The Ideological Challenges
of Religious Pluralism and Multiculturalism
for Globalized Societies

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Abstract:

The phenomenon of globalization has led to many globalized societies. Globalized societies are societies that have experienced and are influenced by the features of globalization. In globalization, time and space have shrunk and the world's peoples and cultures are now more interlinked and interconnected through transportation and information communication technology which has led to the movement of human capital and transmission of ideas and cultures. Globalization has facilitated the meeting of different religions and cultures. In many societies today you now have people of different religions and cultures living/working side by side. Religious pluralism and multiculturalism are now ideological standpoints as they are now sets of beliefs of how society should be organized. This paper will hermeneutically examine these phenomena and the challenges that they present. Through analysis the paper argues that both religious pluralism and multiculturalism are facts of globalized societies not to be ignored. The paper concludes that religious pluralism and multiculturalism can be managed for harmony in society. These done globalized societies will experience more social harmony and concord.

Keywords: ideology, religious pluralism, multiculturalism, globalization, globalized societies

Introduction

Globalized societies are impacted by different challenges such as: terrorism, climate change, atmospheric pollution, migration, racism, deforestation, desertification, religious pluralism and multiculturalism. The focus here is on religious pluralism and multiculturalism, hereafter RPM. RPM are to be managed for the good of society. The interest in multiculturalism and pluralism is a core feature of contemporary times from the 1990s as noted by some scholars (Pierik, 2013: 3470; Ejobowah, 2004: 301). Globalization has led to the encounter of religions and cultures in the world and this phenomenon is now a common fact of life that should not be ignored (Dupuis, 2001: 1; Woodhead, 2009: 10). It is important to be concerned not just by de facto

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reality of religious diversity but also de jure (in principle) whether there is a purpose in cosmic order for religious diversity (Dupuis, 2001: 11). It is also important to pay attention to the question of religious pluralism because religions have shaped and continue to shape the way of life of many persons in globalized societies either positively in creating healthy individuals, justice based societies or in precipitating fundamentally intolerant persons (Ferguson, 2010: xii).

The central thrust of this paper is to examine the ideological challenges posed by RPM. Though some may abuse their religions/cultural identities to become intolerant of the values of other religions/cultures, there is value in preserving the various religions and cultures in society in line with modern democratic and humanistic values. All the issues regarding RPM cannot be examined in this paper. The aim here is to break open and hermeneutically clarify the concepts of globalized societies, religious pluralism, and multiculturalism first and foremost. This will foreground exposing analytically the ideological challenges posed by RPM in globalized societies. The paper will also present some ways to manage RPM.

What are Globalized Societies?

Globalized societies are societies that have experienced globalization. They are societies that are influenced and impacted by the values of globalization. In these contemporary times almost all societies have in one way or the order been affected by globalization. There are various definitions of globalization. Globalization is intensification of social relations all over the world (Giddens, 1990: 68). Globalization is the increased extensive movement of people, cultures and capital across the societies of the world and it is also connected to an advanced type of capitalism; and new communications, technological and scientific technologies influencing new forms of socio-political co-operation (Woodhead, 2009: 10). Another definition of globalization sees it as: "... processes whereby individual lives and local communities are affected by economic and cultural forces that operate worldwide. It is the process of the world shrinking, becoming a single place" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2006: 461).

Globalization has led to many societies in the world becoming globalized, multicultural and also religiously pluralistic. With the advancement of information communication technology, the movement of human capital, and migration of peoples from one society to another; many societies have become filled with peoples of various cultures and religions. Religions from the east such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, etc have been transported to the West. African traditional

religions have travelled through the transatlantic slave trade and recent migration of Africans to places like Brazil, the Caribbean, Australia and other places. It is common in places like New York, Washington DC, and London to find Chinese, Japanese, Indian migrants in these major cities. Values from the West through the process of westernization have also been adopted in non-western cultures. One positive benefit of globalization is that it has led to easy availability of scientific and technological innovations and discoveries. This has brought about higher agricultural and economic productivity. Dismantling of trade barriers, transportation of manufacturing equipment, quick electronic payment systems, rapid diffusion of knowledge have all led to increase in productivity and ease of commerce (Ozigbo, 2004: 79-80).

Globalization has exacerbated cultural conflicts and disintegration of local cultures (Ajayi, 2005: 202). As the world is globalizing the nation-states and economies with higher influences have more impact on the developing ones. Globalization has often propelled westernization as many western values and systems are transported to the non-western world. In places like Africa, and South East Asia there is often tension between traditionalism and modernity. Many anti-globalization protests especially by indigenous and social justice groups and people who feel left behind have happened. They include: the 1999 Seattle protests, the 2000 Davos Clashes, the 2017 Hamburg protest, the 2011 Occupy Wall Street protest and so forth.

From another perspective, "globalization connects the world as never before, and challenges Western values and self-centeredness by showing that there are other ways of being modern" (Woodhead, 2009: 10). While globalization can unify and bring people closer it can also create tensions among people. It can unpack complexes of local cultures, creates new identities and creates more diversity (Lehmann, 2009: 409). Lehmann writes that while Euro-Christianity came to Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries today it has been reshaped and repackaged by African migrants who have exported an African culturally informed form of charismatic styled Christianity to the western world in the forms of numerous African founded Pentecostal churches (2009: 409).

Though globalization has some negative effects when well harnessed in a spirit of authentic humanism and for the wellbeing of all it can be a powerful force for good and the welfare of all. In harnessing the forces of globalization for the common good it will be good to know that globalization has created room for movements of peoples and cultures which has resulted into multicultural and religiously plural societies in many parts of the world. While globalization is bringing about more inter-relationship and interaction among people, homogenizing cultures worldwide it has also concurrently led to resurgence of ethnic communal identity (Ajayi, 2005: 204). Managing the side effects and challenges

coming from these ideologies of pluralism and multiculturalism is vital for harmonious globalized societies. It is a basic feature of globalized societies that they are religiously plural and multicultural. The existence of various religions and multiple cultures pose challenges for these societies that have become globalized.

Understanding the Ideology of Religious Pluralism

It is important to define the concepts of ideology, religion and pluralism before understanding the ideology of religious pluralism. It is taken for granted in this paper that both RPM are ideologies (Nye, 2007: 109). The term, "ideology" can be defined as:

> ...a system of values and beliefs regarding the various institutions and processes of society that is accepted as fact or truth by a group of people. An ideology provides the believer with a picture of the world both as it is and as it should be, and, in doing so, it organizes the tremendous complexity of the world into something fairly simple and understandable (Sargent, 2009: 2).

Destutt de Tracy, a French theorist is the one who first used the term, "ideology" on 23rd May 1797 and he used it to refer to the "science of ideas" (Drucker, 1974: 3). Ideologies are a pragmatic and action-oriented set of ideas and convictions about the place of human beings in nature, society or history and how humans ought to organize their life (Macpherson, 1975: 157-158). In the light of this, Macpherson argues that systems of thoughts and programs for action such as conservatism, liberalism, democracy, populism, Marxism, Nkrumahism, and pan-Africanism are all forms of ideologies (Macpherson, 1975: 158).

A set of beliefs that promotes a plural religious society can rightly be identified as an ideology. Religious pluralism does not simply describe a state of things but also is an ideological stance on how society should be organized (Grimmitt, 1994: 133). In understanding religious pluralism, a definition of the two terms, religious and pluralism will be offered. Religious is the adjectival form of religion. A few definitions will suffice here to provide an opening to understand religious pluralism. Religions are "social forms which use practices, symbols and beliefs, usually in a collective setting, to orient people to a higher or ultimate level of reality, thereby providing them with template for ordering social and personal relationships in this life" (Woodhead, 2009: 11). Religion is human wonder over the mysteries of the universe and the purpose of humans and other creatures in the cosmos; and the world religions are "composite of the insights into ultimate mystery that people who struggled into these lofty questions have gained" (Stoutzenberger, 2011: 3-4). Most definitions of religions are restrictive as it is difficult to come up with a definition that embraces all aspects of religion for it can be

defined from sociological or metaphysical or psychological or humanistic perspective; yet "A definition that has received reasonable acceptance among scholars is as follows: religion is a system of communal beliefs and practices relative to superhuman beings" (Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 1999: 915). The religions of the world include Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, African Traditional Religion, and Native American Religion.

Having defined religion, it is imperative to define pluralism. Pluralism refers to cultural, racial, ideological, national, gender, class or other forms of diversity in a nation or global community or even in the environment and it is a challenge to state centricism (Igwe, 2005: 326). Another definition sees pluralism as a term used to describe "the presence of variety" such as when the United States is called a plural society, and in a normative sense such as "salvation or enlightenment may be found in multiple religions" (Taliaferro and Marty, 2010: 180).

What then is religious pluralism? Religious pluralism is an aspect of multiculturalism and should not be divorced from it. Religious pluralism also named religious diversity is constitutive of increasingly postcolonial, global, and postmodern world (Carbine, 2007: 1049). With regard to religion, Hick has argued that pluralism means salvation occurs in all religions and no religion is exclusively true and so they should be open to one another in sharing and living together (Hick, 1989: 233-249). According to Dupuis the term, "religious pluralism" was coined recently within the contextual framework of "theology of religions and is replacing the term "theology of religions" (Dupuis, 2001: 10). Norton states that religious pluralism can refer to different responses/approaches to the phenomenal reality of multiplicity (diversity) of religious beliefs, traditions and practices (Norton, 2020: 1). Religious pluralism identifies the fact that there are many religions with different beliefs.

While affirming religious pluralism in globalized societies, it is important to remark that there are three main approaches to religious pluralism in Euro-American theology of religions and these three approaches are exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism (Carbine, 2007: 1051). Exclusivism affirms the centrality and absoluteness of Jesus Christ and belief in him as necessary for salvation. At a time in church history from a catholic perspective it was expressed in the statement: "ecclessia nulla salus" (outside the church there is no salvation). In *Dominus Iesus* (Christ the Lord), the Catholic Church enunciated that Christ Jesus is the universal redeemer and necessary for salvation (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2000). The second approach to religious pluralism according to Carbine is Inclusivism which proposes that knowledge of God can be found in other religions as they carry some "ray of truth" (Carbine, 2007: 1050). The Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate* endorses that elements of truths can be found in

other religions but they are all leading to Christ (Catholic Bishops, 1965). Here there is a place for religious dialogue though with the aim of reaffirming Christian faith. The third position to issues of religious diversity asserts pluralism in which Jesus is unique to Christians but does not deny that God has revealed himself in other religions (Carbine, 2007: 1051). The philosopher of religion Hick asserts that all religions are different ways to God and are different responses to the one divine reality that there should be a move from christocentricism to theocentricism (Hick, 2007: 610-612).

The categories above can equally be used to define other religions attitudes to the question of religious pluralism. Exclusivist believers believe that only their own religion has positive value and offer salvation; inclusive believers hold to the uniqueness of their own religions truths and personalities while being open to the fact that God's saving power can be felt in other religions; and believers in religious pluralism affirm that all religions have "prima facie value by their own right" (Harrison, 2007: 197-198). A word on the attitudes of some few other religions on religious diversity is needful here for the issue of religions perspective should not only be seen from a Christian angle. The traditional Islamic disposition is that a Muslims can only live a truly Muslim life and be faithful to Allah in an Islamic society, in traditional Jewish thought a gentile life is unacceptable as only the Jews were uniquely chosen for a special relationship with Yahweh God almighty (Harrison, 2007: 197).

Conceptualizing the Ideology of Multiculturalism

The word, "multiculturalism" comes from two root words, "multi" and "culture". "Multi" refers to what is many. Culture on the other hand refers to "the total life ways characteristic of the members of a society including tools, knowledge and patterned ways of thinking and acting that are learned and shared and are not the direct product of biological inheritance" (Sanderson, 1988). It is important here to state the importance of culture and respecting the different cultures of people in a globalized society. Through culture human beings have adapted to their environment. In adjusting and adapting to their environments people create culture in the forms of the food they eat, the tools they use to work and play, the clothes they wear, their land use systems, their medicinal and pharmaceutical practices, their management of environmental resources, their interaction with others rooted in their moral precepts, their spiritualities and philosophies of life and in many other forms. Man and woman are cultural beings (Mondi, 1985: 146). The culture that human beings have created to help them to navigate through peaceful

and hostile environment is vitally important to the wellbeing of the people. Though not all aspect of created culture should be preserved (for there are aspects such as slavery, colonialism, apartheid, sexual discrimination, racism, xenophobia, etc that are inimical to authentic human flourishing); the good aspects should be conserved. Wherever human beings find themselves in a globalized society their viable cultural identity should be safeguarded (Taylor et al, 1992).

The presence of many cultures in a society leads to multi-cultures. There are many conceptualizations of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is "the coexistence of diverse cultural values and backgrounds" (Kapukaya, 2010: 126). A more extensive definition by Kapukaya states that: "Multiculturalism is the co-existence of a number of different cultural structures in the same living environment. The members of a multicultural society are the people who represent diverse cultures, civilizations, beliefs, types of lives, world views, etc." (Kapukaya, 2010: 127). Hoffman and Graham say that multiculturalism can be an attitude, a tool of public policy, aspect of institutional design (Hoffman and Graham, 2009: 342). They note that multiculturalism as attitudes means a cosmopolitan openness to different cultures and respect for other people's way of life; as tool of public policy it deals with issues of social inclusion in education, health and other aspects of social life; and as aspect of institutional design it refers to what kind of society should obtain

To a certain degree multiculturalism has existed for a very long time from the time that two or more cultures interacted. Pierik writes that from a descriptive angle societies have been inhabited by persons of various ethnicities, differing lifestyles, religious beliefs, and perceptual conception of what is the good (Pierik, 2013: 3471). Though from a theoretical standpoint some argue that it emanated from the activities in the 1960s of Black Panthers in the United States; and the agitations of people all the world who felt marginalized, excluded and stigmatized and needed a stay in their communities (Johari, 2014: 645). While demanding their distinct identities either as a racial group or ethnic group or linguistic or sexually different group they argue for the preservation of their identity within the community (Johari, 2014: 645). The history of the agitations of these various groups can at times be violent, separatist and a threat to national unity. This is one of the areas in which the challenge arising from multiculturalism comes into play. These communities that are arguing for recognition and full citizenship are different from the dominant ethnic or racial group in society. The deliberate policies created to manage the multicultural realities of society are called multicultural policies.

Some cardinal characteristics of multiculturalism are: (1) distinct cultures especially of vulnerable groups /minorities should be

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safeguarded, (2) recognition of value pluralism and different conception of the good, (3) fostering social justice and affirmative action for underprivileged social groups, (4) demand for a more inclusive concept of citizenship, and (5) aspiration for a pluralistic order in which all are represented (Johari, 2014: 645). The debate on multiculturalism shows itself in different ways such as issues of migrant workers in Europe, threats of seperatists in Quebec, the status of African American in the United States, issues of government policies on civic integration for migrants, issues of headscarves for religious adherents in the police or schools, cultural festival subsidies and other issues of attending to cultural diversity (Pierik, 2013: 3470). In reality, multiculturalism is a form of liberalism that emphasizes the rights/freedoms of neglected groups within the democratic space and rejects fascism, false assimilation or any other system that seeks to impose one culture on all others (Johari, 2014: 645).

The Ideological Challenges of RPM for Globalized Societies
One key ideological challenge is that it can breed anti-nationalistic feelings as sub-nations/minority groups assert their distinct identities. Realizing national integration becomes difficult as some persons may uphold the sentiments and values of their sectional groups more than that of the nation. For instance when Germans in Czechoslovakia and Austria sided with Hitler to take over those two countries or when Chinese living in South East Asian nations remain distinct creating problems for the nations in which they are living (Johari, 2014: 648). Related to the above is that recognition of RPM can create a flourishing space for identity politics which can be dangerous for the peace, harmony and wellbeing of society. A word on identity politics here is useful. Johari writes that as an offshoot of multicultural politics, identity politics describes the movements, agitations, struggles and protests of neglected groups in society who now clamour for recognition in the political and social institutions and systems of their nation-state and this process can become volatile (Johari, 2014: 650-651). Furthering on the dangers of identity politics, Johari writes that while citizens of a state can have several identities; these identities should be subject to national loyalty. The problem often is that people allow their parochial loyalties to supersede that of the nation (Johari, 2014: 650). In a place like Nigeria and many other nations in Africa there are often tensions between the two loyalties as people allow their loyalty to their cultural groups to superseded that of the nation. This is often precipitated by the failures of the nation-state to provide the good life for the people.

Another crucial challenge arising from upholding multicultural values and promoting religious pluralism is illiberalism. It is problematic to accommodate cultural practices and religious traditions that promote women oppression, racial discrimination, and even violence. This is a serious problem for globalized societies. Related to this is the problem that recognition of an ethnic culture can inadvertently make some people to become ethnocentric ignoring other people's culture. Ethnocentricism means valuing and seeing one's culture as the only center of truth and even being uncritical of unsavoury aspects of one's culture. In a globalized multicultural society one's own culture cannot simply be the measure of truth. Particular cultures should be moderated by global ethical norms.

There is equally the issue of security and terrorism. In globalized societies today, recognition of RPM has led to the admittance of migrants from diverse backgrounds. This can lead to security treats to the host society. In the 9/11 attacks it was migrants whom the United States had welcomed that blew up the World Trade Center killing thousands of people. Migrants in Europe have attacked members of the society also. It is a fact that these attackers are by religious fanatics. But the fact remains that there is security risk in admitting migrants. This does not mean that society should end migration. Freedom of movement is a fundamental human right. What needs to be done is how to respect the rights of migrants while at the same time securing people's welfare from the threat of fanatical migrants.

Flowing from the above is that an environment of RPM is susceptible to other forms of conflicts. There are persons who have a narrow particularistic understanding of their religion or culture who turn to violence to promote their ideologies. Terrorist groups like Boko Haram, Islamic State, Islamic State in West Africa, Al Shabab, and Al Queda have claimed they are fighting in the name of Islam and have turned against civil society. They have killed in the name of religion. A classic case of how from a religious perspective conflict can arise happened on 30th September 2005 when a major Danish paper, *Jyllands-Postem* did a publication of twelve cartons of the Prophet Mohammed showing him as a terrorist. Some Muslims were highly offended by these cartons as they understood from their religion that the prophet should not be depicted in such manner. There were some protests around the world in which some persons were killed. The fact is that if these western societies were not open to RPM, Islam and her adherents possibly may not have been allowed in these western societies. In 2015 Islamist terrorists attacked the office of Charlie Hebdo, a satirical newspaper. When religious adherents claim an exclusivist ideology, the adherents are likely to be hostile to other members of society (Omoregbe, 1993: 299).

No matter the ideological challenges posed by RPM it should not be abandoned. Globalized societies should create mechanisms to tap into the riches of RPM. Both the many different religions and cultural traditions have moral values that are helpful to building health and wellbeing of globalized societies. Modern globalized societies affirm values of human dignity, sacredness of human life, human equality, egalitarianism in their moral codes and public policy; and these values now generally supported by the liberal wings of all world religions and thus the ethico-social aspects of the religions serve as a conscientious moral guide to many in society (Woodhead, 2009: 7). While it is true that there are strands in these same religions that that oppose egalitarian values and universal human rights, by and large the religious traditions can help to foster gender equality, break down ethno-cultural barriers, and support a common humanity (Woodhead, 2009: 7-8). The side of religious faith that is open to promoting egalitarian values, democratic flourishing, and humanitarian harmony, environmental sustainability should be nourished and enhanced by public policy for the wellbeing of society. Through globalization the world is now interdependent and it is necessary for people from various religions and cultures to "get along together" or get destroyed together; and though at times some religions have been sources of conflicts and violence there are elements in them that encourage justice and peace that should be appealed to and built upon (Stoutzenberger, 2011: 16; Hill, Knitter and Madges, 1997: 148-150). It is this reality that leads to the proposals below.

Proposals on Mitigating/Overcoming these Ideological Challenges

Safeguarding the right to religious freedom and right to cultural association within the context of other fundamental human rights can help to mitigate the negative challenges and foster harmony. The right to religious freedom and cultural association is not an absolute right. Illiberal religious groups and cultural groups should live in respect of basic human rights.   Promoting the right to religious freedom of conscience and religion is not only the duty of government. The religious bodies themselves can help to promote it in various ways (Appleby, 2000: 245). The United Nations have adopted different human rights instruments that affirm the rights to religious freedom and cultural association. These declarations include: Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (United Nations, 1992), and Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (United Nations, 2007).

Fostering dialogue is a crucial key to managing the challenges of RPM in a globalized society. Dialogue does lead to tolerance,

understanding, enlightenment, mutual knowledge and enrichment of one another (Paul, 1990: 4; Panikkar, 1999: 10; Cole, 2004: 10-11). Dialogue involves effective communication, openness, listening and positive criticism among various religions and cultures in society. Public authority should direct social policy to ensure that it enhances dialogues among the various groups in society without stifling what is valuable in them. In secular globalized societies the state should be separate from religious bodies and should endorse no religion or particular culture but it can tap from the riches of various cultures and religions since the many members of the state are equally members of these groups. Most religions affirm a social and justice dimensions to their faith. This can be an opening that the state can tap into. Various religious groups should engage in interfaith social projects to the good of their society and their members. Likewise different cultural traditions in society should live in self respect of one another and interact among themselves instead of fighting. Dialogue is necessary to combat religions violence, conflicts, and even religiously based terrorism. When people understand themselves they are likely to live in peace and harmony.

Education can foster intercultural values of peaceful and harmonious living; and also in promoting inter-religious understanding in globalized multicultural societies. With regard to religions, they have a powerful platform and there are many persons in the global society who still strive to adhere to their religious books and teachers. Religious teachers should conscientize for peaceful living. Since some of the ideological challenges that often emanate from religious pluralism and multiculturalism are violent conflicts, harnessing religious and cultural resource against violence is importance. The religions should educate/teach their members to realize that violence in their name cannot be justified in the name of God. Religious leaders have a responsibility to teach their members that.

The fact of religious plurality should be accepted, especially by religious leaders who should help and orient their coreligionists to accept and live with this fact. When interdependence is not just tolerated but is accepted and lived, it becomes the high moral value of solidarity (Arinze, 2002: 36-37).

Likewise cultural groups, associations, and other cultural platforms have a responsibility to educate their members towards respecting other cultures. They should educate their members in cosmopolitan values while respecting authentic national values in the nations in which they now live as citizens or residents.

Because in speaking of religious pluralism the focus is on the different religions, what the different religions value can equally help to bring them together thus enhancing togetherness against difference. One thing that most religions value is the ritual of prayer. At the heart of most

religions is prayer with worship. If religions pray together they are likely to live in love of one another and thus conquer many challenges arising from religious diversity. Annually there is the Assisi World Day of Prayer for Peace that started in 1986 initiated by Pope John Paul II to fast and pray in promotion of peace. That World Day of Prayer for Peace has seen Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Jews, Shintoists, Jainists and people of other religions assemble to pray for peace. When followers of the different religions see their leaders coming together to pray it re-enforce in them the value of solidarity and non-discrimination. Related to this the example of world religious leaders visiting the temples and churches of other religions is also very inspiring in promotion social love. A thing like this has been done by Catholic Leaders, Muslims leaders, Orthodox leaders, etc. The World Parliament of Religions is also remarkable in meeting and bringing religious leaders together to pray.

Conclusion

The paper examined the realities of RPM in globalized societies. It was revealed that religious pluralism is a reality and scholars and religious adherents have responded to it in different ways. There predominant positions of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism were indentified. The paper argued that in the light of the fundamental human right to religious freedom all religions should be respected and allowed room to flourish. Adherents of the various religious should be mindful of the human right of others to freedom of conscience and religion. Related to religious diversity is that today's societies are multicultural by the fact of globalization. All cultures carry cultural riches that can enrich society. Greater harmony will be achieved in society and society will advance better if RPM are channelled for the wellbeing of society. Religious groups and cultures in a globalized society should be open to have illiberal aspects of their beliefs and practices transformed for the greater good of humanity.

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