

PRINTING MEDIA AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: A DISCOURSE OF ISLAMIC DA'WAH ACTIVITIES IN THE PUBLIC PRINT MEDIA IN KWARA STATE.

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Abstract

The vast transition of information to electronic and print media is making information resources of the world available to an increasingly global audience. The information delivery capability of print media serves all sectors of society, religious education inclusive. The importance and the influence of print media on modern Islamic Da'wah outreach cannot be overemphasized. There are various Islamic articles published in the Nigerian News papers by some Muslim scholars. These articles were designed to educate the Muslims and non-Muslims on socio-religious issues. This paper examines, the impact of religious education most especially, on the Muslims of Kwara via print media

INTRODUCTION

Da'wah is a form of Islamic education which implies calling people to the way of Allah. *Dāin* is a 'caller' or an 'inviter'. However, *Da'wah* is generic in view of its various contextual applications in the Holy Qur'an and divergent opinions by different scholars. The utmost and fundamental principle of *Da'wah* in Islam is implicitly defined in the *Qur'an* chapter 16, verse 125.

Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord, with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: For thy Lord knoweth best who have strayed from His path and who receive audience.

In relevance to the above verse, invitation to the way of Allah rules out aggression and the use of foul language. Divine invitation is devoid of hostility and should be convincingly preached through logical reasoning. *Da'wah* is a continuous activity because human beings are vulnerable to forgetfulness. Therefore, it is inevitable for constant purification of soul against greed, heresies, intolerance and religious crisis.

The tempo of dynamic social interaction has indispensably brought Muslims and Christians together on common platform of socio-religious interactions in Nigeria. Print media has been a veritable medium of educating the public on the concept of religious tolerance and harmony because of its universality and durability.

It is against this backdrop and other social needs that the Kwara State government founded the NIGERIAN HERALD in 1973. It was later changed to THE HERALD.

Establishment of Public Print Media in Kwara State

Before the advent of the societal or religious print media in Kwara State, *The Herald* which was established in 1973 had overwhelmingly played the roles of religious enlightenments through the regular publications of the Christian and Islamic articles on Sundays and Fridays respectively.

The Kwara State Printing and Publishing Corporation is the pioneering print media in Kwara state. It was founded by the Kwara State of Nigeria by Edict number 3 of 1973 on the 2nd January 1973, through the instrumentality of the then state military Governor, Colonel David L. Bamigboye.

Socio-Religious Roles of the Kwara State Printing Press

In consonance with the views which the then Governor of Kwara state, Colonel, Bamigboye had expressed from time to time, he stressed that the proposed newspaper would enjoy all the freedoms to which the press was entitled in order that it would carry out its socio-religious roles effectively.

The Herald acts as avenue of information between the people of Kwara state and their government. Above all, the singular objective of the newspaper is to coordinate the Muslims and Christians on the platform of harmony and good brotherhood state. In addition, *The Herald* would give publicity to the arts and culture of the people of Kwara and, according to the Edict, carry reports of outstanding and general interest as well as well-informed criticisms and features.

The Herald has continued to maintain these important roles to crave for religious understanding and peaceful co-existence in Kwara State. These important roles were demonstrated by presenting harmonious and reconciliatory reportage on religious crisis to the public such as during the 1986 Ilorin public disturbances arising from the Palm Sunday procession, the 1999 Ilorin religious crisis and the August, 2004 Ilorin crisis over the visit of the German itinerant evangelist, Reinard Bonnke to Ilorin. The Kwara State printing press attaches importance to religious education by giving enough coverage to religious issues in the Herald. Equal pagination for socio-religious enlightenments is given to Islam and Christianity on Fridays and Sundays respectively.

It is of prime concern in this section to examine *The Herald* as a public print media in relation to its Islamic religious education towards the religious needs of the people and maintaining peaceful co-existence among the adherents of different faiths. To this end, the activities of some Muslim writers and the various educational methodologies employed by them in carrying out their spirit of *Da'wah* will be brought into lime light.

The Herald allots two full pages captioned *The Qiblah* for Islamic issues on Fridays. The two pages are further separated into four divisions. The first column features reported news that reflect issues affecting Muslims. The column educates and offers situational reports from the Islamic events covered within the state and outside during the week to the Muslim readers. The subsequent column on the same page is regularly captioned 'Friday Discourse'. The Muslim columnists in the column educates and offers situational reports from the Islamic events covered within the

state and outside during the week to the Muslim readers. The subsequent column on the same page is regularly captioned Friday Discourse. The Muslim columnists in the column write on topical issues reflecting Islamic basic fundamentals such as *Institution of Zakat. Hajj* etc. While another column is captioned in relevance to the Islamic issue discussed, the last column is regularly captioned with *Safi Jimba on Friday*.

The write-ups of some Muslim columnists published in *The Herald* show the need for proper religious education of Muslims for purposeful *da'wah* outreach. The publication of Saudat AbdulBaki on "Role of Muslim Women in *Da'wah* justifies this. However, other constant Muslim scholars who have expressed their views in *The Herald* are: M.A. Ambali, Ahmed Ajiboye, Ibrahim Owotunwase, Safi Jimba, S.O. Muhammad, Lanre Badmus, Yusuf Ali, Biliqees Oladimeji, Bilal Shittu, Sulyman Nyang, Yasser Remilekun, Sekinah AbdulAzez etc. In addition to the personalities mentioned, the Hilal Crescent Islamic Centre also contributes educative religious articles regularly in *The Herald*.

At this juncture, it is expedient to examine the activities of some of the Muslim scholars mentioned in relation to their spirit of *Da'wah* in *The Herald*.

AbdulMuttalib Ambali

The first person that captured one's attention is AbdulMuttalib Ambali, a legal luminary and a regular *Herald* columnist. The research carried out has revealed that he has published some works in *The Herald* reflecting Islamic jurisprudence. Some of the topics he addressed include: *Ash-shahadah*; Evidence in Islamic Law, Democracy on the scale of Islam, Religious Adherents and Peaceful co-existence.

In his article, 'Religious Adherents and Peaceful Co-existence' he portrays Islam as a religion that promotes harmony, keen sense of brotherhood and good neighbourliness. AbdulMuttalib Ambali as a peace loving man uses mass media to enlighten the public on some controversial issues that often lead to chaos between Christian and

Muslim communities. He emphasized fundamental human rights especially freedom of worship in relevance with Qur'anic injunction. He laid emphasis on the worship of one God by the Muslims and Christians as commanded in the *Qur'an* chapter 3 verse 64.

Say: O people of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah, if then they turn back, say ye: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's will).

AbdulMuttalib Ambali in his article presentation enlightened the Muslim *Ummah* on the need to portray Islam in good image in order to foster mutual understanding among the people of Kwara State. He encouraged veritable means of dialogue towards setting any sensitive issue capable of tearing the country apart.

Through *The Herald*, Abdul Muttalib Ambali treats some other fundamental Islamic jurisprudential issues like *Ash-shahadah*; Evidence in Islamic Law. He explains *Ash-shahadah* etymologically from *shahadah* which means to be present or participate in an event. It conveys the meaning of being an eye-witness to an incident or event. It also means the knowledge acquired as a result of direct experience of expertise. He describes the attributes of *adil* i.e competent witness as adherence to Islamic faith. However, the honesty of the witness counts more than the apparent faith he professes in matter of evidence. He expounded his views on honesty of a witness in relation to *Qur'an* 3:75.

Among the people of the Book, there is he who if thou trustest him with a treasure, will return it to you

This explains that Islamic law will prefer the evidence of a honest non-Muslim than evidence of a dishonest Muslim. Essentially, he admonishes Muslim readers on the gravity of false witness in relevance to the Quranic injunction in

chapter 17 verse 36.

And pursue not that of which though hast no knowledge:

for surely the hearing, the sight, the heart all of those

shall be questioned of.

The concern of AbdulMutalib Ambali as revealed in his publications has presented him as an Islamic legal expert enlightening the readers on *shariah* law with a view to sensitizing readers to the ideal social and divine order.

Saudat AbdulBaqi

Saudat AbdulBaqi is also a versatile Muslim character who also chose *The Herald* as a medium to propagate the spirit of *Da'wah* among the Muslim for the understanding of individual religious obligations and social roles. Her publications include; "The Roles of Muslim Women in *Da'wah*" and "The Rights of the Muslim Women in Islam".

She explained in her publication: "The Roles of Muslim women in *Da'wah*" and "The rights of women in Islam" the in-human treatments meted to women before Islam such as denial of rights of inheritance and rights to acquire properties. Rather they were considered to be chattels to be inherited and objects of fun and entertainment. The same stories abound in the history of Roman empire where women had no right to worship because they were regarded as being impure.

According to her, Islam has redeemed the image of women. Islam does not suppress a woman in any form. Rather, she is rated equally along with her male counterpart in the area of worship. She quoted Qur'an chapter 16 verse 97 to elucidate this assertion.

Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has

faith verily to him / her will We give a new life that is good

and pure and we will bestow on such their reward

according to the best of their actions

She explained further that Allah does not deny any being the reward of good deeds performed regardless of sex. Such person will enjoy a peaceful life full of contentment and an unbounded generosity of Allah in the hereafter. She equally emphasized the exalted position and rights of women in Islam as delivered by Prophet Muhammad during his farewell sermon.

Viewing the indispensability of women in the functional *Da'wah* in her publication, she emphasized necessity for the training of women for dynamic society. Quoting from prophetic tradition in this regard, she said to train a woman is more rewarding than to train a man. The prophet said:

If you train a man, you have trained an individual but if you train a woman, you have trained a nation (The Herald, June 2005: 18)

In another Hadith, the prophet is also quoted to have said on the authority of Abdullah bn Mas'ud, may God be pleased with him, the apostle of God (SAW) was reported saying:

He who has a female child and gives sound education gives her the best nourishment and bestows on her well, out of the favours of God which he favours him with, she will secure him a shield from the chastiment of hell and facilitate his way to the paradise. (Al-Tabariy).

She observed trained intellectual women as viable tools for functional knowledge and custodians of socialization. Women impart a lot of values to their children because they are more accessible to their children than their male counterparts.

Saudat AbdulBaqi through her expertise knowledge in mass communication has made efforts in publications to awake the consciousness of women to the exalted position of dignity bestowed on them by Islam especially their indispensable roles in the spiritual development and nation building.

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Salihu O. Muhammad

Another zealous columnist with brilliant pen in *The Herald* is Salihu O. Muhammad. Some of his publications include *Islam and Journalism*, *Resource Control*; *Islamic Provision* etc.

In his publication; "Islam and Journalism", his views on Islamic journalism are clearly presented. He presented Islamic journalism as performing educative, informative and entertainment roles. He explained Islam as a religion that will not deprive the public to know what is going on in both their immediate and remote society. He viewed that it is the responsibility of the journalists to educate the public especially on burning issues in the society. He illustrated the importance of information in relevance to the *Qur'an* chapter 49 verse 6 that if anybody comes to you with any information, try and seek more clarification and make sure you validate your information before you decide on it.

While he highlighted the indispensable roles of journalism in the society, he encouraged the journalists in the light of the cited Quranic verse (Q 49 v 6) that is a code of conduct of journalism to report event as exactly happened and not to suppress fact either to favour or disfavour any side.

The views of this erudite scholar as revealed in this piece presents him as a conscious writer who perceived information as a nucleus of society capable of disintegrating it or maintaining a society harmoniously as a single edifice.

In another publication "Resource Control; The Islamic provision" by the erudite scholars, he presented wealth, that is, *amwal* as all resources of nature described in the Holy *Qur'an* as bounties from Allah and as a means of provision and comfort. He cited *Qur'an* chapter 62 verse 10 and *Qur'an* 73 verse 20 to illustrate his assertion.

According to Salihu O. Muhammad, wealth is expected to create and maintain a just and whole-some balance among the members of the community. If it fails to

provide this just balance in the society, it becomes hoarded treasure.

He condemned self-centeredness and the privileged ones in the society who are devoid of altruism. He encouraged his readers towards submission to Allah in all ramifications by acknowledging His Lordship over everything. This he explained through his description of type of ownership of wealth: absolute ownership, which belongs to Allah and delegated or restricted ownership which is attributed to man. Therefore, Allah created everything. To Him belongs the absolute authority and control over everything. According to Qur'an 20 verse 6, Allah says:

*To Him belongs what is in the heavens and on earth, and
all between them and all beneath the soil*

Salihu O. Muhammad, an advocate of Islamic principle of resource allocation expressed his views that Islam abhors any arrangement that will promote dishonesty, injustice and marginalization. In Islam wealth such as oil, gas mine and all other mineral resources are regarded as common property of all.

Conclusion

Unity in diversity, sustainable growth and development can only be achieved in a socio-religious society devoid of religious upheavals. The Kwara State Printing Press; the publisher of *The Herald* has continued to play indispensable roles in this regard. *The Herald* as a public print media through the reflection of various Islamic topical issues performs informative, educative and entertainment roles to the citizenry.

Recommendations

The unsurpassed appreciable informative and educative roles of the print media have made it an indispensable instrument in the nation building process. Based on this, the following recommendations are considered vital.

Muhammad Haruna, "Between Development Journalism and Religion". *The Herald*, April 22, 2005.

High level of readability of newspapers is desirable for the Muslims. This will further enhance intellectual break-through and sustainable print media. In the recent true, while some Muslims do not buy newspapers, journals and Islamic magazines, some Muslims believe they should be given such publications free of charge.

Killing of innocent souls and wanton destruction of properties should be discouraged in the name of religious protests. The Holy Qur'an chapter 16 verse 25 charged the Muslims;

*Call mankind unto the path of your Lord with wisdom
and goodly counsel. Present the cause to them through
argument yet more sound.*

The above verse implies invitation to the path of Allah should be done without the use foul language. The verse teaches the Muslims against aggressive approaches to seek redness on misconceptions about Islam. *Da'wah* can be carried out through veritable mass media channels to enlighten the Muslims and the non-Muslims on some misconceptions about Islam.

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