



VIEWING SOCIALIZATION AND RELIGIOUS INDOCTRINATION FROM CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract : Every religion serves as an agency of socialization and indoctrination. As long as a religion teaches its adherents ethics, it is socializing. In the same way, when a religion holds strictly to its beliefs and doctrinal practice, it is doctrinating. There is nothing wrong for any religion to socialize and indoctrinate its adherents but as soon as its doctrinal teaching shakes the basis of peaceful co-existence, harmony and religious tolerance in the society, indoctrination becomes dangerous and offensive.¹ This paper will therefore focus on how Christianity could serve as an agency of socialization and indoctrination without hampering peaceful co-existence and religious tolerance in Nigerian society. This paper will also highlight the danger in a Christian being extremely indoctrinated to the extent of becoming fanatical in the practice of Christianity. A working definition will be given for socialization and indoctrination. Some Christian doctrines will be discussed and how such doctrine could be fanatically interpreted to breed indoctrination will be analysed

Keywords: Socialization, indoctrination harmony, religion, co-existence, tolerance and society.

Introduction

Human being can be described as a social and religious being. Therefore socialization and indoctrination go hand in hand in the development of mankind, irrespective of any religion of individual. We will therefore discuss positive and negative sides of socialization and indoctrination with particular reference to Christianity.

Indoctrination is the act of filling the mind with particular ideas or beliefs. Socialization is the process by which persons acquire the knowledge, skills and dispositions that make them more or less able members of their society.² Religious indoctrination may be embodied in the system of doctrines that an adherent is expected to hold on to in order to be recognized as a follower of the religion. As socialization is essential to making a person a social being, so is religious indoctrination essential to determining a sincere adherent of any religion. As socialization influences a person's relationship with his society, so does religious indoctrination help to influence a person's beliefs in a religion.

Awareness about Conflicting Agencies of Socialization

In modern societies, socialization calls for the development of a type of person who can adjust to changing patterns and who

can help to change patterns to fit changing needs. The required personality type is developed against a background of conflicting agencies of socialization. No longer have do family, church and school worked harmoniously together without fear of conflicting influences, if indeed they ever did. The generally recognized major agencies of socialization face a vast array of contradictory influences and they are often in disagreement among themselves.

There are many cases in which one or more of these agencies hardly function at all. Some children are in such constant conflict with the school that enforced, hence schooling becomes purposeless, miserable and some homes are hopelessly disorganized. The Church is often ignored, it seems to be declining as a major influence on youth especially college youth because of her conservation and neglect of the youth. Also, the major agencies of socialization often seem to be working at cross purpose. A strict puritanical home may resent a sex-education course given at school as well as assigned stories, plays and novels. Parents who are strict disciplinarians may regard the teachers as too weak and permissive; other parents may think the school is tyrannical. Children reared in a fundamentalist church may be taught that



the evolutionary theories mentioned in biology are nonsense. Often conservative parents resent liberal teachers and liberal parents resent conservative teachers.³

Marriage becomes a type of adult socialization in which people (man and wife) must learn to work together, compromise and define their roles in a mutually satisfactory way, otherwise marriages do not last. Conflict in socialization often develops because there is not consistent pattern in relationships between parents and the offspring. Some parents are very strict with their children, others extremely permissive.

“Unofficial” Agencies of Socialisation

Outside the school, church and family, the individual is being influenced by less recognized but very powerful agencies of socialization – magazines, television, advertisement, movie (some featuring sex and violence), new types of companions and the general awareness of a world of bright lights and frivolous pleasures. All kinds of new contradictions come into the teaching of the individual through these agencies. Ambivalence on the part of society towards violence is among the various conflicts that accompany the socialization. Exposure to media violence does not drain off aggressive tendencies.⁴

The socialization process presents infinity of confusions and conflicts. In summary, socialization is the process by which one internalizes the attitudes, beliefs and values of one’s culture.

Socialization requires:

- (i) Interaction with others
- (ii) The experiences of emotional acceptance and
- (iii) Symbolic communication mainly through language.

Language is not only a means of communication but, to a great degree, it is a means of perception and thought. Cultural and sub-cultural groups try to preserve their identity by socializing children into their own pattern, but socialization patterns change.⁵

Kinds of socialization

There are two kinds of socialization:

- (i) Primary socialization (of child); and
- (ii) Adult socialization.

In adult socialization, a person must learn to function in any group or organization that he enters; he must learn not only new practices but also new values and norms, a new and specialized vocabulary, new ways of interacting with others. When entering an occupation or converting to a new religion,

he is making such a significant change in his life that he can be described as developing a new self. Hence adult socialization is usually thought of as building upon primary socialization since the basic human equipment of a self-human sentiments and language have been fashioned during primary socialization.⁶

Religious Indoctrination

The word indoctrination comes from “doctrine”⁷ which is derived from “*docco*” meaning to teach and it denotes both the act of teaching and the subject taught. By a dictionary meaning, indoctrination is filling the mind of man with particular ideas or beliefs; therefore religious indoctrination is filling the mind of an adherent of any religion with the beliefs of such religion. In Christianity, religious indoctrination emerges because it has some teachings and beliefs. This paper would therefore treat Christian doctrines such as the doctrine of divine revelation, the doctrine of God, doctrine of predestination, and the doctrine of last things – judgement and life after death.

As primary and adult socialization help to give man an all round life-cycle socialization, so also religious indoctrination builds up any convert of any religion from his first day of conversion till he dies especially in Christianity.

Religious indoctrination which deals with the essential teachings of every religion helps to teach the adherents of such a religion the way of life of people in such religion, and such new convert must comply with the teachings if he will not be an off-man-out in the religion. Therefore, as lack of socialization could throw one out of balance within a society, in like manner any religious adherent who remained indifferent to his religious indoctrination could not be counted as an adherent of such religion, particularly in Christianity for religious indoctrination is a set of better system.

Doctrine of Divine Revelation

Christian accepts the scriptures as the authoritative revelation of the purpose and plan of God; therefore the doctrine of divine revelation is considered as a specific revelation. Progressive revelation, inspired revelation and final revelation. Christians believe that a divine revelation is the communication or disclosure by God to man of truths which is the communication or disclosure by God to man of truths which could not otherwise be known, no matter how trustworthy his source of knowledge human search can never find God out. Whatever one desires or needs to know about



God, all truth in revelation, must come from God himself. Such revelation of God to man is transmitted to others through inspiration of the Holy Spirit.⁸

Therefore, it is a religious indoctrination for Christians that the scripture is not man's collections but God's divine revelation to man through dreams, visions, intuition and prophets.

Christianity has doctrines on God the creator which adherents of the religion are taught; for instance, to the Christians, God is the beginning and end of all existence, the first and final cause of all that exists. Both man and things were created by His decision and through His action as revealed through divine revelation.⁹ according to Gibson, there are three main stages in the development of the doctrine of God namely

- (i) The being of God, dominating scriptures;
- (ii) The revelation of God in Christ; and
- (iii) The record of that revelation by the holy spirit in the sacred word.

To this end, all Christians believe in the doctrine of God who has absolute attributes as omnipotence, omnipresence etc. He is external. He is immutable. He is God who possesses intrinsic and transcendent holiness. He is God of Love. He is a just and infinite God.

Doctrine of Predestination

In Christianity, predestination is the effective exercise of the will of God by which things before determined by Him are brought to pass (Eph. 1⁵).¹⁰ Predestination is linked to God's love, therefore, He can never be guilty of anything capricious. Predestination is the exercise of divine sovereignty in the accomplishment of God's ultimate purpose or decree. He is never influenced by any external consequence. God does not predetermine who should and who should not be saved scripture does not teach this view, what it does teach is that the doctrine of predestination concerns the future of believers. Predestination is determining of the glorious consummation of all who through faith and surrender become the Lord's. he has determined beforehand that each child of His will reach adoption or "the son-placing" at his resurrection when Christ returns. It has been determined beforehand that all who are truly Christ's shall be conformed to the image (Roman 8:29; Eph. 1). Christian believes in life after death and the day of judgement. The concepts of paradise and hell are predominant in the religion. This belief influences the social and moral behavior of adherents of Christianity, thereby serving as a social control on their behavior. The fear of judgement that is

surely believed in Christianity and the rewards and condemnation that could follow after life help to mould the morals of the adherents – this is a form of social control within the process of socialization. Another predominant doctrine is "Faith." Christians believe in the Trinity – God the father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit., faith is a patent force, Christ said that faith is able to remove mountains for faith laughs and triumphs over impossibilities. Faith is important because all men are dependent upon it as the avenue of access to God.

In Christianity for instance, the covenant at Sinai resulted into Decalogue which is given fuller explanation in the New Testament (Matthew 5-7)¹¹ and its principles fully adopted by Christians.

All the above-listed moral and social obligations in Christianity would be analysed to know how much of socialization is found in such religious moral indoctrination.

To start with, Christianity emphasized among its adherents the Christian ethics which the Decalogue summarized. The first four commandments of the Christian faith analyse the relationship that should exist between Christians and God: - God instructed Christians not to have any other God but Him, this is absolute monotheism – the worship of only one God. Thou shall create no graven image for thyself is a check on idolatry. Thou shall not call the name of thy God in vain. This commandment deals with demand for absolute respect and honour for the name of the Lord. Remember the Sabbath day and hallow it. This fourth commandment demands sincere worship-life among Christians.

The second part of the Decalogue deals with inter-personal relationship among fellow Christians. The six commandments can be termed the bedrock of Christian ethics and nucleus of social integration and peaceful co-existence among Christians. For instance, the fifth commandment says honour thy father and thy mother so that your days may be long. In any society, if honour is given to whoever honour is due, there would be cooperation, unity and progress in such a society. People brought up in such a way would always endeavour to maintain peace, law and order thereby socializing them to be good citizens. The sixth commandment "Thou shall not kill": killing is an anti-social behavior. When Christians are indoctrinated in abstaining from killing and in having respect and concern for other people's lives, then such Christians are being socialized and are preserving their lives and the lives of other people within the society. There could not be peace and



stability wherever life is arbitrarily taken and where there is no security for human existence. Therefore, when Christians observe this commandment, they are undergoing some process of socialization within their system of beliefs – indoctrination. The Seventh Commandment states that “Thou shall not commit adultery.” Adultery is considered to be an anti-social act hence it is a social ill which any indoctrinated Christian should avoid. Adultery brings enmity into society. It brings moral decadence and scandal and it breathes hatred between couples concerned. Because adultery does not augur well for maintain social stability and peaceful co-existence, Christians consider it as anti-social by keeping the commandment and thereby helping to keep peace with the society.¹²

The Eighth Commandment “Thou shall not steal” is very significant. Stealing is a social ill. Highway robbers are threats to people’s lives. Society condemns rogues and all acts of stealing. Therefore when Christians keep the commandment, they become assets to the society. This act of religious indoctrination helps to socialize Christian converts within their religious set-up.

The Ninth Commandment says “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” and the Tenth Commandment “You shall not covet your neighbour’s house, you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife or his man-servant or maid-servant, his ox or donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor. “These two commandments, if strictly obeyed, will ensure peaceful co-existence and social stability in society.

To my mind, the above-listed Decalogue of the Old Testament of the Bible help to maintain law and order in Judaism and among the Jews. In the New Testament of the Bible, the Christian ethics were expanded by Jesus Christ in his Sermon on the Mountain (Matt. 5-7).¹³ This could be summarized in the following words; Faith in God, Love, Peace and Joy for fellowmen. In my opinion, I believe that wherever the above-listed agencies of religious indoctrination are well looked into by the agents of religious indoctrination – (Priest, Prophets, Bishops, Teachers, the Church) etc., all Christians would be socialized with the religious system of belief, and Christian ethics. In return, Christians would be better assets in our society.

Inter-relatedness of Socialization and Religious Indoctrination

Having discussed the belief systems of Christianity in Nigeria, one needs to look at inter-relatedness of socialization and

indoctrination. It is been abundantly clear that socialization and religious indoctrination work hand-in-hand to make man fit into his society whether secular society or religious society. Both emphasize development of moral ideals to a large extent in order to maintain a peaceful co-existence, among members of the secular or religious society. Infact, one may claim that socialization is to secular society, what religious indoctrination is to religious society. As processes of socialization of one society conflicts with that of another society during childhood and later socialization, so also conflicts existed within the religious indoctrination of various religions. For instance, Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God, but Muslims do not hold the belief that God has any son and that all Muslims are slaves of God; hence the two has any son and that all Muslims are slaves of God; hence the two religious indoctrinations are based on different beliefs. In traditional religion, the adherents see nothing wrong in approaching God through the divinities that are considered as intermediaries of God, but both Christianity and Islam are opposed to worshipping any graven image or divinities.

In socialization of secular society, the place of women differs from one society to another. Fro example, in Ghana matrilineal system is in practice whereas in Nigerian patrilineal system is used where the father is given predominant recognition in the society and not the mother as in Ghana.¹⁴

Composite of Socialization and Religious Indoctrination

Some processes of socialization could be abused. For instance, in many advanced countries like Britan, America, U.S.S.R., there are some television movies and films which harden children’s heart and make them ardent criminals. In some other developing countries like Nigeria which still nurses some colonial mentality for the sake of civilization, some Nigerians have thrown overboard the culture and tradition in dressing, greetings, interaction with their family; there is no respect for elders, our cultural heritage destroyed for foreign culture. For example, Obas, Emirs and Obis in Nigeria have no recognized place of leadership because of the foreign system of government we inherit in Nigeria. Most Nigerian traditions and culture are being sacrificed at the altar of colonialism and modern civilization.¹⁵

In religious indoctrination, religious extremists have gone to the extent of behaving as “half mad religious people”. Such extremists live “Peter-Hermit” type of life – isolating



themselves from other Christians and by so doing; they go against the communal living of the early Christians which the Bible fully supports. Some of the religious extremists practice disobedience to the Fifth Commandment – “honour your father and your mother” under the practice of “holier-than-thou-attitudes”. By reading the scripture and wrongly interpreting the scriptures to younger ones, they find themselves unfit to live harmoniously with other fellow Christians. Such religious fanatics in Christianity have done more harm than good by wrongly socializing their adherents through their inconsistent religious indoctrination. At this juncture, one can claim that wrong socialization and fanatical religious indoctrination are the same and should be condemned so as not to add more problems to the existing social ills, such as the recent Maitatsine religious war in the Northern states of Nigeria in which many lives were lost.

In Christianity, some people who had been wrongly indoctrinated and who wrongly interpreted what the contents of the Bible say had made life extremely miserable for themselves. A few examples would be given here.

Among the Christian youths, some of them in the process of claiming not be of the world deny themselves of some socializing agencies like the family. Many of them refuse to get married and yet they are not catholic fathers or sister. Some of them reject their parents and call their parents all sorts of names. Some even die untimely when as a result of wrong indoctrination; refuse to take medical treatment in hospitals. For all these, such wrongly indoctrinated Christians contribute more to the social problems of Nigeria society. Apart from making themselves miserable, they also make their parents and relatives very miserable.

It is a good thing to follow strictly the tenets and doctrines of one’s faith; but at the same time, religious extremism and wrong indoctrination should not be encouraged in any religion. Jesus Christ who was the founder of Christianity did not isolate himself from his society and relatives; instead, he interacted with the sinners, the sick, the distressed, the rich and the poor. He healed the sick and assisted the poor in spirit to sustain their spiritual life. Jesus Christ was never a religious fanatic. He was an ideal religious leader and founder of Christianity. What most of the Christian fanatics do nowadays is interpreting the contents of the Bible to justify their own selfish ends and to behave like the Pharisees and Sadducees who Christ condemned and described as

hypocrites. He also described their righteousness as white sepulcher. Therefore there is need for the present-day christens who claim the holier-than-thou attitude to control their wrong indoctrination of the tenets of the Christian faith so as not to continue to mislead their teaming adherents. Christianity is a very good agency of socialization and indoctrination but it is unchristian to allow Christian indoctrination to degenerate into religious fanaticism thereby increasing our societal problems rather than minimizing or removing such societal problems. Excess in the practice of Christian indoctrination is as bad as misleading and causing confusion in Christian society. This should be condemned and discouraged.¹⁶

Conclusion

With what we have mentioned above, points on socialization and religious indoctrination, we may conclude that socialization is found in religious indoctrination and vice versa. Religious indoctrination forms the basis of socialization of some adherents of such religion, because religion is part of culture into which one is born and it is within that culture that one is socialized from childhood to adulthood. In fact, we can conveniently claim that religion forms the bedrock of norms of many societies, and it is within these religiously based norms that a child is socialized.

It has also been pointed out that religion is one of the agencies of socialization. In fact the major agency hangs around religion. For example, many schools originally belonged to religious groups because education came in the train of religion: hence there existed Christian mission schools. There is no home or family in Nigeria that has not got a religion as part of its culture. Therefore, we may conclude that the religion of any home or family would influence the socialization of its children at home or family would influence the socialization of its children at home or family level. This is evident in Christian homes. This will in turn influence the choice of school such children would attend, we may conclude then that religious indoctrination permeates through the agencies of socialization. Therefore there is much of socialization in religious indoctrination and vice-versa.

In terms of merits and demerits, socialization and religious indoctrination have the same merits and the same demerits. Just as processes of socialization help to develop the moral aspect of man which permeates throughout his life cycle, socialization process could be abused as discussed above, so also Christian indoctrination could be abuse and so destroy the



society when religious fanaticism and excesses set in. But if moderation is observed within socialization and religious indoctrination, then the two would go hand-in-hand for the all around development of man and his society.

The agents of socialization- the parents, teachers, and society at large could be influenced by their various Christian indoctrination and large could be influenced by their various Christian indoctrination and denominational practices; hence bringing in conflicts within the process of socialization. The same conflicts may also arise within agents of religious indoctrination. For example, priests, prophets, bishops, church elders, various denomination or sects may hold different views in their belief-system and this may confuse their adherents. A great conflict is experienced in Christian indoctrination when the agents of Christian indoctrination behave contrary to what their belief-system indicates; this also happens in socialization.

On this note, we may conclude by saying that socialization and religious indoctrination perform nearly the same function with little or no differences, with particular reference to Christianity in Nigeria, but socialization helps religious indoctrination, just as religious indoctrination helps socialization; and both are needed for the all round secular and religious development of man. But where one over rides the other, and when excesses on the part of any is allowed instead of moderation, then excesses on the part of any is allowed instead of moderation, then such situation leads to an imbalance in the social and religious development of man. Therefore, before religion and state could harmoniously work hand-in-hand, socialization, and religious indoctrination should be seen as help-mates. It is then the state would not undermine the importance of religion and religion would endeavour to raise the social and moral standards of the state

within her process of religious indoctrination. This could best be achieved in Christian religion in Nigeria if excesses and over-simplification of Christian tenets as found in some independent churches are minimized. It is then Christians can boast of a very harmonious marriage between Christian oriented socialization and indoctrination in Nigeria.

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