
Christian Religious Education of Culture: Its Implication for National Integration in Nigeria

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Abstract

From the history of Christian education in the Judeo-Christian era, leaders of Christian religious education thoughts have been involving in national integration which the Bible is fully equipped with the examples of such leaders, people like: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob from the group of the patriarchs; Moses, Joseph, Joshua, Deborah and Samuel the representatives of the Bible leaders and prophets; Aaron, Abiathar, and Zadok were from the family of Levi representing the priests. The representatives of kings include: Saul, David, Solomon, Rehoboam and Jeroboam followed by a host of others just to mention a few. Christian education has its implication in the prevailing immediate community. Just as human society is dynamic; so also Christian education is dynamic. Therefore both must engage each other with a meaningful interaction for their good ordering preservation and mutual benefit of integration in the society. This is part and parcel of culture and integration of the nation. Nation integration does not emerge from the blues; it has to do with God-given agents of transformation here on earth. It happened in the Old and New Testament times, so it is happening in our contemporary communities today. God revealed His will to humanity in the New Testament times using human agents to foretell his will to humanity through Christ who came to the world as a human being through Mary without any man's factor. After Jesus Christ performed his glorious ministry he assigned his disciples to accomplish his mission of integration. The Christian education of integration was carried out by the early educated men such as Origen, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Augustine and Martin Luther who were committed in integrating their own society. Jesus Christ gave the metaphorical teaching of "Salt" and "Light" that Christians should be involved in national integration by influencing their own society. Christian can make a contribution towards national integration from any standpoint: moral, domestic, social, educational, commercial, economic, cultural, administrative, political, or religious participation. The essence of this participation in national integration is to give glory to God and promote peaceful coexistence in the society. Our early missionaries made significant contributions in the national integration through evangelism, culture, education, and industrial attitudes.

Keywords: Christian, Education, Culture, Integration, Peace, Implication, Influence, Moral and Glory,

This paper focuses on Christian education of culture; its implication for national integration in Nigeria. Nigeria is a heterogeneous society with differences in tribes, languages, religious beliefs, denominational affiliations, values. The country has a fertile ground for friction, disagreement, misconceptions, miscommunication, and diversity in perspective, lack of relationship and conflict in nature (Mambula, 2005). These problems could lead to disintegration in the society. In fact the differences in Nigeria have created religious and ethnic conflicts and strife that smoulder for years. In the North-East, there is a difference created by members of “Boko Haram”; in the East there is a problem of environmental pollution that leads to formulation of militants and kidnappers or abductions; in the South, there are problems of land and boundary disputes; in the North, there are problems of socio-political, land and religious conflicts. All these are the problems Nigerian society faces as a nation that lead to disintegration. Nigeria is a pluralistic society with different cultural background. By way of definition, “culture” means “arts collectively; arts, music, literature, and related intellectual activities considered collectively, or a group of people whose shared belief and practices and are identified in the particular place, class, or time to which they belong”. Love and freedom are other necessary ingredients for national integration. (MacGregor, 1954). Love is really the law of life. Love can lead to national integration. The word “integration” means the process of opening a group, community, place or organisation to all regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender or social class. It is also the process of becoming an accepted member of a group or community. Since the time of creation, man was identified with a particular culture. One of his primary arts was to “unite or integrate or meet together or come together”. They meet together for a common goal (Genesis 2, Exodus 12, and Lev. 23). The implication of this is that God’s plan for man from the beginning was for culture and integration (McDonald, 1974). By this perspective, one sees culture and integration as a blessing, but which became a problem, punishment, suffering and curse due to the fall of man and his disobedience (Genesis 3:17-19). When the people of Israel disobeyed God, he used expanding Babylonian empire to send them into captivity and separate them from their homeland. They now discover the importance of God’s Law the Torah and their need to know and obey it. These Laws include the Oral and written Torah or the law (Pentateuch), the prophets (the historical and prophet books) and the Holy writings (Psalms and Wisdom literature). They were meeting to use the oral interpretation of the written Torah, (Lockyer, 1986).

From that time until now, culture and integration have been 59% source of livelihood out of frustration. In the Ten Commandments, the Lord says; “Honour your father and your mother that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you...” (Exodus 20:9-11). “What is the best way to transfer information, skills, and biblical values to young people so that they may be effective Christian decision makers?” Youth ministry, spending countless hours in Bible study,

catechism, youth groups, worship, and even social outings, conveys relentless streams of religious doctrine. Most youth ministers and other laity feel secure in their church's educational programs; yet, many are still building rudderless ships. Young people are often cast into a sea of changing rules, relativism, and stormy inconsistencies, armed only with untried doctrine that has never been internalized or applied to life situations. A multitude of research supports new teaching strategies that emphasize critical thinking-the ability to "learn how to learn." Those in youth ministry should understand and employ these techniques in educative ministries. With critical thinking skills, young people will have the tools (rudder) they need in order to successfully navigate the tough seas over which they travel. There are four ingredients necessary to build an effective instructional, educational foundation in youth ministry: educative philosophy, appropriate strategy selection, implementation, and evaluation, (Leverette, 2017).

During the Exodus era, the Israelites were physically involved in the building of tabernacles in the wilderness, as recorded in Exodus 26, and in the building of the Temple (I Chronicles 28:10). Serious emphasis was given to culture and integration by the Hebrews. The New Testament words for "culture and integration" carry the same idea as in the Old Testament. For example, culture and integration are used more than 142 times particularly in John's Gospel, Hebrews, James, letters of Paul and Revelation. In Greek the word "Kalliérgeia" which literally means "cultivation, farming, crop, tillage" can also be translated "culture." (Prius, 2016). The words "kultur" in Hebrew has the same meaning with the Greek word "politismós", which is translated "culture" "civilization or ethos." In classical Greek, the noun "koultoúra" has reference to the culture which civilization produces, but in the New Testament, it signifies the education while the word "mórfosi" refers to the education, schooling or learning by which men gain their subsistence (Herbert, 1986)..

In 2 Esdras 8:6 the King James Version and the Revised Version (British and American) give.....culture to our understanding i.e. to nourish it as seed in the ground. The word "kalliérgeia" is used to denote the cultivation or profit which results from man's activities, business or endeavour, as well as farming which the pursuit of the gains is involved, (McDonald, 1974). Likewise the word "oloklyrosy" which means integration and "kathety "ensomatosy" are synonyms and antonymous of the word integration in "Almaany" dictionary." They are synonyms of horizontal integration, horizontal combination, and consolidation integration. It is also synonyms of vertical integration, vertical combination, consolidation integration, (McDonald, 1974). The point being made is that the Bible commends culture and integration. They are veritable tools for education for national integration. In proposing a Christian religious education of culture, its' implication for national integration in Nigeria , one needs to ask whether Africans have their own traditional understanding of culture and integration or their understanding is based on the Christian religious education of culture its' implication for national integration? If there is no such understanding in an African context, how can we then build a Christian religious education of culture, its' implication for national integration that is both African and Christian education of culture and integration? These are some of the ideas that will be discussed in this paper. The thrust of the paper

is an attempt to propound a Christian religious education of culture' its' implication for national integration from Nigerian and African perspectives.

In this section, the presenter seeks to respond to the earlier questions raised about Nigerian Christian religious education of culture its; implication for national integration. The truth is that Nigerian education has hitherto not fully expressed their Nigerian-ness educationally. Western scholars dominate the educational journals and magazines so much so that African scholars are pushed to the rear in the guise that there is a educational vacuum to be filled in Nigeria, because a truly indigenous evangelical Nigerian education has been slow to develop. Therefore, a clear stand by Nigerian education to expand the universal and unchangeable truths of scripture is needed which can stand on equal pedestals with those of the West.

This is one of the tasks to be accomplished in this paper; to present the Christian education of culture in its Nigerian or African perspectives. Another question is: Is it possible to have Nigerian education that is both Nigerian and Biblical? My response is in the affirmative. The reason for this position is that "many Nigerians found that the presentation of Western issue in Christian education did not answer their inmost questions or solve some of the spiritual problems related to Nigerian or African culture." Donovan, (1995). Consequently, 'Christian education was thought by many Africans to be something Western, instead of universal to all mankind, as it really is.

Two problems stand out in an attempt by the Nigerian educators to counter the Western educational stance. First, very few efforts have been made to relate -Christian education in a Nigerian context since the past four decades. Second, the inability of the Nigerian educators to distinguish Nigerian Christian education from the elements of African traditional religions; a situation referred to as syncretism by our detractors.

But what we are doing is not to mix up Christian education or Biblical education with African tradition or African traditional religion. But the aim is to "state the biblical truth in education in a way that is true to Nigerian or African life and experience", (Donovan, 1995); to enable the ordinary readers of the Bible understand the education with the scriptures more clearly in their own context.

In other words, we are saying that Christian education must be truly Christian and truly Nigerian or African in expression. Nigerian educators, therefore, have the task of developing a Nigerian Christian education that is devoid of elements of syncretism; a Christian education fashioned in Nigeria that must satisfy the deepest longings and culture of the Nigerians and African in the search for Bible truths. How, then can one evolve an education of culture that is both Christian and Nigerian or African? The above question is timely because the evolvement of an education that is both Christian and Nigeria or African is a task that must be done. Nigerian educators cannot afford to fold their hands and do nothing probably because it is hard so to do. It is a task that must be accomplished, and that is the goal of this presentation.

First, one must know what the Bible says about Christian education of culture vis-a-vis what does the Nigerian culture say on the subject matter. Secondly, we should ask how Nigerian culture relates to what the Bible says on the same issue, and seeks to understand the actual Nigerian or African beliefs and practices that relate to the subject

matter. Thirdly, one should endeavour to express the truth of the Bible on the relevant areas in a way that is clearly related to Nigerian culture, and applicable to daily life.

Christian Education of Culture for Integration

a. **From a Christian Perspective:** It is pertinent to briefly state the Christian perspective of culture as a launching pad to the discourse on the Nigerian perspective of culture for integration. The Christian education of culture for integration is a statement of what the Christian or the Bible teaches about integration as one comes across the word on the pages of the Bible, (Donovan, 1995). It is the doctrine of the meaning or value God places on human peace and unity. Below are a few education positions of the Christian concerning culture and integration.

First, a Christian integrates because he is made in the image of God. The Bible creates a scenario that imbues the Christian with the desire to always love and unite, not only to please the person he loves, but as unto the Lord. This paper presents God as a united God. He created the universe and has been in the business of sustaining it since creation. Having been created in the image of God, it is only fitting that man should love to promote education of culture for integration, fashion, love and re-unit in order to participate in God's continuous purpose of creation. Since God called and found the children of Israel he placed man in the spirit of culture of integration, to the spirit of togetherness, it thereby implies that the assignment of integration is in God's plan for humanity. The Garden, which Adam and Eve were asked to live, had its purpose of integration. In the contemporary times, those integration include physical, social, cultural and spiritual integration, (Mcneal, 1991). Thus, the Christian educators are to fulfil this wide range of human endeavour to promote the Christian education of culture for integration as one made in the image of God.

Second, a Christian work for nation integration in order to reflect God through practicing integrity in his culture for integration. Practical Christianity issues from the heart of the individual and it affects the actions he does and his general attitude to life. This is so because a Christian knows that he has a responsibility to promote integration and must put in a day's practice. A Christian views his service to his culture for integration as ultimately rendered to God, knowing full well that God is the ultimate Judge of his whole efforts (Matthew 6:5-8), (McNeal, 1991). On the other hand, too, Christian educators know that they are also accountable to God for the way and manner they treat their nation on the issue of Christian education of culture for integration.

Third, God's plan for integration includes love. Exodus 20:1-8 records this "love your neighbour as yourself this is a service to the Lord your God. On it you shall not hate...." John 3:3 affirms that God loved us even when we were sinners. This love was for the integration or education of culture for integration. Thus, God prescribed a kind of love for integration for His people each one should do the same (1 John 3:1-11), (McNeal, 1991). God, in His wisdom, found a balance between culture and integration because He knew the physical, mental, emotional, psychological and spiritual limits of His people. By so doing, God introduced the Christian education of culture for integration into the system of education. So, the Christian education of culture for

integration includes love one another, which is a necessary factor of human endeavour and practice (Mambula, 2005).

Fourth, Christians see their primary vocations as serving God alone. Every Christian sees his or her vocation as a calling for service. For example, Christian teachers, doctors, lawyers, mechanics, bakers, and traders are called for service only. Christian professionals look beyond their immediate service to God or worship God; to see the need of promoting culture for integration in their Christian service. Their eyes are to look at the national integration. In fact, they need no services alone, because their services are to point to the integration of their nation because doing that is service unto the Lord. A true Christian education of culture is the one which is directed towards influencing mankind into a national integration.

b. **From an Nigerian Perspective:** Nigeria is the first largest country in Africa, only next to America in land space, and occupies a first place in population in Africa. It covers one fifth of African's land space and has over one tenth of the world's population, (World Book Encyclopaedia, 1982). About 70% of the people in Nigeria live in rural areas. Thus, their dominant source of livelihood is agrarian, (World Book Encyclopaedia, 1982). Nigerian land mass is richly blessed with mineral wealth, including huge deposits of copper, diamond, gold, cocoa and petroleum in addition to valuable forest reserves. From time immemorial, Nigerian churches have been involved in physical Christian education of culture for integration. Since the civil war Christian educators have been preaching the integration in Nigeria, Nigerian Christian educators have never stopped preaching Christian education of culture for integration. Some of the finest sculptures in the world have been made in Nigeria with varying styles, methods and techniques. The brief analysis above indicates that Nigerians work towards national integration. Next is the proposed Nigerian Christian education of culture for national integration.

Nigerians understand integration as God-given assignment, like the case of Jesus Christ, it is generally believed that man is created to love, promote national integration or cater for education of culture for integration. It is to start from family members, down to community, state and country at large. Nigerians Christian educators are gifted in preaching love and national integration, peace, harmony and mutual relationship and so on. They believe that they are destined to be one, as brothers and sisters for the bountiful blessings and reward from God. Nigerians philosophy of national integration is not far from that of the Bible in this concept in that they do not preach the idea of division or restructuring or referendum; they believe Nigeria is a God-given country.

National integration is dignifying in a Nigerian context. In Deuteronomy 6:4ff, the scripture records that God blessed the male and female who walk together as one: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on ground." The act of relationship and subduing the earth implies dignity, love, integration, culture and togetherness. God gave a good Measure of integration, love, oneness, power and

authority to man and made him to oversee the universe and has dominion over all other creatures for national integration.

The integration of Israel to fight their enemies and won the battle was an element of the fruits of national integration. Palestine failed to Israelites was an important rewards of national integration. Christian education of culture for national integration is to be secured from the heart of Nigerian Christians. These separate skills and abilities are required for Christian education of culture for national integration. Nigerian Christians are specialized in different kinds of innovations; culture and education for national integration tangling from the household responsibilities of people of Israel established from Adam down to Jesus Christ, to enable them live in harmony. Every Nigerian Christian, who does this successfully, feels complete. Hence the salvation is awaiting Christians who live in harmony.” Any education of culture fashioned in Nigeria that does not portray the spirit of integration may not see the kingdom of God..

Christian education of culture for national integration is sweet in the view of all Nigerians. The Nigerian concept of Christian education of culture for national integration as sweet is paradoxical in the sense that Christian education is usually seen as something hard and excruciating, but the opposite is the case in Nigeria. Christian education of culture for national integration in an African context is sweet because the of dividends accruing from dedication to the will of God are usually enormous. When such gains are being maximized or enjoyed, the “sufferings” or efforts exerted at the time of dedication and obedience to God are forgotten. Therefore, an education of culture in a Nigerian context which sees culture or integration as sweet is most welcome. Understanding culture integration from this Nigerian perspective gives more meaning and value to obedience to the will of God. It makes one to have satisfaction from every little effort to serve God and feel that one has done something worthwhile. This same concept of Christian education of culture for national integration as sweet and satisfying becomes a motivating factor to all Nigerian Christians.

Nigerians view Christian education of culture for national integration as rewarding. When I was growing up as a young boy, pastors or “mallam” were the commonest people who call for community integration. At that time, those who sought for pastoral jobs were said to have taken an oath of poverty to serve God. In fact, it was generally said, with all seriousness, that “Mallam or pastors’ rewards were in heaven,” but the tide of things has long turned for the betterment of the pastors. The teachers are not different in this regard from the pastors. Some pastors have changed the doctrine of suffering to that of prosperity. The Hymn “Ready to suffer; ready to go” to “ready to prosper, ready to gain” all in their attempt to “make it” or “breakthrough” was their common song then.

However, the issue of adequate reward or remuneration for teaching Christian education of culture for national integration is a very important one. One can neither wish it away nor fossilize it, (Lockyer, 1956). It is a real issue that is capable of destabilizing a nation like Nigeria, because every Christian in Nigeria is supposed to teach or preach Christian education of culture for national integration. The scriptures affirm that integration in the nation is worthy of his service (Matthew 5:1ff). Even

though integration is necessary after teaching and preaching had been done, there are agencies or government organisations that can also help adequately in promoting national integration: such as the work of a army officers, or force generally, the work of a medical practitioners and the work of a clergyman, (Williams, 1983). These categories of workers are performing a good work of education of culture for national integration for which nobody can ever dictate their effort in national integration. These are specialized areas, which everyone cannot just move into. It is a call to service for humanity and a commitment that is tantamount to a sacrificial self-giving to the nation. Any worker in this category just keeps working because true “reward comes from God Himself who rewards each person according to what he has done (Psalm. 62:12). In Nigerian context, the one who is trained for a particular work would only work for that aspect. Sometime, government needs to appreciate such people for a job well done.

Christian education of culture for national integration binds people together as communities in Nigeria. Nigerians live in small communities as a people. They believe in living a communal life with others of the same extended family, clan or tribe. They tend to find their identity and meaning in life through being part of their extended family and acquaintance, (McNeal, 1995). By so doing, there is a sense of unity and common participation in life and work common history, and a common destiny in the national integration. Communal work helps to cement Nigerian unity and community life because Nigerians place higher priority on people and human relationship than on technology and material things.

Nigerians conceive of Christian education of culture for national integration as divine imperative. From the foregoing, one can deduce that national integration was originally in God’s plan for Nigerians. God created man and one of his primary tasks was to live together for a common goal. This common goal was for the national integration. It started in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:8, 15). Although education of culture for national integration, which was meant to be a blessing, became a curse or captivity experience after the fall or human disobedience (Gen. 3:17-19), man was still to live in harmony in order to worship God. Christian education of culture for national integration is a divine imperative; it is commanded by God. In Thessalonica after the Apostle Paul had preached on the last things and the second coming of Jesus Christ, many Christians tried to cause division. When Paul heard it he wrote to tell them, “if any man will not teach or preach Christian education of culture for national integration he shall not enter the kingdom of God,” (2 Corinthians 3:1ff). The above reference is an affirmation of the divine imperative for the Christian to work hard, not only for a living but also for the building of a nation.

Conclusion

The effort that has been made in this paper is to present Nigerian perspective of the Christian education of culture as a means of national integration. To accomplish this task, a contribution has been made in the area of the Christian education of culture for national integration from Nigerian perspective. From that perspective, Christian education of culture for national integration is seen as a divine imperative, and God-given for the benefit of mankind. Since Christian education of culture for national

integration is a divine imperative it is believed that every genuine Christian education of culture for national integration brings blessings to the family hence the Nigerian attitude of education of culture. Man is blessed and is given the authority to rule and subdue the earth, a statement that implies National integration and building up the nation. Nigeria as a country should create a means for the citizens to have access to schools; different media especially radio programme and other institutions for worship that could reach out far near in order to promote national integration.

Recommendation

The paradoxical understanding of the African concept of Christian education of culture for national integration, that integration is sweet and satisfying distinguishes Nigerian education of culture from the extant cultures on the same issue. The benefits derived from national integration make it to be sweet and satisfying. The lethargic attitude to education of culture by some Nigerian educators makes them to lack a sense of “joy in the service” of their nation, (McDonard, 1999). Nigerians, vis-visa Nigeria Christians should dissociate themselves from such division attitudes by serving creditably as unto the Lord. The final points made on the Nigerian perspective of Christian education of culture for national integration is that education of culture for national integration binds Nigerian people together as a community and a people of the same identity, history and culture.

Nigerian culture agrees with the communal integration because, in both education of culture and tradition of play relationship are uppermost in their heart. The Nigerian Christians are, therefore, challenged to rise above division and indifference which characterize the attitude of many Nigerian Christians. Each Christian educator should realize that, by promoting national integration, he or she is following the footsteps of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. By so doing the Christians will be building a nation to grow high where education for national integration is seen as divinely-given, sweet and dignifying; a nation where honest national integration engenders a sense of community life.

Nigerian government should recognize the importance and role of Christian education as a mediation and resolution of national conflicts. Christian education is to teach and preach the values of love, tolerance, forgiveness and acceptance in Nigerian secondary schools. These thoughts will help in national integration.

There should be a guarantee of religious freedom in the country to all Nigerian citizens. People should believe in a practise of religion of their choice everywhere they reside in the country. Similarly, all religious organisations should be allowed to acquire their places of worship anywhere and everywhere appropriately. All the religions in the country should be given equal right in the treatment for the practices of their various religions.

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