

The Gospel And Strategies For National Development In Nigeria: A  
Study Of Moral Model Of Matthew 5: 17-48

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**Abstract**

New Testament scholarship presents the word gospel (euangelion in Greek) as Good News, which refers to the fact that the Son of God died for salvific destiny of mankind (that man may have eternal life); Matthew addressed his Gospel account primarily to Jewish readers and as such presented Jesus as the Messiah, the King of the Jews. Jesus re-interpreted selected aspects of the Ten Commandment- Matthew 5: 17-48, which reflected inappropriate attitude of scribes and Pharisees to Mosaic Law in first century Christian era; therefore, this paper seeks to examine the re-interpretation as a moral model to shed light on attitudinal factor undermining national development in Nigerian contemporary society. Methodologically, this paper is hinged on qualitative research design; specifically employing documentary research method along with textual analytic technique. The paper discovered that Nigerian negative attitude to constitutional provisions affects national development, leads to fraud, crime and discontinuity of policy implementation and as well serve as obstacle to national development. This paper states that attitudinal change of Nigerian leaders and people will promote national development, much the same way Jesus took his listeners, including scribes and Pharisees, into retrospection of their negative attitude to interpretation of Mosaic Law. Finally, the paper recommends the following strategies toward national development in Nigeria:

commitment to constitutional provisions, tolerance amidst provocations, changed attitude for national development, imitation of moral heroes and heroines, sustainable economic and social welfare schemes.

## **Introduction**

Good News, in Christological context portends sustainable, enduring and positively transformative prospect for existential challenge of human society, terrestrial and celestial dimensions of existence inclusive. The Gospel is the Good News of Christian faith tradition, and as such qualifies as inspirational and insightful source of knowledge, strategies and positive attitude essential for national development globally, and Nigeria in particular. Jesus Christ, for instance, once declared: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4: 18-19, New King James Version, NKJV); that is illustrative of the essence of the gospel as good news to global community in dire need of positive transformation socially, economically, politically, educationally, religiously, morally and technologically. In contrast, social problems such as poverty and hunger, maternal mortality, illiteracy, political instability, ethnic and religious conflicts, malnutrition, diseases (HIV/AIDS, malaria) and crime are situations in Nigeria in dire need of sustainable solutions. Past and present governments of Federal Republic of Nigeria find it elusive to identify sustainable strategies to tackle

some of these social problems that seem to defy solutions, for instance, prevalence of kidnapping and terrorism. National development cannot be said to have taken place amidst insecurity, terrorism, kidnapping, ritual killing, and apparent ethnic cleansing in different parts of Nigeria; such social ills constitute indices of underdevelopment and national retrogression.

Attitude has been identified as the major problem and factor affecting national development in Nigeria. Attitude is defined as “a predisposition to respond in a particular way to an object, the object being things, places, ideas or situations” (Badejo as cited in Njoku, 2000, p. 20). Arguably, the fundamental problem confronting Nigeria has not been that of the constitution, knowing that there is no perfect constitution in the world. Rather, there is no gainsaying the fact that the major problem Nigeria is facing is that of attitude of the country’s people to issues relating to the constitution, infrastructural and economic development, elections, governance, among others. Furthermore, it can be contended that any national development strategy that does not take the attitude of Nigerians into consideration may fail to yield positively transformative impacts; in other words, programmes aimed at attitudinal change of both leaders and the led are indispensable in contemporary Nigeria. It is in the change process, the relevance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ comes as panacea to attitudinal problem undermining national development in Nigeria.

For Schwarz (1999, p.78) the “word *gospel* comes from the Old English word *godspel* – God’s (good) story which derives from the Greek word *euangelion*, a compound composed of the adjective *eu*,

meaning good (as in eulogy, euphemism and euphoria), and *angelion*, meaning message or news”. Expatriating further, Schwarz maintains that in the New Testament, the “Good News (uppercase G and N when referring to the good news) is that the Son of God died that we might not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16)”. Moreover, for Schwarz, from the “second century on, the word *gospel* has also been applied to the first four books of the New Testament – the books *containing* the Good News”. It is on the basis of the foregoing, this paper sets out to study the moral model otherwise termed Re-interpreted Mosaic Law in the Gospel, specifically, Matthew 5:17-48 with an aim to identify strategies for national development in Nigeria. It will be recalled that attitudinal problem was earlier on pointed out as the major problem affecting national development in Nigeria; therefore, attempt will be made in this paper to appraise attitudinal problem of Jewish people in relation to interpretation given to Mosaic Law (Decalogue) in first century Christian era and how Jesus re-interpreted Mosaic Law (as moral model) in light of its true meaning. In doing that, this paper will show clearly that attitudinal problem to law and constitution was present in Jewish society of first century Christian era as much as it is a national disaster in Nigerian contemporary society. Methodologically, this paper is hinged on qualitative research design; specifically employing documentary research method along with textual analytic technique. The paper is divided into eight (8) sections namely, introduction, conceptual issues, moral model in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:17-48), obstacles to national development in Nigerian contemporary society, attitude: a major problem affecting

national development in Nigeria, Matthew 5:17-48 and strategies for national development in Nigeria, recommendations and conclusion.

### **Conceptual Issues**

Conceptual clarifications become pertinent in scholarly work meant to familiarize readers with appropriate understanding of on-going discourse. This section is meant to simply do that for every intended reader.

#### **(a). National development**

Maduabum as cited in Ugwu (2004, p.28) conceptualizes national development as a “process of increasing the skills and capabilities of individuals thereby enabling them to tap the potentials of their environment, for improved standards of products, perfect means of production and better standard of living”. The conception here lays its emphasis on human development as prerequisite for national development; which equally points to educational strategies of building people with competence and character; of-course, in character formation, right attitude to life and human society becomes indispensable. Ugwu (2004, p. 28) illustrates the concept of national development when he says,

A nation is developing when a rural woman who *abinitio* does not know about fertilizers, improved species of cassava and modern techniques of planting them and puts them into practice, to better off her economy and that of the nation in general.

For Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011), national development implies the “overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation”. The definition

points to collective advancement and or progress in all sectors of a nation or country. In like manner, Nnamani and Etesike (2009) opine that national development involves the positive advancement and progress of individuals thus constituting social capital to further develop the infrastructural dimension of the nation. Nnamani and Etesike further warn that failure to give priority attention to human development will prompt the undeveloped human beings to destroy what has been developed in the infrastructural dimension. The implications are numerous one, competence and character formation of individual that make up a country is indispensable; two, right attitude formation in character development is pertinent to development of human personality and consequent implication for national development.

**(b). Attitude Formation**

Attitude refers to “predisposition to act in a positive or negative way towards persons, ideas and events” (Ryan & Copper as cited in Njoku, 2000, p. 20). Njoku (2000, p. 20) sees attitude as a “reflection of one’s predisposition consequent to his frame of thought and mind towards a particular object or situation”. For Ajose as cited in Njoku (2000, p.20), attitude comprises ideas, beliefs, opinions and values which an individual has, the feelings and emotions connected with these and the behavioural tendency”.

Attitude formation refers to acquisition of attitude usually through experience in the physical, social, religious or cultural environments of an individual. Considered in the context of social group, an individual could acquire attitude through imitation of parents and peers, some

personalities considered to be heroes or heroines (Njoku, 2000). In like manner, social interaction, event or social situation may affect the attitude of an individual positively or negatively. Other avenues for acquisition of attitude include media, religious programmes, school system, recreation programmes and community lifestyle. Njoku argued that acquisition of positive attitudes on the part of citizens will help to ensure continued national survival, stability and rapid economic and social development.

### **Moral Model in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:17-48)**

#### **(a). Background of Matthew 5:17-48**

New Testament scholarship presents the word gospel (euangelion in Greek) as Good\_News\_ which refers to the fact that the Son of God died for salvific destiny of mankind (that man may have eternal life): "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16, NKJV.); equally important is the fact that from second century Christian era, the word gospel refers to the first four books of New Testament (Schwarz, 1999). The four books are namely, the Gospel according to St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke and St. John.

Matthew addressed his Gospel account primarily to Jewish readers and as such presented Jesus as the Messiah, the King of the Jews (Matthew 2:1-12). Matthew, also known as Levi the tax collector in Palestine, who became one of the disciples of Jesus Christ, is believed to have written the Gospel named after him in 80 - 85 AD (Dunnett, 2002). The gospel is identified with five (5) major discourses of which the Sermon on the Mount (this term is not found in the gospel itself, but

comes from Augustine, Schwarz, (1999) is one of them namely, the sermon on the mount (Matthew 5:1-7:29), commission to the Twelve (Matthew 10:1-42), parables of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:1-53), meaning of greatness and forgiveness (Matthew 18:1-35) and Olivet discourse (Matthew 24:1-25:46).

The moral model in Sermon on the Mount is otherwise referred to as Re-interpreted Mosaic Law or Re-interpreted Decalogue (Ten Commandment in Old Testament). In actual sense, Jesus re-interpreted selected aspects of the Ten Commandment, which reflected inappropriate attitude of Scribes and Pharisees to Mosaic Law in first century Christian era. Properly re-interpreted in one of the discourses of the gospel according to St. Matthew as contained in Matthew 5: 17-48; this paper examines the re-interpretation as a moral model to shed light on attitudinal factor undermining national development in Nigerian contemporary society.

**(b). Overview of Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5 - 7.**

Schwarz (1999) contended that Matthew 5-7 was not termed *Sermon on the Mount* anywhere in Matthew narratives; rather the term Sermon on the Mount comes from Augustine (350-430A.D), that is, Augustinus Aurelius, the Bishop of Hippo. Sermon on the Mount summarizes the teachings of Jesus on how Christians are to live in this present world. Structurally, it contains eight beatitudes, six antitheses (that is, re-interpreted Mosaic Law), the Lord's prayer and other wise sayings of Jesus such as beam in the eyes. Schwarz (1999) claimed that the Sermon was a collection of series of teachings of Jesus on a hillside near the Sea of Galilee contained in Matthew 5-7; however, there is

structural re-ordering in the Gospel according to St. Luke, for instance, the beatitudes is found in Luke Chapter 6, while the Lord's prayer is found in Luke Chapter 11.

**(c). Jesus' Re-Interpretation of Mosaic Law in Sermon on the Mount: A Study of**

**Matthew 5:17-48.**

Mosaic Law refers to Old Testament Decalogue and its associated statutes in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Mosaic Law can be divided into three aspects namely (Coulter, 2008, p. 3),

Moral law - rules about right and wrong behaviour towards God and other people. Ceremonial law - regulations about the priesthood, temple, sacrifices and festivals. Civil law - guidelines for Israel's rulers and judges about how crime was to be punished and the nation governed. The Scribes of Jesus time were a group of scholars who were dedicated to the study of the law, to making copies of it and to teaching it to the people. The Pharisees (meaning 'separated') were a religious sect who were dedicated to living in obedience to the law, and who accepted the authority of both the Old Testament and the Oral Law.

The issues raised above points to the problem which precipitated the need for re-interpretation of Mosaic Law as contained in Matthew 5:17-48. In other words, for the Scribes and Pharisees in particular, to avoid breaking the written code of Mosaic Law; the Tradition of the Elders (which is the Jewish interpretations of Mosaic Law) added certain details to the written law of God (Mosaic Law) which led to three problems namely (Coulter, 2008):

**(i). Faulty Judgement:** Tradition of Elders place oral traditions on same level in authority with the word of God, which led to judging

people who failed to keep Jewish oral traditions as if people were actually guilty of sin against God.

**(ii). Faulty Righteousness:** Tradition of Elders inadvertently lessened the standard of the righteousness of God.

**(iii). Faulty Moral Superiority:** Tradition of Elders missed the fact that the problem with mankind is that sin (moral deviation from the standard of God and right relationship with Him) has damaged human species and human heart is corrupt; as such, there is no basis for moral superiority by mere observance of Jewish oral traditions.

Illustratively, Coulter (2008, p.3) presents a tabular picture of the distortions in Jewish interpretation of Mosaic Law as observable in their oral laws thus,

<b>Mosaic Law</b>	<b>Traditions of the Elders</b>
Refrain from work on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11)	Harvesting is work. Plucking a handful of grain is harvesting. Therefore Jesus' disciples were guilty of breaking the Sabbath by eating some grain plucked in the fields as they passed through (Matthew 12:1-2). Healing is the work a physician performs. Therefore one cannot heal on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:10).
Fasting, on special occasions, as a sign of repentance.	Fast twice a week (Luke 18:12)
Tithe, give one tenth, of your income to the Lord (Malachi 3:8-10)	Tithe everything, even down to garden herbs (Matthew 23:23). Jesus does not reprove them for this.
Priests are to wash their hands in the Laver before offering sacrifice (Exodus 30:17-21)	All people are to wash hands before eating lest they pass ritual uncleanness to food, which, when eaten, would render the whole body unclean. Not as a hygienic

	precaution, but a ritual act of pouring water over the hands up to the wrists (Matthew 15:2).
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Source: Coulter (2008, p. 3).

A Christian view of Mosaic Law indicates three purposes of it namely, to reveal what God is like; to show the Israelites the best way to live ( Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 119:105); and to teach mankind their need for the forgiveness of God over sin. Pauline soteriological view in Romans 3:20-25 (New King James Version) states:

Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.

A textual analysis of Matthew 5:17-48 offers moral model intended to shed light on strategies to combat attitudinal problem inhibiting national development in Nigerian contemporary society. The moral model is rooted in re-interpretation of Mosaic Law contained in Matthew 5:17-48 thus (Westerholm, 1992):

**(i). Matthew 5:17-18 (Fulfillment of the Law)**

Jesus states that not only did he fulfill the Law and Prophets by his coming, but he will continue to fulfill the law. Jesus upholds the

tenets of Mosaic Law and affirmed his commitment to the law; by extension, commitment to constitutional provisions is indispensable strategy that will serve as panacea to attitudinal problem in Nigeria.

**(ii). Matthew 5:19-20 (Sacredness of Commandments of God)**

Jesus implies here that no person has the right to set aside the commandments of God; moreover, for his disciples and Christians their righteousness must supersede that of Pharisees who were so precise about the letter of the law but missed out the intent of the law. The constitutional provisions in Nigeria may not be the best in the world; but certainly, no nation in the world has a perfect law or constitution; which explains why, arguably, the fundamental problem confronting Nigeria is not that of the constitution but that of attitude of Nigerians to issues relating to the constitution, infrastructural and economic development, elections and governance among others. It is doubtful whether Nigerians are mindful of the letter of the constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, let alone the intent of the constitution and the national goals namely (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1998, p.7): “a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens”.

**(iii). Matthew 5: 21-22 (Murder)**

The re-interpretive method employed by Jesus involved the formular “You have heard it said ... but I tell you” meaning the followings: one, Jesus states the traditional interpretation of Mosaic Law as taught by scribes and Pharisees, that is, as Tradition of the Elders (Oral Laws); two, Jesus re-instates the original meaning without

disagreeing with Mosaic Law; third, Jesus re-directs his listeners to the intent or heart of the law which is love for God and neighbours. For instance, Matthew 5:21-22 is a focus on murder. Mosaic Law prohibits murder, Jesus transcended the prohibition against murder when he forbids anyone from indulging in sin of anger. In other words, Jesus goes to the heart condition, the attitudes of individuals not only their actions because attitude in part determines action.

In much the same manner, the series of murder cases reported and unreported ones in Nigeria and globally have their roots in the sin of anger, bitterness and contempt for law. National development cannot thrive amidst ritual killing, kidnapping, armed robbery and extra-judicial killing; as such the attitudinal problem of anger, bitterness and contempt for law and order need to change; hence the call for attitudinal change as panacea to most social problems in Nigeria.

**(iv). Matthew 5:27-30 (Adultery)**

While commenting on the second antithesis of the re-interpretation Jesus gives to Mosaic Law, adultery, Nevue (nd.) states that “Jesus goes to the heart of the issue. It’s not just the act of adultery that is sin, it’s the heart of adultery that is sin”. It is instructive to observe here the problem of attitude, that is, condition of human mind is brought to focus as one of the determinants of human action. Lawsuit over adultery in various courts of law in Nigeria could be better minimized with change of attitude which translates to change of heart.

**(v). Matthew 5:31-32 (Divorce)**

Jesus points to the fact that marriage is a permanent relationship, which is in contrast to interpretation of the Pharisees with reference to

Deuteronomy 24:1. Issuance of certificate of divorce was permissive in Mosaic Law, though not necessarily the original purpose God intended for marriage; as such Jesus addressed the problem again in Matthew 19:1-12.

**(vi). Matthew 5:33-37 (Oath -Taking)**

The emphasis of Jesus on oath-taking was more of integrity. In other words, content of human character should reflect attitude of integrity, and as such oath-taking should not arise.

**(vii). Matthew 5:38-42 (Revenge)**

The emphasis here is to resist evil or put differently, overcome evil by doing good in return. Pauline conception of Christian living as contained in Romans 12:17-21 equally emphasized the same. Retributive laws in Exodus 21:24 were not meant for personal revenge but to serve as guide in settling disputes by judges of Israel.

**(viii). Matthew 5:43-47 (Love)**

Ultimately, Jesus says we should love our enemies in contrast to the Tradition of the Elders (that is, the oral laws added to Mosaic Law as enunciated by the Pharisees) when he declared, “You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy” (v. 43). In other words, the phrase “and hate your enemy” was added as part of Tradition of the Elders which typifies the antitheses in Sermon on the Mount as re-interpreted by Jesus.

## **Obstacles to National Development in Nigerian Contemporary Society**

Some of the obstacles to national development in Nigerian contemporary society predates independent era, better captured by the Federal Government of President Jonathan Goodluck in the document entitled, *The Transformation Agenda, 2011-2015* (National Planning Commission, 2011, p.7):

Nigeria's development efforts have over the years been characterized by lack of continuity, consistency and commitment (3Cs) to agreed policies, programmes and projects as well as an absence of a long-term perspective. The culminating effect has been growth and development of the Nigerian Economy without a concomittant improvement in the overall welfare of Nigerian citizens. Disregard to these 3Cs has resulted in rising unemployment, inequality and poverty.

Lack of commitment, consistency and continuity to development agenda is more of attitudinal problem especially on the part of Nigerian leadership, which account for unemployment, poverty and crime in some circumstances as pointed out above; in addition, the followings are specific issues to contend with in our national life if national development is to be actualized:

### **(a). Fraud**

Fraud is understood as both a crime and bad morality that is rooted in attitudinal dimension of individual fraudulent persons. It is an act of deception to obtain illegal personal benefits. Shang (2009, p.52) defines fraud as "bribery, illegal gratuity, false statement and false claims, extortion, breach of judicial duties, embezzlement, failure to report crime to appropriate law enforcement authority". Fraudent practices

jeopardize economic growth, enterprise development and consequently national development as obtained in banking industry prior to consolidation programme of Nigeria banking industry during the era of Professor Charles Soludo, the former Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria.

**(b). Discontinuity in Policy Implementation**

National development is hampered in Nigeria, not because good policies and programmes for development do not exist, but successive governments change policies for political reason and in some cases, for selfish reason. Discontinuity of Green Revolution, Operation Feed the Nation and Family Support Programmes are few among others that were discontinued in Nigeria. The stated goals of such programmes notwithstanding, mere repetition of similar programmes in new nomenclatures usually arose yet soon discontinued by successive governments of Nigeria. The self-centred interest of political leaders in Nigeria, which usually accounts for discontinuity in policy implementation has attitudinal bearing. If attitude leading to self-centred interest is changed, definitely, resultant action will change.

**(c). Monocultural Economy**

Nigeria depends on oil industry without economic diversification; this means budgetary allocations is determined mainly by revenue derived from oil industry. Change in international oil price therefore determines our budget proposal and implementation in Nigeria. The political will to diversity Nigerian economy seems to be lacking, not because the importance is not known, rather it has been a matter of

attitude in favour or disfavour of economic diversification by Nigerian leaders.

**(d). Crime**

Crime – an offence against law and punishable under the law, continues to increase in Nigeria. Political thuggery, religious extremism, kidnapping, armed robbery and human trafficking are some of the criminal activities affecting national development in Nigeria. Most of the criminal activities listed above have their roots in attitudinal state of the individuals perpetrating such acts which explain why the Good News of the Gospel of Christ becomes pertinent in national development.

**Attitude: A Major Problem Affecting National Development in Nigeria**

A review of the concept of attitude shows that it can be changed for national development. Rokeach as cited in Uji (2006, p.78) defines attitude as “a learned orientation or disposition towards an object or situation which provides a tendency to respond favourably or unfavourably to the objects or situation”. Uji further cites other scholars and added his perspective thus,

An attitude is a disposition to act in a certain way towards some aspect of one’s environment, including other people... Attitudes are likes and dislikes. From the definitions above, it is clear that: ...attitudes are learned through either our personal experiences or what other people tell us about the attitude object; attitudes are not behaviours themselves but they determine how we behave towards the object in question; attitudes may be in favour of the object concerned or may be in disfavour; and attitude may be changed through counter learning or counter experience.

In Nigerian experience, negative attitude affects our national development in several ways. It was earlier pointed out in this paper that negative attitude of Nigerian leaders rather than the Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria is the major obstacle to national development; arguably, the followings are illustrative of attitudinal factor affecting the development of Nigeria as a nation. Firstly, routed in negative attitude, most Nigerians do not obey everything stated in the Constitution of Nigeria. Secondly, the negative attitude of Nigerian leaders towards national development seems to dictate the negative attitude of most Nigerian people towards the development of the country. Thirdly, rooted in selfish attitude, for instance, most Nigerians place self interest above national development. Fourthly, Nigeria is not working, but for it to work, the attitude of everyone, especially the leaders, must also change.

### **Matthew 5:17-48 and Strategies for National Development in Nigeria**

Ethical overview of Matthew 5:17-48 readily points to attitudinal factor that affect the first century Jewish society, particularly, in terms of interpretation of Mosaic Law. In like manner, attitudinal factor lies behind the manner Nigerian people interpret and obey everything stated in the Constitution of Nigeria. For instance, how much commitment, sense of continuity and consistency do Nigerian leaders and people attach to attainment of stated national goals and objectives? This is a question that borders on attitudinal factor. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in its Chapter 2, sections 13 to 18 state in part:

the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government,... the State shall... harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity and self-reliant economy; control the national economy in such manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity... The State shall direct its policy towards ensuring that, ...conditions of work are just and humane, and that there are adequate facilities for leisure and for social, religious and cultural life... there are adequate medical and health facilities for all persons...

A constitutional provision as illustrated above is synonymous with national development, granted that the provisions are achievable. However, as earlier mentioned in this work, negative attitude with consequent evils of fraud, discontinuity of policy implementation, and criminal acts led Nigeria to backwardness in so many aspects of national life; leading to unemployment, malnutrition, maternal mortality, hunger, poverty, illiteracy and other negative index of underdevelopment such as HIV/AIDS.

This section outlines strategies for national development with reference to moral model derived from re-interpretation of Mosaic Law by Jesus as contained in Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:17-48):

**(a). Commitment to Constitutional Provision**

National development could be achieved if government and the governed are committed to achieving national goals and objectives as stated in the Constitution of Nigeria. The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, in its Chapter II, Sections 13-18, for instance, states such goals for national development. Commitment is a moral virtue rooted in human attitude that can be learned or unlearned. Jesus cautioned his listeners

that he did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it; in same manner, Nigerian people should uphold constitutional provisions, especially, as it relate to national development.

**(b). Tolerance amidst Provocations**

Religious intolerance and ethnic conflicts can be mitigated in the light of forgiveness and forbearance borne out of positive attitudinal change. This is necessary in order to ensure peace and progress in building Nigeria as a nation. Jesus, for instance, forbids sinful anger, resentment and unforgiveness which lie behind the evil of murder. Nigeria need to unlearned ethnic discrimination and prejudice and imbibe tolerance amidst provocations.

**(c). Changed Attitude for National Development**

An overview of re-interpretation of Mosaic Law in Matthew 5:17-48 by Jesus calls for attitudinal change in the following areas:

- (i) Nigerian people should replace anger with forgiveness towards one another. This will prevent crime related offences such as manslaughter, extra-judicial killing, suicide and genocide.
- (ii) Nigerian people should abhor sexual lust in their hearts and pursue purity of heart. The evil of adultery is both sinful and criminal in nature. It has health implication in terms of sexually transmitted disease.
- (iii) Nigerian people should mitigate or prevent incidences leading to divorce. Changed attitude of heart in terms of marital

unfaithfully to faithfulness and commitment to marital vow will prevent prevalence of broken homes, divorce and re-marriage. The basic unit of every society is the family, and as such prevalence of broken home in any society is a negation of national development.

- (iv) Nigerian people should imbibe the virtue of truthfulness in public life and in private matters. Integrity of individuals should be promoted for purpose of social harmony. Jesus encouraged simplicity and truthfulness in interpersonal relation.
- (v) Nigerians should learn to forgive and avoid retaliation amidst violence and religious extremism. All religious traditions in Nigeria should join hands together in promoting unity and faith, peace and progress which could guarantee national development.
- (vi) Nigerians should overcome self-centredness, nepotism and tribalism; such evils are negation of love of God and attitude of consideracy for one another.

### **Recommendations**

This paper recommends the followings in order to promote and sustain national development in Nigeria.

- a) **Attitudinal Change**

Religious communities should encourage positive attitude and loyalty to Nigeria as a nation through sermon, teaching and preaching.

**b) Imitation of Moral Heroes and Heroines**

Nigerian leaders, male and female should pride themselves in consideracy for the governed both in attitude and action in place of corruption and open display of materialism and ill-gotten wealth. In so doing, they should aspire to become moral model, moral heroes and heroines that the governed could imitate.

**c) Sustainable Economic and Social Welfare Schemes**

Religious groups should encourage the less privilege in the spirit of love, by mounting effective entrepreneurial skill acquisition and welfare programmes for the poor, unemployed and social deviants. In other words, religious communities should provide succour to the helpless and hopeless in Nigerian society. In Christian faith tradition, for instance, the motivating factor should be response to Jesus' call to feed the hungry, visit and care for the sick, give assistance to prison inmates (Matthew 25). It is in the practical demonstration of love and care in this manner, the Good News becomes real to human society, particularly, Nigerian society.

**Conclusion**

This paper examines moral model of Matthew 5:17-48 in relation to national development in Nigeria. The paper presents the Gospel as the Good News of Jesus Christ, with a focus on Jesus' re-

interpretation of Mosaic Law against the Tradition of the Elders of Israel in first century Christian era. The negative attitude of scribes and Pharisees in relation to Mosaic Law was examined and contrasted with Nigerian negative attitude to constitutional provisions for national development. Fraud, crime and discontinuity of policy implementation were identified as obstacles to national development. This paper states that attitudinal change of Nigerian leaders and people will promote national development, much the same way Jesus took his listeners, including scribes and Pharisees, into retrospection of their negative attitude to interpretation of Mosaic Law.

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