

29

RELIGION, PEACE AND SECURITY FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

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Introduction

Oloyede (2016) stresses that religion remains the most powerful force that brings people together despite geographical barriers. He listed religious values to include truth, honesty, compassion, kindness, modesty, decency, selflessness, chastity, justice, discipline, patience, morality, sincerity, among others. According to Obiefuna (2018), religion is fundamental to humans, life and living, thinking patterns, attitudes and relationships. He added that religion is considered critical for all meaningful and sustainable development in any human society. In light of the above qualities of religion, what else is expected in a religious society other than peace and security that will result in sustainable living? Religion is a strand from the time mankind learnt about the existence of a higher being than him and the need to worship such a being. Hence, trusting in the power of that gives confidence, peace and security for life to continue.

Every religion practised on earth, by its nature and meaning, is neither for evil nor violence but for peace, security and sustainable living unto mankind. If any religion is considered to be bad or violent, then it is usually the product of the wickedness of the practitioners. All religions are good because the centre of every religion is the concept of God. God, in His nature, is not evil but love. Religion serves as mankind's channel of communication with God. Although God is abstract, faith transforms Him from a state of abstraction to an imaginary physical, whereby one can talk with him. This paper considers every human being on earth as religious, be it consciously or unconsciously. Omoregbe (1993) emphasises that religion is such a striking and interesting phenomenon in human life that it cannot be ignored even by the sceptics, agnostics and atheists. He added that there is no other phenomenon, which moulds and controls man's life as much as religion does. For religion, men have given up their possessions, even their lives. Some have renounced the wealth they were born into and turned themselves into beggars for their religious beliefs. The apostles of Jesus Christ, St Francis of Assisi, Williams Carey, Robert Moffat, Bishop Shanahan, including Revd Fr BAC Obiefuna, among many others, who, in this critical and corrupt age of human existence, have the courage to stand by the truth, sincerity, justice, fairness, etc. for his religious beliefs.

What then is this Religion that people should choose to sacrifice for?

The concept of religion as well as its meaning and understanding have differed from generation to generation and from society to society. By sociological classification of society, there are apparently three types of society, namely: traditional society, modern society and post-modern society. Each of these societies carry with it changes in religious, social, cultural, political, educational and economical phenomena.

To start with traditional society, it has been explained by O'Donnell (1997) as primitive society. That is, non-literate or pre-industrial society. Traditional society is characterised by religion. That is to say, people of traditional society emphasise religion in

almost everything. As a non-scientific society, people of traditional society are shallow-minded. As a result, they rely on religion for a living. Hence, Madu (1997) identifies that religion is so important to humanity like a child who absolutely believes in the might of his father, and this gives him absolute confidence and security in his daily activities, as the belief in the sovereignty of God makes man to forge ahead in life despite the myriads of problems of existence.

Religion affords an insight into the realm of the supra-mundane, making us realise that life has meaning, a meaning which must be sought in union with God. Religious cults and rituals to God, which give man a sense of friendship with God, are pointers to the positive value orientation of reciprocal relationships in human enterprise. Man, in his vertical dimension, finds fulfilment, self-realisation, and self-actualisation in God, who he believes cannot fail or disappoint him in the manner of human beings. Hope is a very strong element for human existence, and since religion preaches hope, the seemingly hopeless man can endure the hardships of life with the hope of a better tomorrow. Religion is at the core of the personality, and thus, man is aroused by the value that man holds dear to him. In fact, the whole mysteries surrounding human existence are to find their answers in religion and not in another field of endeavour such as philosophy. Religion has a way of holding together people of the same faith to the extent that, often, such solidarities are extended to other human activities.

In Igbo traditional society, that is when the Igbo people had not experienced western education, life was easy and simple. There was love among the people of every community. In those days, the law of the land was supreme, and religion was held to a great height. People saw themselves as one and brothers' keepers. There was nothing like unknown gunmen, Boko Haram, no armed robber, no kidnapper, no assassin, and all other evil beings. People enjoyed life in a natural way. For example, children came together at night, especially when there was moonlight, for moonlight plays and storytelling. Adults also gather at the clan square to hear news of the day over gourds of palm wine that would be brought by raffia palm tappers free. Such gatherings were possible and a sign of peaceful co-existence and security.

Peaceful Co-existence

Peaceful co-existence can take place at every level of human existence or society - local, national or international. At whatever level, peace is peace and means absence of war or conflict. According to Ozoemena (2019), the underlying principles of peaceful coexistence include the renunciation of war and adoption of negotiations as a means of resolving dispute between states: equal rights, mutual understanding, and trust between states, as well as consideration of each other's interests, non-interference in the internal affairs of another states; (person) and recognition of each people's right to choose freely its own socio-economic and political system. In addition, peaceful co-existence presupposes a rigorous respect for the sovereignty and the development of economic and cultural cooperation based on full equality and mutual benefit.

Concept of Peace

Peace is a thing often desired but hard to find. Virtually everybody needs peace but many people will not like to pay the price. Peace is conceptually divided into two for the purpose of this work: absolute peace and relative peace. Absolute peace is referred to as peace given

by God to mankind. ‘But upon David and his descendants, upon his house and his throne, there shall be peace forever from the Lord.’ Otherwise, there is no absolute peace but relative peace.

Definition of Peace

It is not easy to define the word ‘peace’ without running into arguments. Hence, peace may be defined in several ways. Literally, the word peace is derived from the Latin word “pax”, which means a pact, a control or an agreement to end war or any dispute and conflict between two people, two nations or two antagonistic groups of people. One clear fact is that the absence of peace in any environment is dangerous because the absence of peace means the presence of conflict. The writer, at this point, wishes to follow Ibeanu (2009) in his conceptualisation of peace, where he says that apart from the peace as the converse of war thesis and its instrumentalist and functionalist interpretations, we can also evaluate other conceptualisations of peace as they appear in philosophical, sociological and political works.

Philosophical Definition of Peace

Many philosophers see peace as a God-given state of human existence. Peace, from this philosophical point of view, is the pre-corruption state of man in society, as God established it. In other words, peace is a state of perfection, an earthly expression of God’s kingdom that is yet uncorrupted. Thus, St. Augustine of Hippo distinguished between “two cities”, namely, the city of God, founded on perfect heavenly peace and spiritual salvation, and the earthly city of man, founded on appetitive and possessive impulses, corrupt and torn by strife.

Sociological Definition of Peace

Like normative philosophy, the sociological definition of peace addresses the social context. However, while normative philosophy addresses what ought to be, the sociological definition addresses what is. Sociologically, peace refers to a condition of social harmony in which no social antagonism exists. In other words, peace is a condition in which there is no social conflict, and individuals and groups are able to meet their needs and expectations. How is this achieved? There are two broad stylised sociological responses, namely, structural functionalist and dialectical materialist responses.

Structural-functionalism is a tradition of social analysis that sees society as a mosaic of functions and structures that perform them. For example, in order to survive, a society needs to educate its children, produce goods, govern its affairs and provide security for its members. These are number of structures such as schools, industries, parliaments, courts, armed forces, and so on put in place to achieve this.

Thus, structure means a set of interrelated roles necessary for performing a specific function. When structures perform their functions properly, there is order in society and in fact, society inherently moves in the direction of order and stability. Consequently, from a structural functionalist perspective, peace is achieved where existing social structure perform function adequately supported by the requisite culture, norms and values.

On the other hand, dialectical materialism is a tradition of social analysis associated with Karl Marx. It suggests that to understand society what we should look at are the processes through which society produces and distributes the means of its material existence

and the struggles, usually among social classes, that are integral to the process. In other words, it is about how human societies produce and how they distribute work and rewards. In societies divided into classes, the dominant classes do less work but appropriate most of the rewards.

However, peace will not be feasible in so far as society is divided into classes and there is persistence of objective structural and revolutionary violence.

Francis (2009) defined peace from different points of view. To him, peace is generally defined as the absence of war, fear, conflict, anxiety, suffering and violence, and the absence of peaceful coexistence. It is primarily concerned with creating and maintaining a just order in society, and the resolution of conflict by non-violence means. In general, he continued, six meanings of peace are agreed on by many peace researchers, including peace as the absence of war, peace as justice and development, peace as respect and tolerance between people, peace as Gaia (balance in and with the ecosphere) inner peace (spiritual peace) and peace as 'wholeness' and 'making whole'.

Finally, Ozoemena stressed that there is internal peace or peace of mind. It is a state of calm, serenity and tranquillity of mind that arises due to having no sufferings or mental disturbances such as worry, anxiety, greed, desire, hatred, ill-will, delusion, et cetera. Internal peace is peace within oneself; it is derived from practicing or training of mind of an individual. Lao Tzu said about peace poetically thus:

If there is to be peace in the world,
there must be peace in the nations.
If there is to be peace in the nations,
there must be peace in the cities.
If there must be peace in the cities,
there must be peace between neighbors.
If there must be peace between neighbors,
there must be peace in the home.
If there must be peace in the home,
there must be peace in the heart.

Internal peace, therefore, is the foundation of peace; if all men had internal peace, the world would be free of troubles. There is no doubt religion is one of the ways peace of mind is achieved. And where ever there is peace, there is security.

Security

The word, security, may be difficult to define because it is multidimensional. In every aspect of life, security can be perceived; hence, it is wide in scope. The concept of security can be seen from insecurity. It is common to talk about insecurity in the terms of kidnapping people at random, killings, rape, banditry, strike, protest, unemployment, school-drop-out, high cost of living, and many more. Looking at what is conceptualised as insecurity, one can see what can be said to be security. In the words of Adedoyin (2013):

It is an indisputable fact that development is strongly linked to security. No nation can develop economically, socially, and politically in the environment of insecurity. In such environment, scarce resources that ought to be used for implementing development projects are diverted towards providing security for all and sundry, because it is when people are alive and well that they can plan on how to develop their environment. Therefore, security of lives and properties against threat of

insecurity, be in internal or external, is paramount to the leadership of any country (pp. 455 – 485).

Security is a fundamental issue because the sustainability of life and living depends on it. If there is no security, existence may not be possible. Scholars often discuss security in terms of national security, human security and global security. Each of these can be subdivided. For example, human security can be subdivided into economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security, according to the UNDP report of 1994. The writer suggests that there ought to be religious security. Although one may argue that personal security accommodates religion, the writer insists that the first security sought by humankind is religious security.

Concept of Religions Security

The first human experience concerning security was religious security, for after God created Adam and Eve, he kept them in the Garden of Eden, where they lacked nothing, and God used to visit them according to biblical stories. They trusted and confided in God for all their needs, and their living was sustained. Whatever a person accepts as his/her God (god) is what that person trusts and confides in in times of trouble and hopelessness for sustainable living. From the Watchtower comes the story of Faizal, who required major heart surgery just over a year after his wife died.

He says; “When I read the book of Job, I know Jehovah put it there for a reason. When we find an example in the Bible that we can relate to, it is a way of soothing our pain of heart.” Again, Tarsha was young when her mother died. She says; “knowing our Creator is what gives life purpose, hope and joy despite all the things we may have to deal with. Jehovah is more than capable of sustaining and helping us to get through each day.

Above one life experiences, there may be more traumatic events that can make life seem unbearable. But as one carries one’s personal burden, one may wonder if life is worthwhile or whether anyone cares about another person’s trouble. Assurance is that one’s God (god) cares about his own. Even though deity may not take away one’s problem immediately, the faith and confidence can give inner peace and hope with which to cope and overcome. This is source of security that helps to sustain living To a Christian, the word of God in the Bible, gives him hope and assures him of better future and through prayers and supplication, the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will fill and guard his heart and thought hence there will be sustain able living.

Conclusion

Religion indisputably, is the primary source of peace and security to every meaningful human being. As concept of God is the centre of every religion, as God has the capacity and capability of handling every situation, inner peace comes from God. To Christian faithful, the Bible in book of Luke 4:18; states “The spirit of the lord is upon me, because he has appointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the broken hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

Just like Christianity every other religion has a way of providing peace and security to her members through the deity that is worshipped, and thus, life continues.

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