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Research article

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN PROMOTING PEACE: AN ISLAMIC VIEW

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ABSTRACT

Education for peace is primarily concerned in helping students in particular and the entire people in general to develop a positive vision of peace that should form part of their lives. Religious education is to make them fully understand the fullness of religion and appreciate all other faiths. It is concerned in developing values and skills to guide them in striving for the achievement of life that embrace all categories of people and establish in them the sense of tolerance. The paper intends to examine the role religious education can play in promoting peace in the society. It will also sum up with recommendations for solutions when conflicts and intolerance shows its ugly face in the society.

Keywords: Religious education, Religion, Promote, Peace

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INTRODUCTION

It is generally acknowledged that peace is the bedrock of any society. This is due to the fact that the phenomenon called peace is necessary in human life and activities. It is evident among the nations of the world that peace cannot be compromised in national progress. It is required in any endeavor to develop human and

natural resources. No government can function properly in a situation of violence, insecurity and war. Peace or peaceful co-existence brings about development in a nation. Peace is a state of being free from wars, conflicts, disharmony, and disorderliness. Peace education on the other hand is the process of acquiring the values, the knowledge and developing attitudes, skills and behavior to live in harmony with ones self, with mankind and with the natural environment. (www.wikipedia.org/wiki/peaceeducation). Religious education set out to address the culture of violence and aggression and to inculcate values and non violent change among young people and adults alike. It opens people's eyes and minds to see and understand actions taken and their consequences.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious education has over the years been given various definitions by different people depending on the context it is used. The Encyclopedia of Educational Research (1969) sees religious education as:

Those enterprises designed to induct each new generation into attitude beliefs and practices of a particular religion thereby perpetuating the religious and at the same time providing for the individual unifying centre for his life.

Webters Dictionary (1971) defines Religious Education as Follows:

a. Religious Education refers to instructions on the principles of a particular religious faith.

b. Religious education refers to instructions in religion as a subject of general education. Relatively, the encyclopedia America (1978) defines religious education as "the process by which any religions body indoctrinates and trains its members, especially the young in its beliefs and practices".

c. From the above definitions one can say that religious education is the process any religious body uses to train its members in its beliefs and practices. The paper therefore will attempt to examine the role of religious education in promoting peace in the society.

WHAT IS EDUCATION?

Education "is the process whereby an individual's behaviors, attitudes and general perception of life is charged through the process of learning" (Mbagwu 1983.) whenever learning impacts positively in the behavior of an individual we say learning has taken place. This learning could be direct or in direct the direct may be through guided instructions by a teacher or the model while the indirect is through experiences. This entails that one of the major aims of education is transformation of individuals who will in turn affect the society positively. The transformative function of education is supported by the National Policy on Education (2004: 6, 7, 8) which assents that.

Education is an instrument for national development and that any fundamental change in intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educational revolution. Again, it goes on to say, Nigerian education is generally geared towards self-realization, better human relationship, individual and national and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, as well as towards social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress.

Having considered the above, we could see that religion and education have a common trait that is, both emphasize on the significance of better human relation. If this is so, it is never out of place to say that the inculcating of religious education in the citizens is imperative and definitely shall yield peace and transform societies morally. From the brief definition too, one is in better position to tell what religious education is.

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WHAT IS RELIGIOUS EDUCATION?

Different people have viewed religious education differently depending on the background and the perspective they are coming from. Some see it as an academic programmed where as others conceive it not so. However, almost all writers in their writes-up have some common traits. Religious education according to Wikipedia is the teaching of a particular religion and its varied aspects, its beliefs, doctrines, rituals, customs, rites and personal roles. This is not far from the truth; it is set of teachings as contained in the Qur'an that Islamic education focus on. From another angle, religious education is an academic subject giving children and young people an understanding of how beliefs and values affect our lives. It is this affective aspect of religious education that this paper is out to address. That is to see how religious education can yield peace and moral sanity in societies.

Therefore, it is too glaring that religious education is the inculcating of religious values, beliefs, the dos and don'ts in order to make positive impacts in the lives of the society. In this light, religious education promotes the spiritual, moral, social, culture, mental, and physical development to pupils and of society and prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

CONCEPT OF PEACE

1. Peace according to the illustrated oxford Dictionary 2003 is the state of quietness, tranquility and mental calm. It could also mean freedom or the cessation of war, it is freedom from civil disorder, a ritual liturgical greeting (the peace). Peace is to be a state by friendliness or serene" et cetera.

The term peace according to Albert (2004) does not merely imply the absence of overt violence or negative peace. Peace encompasses the presence of social economic and political justice which is vital or essential to the notion of "positive peace".

For instance, "structural violence" gives rise to injustices such as, discrimination and unequal access to opportunities, virtually all of these injustices lead to or cause conflicts when peace is hindered by obstacles (i.e. structural violence's), it means all people's fundamental rights are violated, in this instance, a solution has to be sort.

Jega, (2006), said peace can be conceptualized as having two separate dimensions i.e. in the first dimension, there are war, violence and strive and in the second dimension, there are settlements, agreements or common understandings that end or overt hostilities and violence. On the first dimension, if war or violence is absent, then peace is assumed to exist and on the second dimension is discordant, hostiles, interaction aimed at dominance and differential benefit i.e. winners and losers and characterized by social justice at the first dimension and mutually, harmonious interaction characterized by justice at the second dimension at the end, if the relationship is characterized by positive, then peace is assumed to exits. Thus peace may be defined as the absence of way or violence in a mutually beneficial, harmonious relationship among parties i.e. aspects of a person or among individual, groups or countries.

Imperatively, Johnson (2006) identified some characteristics of peace. For example, first he said peace is a relationship variable, not a trait that is to say, peace exist among individuals, groups and nations that is not a trait or a pre disposition in an individuals, group or nation. Peace is a relationship, he said that cannot be maintained by separation, isolation or building barriers between conflicting parties, all of which may

temporarily reduced violence but will not establish the relationships required for a long term peace, second characteristics of peace.

ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES OF PEACE

Islamic religion is a religion of peace. *It* contains a number of injunctions that are geared towards promoting peace among its disciplines and others Allah (swt) in verse 17:26 says;

> And render t the kindred their due rights as (also) to those in want, and to the fairer but squander not (your wealth) in the manner of (spend thrift).

Here, the above verse is teaching that when one is endowed with wealth he should spend it in a manner that it will benefit all around him and not to use it as a show off that he has wealth. This means he should use the wealth in promoting good relationships which eventually will lead to peaceful co-existence.

Here are few of the verses of the Qur'an that are addressing people on peaceful co- existence. Chapter 17 verses 33 -39 reads;

> *No take life which God has made sacred except for just cause. And if anyone is slain wrongfully, we have gained his heir authority (to demand) for blood money (Qisas) or to forgive, but let him not exceed bounds in the matter of taking life for he is helped (by the law). Q17:33.*

> *Verse 34; Do not come near to the orphans property, verse 35 reads; Give full measure when you measures, verse 36 reads; And pursue not that of which thou has no knowledge; The next verse says, No walk on the earth in insolence Verse 37. In verse thirty eight (38) Allah (SWT) says; of all such things the evil is hateful in the sight of they lord.*

> *In verse thirty nine (39) Allah (swt) concludes; these are among the (precepts of) wisdom, with the lord has revealed to thee, take not with God another object of worship lest thou should be thrown into hell, blameworthy and rejected.*

Yusuf Ali expounding on the verses says; verses 23-29, of chapter seventeen is far advance of the bare Decalogue in that it searches out motives and draws pointed attention to the weak and helpless if we are to read any spiritual understanding of God, It begins with a "mention: of the worship of the one True God and ends with a similarly mention to close the argument thus emphasizing the fact that the love of God embraces the love of man and practical help to our fellow creatures.

He further expounds that "blameworthy" in verse 29 carries us back by reminiscence to verse 29 of chapter (Surah) 17, between which and this verse there is mention of crimes committed out of covetousness and a selfish disregard of other people's rights. "Rejected" carries back our reminiscence to verse 18 of Surah seventeen (17) from which to here we have a reference to crimes that lead to deprivation of Gods grace. The later he says; is of cause wider than the former. Note how subtly the two streams of though are he conjoined. (Yusuf Ali page 705).

In a lecture, Abubakar, G (2006), in a seminar paper outlines the Islamic perspectives on peace where he says;

Peace is one of the attributes of Allah, (swt) as- Salam which means peace. He argues that peace according to the Quran is achievable only through the divine Laws Allah that is, keeping to this rule in every sphere of life. He further elaborates that in Islam Muslims are asked in both his prayers and in greeting his fellow beings to send peace to the prophet (saw), himself, other righteous servants of Allah and his fellow

Muslims. Islamic religion is therefore is an embodiment of peace, love and total submission to Allah Q: 3:10. Prophet Muhammad (saw) is the carrier of peace as he carries man to the bridge of guidance (Huda) light (Nur) Goodness (Ihsan) and consciousness (Q: 4:69).

In the tradition of the prophet (saw) he is quoted to have said, "I am a mercy showing the right way" the holy Quran confirms this statement where it says. "We sent thee not, but as a mercy to all creatures (Q: 21:107). In another tradition the prophet (SAW) says; Allah (swt) made the word "Peace" the greeting of my people and security upon the people who enter into agreement with us (Muslims).

However, the settlement of the righteous is the home of peace and security (Q: 14:23). In another verse He says: for them (the righteous) will be a home of peace with their lord (Q; 14:23). More so the companions of the   garden of eternity (Al-Jannah) will not hear any speech nor talk any language other than "Peace" (Q: 19:20, 61). It is valuable to conclude says Abu-Bakr (2006) therefore, from the forgiving that Islam attaches great importance to this important value "peace" furthermore, justice another Allah's attributes is   a component of peace, for without it, there can be no sustainable peace Q4:58).

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to effectively benefit from religion as an instrument for promoting peace education, this paper recommends that:

Parents should strive to see that their children are given religious education from the early part of their life (while young).

Religious education should be made compulsory at all levels of learning. This will go along way in promoting morally sound citizens, which in turn will rid the society form fanatic, corruption, greed, segregation and all vices of destruction.

Religious leaders should adhere strictly to the teachings of their religious tenets. This will minimize fanatic and bigotry.

Teachers should at all levels try in inculcating to their students and the general public religious education and peace education in general.

Peace education is the role responsibility of all stakeholders therefore, parents, teachers and the entire community should educate young children on the importance of peaceful co-existence so that people will benefit positively for a better world and a better hereafter.

CONCLUSION

All said and done, we surely know that there is need for religious education at every level of our living, child, or adult, male or female. Islamic Religious education if properly adhered to its tenets will yield peace and moral sanity in a country or nation. Leaders of nations should partner with religious leaders, teachers, lecturers, traditional rules and parents/elders in the society so as to maintain and overcome in security problems and moral decadence. If this is in place, a country will be free from threat of insecurity and moral bankruptcy. When there is peace and moral sanity in place a country will experience tremendous development, freedom of movement, free interaction and moral sanity.

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