

THE PERSPECTIVE OF CHRISTIAN MORAL EDUCATION FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Successive Governments in Nigeria have taken several measures to raise both the moral and living standards of the society. Some of these measures include: Late General Murtala Muhammed's retirement of alleged fraudulent public officers, "the ethical revolution" of Alhaji Shehu Shagari's administration, "War Against Indiscipline" of General Muhammadu Buhari, General Ibrahim Babangida's "Mass Mobilization for Social Justice, Self Reliance and Economic Recovery (MAMSER)"; and General Sani Abacha's "War Against Indiscipline and Corruption" (WAIC). President Olusegun Obasanjo's regime also came up with the Fight against Corruption Crusade. In order to achieve this he set up "the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission" (EFCC) and "Independent Corrupt Practices Commission" (ICPC). Furthermore, on August 1st, 2007, President, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's regime came up with its own policy, named the "Seven Point Agenda". Currently, President Goodluck Jonathan has come up with his Transformation Agenda. However, despite all these efforts, economic experts and policy analysts blame successive governments of failing to achieve their economic goals not because they lacked good plans but because of bribery, corruption, nepotism and social injustices that prevail. Hence, instead of the people benefiting from governments programmes of development; ignorance, poverty, unemployment, insecurity, decaying infrastructure in education and hospital sectors, power outage and ethno-religious conflicts are still prevalent. The paper examined the concepts of governance, good governance, education, moral education and Christian moral education. It further discussed how good governance can be achieved through Christian moral education and made conclusion and recommendations.

Introduction

Pervasive corruption in the country is one challenge the people and their leaders have been tackling, at least in pious declarations of intents, since the young majors struck on January 15, 1966. Yet, in the December 31, 1983 Court Broadcast, Brigadier Sani Abacha of the Nigerian Army addressed the nation on behalf of the Nigerian army indicating the great economic predicament and uncertainty, which an inept and corrupt leadership has posed on the nation for the past four years (Tell Magazine, May 2011: 62). Then after ten years, precisely on Saturday, June 26, 1993, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida addressed Nigerians following the then annulled Presidential election of June 12th. He argued that though the presidential election was generally seen to be free, fair and peaceful, yet there was in fact a huge array of election malpractices virtually in all the states of the federation before the actual voting began (Tell Magazine, May 2011: 65-66).

Furthermore, on Monday, May 29, 1999, His Excellency, President Olusegun Obasanjo following his swearing-in ceremony as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria attributed corruption as one of the greatest tragedies of military rule because it was allowed to grow unchallenged, and unchecked, even when it was glaring for everybody to see. Hence, the challenges to good governance since Nigeria's independence have not been resolved despite several policies and programmes devoted by previous governments to address such. Hence, this

paper which examines the perspective of Christian moral education for good governance in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

Governance: The word ‘governance’ derives from the Greek verb κυβερνάω [*kubernáo*] which means *to* “steer, drive, guide, pilot” and was used for the first time in a metaphorical sense by Plato. It then passed on to Latin as *gubernatio* (“management, government”), and then on to many languages (http://ec.europa.eu/governance/docs/doc5_fr.pdf). The World Bank defines governance as: “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Governance#cite_ref_1). The Worldwide Governance Indicators project of the World Bank defines governance as: “The traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Governance#cite_note_2).

Good Governance: Good governance is a concept that has come into regular use in political science, public administration and, more particularly, development management. It appears alongside such terms as democracy, civil society, participation, human rights and sustainable development. In the last decade, it has been closely associated with the public sector reform. Good governance has 8 major characteristics. It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive, and follows the rule of law. According to Okebukola, (2012: 4):

Good governance is the entire process involved in realizing the purpose of government-providing the abundant life for the people, guaranteeing happiness for the people, administering justice and peace and promoting overall development of the people and social infrastructure as well as preserving environmental wellbeing. Good governance entails the respect for the dignity of the human person and human rights. In a dispensation of good governance, the individual is respected and validated. Good governance promotes social reconstruction, peace-building and brotherhood; it also includes authentic humanism, positive dialogue, equitable and just sharing of resources and abundant provision of the amenities of life etc. It should be noted that good governance does not in any way imply perfection.

Without good governance, democracy degenerates into the dictatorship of the few to the distress of the many. Good governance has become an international standard for measuring the legitimacy and the performance of governments throughout the world. International Donor Agencies now require proof of performance of good governance before they part with their developmental assistance fund (Agbese, 2011).

Education: Education is often defined in several ways depending on an individual’s perception of the subject matter. It can be described as the development of a person spiritually, morally and intellectually, physically and emotionally- process of socialization that enhances the person’s adaptability to society and to his or cultural environment (Maduewesi, 2006). Adesina in Eresimadu and Eneasato (2006:4) observes that education goes beyond literacy alone but also includes the acquisition of functional skills, moral identity, and ambition to succeed in life and to improve the society. Education can be seen as an essential instrument for equipping an individual

to live a successful life in society thereby contributing positively towards socio-economic, technological, scientific, cultural and political development of the nation.

Moral Education: Moral education can be seen as an essential instrument for equipping an individual to be able to judge what is right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate, just or unjust and good or bad in social relations. Moral education inculcates in an individual the appreciation of the values of honesty, integrity, altruism, accountability, hardwork, justice, equity, patience and discipline. According to Otonti (1983:19):

Moral education involves not only teaching, learning and other processes whereby values, rules, principles, ideals, habits and attitudes are inculcated, but also the taking of adequate educational steps supplemented with appropriate institutional arrangements to promote moral growth along the developmental continuum.

Christian Moral Education: Maduewesi (2006:10) describes Christian religious or moral education as the applied aspect of religious studies just as knowledge of plant is used to improve plant cultivation and crop yield. She added that: “it can be seen as the desirability of using Christian values embedded in Christian religion to improve the behaviour of the learner and in final analysis raise the quality of social interactions”. Christian moral education is the process of guiding the behavioural development of an individual in Christian moral principles so that the person can reason appropriately and perform what is right and acceptable in the society.

Moral value may look clearly attractive in terms of looking reasonable and logical which in the long run serve selfish ends, and bring to bear on persons consequences that are detrimental to human existence. This form of attraction does not represent moral values in Christianity. The forms of moral value which have values in Christianity are those that are unselfish, in determination, seek to improve human welfare and in the process achieve all of these within the interest of God.

Thus, actions that expunge God’s interest in content lose its moral signification. All human behaviours standards and principles that are cynical to God’s interest have no moral values. God’s interests begin from the point in which people act as dangerous impediments to the well being of others (Akanmidu, 1993: Pp.149-160).

There is supernatural disclosure that does not allow Christianity to give up its basis in a transcendental revelation and, therefore can neither surrender its moral requirements nor compromise them in the cultural prejudices and corruption of the day.

Christianity’s administration provides laws, rules, and regulations, which govern the conduct of its members. Christianity inculcates moral values through its associations, for example, boys brigade, Girl’s Brigade, fellowship of Christian students, Christian union, scripture union, Nigerian Federation of Catholic students, young men’s Christian Association of Nigeria etc. Through the families, Christian moral ideals are introduced to children. Christian leaders also exert influence in shaping the moral judgments and practices of fellowship. The Christians have the Bible as guard for inculcating Christian ethical principles, failure of which could lead to the expulsion of the member or members from the church. However, various other punishments could also be taken upon the person.

The Perspectives of Christian Moral Education for Good Governance in Nigeria

There is no doubt that Christian moral education embraces the appropriate attitudes and values that are essential for good governance in Nigeria. The attitudes and values discussed in this paper include: good character development, respect for human rights and dignity, promotion of the common good; and protection of the poor and vulnerable.

(1). Formation of Good Character:

Formation of good character is fundamental in Christian moral education. It does not only recognize, but also require a discipline in a formation of character and points to self-discipline as an ideal norm (Wycliff Bible Encyclopediadia, 1975: 401). For example, Christians are urged to live good and righteous life for the well being of the society, “Seek good and not evil that you may live; Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate” (Amos 5:14, 15). “Follow justice and justice alone”. ... (Leviticus 19:35) while (Proverb 14:34) writes: “Righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach”.

The sixth commandment condemns stealing, hence, (Deuteronomy 5: 19) says: “thou shall not steal”. Dishonest acts and lying are also condemned: “if you have not been faithful in that which is another, who will give you that which is your own”. On the danger and consequences of lying the Bible says that: Everyone, who has practiced falsehood have their abode in hell fire. “Do not lie to one another, for he who pours out lie will perish” (Revelation 22: 15; Rev. 21: 8.). A false witness will not go unpunished and he who litters lie will not escape (Proverb (19:5) ...“Do not swear at all ...let what you say be simply yes or no, anything more than this comes from the evil” (Matt5:33-37).

The Bible urges individuals to be upright in their duties, “You shall not take bribe for bribe blinds the officials and subverts the course of those who are in the right” (Exodus 23:8). The Bible admonishes irresponsibility using the parable of the ten virgins in the Gospel of Matthew, ...but at midnight there was a cry,... watch therefore for you do not know the hour” (Matt 25:1-13). Injustice is also seriously condemned, “Do not pervert justice or show no partiality (Amos 5:7). In social relation honour both the rich and the poor... (James 2:1-6).

From the above Biblical injunctions, bad governance which is portrayed in acts such as: nepotism, bribery, corruption, embezzlement of public funds, ethnicity, electoral malpractices and other social injustices etc. are all negative character attributes and contradict Christian moral education. A true Christian ensures that he or she is guided by these scriptural principles which are essential attributes of good governance.

(2). Respect for Human Rights and Dignity

According to Scott, (1989) “human right has its origin from creation. Man has never acquired them nor has any government or other authority conferred it. Man has had them from the beginning. He received them with his life from the hand of his maker. They are inherent in his creation. They have been bestowed on him by his creator.” The dignity of human beings is asserted in three successive sentence in (Genesis 1;27, 28). First, ‘God created man in his own image.’ Secondly, ‘Male and Female he created them....’ Therefore, every person, regardless of race, sex, age, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, employment or economic status, health, intelligence, or achievement is worthy of respect. Thus, human rights are at base the right

to be human, and so to enjoy the dignity of having been created in God's image and of possessing in consequence unique relationship to God himself, to fellow human beings and to the material world. William Temple quoted in (Scott, 1989:163) states:

There can be no rights of man except on the basis of faith in God. But if God is real and all men are his sons, that is the true worth of every one of them. My worth is what I am worth to God; and that is a marvelous great deal, for Christ died for me. Thus, incidentally, what gives each of us his highest worth gives the same worth to everyone; in all that matters most we are all equal.

Hence, equality of all comes from the essential dignity as children of God. Treating equals equally is one way of defining justice, and justice in turn means that we render to each person his or her due, which is the attribute of good governance. While each person is different, while each culture and customs varies, while talents vary, discrimination because of these differences goes against the more basic principle of human dignity. This brings to fore the issues of marginalization in the distribution of natural resources in Nigeria. This has no doubt engendered a lot of conflicts in the Nigerian polity. Just social structure is inevitable in the allocation of resources in the country and should not be biased either by religious, ethnic or political inclinations.

3). Promotion of Common Good

In the catechism of the Catholic Church (Schineller, 2002), the common good is to be understood as the "sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily. A proper concern for the common good is the antidote to unbridled individualism, narrow mindedness and self-centeredness. Working for, and serving the common good involves three basic elements: respect for the human person; and the social well being and development of the group. Jesus Christ begins his preaching by proclaiming that the Kingdom of God is at hand. His Kingdom, open to all and for all is a Kingdom of truth and justice, peace and love.

In Nigeria, public officers squander and loot the money meant for the common good of the masses. In fact, the cancer called corruption which can be found in all spheres of Nigeria life is largely responsible for the stunted economic growth of the country and for the mass poverty that reign in the land (Suleiman, 2011).

(4). Protection of the Poor and Vulnerable

Schineller (2002), observes that a society is measured and evaluated by its treatment of the weak and the powerless. The common good, the good society as a whole requires preferential protection to those affected by the absence of power. The heart and hand of Jesus went out in compassion to the sick, the hungry, the leper and the outcast. Jesus told the disciples of John the Baptist that the sign that he is the true Messiah is that "the poor have the good news preached to them (Mt 11:5). Pope John Paul II emphasizes that the poor are not burdens, but our brothers and sisters. The Catholic Catechism in Schineller (2002), also indicates that, "those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a preferential love on the part of the church, which since her origin and in spite of the family of many of her members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense, and liberation through numerous works of charity which remain indispensable always and everywhere." Indeed, if the Christian politicians and leaders sincerely imbibe these

Christian moral values in the performance of their duties, good governance will inevitably be enthroned.

Conclusion

Good governance does not mean as we tend to understand the term in Nigeria, the willingness of a president or governor to distribute the so-called dividends of democracy among the various communities in the country. The military regime distributed those dividends too, but one cannot ascribe good governance to a military dictatorship. A military government does not permit those essential elements that characterize good governance.

In the same vein, civilian government cannot automatically lay claims to good governance, no matter their level of generosity with the dividends of democracy, if the deficit of good governance is greater than the sum of its performance. There is no doubt that Christian moral education embraces the appropriate attitudes and values that are essential for good governance in Nigeria. These attitudes and values include: formation of good character, respect for human rights and dignity, promotion of the common good; and protection of the poor and vulnerable.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations for achievement of good governance.

- (1) Teaching of Christian moral education should be taken seriously in the family, school, church, mass media and various youth organizations.
- (2) To achieve Good governance all Nigerians should see it as a collective responsibility.
- (3) Electoral process should be credible, free and fair.
- (4) Transparency and accountability should be enthroned in governance. Politicians and those in leadership positions should therefore be alive to their responsibilities.
- (5) Government should provide security for citizens, especially Christians who are being molested and killed by *Boko Haram* during religious worships.
- (6) All forms of injustices and marginalization should be discouraged. Leaders at all levels should be responsive and sensitive to the yearnings and aspirations of the people with regard to certain infrastructural development and social amenities especially that of power supply which causes serious set backs to many businesses and even foreign investments.

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