

BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW: A SINE QUA NON FOR NEW HORIZON IN CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS STUDIES; FROM ACCESS TO QUALITY

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Abstract

The Nigerian educational system is presently confronted with a number of extremely complex, interlocking crises since the coming in of Universal primary education (UPE) in 1976. The qualitative content in the Nigeria educational system has witnessed great challenge. Parents and teachers seem to be standing by to watch as good becomes evil, and evil good, corruption, examination mal-practice, poor teaching and learning process is on the throne. Moral values which used to be at the center of learning and teaching in the Christian religious studies are now compromised or disdained as inapplicable in the name human right and freedom. The purpose of this research therefore, is to show that; Biblical worldview is essential to the quest for a new horizon in Christian religious studies. Fundamentally, this approach will ensure the promotion of good values, respect to human dignity, hard work, honesty, justice, common good and peace of all citizens. The researchers used theological interpretation of scripture as the methodology to achieve the set goal. The study strongly seeks to present Christian religious studies as a field of study that will change lives for God, transformed our old worldviews and bring development to our dear nation. The work assumes that many people do not know that Biblical worldview is extremely important in shaping behaviours for development. It therefore, taught the significance of Biblical worldview for quality educational growth and not just access.

Introduction

Fundamentally, the background approach to our present study of Christian Religious Studies is from the covenantal relationship between God and Abraham and the mosaic doctrine for parents to bring up their children the way they should grow. The theological interpretation of Deut. 6:4-5 exhort parents with the responsibilities of teaching, nurturing and disciplining of children in the “*Shemah*” (law).

The training was to be holistic in nature that is, spiritual and physical (body and soul). To the Greek culture the familiar terms for its education was “*paidia*” and “*nouthesia*”. According to Douglas (1991) “*Paidea*” refers to the total education of the young-intellectual, physical, moral, cultural, and social. Whereas “*nouthesia*” specifies the rigorous and admonishing nature of such education, which for the Greek schoolboy, literally meant the

probability of a whipping administered by a farming slave or “*paidagogos*” to punish any lapse in learning (p. 288).

In this context, training or learning was to take a contextual and holistic manner for a total upbringing of a person.

Thus, training within the realm of religion was not limited to one area of life, but rather all of life was considered important. Human activities such as, economic, politics, labor relations and others have a religious character, an underlying world- and life view.

The present level of moral decline in the national life of Nigerian society and particularly educational system as clearly expressed by most social indicators, like child abuse, fractured families, alcoholism, abuse of human rights and corruption in both public and private sectors has roused the concerns to think of developing new horizon in the field of Christian Religious Studies.

For a new horizon in Christian Religious Studies to be achieved, it must first overcome the handicaps it faces within the curricular developers. The public and private schools, both need to affirm a biblical world-view in its educational system. Teachers and administrators must be willing to understand the system and also willing to take time to deal reasonably and sensitively with the present nation issues of underdevelopment and unemployment in the country.

Also to succeed in our quest for a new horizon in Christian Religious Studies that will reflect quality not just access will need to give highest priority to the *paideia* and nurture necessary for growth in the field of Christian Religious Studies as its core aim for national development.

Explanation of key Terms

Worldview: The Greek word “*Kosmos*” means “the ordered world” it is sometimes called the “universe” or “the created world”. The word “*kosmos*” is more often used in the little sense of human beings, being a synonym for *he-oikoumene* ge “the inhabited earth” (Douglas 1980:1261). The world in this understanding is a place where people are born, and in it they live till they die.

As people live in the world, they developed conceptual framework, pattern or arrangement of their beliefs system (Nash 1999:13). This helps them to answer some difficult questions of life. This then reflect the true views of life and of the world in which they live in.

According to Nash (1999) “A worldview, then, is a conceptual scheme that contain our fundamental beliefs; it is also the means by which we interpret and judge reality” (p.14). This is to explain that, what we consider good or bad behavior is controlled by our worldview.

Nash (1999) in agreement with this stated that,

Worldview functions much like eyeglasses. The right eyeglasses can put the world into a clear focus, and the correct worldview can do something similar. When people look at the world through the wrong worldview, reality doesn't make sense to them. Putting on the right conceptual scheme, that is, viewing the world through the correct worldview can have consequences for the rest of a person's thinking and acting (p. 14).

The way people see thing around them and even act explain basically what their worldview is all about. Worldview therefore, sorts out what is important and what is not, what is of highest value from what is less. It thus advises one on how to conduct his or her self in the world.

Christian Religious Studies and Worldview

Religion generally deals with one's beliefs system. It is a dimension in one's life that guides him/her in most his/her actions and approaches to issues of life. Christians as followers of Christ accept the teachings of Christ in all their actions and gives in life. As John Calvin said “all human beings incurably religious. Religion is an inescapable given in life (Nash, 1999: 19). This means that, all humans have one form of religion or another and these beliefs in God or powers above man have an enormous influence on everything else the person does or believe.

The approaches to the study of Christian Religious Studies therefore, must come from the dimension of a conceptual system, a world-view and- life view. This agrees with Nash (1999) who state that,

Christianity then is not merely a religion that tells human beings how they may be forgiven. It is a world-and -lifeviews. The Christian worldview has important things to say about the whole of human life. Once we understand in a systematic way how challenges to Christianity are also worldviews, we will be in a better position to rationally justify our choice of the Christian worldview.

Christian Religious Studies then must be approached with a right conceptual scheme so that it can bring everything into the proper focus for the development of our nation. This is

where the biblical worldview comes in to better shape our understanding of God, the world, and ourselves.

Functions of Worldview in general

Humans' behavior generally are determined by what is of value and important to them and in this context their worldviews. It is therefore important for to know the function of worldview in humans' life. Below are functions of worldview as stated by Paul G.Hiebert (2009:29-30).

1. Hiebert (2009) in the words of Brain, Walsh (2006; 44-45) notes that, "Worldviews are our plausibility structures that provide answers to our ultimate questions. Where are we (what is the nature of the world)? Who are we (what does it mean to be human)? What's wrong (how do we account for evil and the brokenness of life)? What is the remedy (What is the path from brokenness and insecurity to a life that is whole and secure)?"

They do so by providing us with mental models of deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or pictures and image that shape how we understand the world and how we take action.

2. Worldviews gives us emotional security. Faced with dangerous world full of capricious and uncontrollable forces and crises of drought, illness, and death and plagued by anxieties about an uncertain future, people turn to their deepest cultural beliefs for comfort and security.
3. Worldview validates our deepest cultural norms, which we use to evaluate our experiences and choose courses of action. It provides us with our ideas of righteousness and sin and with ways to deal with them. It shapes our perception that this is the way it is and this is the way it ought to be. It also serves as a map for guiding our behavior
4. Our worldview helps to integrate our culture. It organizes our ideas feelings, and values into a more or less unified view of reality.
5. Charles Kraft observes, our worldview monitors culture change (1977:56) we are constantly confronted with new ideas, new behavior, and new products that come either from within our society or from without. It helps us select those that fit our culture and reject those that do not.

6. Worldviews provide psychological reassurance that the world is truly as we see it and a sense of peace and of being at home in the world in which we live.

Biblical Worldview and New Horizon in Christian Religious Studies

The Bible contains two major parts, the Old and the New Testaments. The understanding of the Bible stories from the first point view of unity gives us a better idea of what the Biblical Worldview is all about

Hiebert (2009) observes that,

We must keep in mind that the Bible itself is the history of God's progressive revelation of himself to humans. The Old Testament is a record of the unfolding of a single cosmic story. In it, after the fall, God chose a people and prepared them to be recipients and messengers of his revelation. In their history he shapes a worldview that could adequately understand the content of that revelation. (p.266).

From this understanding, Biblical Worldview is considered in this work as the Christian understanding of the underlying givers in the Bible. From the Old Testament to the New Testament the Christian sees everything as God's activity and it is taken serious as his (God) eternal purposes for all humans.

The Biblical worldview begins with the understanding of God as the Creator and Lord of the universe, and its history. He is the God of power and his reign is forever.

Heibert (2009) also state that, "this reign is never questioned. There is no power that can challenge Him, for He is the source of all power" (p. 269). This Biblical Worldview state also that, "God is Love, even when creation, including humans, rebelled God manifest His redemptive love. He did not destroy fallen creation and create a new universe. He reached out in unconditional love to redeem and restore the lost" (Heibert 2009: 269).

In the quest for a new horizon in Christian Religious Studies people are call to love because God is love and He loved us unconditionally. This is not just love that is selfish, with feeling of deep affection, devotion usually accompanied by earnings or desire for affection between persons of the opposite sex, founded in the combination of compassion and desire (Heibert 2009: 292). But it is the unconditional, committed kind of love that is for the well-being of another person which cut across tribe, language, religion and nationality.

This kind of worldview seek for a love that is sacrificial, seek not its own, it is gracious and forgiving; spontaneous and joyful.

This is the worldview that is committed to peace and joy. The recent senseless killing of Fulani herdsmen in Benue State is judged to be wrong within the understanding of this Biblical Worldview.

In the study of the Bible, the central message and focus of God is peace. Peace in this context is a proactive process. (Heibert 2009) also state that “it is to love our enemies and go to them to seek justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation” (p. 294).

The Biblical Worldview calls on Christians to walk in the ways of Christ. That is we are to love even when we are hated, forgive unconditionally when sinned against, and seek reconciliation. In this perspective of the Biblical Worldview, we are willing to be killed rather than to kill, because we seek to win those who oppose us. This is the goal of Biblical Worldview that will achieve a new horizon in Christian Religious Studies, the one that seek justice, such justice that leads to reconciliation, the kind of reconciliation which breaks the cycle of violence.

Marshall (2001) writes,

Without diminishing the reality of evil, without denying the culpability of those who commit crime or minimizing the pain of those who suffer at their hands, and without dispensing with punishment as a mechanism for constraining evil and promoting change, the New Testament looks beyond retribution to a vision of justice that is finally satisfied only by the defeat of evil and the healing of its victims, by the repentance of sinners and the forgiveness of their sins, by the restoration of peace and the renewal of hope- a justice that manifests God redemptive work in making all things new (p. 204).

Also, in the teaching and learning of Christian Religious Studies within the context of new horizon that will improve the quality of education emphases should be place on patience and long suffering. This Biblical Worldview teaches that, we are interactively into the thick of life and to fully bear the suffering within and around us. Hiebert (2009) maintained that,

Patience involves learning to listen to and live under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It lives under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It requires stopping and listening when someone in pain needs immediate attention. It requires searching for forgiveness without having to forget shameful memories. It is “a willingness to be influence even when this requires giving up control and entering into unknown territory (p. 295).

The Biblical worldview therefore, help a Christian to remain focus been in times of difficulties.

Vongdip (2013) observed that,

A Christian faith shall not waver when his or her focus does not wander. Unemployment, fewer jobs more applicants, lack of promotion fewer vacancies, sicknesses, persecutions among others ills of the moment shall not take a believer's eye of his or her sovereign God. With a believer's eye firmly fixed on God, he or she can fearlessly live out his or her faith in this life trusting God to withstand every of the consequences (p. 27).

In the new horizon for Christian Religious Studies, learners should be encouraged and challenged to grow in their faith by exercising it.

Also, in the teaching and learning of Christian religious studies learner must be taught that God is the creator of these three institutions namely, the home (Genesis 2:18-25), the government (Genesis 9:17; Acts 17: 24-28, Romans 13:1-5, and the church (Acts 2). Therefore, the present discrepancy between these institutions in our learning system that denies the reality of Christian faith in their daily experiences, especially in the area of responsibilities to the public matters is a misrepresentation of Biblical Worldview that needs to be corrected to a new horizon that would be able to solving the nation's problems.

The Christian transforming worldview calls for "a paradigm shift in which God is known to us through Christ and replaces ourselves or any other god as the center of our lives. This is a radical shift the consequences of which take a lifetime to be completed (p.320). But when we start to make Christ the Lord and center of our lives many dissonances between this and our old worldview must be worked out: for the rich to give all and follow Christ; for the poor to turn from old feelings of being a victim and be proactive in living in a Christ like way (p.320).

Conclusion

The biblical worldview for a new horizon in teaching and learning of Christian religious studies is all about the transforming lives. The Biblical worldview calls for people to have a total or complete change of the Old worldview to the new biblical worldview that involves a transformation at all levels of the knowledge, and culture. It must also change them physically, psychologically, socially, emotionally and even spiritually. This kind of approach in Christian religious studies will bring about new horizon in education that is radical and total.

Paul the apostle writes on the Biblical Worldview in Romans 12:1-2 thus,

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sister, in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your proper worship as rational beings. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be

transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.

The Biblical Worldview for new horizon in Christian religious Studies must be the kind that will act like salt and yeast, bring about a total transformation in the field of education and the world at large.

Recommendations

- The curriculum of Christian Religious Studies must include among others the Biblical understanding which sees everything we do as God's activity. This shift will also encourage learners to take seriously the spiritual dimensions of creation as coming from the creator, as such needed to be treated with honor and respect.
- Christian Religious Studies must not be limited only to academic knowledge. All of life activities must be involved whether it concerns economics, politics labour relations or any other human activity, our true religious character must be an underlying worldview and commitment.
- The Federal and State government must not only protect the rights of individuals, on other issues, but also support and encourage the learning of Christian religious Studies and the right of believers to live out and express their Christian beliefs in the society. This will help believers to put their beliefs in the context that, the world in which we live in is not ours, but we are co-responsible to God for its care and use. As such, public and private resources should be conserved and increase for the welfare for our and others' children and for other creatures. This is based on the Biblical worldview of love and justice
- Parents too are call to stand up to their responsibilities of training their children towards right attitude to education not the present one that promotes the increase of wealth and personal gain. Instead they should encourage the educational growth of genuinely needed knowledge that determines its effect throughout the whole society.
- Teachers of Christian Religious Studies must not only be employed in the field on the basis of their academic qualifications, but those of good morals and integrity. This will help them to provide educational materials and methods of instructions to serve the students' needs to mature with integrity, to be faithful to their life activities and responsible servants of their society and God.

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