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Globalization and its Effects on Christianity

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Abstract

The world as a "global village" comes to grips with the fact that civilization and modernization endlessly speak of making people "happy" and at the same time elevate capitalism, consumerism, slavery, debt, bondage, hypocrisy and among others. Thus, the central teaching in Christianity is love of God and love of neighbour. Globalization today celebrates a way of life that not only leads people away from this love but also discourages people from knowing that this love exists. Undoubtedly, globalization, a purported grandeur as it claims, actually starves and alienates lives and barricades people's way to the source of real love. Hence the writer attempted to re-define this real love in Christian context and the need to internalize its essence in the light of globalism.

Introduction

Globalization has thus become the much-talked about and most pressing issue of the contemporary times. From the period of the schoolmen to the present day, globalization is a top-of-the list issue. Most interestingly is the fact that globalization is geared towards interdependence and transnational reach within the developed and developing countries. Meanwhile, globalization has reduced drastically the sense of isolation felt in much of the developing world as well as access to knowledge beyond the reach of even the wealthiest nations. Fundamentally, it has enormously reduced the cost of transportation, communication and the breaking down of artificial barriers to the services, knowledge, and people across borders. This process has made Christian teaching easily accessible to many.

However, the globalization is not actually making life better especially for those most in need of its promised benefits. This is obvious in Christian faith where issues of

religious wars and "Christolatry" are prevalent. Also, pornography, hypocrisy, immoralities, homosexuality, fake lifestyle, among others are entertained in Christianity globally. As a matter of fact, Christianity is centred on global love and true happiness for mankind. But, this interconnectedness of people has vehemently refused to unite people together. This has truly alienated Christians from the real benefit of love as a result of the breaking down of the barrier Christianity has hinged on.

It is therefore the intention of this paper to explore globalization and Christianity. This study will cursorily look at Christian teaching in the global context; with a view to assessing the current trend in Nigerian milieu.

Globalization: An Overview

The wake-up call to globalization has indeed built safeguards to project the vulnerable against sudden or interminable reversal of fortunes as the world undergoes a process of rapid change. Suffice it to say that (Nnamani 2003: 16) asserts that.

Globalization refers to the phenomenon whereby, people, countries, businesses and other groups around the globe relate without difficulty. Globalization is multi-dimensional, with social, political (religious) and economic implication.

Supporting this claim, (stiglitz; 2002:4) writes:

Globalization as a force that has brought so much good – become so controversial? ...Globalization has led to the introduction of new technologies, access to new markets and collective action at the global level for religious stability and liberalization.

Thus, stiglitz sees globalization as partly good and partly controversial. It is good as a result of the innovation, invention, easy access to million of people at the doorstep without much ado. By extension, the good includes access to religious teaching in the Internet, collective decision on religious stability in all nations without going into war. On the other hand, it is partly controversial as a result of the liberalization that has broken the global ethics. This liberalization is the gullible acceptance of all activities whether they are inimical or unhealthy to every individual or not.

Having discussed the good and ugly side of globalization, it is pertinent to note that religion is not indifferent to the interdependence with regard to the social change occasioned by the development in technology. This has tremendously affected religion especially Christianity. It must be understood that Christianity is global. Most of the religious tenets are universal and globally appealing. This truth attempts to reconcile the cultural

diffusion, which in a way poses threat to the belief in what constitutes the basis of Christian teachings. We shall now turn to the Christian teaching in the global context.

Christian Teaching In The Global Context

Christianity as a religion founded by Jesus Christ teaches global love of God and of neighbour (Matt 22:37-39). Jesus Christ himself focused mainly on this global happiness and government when he taught his followers to pray for God's will to be done on the earth (Matt 6:10). Notably, Christianity whose application revolves around central concept of love of God and of neighbour informs the whole ecumene as briskly enunciated by Jesus Christ; and anybody who believes has not only become a true Christian indeed but has also embraced a perfect weitaristic way of life in the present on the one hand, and the life of bliss in the hereafter on the other hand. (Esposito and Watson, 2000) assert that Christianity as one of the world religions is global and universalizing as well as spatially rooted; but in particular, it has non-economic values and norms to sustain; and its interrelations are thus of considerable importance for global order in the sense of sustaining the values of justice, peace, and ecological integrity. Not only that, it is equally expected that Christians lead their lives according to scriptural tenets by contributing their energies towards human and social development.

In a way, Christianity ensures the all-encompassing and all-embracing development of man and service to God. To this end, this is a product of man, and it is concerned with a moral and righteous man who can by virtue of ethical inclination, ensure an adequate development of the polis. (Stephen Post, 1990) remarks further that "human personality can only reach fulfillment in communion with God and with others who share in this communion". (Ibid) consistently maintains that the commandment to love God is a prerequisite to that of love for the neighbour; the latter devices its authority and content from the first, without which it would not be a religious injunction. This means "god-centered charity." This therefore portends the building of humanity in the "Golden Rule" or global ethic of "people should treat others as they would themselves wish to be treated" (Matt. 7: 12). It is worthy of note that:

Jesus Christ, the greatest leader the world has ever known, taught this standard of behaviour some two thousand years ago...but the principle is still as valid as ever. A globalization that hinged on that standard would undoubtedly be beneficial for everyone. (Awake, 2002:12).

In the era of globalization, Christian response to global communication is equivalent to describing the place of culture in Christianity. In modernity, civil society is certainly the space in which religion cum Christianity can breathe more easily and through which it can best subscribe to the development of a different order (Esposito and Watson, 2000:33). As Christianity is global, information technology has played great and inalienable role in bringing services to the doorstep of the privileged ones through Internet, newspaper, and publishing houses, Television station, website, among others, and has also played dynamic leadership in professionalism, viz physicians, lawyers, preachers etc. Of course, it is essential for the civil society organization to have a significant impact on the question of global order as it has transnational reach. In fact, this assertion is premised on the fact that information is about enlightenment and acculturation. In other words, the cross pollination of ideas and cultural influence are a vital feature of globalization and nothing symbolizes these phenomena more than the Internet.

To give an exposition of the Christian global analysis of information technology is to actually emphasize the stark reality of the much talked about globalization. To start with, the global information at the disposal of the Christian through the Internet, computer, satellite is greatly influenced by the initiators of the information system to both good and the peril of Christianity. The implication of this to the Christians in the global context where information is everything is that it adversely exposes Christianity and its faithfuls to both good cultural diffusion as well as interminable threat.

Ryerson (2000:14) observes positively that as for our Christian faith in scientific technology, we strive to maintain balance between commitment and openness, firmness and flexibility, continuity and change, and memory and receptivity. Therefore, the Christians of the world must discover the commonalities among the world's religions, as well as the differences, so that we can all build on the commonalities and intelligently discuss the possibility of creating societies of tolerable and approximate justice. This justice will swallow both human and global flaws, and thus engages in a worldwide conversion about spirituality and morality, about the very nature of civilization. This is particularly true of the world's Christians. Besides, globalization centers on interconnectedness and participates in the co creation of the universe. This resides in the inter-connectedness and not in single individuals. To the end, Jesus taught the world that he is not a sole possessor of power, but the revelation of a new understanding of power that connects members of the community. Levison and Levison (1992:154) appositely remark that Jesus taught the world an internal ethic of solidarity in Matt.5: 21-28. The need for forgiveness, purity, giving up one's cloak,

and giving to the poor—all of these were internal commands to members of the nations. In this way, individualism would be eliminated by a solidarity, which claimed that they, not their white oppressors, were a people of dignity, God's chosen.

However, globalization simply accepts modernity that loses the rudder of our tradition and our faith. Christianity has become too accommodated to modernity and has

grace is never cheap. This is not a message that modernity welcomes. Again, with the introduction of website and cybercafe, there is cultural conflicts and the promotion of materialistic values which people find uneasy to hold back the tide.

Unfortunately, the internet is not merely used to spread beneficial information, cultural, and commerce. Some websites promote pornography; racism or gambling ... Television and film also have an ~~unhealthy influence on people's minds. The images on the screen~~ screens often come out of irony mood, the world's principal factory of make-believe. The value that this vast entertainment industry reflects, often promote materialism, violence, or immorality (Awake, 2002).

Arising from the foregoing, it is apparent that these are foreign to the local culture of many nations of the world. In a way, this globalization of culture has made it so unwholesome that invasive western culture and lifestyle have affected people's hope and desires. With this global phenomenon, in today Christendom, there is the total acknowledgement of materialism, in that preachers so much concentrate on materialistic values than spiritual values and inclination. To a large extent, vast majority of mankind will never attain such a global happiness as a result of material progress in the face of despondency especially in the developing countries.

Another area of concern arising from this is the effect of pornography in the globalised world. With this, in actual sense, mankind has patterned a lifestyle that permits man to wear earrings, 'fry' hair and others, which are disdainful to a next-door neighbour. Even today, immorality is being handled with levity, such that many unusual things have been admitted in Christendom. In fact, sexual harassment and fornication have been given a "second thought." The example of Rev. King would suffice in this regard. Homosexual bishops are now being consecrated and permitted to preach in South Africa and London especially in Anglican Communion. This recent phenomenon is almost dividing Christendom (especially Anglican communion). In a communiqué issued at the end of Anglican conference in England it is said among others that:

Consecration of homosexuals could lead to further divisions in the church and put the future of the communion in jeopardy. These actions threaten the unity of our own communion as well as our relations with other parts of Christ's church ... All this is happening in a world already confused in areas of sexuality, morality and theology and polarised Christian opinion.(Daily Independent,2003)

The wake-up call in Christendom today is to attack this with energy instead of admitting it, because without global morals "the friction and tensions of living, in the global neighbourhood will multiply" (Ibid). It is interesting if not sad to note that this unchecked globalization has posed and still poses dangers. For it is pointedly noted that:

Globalization has broken down the barriers we had depended to protect our cultures and religion {i.e. Christianity} (Post Express 1999:27).

Much more shocking is fact that many Christians fail to scrutinize messages received, but this is not to say that Christianity is against civilization or modernity as obviously observed and pioneered by cyberspace. Rather, Christians should verify any message in ascertaining the ring of authenticity before accepting such. There are no two ways the fact that Christians have become immersed in foreign messages capable of posing threats to world system.

It is evidence that economic strand in the global context is nothing to write home about. The reason is not far fetched because economies built upon capitalism cannot stand to benefit individual poor. This tendency sets to benefit ably privileged at the expense of the underprivileged. The vast income divide between rich and poor segregates people and even countries from one another. Globalization has promoted and championed the course of the rich against the poor. Such gross unfairness in the global neighbourhood clearly sows many seeds of unrest and frustration. Churches are not therefore immune from these tendencies, but in so far as they are less affected than other bodies then they are likely to find themselves increasingly marginalized in their role and influence" (Esposito and Watson, Ibid)

In a nutshell, such activity of global exploitation encourages embezzlement, hoarding, miserliness, and other criminal and pathological fixation. The only headway is creating enabling environment of freedom for individuals to cultivate the general welfare of the society for full realization of potentials of members in a bid to attaining user-friendly freedom and environment. This measure informs and forms the love of neighbour, which, to globalism, has not been fair but widening the gulf between the rich and poor. Put differently, Christianity does not share the idea of exploitation, no wonder, the basic necessities – food, shelter

and clothing) have been elusive to man with the inherent contradiction and heaven – insulting heresy that suffering, extortion, oppression, and other economic vices will be rewarded in heaven. This concept depicts “the enemy within” and the inferiority and shame that the ideology of domination says about them. Thus, the famine currently experienced in the third world of today has become nucleus for the call for globalism, whereas the end product is uneven distribution of the global wealth.

In the political arena, globalization does not favour the impoverished countries. This fact is borne out of the realization that the western political ideology is hinged on democracy – the government by vast majority. Meanwhile, it is obvious that theocracy and Monarchy were practiced in the yore, but sovereignty is left in the populace. Albeit, Christians obey those charged with authority, hence God ordained all authority. (Rom.13: 1-6). It must be emphasized that this God-given mandate is not supposed to be used to the total neglect of the people and total disobedience to God. Thus, during the medieval period, the church and state were romanticizing. But in this modern secular sense, governance depends largely on the state, identifying with religion and associating with its culture. With this event, democracy is highly favoured because of the fact that it is a government of people’s representation. Therefore, it should be globally seen as a government with full participation of the populace, wide consultation to strengthen national identity and bolster the state apparatus, responding favourably to its overtures, in opposition to foreign influences and especially those arising from contemporary globalization.

By extension, Peters (2000:376) asserts that global politics should be anchored on the divine and political ordering, which is not alien to individuals, but built into our nature that possesses a communal life and spills ahead to the kingdom of God. He goes further to say that:

Political order... as the general human tendency, towards the forming of community and ordering of community life around principals of fairness and justice is the eschatological call ringing in the ear of every one in organized society. Life in the temporal body politics can offer us a positive foretaste of what will be our final destiny in the everlasting polis of God (Ibid).

To this end, it is mandatory for the subjects to obey their elected leaders and such leaders should in turn manage state affair with wide consultation, candour, equality, justice, fairness

regardless of the faith and position of the minority. Through internet today, specific instructions are given on how to send parcel bombs invariably to the "dissenters" in the global Politic. These unprecedentedly send their wilders and their targets to their grave. "On the internet, trouble is just a few mouse clicks away"

The Nigerian Case

The Nigerian church intermingles with the global world in the sense of sustaining the values of Justice, peace, culture, and equity among others. Despite its transnational reach, Christianity in Nigeria some what battles the various paradoxes from that which we are fully aware, coupled with the obvious fact of undermining the theological agenda which fails to protect its corresponding differences and advocate an inviolate whole. These observable differences in culture, and other spheres seem so strong and pronounced.

The diversity of Christian tradition constitutes some of the most potent challenges to Christian faith in the global world. The challenge is more acute now than before. Not only are these problems all around us; they exist within us as well. We have begun to internalize foreign culture, western lifestyle, materialistic value in the Nigerian church with the bane of make-believe and attendant consequence of material progress in the face of despondency and angst in Nigeria on one hand and the developing nations on the other. Thus, the introduction of Internet has infused *Laissez Faire* attitude in Christians in Nigerian culture, because attention has been shifted from we-feeling or communal way of life to capital top-list. Today, in Nigerian church, nothing is held about the golden rule; hence, the barrier of our culture has been broken consequent upon globalization.

Initially, Catholic communion has been the only church in existence for a long time that condemned materialism, slavery, unjust wages and exploitation of people, but with the recent development both Catholic and Protestants alike have portrayed and still portray commercialization of religious system, which has been fully incorporated into the global capital system. With the commercialization of Christianity, there is intense greed, selfishness, competition even among preachers, callousness-preferring material wealth to men, the readiness to sell anything including sex or honour provided there is a large enough material things especially money (Toyo, 2001:13). It is mind-boggling to note that Nigerian Christianity remains gloomy as long as the rich are getting richer and much more powerful while the poor become humiliatingly poor, helpless and hopeless, with the unprecedented famine in the land (Ejiogu, 2000:7). In fact, Ehusani (2001:152) is apposite when he avers

that there is the “ steady flight of human development... and an entrenchment of economic hardship now taken for granted and taken as normal”.

This is a fertile ground for the oppressors to continuously gain momentum to perpetuate their superiority. Indeed, the capitalists controlled the political and social aspects of the society. Such control favors the capitalists while the masses suffer squarely (Azelama, 2002:181). In the Nigerian case, this amounts to globalizing in oppression and poverty, because Nigeria has not been able to participate effectively in the global Christian faith as a result of pervasive and overwhelming poverty, pandemic corruption and the dispossession of the mass of the people. Frankly speaking, it is glaring today that a worship of the capitalists and the ascendancy of intolerance are common and prevalent. More often than not, there is no meaningful, qualitative and valuable life for the masses. The essence of man in a humanized world becomes sham façade in which case there promotes threat in the global scene. Succinctly, global christianity is marked by the embarrassing contrast between the spectacular scientific and technological achievements on the one hand, and a shameful degradation of the human person and spirituality on the other. As a result, we erect global structures where communication thrives and communion is non-existent.

Suggestions

As has been observed earlier, we shall offer that ethical standard should be brought squarely into globalization so as to repair global face and instill its moral rule, which promote cross-pollination of ideas in Christendom. In fact, the ecumenical integrity in the promotion of coalition of Christian societies should be concerned with appropriate action in each place of justice; peace among others, which will also unravel imported traditions (Congar, 1979:14). In that the authenticity of all cultural negotiations would be a challenge for the global world in which we live.

More so, Christianity in Nigeria should educate Christians to understand all Christian doctrines, beliefs, we-feeling, colleagueship as bringing to the fore the single moral act in the household of faith being a whole a creation as God house and that all of us are guests of equal stature in the divine living room; corresponding to God's oneness is a oneness of humanity.

As regards commercialization of Christianity, greed is clearly personified in capitalism and consumerism. In the global context, human beings are taught to worship money, worldly scientific and technological development at the peril of the human development and spiritual advancement of men and women. This greeted the core concept

of consumerism. Therefore, Christians should use their spiritual traditions as scientific approaches in order to have alternative to consumerism. This implies that the deeper perception of humanity as well as spiritual moral force which dominated the Christian World view, and which the opponents of Christian Culture tend to do away with for the sake of materialistic values, is what the Nigerian Christianity needs most amidst decline of western civilization and globalization. If this is not embarked on, the Christian traditions will remain at the surface level of the new dominant value system that reduces human beings to be at the mercy of greed. This is to remove the sins of inequality, prejudices, unhealthy competition, deception, extortion and unbearable angst; with the view to re-understanding ourselves as a people open to God and His love towards humanity (Fashole-Luke et al: 1978:175).

Finally, the Christian globalization should include in the sense, the marginalized among the people of God. Christianity will discover its wholeness in the global context and function unbiasedly as a sign, instrument and foretastes of God's intention of reconciliation for a desperately disharmonized human race, in which no other sovereignty is recognized but God's (Best, 1978:37). This will manifest the human and shared cumene with the obligation of realizing the true development of human and spiritual destinies in the face of globalism.

Conclusion

Our excursion so far has revealed that globalization, despite its purported grandeur as it claims, has many imperfections, far from real and not gives equal opportunities. Though, its meaning and beliefs is anchored on the development of information technology, economic integration and political orders. Be that as it may, our evaluation has shown that globalization is firmly and strongly established in unethical basis, promotes starvation, alienation, hatred, capitalism, inequality, flaw, and autocracy among nations of the world. Thus, Jesus commanded the Christians to love the enemies among them so that they could with one voice demand justice of the oppressors. No wonder, Jesus dedicated the final week of his life to rebuilding the global nations out of fragmented individuals.

In sum, the idea of global phenomenon may seem to have envisioned a more balance world order; the premise on which it is built is untenable and inconsistent as a result of the place of the developing nations. Except globalization is set on a unique, solid and moral foundation, it will continue to be frowned at by Christians and looked upon with scorn.

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