

Religion, Culture and Morality from the African Background

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Abstract

In this computer age, religious and moral culture appear anachronistic to many, yet throughout the history of humanity, it (religion and morality) has played indispensable roles in holding the society. This work aligns itself with identifying religion and morality as life culture in Africa. Especially, not minding there can hardly be compromise between it and science which is present day influence, religion is still an outstanding factor of reality, having positive impacts even in the face of hunger, economic melt-down, unemployment, insecurity, terrorism, racism, corruption, global warming and climatic change, poor leadership, political instability, war, religious rivalry and other global problems. The African cosmology of 'the spiritual controls the physical' notwithstanding, humanity is identified as the hub at which many activities revolve including religion. To a very large extent humanity is responsible for disobeying religious and divine orders. The resultant effect of this human free-will of wrong choice, the world interprets as evil or problem. This study of the reality of religion in the African context adopted the phenomenological approach which is same time, multi-dimensional as methodology. It recommends a general change of attitude, divorcing over-dose of selfishness in other words, and complete obedience to religious virtues as solution to many global problems.

Introduction

Religion, culture and morality are of deep concern to humanity, yet religion and morality can generally be referred to as culture and not easily separable one from another. Their origin is not easily traceable. Religion deals with people's beliefs and relationship with the spirit-beings. Culture is the total way of life of a people, while morality talks of behaviour, evil and good in the society; and humanity is a principal actor in all. Virtually everything revolves around and depends on it as the highest of physical beings. Little wonder why humanity is identified with a number of distinct traits, as *homo sapiens* (a rational being), as *homo symbolicus* (a symbol-using and meaning seeking being) or *homo viator* (a being that hopes). Humanity belongs to the class that possesses self-consciousness or self-transcendence. Consequent upon such qualifications possessed by humanity, it behooves on it then to inquire into certain departments and activities of nature to ascertain necessary positions. The manner of operation and inquiry of humanity invented the culture of religion and morality or that nature provides them as means and ways to ensure existence of human society.

In the whole of African continent, religion, culture and morality can rightly be said to be predominant way of life. That there would be no complete cultural life without religion and morality remains a truism. Religion, culture and morality are intricately interwoven that life in Africa has completely been guided and glued to religion and morality to the point of no divorce. They interact and outstandingly influence each other. Hardly also can any human activity be carried out without ardent reference to any if not all of them. Dynamism in its fullest and diverse spheres no matter its impacts, up to selfishness against patriotism and human unity, has not

displaced either religious or moral culture in Africa. Truly, human over-dosed selfishness nearly turns even the entire world into pandemonium as the world now struggles to survive in all fronts; sadly, problems of the world are yawning for practical urgent solution. People are dying and there is need to proffer practical solution to the problems of existence of human life in our world. Notwithstanding such problems like threat of nuclear war, global economic melt-down, unemployment, insecurity and terrorism, racism, corruption, tribalism and nepotism, global warming and climatic change; religion remains the richest part of African heritage, found in all African people. It could be alleged that it is part of Africa's cosmology to supply nature's needed religio-ethical modeling concept.

Traditionally, different groups in Africa have been well interested in the affairs of, and relationship with the divine as well as other aspects of individual and communal life. And religion has sustained many of its roles, explanation of the unknown, encouragement, fellowship and communication between human and the divine. Whether it be at family, community, tribal or national levels, religio-moral culture and tradition have served human existence as priority. Contemporarily too, there has been some worry on a number of ugly developments, like unnecessary disagreements, unproductive change, lack of immorality decadence, corruption and reduced dignity of labour as well increased natural calamities, etc. However, no matter conflicts of beliefs, values, convictions and cultic practices, religion anchors and undergirds every aspect of the people's culture, little wonder why it has been described as the womb of culture in Africa. Although the continent may not claim holly to have originated every religion she professes, there are amongst other religious ideologies, majorly: Christianity, Islam and ATR religious practices, which imbue and invest other aspects of life with meaning and significance in Africa. The supernatural which is believed by all Africa, as the force that still radiates continued appreciation of these ways of life shall feature prominently in this discourse.

In this study as we attempt a contribution to works already put forward by numerous scholars of religion and culture, a little re-arrangement of the topic under consideration at the first instance, is deemed helpful. The reason being that many writings on especially African Traditional Religion, appear pedantic and do not organize the contents of religion in an easy manner for the benefits of readers, this work organizes its sub-themes in such a way that would enable readers to follow without strain. The sub-heads include culture, morality and religion, with Africa as the background. This order believably, would make understanding and logical sequence of this work simpler. Africa here serves the limitation of the study although very vast a continent but, the *africanness* of its multi-tribal traditional religious background makes its religious activities to be viewed as singular (ATR) instead of plural, and not withstanding other world religions like Christianity and Islam. Again the area (Africa) has to be clearly identified to some measure, to enable a deeper look into its moral and religious philosophy. Therefore, this keyword-arrangement order: Africa, Culture, Religion and Morality, is preferred in conjunction with other essential ingredients of thesis writing on religio-moral culture in Africa.

The aim here without depletion is to emphasize the indispensability of the role of religion and morality in holding the human society, and to prove that the solution to many global problems shall come when humanity divorces over-dose of selfishness in everyday life of the society by obeying and keeping divine orders. This work does not suggest complete avoidance of all artificial support to life, say from science and the like but, advocates seriously preference of nature over extra-mechanical, and maintains viva voce for instance, that today's Christianity is not as obedient as it should for, legalism, liberalism or self-righteousness, at least to some extent viewed in this work as 'over-dosed selfishness' and the 'psycho-religio-ethical factor, that

human is un-cultured' (nominal religiosity). This might well apply to Islam and other religious groups through, the human individuals who are personages and carriers of the religio-cultural life in Africa. It is necessary to mention that, phenomenological approach research methodology which is same time multi-dimensional is adopted for this study and structural functionalism, serves the theoretical framework.

Clarification on Operational Terms

The intention is not to go into the over-laboured semantics of definition on all the meaning, origin and function of each of the keywords that constitute the complex phrase forming the title of this work. It is an over-worked and unsettled issue to some level. Nonetheless, it is important to refresh one's mind on what some earlier scholars think or say; and the use of each of these words in this study particularly.

Africa

Generally, as the geography of external landforms of the earth for instance, gives idea of what lies within the earth's crust that, it is made up of various concentric layers, types of rocks, earth movements, lowland and some other features, so Africa therefore, can be viewed from the perspective of many features or components, including people, worldviews, etc.

Africa no doubt is a continent that is south of Europe, east of the Atlantic Ocean, west of the Indian Ocean and north of Antarctica. It holds the following countries: Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Seychelles, Rwanda, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, Algeria, Ceuta, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Melilla, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, Western Sahara, Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Reunion, Swaziland, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. According to Mbiti (1975:2),

Africa has a very rich heritage of what past generations of African peoples thought, did, experienced and passed on to their children. This heritage forms a long line which links African forefathers with their descendants who now feel proud of it... the African heritage is rich but there are also differences from time to time, from place to place and from people to people. Some of this heritage originated on the African soil.

The heritage can be categorized into culture and religion which might submerge morality as a good number of beliefs and practices are found in Africa.

It is a field of operation with influence that manifests in every sphere of life up to symbolism. This Mbiti (1969) summarizes in the study 'African religions and philosophy'. African religions and philosophy deals almost exclusively with traditional concepts and practices in those societies which have not been either Christian or Muslim in any deep way, before the colonial period' (1969:xi). Other scholars of note have expressed views as it appertains to Africa either in part or general. Emeife Ikenga-Metuh (1987:ix), avers: Africa is a vast continent. Though one, it is diverse, it is characterized by ecological, racial, ethnic and historical differences; yet similarities extending over wide area exist. Opoku (1978:1) maintains that a close observation of Africa and its societies will reveal that religion is at the root of African

culture and is the determining principle of African life'. Onyewuenyi (1993:24) declares, 'it is interesting to note that recent archaeological discoveries by the Leakeys in 1959 of Zinjanthropus-boisie, the oldest tool maker, homo-sapiens, has convinced the world that Africa was the Garden of Eden and the cradle of human civilization'...the oneness of the African continent was restored by the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU)... making nonsense of the Africa-south-of-the Sahara idea'.

Therefore with reference to the focus of this study, Africa means the base of operation of culture and religion amongst all people and tribes of the continent, as it influences religion and religion influences her too. And as well it is believed to be no mean continent of disunity but of oneness depicted in the use of the expression, *africanness*. It could also be branded the cradle of human civilization owing to the postulation that Africa (Egypt) is the origin of Greek philosophy; little wonder then why it so attaches itself to a 'religio-moral' culture.

Culture

A true and full study of culture belongs to anthropology which is the study of human beings, their characteristics and their relationship to their environments'. Udo Etuk (2002:12) opines that culture is a difficult notion to define; it also has rather many different definitions'. The word comes from the Latin '*colere*' meaning to cultivate and emphasizes variety of meanings and implications. But then, every large human group contains the entire range of human capability, whether in intellectual, scientific, or artistic capacity. Wherever a community is found, we find more than an association of individuals, each pursuing own life and possessing ideas, a social pattern, a coherent body of customs and ideas, an integrated unity or system in which each element has a definite function in relation to the whole. The web of thought and action holds societies together. This interior force is as real and authoritative as the external environment. This sum total of customs, rules, beliefs, marriage systems, and so on can be referred to or called the culture of that society. This idea is viewed differently by different schools of thought as well expressed as complex. The variety of definitions notwithstanding, one common element appears to sum it up, that a people's culture is their entire way of life as a social group'. This now can easily cover religion and morality of a people comfortably and serve as source of account for why such a group attaches importance wherever it is so tenaciously placed. John Lewis (1982) posits 'that culture maintains and enhances life. It builds up and strengthens a group and helps it to satisfy its needs'. This no doubt religion takes responsibility of for Africans and in Africa. Culture unites individual human beings in every sense of it, many scholars agree, it is a heritage that makes for stable structures. J. Lewis (1982:76) further wrote:

The function of culture as a whole is to unite the individual human beings into more or less stable social structures, i.e. stable systems of groups determining and regulating the relations of those individuals to one another, and providing such external adaptation between the component individuals or groups as to make possible an ordered social life. That assumption I believe to be a sort of primary postulate of any objective scientific study of human society.

Mbiti (1975:7) draws the explanation closer and with Africa in mind particularly:

Each African people has its own cultural heritage... the word culture covers many things, such as the way people live, behave and act, and their physical as well as intellectual

achievements. Culture shows itself in art and literature, dance, music, and drama, in the styles of building houses and of the people's clothing, in social organization and political systems, in religion, ethics, morals and philosophy, in the customs and institutions of the people, in their value and laws, and their economic life. All these cultural expressions influence and shape the life of each individual in his society; and make a cultural contribution to his community through participating in its life and in some cases through creative work.

Furthermore, many words may have more than one meaning so, there is however another understanding of culture in application. This is to be 'cultured'. A different and restricted sense of the same word "culture", Udo, Etuk (2002: 13) explains, 'this sense in which to be a *cultured* person or to have culture is to have fine tastes in matters of foods, wines, and clothing; and to be comfortable in high society. Culture in this later rendering applies to individuals while in the former sense is a thing of social groups'. The two senses, culture as way of life and culture as education shall apply in this work.

Religion

Religion like the word culture is so composite and complex a word that no comprehensive synonym, phrase or sentence brings out completely its meaning. On this Akama (1997:5), observes a great error, 'that everyone thinks his definition is the correct one'. Iwuagwu (1998:13) recalls that, professor Pratt tells of the American psychologist, Professor James H. Lueba who once collected forty-eight definitions from forty-eight experts and added his own two to make a round figure of fifty definitions of religion and, none of the definitions exhausted the meaning of religion'. Iwuagwu further suggests that, the difficulty in definition of religion arose partly from the uncertain root of the word religion:

Cicero, the Latin writer used the word '*religio*' and thought it originated from the root '*leg*' or from the Latin verb '*relegere*' which meant to read or to ponder, or to take up, gather or to count. Servius says it came from the root '*lig*' or verb, *religare*, "to bind" or to bind back'. Another Christian writer of the 3rd century AD. Lactantius, rejects *relegere* and agreed with Servius that the root is *relegare* because it indicates some bond or relationship or communion between the human and the divine'...J Estlin Carpenter sees *religio* as the feeling of awe...the whole group of rites performed in the honour of the divine being' or as a body of religious duties, the entire series of sacred acts in which the primitive act is expressed'. A.C. Bouquet explained religion as 'a European word meaning 'the scrupulous observation of omens and performance of rituals' while Cartwell Smith suggested a change of name from religion to something else, 'tradition and faith' as substitute for religion' and further explained that 'the personal faith of men and women' is the buttress for 'cumulative tradition'.

He went on and on but we should appreciate the fact that religion is not a doctrine or law, or a hypothesis. It is not a matter of any one department of man's psychic make-up but involves the totality of human being. Akama (1997:6) suspects that 'what rite that matters to one religion may not matter to the other and so may not be considered as well, many authors do not make their positions clear with regards to religious or philosophical conviction, for position taken by

an author is bound to reflect itself in the definition. A careful study may reveal that some definitions may supplement another and so suggests that, vagueness, narrowness, compartmentalization, prejudice, and the likes should be avoided in defining religion’.

At this point it is pertinent to state that the term religion is used to refer to humanity’s search for the divine (God/gods/Divinities/ultimate enlightenment, etc.), man’s experience of the ultimate reality, as well as the expression of that awareness in concrete life. Be it Christianity that claims faith other than religion, Islam or African Traditional Religion, religion is fundamentally world-view. It provides a unified picture of the cosmos, consisting usually of a web of interconnected beliefs, ideas, and symbols that seek to explain rationally the order in the universe, an order that is believed to undergird human life and the universe.

Religion is not static but a dynamic phenomenon that has development. Humanity advances in personal life, as much as one sees and hopes to find in one’s religion. It is the womb that gives life to most parts of human culture. Religion is life mostly in Africa; this thought is clear in all facets of African human activity. This concept or phenomenon shall be examined through the views of Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion, considered major religious strands in Africa.

African Traditional Religion (ATR)

African Traditional Religion is the Africans quest for God (Gods/Spirit-beings/Divinities/ultimate enlightenment or whatever name) and of God’s revelation of Himself to humanity. Unlike Christianity and Islam, it does not claim any specific revelation of origin or founder, no much pronounced buildings like church or mosque yet is everywhere and in all aspects of life. Its nature is manifested from its parts like, beliefs, practices, ceremonies and festivals, religious objects and places, values and morals, religious personages and functionaries. It plays some roles like, enlightenment and cultural appreciation, purification, defence, promotion and development, provision of food for spiritual hunger, character formation, giving guide to other disciplines, explaining the world, etc. It has characteristics of being a common property of a group, dynamic, cumulative, man-made but with divine origin as well as man-made cultural objects which are religious in nature serving religious purposes. As Idowu would put it; “This religion results from man’s spontaneous reaction to his immediate awareness of a living power. Wholly other, and infinitely greater than himself, a power mysterious because unseen, yet a present and urgent reality” and Mbiti (1969) puts it as ‘religions’ in his work, *‘African Religions and Philosophy’*. His reason probably being the vastness of Africa and the multiplicity of tribes in the continent, especially as, ‘it deals almost exclusively with traditional concepts and practices of those societies. Traditional concepts still of many African peoples, obviously differs from individual to individual and from place to place. He opines, ‘We speak of religions in the plural because there are about one thousand African peoples (tribes) and each has its own religious system’ (1969: xi). Except himself not many subscribe to such plural use about the traditional religion of Africa no matter diversity.

The researcher aligns here with African Traditional Religion and suggests we should heed the advice of Professor Iwuagwu (1998:20),

But we should be cautious here, for when we describe the African religious phenomenon as religions, we are definitely splitting what is a whole into parts; there is the underlying unity in the nature of this phenomenon throughout Africa. The underlying nature is tradition. The religion is traditional because it is handed down from age to age through the oral tradition...it could rightly be “Indigenous Religion”, but the word indigenous cannot exhaust the entire semantic

components of the word traditional which combines the concept of authority, originality and genuineness in relation to Africa. Tradition can be described as ‘opinion, belief or custom brought down from ancestors to posterity’.

Islamic Religion:

The Islamic religion is the oldest missionary religion in Africa and one that has a long history of teaching. Within a century after the death of the prophet Mohammad in AD 632, Islam had swept across the whole of northern Africa and engulfed the Horn of Africa stretching southwards along the east coast’. It is the most widely acclaimed religion in Africa, Islam means to surrender or submit oneself for obedience to god or Allah. It is the Muslim religion preached by Muhammad between 610 and 632 AD.

According to Ninian Smart (1989:278):

Islam established its main outline very rapidly, partly because it had a single founder, and partly because it had a foundation document, namely the Qur’an, and partly because in having a political aspect it had to take rapid decision in organization in view of its great success’.

Islam whether classical or medieval, is quite different from the original religious worship of the Arabs which was polytheistic. Again, from the human point of view the Qur’an looks like a miraculous achievement of sublime artistry. It is easy to think of the Qur’an simply as a book and to say that the Muslims have faith in the words of a holy book. But this does not convey the centrality and power of the Qur’an in the Muslim eyes. If one looks for an equivalent roughly to the Christian Incarnation (the divine nature of Jesus) in Muslim piety, it would be the Qur’an. It is divine thought and divine law incarnated in words: it is mysterious sound which has everlasting life and existence, an examination from the one Divine Being. One of the attributes of God is speech and the Qur’an is God’s eternal speech. The revealed and everlasting nature of the Qur’an gives Islamic faith a great strength, especially because the book is not translated. The Quran remains the Arabic Quran, in this sense God thinks in Arabic.

Islam has these dimensions of faith. The rituals: the Muslim has the duty of praying five times daily facing the *Ka’bah*, according to certain formulae of words and body posture; recite the credo in public, ‘there is no other god but God and Muhammad is the prophet’. Keep the Ramadan fast in the ninth month. Perform the Pilgrimage at least once in a life time. Pay the alms tax, or *zakat*. Friday is a special day of prayer, with congregational worship and preaching in the mosque. Throughout the history of Islam there is recognition of the central place held by the law or *sharia*. Mbiti (1969:242), wrote, ‘like Christianity, Islam in Africa can be described as indigenous, traditional and African, presently but is treated differently from ATR.

Christianity

Christianity is a major Faith, which comes from divine revelation, stemming from the life, teachings, and death of Jesus of Nazareth (the Christ, or the Anointed One of God) in the 1st century AD. It has become the largest of the world's religions. Geographically the most widely diffused of all faiths; it has a constituency of more than 2 billion believers. Its largest groups are the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox churches, and the Protestant churches; in addition to these churches there are several independent churches of Eastern Christianity as well as numerous sects throughout the world.

Like many other religions of the book, the truth about Christianity is contained in the Bible which the Christians believe to be the word of God Almighty. It is called the word of God because it is inspired by God, though copied by men but the writers also are believed to be inspired also as well as those who read. There is a difference about its inspiration and that of other religions for, an artist for instance can explain his imaginations but a prophet is unable to fully understand or explain all the implications of his teaching or utterances. This is because the sources of what he says come from God and they are not words of men or the prophet himself.

Christianity in Africa is progressive up to the point of the development of African Christian theology; it fully operates in full force in its African background. Its teachings are moral, redemptive and liberating. 'Christian faith confesses Jesus Christ to be the sole mediator between God and mankind', maintains Sinclair B. Ferguson (1988:135). Also, Mbiti (1969:229) observes, 'Christianity in Africa is so old that it can rightly be described as an indigenous, traditional and African religion. Long before the start of Islam in seventh century, Christianity was well established all over Africa'.

Morality

To think of origin of morality is as tasking as that of religion; 'history cannot reveal the origins of morality nor anthropology', (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010). 'The term morality derives directly from the Latin, *mos-mores*, meaning custom or way of life of a people. It has its equivalent in Greek- *ethos*, from which the English word ethics is derived. The Greek lexicon gives the meaning of *ethos* as custom or way of life of a people' (Christopher Ejizu, 2014). Ethics proper—i.e., the systematic study of what is morally right and wrong—could have come into existence only when human beings started to reflect on the best way to live. This reflective stage emerged long after human societies had developed some kind of morality, usually in the form of customary standards of right and wrong conduct. Accordingly, ethics began with the introduction of the first moral codes. Again, that morality should be invested with all the mystery and power of divine origin is not surprising. Nothing else could provide such strong reasons for accepting the moral law. Attributing a divine origin to morality creates an interconnection, the link between morality and religion so firmly forged that it is still sometimes asserted that there can be no morality without religion.

Furthermore, many believe that there are no moral universals—i.e., that there is so much variation from one culture to another that no single moral principle or judgment is generally accepted. It has already been shown that this is not the case. Of course, there are immense differences in the way in which some principles are applied. The duty of children to their parents meant one thing in traditional Chinese society and means something quite different in contemporary Western societies. Yet, concern for kin and reciprocity are considered good in virtually all human societies. Also, all societies have, for obvious reasons, some constraints on killing and wounding other members of the group.

Beyond this common ground, the similarities become more striking than the variations in moral attitudes in Africa mostly due to the religious practices which partly agree with the *africaness* probably. In Africa, the divine concept appears more pronounced than any other trace of origin of morality. This work aligns itself however with the position that, 'the terms morality and ethics focus on human conduct in terms of the ought; what one ought to do, or ought to avoid. In their origin the two terms are synonymous in the meaning. Conventionally however,

there is a slight difference in their usage. Morality is used ordinarily to focus on rightness or wrongness of human conduct as such' (Christopher Ejizu, 2014).

Point of Convergence: Religion, Culture and Morality

To the African, scarcely is there any cherished culture that is not underpinned in religion. It so remains a factor in the people's life experience in spite of the enormous transformation that has taken place in culture. And religion is placed prominently in this discussion as the anchor of moral, magic, scientific, social and economic or some other culture of note. Even in recognition of some atheistic claims, Africans have one confession or the other to make in relation to systems of belief, relationship and deep actions up to entities whose existence is not open to observation. In Africa the observation of D.N.Ghosh (1966), that, 'religion begins where science stops' is justified. One would also accept that it is about Africa that, Lucy Mair (1972:211), observes that 'experimental science more or less is formulated in shape of religious dogma':

Today, although we have not returned to the nineteenth-century interpretation of religion as the product of fallacious reasoning, we do recognize that every society has its world view, and that in the societies which have no tradition of experimental science this is formulated in the shape of religious dogma. In all societies of simple technology, people believe that the process of nature and the success of human endeavour are under the control of entities outside the range of everyday experience, whose intervention can change the course of events. The word generally to describe such entities is 'supernatural'. Religion consists of such beliefs and practices in Africa.

From the traditional to the contemporary to some extent, religious practices (Islam, Christianity and ATR) in Africa have been examined and found to have common agreement in teachings and beliefs. The teachings: humility, sanctity of blood, respect for humanity, equality of all mortals, spirit-beings control over humanity and activities, as well explanation of the unknown, unity, peace, and selflessness among others appear common in the beliefs in Africa. These directly or indirectly inform and form a guide for the adherents who have become the carriages of these religious thoughts.

Incidentally, Christians for instance are generally expected to or nearly live as moral as Jesus Christ the founder of Christianity. The Muslims also according to the life pattern of the Prophet Mohammed, undermining the observation of Agwu Kalu (1998:72), that 'Islam spread by fire and sword between 1804 and 1831 in most parts of northern Nigeria by jihadists inspired by Usman Dan Fodio'. As well as the African traditional religionists who are believed to hardly separate their culture from religion, this majorly anchors on careful, caring life of love for humanity and the society. This conclusion, Ejizu (2007) interpreted by quoting Leonard as observing, 'The Africans live religiously, dress religiously, dance religiously and die religiously'.

To morality in Africa, there has to be a spirit-force behind any human behaviour for it to be achieved. The Igbo of eastern Nigeria for instance has a little respect for human authority without spiritual backing but has more when it is said, '*O nagwa anyi ihe ndi mmuo gwara ya ka o gwa anyi*', what the spirits said is what he is telling us and it must be done. The same is

obtained among the Efik, Ibibio, Hausa, etc. of Nigeria and also in Akan, Ghana. Not only among the countries in West Africa but all-through sub-Saharan Africa, morality is guided and guarded to some extent largely by spiritual influences. Whether among sedentary land-cultivating peoples like the Idoma and Yoruba of Nigeria, or highly itinerant peoples like the Wolof and Masai of Senegal and Kenya respectively, the cosmology of the 'spiritual determines the physical' is widely acceptable in all its ramifications. Moreso, numerous events like worship and festivals make this concept a regular occurrence for clearance of doubt. A prolific writer on traditional African Culture and Life, Ejizu (2007:86), in religion and morality through the significance of Festivals, illustrates this:

Most traditional African groups have their respective calendars of regular liturgical feasts. The *Egungun* and *Oro* of the Yoruba, the *Duen* of Kalabari, the *Ekwe* of the Andoni, the *Adae* of Akan, the *Molimo* of Mbuti people of Zaire, *Porro* and *Sande* of Liberia and Sierra Leone respectively and the *Nkang'a* for Ndembu of Zambia. These are often in honour of ancestors, various deities, nature and cosmic forces.

As African festivals are associated with movement of the universe and nature so is morality believed to be backed by the divine. A close study of unearthed data on ritual objects and symbol forms among several indigenous groups show that religion and morality are intricately connected and interdependent. It is not the case of secular or religious, but rather both rational and religious, in fact, less of the former than the latter. And the ancestors, powerful deities, particularly the earth-divinity are definitely a source as well as the guarantor of moral norms'. Diviners and spirit-mediums play the important role of discernment also explain the dictates of the supernatural. 'In most traditional African societies religion and morality are like Siamese twins inseparable to the core'.

More so, it becomes agreeable that no religion has as its creed, that human should kill fellow human to the point of even no judgment so as not to condemn, involve in ritual killing and kidnap, destroy property or be immoral/evil generally. But should always, in all times and place be obedient and submit to divine order as life is divine' and does not end in the physical. Most of the instruments developed by experts in different religions in Africa for identifying and measuring genuine piety highlight commitment to moral values and standard. Interestingly, each of the three major religions in Africa upholds virtues as honesty, truth-telling, justice, hard-work, charity among others. This thought no doubt guides Africa even in the contemporary times of modernism and globalization.

Point of Divergence: What is Responsible?

Upon the supposed justifiable moral and spiritual principles of life presented to the society by religions in Africa, one would expect an ideal Africa. But instead, it becomes astonishing that such is not completely the experience. The different religious scriptures like the Christian bible records, 'the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, again the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Jeremiah 17:9; Genesis 6:5). Again, ascertaining 'from where fights, conflicts and disputes' come; it invariably concludes, 'from cravings that war within ...selfish desires' (James 4:1-2). Tim Lahaye (1984:9) also thinks in that line, 'temperament influences everything, from sleep habits to study, to the way you get along with other people. Humanly

speaking, there is no other influence more powerful'. It is believable that even any religion rejected by humanity can go into total annihilation. Then it becomes obvious that all the properties are some qualities of the personality of humanity since it is a very important actor in the religious activities of Africa.

The intention here is to suggest that every possible effort be made by 'self' to pull humanity out of corruption, ritual-murder, empty political promises and other violent crimes also against humanity and society. In humanity therefore this essay discovers two critical background-factors in the central cavity of the practice of religio-moral culture, using the African background: (i) Over-dose of Selfishness (ii) Lack of Cultured-life.

Over-dose of Selfishness:

Beginning from the known, the 'self' is a person's personality or character that makes one different from the other. As a condition, it graduates to self-centeredness or selfishness if uncontrolled. In many instances, checks may be overlooked. To be selfish is to care about oneself only. The act is selfishness. Selfishness makes for bias or self-interest out of every action or reaction while, overdose of selfishness makes every situation or position a disease/epidemic and, the mind, heart or conscience dead to reactions, protests or situations. Consideration is not given to the culture of religious-morality that makes for communal protection of general interest, rather extreme individualism and 'only me syndrome'. It is complete disorder which devastates freedom and order. This trait does not go well with many where unity, agreement or co-operation is expected. Leon Morris (1988:100) further observes:

It is natural for every one of us to consider everything we encounter in the light of how it will affect us. I do not mean that we never give thought to other considerations. We all do at times. But what effect a given course of action will have on our own aims and prospects is always a factor of considerable importance. If as far as we can see, there will be no effect on us, then we find no great difficulty in being objective about it. We then can weigh it up thoughtfully and give a reasoned verdict on its worthwhileness. But where our own interests are involved, we tend to decide questions in the light of what will suit us best.

To an extent, selfishness could be managed but gets so intolerable and indeed devastating at an over-dosed stage. At this point even' it causes vision of jealousy of the supernatural.

The term, over-dose is chosen from Medicare. It means taking more dose than prescribed or required. The usage hinges on its metaphorical pungency. As a metaphor, over-dose clearly illustrates, in a comparative custom, the similarity of the dangerous effect of excess intake of either drug or mostly absorption of wrong ideas and practices in a religio-moral culture. It so becomes a menace, evil or crime as it affects adversely a great number in the society. 'For at least, both Medicare and Religion at different levels, aim at the achievement of health or wholeness for human person' as observed Iwuagwu (1998:95). Health of the society comes from morality and there shall be joy which virtually, all would appreciate and enjoy.

Joy the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune is a source or cause of delight. A. S. Hornby (2006:95), defines it as a feeling of great happiness' and this depicts success and satisfaction. This research conceives of a society where greater number of people is successful and feels satisfied averagely. No doubt it shall be appreciable that things go well as against general labour strike or protest. Protests come more when over-dose of selfishness becomes the culture. The experience during the Apartheid government in South Africa, or even

Nigeria between 1966 and 1970 provide some instance. There abound similar experiences within Africa or even beyond. Apartheid or Racial segregation or discrimination, (Afrikaans: “apartness”), policy that governed relations between South Africa's white minority and nonwhite majority sanctioned by law, was widely practiced in South Africa even before 1948. This again tells of the age of over-dose of selfishness, perpetrated by humanity and not any religion.

Lack of Cultured-life:

Instead of practicing the culture prescribed by religions, many point accusing fingers on religions as being responsible for the problems caused by humanity’ non-exhibition or religio-moral culture, yet remain nominal. Accusing religion as responsible, Onunwa (2012:2) posits,

‘It is sad to state as we sit here to discuss, that problems of the world are increasingly yawning for practical and urgent solution. In the face of the above listed problems, is the study and practice of religion making any positive impact? For me I come from a country where religions are no longer relevant in public affairs or have been made redundant, yet the society is moving. I know some other parts of the world which are looking for solution through other avenues...the problem of discrimination is an indelible mark of Organized Religion. Religions have rather divided than united humanity, oppressed rather than liberate.

However, part of the function of culture including religion is to make life secure and continuous for human beings. John Lewis (1982:86) says, ‘its success depends largely on the efficiency of the method’. The method here is the sense to become a *cultured* person, or to have culture of fine tastes in matters of living the morals of religion so to be comfortable in the society. This had earlier been mentioned in this work. To be cultured is to be educated in the demands of religio-moral life and the ever readiness without check even, to always keep such order and culture no matter one’s inclination or profession. The few who shun bribe, robbery and the like belong to this class but, the opposite refer to them as thoughtless. To be orderly is to have freedom and to have freedom is to be cultured, unfortunately many lack this understanding. Dalai Lama (2010) explains this deeper in the ‘call for compassion’:

When we are concerned mainly with our own interests, inevitably we tend to neglect others' interests. Because of this, preoccupation with our own interests—our own narrow desires, ambitions, and goals—undermines our ability to be compassionate. And since compassion is the source of happiness, self-centeredness prevents us from attaining that spiritual peace—peace of heart and mind—which is the principal characteristic of lasting happiness. Conversely, the more we concern ourselves with providing for others' well-being, the more meaningful our lives become and the happier we ourselves will be. Thus in serving others we serve ourselves. This is why I sometimes call compassion “wise selfishness.” Compassion entails exercising restraint and disciplining our negative thoughts and emotions out of a sense of responsibility towards all others. Yet alongside kindness, generosity, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, humility, and so on, these are the very things that happiness consists in.

In this thought religion is exonerated, but humanity is not, given to its over-dose of selfishness and continued disobedience to divine orders and dictates. How can human, a culture-bearing

primate, distinguished by a more highly developed brain and a resultant capacity for articulate speech and abstract reasoning be using such high capacity anti-socially or anti-humanly? It is highly disappointing.

Most human conduct should be judged according to, and brought into harmony with, the law of nature. Such, many minds apply when the center or nature essence, humanity, shall have become free at least from the oppressions of fellow human. The divine never for any time demanded human sacrifice yet history has had it that, there are primary types of human sacrifice: the offering of a human being to a god and the entombment or slaughter of servants or slaves intended to accompany the deceased into the afterlife. The killing of a human being in such manner has often been part of an attempt to commune with a god and to participate in divine life. Human life, as the most valuable material for sacrifice, has also been offered in an attempt at expiation. Such concepts in diverse manners, resulting from self-esteem, self-image, and ego-involvement regarded by some as useful, remain a taboo to many who regard them as superfluous and evil. Both over-dosed selfishness and non-acting of cultururation remain responsible for corruption and the like.

Conclusion

May it be evoked, that in this computer age, religious and moral culture may appear anachronistic to many, yet throughout the history of humanity, religion with morality shall continue to play indispensable roles in holding the society. If not for religion all would turn to something different from human and, the earth to another more catastrophic planet. This work maintains the stand that due to **Over-dose of selfishness** and **Lack of Cultured-life**, humanity becomes responsible for the world's problems and identifies religion and morality as life culture in Africa. Not minding there can hardly be compromise between it and science which is present day influence, religion is still an outstanding factor of reality, having positive impacts even in the face of hunger, economic melt-down, unemployment, insecurity, terrorism, racism, corruption, global warming and climatic change, poor leadership, political instability, war, religious rivalry, and other global problems. After all not every religion in Africa campaigns violently to propagate its creed. The African cosmology of 'the spiritual controlling the physical' notwithstanding, humanity is identified as the hub at which many activities revolve including religion. 'Of course of all the wealth the world possesses the most decisive and most valuable is the people's (humanity). To a very large extent humanity is responsible via disobeying religious and divine moral orders. The probability is above 50% that disobedience brings devastation. The resultant effect of this human free-will of wrong choice, the world interprets as evil or problem. This study of the reality of religious and moral culture in the African continent insists that although some few developed Nations of the West may apostate, religion laid the foundation of moral and intellectual character, even there. There can be no complete study or activity without reference to nature. This study therefore recommends a general change of attitude, divorcing over-dose of selfishness in other words, and complete obedience to religious virtues as solution to many global problems.

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