RELIGIOUS ICONOGRAPHY: Ethical Interface of Nigerian Knowledge Society

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Abstract: Nigeria's present political and economic backwardness is evidence of the absence of moral and ethical standards among its populace. The study looks at the ethical motif of religious symbols in the domain of religious iconography and uses the same as an ethical interface in knowledge societies. The research is qualitative and uses a participant observation approach to achieve its results. The research demonstrates how religious icons interact with society in a critical and creative-ethical way. The study is significant for promoting social ethics and morals as a prerequisite for a developed Nigeria and society in general. It concludes that religious symbols contribute to the development of a strong ethos that conveys society's moral principles since they are essential to the sustainability of knowledge societies; hence, they should be given special values such that they could lead to national integration that eliminates the vices and tendencies that limit any knowledge society.

Keywords: Ethical Knowledge, Pope Francis, Religious Iconography, Symbolism.

1. Introduction
The interaction of art and religion is still a fascinating topic that has developed to accommodate shifting scholarly agendas. This

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emotional element may have had an impact on some of the best creative works produced in contemporary Africa. All major world religions have used symbolism and imagery, and the symbolic elements serve as the main characteristic of religious expression. Religious teachings, theological debates over dogmatic ideas, a person's religious experiences, and more individualistic viewpoints may all be reflected in icons. Individual and societal knowledge of the relevance of symbolic expression has been confirmed, developed, and deepened by research into cultures and faiths. In this study, we argue that a fully formed society must be ethical and that accomplishing this goal requires knowledge. The study contends that respect for human life, awe for gods and other deities, hospitality, veneration for elders, orphans, and widows, aid to people in need, adherence to social norms, and other behaviours are all considered morally appropriate by Nigerians and Africans in general.

In the areas of economics, society, politics, government, religion, and national integration, there are significant connections between ethics and knowledge societies, and everyone in human society needs ethical cultures rather than market-based ones (Nandhikkara, "Homo Religious at the Service" 305; Nandhikkara, "Logos and Mythos" 3). Any human civilisation without ethics is unstable intellectually and practically, and it is unsafe for people to live in. Thus, ethics interacts with knowledge societies in a critical and creative manner. In this sense, the socialisation process inside and outside institutional settings is considered since it is essential for stepping into normal and atypical roles. The pace of Nigerian society's progress has been slowed down by moral decadence, which has affected every aspect of the country. In this study, we draw the conclusion that religious symbols might help Nigerians learn ethics and encourage such knowledge in one another.

In Nigeria, social alliances and better interpersonal relationships may be created by using the ethical undertones of religious images or symbols. In addition to the merely objective qualities of morality, devotion, and reverence, religious iconography can be used to achieve political goals. Spiritual symbols may serve as a reminder to people of their moral

obligations as the Creator's offspring. The degree to which Nigeria's people are taught ethical principles like honesty, discipline, tolerance, and patience will determine how well the country develops socio-politically and economically. According to the encyclical *Laudato Si*, people's perceptions of reality push them to interact with the outer world in ethically and technically dubious ways. The study contends further that human moral failure occurs when this interconnectedness is forgotten, ignored, or lost. Hence, religious believers are advised to respect one another's faiths, as well as their tenets, symbols, guiding principles, authorities, and places of worship. This study investigates the ethical theme in religious imagery and how its ethical reflections serve modern knowledge societies. This is about how religious symbols affect society in ways that are important, moral, and unique.

2. Religion and Visual Art

According to Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, art genres include painting, drawing, printing, sculptures, and ceramics; photography, video, cinema, design, handicrafts, and architecture (99). There are elements of creative arts as well as other forms of art present in many creative fields, including performance arts, conceptualism, and textile arts. Eric M. Mazur argues that art is a fundamental aspect of human life and a driving force behind the development of religion since it serves as a means of artistic expression, communication, and self-definition (44). For Mazur, religion is the spiritual urge that unites humans with the divine via spiritual experience, ceremonial practice, and mythology (46). Through rituals and storytelling of holy tales, art and religion combine to influence an impression of the numinous. Each religious tradition seems to have a perspective on art and, therefore, on representation. Vivian Mann is of the view that the three main types of religious perceptions toward art are iconoclastic, aniconic, and iconic (61). Mann argues further that each major global religion undergoes a similar transformation in terms of its core conception of appearance.

Through iconography, art transmits religious ideas, practices, and ideals as visible religion. John E. Cort postulates that on the

road to truth and beauty, art uses visual archetypes and idealisations, offering glimpses of the holy and examples to imitate on the way to redemption (315). Cort's assertion implies the mutuality of meaning and image creation as a kind of creative communication between human and non-human entities. In its simplest interpretation, art is a cultural expression and an imagined representation of human experience, prophecy, and a testament to religious ideals. Therefore, the relationship between art and religion is still an interesting issue that has evolved to fit changing academic interests. For instance, because of their worldview, Africans' spiritual activities have sparked the development of fresh visual imagery (Wuthnow 29). These works of art and items could contain ethical codes and ceremonial charges. The religious and philosophical motifs in visual images act as the source of their strength. In this way, some of the greatest artistic creations in modern Africa may have been influenced by this emotional component. In support of the preceding, Rosalind Hackett (128) claims that in African philosophical theology, the relationship between God and lesser deities and spirits is simply an expression of the Supreme God's qualities. In other words, the necessity for humans to mould their reality led to the development of the African religious stance.

3. Conceptualising Religious Iconography

The Greek term 'icon' is used to refer to an image. An icon is now a term used to describe any image that sticks out or has a special meaning. The orthodox Greek Church has used icons as objects of devotion ever since the seventh century. Iconography is the study of the symbols included in a piece of art and what they signify. For example, a snake may represent bad luck, temptation, wisdom, reincarnation, or the cycle of life in many cultures. A snake is said to bring luck in Chinese culture and symbolises the might of nature. Iconography separated itself from archaeology in the 19th century and focused largely on the prevalence and import of underlying religious symbolism in Christian art.

Religious iconography, therefore, is the use of icons by religion, including images, acts, artwork, or natural events. Sarah E. Worth

argues that numerous religious symbols are logical summaries, approximations, generalisations, and stylisations of images or visual perceptions of the universe of sense objects that take the form of iconographic representations (278). This confirms Sally Promey's assertion that certain symbols occasionally reoccur in religious artwork that is complex or compound in character (583). Other forms of powerful symbols, such as language, sounds, gestures, rituals, and architecture, may also be included in religious images. For instance, the gods, saviours, redeemers, heroes, and *avatars* (incarnations) are only a few examples of the many religious and spiritual personalities and authorities that make up this immense complex of symbolism (Morgan 20).

The Christian saints and the historical prophets, apostles, and preachers are all identified by a highly intricate system of symbols. Speaking from Morgan's viewpoint, symbolic and iconographic representations of ritual participants and the leadership of the religious organisation are also possible (24). For example, a religious community uses symbols to identify both itself and its beliefs, including the *swastika* in Hinduism and the *yin-yang* symbol connected by the circle of stability (*taiji*) in Chinese universalism. Such images of gods and devils from numerous archaic faiths and Buddha, Christ, and other Buddhist and Christian saints subsequently became objects of personal devotion and meditation. However, in general, religions like Judaism, Islam, and the ancient Shint have rejected any images of the divine.

The divine may be represented through icons in both its unity and the diversity of its distinctiveness, emanations, and incarnations. Icons can show religious teachings, theological debates about dogmatic ideas, other religious beliefs, personal religious experiences, and more individualistic points of view. In this sense, some academics have placed more emphasis on the symbolic nature of religion than on efforts to explain it logically. All major global faiths have made use of symbolism and imagery. Some psychologists believe that the primary feature of religious expression is the symbolic component of religion (Promey 585). The study of cultures and religions has reaffirmed, expanded, and enriched our understanding of the significance of symbolic

expression and the visual presentation of religious truths and concepts. One of the most significant ways of understanding and conveying religious realities is through frameworks of symbols and images that are composed in a certain organised and established connection to the form, substance, and goal of the presentation.

4. Ethics and the Ethical Interface of Knowledge Societies

Words such as 'morals' and 'morality' are often replaced with the words 'ethics' and 'ethical.' The Latin term *mores* is the source of the Greek word *ethos*, which provides a strong etymological foundation and explanation for the synonym. A person's or a group's ethics or morals are comprised of both their regular and customary behaviour and what they perceive to be appropriate, morally correct, and/or required. For instance, according to Peter Ottuh, the morally reprehensible acts that are prohibited for Africans include murder, stealing, dishonesty, adultery, lying, taking someone else's property forcibly, and others ("Religious Approach" 22). Ottuh argues further that other behaviours that Africans see as ethically acceptable include respecting human life, respecting the ultimate being, having reverence for gods or deities, honouring ancestors, showing hospitality, showing respect for elders, providing assistance to the poor, orphans, and widows, complying with communal regulations, and so forth.

In an attempt to change the global conversation from concentrating on information societies to the broader, more authoritative, and more powerful idea of knowledge societies, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) published its world report in 2005. According to Rohin Mansell and Gaetan Tremblay (16), UNESCO made a major contribution to the Global Forum on the Information Society (WSIS) by working with partners and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Knowledge societies are based on four pillars, according to UNESCO: appreciation for the variety of languages and cultures; freedom of speech and information; all people having access to knowledge and information; and high (ethical) standards of instruction (Mansell and Tremblay 19). Being ethical is a necessity for a fully realised humanity, and like in other

facets of life, achieving this aim requires knowledge or education. Humans, according to Jose Nandhikkara ("Editorial" vii), are reflective entities capable of distinguishing between good and evil, right and wrong, fair and unjust. Nandhikkara explains further that despite humans' differences of opinion over what is right and wrong in each case, they still agree that good should be pursued and evil should be avoided in society.

UNESCO has been advancing its goal of inclusive knowledge societies through knowledge exchange and causing changes in the sociological, economic, and political spheres (Mansell and Tremblay 19). Therefore, it becomes essential for social cohesiveness, sustainable economic growth, intercultural communication, and peace that everyone has access to ethical knowledge and adheres to ethical standards. In this sense, according to Nandhikkara, all civilised or uncivilised facets of human existence and society, including science, economics, politics, and economics, may benefit from personal and societal ethics ("Homo Religious at the Service" 305). In knowledge-based societies where markets rule, ethics must include economics as well. Hence, the unethical behaviours of inequality, corruption, deprivation, and exploitation must be significantly eradicated.

The UNESCO presentation of the paradigm of knowledge societies gives a number of diagnostic tools that can be used to look at each society and help come up with ethical policy solutions together. In the opinion of Nandhikkara, the inequality that still exists in the society of *Homo economicus* cannot be ignored by *Homo ethicus* (305). Nandhikkara advocates that, instead of commercial societies, everyone needs ethical societies. Although there is a strong desire for it, there is also a strong scepticism about the function of ethics and morals in politics today. People are losing trust in politics in their societies since they see it as a place where they may invest in furthering their own interests at the expense of the greater good of society. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals is supported by a vision that takes an all-encompassing approach to resolve issues that concern people, the planet, prosperity, and partnerships through ethical knowledge sharing (Velasquez 6). There are crucial links between ethics and

knowledge societies in the domains of economics, social issues, politics, governance, religion, the environment, and national action. Ethical knowledge is an important factor that facilitates individual and governmental negotiations in different endeavours. Political decisions cannot be made without moral considerations, even when personal and political morality may diverge. In the cycle of life, homo *ethicus* and *homo religiosus* are closely intertwined. Nandhikkara explains further that religions have historically been the keepers of ethical guidance and moral teaching, codified in texts and passed down orally (307). In this sense, many believers would argue that religion is vital to living ethically and that it guides their moral choices.

Ethical knowledge helps intergovernmental bodies develop joint courses of action to address prevailing or emerging local, national, and global challenges. In addition, it informs individuals and governments on the ways and means to address their existential challenges. Many people favour secular ethics and believe that religion is more of a hindrance to life's peace. Societal morality and ethics are important to human existence and its interactions. Therefore, all facets of human existence are intimately in need of ethical knowledge or education, which is open to researchers and academics to advance further on. Any human society that is devoid of ethics is philosophically and practically poor and dangerous for human habitation. Here, this research becomes justified and significant because it has the task and goal of critically and artistically analysing how ethical knowledge interfaces with societies.

5. Theoretical Understanding

Symbolic interactionism forms the theoretical foundation of this study. The founder of Symbolic Interactionism (SI) was George Herbert Mead. Sociologists consider George Herbert Mead to be the father of both the symbolic interactionists' theory and the interactionism movement. According to Handberg *et al.*, SI references specific consequences of human communication and interaction arising from practical concerns (1025). Thus, between exchanges, meaning is created and recreated via the interpretation

process. Mead claimed that while people's identities are social products, they are also creative and purposeful (cited in Griffin 1). SI focuses on the mechanisms that reduce people, things, events, and other environmental aspects with specific meanings to almost nothing more than objects of orientation (Griffin 1; Naumenko 138). The symbolism or meaning of the object of orientation influences human behaviour in several ways.

For Paul Jane Milliken and Rita Schreiber, describing social conduct requires understanding subjectively held meanings (686). Meanings are byproducts of people's ability to symbolise and communicate as they look for answers to common challenges. In this vein, meanings associated with other people with whom a person interacts and interaction settings are particularly significant. In SI, the development of the self is crucial for stepping into both normal and abnormal roles and socialisation processes both within and outside of institutional settings are taken into consideration. The research techniques and ideas of symbolic interactionists are frequently criticised for being too impressionistic and unorganised, including the lack of testability of their theory, which bothers certain theorists.

The theoretical model of this study is primarily based on the viewpoint of symbolic interaction, which relies on the symbolic significance that individuals create and improve throughout the course of social contact with one another. The theoretical portion of this essay concentrates on interpersonal interactions and the significance that religious symbols or icons have in society as sources of symbolic knowledge. One can observe from the examples above how symbols convey our ethical character via interactions between symbols. For Vlaho Kovacevic, K. Malenica, and G. Kardum, SI plays three different roles in this research: ethical, psychological, and sociological (30). Additionally, SI's pragmatic view on human behaviour in this study's setting sees human behaviours as the construction of the self, the environment, and society via symbols. In this position, we contend that people and society develop particular ethical perspectives and interpretations as a consequence of their familiarity with religious

symbols and that, as a result, moral behaviour is impacted in society.

In the context of a symbolic setting, religions in Nigeria, like those in other societies, put their followers in direct physical contact with the supernatural realm. Adherents of religion in Nigerian society want to have the most straightforward, personal, and direct contact with the supernatural as they can. The responses of the respondents support the idea that the experiencing aspect of religion is primarily lived on a personal level and takes precedence over the societal aspect. Instead of understanding religious teachings, most religions gave greater prominence through rituals and manifestations of symbols (Gusfield and Michalowicz 418). This impairs a religious community's comprehension and determination of sacred symbols. Furthermore, it could be argued that symbolic exchanges in most parts of Nigerian society occur during religious and cultural festivals.

6. Nigeria's Ethical Dilemma

Nigeria is a nation in West Africa, situated between the northern Sahara and the south of the Guinean Gulf. With a population of over 280 million people, it is Africa's most densely populated country and home to over 350 ethnic groups, 600 different languages, and a diverse range of cultural and religious identities. Moral deterioration has impacted all parts of Nigerian society and hampered its development. In addition to sexual immorality, Peter Ottuh and Victoria Aitufe listed social adjustment problems, disobedience, and defiance of constituted authority figures and the law; these include plagiarism, theft, bribery, corruption, and kidnapping, among others ("Kidnapping and Moral Society" 431). This has sowed fear, unpatriotic feelings, discord, and a loss of faith in the economic and political development and progress of the country. Moral degradation affects the whole nation, making it a social concern. Moreover, without a doubt, a civilisation will face disaster if it does not curb the development of immoral behaviours.

According to Peter Ottuh, Onos G. Idjakpo and Anthony Uviekovo, a religion is a body of beliefs regarding the creation, nature, and purpose of the universe (301). Nigeria is a religious

society, and religious icons or symbols can be found everywhere in the country. According to the findings of this study, religious symbols are capable of guiding Nigerians toward ethical knowledge and fostering it among them. We argue, along with the viewpoint of Phillip Vannini, that religious icons or symbols can create an *ethos* that is consistent with the social or religious teachings of moral precepts (284). Nigerian society's shared values, morality, and beliefs can be expressed, fixed, and reinforced via religious icons or symbols. The ethical reflections of religious icons or symbols may be used to form social bonds and even improve interpersonal relationships in Nigeria. However, religious imagery may be frequently used for appropriate political purposes in addition to the purely objective characteristics of morality, devotion, and respect.

7. Religious Iconography's Ethical Motif

Humanity is portrayed as being made in the likeness of the sacred and acting in generally religious ways; in contrast, the divine assumes anthropomorphic traits. The ceremonial and legendary representations of the major polytheistic faiths are where this form of anthropomorphism achieves its pinnacle. Examples include the sacred images employed in ancestor veneration and the animism-related spirits and soul idols of different local civilisations. Every religious icon or symbol depicts different life motifs, including ethical or moral motifs. For instance, Buddhism created the bodhisattva (buddha-to-be) figure to symbolise achieving enlightenment. The image of Christ is often used in Christianity to symbolise the divine or holiness. The holy is represented mostly by the sacred text, the crucifix, the throne, and other symbols of grandeur and authority, such as lights, lamps, and canopies. It is possible to display certain body parts and use them to represent the divine. It is possible to depict humanity as either a small version of the cosmos or as the object of redemption. Every stage of the process of making such an icon is a journey of discovery that is infused with morality. Each element in the design has a symbolic purpose and reflects the designer's participation in societal morality.

According to Robert Wuthnow, spiritual symbols also have a way of reminding humans of their moral duties as the Creator's children (31). Religious icons uplift their beholders, bless them, and inspire them to live ethical and spiritually aligned lives in society. It might be simple to lose sight of one's religion and stop acting in a manner that honours the Supreme Being at all times. According to David DeCosse and Brian Green, an ethical society is one that is well-cultivated and civilised (3). It trains the human mind to recognise morally right or wrong character traits and behaviours prevalent in their society. In this sense, for the economic, political, and social networks to operate well and, by extension, for the well-being and the realisation of each Nigerian's potential, ethical knowledge and its praxis are sine *qua non*. This implies that Nigeria's socio-political and economic development will depend on how well it cultivates religious values like honesty, discipline, tolerance, and patience in its people, starting with the family as the smallest unit of society. The current political and socioeconomic backwardness of Nigeria is a sign that its people lack moral and ethical values. In this study, we explored religious icons to advocate societal ethics and morality as a precondition for a developed Nigeria. It is also recognised that in order to seize the significant potential that will contribute to the development and stability of Nigerian society, the transmission and uptake of fundamental ethical and moral principles derivable from religious icons are crucial.

One of the most common religious icons that most Nigerians possess is religious writings or texts. They are symbolic because they stand for a lot more than the papyrus, parchment, or other writing medium on which they were originally composed. Religious texts provide supernatural revelation from God, describe past and future events that have deep religious importance, and offer moral lessons for society. Both the Vedas and Upanishads, for instance, are repositories of spiritual truth for Hindus, much as the Qur'an is to Muslims more than just a book because it is the disclosed word of *Allah* (God). In their efforts to live obediently according to God's will, the rabbis who wrote the rabbinic literature applied their sages' moral judgments to the rules of living

(Mann 63). On the ethical ground, devout Muslims' reverence and unwavering regard for *Allah's* divine revelation is symbolised by placing the Qur'an on the top shelf of their home. This serves as a moral reminder for them.

8. Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si*

According to DeCosse and Green, Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si* (Praised Be) is the most thorough Vatican treatise on ecological ethics and Christian religion to date (4). This text is intended for all people, not just Catholics and Christians. It bases its claims on religious principles, but those same beliefs are then expressed in more broad philosophical terms that are more understandable to the book's intended international audience of Catholics and non-Catholics. In almost 40,000 words, *Laudato Si* covers a large amount of intellectual ground and a wide range of topics. The following types of moral reasoning are used: character, fairness, consequences, natural law, and human rights. The ideas of human dignity and the common good continue to be the twin foundations of ethical analysis throughout the text, as they have been in more recent Catholic social teaching volumes. But one of the most notable ethical aspects of *Laudato Si* is its emphasis on the inherent worth and rights of non-human animals and ecosystems. Another notable aspect of the *Laudato Si's* ethical content is the frequent emphasis on the concept of the common good. According to it, human moral failure in involvement with the natural world often arises when this interconnectivity is lost, not recognised, or neglected. The encyclical expresses particular disapproval of an arid utilitarianism linked to an economic and technical logic divorced from more general moral considerations in human society.

The technocratic worldview, according to Pope Francis, distorts the human vision of reality and encourages people to connect with the outside world in ways that are morally and technically flawed. According to him, it amounts to a misuse of science and technology and an application of them outside of their intended purposes, turning them into a totalising worldview that leaves no space for other schools of thought. Pope Francis underlines the

interconnectivity of all things throughout the whole encyclical. Ethics bears witness to this (DeCosse and Green 5). A theological concept of creation sees such connections as evidence of God's wisdom. Ethics also resides in such a linked world, and therefore, it must be comprehended. The encyclical primarily achieves this via the idea of integral ethics, which calls on people to think about their duties of justice in terms of three relationships: those with God, other people—particularly the poor—and the world itself. However, there are further connections between ethics and interdependence in the encyclical. For instance, it discusses the inherent, though not absolute, worth of ethics in human society.

The encyclical also mentions that those who live in poverty experience the worst effects of climate change and environmental disasters; thus, the Pope suggests the holistic ethical paradigm as an alternative to the technocratic paradigm. Integral ethics is a comprehensive way of looking at the world that aims to foster both human and environmental well-being. In this way, the encyclical shifts to a virtue or character ethics where individual virtues (or right conduct) have the power to change who they are in terms of both their inner inclinations and their outer deeds. Justice and wisdom are also often mentioned in the encyclical.

9. A Synthesis

Religions in Nigeria place more emphasis on rituals and symbolism than on comprehending religious doctrine, thus placing more emphasis on direct touch with the divine. For instance, festivals associated with religion and cultures include symbolic exchanges. In Islam, religious symbols include the Qur'an, which exhorts Muslims to virtue (*al-birr*), goodness (*al-husn*), uprightness (*al-salah*), and conscientious devotion (*al-taqwa*). These virtues are defined as believing in God, sharing one's wealth with the needy, freeing prisoners, remaining steadfast in prayer, keeping one's word, and being patient in the face of suffering, hardship, and violence (Qur'an 2:1). St. Paul emphasises the need for Christians to love everyone and live morally upright lives in God's eyes (1 Thess. 3:12-13). Learning to accept one another's differences, overcoming prejudices out of respect for one another, and

cooperating for peace and service to the least among us are all positive steps toward understanding one another.

This fundamental ethical principle needs to be followed in communities, workplaces, and educational institutions. This is the moral code that believers who coexist in a contemporary, pluralistic society like Nigeria should follow. Traditional believers, Christians, and Muslims all share many traits with each other as believers and as people in Nigeria. They share the same world, which is characterised by numerous signs of hope as well as numerous signs of suffering. Religious believers must joyfully acknowledge their shared religious ethics and values in order to find a solution. Peace, kindness, and respect for human dignity should be considered among the greatest religious and ethical principles by Nigeria's three ancient faiths. A sign or emblem naturally works against inclusion and prejudice. Therefore, as religious symbols promote the welfare of everybody, they should serve as an inspiration for peace and harmony among peoples and individuals.

Religious symbols and their ethical underpinnings testify to the essential principles of the family, civic duty, deference to God's rule, and compassionate care for the ill and suffering in society, among others. By modelling their behaviour after these virtues and imparting them to the younger generation. Religious adherents show how their beliefs promote not only human advancement but also strengthen ties of neighbourly solidarity that promote societal progress. In this way, a society that was essentially homogenous at the time laid the foundations for a time when pluralism was clearly manifest, with underpinnings that clearly point out the obvious limits of pluralism. After all, it is inconceivable that a society could endure over time without agreement on fundamental ethical principles. They are encouraged to respect each other's religions, as well as their precepts, icons, value systems, leaders, and places of worship. This is especially important among religious adherents in Nigeria.

10. Conclusion

This study revealed that religious symbols help to create a compelling ethos that communicates the ethical values of society. It has also shown that religious icons are accorded particular ethical significance since they are seen as an integral component of a moral society. The research presented religious iconography as a symbolic art that expresses the moral theological doctrine of religion in society. The moral or ethical reflections of religious icons or symbols can revive Nigeria and Nigerians' moral resilience and help them once again to recognise the shared moral principles that unite them in order to live in harmony and promote the overall development of the country. Religious icons are sources of societal, ethical and cultural revitalisation. In this sense, both people and society need sound ethics, morality and culture because they give norms, practises, customs, attitudes, convictions, and understanding of what is appropriate and inappropriate. Hence, there would not be a worthwhile knowledge society without them.

If this ethical revivalism is pragmatically taken into account correctly, these ideals may also enable extraordinary national integration that can eradicate the vices and inclinations that impede the growth of Nigerian society and the larger society. Therefore, since religious symbols help to build a sustainable, ethical history and communicate a society's moral values, they are very important to ethical knowledge societies. Because of this, religious symbols should be given special values so that they can bring about a sustainable unity that gets rid of the character flaws and habits that hold any knowledge society back. It is a truth that the lack of morally upright behaviour in Nigerian society has contributed to the country's underdevelopment, extreme individualism, corruption, moral decline, and a host of other problems. Therefore, the role of citizens through advancement, good governance and leadership, a preference for educational improvement, character formation, religious tolerance, and security, among others, must all be used to achieve the much-desired progress if development is to become fully workable as well as assertively integrated into the Nigerian sense of morality.

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