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THE EFFECT OF GLOBALIZATION ON RELIGION IN THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

This research work focused on the effect of globalization on religion in the Nigerian society. Globalization is the process of international integration arising from the interchange of world views such as products, ideas and other aspects of culture. The researchers adopted the primary and secondary sources of data collection as well as participant observation as their methodology. Ti he work discovered that globalization have both positive and negative effects on religion in the Nigerian society. And the work recommended that Christians in Nigeria should be taught the principle of selective acceptance, which should enable them not to accept all ideas they are exposed to but to know that it is only those ideas and values which are useful for healthy living that they should accept.

Keywords: Effect, Globalization, Selective Acceptance, Religion, Nigerian Society.

Introduction

The term globalization is derived from the word globalize, which refers to the emergence of an international network of economic system. One of the earliest known usage of the term as a noun was in 1930 publication entitled, "Towards New Education", where it denoted a holistic view of human experience in education. Globalization is the process of international

integration arising from interchange of world views, products, ideas, and other aspects of culture. Advances in transportation, such as the system, the steam locomotive, steamship, jet engine, containership and telecommunications, infrastructure, including the rise of telegraph and its modern offspring, the internet and mobile phones have the major factors in globalization generating further interdependence of economic and cultural activities.

Large scale globalization began in the 19th century. In the late 19th century, the connectedness of the world economics and culture grew very quickly. The concept of globalization emerged from the intersection of four interrelated sets of communities of practice of academics, journalists, publisher/editors and Librarians. There are other basic aspect of globalization, such as trade and transactions, capital and investment movement, migration and movement of people, and the dissemination of knowledge. Further environmental challenges such as global warming, cross boundary, water pollution and over fishing of the ocean are linked with globalization. Globalizations affect and are affected by business and work organization, economics, socio-cultural, resources, and the natural environment. Humans have interacted over long distances for thousands of years. Philosophy, Religion, Language, the Arts and other aspects of culture spread as nations exchange product and ideas. The advent of electronic communications, most notably mobile phones and internet, connect billions of people in ways by the year 2010 (McLuhan, 1987, P.75).

Having examined the emergence of globalization and its positive impact on people especially in connecting people all around the globe, thereby facilitating easy movement and transaction of business, it also pose a great challenge to Christian faith.

There are both distal and proximate causes which can be traced to globalization; globalization as a process of interaction among the people, companies, and government of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment aided by information technology. This process has effects on the environment, on culture, on religion, on political system, on economic development and prosperity, and on human physical well-being in societies around the world. Globalization has made so many Christians particularly in Nigerian Universities which Taraba State University is part and parcel of to involve themselves in social vices such fraudulent act "Yahoo-yahoo", etc. and this act has tampered with the practice of their faith because they devote most of their time to internet, mobile phones, watching football games, watching pornographic and obscene materials and logging to satanic websites that teach them evil things. The stated above are the factors of globalization, in other words, they are caused by globalization. Involving in such act, makes the faith of Christian was cold and as a result, iniquities are at increase as is stated in the book of Matthew 24:12: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold".

The purpose of this study is to educate fellow Christians and Nigerian society the effects of globalization and the dangers involved in the use of some internet materials especially those that expose people to some western culture and orientation which are forbidden to our adorable and amiable cultural norms and values, and most importantly our religion (Christianity). For instance, a man called Jose Luis in United States of America; Washington DC who has a church named Jesus De Miranda; has over five thousand membership, and each of the member has tattoo number 666 on his/her arms or forehead. He claims to be anti-Christ. He said that he is the Jesus and that they should not worship Jesus Christ of Nazareth but him

Jesus De Miranda who said he does greater things than Jesus Christ of Nazareth. This man has a website and whoever withes to join him can log in that website. As such, some people do log into such sites which is believed that any message that is received there has influence on the receiver. All these activities are really affecting our Christian faith, and is as a result of globalization that people get such information.

The researchers intend to also use this medium to enlighten Christians that it is not every information they get on the internet that is genuine; some of the websites they Google are devilish. This study therefore, is committed to finding out how globalization has affected this faith especially among Nigerian students.

This research if successfully completed, would shape the perception of people and their pattern of behaviours as well as attitude toward the practice of their faith most especially Christians in Nigerian society, and equip young people on the kind of messages to be consumed especially on the internet in such a way that their Christian faith is not compromised. My aim is to ensure that all those who been misled in one way or the other by globalization and are almost losing their faith in God are well informed and educated on the need to make wise use of global material. Those who stand to benefit are Christians in Nigeria. The study will also at the end make cogent recommendations that will serve as a guide to Christian students in Nigerian society to adhere strictly to the teachings of Christian faith and make judicious use of their time on things that teach morals instead of things that corrupts their adorable Christian virtues that impresses God.

Globalization and Christianity

Religion plays an important role in the process of globalization. Such a role did not just start within the last decades. The world religions, especially Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism linked together major religions of the world in the middle ages and before, creating civilizations far larger than most of today's nation states. This role, of course, is in line with Peter Beyer's (1999, P. 10) description of globalization when he said that globalization means that "peoples, cultures, societies and civilizations previously more or less isolated from one another are now in regular and unavoidable contact".

Ali Mazrui (2006, p.26) (Globalization) recognized religion as one of the four major forces that have been the engine of globalization across time. Others are technology, economy and empire. According to him, these forces have not necessarily acted separately but have often reinforced one another. He further asserted that globalization of Christianity started with the conversion of emperor Constantine 1 of Rome in the year 313. Before the time of Constantine, Christianity was regarded by the government of Roman Empire as religion illicit, that is to say that it had no legal status. The early Christians then faced persecutions, lost their freedom and were hindered from spreading Christianity in other parts of the world. But during the reign of Constantine, Christianity became religio licita (lawful religion), a religion that gave it the status being the official religion of the state. This gave the church, not only freedom of worship, but the liberty to carry the gospel to different parts of the world at the time (Boer 1997 p44).

Today Christianity is still very much involved in the process of connecting the different parts of the world. Christianity has established its religio-cultural sphere throughout the modern

world. In the process, some of the characteristics originally held by its members undergo certain level of transformation in the process of developing within specific nations.
A typical example of a religious community that has undergone such transformation process is Pentecostalism. For about one hundred years now, Pentecostalism has become a major form in Christendom. The basic character of this religious movement is its emphasis on divine healing and baptism of the Holy Spirit. They also emphasizes on the experimental dimension of religious involvement. According to them, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, a believer can engage in a process of transformation within his own historic reality.

The Pentecostal community has evolved from a small brand of Christian believers in different localities to become a worldwide movement with an estimated number of 450 million members (Barett 1999 p 24). Pentecostalism as movement has adapted readily to variety of cultures in the different parts of the globe. According to D. Klaus (1999, p 127-130), it can be argued that while regional differences are real, Pentecostalism has generated a global culture which shared common spirituality. Muray W. Dempster (1999: p 200) writing toward the last century, also commented about the role of globalization in Pentecostalism. On this he said: "although the participants in the movement at the time of its inception at the turn of the century were on the margins of society, the expansion of characteristics experience has pervaded all parts of the world.

Effects of Globalization on Christianity
Globalization has affected Christianity in so many ways. For example, globalization has accelerated the migration of peoples and the speeding up of communication, especially by means of the internet. This has to do with the easy conveyance of religious teachings across distant areas of the world. It is now possible for most religion not only to spread their views but to proselytes around the world. The international radio and television networks have also enhanced opportunities of missionaries' enterprises of many religious groups as they are able to reach even those in the very remote places of the world.

Another effect of globalization on religion arises from pluralism which is an ideological view point that emerged from the transformation of the societies of the world. The narrowing of the distances between people of the world has brought about the co-existence and interaction of human beings of different social backgrounds. In such a situation, pluralism is widely accepted, as a means of maintaining harmony in the midst of diversity. The main point of pluralism is that facts and values are to be distinguished. It postulates that facts are to be seen as public and agreeable with while values and beliefs cannot be seen as such. According to the ideology, no value or belief is absolute. None of them should be taught as "truth" like since they are all relative. McGrath and Green (2007 p67 & L Kurtz (2008 p89) confirm that this phenomenon is a feature of globalization when he said:

"cultural and social diversity are distinguished characteristics of modern life; individuals or groups in the global village can choose their religious orientations from a variety of options rather than simply accepting the specific."

Christian Faith
Faith in Christianity is a central notion taught by Jesus Himself in reference to the good news. In the understanding of Jesus, it was an act of abandonment in which people no longer rely

on their strengths and policies but commit themselves to the power and guiding word of Him in whom they believe. Some of the history of Christian theology has followed the biblical definition in Hebrews 11:1 "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." As in other Abrahamic regions, it include believe in the existence of God, in the transcendent domain that God administers his kingdom and in the benevolence of the will God or God's plan for mankind. According to most Christian tradition, Christian faith requires a belief in Jesus resurrection from the dead by God the father through the Holy Spirit. The precise understanding of the term "faith" differs among Christian traditions. Despite the differences, Christians generally agreed that faith in Jesus lies at the core of Christian tradition, and that such faith is required in order to be a Christian.

The New Testament writers following the translators of the septuaging rendered words in the Hebrew scripture that concerned faithfulness, using pistis group words. The pistis group of words is most appropriately translated into English by a range of words, depending on the context; pistis describe connections of firmness that can form between wide varieties of entities: people's tradition, practices, groups, purpose, facts or propositions. The pistis group of words in the New Testament can thus be interpreted as relating to ideas of faithfulness, fidelity, loyalty, commitment, trust belief, and proof. Faith is often discussed in terms of believing in God's promises, trusting in His faithfulness to act.

In recent decades, scholars have researched what pistis meant in the social context of the New Testament writers. Several scholars who have studied the usage of pistis in both early Greek manuscripts and the New Testament have concluded that faithfulness is the most satisfactory English translation in many instances. This recent research has prompted some to argue that New Testament faith belief in Jesus should be understood in terms of faithfulness, loyalty, and commitment to Him and his teachings, rather than in terms of belief, trust and reliance. Such understanding of faith can be integrated well with moral influence of theory of atonement. In view of this, James Hope Moulton and George Milligian suggest the rendering: "faith is the titled deed of things hope for." (Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, 1963, p.660)

Conclusion

While it is correct to say that globalization has both positive and negative impacts on the world, Nigeria inclusive, its negative impacts are very weighty. There is a need to urgently and effectively address these challenges arising from globalization. Without doubt, globalization is an irreversible process in accordance with natural laws. Inasmuch as the pain caused by some aspects of globalization is undeniable, the real issue is whether the negative effects of its sweeping processes can be ameliorated – and the positive effects enhanced. This is because it is apparent globalization has come to stay. There is a need for Nigerians to preserve their culture in any way possible. It is a shame that many Nigerian children of this generation cannot speak their mother tongue or understand their culture. Nigerian Christians need to exploit the process of globalization to promote their faith, for example, the internet can be employed to propagate the gospels. There could be website where the youth could browse to learn proverbs and rudiments of their cultures of Nigerian people.

There is, therefore a need for a reassessment of how Nigeria has fared in the era globalization. Science in a globalizing world has benefits that Nigeria can and should take advantage of the era of computers, revolutionized telecommunication and the internet is what the country

cannot shy away from, but the positives of the times should be properly harnessed for the country to appropriately benefit from globalization. Instead of a consolidation of the cultures and values of the country, various dimensions of globalization continue to erode what makes this part of the world unique. Imitations and adoption of western values are being done at the detriment of the nation's essence of existence. Nigeria needs to phantom how it will not be swallowed by globalization. Instead of total reliance on what the west in handing down, the country needs to encourage local production and industry. There is a need for Nigeria to demonstrate her beliefs in indigenous technical knowledge and skills, instead of being subjected to the mercy of globalization without being globalized in the real sense of it. The country must be proud of her heritage and way of life, instead of being submerged in the western way of life. If Nigeria is able to utilize globalization in such a way that increase the positive impact and minimize the negative impact, the world will be a better place to live in.

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