



Religion, Gender and Globalization

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Abstract

The theme of this write –up caption ‘Religion, Gender and Globalization’. So, this paper seeks to critically examine religion: its historical viewpoint, its etymological perspectives, various views of scholars to the understanding of religion as well as the impact of religion on the society. It shall also look at gender: gender analysis, gender equality and equity and the impact of gender on the society. It shall further look at globalization and its impact on the society. However, this work shall give the researcher the opportunity to do a critical study through the use of a resource materials and also involving directly in a library research that need the secondary sources of documentation not necessarily the primary sources of documentation that involve the participant’s observation, through issuing of questionnaire or personal interview. As a matter of fact, this is a scholarly research work. So, religion as the key terms simply denotes as a belief in the Transcendental Being or a Supreme Being that has a systematic principle of ‘dogma’ that guide the individual adherent or worshipper in their various religion and gender which deals with the socially determined characteristics of an individual in the society as well as globalization which involve the social structural development in the society. Religion, gender and globalization have a social implication both on the individual and society at large.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In recent days, society is made up of various variables that constitute the functionality and operation of the socially – directed activities. These socially – directed activities are controlled by human factor. As a matter of fact, the focus of this write –up is to critically look into the subject matter of religion, gender and globalization as a social factors in the society that need the corresponding human factor as a major determinant of religion, gender and globalization. It is interesting to know that the three socially determined elements in the society can be seen both in a developed and underdeveloped regions of the world.

Therefore, there is no human society without religion because of the fear of the Unknown that is prevalence in the society. Gender in its dimension involves human factors because it involves those characteristics exhibited by human beings that can be considered as being a male or female. Gender is quite different from sex, because sex has to do with the innate biological features that determine whether a person is a male or female. Then, globalization is also a causative development by human factors in the sense that it involves the human adventure into structural development in the society. Nevertheless, these issues cannot be functioning in a vacuum as well as without human factors that need development, socially determined features of individuals and the protection and provision from the Supreme Being.

1.1 HISTORICAL VIEW OF RELIGION

In the actual sense the history of an event or phenomenon is that point in which its existence was documented. The documentation process gave rise to the history of any event of human endeavour because reference could be made to the date it was written down. As it concerns religion which has to do with the belief in the Creator or Unseen being or Spiritual being, religion began immediately after the human creation.

Based on the above view, it is widely said or known that the history of religion is as old as the history of Man himself that is during the creation of Adam and Eve. "That is what archaeologists and anthropologists tell us. Even among the most primitive that is to say, underdeveloped, civilizations, there is no found evidence of worship of some form (Watch Tower 19). In that similar view, Streng put it that "the historical interpretation was justified by an appeal to documentation and by the claim that historical events are to be interpreted as a result of other historical events or as a result of human forces"(55). Summarily, the history of religion is dated back to the period when man was created and acknowledges the presence of a Supreme Being higher than and also spiritual in nature.

1.2 ETYMOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF RELIGION

To study a phenomenon is to critically understand the root meaning of such a phenomenon or the etymological standpoint of such a phenomenon under study. It is on this point that the phenomenon in question is termed "religion". Although effort had been made to provide a generally acceptable definition of religion but failed, because various authors, writers as well as scholars attempted the definition of religion based on their own perception of religion or from their religious background. Accordingly, to the layman's understanding of religion is simply a system of belief and the fear of the "Unknown". The

point narrated above as a layman understanding of religion cannot be overemphasized because apparently man is bound with beliefs and fear of the Unseen Creature. However, this is a mere simplistic way of explaining the concept of religion but in a more elaborate and scholarly manner, the etymological meaning need to be understood.

Etymologically, religion is derived from a Latin word “religio”, which the root word is known as “ligare” with a prefix “Re”. The term “ligare” simply denote to ‘bind’, ‘join’ and ‘connect’ and the prefix “Re” is noted to be ‘again’ in joining the two term “Re” and “ligare” its means rebind, rejoin and reconnect which simply connote that religion is that medium which rebind, rejoin and reconnect us to the Unforeseen or the Unknown. Therefore, it is important to understand that the etymological meaning of religion has it basis on “Re” and “ligare”.

On the other hand, the etymological meaning of religion can also be seen in a two root words ‘leg’ and ‘lig’ (cited in Anyacho 2). According to him ‘leg’ means to take up, gather, or observe, to observe the signs of divine communication” while “Lig” means ‘to bind’ (Anyacho 2). Apparently, religion is that phenomenon that plays the centre pieces of a uniting force among mankind. In this regard, therefore, the uniting force among the religion of the world is the “Unknown” which denote the Supreme Being, Transcendental Being, the Creator, the Supernatural Being, etc. in this premise, it is obvious to understand that religion existed before mankind in the sense that mankind inherited religion or religious experience from the ‘Unknown’ this proves that religion is as old as the world not mankind rather.

To further strengthen the etymological understanding of religion, it was noted that it is derived from the three Latin words; religare, religio and religere are interpreted as the derivatives of the English word “religion” (Okon 17). However, the term religion is a phenomenon that is gotten from a Latin background. Furthermore, Okon presented that ‘religare refers to that which binds, religio refers to a constraint that cannot be evaded; religere refers to something that is recurring in the sense of a verdict which man cannot ignore no matter the level of his development. To sum up the etymological understanding of religion, it is widely accepted that it is a derivatives of the three Latin words that is translated into an English word known as ‘religion’.

1.3 DEFINITIONS OF RELIGION

After exclusive and inclusive understanding of the etymological perception of religion, it is on this view that various scholars, writers, and authors in the field of religious study put up a definition of or the definition of religion. However, a definition or the definition of religion by various scholars, writer,

and authors maybe a result of their preconceived ideas based on their religious background or societal occurrences in a given period.

Therefore, the following definitions of religion are considered in this paper. In the words of Peter Berger, "religion is the human attitude towards a sacred order that includes within it all beings – human or otherwise. In other words religion is the belief in a cosmos, the meaning of which both transcend and includes man" (cited in Okon 18). Patterson view religion as "a relation between man and a Supernatural being" (cited in Edet 1). Religion according to R. W. Bellah is "a set of symbolic forms and acts which relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence" (cited in Anyacho 3). In the words of Melford E. Spiro, religion is "an institution consisting of culturally pattern interaction with culturally postulated Super human beings" (cited in Akpan 30). John Dewey defines religion as "any activity pursued on behalf of an ideal end against obstacles and in spite of threat of personal loss because it's general and ending value" (cited in Okon 19). Another erudite religious scholar known as Emile Durkheim presented a brilliant and excellent definition of religion in the year 1912 to mean "a distinction between the sacred and the profane. Sacred objects – for example, the Cross in Christianity – produce a sense of awe, veneration and respect, whereas profane objects do not". (Cited in Haralambos, Holborn, Chapman and Moore 432). Similarly, Roland Robertson in the year 1970 put up a brilliant definition of religion to include "the existence of Supernatural beings that have a governing effect on life" (Cited in Haralambos, Holborn, Chapman and Moore 432).

Furthermore, a notable German scholar known as Max Muller, simply defined religion as 'a mental faculty or disposition which independent of sense or reason, enables man to apprehend the infinite under different names and varying guises" (cited in Ekpunobi and Ezeaku 2). Another definition of religion put forward by a notable figure of the protestant reformation in the person of Martin Luther, thus, religion is "that to which thy heart clings steadfastly, that truly is thy god" (cited in Brown 4). Accordingly, religion is the "belief in God which culminating in continual worship of Him, strict observance of his words and rules, making petitions before him, identifying with his people and propagating his love" (Edet 2). Lastly, according to John Haggai religion " is the practice of praying, prayer gives us necessary grace to block negative thoughts distracting attitudes and worries that torture the mind and deteriorate the body" (cited in Edet 2).

1.4 IMPACT OF RELIGION IN SOCIETY

The impact of religion can be seen both positively and negatively in society in the sense that society cannot do without religion and religion cannot

function in a vacuum, religious activities must function in the society as well as individual living there. However, religion and society cannot function without the existence of human being, therefore, human being are at the centre piece between them.

Religion as a social phenomenon in society plays a predominant role among groups and individual in the sense that no human society can function without a belief system, although the individual or group beliefs may differ based on their various religions or worldviews but all belief systems aim at the belief of in a Supreme Being or the Supernatural Being. It is on this note that Yinger put it that "religion involves much more. Notice that he does not simply talk about 'beliefs' but about 'a system of beliefs'; religious beliefs are not assortments of unrelated points, but hang together in a coherent way. Christian beliefs, for example are about God's creation, how it was marred by sin, and how God sought to redeem the world through incarnation as Jesus Christ" (Cited in Chrissides and Geaves 20). Positively, religious beliefs and practices sensitize the human society on the existence of God or gods. It was noted that "theology involves much thinking and reasoning about the nature of God and His relationship to man and the world by the exercise of human reason only" (Anyacho 21). To buttress the above view Edet put it that "in this sense, theology has to a greater or lesser degree been focused on God or gods" (20). Religion can also harmonize individual into a group because of their keen interest on the same beliefs. It is on this view that Anyacho put it that "with the society providing the basic ingredients for religious interaction among members of the religious group" (26). Religion creates a sense of belonging for their adherents in the society through their beliefs in the sacred order in the world unseen. Chrissides and Geaves declares that "religion offers sustenance to their followers and encourages them to work for a better world, or for higher goals in some other world" (20). The cognitive impact of religion in society can also be found on the religious rituals and symbols that are used as unifying factors among its members. Religiously speaking, "religious beliefs, symbols, the Church, Mosque, temples, Shrines, etc are integrative mechanisms for various communities of believers" (Anyacho 27). Religious symbols include; all their sacred texts, sacred objects, and worship centers. While religious ritual includes; prayers, meditation, songs, chanting, fasting etc which are mediums through which each member of the society belonging to a particular religious organization commune with the unseen being. It is on this regard, therefore, that Anyacho put it that "religious rituals help to bring the believers together to participate in some common activities" (27). Furthermore, for Chrissides and Geaves put it that "religions encourage prayers or meditation, worship, and ceremonies, and rite of

passage to enable men and women to mark the main life-cycle event such as birth, marriage and death” (20).

On the other hand, negative aspects of religion are also felt in the society due to the fact that not all human persons belong to the same faith, ethnic group, language differences and locality, this may also arouse various religious disparities which constitute religious war and conflict. For Akpan, “there are a number of disturbing phenomena in the society arising from religion” (33). However, religions cause disunity among people in society. In this regard, however, Akpan further reiterate that “religious organizations have sometimes exerted discriminating influences which have often generated disaffection, apathy and separation among people in the society” (33). Furthermore, “religion, which usually praises the virtues of peace, has in many occasions divided people into opposing camps” (Anyacho 29). Even in a particular religion there are usually severe tension and division base on the differences in the denomination. It is quite alarming that “denominational differences have often led to inter-denominational crisis and conflict” (Akpan 34). Various religious beliefs constitute tension and crisis in the society in the sense that Christian belief in Jesus Christ as the son of God, Muslim beliefs in Prophet Muhammad as the chosen prophet of God, while Buddhist beliefs in Buddha enlightenment. Therefore, “religious beliefs in reincarnation, resurrection, promises of paradise, Nirvana and Heaven enable one to bear the loss of a beloved relation with fortitude and hope” (Anyacho 29).

2.0 RELIGION AND GENDER

Religion and gender is an area of studies in the academic discipline of religious studies that base its interest on knowing how gender issues (male and female) are being treated. Although female gender sees religion and society as a patriarchal dominance over them and try to look for measures that can bring equity and equality. According to Chryssides and Geaves “some women have struggled with their Christianity and gender issues and come to the conclusion that the former is irrevocably permeated by patriarchal attitudes and structures and therefore irredeemable” (319). However, for Wehmeier, gender is “the fact of being male or female: issues of class, race and gender” (492). It was also noted that “gender refers to the socially determined ideas and practices of what it is to be female or male” (Reeves and Baden 2).

Based on the above understanding of gender, its essence does not implied any dominance over any gender (male or female) but religion and society ensures that there is marginalization and segregation of female gender from certain activities in the society because of its patriarchal nature.

2. 1 GENDER ANALYSIS

This, of course, shows the extent at which there is a proper evaluation of gender activities in the society to ensure that there is need for inclusion of both the male and female gender in the planning and developmental process of the society. However, in any case, if there is any separation of the male from the female in the planning process of the society it brought about gender imbalance in society, for instance, even in a family circle where the male child is given preference to female child always bring about chaos in the family. Besides the family circle, schools may also contribute to the gender imbalance in the sense that most school activities are being divided between male and female. Base on this view it was noted that “however, in both classrooms there were instances where teachers reinforced gender differences by, for example, organizing contests between boys and girls, referring to ‘the boys’ and ‘the girls’ in the classroom, or getting the children to separate into boys’ and girls’ lines when going to antagonism or rivalry between males and female, and reinforced a sense that the sexes were different” (Haralambos, Holborn, Chapman and Moore 757).

Gender analysis is that aspect to check mate the excesses of gender separation and difference in relating to the development plan of the society to avoid misappropriation of gender role in society. For Reeves and Baden, gender analysis is “the systematic gathering and examination of information on gender differences and social relations in order to identify, understand and redress inequalities based on gender. Gender analysis is a valuable descriptive and diagnostic tool for development planners and crucial to gender mainstreaming effort” (6).

2.2 GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUITY

In society there is a greater expectation of balance between the male and female gender, this balance may be as a result of providing the equal standing of the gender differences to maintain a stable status quo in the society. In the contrast, female gender always sees their selves as being segregated from the society by male gender; this arouses inequality in the opportunity offered to them. It was noted that “in recent days there has been an increased theoretical emphasis upon the differences among women, and the differences among men. It has been recognized that there are a variety of ways to be feminine and a variety of ways to be masculine” (Haralambos, Holborn, Chapman and Moore 103). Due to the patriarchal nature of the society, female gender has been categorized with all sort of inequalities in the society. This inequality can be seen in all forms of hierarchy in society. So, “it manifests as hierarchical genders relations, with

men above women, and women being regarded as inferior and less valuable solely by virtue of their sex” (Mikkola and Miles 6).

However, on the contrary, gender equality and equity is that aspects that ensure that there is balance of the gender inequality in the society. Therefore, for Mikkola and Mines gender equality “is expressed in attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and policies that reflect an equal valuing and provision of opportunities for both gender” (6). Gender equality can further be seen as “women having the same opportunities in life as men including the ability to participate in the public sphere” (Reeves and Baden 10). However, in simplistic understanding of the gender equality is that approach that ensures that there is need for equal opportunities for men and women in society, that is, where restriction is being place either on men or women is being removed. For instance, in Nigeria’s political portfolio or offices like chairman, governor, president before recently women were restricted from such opportunity. But in recent days due to gender equality such embargo had been removed.

On the other hand, gender equity as noted by Reeves and Baden is “the equivalence in life outcomes for women and men, recognizing their different needs and interests and requiring a redistribution of power and resources” (10). Based on the above view, although gender equality and equity may be interchangeably used at times but there are quite different in the sense that the former look at equal opportunities for both gender in a public sphere while the latter ensures that there should be a proportion of treatments for men and women base on their desire and want, it also show interest in the percentage sharing of power and resources. For instance, in the ministerial position in the Nigerian democracy there should be either 60%/40% Or 70%/ 30% ratio for the appointment of men and women into ministerial offices respectively.

2.3 IMPACT OF GENDER IN THE SOCIETY

When referring to gender in this context does not really denote the sex pattern of an individual, that is , the biological pattern that differentiate between a male and female but gender in its own understanding is the social and psychological patterns of behaviour that an individual exhibit in society. Gender for Isoyip is simply the “socio- cultural designations of behavioural and psychological qualities” (152). So, in some cases in the society a male child may develop a female tendencies and attributes while the female child in the other hand may also develop the male tendencies and attributes

Therefore, gender issues as brought about a serious disparity among people in society that may retard the developmental process in the family and society at large. This is as a result of decision power largely given to men than women. It is in this basis that has resulted in gender hierarchy in

society. So, "Gender hierarchy is manifested in family relationships, inheritance laws and customs; valuations of women's work and its general invisibility; and the power to make decisions in society" (Mikkola and Miles 6). To buttress the above view of the hierarchical nature emphasize both on women and men in society which apparently distort the developmental process of a given project in society. Reeves and Baden put it that "hierarchical relations of power between women and men that tend to disadvantage women. These gender hierarchies are often accepted as 'natural' but are socially determined relations, 'culturally' based and are subject to change over time" (18). It is noteworthy that the gender issues above indicate that gender relation has a reversal impact in society in the sense that women are seen to belong to the low class in society even when their contribution may bring a progressive impact in society.

Furthermore, there is a strictness attach to division of labour in family and society concerning women and men. Some domestic works are mostly specifically designated to women while most paid jobs are preferred to men that see one ahead of each other. For this fact, Mikkola and Miles noted that "societal norms and rules may exclude women from particular types of paid employment or leadership positions. On the other hand, men may be excluded from child care and the home sphere which is considered the women's territory" (7). However, Reeves and Baden reiterate that "roles typically designated as female are almost invariably less valued than those designated as male. Women are generally expected to fulfill the reproductive role of bearing and raising children, caring for other family members, and household management tasks, as well as home based productive roles, particularly paid work, and market production" (8).

2.4 GLOBALIZATION

The term 'globalization' is derived from the words 'globe' or 'global' which simply denote 'the whole world'. However, globe simply means "an object shaped like a ball with a map of the world on its surface, usually on a stand so that it can be turned" (Wehmeier 504). On the other hand, global indicate "a covering affecting the whole world" (Wehmeier 503). It is on this basis that globalization derived its root. Globalization look into any phenomena that its impact can be found in the whole world. Due to the advancement of science and technology in which the world become a global village where information get to every nooks and crannies of the world in a second through social and mass media, this is as result of globalization. Based on this view, Anyacho writes "the current issue in globalization is making us become more aware of the interconnectedness of all men in the universe regardless of race, tribe, religion, level of technology and economic advancement" (163).

However, Ritzer defines globalization “as a transplanetary process or set of process involving increasingly liquidity and the growing multidirectional flows of people, objects, places and information as well as the structures they encounter and create that are barriers to, or expedite those flows” (cited in Haralambos, Holborn, Chapman and Moore 1006). Globalization ensures the fast spreading of events and information through internet- networking. Therefore, global issues like increase in population, environmental degradation, outbreak of disease, sporting activities, religion, gender issues and so on, are those phenomena that its impact is fondly established in human nature and society at large. Religion and gender are epitomizing issues of globalization in the sense that their impacts are experience in every facet of human activities.

2.5 IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION IN SOCIETY

The positive impact of globalization is to create the awareness of information in the human society, it educates the people with the existing technological development in society, and it encourages structural development in the society. And on the other hand, the negative impact of globalization is the constant destruction of the ecosystem; it is on this that Oyeshola writes “Our planet is threatened by global warming, ozone depletion, biological diversity loss, deforestation, desertification, environment disasters and degradation” (cited in Anyacho 163). Also, due to the rapid increase in the life sustaining machine through scientific discovery and advance drugs the world population keep on increasing in a geometrical progression. Emmel noted that “the world population reached 5.7 billion in 1994 and if the rate of growth is unabated it will reach 10 billion by the year 2030” (cited in Anyacho 165). It is noteworthy that globalization is paradoxical in nature because its positive and negative implication is being felt in the society in the recent days

2.6 CONCLUSION

The focus of this paper was on typological issues that its relevance affects the society in which we lived. It looks at the concept of religion in its own entirety; that is, the historical view of religion, the etymological view of religion, its definitions, and impact of religion in society. It further looks at the concept of religion and gender; gender analysis, gender equality and equity, and the impact of religion in the society. However, globalization was also under study and its relative impact in the society.

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