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## **THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING CHRISTIAN YOUTHS SOCIALY AND MORALLY TO SAVE NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Christian Education is concerned with inculcating into individual, the Christ-like life. It is also concerned with ultimate development of character and Christian maturity in the youths. It is centered on Christ and the goal is to be like Christ in all ramifications. This paper examines Christian Education and its role in developing the Christian Youths, morally and socially. It defines education, Christian education, and Christianity. It also gave some aims of Christian education, biblical views of social and moral development of youths were addressed. The roles and effects of Christian education were also identified.

**Keywords:** Christian, Education, Social, Moral, Development, Role play and Maturity.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Walsh (1990) says, Education is the process that prepares young people for their social inheritance and this involves development of knowledge, training of mental abilities, and development of character. Development of character in Christian youths extended as far back as the Bible days, through Aristotle, Ethics and Socrates and continues through to modern times. Moral and social developments of youths occupy a strategic position in national development, human relationships, and his relationship to God. This is so because; development of human character is a solution to social problems and a worthy educational ideal. Christian youths are the young people in Christendom who will become Christian leaders in the nearest future. These young ones need to be developed morally and socially so as to have good character formed in them. The good character involves moral responsibility and sound ethical and moral behaviour, capacity for discipline, a moral and ethical sense, sense of values, goals and a standard of personal character ideas. Developing good character in Christian youths will be achieved through the process of Christian Education. The process and the task of Christian Education are ordained by God. Christian Education can be understood very well in the light of the word of God as recorded in the Scripture. A Christian Education is one in which the infallible truths of scripture reign paramount. They form the foundation upon which all academic pursuits are built, and for this reasons, youths are often better able to reach their full educational potential. Solomon and Joshua write: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding (Pro. 9:10) This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful, (Joshua 1:8).

Christian Education has the potential to equip youths for both job and for life, because it is grounded in the knowledge of our Creator, who grants wisdom and understanding to anyone

who seeks Him first. It is an education that has the liberty to address the whole child – social, intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual can and reach the possibility of excellence. With the realization that Christian Education is the platform on which the total child is formed, its importance, roles and objectives must be over emphasized. This paper examines the roles Christian education in the development of social and moral life of Christian youths. It examines the following: Christian, education, aims, Biblical view of moral and social development of Christian youths; roles of Christian education in the development of social and moral life of Christian youths.

### **What is Education?**

The Nigerian National Policy on Education (1981) defines education as a process that helps to develop the whole man to enable him function effectively in whatever environment he may find himself. Thus education is that process which helps the whole man to grow.

Ungamadu (1992) sees education as a process by which people acquire the cultural heritage, knowledge, ideas and the civilization of the past so as to be able to take part in the civilization of the future. Nwankwo (1992) adds that, education is the systematic process of developing and person physically, mentally, spiritually and socially for his own benefit and for the benefit of the society in which he lives.

### **What is Christian Education?**

According to Howard (1991):

Christian education is not an option, it's an order, it is not a luxury, it is a life. It is not something nice to have; it is something necessary to have. It is part of the work of the Church. It is not extraneous, it is essential. It is our obligation not merely an option. And for Randolp (1963): Christian education is the effort to make available for our generation: children, young people and adults the accumulated treasures of Christian life and thought in such a way that God in Christ may carry on His redemptive work in each human soul and in the common life of man. However, Lampat (1988) sees the differences between secular education and Christian education on the bases of the adjectival description "Christian". This means that to be Christian, education must have God's esteem for the human beings, sense the task to be a whole life experience of growth and maturity and give opportunity for service through experiential action. At this point, it is clear that the link between Christian education and theology is absolute in the sense that Christian education is different from religious education, which is not necessarily Christian, since religious education will emphasize on religion which may refer to either God's other than the Old Testament God or the Saviour Jesus Christ in the New Testament. So, the difference comes in articulating an education distinctly based on theological preposition derived from texts of scripture rather than education developed to perpetuate and propagate tenets of a designated religious system.

This is not to say that Christian education has nothing to do with secular education or social sciences. In fact, Christian education owes a great deal to the general secular education especially social sciences. A secular University may offer social sciences including Christian

education. But cannot provide the natural habit for Christian education, its absolute link to scripture pushes the social sciences to step child status. Jim (1986) stresses that: Theology is crucial to Christian education. Christian education has been accused of drifting far from Orthodox theological teaching, particularly with regards to the Christian view of human nature and spiritual growth. This drifting is unfortunate, for Christian education is lost unless grounded in biblically based teaching. No matter how much zeal Christian education may have, it is of little use without an awareness of the essential theological underpinning of faith.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN BIBLICAL SOCIETY**

Christian education is the education that develops and brings to maturity the powers, skills, attitudes, and capacities of growing and maturing personalities. It is the education that seeks to re-organize, re-integrate, and re-energize or redirect the child. While this actually can be achieved only by God, the Christian teacher is privileged to serve as God's agent, and the school as his means. The divine mandate for Christian education was made by God to parents in Deuteronomy 6; that in all they do, they should provide a godly education to their children. Writing on true education, Dough Wilson believed that the True education is one which is scripturally fundamental and based on the truth of the word of God. Dough Wilson (1995) states that: All truth is God's truth, and God's word sheds light on our path. Only in His light can we see light. Education, which is Christian, is not focused on possibilities but on certainties found in God's word.

Therefore, Christian education is that education which directs the child to his creator and prepares him for service to God and humanity. Such preparation for effective services is to be well grounded in one's mind before direct engagement of the cultures. Rigorous academics, no matter how thorough, will miss the mark if the reality of God is denied. Christian education has its goals and objectives in the making of the total child.

### **EDUCATION IN THE PENTATEUCH**

Education in the Pentateuch focused on learning about God. Genesis 1:1 leaves no room for flexibility regarding its main topic. God controlled the events in the lives of his people. He provided the covenant and laws, raised leaders to teach his people about personal and corporate righteousness. Jewish education was entirely religious education and the only textbook was the scripture, all primary education was preparation for reading the law. So, the center of Hebrew education was Yahweh. The word of God is the absolute truth to the Jews. Evangelical education retains its commitment to absolute truth which cannot be changed. Therefore, the focus in the Hebrew education is the family. Deut.29:29, says "the secret things belong to us and our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law". This instruction was to the nation of Israel and the nation is represented by the families. The Old Testament Usage of "didasco" (to teach) in the Septuagint occurs about 100 times in Psalms, Deuteronomy and Jeremiah and this denotes communication of knowledge and skills as well as centers on how one's life ought to be (Deut 11:19, 20:18). God's concern in such education was on action. God requires properly motivated actions as

well as good intention or warm heart. For this reason, Clark (1991) says that Christian Education must teach knowledge and skills as well as services through responsible action.

### **EDUCATION IN THE GOSPELS**

Jesus role as a Master-teacher has provided Christian education a poignant demonstration for almost 2000 years. Howard (1988) observed that: No one could ever accuse Jesus of a truncated education philosophy. He understands that all learning involves a process. He not only knew what he was to teach, but he also knew how to teach. Learning was more than listening, teaching more than telling. How did Jesus become so effective without bells and schedules, a fixed classroom and over head-projector or planner graph. The center of the Mathew 28:19-20 commissions stand the imperative "make disciples". This phrase has been taken to mean sharing the Gospel and thereby limits the commission to evangelism at home ad abroad. But genuine biblical disciples hear, understand, and obey Jesus' teaching that does not happen by raising hand or coming forward in a meeting. Jesus emphasized life-change, not content transmission. He highlighted multiplication of the body in the world not addition of member to roll. The purpose of Christian education either in Acts, Pauline Epistles or General Epistles is to bring change into the life of the learner until he/she has reached maturity in Christian life. This maturity is achieved when a person has knowledge of God's words with understanding that results in changed behaviour and growth in knowledge thus making the person become stronger both in endurance and in patience. Dickson (1991) observes that "the Holy Spirit affects not only the teacher and the learner, but also the subject matter and the environment. His power permeates truths wherever it is found."<sup>16</sup> It is in this sense hat education in the New Testament helped the societies of biblical times in promoting and fostering peace and justice. It is from this vantage that one can view the importance of Christian education in enhancing peace and general human development.

### **CHRISTIANITY**

Christianity is that religion that advocate repentance and the accepting of the liberating will of Jesus Christ the son of God. Having embraced the saving of God through Jesus Christ, the Christian no longer lives in sin or under the oppressive rule of the devil from whose hands he has been delivered. Having been liberated, they have become God's special people on earth to declare his saving work to those who are yet to be saved and come under his rule. Therefore, according to the word of God, Christians are: A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (Peter 2:9) And also John declares: Yet to all who receive him, to those believed to his name has gave the right to become children of God. Children born not of natural descent nor of human decision or a husband will, but born of God. (John,3:18). Therefore, a Christian is the one who is connected to Jesus Christ, under whom he has put himself entirely at his disposal. He has put himself absolutely under Christ's care and Christ can use him in any way he wishes. A Christian lives as the Lord's person, subject to his command. He can trust Christ with his soul. His commitment to the Lord is very strong and is motivated by love and gratitude for Christ dying for his sins and forgiving his sins. For this reason, Christian are a body of people called by God to a holy life

as their heavenly father is holy. To be holy therefore, means to be different, separate and upright or righteous from the other people of the world who do not belong to the Christian religion. Harinson (1983) says: A Christian is a person related to in some way to the Christ, therefore, the word comes into usage first in Acts 11:26. "The Apostles were first called Christians in Antioch.

### **AIMS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

One of the major aims of Christian education is God-centered living. This, according to Gaul, (1993) involves: Understanding of God's eternal purposes, his means of carrying them out, and his revelation to man. Understanding of nature of sin and its effects, and of redemption and its results. Understanding and desire for God-oriented living as proof of and gratitude for redemption and understanding of the Christian's relation to creation.

Christian Education is aimed at self development and understanding. This has to do with acquisition of the skill of communication, including speech, reading, writing, number and intellectual curiosity. It involves understanding of one's own capacities and limitations and how they may be used maximally to serve man's purpose before God and understanding of the proper care and development of human resources like health and recreation. Development of higher interest and appreciation in art, music, literature, esthetic and leisure times as well as development and conscious direction of attitudes and habits appropriate to the man of God and standards of moral and ethical behaviour consciously related to God's revealed standards. According to Gaul, (1993) Christian education is aimed at establishment of responsible civil and social behaviour. Development of attitudes and behavior patterns towards others consistent with Christian ethics; understanding of the forces and influence within and without which obstruct the development and application of wholesome Christian attitudes; willingness to assume responsibility for wholesome relationship with others, at home, in school, in recreation, in governmental activities, in social relationships; knowledge and understandings of the information and facts necessary for proper perspective in the solution of problem are all basic tenets of Christian living.

Christian education purposefully exposes the child to vocational and occupational effectiveness. According to Makulu, (1971) : A good understanding of the purpose of work in God's plan of the field of work open to the Christians; a better understanding of one's own capacities and aptitudes for particular field of service and appreciation of work and service of others are the knowledge the youth imbibe through Christian education. Therefore, the aims of Christian education according to Ilorin (2002) : Reflective thinking, appreciation of culture, self realization, human relationships, economic efficiency, civic responsibility development of creativity, contact with ideas, moral and spiritual development, fundamental skills, effective citizenship, sound physical and mental health and the achievement of pace.

### **Biblical Perspective of Moral and Social Development of Youths**

Scripturally, moral and social life of individuals dovetail from the law given to Moses by God which is contained in the Pentateuch (Exd.20:1-31; 18, Lev., Num., Deut.) The Hebrew word

for law is 'Torah' meaning teaching. It signifies instructions received from a superior authority and which serves as a rule of conduct. It is used for human instructions (Prov. 1:18), but more extensively of divine teaching. Willington (1984) notes: There are three main divisions of the law (instructs/teaching). The moral code – otherwise called the ten commandment, (Exd.20:3-17; Deut.5:7-21); the spiritual code – ordinances, all of which foreshadow Christ and Salvation (Exd.35:40; Lev.); and the social code which deals with the judgment and divine laws of God's new establishment for his people; (Exod. 21-23). It includes rules for diet, sanitation, quarantine, soil conservation, taxation, military service, marriage, divorce etc. The law reflects God's nature. This means that God has not changed. The things that he dislikes are still the same. What he had said concerning good human relationships are basic and fundamental. The second half of the Decalogue deals with social relationship between man and man while the first half deals with moral development in relation in God. The law reveals God's will for his people behaviour. It also reveals a committed trust in God and His word and heart felt love for Him. Hutti (2003) points out three major issues in the education of young people from the law given to Moses, He notes: The first is the development of a vision for one's life that includes, the discovery, the purpose of God in creating one and defining of one's life mission and desired life style. The second is the development of one's God given ability character, dealing with concern direction and quality of life. Third is the development of competence, ideal, good relationships and love for God and man.

Biblical moral and social lives of youths are closely linked. In socialization, the youth become integrated into the larger social community, which has God's law guiding them. The youths learn the godly values, standards, knowledge and norms of the community. This enables him to live as a distinctive individual. Developing socially means to learn to get along with other men, learning to live with all kinds of people God has made and appreciate other people as God's property. In developing socially, the youth also develop in personality for maturity that is, the youth appreciate the God given ability in him which made him a distinctive individual and learn to use these ability to serve God and man. Our personality is unique because of the Godly endowment and personal experience that enters into the formation of each person. The Bible teaches in Proverbs 22:6 that we should "train a child the way he would go, and when he grows, he shall depart from it not". Furthermore, Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end leads to death". Morally, a child does not know the difference between good and bad. Both satisfied him, the above injunctions will help adults to direct them. Moral consideration is focused on character considered good or bad, right or wrong. Developing good morals in the youths has been God's concern from time immemorial. In Eph.5:8, parents were encouraged to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Youths acquire a basic sense of identity, they are also learning which behaviour are good and bad as they involve themselves in bible study and other Christian youth programmes organized by the Church. Youths are expected to adopt the teachings of the Bible and adopt the good standards in the society. Christian youths acquire moral development by being instructed by the Christian education teacher or their parents. The more the youths are instructed from the word of God, in moral virtue, the better his or her moral behaviour will be in terms of conforming to the prevailing moral norms of the

society. Based on the biblical teachings of social and moral development of Christian youths in Exodus 20-23 and Proverb 22:6, Solomon admonishes parents and Christian teachers on two important facts that are paramount to youths development. Solomon (1992) states: Adults play an active role in shaping the development of youths character: character develops from within the youth on the basis of the child's own thinking and experience; and given an adequate family environment, youths will be disposed to be concerned about others as well as themselves. Social and moral development of Christian youths must influence three different but interacted systems of the youth – cognitive, effective and psychomotor domain of the individual. This is the best way to make the individual Christian youth.

### **Roles of Christian Education in the Development of the Social and Moral Life of Christian Youth**

1. Christian education develops the youth to maturity as a child of God, personally responsible to him. Because the youth is religious in nature of his being, he is rational-moral-social. He is rational, that is, he can know the truth and accept it. He is moral, that is, he can know or value the good and do it. He is social, that is, he can commune and enjoy relationship. In accepting truth or rejecting it, in doing good or evil, in seeking or avoiding fellowship, he is free, that is by the direction of his chosen way of life. The nature of his freedom is defined by the direction he takes as a religious being. This direction is either the service of God according to his word or the service of his autonomous self. In this action, his is responsible, that is able to call upon to give answers to the one who ordained his way.

Christian education in home, Church, and school develops this responsibility. When the youth has come to accept life in the new "new obedience", he is said to be matured. Christian education is the covenantal task by which a child or youth is brought up to maturity in the new obedience (the right way).

2 Christian education directs the intellect of the Christian youth. Omniscience is one of God's attributes which man reflects. This must be developed and disciplined. Subject matter is the environment or medium in which this takes place. Ama (1995), writes: The stuff that Christian education offers is not merely information to be memorized, but living, actual experience, and by living this environment, the young mind may be developed through experiences which are in themselves worthwhile, and which contribute at the same time to the end goals of education.

3. Christian education is a means through which physical resources of the Christian youth is being cultivated and developed in the full knowledge of the fact that man's physical structure was created through God's design and care. It is not only the means through which individual operates, but is itself an instrument by which man may render homage to his maker. The education must make certain that the child grows to a certain knowledge of those things which will enable him make appropriate use of and care for his body.

4. The development of the total child is the concern of Christian education. The intellectual growth of the individual cannot be rightly pursued apart from his emotional and spiritual development. The social and moral life of the youth cannot be rightly pursued without his intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development. The God like image of man gives him the ability to love and hate, to adore and fear, to praise and condemn. Kohlberg

(1984) upholds that: Man has powers of Volition (power of choice) and restraint. He makes decisions and act on them. His conduct is directed not only by his intellect but by his entire being, physical, mental, emotional, social, moral, spiritual, with the several factors playing varying roles in the final activity. These several factors were once integrated and unified in action and goal, even as God Himself is integrated, unified and purposeful. Christian education must direct the human acts to the purpose of God.

The educative process of Christian education is inseparably link with the redemptive process. Before unification can be effected, the image of God must be restored, through redemption in Christ. Emotional development involves re-adjustment, first to God, then to the learner himself by an understanding of his actual nature, and finally to the environment or culture of which the youth is a part. Such adjustment is a comprehending and inclusive process in which the goals and activities of the individual are placed in proper relationship to the divine plan and purpose.

5. Christian education creates in the Christian youths a form of positive relationship wit adults who can serve as mentor and role model, creates in the youth the ability to learn to respect people and develop skills, increase their self worth, help them stay focused and motivated by goals, exposes them to diverse groups and form a connection to a community group.

6. Wynme and Walberg (1985) give five important roles of Christian education in the development of Christian youths:

- i. Supportive adult – child relationships
- ii. Exposes the youth to societal values and biblical principles for life
- iii. Create opportunities for peer interaction and pro-social actions that is the development of self control, increase their moral and social understanding and concern for fellow Christian.
- iv. Create in the youth the opportunities to think and discuss moral issues which help them to live godly lives
- v. Help the youths to have experience that promote understanding of others – the ability to take the perspective of others and love for God.

Christian education provides youths with instructions on how to be fair, caring and responsible in life. It also provide them opportunities to think about the importance of fundamental social values and practice these values primarily in the classroom, school, at home, in the community and in the larger society. These social and moral values fundamentally, place the Christian youths on biblical absolutes which expose them to the discovery of their divine destiny. Apparently, in the development of Christian youths, Christian education establish the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the minds, hearts and social life of the Christian youths, so as to stamp righteousness and truth in their lives. Ilori (2002) maintains that: Christian education regards the youth, not simply as having mind nor being a potential citizen, house keeper, wage carrier but as the child that possessed God-like qualities and as destined to larger life in a society which involves an interest in God and all mankind. The child is more than an intelligence to be developed. He is a person with soul,



spirit and body to be nurtured. Christian education promotes growth in spiritual character, leads the youth to the knowledge of God's will and to doing his will.

### **The Effects of Developing the Christian Youths Socially and Morally**

The Christian youths occupy a very important place in the future of the Church and the nation. The future strength of both the Church and the nation depend entirely on the degree of their love, commitment and consecration to the Lord. Their love for God and commitment to His kingdom in turn depend on the depth of their understanding of the gospel and scriptural principles upon which the Church is built. These eternal principles and doctrines need to be brought to the youths with as much clarity as possible, in order to catch their attention, and win their hearts and lay a solid foundation for years to come. Preparing the Christians youths of today for the challenges of tomorrow involves an understanding of their role, the type of communication and approaches that appeal to them with the gospel through Christian education.

The effects of developing the Christian youths morally and socially are as follow:

1. It produces potential leaders of tomorrow. According to (Prov.29:2, 14:34; Dan.3:28-30; Deut.32:29; John 4:35). Christian youth salvation (moral and social development) will give the Church and the nation at large a generation of righteous leaders. More missionaries, evangelists and Pastors will be raised for greater evangelistic outreaches. It will also rid the Nigeria nation of Satan inspired and corrupt leaders.
2. It produces youths as great assets. In Dan.1:3-4, I Sam.17:33, 37; Lam.3:2) Christian youths are people of great strength and might. Their conversion is a corresponding conversion of physical, social and moral strength to benefit the community, the Church and the nation at large.
3. There will be great possibility of spiritual and physical production. Christian youths will find it easier to reach out to other youths who will join to turn the corrupt Nigeria nation and world to the right direction for development and for Christ.

### **CONCLUSION**

Christian education which is the word of God remains the central means by which Christian youths could be won to Christ and be developed socially and morally. Christian education therefore, must be organized around a comprehensive curriculum for growth, challenging the youths in four areas of life: intellectual, physical, spiritual, and emotional. Nigeria youths are expected to meet world class standards not only in College preparatory academic, but also in co-curricular areas of performing arts, school leadership, service to God and humanity through Christian education. The highest objective is that Christian youths become ready to commit themselves to continue improvement towards excellence in all their endeavors.

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