CONSECRATED TO CATECHIZE PEOPLE FROM CRADLE TO GRAVE

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ABSTRACT

Catechizing in this work is understood as a deliberate effort to transmit religious knowledge, values, skills, attitudes, and sensibilities of a society to its progeny. Consequently, this work concerned itself with educating the people religiously to get rid of fear and estrangement transmitted by religious parochialism causing the incessant hostility among the people of Nigeria. For it was obvious that while the individual religious adherents imbibed their religious tenets very well, they paid no heed to other people and their religions. As a result they developed tightly closed religious communities. Therefore, while it was obvious that these religions were taught at home, in the places of worship or in the schools up to university level they made no difference on people, because, it was still the same domestication. In effect, the religious teachings did nothing but increased wrangling and incessant squabbles among peoples. This work understood the squabbles as the phobia of tremendous dread of strangeness between the religions. The work therefore, suggested a dialogical process as a new teaching based on the work of the Brazilian philosopher and educator Paulo Freire to rewrite the narrative of religious education from being the harbinger of wars and distress to harbinger of peace and harmony; and to be the permanent process of teaching religion in Nigeria from cradle to the grave.

INTRODUCTION

It was the veteran American professor of religion, Gabriel Moran, who once suggested that religious education has chiefly two aims, namely: (1) to teach people to practice a religious way of life and (2) to teach people to understand religion[1]. These two aims obviously set pace for this essay. The first aim examines the teaching of religion from its basics. This investigates how a child begins religious journey right away from birth within the warm surrounding of the parents, siblings and caregivers. This stage includes the child's world within the primary and secondary schools. The second aim dovetails with the first in the sense that since this involves learning process, it has to begin from the early stage of human development. Hence, it appears that the two phases of religious education appear to be one process of learning with different sides of emphasis. While the first phase lays emphases on ways of developing religion as a way of life, the second phase emphasizes proper understanding of religion. This means in effect that the religion one learns as the only way to worship God from infancy is explored in the second phase to include the awareness of other religions and other people who follow those ways to the same

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[1] Moran, 1998, p.30

God. As the second stage must obviously start from infancy, emphases are increased as soon as the child enters the world wider than the family and community. This means that the child should be further introduced to wider world with samples of the people who are not from his/her family and community together with the differences in the idea of the ways they have to worship God which appear different from their way of worship, yet all the ways lead to one God.

THE ROLE OF FAMILY IN RELIGIOUS FAITH FORMATION

Family, both nuclear and extended has been naturally and globally accepted as the most fertile ground for the raising of religious faith. This is because the family environment offers the child the best suitable ground for growing up. Hence, in the field of faith formation, parents occupy the first place. The reason is that they are the closest 'significant others' in the life of the child. Developmental psychologists such as Piaget, Erikson, Kohlberg and of course James Fowler are of the opinion that the closest significant others in the life of a child should provide the necessary ingredients that enables a proper development and growth of a child. Other significant peoples in the life of the child are the siblings, friends, groups, models, and acquaintances. These are the significant others that provide emotional support, socialization as well as relationship with the transcendent. Perhaps that is why everything concerning basic up-bringing is mainly associated with the family. Thus, like language, community-etiquette and many other behaviors learned at infancy from the family, religion is acquired from the family right away from birth. In the words of Karen Springen, citing child psychiatrist Elizabeth Berger, author of "Raising Children with Character," the roots of morality first appear in the earliest months of an infant's life. "It begins the day they're born, and it's not complete until the day they die."[2] This follows that the 'primal faith', which starts right away from infancy, is the foundation on which a person's faith is established. Such a foundation in the words of Fowler is "nurtured in the family."[3] Within this period parents or the nearest significant others in the life of the child are required to provide the basic love that ensures trust. Berry Brazelton, a pediatrician and Stanley Greenspan, a child psychiatrist, together call this period "most critical and the most vulnerable" in child development. Citing both their own research and that of others, the duo insists that within this period "the ingredients for intellectual and moral growth" of any child must be laid or face the risk of setback "two or three steps behind, no matter how hard we try to help them catch up."[4] This is why Fowler (1991) is correct when he calls the family "the incubator of human faith development."[5] On this account then, every family must do whatever it takes to provide the necessary ingredients for nurturing a child to term.
Such ingredients include "gestures and emotional cues (smiles, assertive

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[2] Newsweek, p. 72
[3] Fowler, 1995, p.11
[4] Ibid, p.34
[5] Ibid

glances, frowns, pointing, taking and giving back, negotiating and the like)" for infants who cannot speak yet. The reason for these early starts say Brazelton and Greenspan is to acquaint the infants with the human behaviours. Citing human voice as an example, the duo maintains that listening to human voice helps infants to learn to distinguish sounds and develop language. Furthermore, they explain that exchanging "emotional gestures help babies learn to perceive and respond to emotional cues and form a sense of self."[6] In the same way this paper believes that cues of faith will be learned from the caregivers when they are expressed often before the children right away from their infancy. As they distinguish sounds and form language so they will distinguish the emotional cues that form good morals and faith and then gradually form the community accepted good morals and faith eventually. Just as Brazelton and Greenspan discovered through many years of studies that family patterns that neglect the ongoing nurturing care lead infants to "significant cognitive and emotional problems,[7]" so infants, who grew up from the neglect of faith nurturing, grow faith imbalance later in life. These infants in their adolescence develop such crisis that lead some to atheism and some to one religion or the other like a rolling stone they never gather any moss in faith. Such individuals actually develop very chaos adult-faith-life without root or at best shallow root one might say.[8] But when properly guarded by the cogent family environment, the child comes out a robust, fervent child of God and solid member of the society.

In the same vein, Ibrahim Syed, one of the best Islamic scholars of our time, enjoins the Islamic parents to do whatever it takes to impart education worthy of Islamic faith and culture in these words:

Parents should provide an Islamic environment, and Islamic culture. It is hypocritical to do things differently and expect the child to have Islamic values. Parents set the best examples for their children to imbibe. Like parents the role of family has also been considered important in learning and upbringing the children.[9]

Moreover, James Fowler claims that since human persons are naturally structured to search for meaning, the awareness is better created from infancy. In other words, since every human person is created with the faculty to literally search for the purpose of his/her being, it is necessary that the awareness is created in early life.[10] Citing Cantwell Smith, Fowler (1995), explains meaning as purposeful "quality of human living"[11] He further explains this quality as the state of "serenity and courage and loyalty and service: a quiet confidence and joy which enables one to feel at home in the universe"[12] Furthermore, he maintains that it is the same quality of serene purpose that helps one to find meaning in one's own life and by extension in the environment and people that help one to discover the ultimate, which roots us

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[6] Ibid

[7] Brazelton, T. B. & Greenspan, S. (2000, Fall/Winter), "Our window to the future". In *Newsweek*, pp.34-36, 72.

[8] Chidili, 2005

[9] Syed, I. B. 2001. *Education of Muslim Children—Challenges and Opportunities.* http:www.uscharterschools.org/

[10] Fowler, J. W. (1991). Stages of faith consciousness. In F. K. Oser & G. Scarlett (Eds.), *Religious development in childhood and adolescence,* 27-45. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

[11] Fowler, J. W. (995). "Stages of faith" San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers.

[12] Ibid.

firmly in life. Fowler in the mouth of Smith insists that with such a profound foundation we can withstand any vagary of life event, come what may.[13] This is to say then that a good family structure nurtures a complete cultured human person, suffused in religious faith and culture. This point is further stressed by Syed, when he insists that:

Every Muslim parent is advised to raise his or her children well and properly. A happy home, comfort, care and love, providing the necessities of life and a good education are some of the responsibilities that parents are required to fulfill. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) said whoever is not kind to young people is not one of us and the best teaching that a parent can give a child is the teaching of good manners and character. The Muslim child absorbs the Islamic values from its parents, teachers, peers, friends and the environment, including the care-givers. Nip it in the bud is the best advice. Otherwise once the Muslim child develops undesirable habits and unethical values, it becomes extremely difficult to make the child into a good Muslim/Muslimah.[14]

Certainly, it is right to say that religion originates from family and cultural heritage. This is because "in all lands the social training of a child directs him to translate tribal ritual into personal habits."[15] Though the child may be oblivious of what is happening in his life at a time, the fact that all it respects, such as parents, significant others, and indeed the elders are performing the act, enables the child to trustfully follow and assimilate whatever the adult society is doing. This is why M. N. Getui, rightly observes that the African traditional society incorporates religious training and instruction in the day-to-day activities of the people in such a way that any person participating in these activities of the people will eventually be molded spiritually.[16] Hence Potvin and Sloane came to the conclusion that "adolescent Church membership within the major denominations is often a simple extension of parental membership."[17] This becomes very true when we consider the contention of the cultural anthropologists that human cultures all over the world are ready fertile ground for breeding ritual and myth. Inherent in these cultures also are some leadership qualities such as priesthood or the like to preserve the religious beliefs and practices.[18] These religious personnel not only preserve the cultural beliefs of a people, they also participate in transferring it to the young. As a matter of fact in some religions, they are the main custodians and transferors of faith. Muslim scholar Syed, puts it this way:

As the children grow, the teachers, community elders, their friends exert deep influence on the character of the child. The parents should choose the right schools for their children. Audio-Visual media such as TV, Video, video games, Movies, peer pressure could play an effective role in raising the Islamic personality the parents are building and deeply influence the behavior of the children for years. It takes

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[13] Ibid
[14] Syed, I. B. 2001. *Education of Muslim Children—Challenges and Opportunities.* http:www.uscharterschools.org/
[15]Allport, p. 26.
[16] Getui, 1990
[17] Cited in Chidili, 2005, p. 96
[18]Chidili, 2006

constant and continuous effort on the part of the parents and others to keep our youth on the path of Islamic values. Otherwise they will become an American statistic. Character education, promotion of order and discipline and ending the culture of guns and drugs from schools are the important steps of Islamic education.[19]

Thus, religion could be said to be a culturally formulated devise for living and acting as well as a liable guide for human behavior. Its usefulness within the culture assures docile handing over from parents to children. In this case then, it follows that the children are obliged to believe what they received from their parents. Certainly, this claims that religious sentiments of an individual springs from his/her ancestral heritage, something one suckled from the mother's breast. If this is accepted, it helps us understand that any kind of behavior, good or bad could be a transferred trait from the parents and significant others to the offspring and posterity. It appears from this that if we have persistent fanaticism from Islamic or Christian religion, for instance, it follows that there are some adult fanatics who consistently pass on fanatic traits to the young. It depends on the parents and indeed all the conveyors of religious faith to expunge all evil traits in their teachings and behaviors and entrench peaceful-loving traits on their progeny. This means then that the Christians, the Muslims and indeed all other religions must desire peace and harmony and as such impart them to their young as enshrined in their Holy Books to influence their offspring so as to influence their environment. In the same vein, all religions must do whatever it takes to fish out all the bad eggs within their ranks to deter them from poisoning the minds and behaviors of the young.[20]

DEVELOPING A BALANCED HUMAN PERSONALITY

Moreover, child education aims at developing a balanced human personality through training of the human spirit, mental power, rational self, senses, and feelings. In other words, education frequently aims at developing human person physically, mentally and spiritually. Above all, educational policy should normally be directed to target enlightening the head and heart and illuminating the human consciousness for all round development of individual personality. This is why education enables a human being to attain the greatest possible harmony, internal and external, spiritual and material, for the fullest possible development of human potentialities and capacities. Along this line of thought, Ibrahim Syed suggests that Islamic education aims at among other things, the preparation of the young for leadership and building of character. He further points out that the final goal of Islamic education is the growth and development of an Islamic personality, which indeed is the pivot of Islamic values.[21] Citing the Recommendation of the Committee

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[19] Syed, I. B. 2001. *Education of Muslim Children—Challenges and Opportunities*. http:www.uscharterschools.org/

[20] Chidili, 2006

[21] Syed, I. B. 2001. *Education of Muslim Children—Challenges and Opportunities*. http:www.uscharterschools.org/

of the First World Conference on Muslim Education, he summarizes the aim of Islamic education as follows:

Education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of man through training of the human spirit, intellect, rational self, feelings and senses. The training imparted to a Muslim must be such that faith is infused into the whole of his/her personality and creates in him/her an emotional attachment to Islam and enables him to follow the Qur'an and Sunnah and be governed by Islamic system of values willingly and joyfully so that he/she may proceed to the realization of his/her status as Khalifatullah to whom God has promised the authority of the universe. [22]

Certainly, all other religious faiths, Hinduism, Afrreligionism, Shintoism, Judaism, Christianity etc deeply shares in this basic aim of religious education. Obviously, this is the intention of all other religious faiths and this is what all of them understand very well and indeed raise their adherents accordingly, to the extent that any good member of any religion is soaked in their tenet to a blind point. In other words people are so awash with their own religious truth that no other religion seems to matter. This is why it appears as if all religions teach love and yet behaves hate to other people since they are closed to themselves. All their teachings are still very parochial and domesticated. Each religious community closes itself up, learns all that appertains to their religious faith, acts and behaves fully learned but relates inimically to others. Gabriel Moran puts this way, "every child acts out a religious way with a set of beliefs, symbols, and actions that relate the person to the enduring religious questions of wherefrom, whereto, and why. Every child takes up a stance toward the universe as a whole and toward the meaning of life and death, even if this way of life is not one of the traditional religions."[23] Moran further observes that anyone who grows up in such an insulated religious world sees other religious faiths very strange. Each person is shocked to notice other people who behave differently from the way they behave. Foreign students know this experience very well, particularly on their first weeks of encounter with other students from other parts of the world.[24] "On their first encountering people who are seemingly intelligent and well-meaning," says Moran, "see the individual elements within other people's religion as strange and even bizarre."[25] If there is nothing done to acquaint each other on one another's religious behaviors, people will remain estranged and worlds apart. Without doubt this explains how all religious faiths bring their adherents up and indeed still live in that way. From cradle through youth to the grave as it were, all religious faiths still mold their adherent in such a straight-jacket fashion. It is even worse in schools of higher learning where religions are not only hemmed along the lines of individual religious faiths but also coached in languages foreign to the local people. Surely, this makes deep understanding of religious faith very difficult. Perhaps that is why there is sporadic yells and shouts at each other now and then out of fear of unknown, among the rank and files of

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[22]Ibid
[23] Moran, 1989, p. 31
[24] Ibid
[25] Ibid

different religious faiths. As all these religions are shouting at each other like people in the market place, no one hears the other, and thus, continues the strangeness among them.

THE APPLICATION OF MORE SELF CRITIQUE TO REINVENT OUR RELIGIOUS TENETS

This is not to say that efforts have not been made toward bringing all religious faiths together for the sake of dialogue and acquaintance. Rather it is to say that enough is yet to be done in that regard. This means that more efforts must be made by all religions to achieve tolerance and fraternity among their rank and files. Jeff Astley suggests in this connection that Christian religious educational process should be "more self-critical of their religious beliefs, attitudes, values, emotions and actions."[26] This, in my judgment, is the only way that religions should evolve self-understanding and self-growth. This is mainly because self-critique enables individuals to shape and reshape oneself for better. Perhaps, this is why Astley's suggestion is the cogent proposal for all religious faiths so as to shape themselves up to understand themselves and also be fully aware of other religions and their importance to various other people who worship God through them. Self-critique therefore is the hinge for all religions' meticulous self-understanding of itself as a unique religion and other religions as unique in their own ways. At the same time it facilitates people's proper understanding of other people who access other religions for worship. The knowledge acquired from self-critique obviously enhances constant growth and deep understanding of religion per se and its universal appeal in general. This obviously is the main thrust of the second aim of religious education. This is the area I think the tertiary level of religious education should explore properly with a view to evolving a modality that should flow down the ranks and files of all religious faiths from the grassroots to the noblest of the society.

BRIDGING THE GAP THROUGH THE COLLATION AND FRATERNIZATION OF ALL RELIGIOUS TENETS

In my opinion, it is high time we started to bridge the gap by initiating some ways of understanding one another through reasonable studies and required dialogue. Experience has shown that religious education has been hewn into two wide parts. Catechism classes or Sunday schools have been child-centered, leading the learning of faith to what Gabriel Moran calls what women do to children supervised by men. This aspect of philosophy of religious teaching and learning renders faith learning childish exercise no reasonable adult likes to mingle with. As if that was not enough, religious learning was shoveled into the seminaries where faith-learning is plunged into foreign languages and high-phonated words, needing high-level of education and very select few of human society to study and imbibe. In

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[26] Astley, J. (1996). "The role of the family in the formation and criticism of faith." In Stephen C. Barton (Ed.), *The family in theological perspective.* Edinburgh: T & T Clark.

this way religion is rendered impenetrable and scary; causing only conflicts and division. Probably, that is why very few people consider religion a worthy subject to study. At this time in human development, it appears proper period to consider seriously, the importance of religion in human life and then plan out ways of learning and imbing the real truths embedded in religions. First there should be a broad based curriculum that will contain tenets of various religious faiths that will encourage fraternization with one another. It is only in this way that the religious faiths will whittle down the strangeness between them. I am suggesting that such tenets should start early enough in the parochial religious faiths and culminate in schools and the schools of higher learning where these tenets should be discussed, critiqued with genuine interest and understanding. This is very urgent and we must start now. As we resolve to embark on this, we will understand with Gabriel Moran that Christianity, Islam, Afrreligion, Buddhism and indeed all other religions "have different but equally valuable lessons to teach." This discussion will enable us for the first time to recognize fully that Afrreligion, Islam or Christianity for that matter is "a religion," utterly unique but comparable to every other religion.[27]

NEW UNDERSTANDING OF RELIGIOUS TENETS AS A GAME CHANGER

Our new understanding of faith automatically changes the aims and objectives of religious education. This time around, it is no more going to be each person learning only their religious faith very well, and finish palaver. No, it is going to be each person learning their religious faith very well coupled with learning other people's religious faiths enough to interact meaningfully with people of other faiths. This is principally for the interest of knowledge that leads to fraternization and oneness of the people of God.

Hence, the aim for religious education this time will be: (1). To enable learners to understand the nature of their traditional beliefs and practices and the beliefs and practices of other world faiths. (2). To teach tolerance and challenge prejudice towards people of different faiths through providing opportunities to develop an understanding of the value of living in a multicultural, multi-faith and multi-lingual society. (3). To help learners reflect upon their own needs, experiences and questions and to confront what are sometimes referred to as 'ultimate questions'. (4). To encourage learners to develop open minds to new and different concepts and to form their own opinions based on evidence and argument. (5).To maintain close links with local churches and other religious communities. (6). To learn from religions in addition to gaining knowledge and understanding about religions.[28]

This will mean in the words of South African Educational Policy, that

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[27] Moran, G. (1998). *The aims of religious education*. In Harris, M and Moran, G. <u>Reshaping Religious Education</u>. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster Press, p. 31.

[28] *South African National Policy on Religion and Education* (Web, 2007).

religious education will provide the pupils with the life orientation that develops their capacity to respect the right of others, appreciate the cultural diversity and different belief systems. It will therefore make it imperative on the parents and teachers to impart on their progeny, the virtues of acceptance of other religions as enshrined in their respective religions. A Muslim for instance will learn from the Holy Qur'an, to respect "those who believe in that which was revealed to thee and that which was revealed before thee" (2 4). "Say, we believe in Allah and in that which has been revealed to us and in that which was revealed to Abraham and Ismail and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes in that which was given to Moses and Jesus and in that which was given to the prophets from their Lord and we do not make any distinction between any of them and to Him do we submit" (2: 1 79). They will also learn to respect people of other religions as stated in the Holy Qur'an: "And abuse not those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest exceeding the limits they abuse Allah through ignorance" (6: 108). The Christians will for instance imbibe such themes like, do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt (Ex 22:21). Show proper respect to everyone (1Peter, 2:17). Love one another as I have loved you. Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you (Lk 6: 27). Owe no one anything except the debt of love for one another (Rm 13: 8), etc.[29]

DIALOGUE AS A BASIC PHILOSOPHY OF ENCOUNTER IN THIS ASPECT OF KNOWLEDGE

To realize this proposal, 'dialogue' as suggested by Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator should be applied as the medium of communication. In his "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" Freire, proposed 'dialogue' as a philosophy of knowledge. In this situation, dialogue is defined as an 'encounter between men mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (p. 88). This translates to mean that in the teaching and learning of this kind, the teacher and the learner must be the people who are curious to learn from one another, and at the same time teach one another based on the information arising from the world around them. The participants must have common purpose which must be to name the world. The world this time must be their problem within their environment. When the problem is named, each member of the discussants will have the opportunity to air his/her views without being coerced or intimidated. This means that the dialogue must be a free affair so as to be rewarding. In the process of the dialogue, there should be no imposition of any person's opinion; there should be no denigration of any person's opinion. All opinions are considered equal. All opinions are discussed with equal interest without fear or favor. This discussion must be inspired by the interest to acquire knowledge, new knowledge of what one does not know. The knowledge acquired in this discussion is meant to leverage the participants and impact on the society positively. Since the knowledge gained is intended to be used in daily life, every member of the community must be enthusiastically and genuinely concerned. The main purpose is to use the new knowledge to transform the society to become a

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[29] Ibid

friendly society instead of hostile community. In this case then, the knowledge gained in discussing words like 'tolerance' 'compassion' or the like, are aimed at transforming the multi-religious, multicultural or multilingual society like Nigeria to cohabit amicably.

As we pointed out earlier, the content of this new idea should be all the religious themes that speak of tolerance, peace and unity amongst people. These themes like love, compassion, tolerance have been earlier enumerated. Home and school as places of learning are very important as already hinted. But with this idea of broad based learning, Gabriel Moran suggests that while not subtracting home and school as places of learning, places of work and leisure should be added. He also suggests that the idea of religious learning being what 'women do to children, supervised by men' has become obsolete with this new idea. He then suggests that since religion is such an important theme in human life, it should be lifelong learning.[30] This means that religious learning should be spread to include the young and the old. The teachers now will expand to be every member of the community, at different stages of life. This means then that as the young takes religious teachings from the old, so the old should prepare to receive religious teachings from the young. That is to say, as birth, death or physically challenged child teaches the mystery of God to the adult so the adult exposes the child to the traditional genesis of their religious faith. In them all are mysteries only religion can teach the people of faith.

THE CONTENT OF THE CURRICULUM

At this point, children should start learning religious diversity by exploring the more tangible forms of the religion, right away from home and then continue with the observable aspects of religious diversity found in churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, shrines, and other places of gathering for religious activity. As children advance in age, other areas of religious diversity could be addressed. Thus, in the secondary schools for instance, students should begin to study the basic component phenomena of religion, such as stories, songs, sacred places, founders, rituals and festivals, with illustrations drawn from various religious traditions and communities in Nigeria and the world. In this connection, Oduyoye (1979) suggests that a learning of this type must necessarily include, "the meaning of everyday events, of festivals, the patterns of behavior, norms and taboos," as well as the community religious history and any other human activities occurring in the community as a part of the religious knowledge, every young person must know.[31] At senior secondary schools, integration of these component parts of religion could be introduced in preparation to further discussion on religious study themes in schools of higher learning. At tertiary level of education, religious studies should

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[30] Moran, G. (1998). *The aims of religious education*. In Harris, M and Moran, G. Reshaping Religious Education. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster Press

[31] Oduyoye, M. A. (1979). The Value of African religious beliefs and practices for Christian theology. In K. Appaiah-Kubi & S. Torres (Eds.). *African theology en route*. New York: Orbis Books, p. 94.

introduce learners to all sorts of critical thinking about significant issues of personal morality and social ethics that are often associated with religion. When religion is discussed in schools it must be positioned in such a way as to be examinable, so as to grade student's knowledge. Students should be also assessed through practical observation to know whether they can behave in reality what they learn in theory. But when these religious themes are discussed in work places and leisure places among adults, the assessment should be on the practical behavior of the people. Thus, if tolerance is discussed for instance, the measurement will be on how the participants tolerate one another starting from that moment of discussion to infinity, anywhere   and   everywhere.

Since J. S. Mbiti in his "African Religions and Philosophy 1977" observed that Africa is profoundly religious[32], it follows that every activity in Africa is religiously laced. In that case then, every learning in African community must be understood as a religious knowledge. This is why Oduyoye's suggestion that puberty rites and indeed other rites of passage should be extended to schools and other places of learning is proper. This is necessary as puberty in particular is the beginning of proper awareness of social integration and disintegration at the same time, in Africa. At this time both male and female integrate sexually by each sex developing its individuality. In other words, males are taught to be male by learning all that appertains to males and females learn what appertains to females. On the other hand, the obvious boundaries created by this arrangement disparage the community since males learn to lord it over the females and in this way the community muzzles the individuality of the females.[33] However, Oduyoye (1995) argues that the new education should include respect for individuality instead of subordination.[34] This will shape the thrust of the education to include teaching equality and respect of all human persons at home, at schools, the places of work and at leisure places.

CONCLUSION

In the end, this dialogical process of learning starting from the cradle to the grave driven by context and content; will usher in the desired objective. The knowledge acquired in this exercise as developed above will eventually dispel the ignorance and debilitating fear hindering the familiarization of divergent religions in Nigeria. The learning will then pave the way for tolerance and respect for other people and their religion. The tolerance and respect will then lead to peaceful coexistence and harmonious neighborhood. This will then, mean that religious literacy should include cultural literacy. Creativity in this regard will amount to developing capacities for expanding imagination, making connections, and dealing with cultural differences and diversity. Furthermore, religious literacy will understand critical reflection to include comparison, cultural analysis, ethical debate,

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[32] Mbiti, J. S. (1977). *African religions and philosophy*. New York: Anchor Books
[33] Oduyoye, M. A. (1979), p. 39
[34] Oduyoye, M. A. (1995*). Daughters of Anowa*. New York: Orbis Books, p.82

and the formulation and clarification of values.[35] In this way religions will understand each other and thus entrench enduring peace and harmony in our society.

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[35] *South African National Policy on Religion and Education* (Web, 2007).