

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

Edited by G.S.Chukwuemeka

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Religion and Society

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to the Holy Trinity.

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CHAPTER THREE

RELIGION AND EDUCATION

By
Edwin, Chinyeremugwu P.

Introduction.

Religion and education remains humankind's most ancient discipline in history. Historians and social scientists have written about this relationship and how the two may influence each other. In the view of some scholars, the 16th-century Protestant Reformation was a driving force for public education in Europe. Protestant reformers promoted literacy because of their contention that everyone needed to read the Bible, which they viewed as the essential authority on doctrinal matters. Driven by this theological conviction, religious leaders urged the building of schools and the translation of the Bible into local languages – and Reformation leader Martin Luther set the example by translating the Bible into German. (Cooperman, Murphy et al 2020)

As two of the dominant institutions of human society, each has been shown to have a large impact on a range of individual outcomes. This section aims at examining the inter relationship between Religion and Education and the role each plays in the other in human society.

The study will be divided into different sections viz:

- I. Conceptual clarifications
- ii. Historical analysis
- iii. The role of religion in educational development:
The Nigerian Experience
- iv. Challenges of Religion and Education
- v Conclusion.

Conceptual Clarifications. The two key concepts or terms to clarify in this study are Religion and Education.

Religion: Religion is one of the concepts that bring argument when you try to define it. The best way to answer the question 'what is religion?' would have been to give the universal accepted definition of religion if there were such a definition. Unfortunately, there is no such definition. Religion is conceived and defined differently by different people. It means one thing to a theologian, another thing to an anthropologist, another thing to a psychologist, a different thing to the Marxist, and so on.

The concept of religion has been defined by E.B Taylor quoted in (Dupre, 1975, 44) as “a belief in Spiritual Being”. It is also defined as man's relationship with or belief in a spiritual or supernatural being who has a ruling power; the creator and controller of the universe. Again, religion is the worship of higher powers from the sense of need. (Nigosian 1974, 3). It is a feeling of absolute dependence (Schleiermacher 1963, 125). We can go on and give different definitions of Religion. Professor Leuba is said to have collected forty-eight definitions of religion, to which he added two of his own, making a total of fifty.

Education: Education like many other educational concepts has been defined in different ways by different educationists. Indeed, educators have observed that education is not an easy concept to define (Adesina, Fagbongbe, Talabi 1985, 39).

As a process, education is seen as what happens to a man

from cradle to the grave, that is from birth to death. It is the systematic development and cultivation of the natural powers of individuals by inculcating ideas, skills and knowledge. (Onyemerekeya 2002, 1). As a system, education can be defined as the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the ability, attitude, and other forms of behaviours which are of positive value to the society in which he lives (Onyemerekeya 2002, 2). In light of the above, education is therefore a tool which enables an individual to live efficiently and effectively not only for his benefit but also that of the society in which he finds himself.

Historical Perspective: The Nigerian Experience

In Nigeria, like other nations, religion and education are inseparable from each other. Each has existed to the benefit of the other since the 16th century. A study of the development of education in Nigeria cannot proceed without recognizing the pioneering efforts of missionaries (Christian and Muslim) in formal education which initially brought the gates of higher learning closer to the people.

The development of Nigeria and Africa, at large, calls for an insight into the impact of religion on modern education. Appraising the impact of religion on formal education on the development of Nigeria is central to this study and an important aspect worth discussing. Development exponents and agencies time refer to wars of religions and their attendant consequences as reasons for a total neglect of religion as partners in development. Therefore in discussing issues of sustainable human and national development, there is a disinclination to the

power of religion. Their main grounds for this come from their perceived intolerance among the religious faithful. By going through the study, readers will be able to know the purpose and contributions of religion to educational development.

In order to put this section in context, it is appropriate to outline the historical missionary activities that led to the establishment of mission schools. One of the intriguing questions is: what would have been the nature of Nigerian education if the Christian missions had not come to Nigeria?

In 1485 the first Portuguese traders landed at Benin. By 1515 spasmodic missionary activities had started in Benin when some Roman Catholic missionaries set up a school in Oba's palace (Orji 2002, 169). This school was for Oba's children and the sons of his palace chiefs. The Roman Catholic missionaries also established a seminary on the Island of Sao Tome off the coast of Southern Nigeria. But all these achievements were short-lived because the slave trade activities wiped them away. It was in the 1840s that some of the rescued slaves who were on trading expeditions from their new homes in Sierra Leone found their way back to Egba land their ancestral home. At Abeokuta, these freed slaves met some of their Kith and Kin and told them terrible stories about their experiences. These experiences include their capture and torture in the slave ships, the miraculous freedom by the British Navy, the White man's religion, his school and his culture (Orji 2002, 170). After hearing these moving stories the Egbas sent a frantic message to the freed slaves at Freetown to "come over to Macedonia

and help us”. In response to these appeals, the following Christian missionaries came to Nigeria to start their work of evangelization and building of schools:

Thomas Birch Freeman.

Methodist Missionary Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman arrived in Badagary in 1842 and by September of the same year had built a mission house and started a prayer meeting on Sundays.

Henry Townsend

In 1843, Henry Townsend of Church Missionary Society (CMS) landed in Badagary too and on request for assistance by Christian liberated slaves, moved to Abeokuta. Townsend opened a mission school at Abeokuta and further helped in the development of Education by setting up at Abeokuta the first printing press in Nigeria in 1852, for the publication of a Yoruba newspaper IWE IROHI. He opened the Ake Orphanage in 1862. During the slave-raiding activities in Egba land, Townsend helped much in treating the sick and the wounded.

Samuel Ajayi Crowther.

Samuel Ajayi Crowther was probably the most widely known African Christian of the nineteenth century (Walls 2002, 15). Crowther was captured with his mother by Moslem slave raiders in 1821 when they attacked their home in Oyo Western Nigeria. Fortunately, as he was being carried to the West Indies, their ship was intercepted by the British navy's anti-slave trade patrol,

and the slaves were liberated in Sierra Leone. There he became a Christian, thereafter he was baptized. The name of this eminent clergyman is Samuel Crowther. Excelling at school, he became a mission teacher and one of the first students of the Fourah Bay Institution, founded by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1827 to train able Sierra Leoneans for Christian service. He assisted John Raban and (probably) Hannah Kilham in their studies of African languages, and in 1841 he joined J.F. Schön as a CMS representative on T.F. Buxton's Niger Expedition, contributing signally to it. He studied at the CMS College in London preparatory to ordination in 1843—a landmark for the Anglican ministry. With Henry Townsend and C.A. Gollmer, he then opened a new mission in Yoruba land, centred in Abeokuta, by now the homeland of Crowther's Egba people. His role in producing the Yoruba Bible, which set new standards for later African translations, was crucial. Crowther's visit to Britain in 1851 influenced government, church, and public opinion about Africa. The CMS secretary, Henry Venn, saw Crowther as a potential demonstration of the feasibility of self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating African churches and in 1857 he opened a new mission on the Niger. The entire staff was African, mainly from Sierra Leone, and Venn moved toward an Anglican version of the “three-self” formula by securing Crowther's appointment in 1864 as “Bishop of the countries of Western Africa beyond the Queen's dominions.” In the upper and middle Niger territories, Crowther pioneered an early form of Christian-Muslim dialogue for Africa. He oversaw J.C. Taylor's groundbreaking work in Igbo land and directed the evangelization of the Niger Delta, with notable results at such centres as Bonny.

Hope Masterton Waddell

In 1846 the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) based in Jamaica West Indies sent Rev Hope Masterton Waddell to Calabar for missionary work. In a sense, Rev Hope Waddell was the founder of the Church of Scotland Mission. Hope Waddell left Liverpool for West Africa in 1846 accompanied by Samuel Edgaly. A printer and Catechist. Surprisingly on reaching Calabar, Hope Waddell found that the King had already acquired a high standard of literacy (Orji 2002, 172). He succeeded in establishing a mission school which later became the famous Hope Waddell institute, Calabar.

Rev Father Lutz.

Rev. Father Lutz founded the Roman Catholic Mission in Onitsha in 1886. Lutz a French, let the party of the Roman Catholic missionaries sent out by the Holy Ghost Fathers to establish a mission in Northern Igbo land. Father Lutz was accompanied by Father Horne and Rev Brothers John and Hermas. When Father Lutz arrived in Onitsha he obtained from the King a strip of land known as Onitsha waterside. Presently it is the headquarters of the Catholic Archdiocese of Onitsha and with time churches were established at Nkwere, Obosi, and Aguleri and later spread to other parts of Eastern Nigeria. History sometimes refers to these missionaries as Merchants of light.

It should be noted here that the various Christian missions of Europe and America came into Nigeria

through the southern sea routes of Lagos. Its easy accessibility and location as a port city made it a strategic point of arrival for the Christian missionaries, after months at sea. This explains the factors which made the southern areas of the country convert to the Christian faith, as compared with the northern parts, which are predominantly Islamic mainly because of the entry and spread of the Islamic religion from the northwest of the country, through the Arab traders and scholars, who entered Hausa-land in the fourteenth century.

The Role of Religion in Education: The Nigerian Experience.

Education indicators in Nigeria reflect gaps in gender disparities, spatial disparities between rural and urban areas, as well as geographical disparities between southern and northern parts of the country. Those disparities drive public action against illiteracy and inequities in access to education. In recent years, addressing challenges posed by these gaps has been the concern of many religious bodies in Nigeria. The history of education in Nigeria reflects the antique relationship shared between Christianity and education. Similarly, Islam shares great ties with the development of education in Nigeria, especially if we discountenance the erroneous identification of education as a strictly western model. Religious bodies, as one of their primary services to society, have sought for the molding of citizens through schooling (education). The impartation of knowledge to generations has been the primary focus of the two major religious groups present in Nigeria.

There are a number of Muslim missions or Islamic groups in Nigeria: the Ahmadiyya, Ansar-ud-deen, Tijaniyya, Sufituruq, Qadiriyya, Shiite and the AhlusSunnaWal-Jama'a. Prominent among them in terms of educating members and Nigerians are the Ahmadiyya mission and Ansar-ur-deen. Akande, A. (2020, Nov.18). An Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission is to lead his/her life following the Shari'a; motivate, train (educate) and involve the entire jama'at in the field of missionary effort. In Nigeria, the contributions of Islam to education mostly started in the north. Aside from schools set to train and educate Muslim children, there were Missionary Training Institutions that also provided education to Nigerians.

As the first religious group to introduce formal education in Nigeria, Christianity has served several purposes in the development of Nigeria's education. Like Islam, Christianity has promoted the training of citizens from the basic level to the tertiary level. This was done through the establishment of educational infrastructure and events/activities to make education a better one. There are hundreds of educational institutions established by different Christian groups in the country. The history of Nigeria's education depicts a high sense of commitment to educating citizens in both secular and religious disciplines. Their contributions to the promotion of knowledge are made possible by the inevitable connectivity existing naturally and theologically between religion and education.

Religion in Nigeria and other parts of the world has come with several positive implications on the educational

development of the citizens which have aided the advancement of these nations. Other roles religion has played in education include:

(i) Religion increases the family's human capital in many ways. For instance, religiously involved parents were more likely to plan successfully for the future and to structure their children's activities in ways that increased their children's likelihood of taking advanced courses and graduating from high school. (Muller, Ellison 2001, 155). Another study showed that family cohesion, which religious practice increases, is associated with an increased internal locus of control and academic competence among youth. Family cohesion also influenced the way youth deals with problems. (Brody, Stoneman and Douglas 1996, 701)

(ii). A voyage into the history of Nigeria confirms the axiom that Christianity, the mother of the church and education are intertwined. Before, during and after colonization, Christianity has been involved in the making of a new elite through education in the area now known as Nigeria. Before private universities were allowed in Nigeria in 1999, Christian Missions and churches had been involved in the establishment of primary, secondary (including modern and high or grammar), teacher training, vocational and theological schools. It is also, a well-known fact that the quality of education produced by these schools when the missions and churches were running them was high, academically and morally. The graduates of the schools were disciplined, hardworking and brilliant. The high quality that the missions and churches gave education then is what is spurring the state governments to return the

schools to the churches and even allow private universities. The Christian churches had been in the vanguard of establishing these private higher institutions in Nigeria.

(iii). The involvement of the church in education as seen in Nigeria, both at lower and higher levels, is a reflection of what had been going on in Christian history whenever and wherever Christianity becomes entrenched. The modern university system is Christian in origin. For example, Bologna, Paris, Oxford and Cambridge, were originally Christian Catechetical schools. Similarly, the best universities in the world today, which are mainly in the United States such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia and Brown, were Christian in origin. Without a doubt, the ethos contributed by Christianity, and the European Enlightenment contributed to making these universities the best.

The inseparable union of Religion and education can only be explained by one underlying philosophy of Christianity that Jesus is the logos, the organizing and governing principle of the world. The same truth is affirmed in Colossians 2: 3 when the author writes that, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ.

The church thus feels responsible to contribute concretely toward the progress of the society within which it finds itself; for example, the church in the face of incessant strikes by government-owned institutions is capable of providing a stable, qualitative and accessible education to discourage Nigerians from travelling abroad seeking for quality education.

Suffice it to say the missionaries laid the foundation of

good quality and good moral education in Nigeria, but the military government and subsequent governments destroyed through improper management when they took over schools from the church and other private organizations. This resulted in academic and moral degradation in the schools, which prompted the rise of new church schools and private schools. If we are desirous of charting a new developmental part for the nation, we must realize the place of religion in education.

Challenges of Religion and Education

The followings constitute challenges to Religion and Education, especially in Nigeria

1. Corruption: This constitutes a great obstacle in the development of any society in general. In Nigeria, corruption has become quite endemic in all facets of life and all fabrics of society and every citizen is aware of this. Hence, adults and children live with it even in their families, worship places, schools, neighbourhoods, military and paramilitary formations, religious schools and government schools. It has given rise to the examination malpractice, cultism and many forms of immoral behaviours.

2. Poor parenting: This day, most parents are now more interested in making money than in the welfare of their children, hence children are left to take care of themselves or by care-givers who in most cases would not inculcate the right attitudes and values but rather initiate them into occults or devilish spirits.

3. Insecurity: General insecurity is now the order of the day in our communities and country at large because of the falling levels of values of education in our nation. No more attachment is given to the sanctity of human life, people are killed and maimed every day in our society

and this is against the biblical injunction that “thou shall not kill”. Of course, this principle under lies the tenets of all religions practised in Nigeria. Activities of insurgents, militants, kidnappers and armed robbers destabilize academic activities and this challenges the value attached to human life and respect for higher authority. Places of worship are under attack as well as our schools. Many schools especially in the Northern part of Nigeria have been shut down because of the rampant abduction of students in the schools.

4. Teachers' inability to create awareness and give proper orientation on the values of religion and education is still a matter of concern to our national development.

5. Exorbitant tuition fees charged by some of these mission schools have become worrisome especially as they are not affordable to many members of the society and the churches.

Conclusion

Religion as a system of norms and values are based on the belief of a superhuman order which people see as a spiritual guide, having practical implications on their everyday practices and behaviours. Education leads to change and builds character and moral values by teaching individuals to think outside of the family values and visions, outside of what they had been in contact since their birth.

Similarly, religion plays a very important role in the process of socialization. Religion, in the most diverse forms, found in all human societies since the first appearances of human societies and wars and social conflicts recurrently result from religious disputes.

Globalization brings diversity, and diversity brings

different cultures, values and religions coexisting together in the same territory. Such states have the greater challenge of safeguarding a peaceful cohesion between them.

There is a need to fight extremisms, corruption, insecurity and the like so that the core fundamental values, common to all religions and at the base of society, are not lost. And it is precisely here where religion and education are complementary to one another. Religion provides the fundamental values, beliefs and practices on which one should guide his/her life in society. Education, helps the interpretation of it, providing a wider vision and diversifying one's knowledge with contact with the different realities.

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