

Hegelian Dialectic Model of Change: Catalyst for Socio-Religious Change in Nigeria



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ABSTRACT: This paper titled Hegelian Dialectic Model of Change: Catalyst for Religious Change in Nigeria submitted that religious change in Nigeria is real and there are several examples of change in persons and societies made possible by religion. These changes are not limited to one religion but several religions because Nigeria is a multi-religious nation. It is argued in this paper that among the several models of change that are available; the Hegelian model is more suitable and ideal for religious change in Nigeria. The paper explored in detail what Religious change entails and as well as indicators of change. Similarly, the paper explained what is meant by Hegelian dialectic model of change and reasons for considering it as ideal model for religious change in Nigeria. The paper advance ways of utilising Hegelian dialectic model of change without constituting threat to peace and harmony in Nigeria. The paper is theoretical in nature and the method adopted in writing the paper is the historical survey method. Needful recommendations are given in the paper on strengthening religious change without violence and assault.

KEY WORDS: Hegelian, Dialectic, Model, Catalyst, and Religious Change.

INTRODUCTION

Religion is as old as man on earth and will remain as long as man continues to live on earth. Religion is a system of attitudes, practices, rites, ceremonies and beliefs by which individuals or a communal group relate/commune with God or to the supernatural world. It is also a means through which people relate together to derive values by which events are judged in the natural world. Religion is as old as mankind and is found wherever organized communities exist¹ Features of religion are spirit being, human being and Supreme Being who is regarded as the source of existence and moral distinctives. Religion depends on social organs such as human to communicate its ideals; and its dimension includes: experience, ritual, belief, intellect and application.

Historically, religion is one of the most powerful agents for changing human attitude and behavior, as well as human society². This understanding of religion brought about the concept of religion and social change as well as the competition among various religions to change human being and the society. Classical social thinkers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries thought that religion would either disappear or become progressively attenuated with the expansion of modern institutions. Their erroneous thought led to the birth of secularization thesis. However, instead of religion disappearing from the world of human it has impacted greatly on the world even with modernization.

Religion continued to be a potent factor in the emerging global order contrary to the view expressed by social thinkers; such as Sigmund Freud, Emil Durkheim, Karl Marx, Mark Weber, etc. They promoted secularization at the expense of religion. A routine survey conducted among people in some communities in Lagos, Nigeria by religious students revealed that

1. Several individuals and groups continued to believe in supernatural forces;
2. Identify themselves with religious terms;
3. Hunger for a spiritually enhanced life;
4. Participate regularly in religious and spiritual small groups;
5. Display intense hunger and thirst for religious/spiritual books, tapes, music, drama, etc ;
6. Religion is a significant factor in voting patterns, ideology formulation, and public policy making.

The wish and desire of most religions existing in the world today is to effect social, economic, political, behavioural and spiritual change in human life. Historically, religion is one of the most powerful agents for changing human attitude and behavior,

¹ E.Kofi Agorsah Religion, Ritual and African Tradition (African foundations) Blomington:Authorhouse,2010),1ff

² Ibid,

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as well as human society³. This understanding of religion brought about the concept of religion and social change as well as the competition among various religions to change human being and the society. This paper is relevant to Nigeria present situation, a country greatly desiring positive change in her social, economic, religion, and political life. The fact remains that the country desire positive change in her citizens and in all things that is Nigeria. Thus, this paper is a needful contribution to the effort of transforming Nigeria positively without rancour and animosity.

This paper is written to address the fear, the hatred, the opposition, the rivalry, the superiority and inferiority complexes and other vices often exhibited by proponents of religions or religion adherents against religious change. The solution offered in this paper is the Hegelian dialectic model of change as the ideal model of effecting religious change that will not ignite opposition, hatred and violence. This paper is theoretical in nature because empirical test was not conducted by the writer in documenting facts stated in the paper. The Historical-Survey method was adopted in writing the paper.

Religion and Change Explained

Change is a fundamental discourse in religious parlance past and present and both religion and change are inter-related. There is a causal relationship between the two because change discussion in religion hinges on emotional, spiritual, psychological, mental, social, physical, and material⁴. Adekoya and Oguntuwase explained Change etymologically as the act, process, or result of modifying; the replacing of one thing for another; substitution, a transformation or transistion from one state, condition or phase to another⁵.

Christianity, as one of the religions in the world is been accused by other religions of teaching and preaching 'conversion' to 'Christ'. The word conversion here strictly means to change religion, to abandon ones religion for another religion⁶. This kind of religious change ignites hate, opposition, superiority and inferiority complexes among the existing religions. This type of religious change is considered apostasy by some religions opposed to this kind of religious change. And the punishment for apostasy is severe, harsh and life threatening. Another word for apostasy is abandonment of personal religion for another religion⁷. The fear of apostasy is responsible for some religions opposition to religious change. Onigu Otite corroborated the stated fact when he said that religion and change is a causal factor of religious conflict in Nigeria⁸

Unfortunately, religious change is not solely on conversion or changing of ones religion to another. Religious change is inclusive of all segments of human life – social, economic, political, emotional, relational, cultural, moral and religion. M. A. Ojo alluded to this stated fact when he said that religion is embedded in the overall survival and success of individuals and the community. He said further that religion provides redemptive strategies of survival and means of understanding the present and sustaining the memory of the past life⁹. Therefore, religion is a catalyst for wholistic and enduring change in human settlement.

Change has two sides-positive and negative depending on the views of people and the end result it gives. Without change development cannot occurred; and change occur at each stage of life to ensure progress from one stage of life to another¹⁰. Change is to make a person or something different from what the thing or person use to be¹¹. Change is said to take place:

When behavior pattern change and is visible and sustained; when there is deviation from religion/culturally inherited values, resulting in a rebellion against the established systems; causing a change in the social order; Any event or action that affects group of individuals that has shared values or characteristics is considered change in socio religious context; Similarly, any change that alters cultural or social patterns of a society such as patterns of behavior; pattern of modus operandi; belief system, goal, and aspiration is considered religious/culture change. When religion influence on society is positive it is said to promote change, but when its influence is negative, religion does not promote change according to A.Dzurgba¹². He said further that religion is a force that influences individual, relationship, institution, and human programme¹³

Change is ubiquitous, ongoing and multifaceted. It is a commonly used expression by individual and corporate organization. It is seeking positive change in the whole of human life materially, socially and spiritually through helping human beings discover

³ Joseph Omorogbe Comparative Religion (Lagos: Joja Press, 1999),1ff.

⁴ Oti Alaba Rotimi 'The Role of Religious Bodies in Nigeria's Change Agenda' Journal of African Society for the study of Sociology and Ethics of Religions, vol.3&4, June&december, 2018,53

⁵ Rich Ayo Adekoya &Jay Oguntuwase 'The Philosophical Basis for Change' Journal of African Society for the study of Sociology and Ethics of Religions, vol.4, 2018, 21

⁶ Yusufu Turaki The Unique Christ for Salvation:The Challenge of the non-Christian Religions & Cultures (Nairobi:IBS,2001),6

⁷ Yusufu Turaki,

⁸ Onigu Otite Ethnic, Pluralism and Ethnicity in Nigeria (Ibadan:Sharpson Press,1990),83

⁹ M.A.Ojo 'Yoruba Diaspora Experience in Ghana and the making of Deji Ayegboyin' Birthday & Retirement Lecture of Revd Prof. Isaac Deji Ayegboyin @70, 2019,47-48

¹⁰ Ibid,

¹¹ Josephine O Soboyejo 'Religion, Ethnicity, and Change' Journal of African Society for the study of Sociology and Ethics of Religions (JASOSER) Vol.4, Dec.2018, 58

¹² A.Dzurgba, An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion (Ibadan:John Archers,2009)

¹³ Ibid,

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their true identity as human beings created in God's image. Socio-religious change refers to an alteration in the social structure of a social group or society. It refers to the notion of social progress or socio-cultural evolution. It is the philosophical idea that society or group moves forward by evolutionary or dialectical means

The Appalacian community Fund (ACF) defines socio-religious change as the movement of people toward the establishment of good environment, economic stability and social justice; and the redistribution of wealth, power, and resources through:

- The actions and organizations of people, working to control their own lives;
- Educating communities about the root causes of oppression and injustice.
- Eliminating barriers to full participation in society such as racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, ageism, and exclusion from decision making processes, religious banditry, religious violence, and hate crime;
- Focusing and making efforts to change cultural, social, political and economic systems and institutions that create, accommodate, and perpetuate social injustice;
- Creating and modeling democratic culture, social, political and economic systems.
- Connecting local issues with national and global concerns; and networking collaborating and cooperating with other change agents working towards similar goals.

Socio-religious change is further defined as alternation or modification that occurs in a situation over a time. It is the change in human interaction and interrelations. It is a change in the overall societal structure and relationship. It is the change in both material and non material culture¹⁴.

SOME INDICATORS OF CHANGE MADE POSSIBLE BY RELIGION

The indicators by which positive change in persons, groups, communities and societies are known are: change in behaviour or character; Accelerated conversion growth; Reconciliation in relationships; Mobilization of gift and calling; Increased relevance to God, other and self; Increase awareness of God's dealing with persons; Radical correction of social ills; Decrease in crime rate; establishment of justice; Healing of broken hearted such as the alienated and disenfranchised persons; Entrenchment of godly lifestyle consisting of peace, unity, harmony, dutifulness, love, obedience and kindness¹⁵; Financial breakthrough; Physical and emotional healings; Positive change in condition of living; and Knowledge empowerment

EXPLICATION OF HEGELIAN DIALECTIC MODEL OF CHANGE

Hegelian dialectic model or Hegel's dialectics refers to the particular dialectical method of argument employed by the 19th century German Philosopher named G.W.F.Hegel. He was an important figure in German Idealism and is considered one of the fundamental figures of modern Western Philosophy. He was born in Stuttgart, Germany, August, 1770 and he died on 14th, November, 1831. He was survived by wife and children after his demised. His mentors during his life time are Immanuel Kant, Aristotle, and Plato¹⁶.The model as formulated relies on a contradictory process between opposing sides¹⁷

Hegelian dialectic model is a complex philosophical study. The complexity of its study is not the primary concern of this paper. The concern of this work is the relationship between the model and religious change. People refer to dialectic or dialectics of a situation when they are referring to the way in which two different forces or factors work together; and the way in which their differences are resolved¹⁸. Dialectic model is also use as a method of reasoning and reaching conclusion in Philosophy by considering theories and ideas together with those that contradict them¹⁹. Hegelian dialectic model of change is usually presented in threefold manner; they are thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Thesis implies idea formulated, antithesis implies opposite or contradiction of the idea formulated and synthesis implies the resolve of thesis and antithesis²⁰. Some examples of antithesis in religious context are: 'Man proposes, God disposes'; 'To err is human, to forgive divine', etc.

Thesis, Antithesis, and Synthesis form a triad in Philosophy. They are a progression of three ideas or propositions. The first idea-the thesis is a formal statement illustrating a point; it is follow by the second idea, the antithesis, that contradicts or negates the first and lastly, the third idea, the synthesis, resolves the conflict between the thesis and the antithesis. The triad is used to explain the dialectical method of German Philosopher Georg Wihelm Friedrich Hegel. But in actual fact thesis, antithesis, and synthesis triad did not emanate from Georg W.F.Hegel; it originated with Johann Fichte²¹.

¹⁴ 'socialchange' www.wikipedia.org/wiki/appalaciancommunityfund-acf accessed on 19/7/2018

¹⁵ Joseph Omorogbe Comparative Religion: Christianity and other world religions in dialogue (Lagos: Joja Press,1999)2ff

¹⁶ Anthony Evans America's only Hope: Impacting Society in the 90's (Chicago:Moody press,1993) 5ff

¹⁷ Lawrence Wilde 'Dialectic and Contradiction' <https://www.marxists.org/works/wildelawrence> accessed on 6/7/2020

¹⁸ 'Dialectic' <https://www.collinsdictionary.com> accessed on 6/7/2020

¹⁹ Ibid,

²⁰ Ibid,

²¹ Lawrence Wilde 'Dialectic and Contradiction' <https://www.marxists.org/works/wildelawrence> accessed on 6/7/2020

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The model is summed up by the dictum ‘the rational alone is real’ meaning that all reality is capable of being expressed in rational categories²². Three principal laws governing Hegelian dialectic models are: the law of the transformation of quantity into quality; the law of the interpenetration of opposites; and the law of the negation of the negation²³. Dialectical thinking refers to the ability to view issues and ideas from multiple perspectives and to arrive at the most economical and reasonable reconciliation of seemingly contradictory information and postures²⁴

HEGELIAN DIALECTIC MODEL AS BASIS FOR RELIGIOUS CHANGE

Hegelian dialectic model allows for the interaction of opposing forces, opposing ideas, and opposing persons having different ideas and different religions. Nigeria is a pluralistic nation with different religion ideologies, beliefs, and practices. For meaningful religious change to take place there is need for interaction of opposing religion ideas and persons. The interaction has to be entered into willingly without compulsion, grudge, and ill-feeling²⁵. The interaction entered into willingly will facilitate exchange of ideas, beliefs, and philosophies of life. This interaction when it occurred may lead to the rejection of one idea or religion and acceptance of another. Better still, fusion of ideas may also take place. When change takes place through this medium it will prevent insinuation, murmuring, hostility, and hatred among different religious adherents against change. This change in religious context is called conversion.

Hegelian model of change is capable of fostering peace, and mutual respect among various religious adherents. It facilitates the coming together of persons on mutual ground, mutual understanding, mutual respect and trust for the purpose of exchanging idea, beliefs and practices gear toward acceptance, or rejection or correction. Furthermore, the method allows for the coming of persons from different religious background on equal term and parameter on one to one basis for the purpose of faith propagation aims at transforming life.

The Hegelian method of change is needed in Nigeria presently because of the socio-political and religious crises that bedevilled the country. There are communities and settlements engulfed in conflict. Indigenes and settlers of such communities including cities in some states of Nigeria especially in North central region of the country cannot socialise, interact, mix-together, exchange view or opinion together because of religion differences as well as ideological and political differences. Hegelian method of change, if followed and acted upon will stem distrust, fear, and apathy seen among various religions adherents in Nigeria presently and it will also caused positive change in people’s life..

Religion has become so volatile, destructive, dehumanising, murderous, exploitative, and divisive in some part of Nigeria in recent times. This situation of religion in some part of Nigeria makes religion propagation, witnessing, mission and evangelism enterprise that can result in change very difficult to actualise. One way to wriggle out of it is to promote mutual dialogue and mutual religion propagation which Hegelian dialectic model makes possible through the interaction of two or more opposing forces²⁶.

Hegelian dialectic model of change is capable of promoting, sustaining, and strengthening love among Nigerian who are separated by religious bigotry, religious sentiment, and religious violence. Jerry Cook gives clear explanation of the kind of love that is been envisaged in Nigeria among the various religion adherents. The love that is needed in every nook and cranny of Nigeria through Nigerian citizens is: love that is slow to suspect but quick to trust; love that is slow to condemn but quick to justify; love that is slow to offend but quick to defend; love that is slow to expose but quick to shield;

love that is slow to reprimand but quick to empathise; love that is slow to belittle but quick to appreciate; love that is slow to demand but quick to give; love that is slow to provoke but quick to help; and love that is slow to resent but quick to forgive²⁷. When two persons or more of different religious persuasion come together under this atmosphere of love as enunciated above positive change that will move them and their nation forward will definitely takes place. Conclusively, love believes and hopes all things (1corinthians13:5). Thus, Hegelian dialectic model is a catalyst for true and sincere love demonstration by persons of different religious persuasion, idea, and philosophy.

Hegelian model of change is very desirous in a country like Nigeria that is multi-religious. Multi-religious societies are bound to interact and exercise some reciprocal influence on one another and the society at-large for meaningful change that will translate to development to take place²⁸. The current impreglio in southern Kaduna in Kaduna state is attributed to religion misunderstanding on one hand and ethnic rivalry on the other hand. The fact remains that both underlining factors identified

²² Ibid,

²³ plato.stanford.edu>hegel-dialectics 24/9/2020

²⁴ Ibid,

²⁵ J.o.Soboyejo ‘Religion, Ethnicity, and change’ Journal of African Societyfor the study of sociology and ethics of religions vol.4, Dec.2018, p53

²⁶ G.S.Egwu Ethnic and Religious Violence in Nigeria (Jos:Stephen Bookhouse,2000)1ff

²⁷ Jerry Cook Love, Acceptance and Forgiveness: (USA: bakerbooks, 2011)

²⁸ S.A.Adewale The Interraction of Religions in Nigeria (Lagos:Sudan Press,1989),61ff

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cannot be faulted in southern Kaduna current crisis that has consumed many lives, several properties, and rendered thousand homeless²⁹. Among the identified solutions to the problem is the bringing together of the various religious leaders for the purpose of dialogue, sharing of idea, view, belief, and suggestion on ending the crisis. This suggested solution is entrenched in Hegelian Dialectic model been advocated in this paper.

Long lasting Peace may continue to elude our world if persons, groups, organisations, communities, professionals, religious people with different idea, belief, philosophy, remained pariah to each other without coming together to share idea and robb minds together on needful actions to move our community, society, nation, and the world forward economically, socially, politically and religiously as entrenched in Hegelian Dialectic model.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Religion remains a vital force in all human society that cannot be overlooked. Human history will not be complete without allusion to religion because of its role and impact on human society. It has aided social progress, educational development, interpersonal as well as mutual understanding among people in Nigeria and other countries of the world. Religion has also been the underlying force behind violence, oppression, discrimination, hatred, stagnation, and tribal conflict in Africa, Nigeria inclusive³⁰.

The position of this paper remains that religion is a catalyst for long lasting, enduring, visible, fruitful, and progressive change. And that human desired change can only take place through the interaction of persons and groups with opposing idea belief, philosophy, culture, religion, and method. When opposing forces comes together in a friendly, mutual, loving, respectful, humane, objective and level ground; they are able to affect each other positively and the larger society. The interaction of this opposing forces or persons is the principle embedded in the Hegelian Dialectic model explicated in this paper.

For Nigeria to remain unify, solidify, integrated, progressive, peaceful, and loving; the coming together from time to time of persons of different religion, tribe, political leaning, idea, and opinion must be encouraged and promoted in order for transformation of life and society to continue to take place in Nigeria. Barriers to meaningful interaction of persons and communities in Nigeria such as unguarded rumour, hatred, misinformation, suspicion, closemindedness, Fear of fellow human, egocentrism, and injustice must be rejected and condemned forthwith.

Awareness on Hegelian Dialectic model should be done among Nigerians at every level of interaction, meeting, and relationship. Various religions adherents in the country should be inform of the importance of interacting with each other on equal term for the purpose of exchanging ideas capable of changing life and society. Enlightenment on Hegelian dialectic model should be given among the educated and uneducated matured vibrant and zealous young adult and older Nigerians in homes, religious houses, and institutions of learning so as to reduce significantly or to completely eliminate the gulf of disunity and hatred among the various Nigerian tribes and religion adherents.

Government officers, facilitators of learning and Religion leaders may be saddled with the responsibility of educating Nigerians on the reasonableness of Hegelian dialectic model to change agenda in Nigeria. This suggestion is in line with the suggestion of J.K.Ayantayo who said that religious values of love, honesty, truthfulness, hardwork, peace loving, etc can be inculcated through teaching, mutual discussion, praise; reward for good deed and punishment for misdeed³¹.

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