

Chapter 11

LGBT Right Activism and the Risk of Christianophobia in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Nigerian conservatism and doctrinaire religion have been cardinal forces behind the adoption of a homophobic legislation in Nigeria. This scenario has spurred many (pro)-gay activists into anchoring their advocacy on a “Christianophobic” rhetoric which labels Christianity and religious fanaticism as two forms of bigotry, barbarism and Nazism, as well as facets of an anti-progressive movement. Such an aggressive advocacy tactic has been making a case for the systematic “de-Christianization” and “de-Islamization” of Nigerians’ minds. Using empirical understandings, this chapter argues that, Nigerian LGBT activists shape their advocacy strategies according to some Western atheistic models; models which have progressively given rise to gay totalitarianism and “Christianophobia” in a number of western countries. The paper highlights indexes pointing to a future “Christianophobia” in Nigeria, driven by a “Christianophobic” gay activism and finally argues that any pro-gay advocacy rooted in the de-Christianization of Nigerians unarguably proffers the disrespect of religious freedom.

INTRODUCTION

Atheistic schools of thought and other detractors of religion tend to associate Christian doctrines and religious fanaticism with backwardness, absurdity and anti-progressivism. In line with this, socio-philosophical forces such as modernism, individualism, secularism and more especially human rights have systematically militated against religion (religious dogmas) and members of religious denominations across the world. These socio-philosophical forces have somehow led to the progressive phobia and demise of religion. They have equally worked towards discrediting religion and reducing its influence in the public life. The concept of human rights in particular has, to a great extent, caused many religious dogmas and rituals/traditions to be relegated to the status of barbaric, repugnant and immoral traditions.

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This is more evidenced by the fact that issues like gender and racial equality, as well as pro-gay proselytism are today successfully discrediting and overshadowing most of the religious dogmas that hitherto stigmatized and oppressed particular minority groups (Crabtree, 2011; Zimrak, 2015). The phenomenal proliferation of the human right idiom in the world has, in this respect, functioned as a solid arsenal and a catalyst of the global movement in favor of gay rights. No doubt, Scott cited by Ray (2016) pointedly concedes that the human right philosophy has enabled the global gay community to gain socio-political power and to move from a socially vulnerable or weak bloc to a powerful minority. As he succinctly contends, “In the space of just half a century this tiny 1-3% of the population have made themselves a global political power with greater influence in the courtrooms and legislatures of the world than the Church of Jesus Christ. This astonishing transformation surpasses that of Darwinism, Marxism, and even Islam in its speed and breadth of reach”.

The human rights philosophy strongly advocates the legitimization or decriminalization of homosexuality not only in secular circles but equally – though recently – in religious communities. Such tenets of the human rights concept have been in total disregard of religious injunctions and conservative/traditionalist cultural models still prevailing in some countries, particularly black African and Arab countries. With this, human right activists and pro-gay schools of thought have, in their complex approaches to defending the rights of homosexuals, considered Christianity – or religion in general – coupled with conservatism as the principal “wild wheat” to off root from people’s mentalities. In tandem with this, LGBTI rights activists in Nigeria have virtually made it their cardinal prerogative to tentatively de-Christianize and de-Islamize the minds of Nigerians. Such de-Christianization and de-Islamization of the minds of Nigerians are regarded by these activists as a bi-dimensional strategy to create conditions favorable for the decriminalization of homosexuality and enable social tolerance in favor of LGBT communities in the Nigerian Federation. Such a strategy has often incorporated strongly worded reflections and more or less “aggressive” discourses against Christian doctrines and Islamic traditions, particularly those firmly in favor of anti-gay proselytism. The reflections and discourses formulated by the radical gay right activists often describe Christians’ anti-gay positions and campaigns as forms of “bigotry”, “Nazism”, “Fascism” and barbarism among other negative connotations.

Using critical observations and literary sources, this paper seeks, primarily to show how the LGBT Right movement is progressively encouraging or preparing the ground for a predictable “Christianophobia” (the acute persecution of Christian faithful) in Nigeria. Secondly, the paper seeks to examine the extent to which such a “Christianophobia” is inimical to the civilities of freedom of religion and freedom of expression, thereby constituting an anti-human right enterprise. In other words, the chapter seeks to show how Nigerian human right activists partly participate in the very “felony” they claim to criticize: the violation of some of the human rights, namely those of freedom of religion and freedom of thought and expression. The chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section provides a theoretical framework composed of atheism and modernization. The second section shows how Nigerian-based gay activists tend to anchor their advocacy on a de-Christianization or de-Islamization of the minds of “homophobic” Nigerians. The third section examines the extent to which atheistic and aggressive models of gay-activism (borrowed from the West) may engender Christianophobia in Nigeria. And the last main section deals with the LGBT right movement in Nigeria and the freedom of religion.

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