

THE IMPACT OF MODERN SECULAR INFLUENCES ON YOUTH

Genesis 3: 1-3

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Abstract

It is a historical fact that the industrial revolution started at 1777, which marked the beginning of a new era in human technological advancement which has cumulated to modernization even to arguably post modernization era, Championed by the Great Britain. It is also an axiomatic truth that modernization came with its negative tendencies which has permeated to every facet of human endeavour. *It is evident in the present times in Nigerian society moral decadence among the youth is fast becoming the norm and sadly pointing to waning of the highly desired moral values. The patterns of behavior among the youth reveal morality level is at an all-time low; long regarded as a consequent factor of modernization. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the effect or the impact of modernization on moral values taught to young people in church of Christ. To achieve this, the study engages a qualitative historical studies and Biblical exposition trajectory. The findings confirm that modernization, through mediums such as social media and urbanization have provided new opportunities and structures which negatively influence the inculcating of moral values into young people, and as such society has lost most of its rich cultural ideals which characterized the youths in the past. Despite most youth generally appreciating the importance values have in their lives, a number hold the notion some moral values which in earlier periods gave meaning to human life are less important. The study establishes an urgent need to fill the gap created by the changed structures of inculcating values and sound doctrine of God's word for the purpose of healing the shaky family foundation aggravated by youths' failure to fully understand the principles of being morally right and calls for the work of redeeming the lost youth to intensify.*

Key Words: *Modernization, Youth, Moral Values*

Introduction

Today the effects of modernization are being blamed for the moral crisis the youth are currently facing. A core argument has been modernization effect produces pervasive social and cultural consequences, and affects how values are being taught to and perceived by the youth. From many sources it does appear modernization is a threat to maintaining those values necessary for the survival of the people (Ime &

Unwanabong, 2014). A related and popular view has been the youth no longer know how they ought to conduct themselves as individuals and members of society; neither do they seem to know what values should inform their behavior (Gitonga, Mbugua & Ogenda, 2013; Ime & Unwanabong, 2014; Mugambi, 2002). Ideally, it is universally established there is no group of people which can survive without a set of values that hold them together and guarantees their continued existence (Etuk, 2002).

ROOT CAUSE THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Sin has always been the real problem of Man, in any era of human history the problem of sin has remains the same. There are many ways to sin but there is only one way out of sin – Jesus Christ (**John 14:6**). From history it appears that the partner through which creeps in and destroys mankind has remains the same. **A closer look at Gen. 3: 1-24.**

1. Sin is attractive/enticing in nature vs 6
2. Satan is active lurking to destroy vs 1-5
3. The principle of changing the values/ morals/ laws etc vs 4-5
4. Sin ultimate end hold mankind into bondage/captivity/ death- both spiritual and physical vs 19, 22-24

A. Joseph in Egypt

1. Gen. 41: 45 Pharaoh changed Joseph's name
2. Gen. 41:50 Joseph married and settled well in the land
3. Later his descendants became slaves in Egypt

B. Babylonian captivity

1. **1Kings 24, 25: 1-17** Nebuchadnezzar made Mattaniah king and changed his name Zedekiah
 2. **Daniel 1: 6-7** Daniel's name was changed to Belteshazzar
 3. **Daniel 1: 8** His food was changed.
 4. Later in history their language was changed.
- B. Roman empire to the British colonization same principles applied
1. Principle of change retained eg. Values, morals
 2. 13 out of 14 Roman Emperors were homosexuals according to William Barclay
 3. Colonization and slave trade historical facts
 4. Industrial Revolution vs colonization
 - a. Outcome of industrial revolution in human history and rejection of religion eg Karl Max, Emily Durkhem, Charles Darwin etc
 - b. Perversion orchestrated by ungodly men and effects today

Effects of Modernization

Society is never static but dynamic, changing from simple traditional outfit to a more complex modern one. Scholars of history agree that modernization as a major feature of modern society has a political, economic, cultural and even religious impact on individuals, families and nations; they however disagree on the nature and extent of this impact (Mensah & Ammisah, 2016). Alongside the changing society, its peoples, values, activities and trends also change. The changes have been positive and also negative, and in particular the values continuing to change to suit the character of a changing society marked by increased moral decadence now being witnessed in alarming proportions, and more anxiety (Ime & Unwanabong, 2014). The conceptualization of modernization for this study is in line with the school of thought that sees modernization as the overwhelming decline of the traditional values, culture and norms. Focus in this study is on the negative impact of modernization on moral values among the youth. To comprehensively do this we discuss it from several perspectives beginning with modernization effect on family values.

Modernization Effect on Family Values

In a world where societies are moving fast with developmental trends, there should be certain principles the families will want not only to genuinely focus on but also to strictly adhere to and family values is key among them. The traditional family had a strong sense of belonging and cohesion and highly cherished family values to the extent that the child's behaviour was often used to evaluate the quality of the parents. It has been increasingly pointed out that standards found in family have declined and given way to situations like people who for instance do not often sit together for even meals because of busy work schedules. As we shall see later there is conflict in today's family orchestrated by new roles and opportunities boosted by modernization. Further, cultural values are changing as seen in the role of fathers who are now not the sole bread winners, a position only they used to hold. On the other hand and unlike in the past where women were rarely found in paid employment, today's women prefer to work because of its creative development, economic and social features (Urszula, 2011:333). Contemporary trends show about 40% of bread winners are women, a reality brought about by modernization (Filipovic, 2013). The trouble with this is that a formally employed mother will ordinarily have very little time for interacting with her children in feeding, playing, disciplining or impacting some values in them in one way or another; so the parent's time and attention to the child is lessened. Generally it can be summed up the family

is seldom together and no longer eats food together in a patterned way with regard to time, place and contents (Cognolo 2006; Mensah & Amissah, 2013).

The extended family, which was regarded as a social dynamism in the family and helped in developing the child's social responsibility and respect among other values, has greatly been affected by modernity. Probably as a consequence, the contemporary youth seem not to have much respect for not only age but for values the community revered. The youth agree they don't observe common gesture like giving up their seats for an older person in public vehicles. Regrettably, modernization continues to provide means like the social media by which western cultures are showcased as superior and therefore spread rapidly leading to continued loss of rich indigenous family values and ideals. The family values are not the only ones which have been affected by modernization, youths' have adopted a disturbing behaviour pattern.

Modernity Effect on the Youths' Behavioural Pattern

In present times moral decadence has to a significant extent replaced basic moral values. The witnessed behaviour pattern of the youth is an indication morality is at its all-time low. Today the youth are lax, and more interested in pleasure and enjoyment with no sense of the future, the sum total of all these is a fall in moral standards that has resulted in indiscipline at all levels of society, whose results is craze for power without accountability, cheating, laziness, and, lack of dignity and respect for human life. Furthermore, it is in public domain there is an increase in vices like corruption, broken homes, teenage pregnancies, crime, and sexual promiscuity (Kinoti, 2013; Ime et al.2014) all linked to the breakdown of moral values. Being dishonest, unjust, intolerant, disrespectful, disobedient, undisciplined, individualistic or corrupt makes one a hero in the contemporary society because these are the values majority holds and are pursuing. The modern society has adopted the philosophy "the end justifies the means." Everyone wants to acquire wealth in the shortest time possible thereby causing the wave of corruption to be in vogue. One notable consistent behaviour pattern of the youth is in the use of social media.

Social Media and Youth Attitude

The media has fast become the forum of public life and social interaction among the youth and has greatly impacted on their values and attitude. Internet and television allow instantaneous exchange of information. They perpetuate social change without physical contact through borrowing of fashions and mingling of cultures

(Mensah & Amissah, 2013:824). Not surprising then, modernization has been blamed for interfering with the way things used to be. Unlike the social media, most African activities carried with them moral message and values which were passed on from one generation to the next (Ezenweke, 2016). Similarly, the Synod of Bishops has noted, though the benefits of mass media include major access to information and greater opportunities for knowledge exchange, these potentialities however cannot hide the risk when this kind of culture is taken to an extreme (Synod of Bishops, 2012). It is unfortunate the youth don't seem to have control of the habit.

A significant impact of mass media has been the propagation of violence particularly on video film and television where the actors are portrayed as heroes. The children who have been exposed to this kind of violence have been known to exhibit violent tendencies in their lives (Anderson et al., 2003). In addition, the use of social media, television, and the increased proliferation of social functions has given rise to celebrities who the youth yearn to learn from or imitate. These celebrities are famous for nudity and substance abuse among other indecent habits. The youth continue to witness the media society celebrate scantily dressed women and socialites and corrupt people celebrated as heroes and trusted with public offices. Disturbingly, it is the case today that within their environment the youth are surrounded by a crowd of witnesses who have thrown morality away, but nevertheless making it in life (Ime et al. 2014).

On the same vein the present radical crave for drugs, consumption of alcohol and partying is most disturbing to parents. Recently there have been incidents of students getting involved in group drinking and immoral acts in enclosed rooms or buses. Other incidences like public advertisements for a party dubbed "Project X", which had to do with house parties for the young people, have provoked swift intervention of authorities. The existence of such an event could be a pointer to the moral decadence among the youth in the country, most of whom have accepted such behaviour as normal (Odumbe, 2016). It is worth noting that for such parties there is normally an overbooking. Another aspect of social media the youth participate in is sexting, which involves sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, photographs, or images. Many of these images become distributed rapidly via cell phones or the Internet. It is saddening to think about the under-age who innocently consumes this kind of information. This situation is more so in the urban and semi-urban areas like our study location where some cultural elements have become fluid and given rise to self-centeredness.

Modernization Threat to Future Generations

Just like in the traditional society the virtues of honesty, kindness, obedience, humility, respect, hard work, self-discipline and fear of God were reported to be still very important. Generally, though, the study results have demonstrated the perception of the relevance of moral values has changed as viewed through the eyes of the youth. Most youth in the study said they do not mind not reflecting some of the values in their lives. For instance, they do not appreciate hard work as a value since they do not see its connection with future success. They disregard the social and important aspects of work which are existential, creativeness and self-realization for working mostly for leisure. However, the parents argue the youth may actually understand hard work is necessary to further their dreams through education, but, as they describe them, they are lazy. Unfortunately, and unlike in the past, even if the youth wanted to, they seem to have few options to manifest as hard workers partly because of the nature of the present economy being now more knowledge based and limited job positions. However, imbibing these values is the only way of enhancing character development and moral health. For the youth it all starts with making a decision to be morally right and stand out of the crowd and become light in darkness of a morally bankrupt society. Short of this, they will fail to be oriented leaders of tomorrow and the entire society will fail in its goals.

Majority of the parents indicated the current youth do not like being provoked even for a worthwhile cause and therefore require to be explained the meaning and benefits of each value for their lives. Hence a key finding, therefore, is that in teaching moral values to the children today, the parents have to show them the relevance of the values in relationship to the issues they are facing or will face in life. An example is where the child has first to perceive say kindness as being extended to him or her or their friends. Another instance is in teaching the youth how to be respectful, where the parents explain the importance or worth of human beings, and love for others because they are created by God in his own image. Sometimes parents cede some ground and listen to what a child who has misbehaved has to say, forgives and grants a second chance thus teaching the child or youth a valuable lesson on how to humble himself and therefore the meaning of “sorry” and “thank you”. This also encourages the child to be forthright and not to keep secrets from parents under any circumstances.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study confirms the long-held truism that moral values as epitomized in the traditional way have been extinguishing gradually in the face of modernity which has brought multiple challenges to the way children are taught. To move forward,

the parents must be willing to play their instructor as well as vigilant role while the youth must be helped to come out of their current worrisome moral situation in order to possess the wherewithal needed to act prudently when they face challenges. This should be done with the understanding that the new ways especially the social media cannot be wished away.

The notion life can be lived out with less of life skills demonstrates a conspiracy borne out of modernization and makes this study conclude that some youth's reasoning and proper judgment in responding to whatever issue they face in life is not guided by any meaningful values. This together with the growing threat of individualism makes this study conclude, as many other studies have previously done, the present and future family risks being dysfunctional and thus creating a shaky foundation for society. Nevertheless, youths are reminded strongly that values never lose their relevance from one generation to another though this is what it may be made to look like. All hope is not lost as the youth can still be taught in the way they can become determinants of change in their society and not victims in a rapidly changing world. The starting point is by realizing modernity is irreversible; even as communities embrace it they should consider reverting to what is good in their rich cultural heritage while not ignoring the fact that this time round the audience has substantially changed and will not accept teaching without questioning. Still, the call to the parents and the Church is: inculcating moral values in children is not an option but a must do and the earlier it begins the better. And to the youth, they can be a force of positive change if they decide to use the power within them accordingly.

As future leaders, the youth has to be morally disposed to steer their societies to prosperity. For this to manifest, the youth must imbibe right moral values that will dispose them to become positively inclined (Ime et.al. 2014). The study therefore establishes an urgent need to fill the gap created by youth's failure to fully understand the principles of being morally right and calls for the work of redeeming the lost youth to intensify. To do this the youths' conviction regarding moral values is of utmost importance if any programs have to work. Countering this youth's situation and the other changed aspects of the society may require measures such as continuation of honest discussions and drastic change of the mindset of the parent and society.

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