

PHILOSOPHICAL EVALUATION OF MORAL VALUES IN THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN STATE

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Abstract

The contemporary moral values in Nigerian public places may be said to have their foundations in the Christian Missionary enterprise of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Previous studies on the Christian Missionary activities in that era have significantly underscored the enormous contributions of these bodies in the educational, cultural, economic and political spheres of the nations. Attempts have been made in some quarters as well to examine the moral values installed by the missionary bodies in this era. However, little has been said regarding the implications of the moral values in the Christian Missionary Educational System in the contemporary Nigerian State. As such, this paper poses to conduct a philosophical evaluation of moral values in the Christian Missionary Educational System and its Implications for the Contemporary Nigerian State. The paper is situated in Durkheim's Functional theory of religion. The research methodology is analytical and archival search methods. This Chapter shows that moral values instituted by the early missionaries, especially in their established mission schools were germane to the foundation and development of the Nigerian Societies. It viewed the philosophy of those moral values are humane, selfless and development-inclined. This chapter recommends the re-introduction and reinstitions of the moral values in various strata of Nigerian Societies.

Keywords: Christian, Contemporary, Evaluation, Implications, Missionary Educational System, Moral Values, Nigeria, Philosophical.

Introduction

Moral values and ethical systems are germane to the growth and development of any society. Mohammad Chowdhury writes that, "People live and grow up within particular moral traditions and systems" and "liberal democracy can only thrive and flourish if its citizens hold certain moral and civic values, and manifest certain virtues" (2). As such, moral values are considered to be foundational values for developed countries. In contemporary times, the continual growing moral decadences, rapid advancement in science and technology and increased societal complexities have underpinned the significance of morals, values and their benefits to society (Chowdhury 2). In the Nigerian context, sources of moral values are religions and cultural heritages. The existing religions in the country contributed immensely to the moral value system in the nation.

In the early nineteenth century, Christianity was introduced through the activities of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) into the nation after some failed attempts (Ade-Ajayi 23). One of the legacies of the early Christian missionary was education and the institution of Christian moral values. It can be said that Christianity significantly laid the foundation for formal education in Nigeria. Within the educational system created by Christian Missionary Associations, moral education was crucial. It must be noted that, "Moral education can be regarded as the process of guiding the character development of an individual in the society in order for an individual to be able to do what is right or just" (Chowdhury 2). The content of moral

education, therefore, is moral values which based on rightness and wrongness inherent in scriptural texts or traditional norms. Christianity at its inception on Nigeria's shores instituted a system of moral values that altered the moral structure and belief system of the land.

Ibenwa writes that in the schools created by the missionaries the children acquired a whole body of new teachings, touching on all aspects of human existence, and these were openly and widely advertised as anti-theatrical to African way of life (151 – 152). Indeed, according to him, Christianity helped in character modification of our children and made our young ones imbibe such virtues like love for one another, truth, obedience and respect for elders, parents and people in authority (Ibenwa 153). However, with government takeover of mission schools there has been a drastic descent into moral decadence among the youth. The need for character reformation and re-institution of moral values has not been this dire. Hence, it is essential to reappraise the moral values of Christian missionary educational system and its implications for contemporary Nigeria State.

Research Methodology

This is a philosophical study; it employs the research method used in philosophical researches. The method is that of philosophical analysis. In this case, it makes use of the following philosophical analysis: logical analysis, linguistic analysis, expository analysis, and critical analysis. It analyses the intrinsic values of morality instituted by early Christian Missionaries and its implications for the contemporary Nigerian State.

Historical Background of Christian Missionary Educational System in Nigeria

The provision of formal education would not have been possible without the activities of Christian missionaries. Maigida Abdulrahman writes that though history has it that the provision of education was first done by private individuals or groups; but formal education started with the missionaries whose goals were "to bring up people in the ways of the Lord and be useful to the society through the teaching of religion and morals" (79 – 84). Historically, the mission of schools was to develop in the young, both the intellectual and the moral virtues," (Abdulrahman 84). The early missionaries strongly pursued the domain of moral education which has concerned with moral virtues such as honesty, hard work, responsibility, kindness and respect for others.

It should be noted that the European Missionaries actually came for evangelism, but felt it was morally justified to give education which will assist them achieve proper spread of gospel (Abdulrahman 84). Significantly, the British Parliament passed the abolition of slave trades in Act of 1833 which was responsible for the repatriation of Africans in Diasporas to a long acquired town in 1787 in Sierra Leone for the returnees (freed slaves) to settle. This town was eventually called 'Freetown.' Also, the revival of missionaries' activities in London, led to the proliferation of a number of Missionary Societies such as the Baptist Missionary Society (1792), the London Missionary Society (1795), and the Church Missionary Society (1799) (Abdulrahman 84).

The revival zeal of these Missionary Societies prompted their massive movement into the field to win souls and give education, with the Bible in one hand and slate in the other. These facilitated the Christian missionaries' establishment of schools such that included: Wesleyan Methodist, with Thomas Birch Freeman and a couple – Mr and Mrs Williams deGraff arriving at Badagry, precisely on the 24th September 1842; establishing the very first private primary school in 1843 and named "Nursery of Infant Church." Still

in 1842, but on the 19th December; the Church Missionary's Society (CMS, now the Anglican) arrived Abeokuta for evangelical survey, hoping to return later for real evangelism in 1844, but they were disappointed to meet the community in mourning mood of their late monarch – King Sodeke of Egba (Abeokuta). Eventually, Henry Townsend and two gentlemen in person of Rev. (later Bishop) Samuel Ajayi Crowther and Rev. C.A. Gollmer accompanied Townsend to Abeokuta to start evangelism in 1846 and the immediate establishment of two schools, one for boys and the other for girls (Abdulrahman 85).

The third adventure took the missionaries of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland led by Rev. Hope Masterton Waddel to Calabar in 1846. It was in 1850 that the Southern Baptist Convention under the leadership of Rev Thomas J. Bowen arrived in Nigeria, but started the first school in 1853 at Ijaiye and another at Ogbomosho in 1855. The year 1857 heralded the CMS Niger Mission with Rev. Samuel Ajayi Crowther and Rev. J.C. Taylor as front-liners. With the cooperation of Niger explorer – Mc-Gregor Laird, schools were founded at Gbebe and Onitsha. The school at Idda in now Kogi State was established in 1864, and other ones were successively established at Bonny and Akassa. Roman Catholic arrival into the country in 1868 with Padre Anthonio settling down in Lagos was a booster to evangelism and educational engagement (Abdulrahman 85).

Much later in 1887 was the Qua Iboe Mission registering its impact at Eket and Ikot Ekpene. So also were many missions in pioneering modern education in Nigeria. The roles of the Christian Missionaries remain invaluable in the history of Nigerian education and the promotion of morals among school children. Moral was pursued and instilled in the children, for them to grow up with good and acceptable conduct the society. The waywardness of school children today was not there under the missionaries' exclusive control of education (Abdulrahman 85).

Concept of Moral Values in Early Christian Missionary Educational System

The moral values of the early Christian Missionaries are rooted in Christian ethics, theologies and dogma of the Church. The sources of these values are rooted, from the Anglican Church perspective, in biblical texts, tradition and reasons (Ogbuehi 320 – 340). Suffice to note that, Christian ethics is concerned with the morality of human conduct. It is interested in what ought to be done in a given situation. Christian ethics judges every action of human beings with the motive of ascertaining whether the action is good or bad (Ogbuehi 321). Understanding Christian ethics will afford us a deep understanding of moral values in Christianity. According to Iwe, Christian ethics can be understood as a discipline of moral theology that avails itself of revelation and supernatural forces in the study of human conduct (18 – 19). Thus, Christian ethics focuses on discourse about Jesus Christ and how the knowledge acquired through theological reflection about Jesus Christ can be brought to bear in the study of human conduct.

Ferguson and Wright insisted that Christian ethics as a branch of moral theology (*theologia moralis*) is concerned with the practical questions of Christian morality. For instance, is it good for a Christian to commit an abortion? Is it good for a Christian to use contraceptives? Is it good for a Christian to give and receive a bribe? (Ferguson and Wright 445). As earlier pointed out, the bible remains the indispensable source that enables a Christian to judge whether his action is compatible or incompatible with the Bible.

Nwaike corroborates this view when he writes that, "Christian Ethics could be found in the life and teachings of the founder as well as in those of his apostles...This good life, Christians believe, is only attainable by behaving in accordance with God's precepts" (14). There is no gainsaying that any act that is not in agreement with the stipulations of the Bible is regarded as bad while an act that is acceptable

according to the biblical standard is considered good. It must be noted that Christian ethics cuts across personal piety to the application of faith to one's practical life (Ogbuehi 321). Christian moral values are inherent in Christian ethics. In fact, they may be interchanged as they both mean principles or standards of good behaviour. In fact, the word 'morality' is derived from the Latin *moralitas* meaning "manner, character, and proper behaviour" (Falade 148). The breath and length of these values are rooted in love. This paper agrees with Ogbuehi's view that love is the *summum bonum* of Christian ethics (321). In fact, Okai quips that Christian ethics as a branch of moral philosophy is rooted in love (Ogbuehi 321).

The early Christian missionaries taught this in their teachings and they were encapsulated in both western education and Christian religious education (Falade 149). Missionary schools were set up as means of teaching those who had been converted to Christianity. Orebanjo opined that the missionaries were interested solely in the work of evangelization (16). They however discovered that in order to be successful, they needed to educate the people to enable them to read the Bible and some religious books. The Christian missionaries concentrated their attention on the Nigerian adolescence or pre-adolescence because they believed that the young's were pliable. The first classes were held in missionary's homes. After the establishment of primary schools, there was demand for post-primary institutions. This demand was met in 1876 when the first secondary school (C.M.S. Grammar School) was founded in Lagos. It is important to note that the established mission schools place emphasis on religious and moral instructions. Specifically, the notion of moral universalism was key to the missionaries' effort in converting heterogeneous populations (Falade 149). Augustin Bergeron writes that, "This emphasis on universal moral values over more communal moral values might have in turn weakened individual's bias towards their in-group (family and co-ethnics) by improving attitudes towards out-group members (non-coethnics, strangers and strangers)" (25).

The Moral State of the Nation

In the contemporary Nigerian State, the moral structure of the nation is almost collapsing. Society is plagued with a lot of moral problems (Talabi 23). In more specific manners, there are various levels of moral decadence which cut across almost all sections of Nigerian National lives. Firstly, we have corruption. It is obvious that among political officeholders, corruption is deeply endemic. The dire consequences of corruption are seen in deplorable road networks, undeveloped health facilities, schools starved of quality personnel and materials, and weaponisation of poverty. Secondly, bribery and kickback are rife. Maigida Abdulrahman points out that:

Bribery and kickbacks are the reason why merit is thrown overboard. People bribe their ways have imposed on the society the dangers of existence. Incompetency is generally the case and supposed professionals are found wanting (85 – 86).

There are activities of militancy, kidnapping and insurgency all over the nations. It should be noted that "these are unpatriotic activities against the state and humanity." These dastardly acts have resulted in the wanton loss of lives and properties. In recent times, kidnapping has been seen as serious economic revenue for wicked men. Millions of dollars have been realised through kidnapping. In recent times, a huge amount is being demanded ransom, agonizing the captive and the relations. Sad enough, some even die in the hands of their captors who still ensure the ransom is hopelessly paid.

Furthermore, robbery and stealing are common on the highways. It is no gainsaying to state that highways are no longer safe, even residential apartments, with all theft or burglary alerts and barricades; houses are still not immune to robbery (Abdulrahman 85 – 86). Nowadays, people cannot sleep with their two eyes closed. In those days when the tradition was respected, there was no lousiness or laziness, everyone was gainfully employed; either as a farmer, fisher folk, hunter, carvers, palm wine tapper, blacksmith, traders etc. Similarly, stealing belongs to the clan of robbery. This is also perpetrated in schools, corporate establishments, and even in government offices (Abdulrahman 85 – 86).

Ritual killings have also taken centre stage in the country. People, old and young, man and woman continue to get missing and lifeless bodies are thereafter found around. Most current of these killings is farmer-herdsmen attack. Bullying, Thuggery, Hooliganism and Cultism Bullying is one of the known deviant behaviours among school children. It is believed that bullying graduates to something uncontrollable as the child grows, such as cultism. Today, thuggery, hooliganism and cultism are the characteristics of youth in and out of schools (Abdulrahman 85 – 86).

The culture of hard work is fast vanishing among the citizens. Cutting corners has now been decorated a societal cosmetic. Certificates are now being forged, legal declarations are no more reliable, as many have altered and doctored the original form of their document, even claim what they don't have. Cheating is part and parcel of the day to day business dealings or in business partnerships; over-Invoicing and inflated prices of purchases on behalf of schools, governments and corporate organizations, as well as cheating amongst students, especially in examinations (Abdulrahman 85 – 86).

Schools, particularly tertiary institutions are now training grounds for prostitution. Clubbing and parties have become fashionable among girls and ladies; they dress almost nude and line up or stand strategically on roadsides or designated spots awaiting their probable customers (Abdulrahman 85 – 86). At international level, human merchants, mostly women, addressed as Madam deceitfully lure these ladies into commercial sex works abroad. On the issue of teenage pregnancy, education suffers today because of this situation. Many promising young girls (mostly affected) are out of school and never courageous to go back, even after delivery and weaning the baby (Abdulrahman 85 – 86).

Evaluation

Moral values instituted by the Christian Missionary Educational System are consisted of manner, character and proper behaviours that are universally accepted and germane for development and transformation of any societies. Indeed, the three level of moral values as expressed in manner, character and proper/right behaviours may be seen pattern of behaviours needed in the society. To instil this in any society, education is crucial. Such kind of education may be described as moral education. Though, moral education is difficult to define but it may be conceived "as the process by which principles of right and wrong are being instilled in the child/individual" (Abdulrahman 85 – 86). A brief review on the notion of moral education reveals the following: Oliver et al writes that, "Moral education is an initiative and communicative constitution by which the education requires dynamic and effective moral development" (165). They further assert that, "Moral education involves not only the teaching, learning and other processes whereby values, rules, principles, ideas, habits and attitudes are inculcated but also the taking of adequate educational steps supplemented with an appropriate institutional arrangement to promote moral growth along the developmental continuum" (Oliver 165). In a nutshell, it may be considered as "the basis of general education which inculcates the teaching of moral values in children and young people.

Dike on this, point out that corruption drives and shapes social values in Nigeria and called for “values education” which involves “educating for the character” and for good “moral values” to be institutionally adopted as a way of growing citizens that will effectively contribute to national development (34). In his own view, Obioma alternatively names “moral education” value education (25). Oliver et al writes that, “Value education is suggested to mean the teaching of respect, responsibility and other values to the citizens for good character development” (165). By evaluation, therefore, the reinstatement of moral education is crucial and germane for Nigerian State. All agents of moral education such as family, school, and religious centres must work toward this.

Maigida Abdulrahman pointed out that a number of significant measures are already been taken, though needed much serious commitment. Some of these measures as stated by him are as follows:

- i. The Nigerian government has recognized the ugly trends and realized that education can be used to solve these onerous problems. Government, through the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) has designed a new national curriculum, now in use; where National Values is taught with religion at Basic level and Civic Education as a Core Cross Cutting subject at the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination. With these, it is believed that morality issues bothering on nationalism, harmonious and peaceful co-existence, honesty, love, kindness and neighbourliness, perseverance, hard-work, contentment and so on would be taught to children, as it is believed that immoralities are best clipped or nibbled in the bud at that age.
- ii. Review of Nigerian education policy, the National Policy on Education (NPE), consistently revised since the first edition in 1977, later in 1981 to ensure that the provisions of the 1979 Constitution are not antagonistic to the policy. In 1998 and 2004, the policy was revised to accommodate the needs of the times. Revised in 2008, but not published, but having the most current which is 2014 edition.
- iii. To promote tolerance and religious understanding, the introduction into the Basic Education curriculum of a subject tagged Religion and National Values (RNV) is a clear indication that government is conscious of our country’s diversity, even in religion, thereby marrying religion and values together for national development.
- iv. Re-introduction of History as a Basic education subject. This also shows that history is recognized by government as a veritable instrument for the growth of a country. We can learn a lot from our history, so that the error of the past would be averted (Abdulrahman 91).

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

In spite of the above, it is the view of this paper that the nation must turn to morality for proper nation-building. Moral education has enough capacity to equip the learners with the qualities of hardwork, self-restraint or discipline, honesty, resilience, Godliness, contentment, peaceful coexistence, religious tolerance, and patriotism needed for societal development and transformation. The existing schools are avenues for moral rectitude. As such, it is recommended that which were included in Maigida Abdulrahman’s paper, and few others from the researcher|:

- i. For any society (or school) to exist, its members (students, teachers, and administrators) must share a number of moral virtues: they must be honest, responsible, and respectful of one another’s well-being (Abdulrahman 91 – 92).

- ii. If we are to live together peacefully in a pluralistic society, we must also nurture those civic virtues and values that are part of our constitutional tradition: we must acknowledge responsibility for protecting one another's rights; we must debate our differences in a civil manner; we must keep informed. A major purpose of schooling is to nurture good citizenship.
- iii. Since definition of morality in the 21st century is becoming personalised and individualistic, it is important to teach moral in the language the 21st century will understand
- iv. On the distinction between moral and civic issues, including the nature of morality itself, students must learn about the alternatives, and teachers and schools should not take official positions on where the truth lies. The purpose of a liberal education should be to nurture an informed and reflective understanding of the conflicts.
- v. As children grow older and more mature they should gradually be initiated into a liberal education in which they are taught to think in informed and reflective ways about important, but controversial, moral issues. By this, they will have a sense of judgement to determine for themselves good or the bad.
- vi. Finally, it is important to educate children about the phenomenal activists and legends who exemplify strength and have shown character to fight against all odds and champion the right causes to bring revolutionary changes.

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