in the Eden episode; the story of Cain and Abel and in Noah's invitation to salvation offered to his society. In these events, God did not only ensure them freedom from His will and interference, but guaranteed them religious freedom by honoring their choices.

Another example of freedom of conscience is that tied to the moral principle of charity central to the Old Testament in which the Israelites were to take care of the poor in their society(Exod. 23:11), a principle often stressed in the prophetic discourse by Isaiah, Amos, Jeremiah (Isa. 10:1-2, 58:1-21; Amos 4:10; Jer. 7:3-6), all being requirements of God with regard to fellowmen, shaping a social attitude pleasing to Him (Ardelean 186-187; cf. Blumoff 270-278, 280-281). Bell again assures us that the Christian is one reconciled to God and so is called to be an agent of reconciliation in the world by assuming and pursuing the radical ethic of love taught by Jesus with dedication and self-sacrifice. Therefore, Christ's teaching is not just about individual or group piety but also establishing community of servants dedicated to the vision of creating a peaceful and people oriented kingdom on earth, hence in the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46), Jesus instructed that the standard by which humanity would be judged relates to how willing man is to serve God in his neighbor especially the least of them. In this sense, "the Servant Community", which is the Christian Church, "must be the clear manifestation of a people who have learned to be at

peace with themselves, one another, the stranger, and...God"
(2; cf. Hauerwas 372, *The Hauerwas Reader*).

However, the question is in what way has Christian ethical
values and moral education impacted on the subject of
religious freedom and sustainable development in an age of
industrialization? It is commonsensical to reason that, for all
rational societies, education is for them the bedrock of
sustainable development. Against this backdrop, Arisi (248)
simply submits that "education takes place throughout life in
many forms, none of which ought to be exclusive". And since
education plays an indispensable role in sustainable
development, moral education which is an important integral
component of education becomes a vital resource for the
transformation of nations in an industrial era. This form of
education serves as the conduit pipe which injects the human
person with spiritual powers that transforms human conduct
to rise above the ordinary material and temporal
existentialism to the ethereal realm of spiritual and ethical
greatness. Moral education was essentially coined by the
policy formulators to serve as the substratum of all other
forms of education, in so far as the primary purpose of
knowledge acquisition in whatsoever form is not to transform
mankind into skillful, intelligent, smart and shrewd beings, but
in addition, to be endowed with kindheartedness, modesty,
discipline, selfless character and moral goodness. This has
always been the vision of true civilization and education, to
train individuals and groups to live together in peace and
harmony within multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-religious,
and multi-ethnic diversity. And when this happens, moral-
religious education paves the way for mutual understanding
and the promotion of religious freedom to become the

solidifying ingredient for economic, social, political and cultural ties requisite for the sustenance of industrial growth among civilized human civilizations. It is in this sense that Lord Fisher Ames' oration stands, which says, "Our liberty depends on our education, our laws, and habits . . . it is founded on morals and religion, whose authority reigns in the heart, and on the influence all these produce on public opinion before that opinion governs rulers"(1800 p. 23). To this philosophy, John Adams caps it all with the words, "[I]t is religion and morality alone which can establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand. The only foundation of a free constitution is pure virtue"(1854 p. 401).

It is important to sum up this section on moral education, Christian ethics and the freedom of religion with the reasoning of great men of history who saw a gap in human activism devoid of moral education and freedom of conscience. Accordingly, John Hull surmises that the huge impact of modernity upon contemporary social and intellectual life has produced new conceptions of human maturity which have influenced religious education. "These include the value of critical thought, the ethical significance of freedom of choice, and the impact of scientific rationality". Consequently, the negative impact of financial globalisation has encouraged a new interest in the character of spirituality as a necessary feature of the lives of individuals and societies. When this reality manifests itself, religious education may be abandoned altogether and the state education system may become completely secular (2000, 113-114). This fact is attested to by A. K. Arjunan who believes that a worthwhile education should target the total development of learner's personality. Unfortunately, the present system emphasizes the

transmission of knowledge and cultivation of occupational skills in the sciences and technology to the exclusion of the spiritual and moral knowledge. This has created a moral vacuum in the life of individuals and society. Nonetheless, the inculcation of desirable values in the upcoming generation is felt essential for finding out answers to so many problems that humanity faces today, thus the need for value-based education. However, its discouragement and consequent neglect spells out doom for the sustainable development of many developing nations.

The neglect of moral education, according to Hull, gives birth to yet another social ill, namely, a pluralization of *learning religion* whereby students and/or children from each faith are educated in separate classrooms and receive instruction from a representative of their distinctive faiths. Undoubtedly, the freedom that this kind of religious education offers is restricted in that it offers freedom to the religion which is being taught and a freedom of non-competitive transmission, but it does not enhance the freedom of the student because it does not expand his or her cognitive horizons. For example, the Muslim children are educated by the Muslim teachers, and the Orthodox Christian children by the Orthodox teachers. This method does not share the sympathy of religious freedom for sustainable development. Consequently, since the main approaches of "learning religion" and "learning about religion" present some limitations, the method of religious education called 'learning from religion' becomes significant. In "learning from religion" students share and participate in the beliefs and practices of the religion being taught, be it theirs or that of others, thus making a contribution to the pupils' moral and spiritual development. An example is the *Gift*

to the Child project carried out at the University of Birmingham where teachers select units of material from various world religions for study by children, aged 4-11 years. These units might consist of a statue, a picture, or a passage of Holy Scripture. Whenever each of these items is presented, the question is asked, "What gifts might it offer the children?" For example, *Ganesha*, the elephant-headed deity celebrated in southern Asia, when flashed before the children, might offer stimulation to the curiosity of the children.

The picture would challenge their values, deepen their distinctive sense of identity, and impart empathy for others in their minds. Education has the capacity to promote moral and spiritual ideals through inculcating disciplined and coherent human moral and spiritual life. World religions and their ethical moral values remain, along with a humanised art, literature and science, the main resources that man has for the rehabilitation of human life. If the religions are to cooperate in the enterprise for the common good, they must rise above unhealthy competitions while avoiding the supreme concerns with their own progress and advantage against other religions. The contribution of religious education to religious freedom though highly diverse, the approach to 'learning from religion' is a unique resource for the advancement of human freedom and the freedom of religion project essential for industrial transformation and development.

Giving support to the clarion call on nations to embark on moral education for national growth, Croitoru and Munteanu in agreement with many others, submit that where moral education is virtually lacking there is great setback in sustainable development. In many such societies with deficit

of ethical moral knowledge, young people are flooded by agnostic, psychoanalytic and materialist theories in the educational system they go through. For this reason, some children *leave their classes with the conviction that truth is relative, and virtues are impossible or useless. All these things influence them in proclaiming that values are relative* (cf. Emilianos, 2001, p. 99). In this regard, the *education for value turns into an education for libertinism,* which triggers non-conformism and the desire for independence (cf. Timiş, 2011, p. 29). The role of moral-religious education is overwhelming during the adolescent stage of man's life, as that period is the moment when man defines or rearticulates his moral-religious beliefs. *Religion* or the religious fact *becomes a kind of life, whose most elaborate expression is one's vocation. Ceasing to be a reflection of the parental image, God becomes the symbol of the supreme value in which all the other values come together* ([cf. Debesse, 1981, p. 107], 2013, p. 2157). This quotation by George Washington becomes instructive:

> Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of man and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connexions with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked, Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in Courts of

Justice? (Farewell Address to the United States in 1796, pp. 22-23)

It is true that true democratic values can survive only under an acceptable moral structure, thus Benjamin Rush had this to say of a truly republican government: "The only foundation for a useful education in a republic is to be laid in religion. Without this there can be no virtue, and without virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and life of all republican governments" (8). This statement by Rush is given credence to by Bernard C. Steiner who asserts that without morals a republic cannot subsist for any length of time. Therefore those who decry the Christian religion, whose morality is so sublime & pure, and which denounces wickedness, eternal misery, and insures good eternal happiness, are undermining the solid foundation of morals and the best security for the duration of free governments (1907, p. 475). These principles conform to the social ethics of Jesus the God-man in a very special way. Thus the Christian moral education aims to train individuals to speak and live like Jesus Christ – to emulate the life of sacrifice, tolerance, humility, integrity, trustworthiness, compassion, courage to condemn evil atrocities, freedom of expression, respect for the lives of others, and the cultivation of peaceful behaviors. Christian ethical values and moral education inculcate Christian habits which contribute, in no small measure, to national stability giving life to sustainable development and technological advancement.

In furtherance with the project and objective of religious freedom and its relation to Christian ethics, Ardelean (187-188) submits that the Bible did not only records principles which speak of justice, freedom, equality and equity, charity

and righteousness, but also above all love as *agapē*. The records of scriptures reveal that Jesus, in his incarnate nature, establishes and introduces His undeserved and unconditional love to the world. His love (*agapaō*) is self-emptying and self-sacrifice for the sake of others, especially undeserving sinners who may even be his enemies and antagonists (Matt. 4:23, 20:28; Jn. 2:5, 3:17, 15:12; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 4:14). His love is much more far reaching than the principle of tolerance and respect in the society, which has only political prudence in view, for the sake of keeping stability and social peace but sometimes subsumed under the guise of falsehood, relativism and skepticism devoid of genuine trust, mutual respect and solidarity. The ultimate end of this love of Christ for humanity is that which inspires the Christian man to sacrifice wholeheartedly and to find ways to understand others, to build dialogue between religions, to create and enabling environment for social peace, equal opportunity and treatment, security and sustainable development.

Considering the place of Christian religious ethics in the advancement of industrialization and sustainable development, T. V. Varughese (1 & 2 of 4), in agreement with philosophers, entomologists and scientists (Alfred North Whitehead, J. Robert Oppenheimer, and Stanley Beck) came to a reasonable conclusion that technology and science have become the present magic geared toward the development and transformation of developed nations. In any case, books on the history of inventions reveal that the vast majority of scientific inventions originated in Europe (including Britain) and the USA since the dawn of the 17th Century. What led to this fast industrial advancement that set the stage for

science and technology to emerge with full force was the return to Biblical Christianity and Christian ethics in these nations. Christian theology practically gave birth to Philosophy which in turn hatched the sciences. Thus moral philosophy engendered all other fields of human endeavor and serves as the answer to the many depressions catapulted by ethnic, religious, political, social status discrimination and economic deprivations that have polarized the peoples and destroyed the roots of unity in many nations. It has also helped to solve the question of environmental degradation and abuse through its exchange of ideas and objective debates in the area of qualitative knowledge production. This writer holds a very strong belief about the place of Christian ethics and industrial development, which sciences cannot just wave aside. He argues consistently, saying:

> The rise of North America to dominance in technology is related to the Judeo-Christian foundation with which it started because the founding fathers of the United States of America were theists who believed in a Creator who gave moral rules by which to live. The work ethic they practiced contributed to the rapid progress of the country. In this ethic, all honest work was regarded as dignified, not just the "white collar" jobs. This also has Christian roots. Jesus, the founder of Christianity, Himself chose the profession of a carpenter prior to His ministry. Along with this work ethic, there was also the right climate for initiating research. The free-enterprise system allowed individuals and private groups to carry on research and to develop technology…technology has given us untold blessings. But technology has also been used for monstrous destruction and human misery. This…coupled

with the illegal use of technology, has also become a serious concern. How can we hold in check the wrong use of technology? Here again, Christianity offers its powerful contribution. Jesus summed up the right law to live by in human relationships thus: "Love your neighbor as yourself." a powerful principle...allows no justification for using technology to bring harm to others... this law encourages us to develop that which serves humanity. The ethical standards of Biblical Christianity also include the practice of honesty and integrity. The need for these in the handling of technology is being increasingly recognized.

According to Calvin Dewitt (3 & 4 of 8) environmental ethics based on biblical culture calls us to a new understanding of the cultivation and caring for the earth and its inhabitants. Thus given our human consciousness we can learn from God's creation, hence with regard to our habitable environment God has given us His "bountiful care breathes in the air, shines in the light, streams from the hills and descends to the plain; sweetly distills in the dew and the rain", therefore we should gratefully practice the principles of *shamar*, i.e., earth-keeping and care (Gen. 2:15), the fruitfulness principle wherein we should sustain and enjoy, not destroy creation's profitability and prosperity (Gen. 1: 22-28; Ezek. 34:18). Furthermore, we are to observe the Sabbath code of conduct to provide creation the opportunity to rest for resourceful and reinvigorated reproduction (Exod. 23; Lev. 25 & 26). In honor of the commission of stewardship in Genesis 2:15 to cultivate (*avad*) and care (*shamar*) for God's gift of nature agriculturists and industrialists who follow Christ and Christian ethics strive to apply *Scienta* (Knowledge of

Creation) in respect to *Ethics* and make this their *Praxis* as the triad of "Science-Ethics-Praxis" equivalent to what the worldview and human perception "See-Judge-Act" entails.

This standard for sustainable agro-ecological stewardship connects us to the ethics of freedom of conscience and religious beliefs to promote policies and institutional change that would stimulate agricultural growth and equity to benefit the underprivileged and disadvantaged of our society, irrespective of religious creed or ethnic alliance. Our diverse religious beliefs and practices further enhance multiplicity of ethical praxis to accelerate sustainable increase in economic productivity; production of healthy food assortments; to "conserve, enhance, and sustainably use natural resources and biodiversity to improve the livelihoods of the poor in response to climate change and other factors", as well as to ensure the equitable distribution and redistribution of the earth's resources to the benefit of all the human family. Thus in agreement with Douglass North, Dewitt wraps up the conviction that "ourselves and what we believe makes for good personal character and wholesome relationships within our families and communities" (5 of 8). Strong scriptural sources for Christian religious and ethical standpoints and reflections on industrial and environmental development, and agricultural productivity find expression in the biblical concept of the Jubilee Tradition. This Israelite Tradition inaugurated, according to David Andrews, at the time of political threat in the 7th and 8th centuries B. C. E. was a heritage instituted to conscientize the people on the management and use of land and its resources communicating the significance of the Sabbath in the administration of ecological, social, political and religious organization of the Israelite society. As a social

program and model for the care and conversion of creation and of the life of the entire Hebrew community, it included the following:

i. **Leaving the Soil Fallow**: This provision was an ecological liberation ethics in which the Jubilee Year mandated the earth's explorers to allow the land to lie fallow every seven years and every 50 years. The land being a creation of God was a gift open to anyone that would nurture it for the common good. The appropriate use of ecology demands that on one should go hungry or be deprived of its wealth because it was an injustice against the dignity of man that anyone staff in the midst of plenty or even insufficiency. Thus apart from the care for creation, provision was made for the care of the human community, which include the less privileged, since the society of Yahweh requires solidarity to be bonded with mutual care, social justice and love, and to treat each other with dignity and respect.

ii. **Economic and Political Liberation**: This model is associated to freedom and recognition of certain basic economic, social, religious and political rights, hence debtors had their debts canceled and lands that were ceded in debt were restored to the original owners thereby ensuring a wide and fair distribution of land ownership so as to stem disparity in wealth as an overabundance of property concentrated in the hands of few. Here also, the Tradition provided that all the slaves of the society should be set free to return to their homes and families in order to reconstitute their dignity and worth as a free people worthy of self-respect, self-actualization and self-realization

The Jubilee Tradition is articulated in Luke's Gospel to portray the mission of Jesus as Liberator and Savior of the dispossessed, incarcerated, discriminated against and oppressed. Therefore at the beginning of his ministry he proclaimed saying: πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ᾽ ἐμὲ οὖ εἵνεκεν ἔχρισέν με εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς, ἀπέσταλκέν με, κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεσιν καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν, ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει, (The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised – Luke 4:18). To this philosophy of respect and solidarity of the human family, Andrews concluded that Jesus was the bearer of a renewed vision for human socio-economic, political and ecological relationships. Naturally, therefore, "at the heart of the Jubilee tradition is an appreciation of agrarianism, of a balance social order where community and creation matter more than money, efficiency, power, command and control operations", giving attention to a society focused on promoting the culture committed to peace, security, prosperity, freedom of thought, expression, participation and conscience, as well as a commitment to the principle of the common good, care for nature and environment, and social solidarity (cf. Thompson, P., 1997, 5; Pope Pius XI 109; Pope Leo XIII 10; Origins, Section A; La Farge 21).

Religious Freedom in Islam and Other Religious Traditions as Complementary Residues for Sustainable Development in Industrialization

Christianity is not the only religion that supplies the human mind and intellect with the moral resource for the promotion

of the freedom of religion, ethics and moral educational backbone for sustainable development. Lying at the frontier of rational knowledge and ethical inquiry is also the sublime message of the Qur'an which supports the freedom of religion project, which makes for improved knowledge on how to treat the environment, species of the habitable earth and persons of other beliefs different from Islamic philosophy and theology. This means that the Islamic tradition in its genuine context, interpretation and application respects the worth and sanctity of humanity and the sustainable world that house the different species of God's creation. While studying the origin of religious freedom in the West, Areej Hassan quoted Gregory Wallace as saying, "The struggle for religious freedom originated with persons who were deeply religious and thus had a significant stake in the outcome". Today within the Islamic tradition many Muslim scholars have made the same point in their claim that religious freedom is essential to the very existence of Islam without which in its earliest stage it wouldn't have survived, "since acceptance of any new religious message requires space for belief" and change in opinion. Thus contrary to the assumption that Muslims view apostates as transgressors against God who deserve severe capital punishment, there are over 200 verses in the Qur'an that affirm individual's freedom of belief (Tony Blair Faith Foundation, 05 May 2015).

It is in this sense that Zahid Aziz (www.ahmadiyya.org, 1) consistently affirms that Islam recognizes complete freedom of religion and belief for every human being. Consistent with this principle, it does not prescribe any punishment whatsoever for a person who leaves the religion of Islam to adopt another faith. The Holy Quran altogether excludes

compulsion from the sphere of religion as seen in this text, "There is no compulsion in religion — the right way is indeed clearly distinct from error" – Q 2: 256. He further argues that the Holy Quran is full of statements which indicate that belief in any religion is a person's personal conviction and concern as individuals have the right of choice to adopt one way or another. Therefore if a believer accepts the truth, it is for his own good, but if he sticks to error, it is to his own detriment. Some examples of such passages that support the principle of religious freedom include:

➢ "The Truth is from your Lord; so let him who please believe and let him who please disbelieve – 18:29

➢ "Clear proofs have indeed come to you from your Lord: so whoever sees, it is for his own good; and whoever is blind, it is to his own harm. And I am not a keeper over you." – 6: 104

➢ "Say (to people): Obey Allah and obey the Messenger. But if you turn away, he is responsible for the duty imposed on him, and you are responsible for the duty imposed on you. And if you obey him, you go aright. And the Messenger's duty is only to deliver (the message) plainly" – 24:54

➢ "If anyone of the idolaters seek your protection, protect him till he hears the word of Allah, then convey him to his place of safety. This is because they are a people who have no knowledge" – 9:6.

Ardelean once more supports the argument that Islam and other religious precepts teach the freedom of religion. For instance, the Qur'an mentions the principle of equity and non-compulsion in Surah 2 Al Baqarah: 256, "there is no coercion (*rushd*) in religion: (moral maturity and intellectual) have a

clear distinction from *ghay* (domination, weakness): anyone who rejects *taghut* (tyranny) and believes in God grabs the hand that keeps him secure and doesn't let the hand loose. And God hears and knows all things". This idea of freedom of conscience is also evident in the philosophy of Confucianism which has the *ren* principle as a fundamental virtue, and which reflects the cherished concept the "two thoughts" or "empathy for the other". In the same vein, the Hindu scriptures contain this piece of wisdom that reflects freedom of religion, "we walk together, talk together…we are all people of the world, then and only then will we have peace" (189-190). It is the unity of humanity in its diversity of cultures, traditions and knowledge based philosophy adorned with a moral backbone and religious freedom that reform men of virtue to become effective tools for industrial development and good governance. Islam understands and respects this reasoning, thus apart "from <u>supporting economic vitality</u> to reducing cultures of religious prejudice, religious freedom offers much and deserves to be a concern of high priority". Significantly, equipping Muslims with faith-based arguments in support of religious tolerance will encourage and empower them to limit and delegitimize faith-based extremist narratives that end in gross violation of human rights, compulsion, violent reactions and consequent underdevelopment (Al-Islam.org, http://tonyblairfoundation.org…).

The teaching of Islam, like the Christian belief, has supported in a significant rate the understanding of the causal relationship between religious freedom, morality and industrial development. The general belief is that sustainable development is a near impossible task where the principles of religious ethics, moral education and freedom of conscience

and of association are undermined, because they support and shape the pedestal of all national developmental tempos and existential conditions. Mohd Khairul Nizam Zainan Nazri (2012, pp. 146-155), and other Islamic scholars of repute have written extensively on this portal contributory inter-connectivity. The argument has been that religious teaching and knowledge acquisition provide full meaning and ethics on industrialization that is in harmony with economic prosperity, sustainable development and environmental security. Industrialization and civilization in Islam affects not merely economic growth but all other dimensions of life such as social, spiritual, political, cultural and psychological wellbeing (cf.n.4 – Al-'Ubaydi, k. F. 2001, p. 43). Islam supports and encourages all forms of industries established on the principles of the changing needs of society, which is conducted under the atmosphere of freedom, justice and security. This industrialization project should foremost be in conformity with permissible activities within the sphere of a God-blessed process which subscribes to Islamic universal ethical principles, and which ensures the balance between the material and spiritual development of a nation (cf. n.6 – Ghazali, A., 1993, pp. 20-21). In accordance with the instructions of Surah Al-Qasas, 28:77, industrialization underlined with the God-blessed process supports the ultimate quest for paradise in the here-after but not forgetting one's responsibility in the worldly life. Thus to ensure its desirable and flawless workability all negative, immoral and anti-social attitudes and evil intends inherent in secular industrialization processes should be checked, rejected and abolished through effective religious and government policies, moral education and high-quality governance. To achieve these noble intentions, Islam believes

that there must be a deliberate policy that advocates and inculcates in the human person the following attributes: Divine Unity and Oneness (al-Tawhid); Vice-regency (al-Khalifah) and Responsibility (al-Amanah); Justice (al-'Adalah) and Equilibrium (al-Tawazun); and the Goals of Shari'ah (Maqasid al-Shari'ah). These four principles of life symbolize the keystone doctrines guiding Islamic moral life, freedom of belief, spirituality, and sustainable development. These, for the Muslim, also measure the performance gauge of true leadership in a balance of political culture, socio-economic and spiritual life marked by the necessities of science and technology.

In consideration of the worldwide trends to developmental and transformational strides, Anastasia Nasibulina together with the founder of the noosphere theory V. I. Vernadsky succinctly argue that sustainable development of the world depends on the formation of persons of good morals and high creative capabilities for tackling problems because the "human personality is a key to everything (2015, p. 1077; [cf. Vernadsky, 1991, p. 102]). Jung Ha-Brookshire developing a Moral Responsibility of Corporate Sustainability (MRCS) theory maintains that, "sustainability is a moral duty for all corporations to fulfill and, therefore, all members of a corporation must abide by moral duties throughout the supply chain for any product to be truly sustainable" (September 2017). Education for sustainability supports the moral philosophy of imbibing knowledge which supports "cognitive, emotional and practical abilities, potential and capabilities of students and their endowment with value, ecological integrity and equitable well-being". This system of education for aims at maintaining the following projects and objects of

development: (i) prevention of ecological catastrophe, provision of quality life and environmental well-being of a country and/or region, development of environmental infrastructure, preservation of human health, acculturation, overcoming destructive consumerism, training of population to understand the necessity to save natural resources and pollution attenuation; (ii) to serve as instruments of forming civic society, responsibility and democratization of social relations, and general human wellbeing; (iii) provision of solution to general education problems by strengthening its status as a socio-cultural institution, improvement of its quality through its systemic reiteration from anthropocentric to eco-centric paradigm, providing priority for moral values in upbringing and the formation of strategic thinking skills, networking with the broad range of stakeholders, and shifting the paradigm of exclusive emphasis on scientism and technocratism in education towards the direction of culture-centric education. Thus education should be based on the promotion of all spheres of life and on the tradition of classical education, which focuses on fundamental character, depth, inter-disciplinarity, continuity, wisdom, humanism and the respectable relationships between man and the environment (2015, 1079). Moral education and ethical philosophy underpin the values and virtues of scientific and technological knowledge vital for industrial headway and sustainable development, hence its impeccable significance for all forms of knowledge production.

Nigeria's Social, Religious, Economic and Political Situation in an Industrial Age

In order to understand the social context in which religious freedom and ethical considerations operate in the spheres of

sustainable development, industrialization and security in Nigeria, it is apt to consider the questions, whether science and technology are far separated from religion and morality when dealing with maters of sustainable development, quality of life and security? Further, whether it is scientifically or ethically right to promote the culture of exclusive application of science and technology over and above humanist values to the detriment of religious spirituality and morality? Whether it is proper to produce and increase weapons of destruction rather than to promote and increase the regeneration of human attitude essential for enhancing the quality of life and life sustaining properties? Whether it is reasonable to use the advantage of industrialization to compel believers of other religions to accept any specific religious beliefs other than those within the dictates of one's conscience? What ethical standards have been abused and applied to weaken the foundation and process of production, construction and distribution of resources responsible for hampering unity in diversity, equal opportunities, imposition of suffering, denial of basic rights and igniting religious, ethnic and political contestations in Nigeria? The answer to these questions would put in perspective the Nigerian situation in her industrial evolution.

Nigerians from the different parts of the country with their diverse cultures, languages and backgrounds share similar views on the need for good governance, sustainable development, educational advancement and security shaped by their recourse to Biblical and Qur'anic ideals of justice, equality, equity, tolerance, love and the fear of God. But it is evident that there has been conflict over religious beliefs, and participation related to disputes over access to material

and ideological resources, as well as from access to learn to the control of the State budget and the media. Religious divergent views often reflect differences in markers of group identity, language, education, historical rivalry, ethnicity, and gender, hence religious rivalry is closely interwoven with the other forms of rivalry which dominate the Nigerian local politics (Nolte, Danjibo and Oladeji 5, 7 & 8). Bearing in mind the hard facts of religious freedom against religious discrimination, incitement and coercion, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada observed with concern that even though Nigeria's Constitution guarantees the freedom of religion, there is high level discrimination and denial of rights to religious-moral education for children of the various religious traditions in the sparsely populated areas of the state by Muslims or Christians.

Thus for example, in many Northern states Christian education classes are not offered, while in the Southern states, on the other hand, Islamic education classes are not often provided (1). These forms of discrimination and exclusionism have given rise to poor governance and the continuous stifling of sustainable development and failure of industrial growth. The denial of rights to moral education coupled with high level of corruption and other forms of abuses and misappropriation have undermined socio-economic progress in the right direction. Thus in the mind of Okoli (66), Ezekwesili was quoted by Prof. Fajonyomi as saying that about 400bn dollars of Nigeria's oil revenue have been stolen or mismanaged since 1960, making this form of institutionalized corruption to bamboozle the efforts of industrialization. On the one hand, whenever jobs or government benefits are denied to the adherents of a particular belief, the principles

of religious freedom and the right to freedom of participation and conscience have been violated (Thomas Reese 2014, 2).

The problem of Nigeria and the collapse of its moral and legal systems continue unabated with the present situation of insecurity, the collapse of market forces and gross undermining of the educational industry. Consequently, the nature of political institutions shaped by interethnic and inter-religious dynamics coupled with the uneven distribution, evident breakdown of security and devolution of political power gives vent to economic stagnation and failure of industrialization. It would be recalled that by 2010 Nigeria was the largest recipient of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Africa in the foregoing, the FDI inflows into Nigeria rose from USD 1.14bn in 2001and USD 2.1bn in 2004 to USD 11bn in 2009 making the country the 19th greatest recipient of FDI in the world. But what has caused the sharp decline in the FDI of recent and plunged the country into the gloomy period of economic disparagement and decay? Effiom and Udah continued to press home the fact that there are hundreds of ethnic nationalities whose contributions to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) can be significant. For example, cultural groups in the Middle Belt region are noted for the fertility of their soil; the South East for palm oil, cocoa and rubber; while the Niger Delta region for the production of oil and petroleum products. Despite these and after many decades of oil exploration, Nigeria is yet to emerge as one of the leading industrialized nations of the world (1776-1779). Providing some reasons responsible for the backwardness and setbacks, Yima Sen argues that the low points responsible for the steady economic decline include, among others, high crime rate perpetrated by Nigerians in Diaspora such as fraud, drug

trade, and human trafficking. The situation is further degenerated by the hypocrisy and sycophancy of the governed, corruption in high places, faulty electoral processes, violent communal and religious conflicts and riots. Furthermore, factors and conditions of production like land, capital infrastructure and services are difficult to access leading to de-industrialization and failure of manufacturing, thus weakening the economic base and facilities. There is also the question of poor management and repositioning of the education system and poor health care delivery services. To crown this unbridled match to under-development agriculture which is the highest contributor to the nations GDP at 40% and the highest employer of labor at 60% is underdeveloped and underutilized through neglect, lack of transparency and accountability, and poor administrative policies (2010, pp. 4, 5, 9). The end result of all the anti-people policies, unemployment, political deception and deficit of sincere democratic principles have transmuted into uncontrollable insecurity, which Gambo Hamza Garba (11 August, 2010) describes as gross violation of the rights to life and property occasioned by religious and cultural coercion and discrimination and masterminded by bad governance, religious and ethnic groups who feel protected by the government.

Many social Critics such as MacLaren (1995:1-87) have identified many other reasons for the failure of modern society to respond to the aspirations of people. Chief among these is the growing insensitivity of people towards the needs of others (Noddings 1995: 365), an outcome of our rapidly dehumanizing society. The issue now, however, is to identify the ways in which perspective and outlook can be influenced to embrace a more inclusive interpretation of caring, that, is

caring for others. This social inequality, imbalance and economic and political segregation based on religious affiliations, have mentored corrupt and selfish characters who rule the country with impunity and violence. This reckless moral insensitivity and deficiency have created a gap in the power-base of freedom of religion, expression and conscience, as well as the giant stride to sustainable development within an industrial forward match effort by developing nations. Again, Croitoru and Munteanu (2013, p. 2157), lamented the situation where contemporary societies are faced with economic crisis like poverty, unemployment, uncertainty, and political deprivation.

These situations are worsened by the presence of moral crisis such as laxness, libertinage, pornographic sensuality, erotic disorders, prostitution for commercial reasons, child abuse and trafficking, divorce, drug abuse, and greed, as well as the spiritual religious and ethnic crisis like fanatical sectarianism, aggressive proselytism and incitement, confused syncretism, doctrinal relativism, nihilist indifferentism. Under these obnoxious systems and deficit of moral rightness exemplar role models become scarce, and in consequence many young people no longer value decent role models, rather they prefer to look for them in areas in which notoriety tends to take the place of principled role models such as *music stars, mass media celebrities, magnates or sportsmen* (cf. Timiş, 2011, p. 30). Given this vile scenario, moral-religious education brings to the front burner a vision in the minds of younger generations a portrait of *role models with a high moral profile and abnegation for the community*. For instance, the young are given the example of the *saints,* since they represent the *guarantee of the spiritual health and serenity* (cf. Bizău,

2002, p. 283), and especially the example of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, born a man, and One who marked the history of mankind, dividing it into two epochs: the one before Christ (B.C.) and the other one after Christ (anno Domini - A.D.). Jesus Christ is *the Teacher* par excellence in the Christian world and the Master of practicable morality. His teaching focuses on the call of man to perfection, which only people of integrity can truly emulate and live by.

THE ROADMAP TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, CONCLUSION AND THE WAY FORWARD

Religious freedom, Christian ethics and moral education put together are core values that have often shaped the inevitable and indispensible template for socio-economic and spiritual sustainability in an age of technological and industrial advancement of developed and developing nations. Nigeria is one among the African nations of the world that is fast developing. Being a land so richly blessed with human and natural resources, it is a land of opportunities well position to achieve landslide victory in sustainable development and industrial advancement. However, since the policies of governance are inflicted with intractable diseases of economic and political corruption, social insecurity, high religiosity devoid of genuine spirituality, neglect of moral knowledge production, and religious discrimination the nation breeds offspring and vicious circles of poverty, illiteracy, underdevelopment and backwardness instead of life increasing sources of industrialization and sustainable development.

Accordingly, Susan Visvanathan (153, 155) in agreement with Barceló and Petrovic (2007, 3), sustained that the activity of the scientists "have potential to affect the flora and fauna of soil and aquatic receiving environments", the mineral

resources and biosphere negatively if not properly managed and exploited in conformity with ethical moral standards. To this end, sacred concerns and scientific ones are mutually supportive. These technical forces of scientific and spiritual knowledge creation can be combined to produce the most beneficial kernel for the sustenance of quality national life, security and development. Thus in order to sow the seed of repositioning and rehabilitating meaningful life on earth with the hope of eternal bliss in the after-life, for the many Nigerians and indeed the diverse peoples of the world, the following parameters would naturally enhance political action and serve as roadmap for orthopraxis:

i.   Create a deliberate policy to enforce the rule of freedom of religion through the introduction of Christian, Islamic and other religious traditions' ethics, which seek to promote human liberty, unity in diversity, justice and the worth of environmental and human lives, into the educational curricula of nations to be studied by children of primary and secondary school levels. This structure of formative period of training should hold for all trainees irrespective of their religious cleavages or envisaged areas of specialization. In other words, Christians, Muslims and Afrelists should be encouraged and caused to learn the basic tenets and ethical values of the major religions of the world that, (i) support the philosophy of taming, caring and sustaining the environment; (ii) encourage love, compassion and tolerance beyond one's ethnic and religious background; (iii) align with the principles of justice and equity; (iv) uphold the principles of unity in diversity and respect for the worth of lives and property; (v) adopt and adore the traditional doctrines of respect for elders and

traditional African values; and (vi) respect the ideology of political freedom, association and freedom of beliefs. This moral composition tallies with the raw materials for producing future leaders responsible for good governance and sustainable development akin to that of civilized nations which states:

> [T]he primary objects of government are the peace, order, and prosperity of society. . . . To the promotion of these objects, particularly in a republican government, good morals are essential. Institutions for the promotion of good morals are therefore objects of legislative provision and support: and among these . . . religious institutions are eminently useful and important. . . [T]he legislature, charged with the great interests of the community, … ought to countenance, aid and protect religious institutions—institutions wisely calculated to direct men to the performance of all the duties arising from their connection with each other, and to prevent or repress those evils which flow from unrestrained passion (Oliver Ellsworth, 1802, p. 3).

ii. Set in motion the machinery for the creation of job opportunities through reawakening in the citizens a sense of commitment, patriotism and recognition of the dignity of labour. The idea could be achieved through the deliberate policy of economic empowerment of the young and energetic members of the society. Here, the Federal Government and the States should pilot this noble affair by advancing **soft loans to the youths, young men and women,** who are not opportune to secure government or white collar jobs on graduation from secondary schools, middle tertiary educational

institutions and Universities. The success of the exercise rests foremost on the establishment of a platform and an office in all the States and Local Government Area Headquarters for these graduates to register, free of charge, under strict supervision by trustworthy and tested moral officers headed by religious clergies of high repute, transparency and integrity to forestall nepotism, ethnicity, corruption, religious discrimination and exclusionism. They should be accountable to the Government and the people to submit progress report and ensure efficient programme workability. The areas that government should consider for boosting the economic power base of these categories of Nigerians, for instance, include Agriculture (husbandry, irrigation, green house farming, aquaculture, and improved seedlings); Transportation; Tourism; Entertainment (musical, healthy sporting competitions and sponsorships, cultural and traditional shows); businesses in communication and information gadgets; Solid Mineral Extraction and Marketing; and Restaurant Businesses, especially for the women.

iii.   Provide equal opportunity for all children of school age to attain free and qualitative education, in Religious ethics, traditional and modern legal systems of human rights, Science, and technology, irrespective of social status, political linage, ethnic or religious background. The success of this project depends much on the moral backbone of government officials saddled with such responsibilities of enforcing strict compliance, by discharging their duties diligently without ethnic and religious discrimination or sentiments, and where

efficient checks and balances are ensured by the supervising agents and agencies.

For any country to achieve peace, prosperity greatness and glory in its lifetime, concerted effort should be made to reposition its educational industry, particularly the moral-ethical in close connection with the scientific and technological. It is for this reason that Okoli sums up the whole business of sustainable development in the thinking that for this country to advance technologically, Nigerians should make good use of their physical strength, minds, brains and character (66). The roadmap to industrial advancement and sustainable development for any developing nation, such as Nigeria, lies in the adequate and deliberate promotion of the human capital development projects through qualitative and quantitative education in a free atmosphere of peace and security. The acknowledgment of religious freedom, true and true, can guarantee this key educational prospect. This conclusion is apt and chief because religious liberty which has its source in Jesus' injunction to believers that in all things, at all times and all situations, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matt. 7:12), is the hallmark of genuine human ethic, civilization and social good. We all can adopt this philosophy in our distinctive cultures, societies, belief institutions and work places for the advancement of peace, security, sustainable development and stability. The choice is ours to make.

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