

RELIGION AND MIGRATION IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD: ANY COMPATIBILITY?

Gbari Usman Sylvester, Ph.D

Department Of Educational Foundations

Philosophy Of Education Unit

Nasarawa State University, Keffi

+2348059876791; gbariusman25@yahoo.com

&

Anselm Ikenna Odo

Department Of Educational Foundations

Philosophy Of Education Unit

Nasarawa State University, Keffi

+2348134885726; anselmikenna4us@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper attempts to find out, if there is any, the compatibility of religion and migration in the contemporary world. People often see migration as being detrimental to religion. This claim is premised on the conception that different religions in most cases lose their identity during their encounter with other religions. Leveraging on this assumption, the researchers through an expository method of study, is set to make an appraisal base on the wide-spread notion concerning religion and migration. There is always a positive and negative effect behind everything under the sun. it should therefore, be taken that migration has both positive and negative effects on religion. However, the researchers are of the position that, the positive effects of religion outweigh the negative effects. Some of these positive effects includes the acquisition of new knowledge in the act of migration, the privileges of migrants having more spiritual encounters as they visit different pilgrimage centers etc. this goes without inferring that there are no adverse effects to this migration process as we agreed earlier. Sometimes, some migrants on their encounter with other religions may get convinced by their teaching and thus begin to lose faith in their own religion, some, having been exposed to the secular world may be attracted by the worldly pleasure, therefore lose faith. at the end of this paper, the researchers made the following recommendations among others; these include: Migrants need to express and live their religious creed. They should avoid marginalization, meanwhile the loss of religious identity will lead to the loss of ethical values and these migrants will be even more disoriented and uprooted in the host society. Again, religious communities of the host society and of the migrant communities should promote exchange and sharing habit.

Introduction

Migration has become a universal feature in the contemporary world. It is observed that over the past century the contemporary world has been rapidly reduced in various spheres not only in church attendance, but even on the affiliation of any religion. The focus has been on the migration and religion. As a result of this, Mariya and Barry (2011)¹ opined that these focus translate into vivid political and social debates about cultural, and more specifically, religious integration of immigrants, and even led to banning the construction of minarets in Switzerland in 2009, as well as banning public appearance in full Islamic face veil in Belgium and in France in 2010. Much of these debates presume that immigrants' religious behavior is inherently different from that of the citizens and, importantly, rigid and persistent over time.

However, there are many reasons why people migrate. People migrate as result of war, violence, persecution, and political instability. Again, the economic reasons, religious imbuelement, make millions to leave their families and friends to migrate to a particular place. The compatibility of religion and migration is another aspect that is constantly overlooked in the contemporary world. This is because of the wrong conception from some scholars that the migration of any religious groups do harm than good. Some scholars were of the opinion that it paves ways to religious identity and culture. Proceeding to this, Jean-Marie Le Pen cited by Dijk, (1997)² opines that Islam, which already represents the second religion in France, is opposed to any assimilation and threatens our own identity, our Western Christian civilization (58). In this context, Le Pen holds to a common tendency in modern racism; the propensity to focus on religion or culture instead of race. He was on the negative effect of religion and migration. However, reflecting on his assertion, it makes one to believe that the differences between "them" and "us," and the threat "they" constitute, are posed in terms of cultural religious characteristics found to be incompatible with "our" culture/nation.

Religion and Migration

From time immemorial, we have been witnessing the variations of populations towards different nations around the world. These variations would either be about the increase in the number of people living in an area, or the decrease in such number. We call this movement of people in and out of the population as migration. Migration is not a recent phenomenon. Migration is as old as man and history. Such movements here had effects on every nation and its culture and lifestyle philosophy to political stance. Others may have moved to a new area in

other to inhabit such places. Yet there is more to migration that increase or decrease of people living in a specific place (<https://www.earthclipse.com/geography/what-is-migration.html>)³.

Migration can be classified under the following: permanent, temporary, voluntary or forced and international or internal. However, Permanent migration is when someone moves from one place to another and has no plans to return to his original home. Temporary migration could be for seasonal employment. On the other hand, forced migration involves the migrant having no choice but to move. voluntary migration is the opposite of this. International is when a person moves from one country to another country. For examples, peoples moving from United Kingdom to the United States of America. Internal migration is when people migrate within the same country or region. An example of this would be someone migrating from Manchester to London (<https://www.earthclipse.com/geography/what-is-migration.html>)⁴.

Religion

Religion is a fundamental set of beliefs and practices generally agreed upon by a group of people. these set of beliefs concern the cause, nature and purpose of the universe, and involve devotional and ritual observances. It also contains moral codes governing the conduct of human affairs. Man has demonstrated a natural inclination towards faith and religion since the beginning of the world. All religions consist of trying to appease and get favours from the superior Being. This resulted in performing rituals (some of them barbaric) and keeping the traditions or laws to earn goodness and /or everlasting life. Christianity has always stressed a personal relationship with God as the touchstone of religion when God created Adam and Eve, He walked with them in the Garden of Eden, in the cool of the day, and enjoyed their fellowship. Religion was, and is still, a close relationship with the creator God according to the Christian faith.

On the other hand, Omoregbe (1993)⁵ defines religion as essentially a relationship, a link established between two persons, namely, the human person and the divine person to exist. Carpenter (1913)⁶ holds that religion denotes the whole group of rites performed in the honors of the divine being. These make up a particular cult or worship ordained and sanctioned by authority or tradition. It means a body of religious duties, the entire series of sacred acts in which the primitive act is expressed. For Bonquet (1941)⁷, Religion is a fixed relationship between the human self and some non-human entity, the sacred, the

supernatural, the self-existent, the absolute or simply God. Religions is an absolute dependence on God.

Creating a nexus between religion and migration

Religion and migration seems to be two side of the same coins. This is because of its interplay in the contemporary world. As far as one of the features of man is movement and movement entails migration. There can be no religion without man since he is the one to make reference to a supreme being. In the act of making a reference he / she doesn't rely only on his understanding instead he always ascertains a doctrine from the high class. Then, on the process of seeking for the knowledge from that high class, he migrates to a particular place. Moreover, anyone who leaves his home or village to seek work abroad has to cope with many changes and discontinuities: the transition from a peasant existence life as an industrial worker, the passage from a highly socially integrated village existence to an urban situation with great freedoms accompanied by insecurities, the divergence between the culture of the homeland and that of the new country, the leaving behind of a largely religiously determined life and the establishment of oneself in a predominantly secularized universe means a lot to migrates where ever they find themselves.

These discontinuities shape the dynamics of individual biographies and of migrants 'family histories. They are reflected in tensions between generations. A parental generation closely linked with its country of origin and its home in a specific region confronts a second generation which grew up in the new country. The considerable demands of migrants in terms of individual and collective adaptation are intensified by the fact of immediate environment is usually extremely difficult.

In the consideration of the link of religion and migration, the place of worship in migration should not be left behind. The places of worship shape the immigrant religions. Turning to religion is initially one way of finding answers to the problems resulting from migration. This is reflected in the character of the places of worship. Storefront churches, Jewish corner prayer rooms, and backyard mosques are much more than places of worship where people meet to pray. They are community centers and self-help organizations, refuges for new arrivals, places that provide help in cases of emergency, social clubs, and information networks. Crucially, these are also places where the norms and values of religion are handed down to the next generation.

Examining the compatibility of Religion and Migration in the contemporary world

Considering the compatibility of religion and migration in the contemporary world, it is worthy to note that it fosters the Individual's Religion. For example, for many people, religion is a component of their personal identity. A specific creed is part of the life of persons. The teachings, the traditions and the habits of a specific religion will influence these people in their behaviours and their way of approach to situations and how they can relate to each other. The personal value system is based on the religion the person belongs to. Therefore, religion can be an important part of an individual, and even if such a person will migrate to another country he or she will carry with her these elements of faith.

It is well known that religion can become an important part of the identity of a migrant, even if he had rather little interest in religious matters at leaving his home country. The new situation he found himself as a result of have left his family, social links and feeling; there arouse the need to defend his identity. Then it's religion becomes an important factor. It depends on what the person will find in the host country if this part of identity will become a positive or negative element for the personal integration process. Faith and religion may become an instrument and opportunity to experience a transnational identity. The migrant may find a way to define for him a new identity out of the components from both societies. This would not be just a summary of two cultures but something new, which could be important for both societies.

Examining migration and religion in the contemporary world, as observed, plays some roles in many parts of our daily lives. These are convictions and rules which influence the life of a believer in his daily life; health and health care are affected. For instance, migrant women may find it difficult to access health services because of their religious education. The education of children depends widely on religious values, so are the whole issues of family life. The well-known conflict between first and second generation in migrant communities is also a consequence of this.

Migration affect the religious laws on the working conditions, the rhythm of the workday and free time; clothing and food rules may not allow people to work in certain places. The question of equal rights for men and women may create critical situations.

Volkan, (1997)⁸, observes that the recent tendency to link the religion of Islam with terrorist practices is a good example of how different groups become homogenized in religious and racist terms. Modern racism, or neo-racism is thus not grounded in biology but in anthropology and in an ideological commitment to unchanging difference. In Western Europe the targets of this new phenomenon have tended to be guest workers and new immigrants from the Middle East, the former Yugoslavia, the South Asian subcontinent, and Africa (22).

In addition, the process of a particular religious group migrating to a particular place encourages community life. This is because religion is not only a personal conviction; the believer may be requested to participate actively in community life, as non-renounceable part of his faith. If these believers migrate abroad they will put much energy into finding or rebuilding his religion holidays in the host country. On the process of migration, religious migrant shows a negative or positive roles. For example, it makes the people in the community to feel at home. It also acts as a sense of belonging. And that will give him or her a sense of security and mutual support. Although, if these communities are closed and/or marginalized by the host society it will create a ghetto in which the could be contra-productive in the act of migration. Therefore, the parallel societies may rise and communication between the host society and that of the migrants could become difficult. On the other hand, if such a community is an open or even a mixed community with migrants and autochthonous members, where a common faith is the binding link this may become a bridge, and allow a smoother migrates processes.

Furthermore, religion and migration in the contemporary world reawakens the spirit of the religious community in directing migrates movement. It is known that migrants often choose the country or even the town they aim to, because of having religious links in that place. Since they have they are aware of the categories of people's habitant who profess the same creed with them. Again since it will help them to seek for support. On the outcome of this, religion may serve as a pull factor for migration.

There are a lot of challenges that may arise in the compatibility of religion and migration in the contemporary world. This is exhibited if migrants who come from one system must cope with the opposite situation in the host country. For example, a person or a whole community which comes from a state with Sharia law and will now have to live in a secularized state of the industrialized World.

The religious needs, the strong convictions and values the person is carrying within herself may create conflicts with the legislation and the way of life in the host country. Social cohesion may be at risk. This becomes even more important if religious institutions of the country of origin continue to influence the life of migrant communities in a country of immigration.

Conclusion

As far as migrants are concerned there are precise rules which Churches should respect. Some of these includes: human dignity must be respected in any case and in any situation, Christian should love their neighbour and migrants may become neighbours, migrants must be received and protected, all human beings are "citizens in the household of God", that means they are equal and have rights and duties like citizens, they are not only guests or "Gastarbeiter". However, Christians are convinced that there is a total truth, but only God is the owner of it, Human beings have only a partial insight of this truth.

In addition, Dijk (1997)⁹ opines that Religion, and in particular, religious movements operating in broad geographic contexts, engage in increasingly homogenized forms of worship and organization that give rise to global communities which locals can then join. In this way, members face an array of options for belonging that reach far beyond their communities and cultures and that challenge local religious forms.

Therefore, despite the shortcomings of religious migration, its positive impact should be set in as a paradigm in the contemporary world; since it fosters development. However, we may opine that religiously inspired migration, whether peaceable or warlike; and that it had an important deal to do with the definition of civilizational and cultural frontiers in historic times. Christians must respect the conviction of others, even if these do not correspond to their own, The Christian faith has at the same time a universalistic approach, believing in the Universal Church, and on the other hand the individual spirituality is part of a personal faith. Both aspects are part of the Christian identity.

Recommendations

To ascribed to the compatibility of religion and migration in the contemporary world, the following recommendations are therefore subscribed. Thus:

1. Migrants need to express and to live their religious creed. This can be a tool for stabilization, avoiding marginalization, meanwhile the loss of religious identity will lead to the loss of ethical values and these migrants will be even more disoriented and uprooted in the host society.
2. Similar religious communities of the host society and of the migrant communities should promote exchange and sharing, becoming like this a bridging tool for integration, avoiding marginalization and frustration of migrant faith communities which may lead to radicalization.
3. The religious communities of the host society may be enriched by the contributions of migrant religious communities. Intercultural experiences can be experienced and eventually transferred into other sectors of social life. The so-called social capital, of basic importance for social cohesion, will be incremented if the religious factor of migration movements is governed correctly. All components of the society and governments will have to work together to pursue this aim.

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