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Research Article

Religion and contemporary security challenges in Nigeria: Way out

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Abstract

From the foregoing discussion, certainly, it has been identified that the major problems affecting the country nowadays, is security challenges within our society. All efforts made by the individuals to rescue the situation are in vain. For this barbaric situation to change in the society, religious studies must be recommended and supported in playing its role. Religious studies could play a greater role in turning society and individual of Nigeria. Since religious studies lays much emphasize on equality, justice and orderliness which is the bedrock of every normal society and advocacy for positive change through means of propagation.

Introduction

Religion in Nigeria plays a major role in the life of the people. To some, it is their candlelight, it gives them insight, wisdom, knowledge and faith is increased through the study of scripture, books and prayers. In Nigeria, religions help us remain in line and stay focused.

A religious leader is feared, respected and loved. He could mediate in situations that defy several means. The advent of the Nigerian religion could be dated back as far as the advent of man in Nigeria. Initially, everybody worshipped whatever they want until the introduction of Islam to the Northern part of the country in as early as between seventh century and eleventh century.

The Islamic religion in Nigeria has been well-established in the Northern state with central mosques in most state capital as at 16th century.

It grew popular to even the middle belt and several parts of Nigeria. At some point, Usman Dan Fodio had to establish a government based on Islamic religion before the advent of colonialism when the government was infiltrated by the British. Christianity as Nigeria religion was introduced in Nigeria in the middle of the nineteenth century by devote

missionaries from British. Christianity was one of the things introduced into Nigeria by British among many other things.

Definition

The word “religion” probably derived from the Latin root *religio*: meaning to bind together, to bind fast or fasten up that, which might otherwise fall apart. It was used sparingly in antiquity in several forms but its meaning in contemporary critical usage derives from the enlightenment. Hence, the word “religion” is a translation of the Latin *religio* and is related to another word *religio*, which carries the meaning of chaining or fastening or holding back. Thus religion binds people together. An acceptable definition of religion has been framed over the years but with one deficiency or the other. A survey of existing definition reveals many interpretations. The Encyclopedia of philosophy defines religion as “the belief in an ever-living God that is, in a Divine mind and will ruling the universe and holding moral relations with mankind” (Martinean, 1967).

Religion is the recognition that all things are manifestations of a power that transcends our knowledge (Spencer, 1964). “Religion is rather an attempt to experience the complete

reality of goodness through every aspect of our being” (Bradley, 1967).

“A man’s religion is the expression of his ultimate attitude to the universe, the summed-up meaning and purport of his consciousness of things” (Caird, 1967).

“Religion is ethics heightened, enkindled, lit up by feeling” (Arnold, 1965). Worthy of note is that most of these definitions stress one aspect or another of religion to the exclusion of others. Thus, Martinean and Spencer represent religion as some sort of beliefs or other cognitive state. Bradley and Arnold express it as a kind of moral attitude and activity while Taggart and Ticle (1965:9) see it as a certain kind of feeling. In a nutshell, Encyclopedia Britannica defines religions as “a particular system or a set of system in which doctrine, rituals, sentiments and other similar elements are connected” (Henry, 1992:509).

In its general and comprehensive connotation, however, the word religion depicts man’s relation to that which he regards as holy, whether the holy being is supernatural or even personal to the individual concerned. To the vast majority of Nigerians, however, the term religion is always associated with the existence of a deity who assumes different names or nomenclatures in different parts of the country and among different groups and communities (Balogun, 1978:50).

For purpose of this paper, therefore religion is the system by which man recognises the existence of a super human controller of the universe, the recognition of God as an object of worship, love and obedience, which ultimately leads to practical piety and morality.

Contemporary Security Challenges in Nigeria

One of the security challenges in Nigeria is the act of taking people illegally and by force and holding them prisoners in order to demand ransom from their family, employer or government. Different terminologies such as kidnapping, abduction, etc. have been used to describe this bastardly act which has become prominent, complex and multi dimensional on the public policy agenda of states and international organisations. The Holy Bible, interestingly, condemns the crime of kidnapping in its entirety. According to the Mosaic Law: “Anyone who selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he should surely be put to death” (Ex. 21:16).

This unethical act has emerged as most lucrative form of violent within the Nigeria society. Hardly does a week pass without the news of a new case of this immoral act. It has grown over the years as an industry involving every level of the society and motivated by many reasons, such as poverty, unemployment, etc. Therefore this crime poses a huge threat to the sustainability of democratic governance in Nigeria.

Another security challenge in the country is that of armed robbers which hold up towns to ransom for heirs as if in

stubborn defiance. During robbery attacks on homes, markets, banks and roads, many innocent people are killed; individuals are badly injured such that parts of their bodies are permanently damaged while carted away.

Causes of Security Challenges

Islamic religion totally discourages all sinful and unlawful accumulation of wealth as Prophet (PBUH) enjoins Muslims to desist from illegal enrichment of themselves as shown in this hadith “The flesh that grows out of unlawful income has no place in hereafter but hell”.

Corruption is regarded as human behaviour due to moral and ethical problems. Allah in the glorious Qur’an further differentiates between people on the basis of their behaviour and ethics in relation to corruption. Allah states that:

Shall we treat those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, the same as those who mischief on earth? Shall we treat those who guard against evil, the same as those who turn aside from the right (Q. 38:28).

Islam addresses every aspect of a Muslim’s life from corruption to walking on the street, from neighbourliness to international relations, from leadership to followership, etc. Islam therefore calls upon Muslims to behave in a just and ethical manner that is conducive to sustainable development.

Furthermore, Islam eradicates the corruption menace through justice, which is the central value, it also teaches that human kind is the steward to Allah on earth and is therefore accountable to Allah for their deeds and choices. Such responsibilities and accountability provides the motivation not only to abide by Islamic moral and ethical code but restrain mankind from any act of corrupt practices.

Dishonesty and illegal behaviour are very serious and old age menace which constitutes devastating impact on our society. It covers a wide range of illegal practices.

The role of religion as catalyst to problem in our society which undermines fear of God, morality, decency, social justice and good governance, rule of law, harmony, peace, progress and development cannot be over emphasised. However, Islam provides a complete and comprehensive universal guidance and solution to all human problems.

Religious Studies as Panacea for Curbing Security Challenges

The national goals of education aim principally at good personality development, social integration and a progressive society. A progressive society is one that makes a steady advance in the pursuit of her stated objectives. Social integrative education is one of the most important instruments for achieving the aims under consideration and the basic

components of socio-integrative education also include as far as Religion and moral education is concerned.

The centre piece of the learning activities would be a four tier core curriculum, viz. (i) Health education (including physical training), (ii) Integrated Sciences (including mathematics), (iii) Language, as well as, (iv) Religion and education and morals.

The curriculum focuses on the point that we should be concerned with the development of the whole person (Gurki 1975:22), not just the production of mechanical or robot doctors, teachers or engineer, experts lacking human feelings, human consideration and national consciousness.

In view of our present realities, the emphasis should be on proper personality/ character development. In Nigeria, for example, all the parts curriculum should play a concerned role towards the evolution of not just the teachers, the engineer and so on, but the good man, the good person: that is in the context of the Nigeria constitution, the National policy of Education and Religion.

Viewed from this angle and from the perspective of Nigeria's ethnical and social economic state, the significance of the concepts of socio-integrative education, with its integral curriculum, in which religious studies and morals becomes part of the core programmes, interdisciplinary approach and emphasis on the production of man of integrity and professional competence cannot be overemphasized.

In order to prevent indiscipline within our society, religious studies should be encouraged from primary level up to high level. If religious studies are given priority from primary level it would be part and parcel of the students, since, they are the leaders of tomorrow. Armed robbers strike always because of lack of human feelings as well Doctors and Nurses do not promptly attend to their patients, Sole Administrators, Councilors, Chairmen, Commissioners, Governors Honorable, Senators, President, Special Assistant and Accountant embezzle public fund, and cultism is rampant among the students, while teachers and lecturers are not committed to their duties, all these mentioned above are because of lack of religious studies.

Furthermore, the indiscipline within the society include: erosion of respect to the constituted authority, diversion of public resources to private pockets, reduces the level of public morality and accountability, jealousy, selfishness and irresponsibility (Aminu, 2003).

Not only that discipline is a secret of the success of great men, our universe also stands on the same foundation. If the solar system is working regularly, if the stars are revolving around the same systematically and if there is no flaw function for millenniums; it is only due to the fact that the solar system is based on order.

Order is found in everything around us from the largest bodies of the universe to the minutest thing called "atom". Everything in this world is made up of tiny atoms. A wonderful discipline is in action and it is seen in each and every moment of the universe. There are tiny atoms in every system.

Every atom has its own centre, which is called 'proton' many electrons move round the centre like stars and moons. In the words of a great Muslim scholar; "if you tear up the heart of every atom you will find its sun in its centre".

The universe is the best guide for all of us in Nigeria. We should learn about life and the causes and reasons of its stability and success from it. This universe tells that; the secret of my survival is the regularly and orderliness which my creator has ingrained in me.

In this world, there is no religion that teaches or encourages hooliganism, cheating, killing, exploit, arrogance but be discipline and follow the rules and regulations laid down by the Creator.

For his part Afigbo (1982), draws attention to a common misconception of development, which has come to have serious repercussions on the Nigerian and indeed, African education and society. Here is his every words:

There is the question of making our educational system not just a system for producing skilled manpower but, much more importantly a system for training our youths for citizenship. I emphasize this point here not only because of the alarming moral and social problems which face Nigeria today, but also because of the through-going materialistic love of our development plans in which purpose of education is seen mainly in terms of manpower development.

Teaching religious studies from primary to high level, it would inculcate good, behaviors on individual instead of behaving irrational and peace would reign in the society.

If religious studies is made compulsory throughout the pre-university stage with a view to inculcating in them religious outlook on life and sending them out into the world with the stamp of religious culture on their mind. Therefore, to keep this conception of religion in view in determining the content and form of religious studies in our schools is a must.

Before the students pass out of the school stage, some of them are likely to develop a taste for higher studies in religion, just as some others are likely to acquire a liking for other subjects. The Universities, therefore, must equally cater for their needs. At the school stage, therefore, every students would have gone through the compulsory test arranged with a view to seeing that he has an intelligent grasp of the essentials of religion as world view and if rightly brought up, would have developed religious character but if the teaching of religious is reach the

University to learn religious shall be adequately equipped for the conduct of life as true human beings.

If not religious instruction but through religious studies is aimed at by our schools, by the time our boys and girls reach the age of seventeen and be ready to leave the higher secondary school, most of their habits would have been established: their character would have been formed; as adolescence is the period of conversion. Even conversion of character would have taken place: their outlook on life would have largely taken the shape.

Campaign through Admonition/Guidance Counselling

The main target of the Missions of the Prophets and Apostles of Allah was to guide man toward good, improve his character, develop his personality and rectify his behaviour and conscience. Thus they strived seriously to spread truthfulness, trustworthiness, justice, faithfulness, etc. while they worked tirelessly to suppress the repugnant and evil elements in the characters of men that lead to lying, cheating, hypocrisy, corruption, etc. And since we have been enjoined to emulate the best character from Prophet Muhammad (SAW), then it becomes incumbent upon us to also guide our fellow men towards chastity and forbid them from immorality. This is what is known as the doctrine of *al-amrubil ma'aruful wa nahyu anu munkar* in Islam. This literally means enjoining goodness and prohibiting evil. Nigerians are religious; those who perpetrate criminal acts thereby constituting security threat to the society are either mosque or church goers. The truth also is that religious scholars both Muslim and Christian are closer to the people. Effective preaching of God's words which in Islamic parlance is known as *da'wah* could also be used to tackle the menace of insecurity in the country. Apart from the emphasis in the worship of God, campaigns through admonition and guidance counselling could also be mounted to address social problems such as murder, lure, killing, robbery, maiming, kidnapping, etc. Through such effort, criminals might turn a new leaf and eschew criminal acts.

Islam considers and makes us a guardian for our brothers, as a result, we must always admonish ourselves when we see things going wrong or even just as reminder. Allah (SWT) enjoined us thus: "Admonish (yourselves) for admonition benefits the believers" (Q51:55).

This admonition also refers to as *Wasiha-Nasiha* has various meaning and implications because while it primarily means giving advice, it also implies doing the right thing at the right time and in the right situation and appropriately. So it is basically about showing people how to do things right. Since admonition is synonymous to correcting people's mistakes, our society must bear it in mind that rashness and hot headedness is not and never an approach talkless of being the best on issue like this.

In a nutshell, it is clear that whatever difficulties or troubles are encountered by men, God always provides a solution, a way out, a relief, a way to lead, to ease and happiness through acceptance of one's prayer, provided we follow His path and show our faith by patience and good deeds, therefore we must strive at every stage in life and look up to God alone as the goal of all his hope.

Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, certainly, it has been identified that the major problems affecting the country nowadays, is security challenges within our society. All efforts made by the individuals to rescue the situation are in vain. For this barbaric situation to change in the society, religious studies must be recommended and supported in playing its role. Religious studies could play a greater role in turning society and individual of Nigeria. Since religious studies lays much emphasize on equality, justice and orderliness which is the bedrock of every normal society and advocacy for positive change through means of propagation.

Recommendations

- Religious societies which are almost completely caged or disallowed will not augur well for the development of morally upright individuals and sanitized society.
- Enough time should be created for students and pupils to learn religious and moral studies.
- The contents of religious studies should be such that will promote the unity of the nation.
- The mass media which includes the different radio stations, newspapers and television stations should be used to broadcast religious knowledge programme which will teach morals and educate the Nigerian youth of the need to live decently since they are the leaders of tomorrow.
- The leaders should be encouraged through religious knowledge, to have the fear of God and rule or give order with the fear of God. It is difficult to arrive in the discipline society where the leaders are indiscipline.
- By and large, in seeking for solutions to the Boko Haram crisis, Nigeria stands to gain so much in simultaneously resolving other important issues affecting her as a federalism. The key to resolving sectarian agitations is dialogue and not force. Nigerians need to do things that are right.

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