

**“RELIGION: MODERN DENIGRATORS
AND REHABILITATORS IN NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT”**

BY

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DEDICATION

This lecture is deliberately and fittingly dedicated to the late childless sisters, Late Madams Wohuruaknu and Wichegbule Obuah (my foster mothers and paternal aunts), for nurturing me to life when my biological mother died while I was yet 6 months old and bringing me up educationally to Standard 4, at Primary School level.

AND

Late Catechist Abraham C. Nwaigwe (later Venerable), who serving at my home church, St. Martin's Anglican Church, Omagwa in 1966 convinced the church to grant me scholarship to complete my Primary School education when my biological father also died while I was 7 years old.

(My Ph.D Thesis at the University of Ibadan, was equally dedicated to the three of them).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Listening to the reading of the citation on me a few seconds ago, no one would be in doubt that my number one gratitude in life would always go to the Almighty God whom I remind daily in my private prayers when I say, “God, I have nothing, I know nothing other than you”. He has upheld me as my “strength and shield”, lavishing me with His marvelous grace and oversight, in anything that concerns me, more so, for making me to know Him. To Him belongs all the glory, adoration, praises, majesty, thanksgiving forever and ever, Amen.

May God preserve the souls of my foster mothers, (two childless sisters, Wohuruaknu and Wichegbule Obuah for nursing, nurturing and training me to Primary 4 of my Primary School education as my biological parents (whom I never knew) had both died before I could know them. Late Catechist (Later Venerable) A. C. Nwaigwe and his wife, Maa Keziah Nwaigwe convinced my home church, St. Martin’s Anglican Church, Omagwa to grant me the scholarship funding which enabled me to complete the primary 5 and 6 classes, when my foster mothers could no longer cope with the Eastern Nigeria Government School fees of £8 (Eight pounds) per annum.

My home church, St. Martin’s Anglican Church, Omagwa is specially thanked for that scholarship intervention without which I would have stopped my educational carrier at the Standard 4 Primary level. My biological parents are equally thanked for bringing me into the world, even though for no fault of theirs, they did not live to train me, but Providence did it for them.

My elder sister Prophetess Mrs. Beatrice Wali (a.k.a. “Aunty Ekpere”) and my elder brother, Pastor Allison Wotogbe-

Weneka for lavishing love on their last born sibling, Wellington. Our love for one another has remained unshaken.

My teachers, who impacted positively on my academic growth are equally deserving of gratitude. Sir. Benson Alozie of Okomoko Etche and Lady Dorathy Ogundu of Azumini Isiokpo for forcing “Arithmetic”, especially the “Long Division” into my head at the primary school level and much later, Sir Godwin C. Nwagbara. I also thank my Principals, W. O. Aleme and C. O. Osuamkpe at the Teacher Training College, Okordia-Zarama for inculcating in us the culture of reading through their indirect policy of “swallow at least 3 novels” every long vacation.

My primary mentor who inspired me to pursue a degree in Religious Studies remains Professor G. O. M. Tasié of Isiokpo, a retired Church Historian and former Acting Vice Chancellor, University of Jos. I remain his disciple. He is followed by my Ghanaian HOD, Professor Christian Gaba, my Scottish mentor and Long Essay Supervisor, Prof. Rosalind I. J. Hackett and Prof. Friday Mbon, who shaped my understanding of African and Comparative Religion at the University of Calabar, which exposure was further concretized at the Post-Graduate School level at the University of Ibadan by Professors J. O. Awolalu and Michael Nabofa.

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since acted as an academic father to me. My colleagues in the Department of Religious & Cultural Studies and the Faculty of Humanities are thanked severally for the comradeship we share, especially Prof. Rev. Fr. Chris Ejizu who like Prof. Nwodo, assumed that elder brother role as well as the late Prof. Daniel Ilega. I am also impressed and indeed grateful to the academic leadership role displayed by the senior colleagues I met in the Faculty of Humanities and the university at large, especially by Professors E. J. Alagoa, E. N. Elechi, S. J. S. Cookey, Charles Nnolim, Chidi Maduka, Late Prof. Ejituwu, Emeritus Professors Otonti Nduka, Anosike, Okiwelu, Briggs and Prof. Adaye Orugbani, who incidentally is appointed Orator to read my Citation today. I also acknowledge and thank the administrative doggedness exhibited by former Registrars of Uniport I met, namely, Late Chief Okogbule Wonodi, Chief Dr. E. N. Acheru and Dr. Chris Tamuno. I want to thank my Christian brothers and sisters, Dr. John Chikwe, Prof. & Dr (Mrs) Onyeike, Prof. & Dr. Mrs. B. E. Okoli, Prof. & Mrs. J. U. Okoli and Prof. & Mrs. A. Akaranta, Prof. (Mrs). Love Akonye, Dr. Iyke Mbeledogu, Prof. Ugiomoh and Prof. Owunari Georgewill for the spiritual counseling and support we share together, not forgetting my brothers and friends, Professors L. E. B. Igwe, B. C. Didia, Aaron Ojule, Okey Onuchuku, Emenike Ndu, Chris Akani, Tony Agumagu, Augustine Onyeozu, Matthew Wegwu, Kinikanwo Anele and my sisters, Prof. Edith Elenwo and Dame Prof. Joyce Akaninwo.

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Blessing C. Enyindah, for believing in what little things he thinks I can contribute to the growth of our young Diocese under his episcopacy. My Lord Bishop, I remain grateful, Sir. Members of the former churches and Dioceses where I had served and who are present here are specially thanked, not forgetting those of my current church (St Peter's Anglican Cathedral Isiokpo) and the entire Christian faithful here. My brothers and sisters – in – law – as well as my own children in – laws are thanked for their support and understanding, especially Chief Joshua Elechi, Mr. Ebenezar Elechi, Navy Captain Sam Elechi-Amadi (of Omagwa), Mr. Stanford Egbule and Mr. Obinna Ozuzuma. Mr. Njoku Chidozie Henry, who typed this work with minimal errors is specially thanked for being that careful.

My home front (wife and children) is deliberately being thanked last but certainly not the least because they all shared in one way or the other, all through these years of my academic struggles in life. My dear sweet wife Gloria, is specially thanked for always being there for me and our children, especially as “we were making our babies” throughout my undergraduate and post-graduate student days, and for which she delayed her own educational pursuit to take care of the home front. To God be the Glory that she was among those who convoked in the last Uniport Convocation ceremony, and she now holds an Honours Degree in History and Diplomatic Studies.

Our children are God's gift, and a source of encouragement to us – Mr. Prudence Chimeichea, Barr. Chimenum Oroma Fortune, Mrs. Igwechi Hope Ozuzuma, Faith Nhehinuchi, Maruchi Chizenum and our “baby of the house”, Chiyeme Emmanuella, not forgetting my three God- given grandchildren who are my special joy and whom I named – Chizuroke, Ad'ibea and Aleruchi.

Every other person who may have assisted me in one form or the other in the course of my preparing for this Lecture, (especially my very supportive Committee of Friends led by Prof.

G. O. M. Tasié, the Editors) and in one way or the other in my life,
I say may God bless you all.

Ven. Prof. Wellington Ornyezinuchimm Wotogbe-Weneka
29th November, 2012.

PREAMBLE

About 34 years ago, or so, as a first year undergraduate student at the University of Calabar, Calabar, I had the privilege of attending and listening to the first ever Inaugural Lecture in my life. It was the Inaugural Lecture delivered by my Dean of Faculty of Arts, Professor Stevenson of the Department of English and Literary Studies (as that Department is called in UNICAL). The topic, I can still recall, was “Laurel in the Streets”. My level of educational insight then notwithstanding, one thing that impressed me most that day was that at an Inaugural Lecture one is able to showcase to the academic community and the general public what one is professing as a professor, apart from hearing the story of whatever the academic journey of the Inaugural Lecturer had been up until one became a professor. That had since then sustained my interest in attending Inaugural Lectures, no matter the lecture topic and hence, except I was away or indisposed, I had never missed Inaugural Lectures which I was aware of, believing that if I ever rise academically, people will gather one day to listen to mine as well. That I am opportuned to fulfill this statutory obligation today (the second in the Department of Religious & Cultural Studies, in the Faculty of Humanities (the first being that of Revd. Fr. Prof. Chris Ejizu in March, 2008), is my greatest joy, not minding that it is supposed to have come earlier than now. The reason for the apparent delay is best known to my circumstances and particularly my Creator, whom I have vowed to serve till the end.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, by academic training, I am a Religionist, and as a senior Anglican Christian Clergyman, I can claim that I am a Religionist both in theory and practise. I am particularly concerned with viewing the religious man in the totality of his religiousness, hence, my study and research efforts as an academic have motivated me to examine whatever the religious people claim they believe in and worship, examining them comparatively, especially on the parallel grounds I easily found, between African (Ikwerre) Religion and the Judaeo-

Christian Religion. Based on my research interests, I am a Professor of African and Comparative Religion. To start with, one of the most distinguishing hallmarks of a Comparative Religionist is that he studies whatever the religious traditions of mankind are and wherever they are practised. This is because he has convinced himself that in the world of men, there exist various religious traditions with different beliefs and practices and that each type makes sense to the adherents or the believers of the religious faith in question.

We further examine each of the religious traditions in terms of how the beliefs and practices associated with them affect, not only the religious life of the followers, but also their social behavior in general. In other words, every religion must be socially relevant in terms of how it functions for the overall development of the society where it is practised.

My worry, however, is that unlike in other disciplines studied in the University system, Religion is the only discipline in which everybody claims to be an expert in the discourse. Some may claim they had known so much about God and how humans interact with Him. More so, they believe they have their own religion, church, mosque or shrine generally and their corresponding religious beliefs and practices. Others will tell you outrightly how they hate or loathe religion and the religious; possibly cataloguing for you some long list of what makes them hate religion with such vehemence. A few other humans will, however, not hesitate to express to you their indifference to such religious discussions, possibly believing that their own natural inclination is in something other than religion.

My further worry is that virtually every Inaugural Lecturer I listened to from diverse disciplines in this University had at one point or the other in the course of the lecture dabbled into the realms of religion. They did so by either quoting copiously from the scriptures or devoting chunks of the lecture, acknowledging God's benevolence upon their lives, including their preparation of the lecture itself. Some would even use scriptural texts to justify their lecture topics, while some others would even sing religious hymns. One would then ask, what else remains for those of us who

are majors in the discipline? Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, this is in reality the fate of the discipline in which I found myself. But I am not deterred to continue with the business of Religious Studies and hence, in a Press Interview I once granted to *The Nigerian Tide* (which was eventually published on the front page of *The Sunday Tide* of 31st August, 2008), I was quoted to have stated *inter alia* “if there is Reincarnation and if I Reincarnate, I will read Religion”. It is the same passion I have for Religious Studies as a discipline that my second daughter, Hope, taking after me, will hopefully be registering for a doctorate degree programme in Religious Studies soon.

In my researches, I have maintained that man is the only universally established and acknowledged being that has something to do with Religion in terms of beliefs and practices associated with the belief (**Wotogbe-Weneka** 2001:19). James Livingstone (2005:3) has attributed the religiosity of man to man’s capacity for “self transcendence”, a capacity denied other lower animals. This self-transcendence capacity is what enables man to reflect and ponder over and around his environment and is thus able to extrapolate into a “Being” or “Force” or “Power” higher than himself which demands his loyalty and worship whom he addresses with, reverence, different names and attributes.

That is why, Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, those of us in Religion as an academic discipline seldom use or are careful in using the word “God” in describing that Being/Force/Power the religious man worships. We rather use almost abstract terms, for we consider such terms neutral enough to carry along all the phenomena that go for whatever religion stands for; words like, Ultimate or Supreme Reality, The Sacred, The Object of Worship and Adoration, The Ideal, The Power etc.

For instance, it may be shocking to those outside the field of Religion to note that the definition of religion is not “Belief in God/gods” as many who are here listening to my lecture would have quickly defined it, assuming I am tempted to give my audience that brief assignment here now. But, there are some recognized Religions of mankind which do not believe in God/gods as such, yet are considered religious enough. How then would one define Religion to

be able to carry along those religions which believe in God/gods and those that do not or those theistic religions and non-theistic ones? This is the problem for which many scholars of Religion do not attempt to define Religion.

Put differently, most scholars of Religion tend to avoid dabbling into attempting defining Religion. And as I had observed (**Wotogbe-Weneka** 2001:19), they avoid dabbling into that effort on two basic assumptions. Firstly, it is bedeviled with endless controversy and debate as to its proper or acceptable definition. Secondly, the assumption or rather fear that embarking on the journey of defining religion is always considered a fruitless exercise, since earlier attempts at such endeavours had caused more confusion than they had intended to resolve. This is because of the nature of Religion as a discipline which studies every imaginable religions of mankind, each of which perceives the ultimate reality from different perspectives.

However, several attempts have been made also by numerous scholars in their effort to state or describe what Religion is, its origin and functions which are usually inseparable. A. Malefijt (1968:11) informs us that an early anthropologist, Edward Tylor, defined Religion as “the belief in spiritual beings”. Spiritual beliefs, in Tylor’s definition, would mean God/gods/ancestors/spirits and all other spiritual entities. But this definition is easily faulted as it did not take cognizance of religious practices which are the religious behavior component. Belief systems and actions systems (practices) are so intimately related that the one cannot be fully understood without the other; especially, since it is religious behavior that verifies religious beliefs.

The acceptance of the Theravada Buddhism with its concept of attainment of the Nirvana (salvation) - “a state of cessation of sensual pleasures” (which is not divine but a state of mind) makes the Nirvana concept as the Ultimate Reality of that Religion and not any being known as God/gods. Religion according to Emile Durkheim (1961:62) is “a system of beliefs and practices pertaining to the sacred”. Immanuel Kant on his part defines Religion as “the recognition of our duties as the divine commands”. The last two definitions by Emile Durkheim & Immanuel Kant are manageable because they talked of “beliefs and practices” which are crucial to Religion. Again, they did

not name what the “sacred” or “divine” is. But then, there will be a problem in these definitions when Theravada Buddhism is brought in. In my study of Religion so far, I have attempted to describe Religion (not definition) as “the recognition on the part of man of a controlling superhuman power entitled to one’s obedience and reverence” (**Wotogbe-Weneka** 2001:17). My description no doubt include Religions which do not believe in the supernaturals or gods per se like the Theravada Buddhism, referred to above, but do recognize a super human entity worthy of their devotion/worship. These are the type of descriptions or definitions where Theravada Buddhism referred to above adequately fits in. What is certain, however, is that religion is a universal and abiding dimension of human experience, which in most cases is taken for granted by human beings.

However, there are still those in human societies who claim they have nothing to do with religion in terms of formal beliefs and practices associated with any Sacred Reality. These are known as atheists. They do not attach importance to Religion and the religious. Some form of atheism could be found in many secular alternatives to religion such as in Marxism, Communism, Humanism and Scientism, etc. They can as well be called “secular or human “ideologies” or surrogate/replaced/substitute/pseudo-religions or pseudo-religiosity. Humanism as an ideology for example, believes that whatever problems man has in his world is caused by man and as such, the problem must be solved by man himself without recourse to any supernaturals called God/gods or whatever spiritual entities for the solution. Their belief in this ideology and their practical life lived in terms of this reasoning have provided them with beliefs and practices which they equate with whatever formal religion also has; hence, we use the term substitute/ replaced/surrogate/pseudo religions for them, but certainly they are not religion; neither would they be interested in being so addressed because of their hatred of Religion for whatever they perceived formal Religion to be. Hence, it has been stated that in every case of man’s revolt against religion, the revolt is invariably not against religion as religion, but against a scheme of religion or something in religion that contradicts its basic spiritual moral claims (Idowu 1973:3).

THE PHENOMENON CALLED RELIGION

It is obvious that Religion as a phenomenon of human concern is perhaps the most complex, most involving phenomenon studied in the Humanities. This perhaps accounts for the reason why it is equally the least comprehensible of all the disciplines within the Humanities. During my headship of the present autonomous Department of Religious Studies, when we were considering what “motto” to go by as a Department, my colleagues and I eventually settled for “INTEGRATED HUMANITY”. It may interest you to know that this is the only Department in the University system which, apart from studying its primary subject matter Religion, also studies History, Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology, Archaeology, Philosophy and even the Languages of Religion.

As I had earlier observed, whatever the form and intensity of the religious tradition, man has from the primordial times acknowledged the existence of certain more powerful supernatural or spiritual forces outside himself. The existence and effect of such pervading spiritual forces beclouding man’s world has caused man to see his origin and the existence of his universe and its contents as a bundle of mysteries which can only be unraveled for him by Religion (**Wotogbe-Weneka** 2001:viii). As we observed, we cannot really understand some people and events and interpret them appropriately, unless we also note their religious influences and persuasions (G. O. M. Tasié & **Wotogbe-Weneka** 2002:265).

For sure, there does not appear to be any modern society without religious beliefs and practices. Even though, there are some individuals in modern societies who do not exhibit conventional religious activities, but through anthropological studies, we know that man can properly be described as a *Homo Religiosus*, (a religious animal). Eric Carlton (1973:34) stated the obvious when he says that even though a Religion does not make sense to us, it certainly makes sense to those who practise it.

Again, Religion has great and important value for people; hence some people are prepared to die for it or give so much for its sake. This is why many religious people make great sacrifices and offerings of the best they have for the sake of Religion; and in some few instances, even in modern times, the offering of human beings for the sake of Religion. To some religious people, religious pursuit is even more valuable to them than their lives and property. This accounts for the reason why followers of a given Religion are often ready to fight and defend it, and in the words of F.J. Imaekhai (2010:61), they are sometimes considered by others as unreasonable, fierce and fanatical, if their Religion is threatened by force or disrespected. In short, the phenomenon called Religion is more complex than we may think or humanly imagine. That is why some human societies which tried to create a “non religious” state and society by practising Communism, Socialism cannot be said to be quite successful because the religious instinct in man is not easy to suppress.

For instance, research has shown that Religious morality is an enduring phenomenon, thus bringing about coherence, togetherness in the society and also uniting man the religious vertically to his Ultimate Reality. In the African context, for instance, one of the most fundamental characteristics which makes the African culture enduring is that the culture is rooted in Religion. Just as many Religions have similar beliefs about the Ultimate Reality so do we have many common religious practices throughout the world and hence, we can talk of sacred personages, sacred places, sacred times in world religions, etc. For instance, common religious duties we notice in world Religions include prayer or meditation, sacrifices/offerings, fasting, pain inflicting practices such as self denial of pleasures and comforts of life, going on pilgrimage at great expense, crossing of oceans in order to take religious message to people in other parts of the world etc.



Fig. 1: The Ka'ba, the House of Allah, in Mecca is the principal Islamic Shrine and place of Pilgrimage. It is considered the geographic and religious center of the Muslim world. (Source: p 47 of J. C. Livingston's *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 2005)

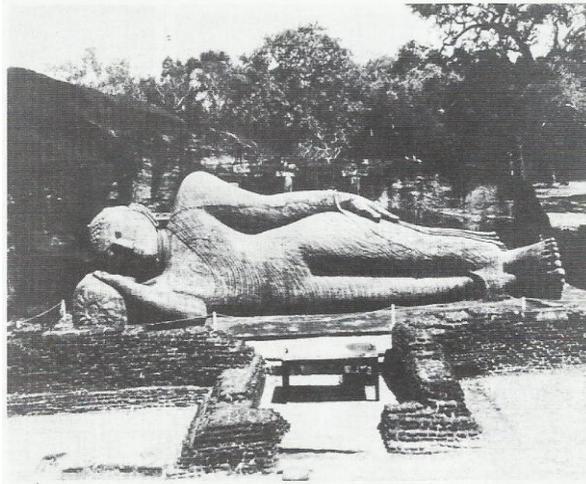


Fig. 2: The Parinirvana of the Buddha from Gal Vihara, Sri Lanka. This giant statue, portraying the Buddha in "complete nirvana," represents Buddhist deathlessness perfect enlightenment, free of craving and delusion. (Source: p 64 of J. C. Livingston's *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 2005).

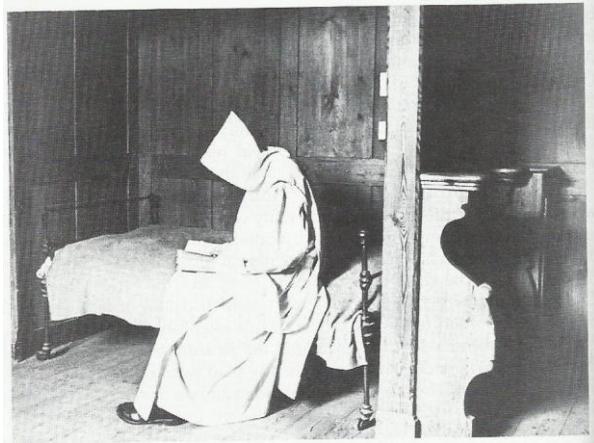


Fig. 3: A Carthusian monk sits reading and in contemplation in his cell at St. Hugh's Charterhouse monastery in Sussex, England. The monk passes most of his life praying, studying, eating and working in solitude. (Source: p 146 of J. C. Livingston's *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 2005).

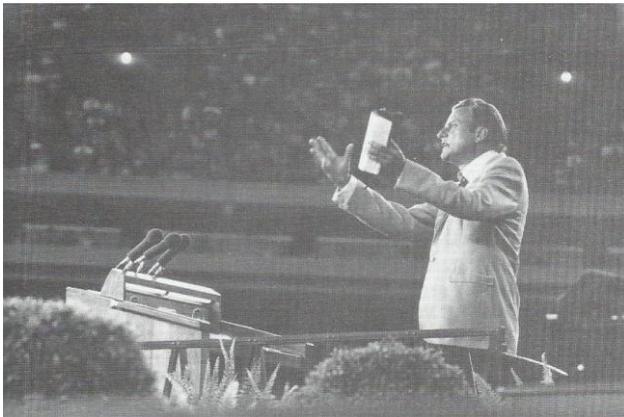


Fig. 4: The American evangelist Billy Graham is here pictured with his arm extended holding the Bible. (Source: p 111 of J. C. Livingston's *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 2005).

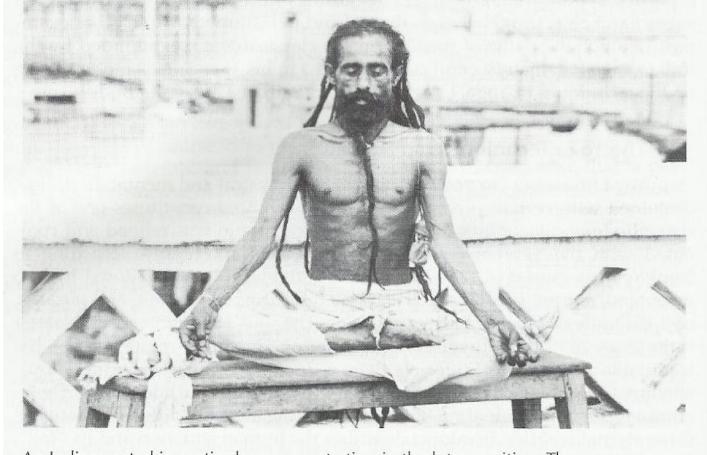


Fig. 5: An Indian seated in motionless concentration in the lotus position. The senses are withdrawn from external distractions preparatory to *Samadhi*, union or super consciousness. (Source: p 322 of J. C. Livingston's *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 2005).

Religion is so important to the religious people that some of the most beautiful buildings in the world are religious buildings, such as tombs, temples, cathedrals, churches, mosques and other gigantic sacred places of the world.

Here in Nigeria, apart from the Independence Day holiday, most national public holidays in Nigeria are religious holidays. The Christians have the Christmas, Good Friday and Easter public holidays, while the Muslims balance the equation with Eidel-Malud, Eidel-Fitri and Eidel Kabir. Unfortunately for the African Indigenous Religion, its varied or variegated nature makes it impossible for it to be given a national public holiday, except the local public holiday for the community and among the people where the local variant is practiced.

Several Religions and religious strands co-exist in Nigeria, though three are the dominant ones namely, Christianity, Islam

and African Indigenous Religion hence, the three are equally recognized by the country's constitution. Unfortunately, it now appears that the co-existence of these Religions in Nigeria, tends to negatively accentuate regional and ethnic distinctions as well as vitiating the unity of the country through violence/killings, bombings that are now traceable to Religion. Islam dominates the northern part of Nigeria and hold strong numbers in the South Western (Yoruba) part of the country. Christian Protestantism and local syncretic Christianity are evident in Western Nigeria, while the Roman Catholic version of Christianity is dominant in the Eastern (Igbo) part of Nigeria and its neighbourhood areas. Both Protestantism and Catholicism are strong in the Ibibio and Annang areas. And in some parts of Southern Nigeria like Rivers State, Protestantism dominates, while in the core Niger Delta area, Anglicanism dominates with some strong evidence of other versions of the Christian Religion, especially the Catholic (F. J. Imaekhai, 2010: 54).

It can be said that the number of Christians and Muslims in Nigeria are almost equal. According to *World Facts Book, Nigeria* (2003), 50% of Nigerians are Muslims, 40% are Christians and 10% are followers of the indigenous African religious beliefs. But *The Religious Freedom Profile* indicates that approximately 46% of Nigerians are Christians and approximately 44% are Muslims and leaving only 10% for African Indigenous Religion.

Following the religious crises resulting in the series of Religious killings that go on in the Nigerian nation today, one can say that the survival of the nation is perhaps in doubt, let alone talking about what Religion can contribute to in national development. This is against the dangerous backdrop of the tendency to always equate national development with economic growth only. It is sometimes assumed that a society which is experiencing rapid economic and industrial growth is developing. I agree totally with Andrew O. Efemini (2003:1) who is of the view

that development that is worthwhile is the quantitative and qualitative improvement in the material, emotional and *spiritual* (emphasis mine) conditions of human existence. In other words, without the “spiritual development” component, which is our interest in this lecture, no nation can be said to be complete in her development as we will soon show in this lecture.

ORIGIN

As in the definition of the word Religion, the exact date of the origin of the religious phenomenon is equally not easy to determine. Interestingly, we are encouraged to say with some level of exactitude how the phenomenon called Religion came about, not when it came about. The basic fact is that Religion is one of the most important aspects of human culture, hence all anthropologists and most other social scientist attempted its study and were able to conclude that systems of beliefs and action involving the supernatural exist in all known human societies. Not only is Religion found in every known human society, it significantly interacts with other cultural institutions. As A. Malefijt (1968:10) observes, “Religion finds expressions in material culture, in human behavior, and in value systems, morals and ethics. Since man is so far the only acknowledged and recognized being that has something to do with Religion in terms of religious beliefs and practices, the origin of Religion will have to be discussed in terms of the origin of this *Homo religiosus*.”

Recent studies have, however, revealed that the emergence of man upon earth can be placed about a million and half years ago, with the appearance of the so-called Erect-Ape-Man (*Pithecanthropus erectus*), and the Chinese man of Peking (*Siranthropus pekinensis*), which can be dated to the middle Pleistocene epoch – which appeared 400 thousand years ago, the long age of the Neanderthal man (*Homo Neanderthalensis*), before the appearance of the present man (*homo sapiens*), somewhere in

the Paleolithic period, which is roughly 50 thousand years ago (M. P. Adogbo 2010:14). Some existing theories suggest human origin of the gods as represented by the Sicilian philosopher Euhemerous, in his work entitled *SACRED HISTORY* when he wrote,

With respect to the gods, too, our ancestors believed carelessly, credulously, with untrained simplicity, while worshipping their kings religiously, desiring to look upon them when dead in outward forms, anxious to preserve their memories in statues, these things became sacred (Malefijt, 1968:17).

In other words, Euhemerous believed that gods in human worship were originally human rulers who were gradually deified by their subjects. Myths in this view were the glorified accounts of the deeds of these great men and of the events relating to their lives, births and deaths. I had also earlier opined that the explanation of such mysteries of the world is the essence of religious mythologies (**Wotogbe-Weneka** 1997:90). This principle of interpretation is now what is known as euhemerism. Some missionaries, traders and other travelers had reported the absence of religious life in some culture and hence, Edward Tylor was quoted as refuting that when he said “Religion was probably a universal culture trait, and an integral part of society that was as old as man himself” and asked rhetorically,

“Are there, or have there been, tribes of men so low in culture as to have no Religious conceptions whatsoever”? Even Charles Darwin recapitulated Tylor’s position more clearly than Tylor about the apparent semantic and ethnocentric error by earlier observers, who equated Religion with monotheism, when he also observed:

There is no evidence that man was aboriginally endowed with the enobling belief in the existence of an omnipotent God ... if however, we include under the term Religion the belief in unseen spiritual agencies, the case is wholly different, for this belief systems to be universal with the less civilized races (468-69).

It is evident that 20th century ethnography has upheld the theory of the universality of Religion in existing non literate cultures; while modern archaeology has uncovered evidences that religious phenomena are of great antiquity. Similarly, archaeologists have provided important insights into man's cultural and religious development. The archaeological division of man's evolution has helped us in providing a chronological context for the various stages of man's evolution thus,

- (a) The Paleolithic period
- (b) The Mesolithic period and
- (c) The Neolithic periods.

Each of these stages of man's development that presents us with various stages of man's development, also presents us with his religious development. Archaeological evidences of fossils and artifacts unearthed from various sites during the Paleolithic period reveal traces of blows on the skulls, the broken arm and leg bones which had been regarded by archaeologists as the earliest evidence of ritual treatment of the dead (E. O. James 1957:18).

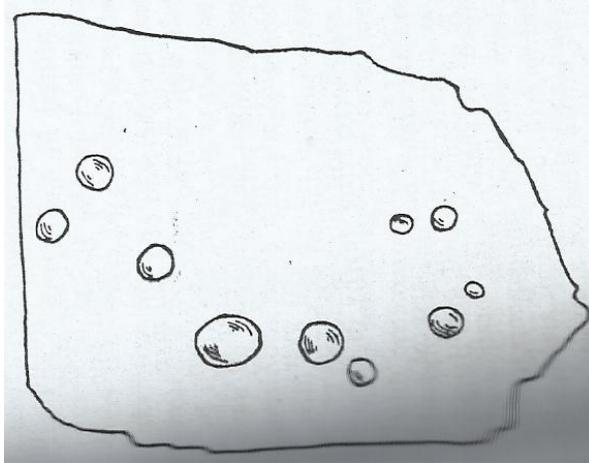


Fig. 6: Cup-shaped depressions in a stone slab covering the grave of a Neanderthal child; La Ferrassie, France.

(Source: p. 110 A. Malefijt, *Religion and Culture, An Introduction to Anthropology of Religion*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1968)

A leading archeological excavator R.J.C. Atkinson was the one who excavated the famous megalithic monument in Europe on Salisbury (The Stonehenges) plain in England in 1960.



Fig. 7: Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain in England

(Source: p. 135 A. Malefijt, *Religion and Culture, An Introduction to Anthropology of Religion*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1968)

R.J.C. Atkinson's interpretation of what the Stonehenges were used for, plus other prevailing conjectures, inform us that the Stonehenges may have been used for offering of human sacrifices, for propitiatory rituals, a place of ritual and worship, where man established contact with the supernatural powers in which he believed. This does not exclude the possibility that it was sometimes used for secular activities as well, such as the holding of political councils or the dispensation of justice (A. Malefijt, 1968:120).

Nothing comparable to the European archeological excavations suggesting traces of man's religious activities of European Paleolithic and Mesolithic period could be found in the New World (The Americas), until much later. However, with the beginning of the Neolithic period, evidences of religious practices bordering on burial becomes abundant. There were found cave burial sites e.g. among the Basket making Indians, the ancestors of the modern Pueblo, who occupied parts of Arizona and New Mexico from about A. D. 100 - 500.

The Hohokam Indians who occupied central and southern Arizona from about 300BC - AD500, practiced cremation. The most elaborate burial practices were found in the Ohio Hopewell culture of about AD900 - 1300. Here, the deceased were dressed in their finest clothing and placed in long tombs or on burial platforms (Malefijt, 1968:142). Ritual treatment of the dead, we will recall, is a major religious activity in all known Religions of the world; hence, the how Religious practices began was through ritual treatment of the dead.

TYPES/CLASSIFICATION OF RELIGION

Religious institution, no doubt, is a major and important human institution. Next to the family (through marriage), Religion can be

said to be the second oldest institution that governs the social as well as personal behaviour of human beings by providing guidelines, laws and principles relating to interaction with fellow humans and the supernaturals (Molley, 2002:6). And as I observed elsewhere, one of the major problems of religious discourses is the multi-reference nature of religious forms and languages in their varied and variegated nature in different cultures and contexts (**Wotogbe-Weneka** 2003:45). This notwithstanding, various Religions of the world have one thing or the other to offer the faithful of the Religion in question. As I also observed, every religious system has something important about it and things which make it different from others, even though there are areas of similarities (**Wotogbe-Weneka**, 1998:154). In African Religion, for instance, the traditional Religious structure is such that it encapsulates other aspects of their social structure such as the religious, political, economic and cultural life. In other words, Religion for the African indigenous faithful does not exist in the intellect alone, but includes man's awareness of his own responsibilities (Abogunrin 1994:7). And so wherever it is being practised, Religion has always exercised enormous influence on people and societies (**Wotogbe-Weneka**, 2002:147). The immigrant Religions of Christianity and Islam on arrival in Nigeria understood the value of Religion in shaping the totality of a person's make up, hence they ensured religious instruction in the school systems they introduced (Isiramen, 2010:116).

In classifying the Religions of the world, we can talk of three broad categories (a) those which are said to be "redemptive" in nature. Best examples include Judaism, Christianity, Islam. That is, they incorporate into their teachings the doctrine of the soul's redemption in the next world, depending on one's activities here and now, (in this world) (b) Those said to be "morality" based Religions. In which case, their doctrinal teachings are basically geared towards moral consideration aimed at directing their

adherents to paths of moral rectitude. Here, we can classify mainly the eastern Religions such Confucianism, Shintoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism etc. (c) Finally, the so called “Primitive Religion” whose adherents are described by some early foreign writers as “savage”, “primitive” and who are said to be lacking in either imagination or emotion (Anderson 1960:9). “So called” expression is used because it was part of the derogatory and arrogant terms the early missionaries and foreign investigators into African Religion used in referring to the Africans and the African Indigenous Religion which they felt was an inferior Religion, if at all considered religious. Unknown to such foreign investigators; African Indigenous Religion contains all the elements found in the more glamorous Religions of their imagination. Again, it must be stated that many of the so called sophisticated Religions of the world today at their embryonic stage had crude forms of what made the whites consider African Religion as primitive.

On the whole, the world Religions we study in my discipline include Judaism, Christianity, Islam, African Indigenous Religions, Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, myriads of New Religious Movements in Africa, Europe, America, Afro-Caribbean and the Pacific Islands and modern developments affecting these religious movements. We also deal with broad thematic issues of contemporary relevance such as Diaspora African Religion in the New World of the Americas (North and South, including the Caribbean Islands), Gender and Sexuality, Mysticism, Ascetism, Pilgrimage, Religion & Education, Religion and Dialogue, Religion & Family, Religion and Fundamentalism, Religion and Economy, Religion and Development, etc. We also teach Secular Alternative belief systems such as Marxism, Humanism, Utilitarianism and such like ideologies which have replaced formal Religion for millions today.

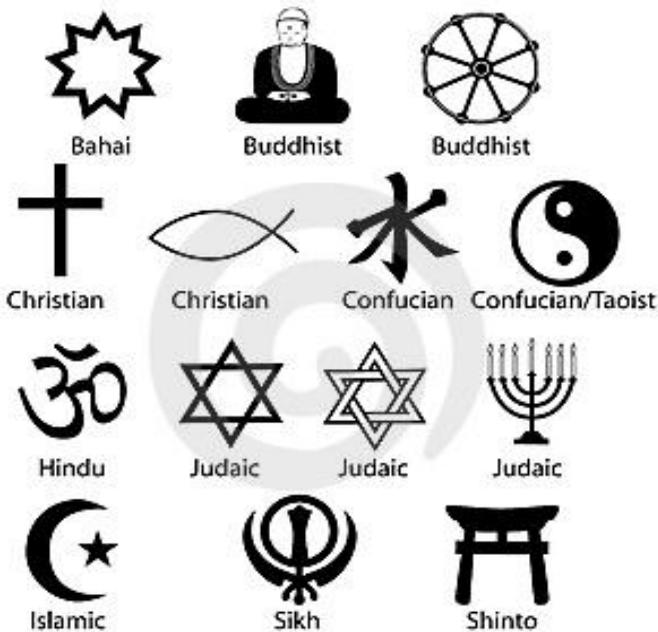


Fig. 8: Pictures of various Symbols of some World Religions
(Source: Google Images)

Next is the categorization of the supernatural powers into two (a) those which are believed to have a non human origin and (b) those which are believed to have a human origin.

Non human supernaturals – many supernatural powers to which the generic term God/gods is applied are believed to be self-created and their origin and existence rarely questioned. They are individually known, named and personalized. They are usually recognizable by their given attributes. Their numbers within any given Religious system may be large or small and in some instances, there is only one, hence, such Religious traditions are termed monotheistic. Speaking about many of them collectively,

we use the term pantheon of gods and such Religious traditions are fundamentally polytheistic, and in Religious traditions that recognize one of the gods as ranking higher than the rest, the term “Supreme” is attached to the highest in rank and placed at the apex in the pantheon of gods when hierarchically arranged.

On the other hand, the supernatural beings believed to be of human origin arose from the religious belief in the continued existence of the human soul after death in many religious traditions, although the nature of his existence is variously conceived. This belief becomes more complex when it is believed that a dead soul is capable of surviving in more than one soul; each with its own ultimate destiny. In which case, the dead through their souls may become like the gods or spirits, retaining their old individuality and personality. This is what brought about the ancestral belief systems. Similarly, some very powerful kings are believed to have been deified after their death and burial through their soul, and cultus for their worship emerging eventually (Malefijt, 1968:156).



Fig. 9: The kissing of the penis of a new born baby as part of a mandatory Buddhist religious initiatory rite. (Source: Google Images)



Fig. 10: Muslims, Christians and Buddhist leaders in a religious dialogue.
(Source: Google Images)



Fig. 11: A Christian and a Muslim participating in a Peaceful
Coexistence Seminar (Source: Google Images)



Fig. 12: Participants at a Nigerian inter religious dialogue (made up of representatives of Indigenous African Religion, Christianity and Islam). (Source: Google Images)

We also have religious categories often referred to as “Cults”. One Charles Braden in his book: *These also Believe*, defines a cult as “any religious group which differs significantly in some one or more respects as to belief or practice from those religious groups which are regarded as the normative expressions of Religions in our total culture” (Charles Braden 1960: xii). Speaking more specifically in our context here, we are more concerned with Christian religious strands regarded as cults within the broad Christianity, although cultic strands can be found in many other religious traditions today. The cults are said to constitute a growing trend in America today – a trend which is away from the established Christian churches and the historic teachings of the Bible. In Christianity for example, they emphasize autosoteric efforts or the desire to save one’s self apart from the Biblical revelation and salvation through the belief in the saving grace of Christ’s sacrificial death. Members of such cult groups represent

attempt of millions of people to find what they regard as “the fulfillment of deep and legitimate needs of the human spirit”, which most of them seem not to have found in the established churches. Walter Martin (1985:10) has presented us with a long list of what today goes for Christian cultic religious groups. They include the Jehovah Witness and the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, Christian Scientists, *Mormonism* – The Latter Day Saints/Spiritism. The Cult of Antiquity, Unifications Church, The Jesus of the Cults, The Puzzle of Seventh Day Adventist, The Rosicrucian Fellowship, The Theosophic Society, The Bahai Faith, The Cult on the World Mission Field, Eckankar – the Religion of the light and sound of God, Zen Buddhism, The Islamic Message of Mohammed, The Grail Movement, Ron Hubbard and Scientology, Cult Evangelism – Mission Field on the Door Step, The Road to Recovery, The Church of the New Jerusalem – Sweden Borgianism, Hubbert Armstrong and the World Wide Church of God – Anglo – Israelism, etc (Walter Martin, 1996:10).

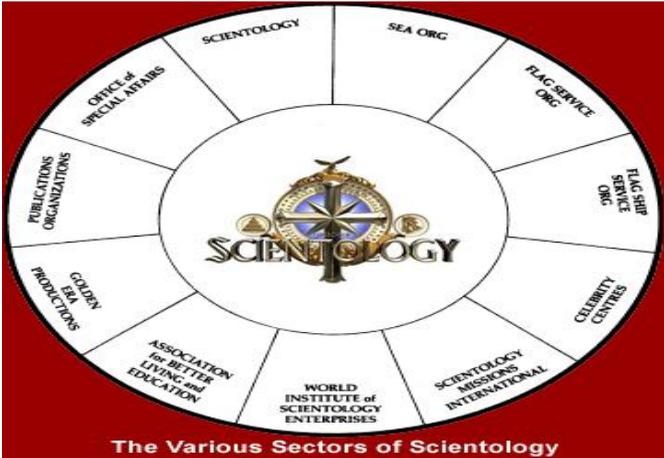


Fig. 13: Examples of various religious cults.
(Source: Google Images)



Fig. 14: Four thousand two hundred members of the Unification Church are married in Madison Square Garden in New York, 1982. The Reverend Moon decided which individuals would be joined together. Courtesy of Tannenbaum, Corbis/Sygma. (Source: p 64 of J. C. Livingston's *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 2005).

THE STUDY OF RELIGION

It has become conventional among scholars of Religion to place the beginning of the study of Religion in the middle of the 19th century, and on the great names like Edward Tylor, James Frazer and Max Muller as the originators. This has created the mistaken impression that 19th century scholars were unmindful or repudiate the efforts of their predecessors, no matter how rudimentary such efforts may have been. No doubt, many scholars from different disciplines, had attempted to observe and analyze

Religious phenomena and institutions throughout the entire history of mankind, especially in the western world.

The ancient Greco-Roman Scholars through their descriptive data of the non-literate peoples they encountered had helped to preserve many ancient Religions which otherwise could have long been forgotten. The ardent Greek traveler, Herodotus; through his writings, made the Religions of foreign people known; for, he was said to have visited more than 50 different nations and tribes recording in detail as he travelled, people's habits and customs, both secular and religious. His efforts could be said to be the precursor to modern anthropology of Religion. He established through his studies the principle of "the equivalence of gods". Using what is today known as "the comparative method in the study of Religion", Herodotus showed how the gods in different religious systems and with different names and attributes actually had similar functions (Malefijt, p.17). Herodotus was followed by Euhemerus who through his own study believed that the gods in humans worship were originally human rulers, who were gradually deified as we had explained earlier under the origin of Religion.

After Euhemerus, two approaches to the study of Religion was developed, namely the historical and theoretical – philosophical, as represented in the writings of a Chaldean Priest, Berossus (C. 280BC), the Roman scholar, Marcus T. Varro (116-27BC) and his friend, Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43BC), Julius Caesar (C.100-44BC) and Strabo (C.63BC-AD21). A prolific writer, Marcus T. Cicero's contribution to the study of Religion represents a spectacular significance through the reading of his best known books on Religion entitled: *On the Nature of the Gods*, *On Divination* and *On Fate*. Cicero was able to compile a well known etymology of the word "Religion" in which he maintains that the Latin word *RELIGIO* is derived from *RE-LIGERE*, which means "to execute painstakingly and by repeated efforts". It was the later apologist, Lactantius (C.260-C340), who believed that the word

religion derived from *RE-LIGARE*, meaning “to bind” or “to hold together”. Although there is no certainty about the correctness of either derivation, the later *RE-LIGARE* is the more generally accepted term. As it stands, Religion as we know it today is certainly what “binds” or “holds” together the religious worshipper and his object of worship. This is how the word Religion came about. No wonder not only the 5th century philosopher and theologian, St. Augustine adopted the term, but the term dominated the theological views of most of the writers of the Middle Ages (Malefijt, p.20). In the main, these earlier studies, even with their somewhat crude methodology, helped to preserve the knowledge of many ancient Religions such as those of the Greek, Romans and Persians.

The Scientific Study of Religion (*Religion Wissen Chaft* – Science of Religion) as we know it today, became an independent discipline only in the later half of the 19th century. The term first appeared almost casually in the writings of some German authors. It was one Max Muller who first used it in a stricter sense because he felt that the Science of Religion should be modeled after the Science of language. He went further to stimulate thought in the Scientific study of Religion when he said,

During the last fifty years the accumulation of new and authentic materials, for the study of the Religions of the world has been most extraordinary; but such are the difficulties in mastering these materials that I doubt whether the time has yet come, for attempting to trace, after the model of the science of language (Max Muller, 1867).

By Science of Religion we simply mean academic (critical study of the subject, like in any other discipline within the university set up such as ours). This further implies objectivity (not biases) in studying a people’s Religion. In short, critical analysis and not

necessarily through laboratory experiment because you cannot prove God's existence in the science laboratory. For example, through sound philosophical arguments, namely, cosmological, teleological and design arguments as put forward by Thomas Aquinas and his contemporaries, an objective basis for establishing the existence of God can be established. Our best sellers in this approach have the titles *The Scientific Study of Religion* by J.M. Yinger and *the Anatomy of the Sacred* by J. C. Livingstone.

These were the gradual developments of the formal academic study of Religion that by 1873, the first academic chair of Religion had been established in Geneva, Switzerland, Europe. Three years later, in 1876, four Chairs were established in the Netherlands. In 1879, the College de France at Paris endowed one, and in 1885, Sorbonne founded the first Independent Faculty of Religion. Again, in early 20th century, courses of study in Religion (as distinct from theology), were offered at nearly all important University in Europe. In fact, the realization of a distinction between Religion and Theology was the most important aspect of this new Science of Religion. At this point, it came to be realized that theology cannot be comparative because it dealt with a single Religion unlike Religious Studies or Comparative Religion which is interested in every Religions of mankind.

Theology might require membership of a particular religious tradition many people argue, if one intends to be its theologian. For instance, that you can only study Christian theology, if you are a Christian, or Islamic theology, if you are a Muslim. This as it is often argued, is because a theologian approaches his study devotionally in order to properly establish the faith, and be able to convert others to it. In other words, the purpose of theology is proselytization, whereas Religious Studies does not proselytize (**Wotogbe-Weneka 2005:14**).

By 1888, M. Vernus began to publish *The Revue de histoire des Religions*, and in 1898 the *Archiv for Religions Wissens chaft* first appeared, and a number of other periodicals dealing exclusively with the study of Religion emerged soon afterward. The first International Congress devoted to the findings of the Science of Religion took place in Stockholm in 1897 and such meetings both national and international became regular events thereafter. The International Conference on the study of Religion has now metamorphosed into what is known as International Association of the History of Religion (IAHR). At the African level, we have African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR) founded in Harare, Zimbabwe on 18th September, 1992, while the Nigerian version is known as Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions (NASR). NASR organizes National Annual Conferences and publishes an academic Journal with the name, *RELIGIONS, A Journal of the Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions*, which Journal I once served as its Associate Editor. The latest copy of the Journal 2011, Vol. 21, contains an article of mine.

It may interest my audience to note that before the African Association was established, that of Nigeria had long been established in 1975 at the University of Ibadan with Prof. J. O. Awolalu as the first President.

Through this Scientific Study of Religion, Religion can be studied and is being studied today by many disciplines which also constitute areas and aspects which are open to students and scholars of Religion. For instance, it can be studied through Historiography, Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology, Philosophy, Phenomenology, Comparative and Literary criticism, using all the methodological tools associated with such disciplines. Thus, we have Historians of Religion, apart from Church Historians, who study the history of Christian churches specifically as such. Anthropologists of Religion, Sociologists of Religion, Psychologists of Religion, Philosophers of Religion, Phenomenologists of

Religion, Comparative Religionists, Textual Literary critics, whose area of specialty is the sacred (scripture) books of the Religions studied, including Religions without written scriptures such as the African Indigenous Religion.

As I had observed (2005:11), the historians of Religion and the phenomenologists of Religion are more comprehensive in their methodological approach to Religion. For instance, the historical approach surveys the Religions of mankind, from a historical point of view, examining the religious tradition along the following themes; origin, founder, initial bottlenecks, membership, basic doctrinal beliefs and practices, growth or expansion, schism (if any), external factors or influences on the Religion, etc.

On the other hand, the phenomenological method approach studies all the basic phenomena that constitute a Religion. That is, the various manifestations or forms of a religious tradition as they manifest in the practice of the Religion in question. For example, we can observe practices of a Religion bordering on rituals, symbols, prayer, mysticism, asceticism, pilgrimage, etc. In my research publications, these methods have been represented diagrammatically thus (Wotogbe-Weneka, 2005, 9 & 19).

HISTORICAL APPROACH

S/N	THEME ↓	JUDAISM	CHRISTIANITY	ISLAM	BUDDHISM	HINDUISM	AFRICAN RELIGION	ZOROASTRIANISM ETC
1.	Origin	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2.	Founder	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3.	Membership	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.	Initial difficulties	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5.	Growth or	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

	expansion							
6.	Basic beliefs	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
7.	Basic practices	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
8.	Schism	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
9.	External factors/influences	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
10.	Etc	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Fig. 15: The historical approach to the study of religion. (Source: p. 9 W. O. Wotogbe-Weneka's *Themes in Comparative Religion*, Hamaz Global Ventures, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria, 2005).

PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

S/N	THEME	RITUALS	SYMBOLISM	PRAYER	MYSTICISM	CALLING	PILGRIMAGE	SALVATION
1.	Judaism →	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2.	Christianity	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
3.	Islam	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
4.	Buddhism	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
5.	Hinduism	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
6.	African religion	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
7.	Zoroastrianism	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
8.	Etc	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Fig. 16: The phenomenological approach to the study of religion. (Source: p. 9 W. O. Wotogbe-Weneka's *Themes in Comparative Religion*, Hamz Global Ventures, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria, 2005).

The anthropologist of Religion surveys the Religious man not only from his religious point of view, but in the totality of his cultural setting – economics, political, language, majorly in man's preliterate setting or what may be called “small scale” or less technologically advanced societies. The sociologist of Religion approaches his study by recognizing that the Religious man lives in a society and sees Religion as performing social function. The philosopher of Religion is interested in Religion because he would like to examine the various languages (assertions) the religious man uses as to the validity or otherwise of such assertions in Religious matters.

For instance, how does the religious man reconcile his assertions such as “God is all knowing (Omniscience), God is All powerful (Omnipotent) and God is everywhere (Omnipresence) with his equally important religious assertions that “Evil/misfortunes exist as realities in the world of and the lot of the religious man in the presence of an Omniscience, Omnipresence and Omnipotent God”? The philosopher, through his philosophical reflections and analysis could like the righteous Biblical Job, answer his wife taunting him over his pitiable situations “shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil”? (Job 2:9-10). The Archeologist of Religion is interested in digging out and analyzing scientifically the religious Artifacts, Relics and Finds used by people of the past in various identifiable archeological sites of the world. They are thus able to interpret the type of religion practised, the meaning and the relevance of the religious artifacts in use in those days viz-a-viz the present level of religious developments of humans. The Psychologist of Religion is equally interested in the religious behavior of man. Through his investigations, he discovers that on the average, while women are more inclined to Religious activities than men, older people are more inclined than younger people. The psychologist asks, could there be any thing intrinsic in Religion that alters or influences peoples religious behavior in life? He would be able through these probings posit that women as weaker vessels need God/supernaturals to allay their fears over such issues as life partners, barrenness, husband abuse, relations-in-laws abuse, etc. On the other hand, the more elderly people are said to be more inclined to religion because they would soon die and meet their creator and hence, they become more religious in order to be accepted at death. These other disciplines highlighted above, even though they study Religion, do not have Religion as their main focus or thrust. They have interests other than Religion. The psychologist, for example, studies human behavior generally,

and Religion, as an aspect of human behaviour, also captures his interest. That is why some scholars like Mircea Eliade (1969:6) a historian of Religion, is one of the most vocal scholars who are critical of all efforts to study religious phenomena in non-religious terms. To do so, he argues, is to fail to grasp the true meaning of the religious actions or belief itself. According to him, "A Religious action reveals its deeper meaning when it is considered on its plane of reference, and not when it is reduced to one of its secondary aspects". For Eliade, Religion is first and foremost an experience *Sui Generis* (incited by man's encounter with the sacred), and is therefore irreducible.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, my many years of studying and teaching Religion has taught me that Religion became an accepted discipline worthy of our study like any other discipline studied in this university because of the following reasons;

- (a) For religious understanding of the *Homo Religiosus* (religious man [animal]). For instance, we would like to know and appreciate how and why man behaves in a particular way, given the suppositions (or prescriptions) of man's beliefs and practices e.g. Why does one man remove his shoes and puts on his hat, and the other would remove his hat but puts on his shoes before entering their respective places of worship.
- (b) To find out the answers that man has been trying to give to the ultimate questions of human existence. Man the *homo sapiens* from time to time in his existence asks himself some questions about his existence and through Religion alone (and no other discipline), provides answers himself. These are answers which give the religious man some sense of hope, thereby giving meaning to his existence. E.g. Why am I here on earth? What is the purpose of life? Why are humans mortal? Any existence after death? What is the existence in the hereafter like? Why am I a man and not a

- woman? Any reward for living a just/holy life? Is there a day of accountability? What happens to the soul of man at death? etc. As you can see, it is only Religion as a discipline that can ask and answer these questions.
- (c) To provide an unbiased/objective account of religious phenomena one studies without value judgment/condemnation, just as one sees them. A renowned Comparative Religionist, Joachim Wach (1961:15) has described the purpose of embarking on the study of Religion in order “to find out what is there that is believed”. He opines that “the truth or falsity of a religious tradition is none of our business; our business is to find out what is there that is believed”. That is why in my discipline, we study everything that forms part of a religious tradition.
 - (d) To overcome people’s religious ignorance. The only Religion one may know to a certain degree is one’s religious tradition. With the study of religious traditions other than one’s own, one’s knowledge of such other Religions deepens. That is why to those of us in the Department of Religious Studies, the term “unbeliever” is a relative term. Just as we use the term “unbeliever” to refer to people outside our own religious tradition and see them as such, so also do they refer to us and regard us. To us in Religion as a discipline, everybody is an “unbeliever” to Religions outside their own.
 - (e) Related to the above reason is in order to achieve a global perspective in our now globalised world of religious plurality. This is important because we cannot possibly understand other people or culture without a thorough knowledge and appreciation of the role of Religion in their life. As J. Livingston (2005:13) put it, “if we are to maintain peace and establish a stable world order among nations, it is imperative that we achieve a knowledge and

understanding of and an empathy for beliefs and ways of life that we now find very foreign to our own”.

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, in my studying and teaching of Religious Studies so far, I have learnt that three categories of people are involved in the study of Religion. I have described these three categories in some of my works (**Wotogbe-Weneka 2005:18**) as (a) the “Goddisms” (b) the “No Goddisms” (c) the “I don’t knowisms” and each has their confessed problems.

- (a) The Goddisms (the Goddists – Theists) – These are believers in one supernatural entity/reality or the other, no matter what name they call it. Their problem is that they have declared for at least one Religious being in the Religion in question.
- (b) The No Goddisms (the No Goddists – Atheists) – These are the confessed non believers. Their problem is that they have made up their minds that there is no God, no supernaturals. This group confesses its belief in unbelief, so to speak.
- (c) The “I don’t Knowisms – (I don’t Knowists – agnostics). Their own problem is that they have said neither “yes” nor “no” to belief systems. They are detached, a kind of “I don’t know”. They are best described as people who say there is no rationale in believing what is said to be believed in or doubting what is said to be doubted. The agnostic see the theist as stupid for believing what he does not know whether it exists or not in the form of the gods/supernaturals/God, and equally sees the atheist as foolish for doubting what he does not know whether it exists or not in the form of the supernaturals/gods/God. They are detached in maintaining what is often described as “the agnostically neutral standpoint”.

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, it may perhaps surprise you to hear that in the assessment eyes of scholars of my disciple, Religious Studies, this last, “the I don’t knowists” of my category are adjudged the best students or scholars of Religion. All that this verdict suggests is that in studying Religion, one’s religious background should not influence one’s study for such a study to be objective. And so, the best way to study Religion scientifically (critically), is to study it in such a way that one’s religious leaning should as much as possible be absent and hence the study should be devoid of value – laden, committal, biased and judgmental expressions.

CLASSICAL DENIGRATORS AND REHABILITATORS OF RELIGION

Since our lecture topic is on “Modern Denigrators and Modern Rehabilitators of Religion”, it has become imperative to sketch those that are the Ancient or Classical denigrators and rehabilitators of Religion as a phenomenon before discussing the modern ones.

In its simple description, classical denigrators of Religion are those who see Religion as a useless phenomenon that has nothing to offer man and the world and as such, should be eliminated from the face of the earth. If at all it would be allowed to exist on earth, it should not be allowed to stand on its own since as far as they are concerned, Religion is not an independent variable. In their condemnation of Religion, they used all uncomplimentary expressions to describe Religion as our range of examples will show shortly. The position of many in this category is understandable, given the fact that some of them are known atheists, while some are humanist thinkers. They feel that Religion should be left out in the affairs of man. Some of those who are against Religion erroneously assume that the only thing Religion can offer to the world is morality which they feel can be obtained

from sources other than the Religious such as human conscience. Although this is an ongoing debate among scholars, the general consensus so far seems to support the argument that the basic moral consciousness of man comes from the religious organizations, even though human conscience plays some part. As I had observed elsewhere, in practical terms, however, it can be seen that Religionless morality scarcely endures as can be proved with many anti-religious countries of the world (**Wotogbe-Weneka 2005:192**).

Great known classical denigrators of Religion are Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. Karl Marx says,

Man makes Religion; Religion does not make man. Religion indeed, is the self-consciousness and self feeling of the man who either has not yet found himself or else (having found himself), has lost himself once more. The fight against Religion is therefore a direct campaign against the world whose spiritual aroma is religious. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the feelings of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of unspiritual conditions. *It is the opium of the people*. The people cannot be really happy until it has been deprived of illusory happiness by the abolition of Religion (Karl Marx in Eddy, 1979:72).

In Marx's opinion, Religion acts as a deceptive device employed by the bourgeois class in a capitalist economy, who are owners of the means of production to suppress the proletariat (commoners) class whose labours are being sapped/exploited by the bourgeois with a payment of peanuts as wages which to them are not commensurate to the labour input in the process of production. Through religious hope of a better world and mansions in heaven, the proletariats are made to forget their sufferings in this world

which they may now see as momentary since a better world awaits them in heaven.

Karl Marx, therefore, advocates for a masses' revolution in which Religion which blinds the masses from seeing the reality of their situation would be overthrown and get themselves liberated.

Sigmund Freud (the psychoanalyst), on his part in his *The future of an illusion*, sees Religion and all that it stands for as “an infantile neurosis”. In other words, like his colleague Karl Marx, Religion is something for the infant, immature mind. When someone develops his/her full mental capacity, he will definitely drop all the ideas of Religion he/she may have had during his days of immature mind. Other more subtle-denigrators could be found in the writings of Edward Tylor and James Frazer (known atheists), who explained away Religion as something that will be outgrown with time. They even attributed the polytheistic nature of African and Indian Religions as the reason for their backwardness in mental and technological development. In their thinking, the more gods there are in a place, the more backward the people there will be. Be this as it may, we have quite a number of secularist and humanistic ideologies all over the places the proponents who would have nothing to do with Religion, and as I have observed (2006:71), modern secular alternatives to Religion have gained much converts and their converts are anxious to drag more members to themselves. This is coupled with the influence of the modern forces of change blowing from the angle of science and technology, thus undermining the relevance of Religion in the society (**Wotogbe-Weneka** 2006:185).

Today, there are quite a number of people who feel that the level human society has evolved has past the relevance and necessity of Religion and that to allow Religion in the scheme of things is to have recourse to retrogression. On daily basis the modern man, particularly in the western world has come increasingly under the spell of non religious and anti-religious

ideas, coupled with some other social and intellectual forces which have all combined to promote a wide-spread practical atheism. On the contrary, traditional African cannot imagine the conception of a world outside the supernaturals (**Wotogbe-Weneka** 2005:173).

For Emile Durkheim, Religion is not only a social creation, but it is in fact society divinized. As he put it, “the deity which man worships is only projection of the power of society”. Religion is eminently social.” (E. Durkheim, but as quoted in Lucky Akuruese in his “Religious truth claims and the new wittzensteinian “principle of critical immunity: a critical analysis” in *Journal of Religion and Culture*).

August Comte is of the opinion that Religion cannot form a stable and permanent part of society. This is because it would be eventually replaced by Science through his theory of the three stages of intellectual advance. To him, society progressed from the first stage which he calls Theological stage to the second which he calls Metaphysical stage, to his positive and final stage which he calls, the scientific stage at what point Religion would fizzle out of human society, since with science it would no longer have social relevance (August Comte in A. Malefijt’s, *Religion and Culture*). In setting forth his humanist and materialist philosophy in the book *The Essence of Christianity* (1841), Feurbach is quoted to have opined that the basic phenomenon of Religion is the theogonic wish, the principle of impetus which brings God into existence. Thus, religious values, including beliefs, are merely the projection of man’s subjective nature in relation to his social environment. According to this principle, God is created out of human imagination, which implies that God is the fulfillment of man’s wishes. Without man, God cannot exist, for man is God. In the process of becoming fully aware of himself, man creates God, God is an extension of man’s culture (L. Akaruese 2009: 72). In his article captioned “Why I am not a Christian, Bertrand Russel (1971:276) had said “Religion is based, I think; primarily and mainly

upon fear. It is partly the terror of the unknown and partly, as I have said, the wish to feel that you have a kind of elder brother who will stand by you in all your troubles and disputes”.

Nearer home in Nigeria here, a well known humanist thinker and social critic, Tai Solarin before his death was always critical of Religion in Nigeria when he said “Nigeria is dying today of Religion. The worst bane of African non development is chronic dependence on the deity to solve all earthly problems” (P. O. O. Ottuh, 2011:81). Of course, his position, like those of all known humanists are understandable. As a self-confessed atheist/humanist, vehement critic of irrationality and hypocrisy, Tai Solanin would always say, “I believe in man (man the man, woman and child). I believe that my duty to man is total service ... outside man; I owe none else any duties. Anything that man wants to do must be done by man himself (Solarin quoted by Ottuh, 81). Tai Solarin taught that prayer is useless, and that it is better to teach people how to solve their problems and give them the power and freedom to act. No wonder that, in a social gathering, whenever he was “mistakenly” asked to lead in opening or closing prayers, he would pray or rather jeer “Oh God if there is God, save our souls if we have souls”. And before his death in 1994, he believed in the GOLDEN RULE as the basis of his students (MAY FLOWER’S COLLEGE) moral education. His wife, who continued with this principle in the school, also died recently as we heard in the News.

All this unmitigated denigration of Religion became worsened when some uncomplimentary happenings seem to be characterizing Religion. For instance, it is revealing to know that many violent words in use today originated from religious context e.g. the words “Assassin” and “Thug”. An assassin was a radical Islamic person (of the Ishmaaili Sect), who took an intoxicant before embarking on a religious mission of murder.

The Ishmaailite Islamic sect was said to have flourished between 11th to 13th century. Members of the group were known for murdering their enemies as a religious duty. The Arabic name means “Hashish”, referring to the assassins’ alleged practice of taking “hashish” to induce ecstatic vision of paradise before setting out to face martyrdom (S.D. Audu 2008:92).

A “thug” on the other hand, was a brand of Hindu worshipper who strangled innocent passersby as a sacrifice to his goddess. The thugs were devotees of a Hindu goddess *Bhavani kali*. They favoured robbing and strangulation of carefully selected victims as the means by which they could hear their goddess *Bhavani kali* (Audu 2008:92). We all know today what these words connote, especially in the socio-political arena of Nigeria. They simply describe one who is a killer, political bandit, trouble maker or a robber.

The classical rehabilitators of Religion on the other hand, disagreed with the denigrators. They felt that Religion is such an important aspect of man’s social institutions that should not be brushed aside/dismissed the way the denigrators had done. On their part, they see Religion as standing on its own and making tremendous contribution towards the good of man and his world, hence they see Religion as an independent variable as our range of examples will equally show shortly. They carefully reexamined what Religion and the religious are indeed offering the society by their beliefs and practices and concluded that Religion can stand on its own as an independent variable capable of making tremendous social impact. But as Robin Horton explained, some of the classical rehabilitators of Religion were even as misleading as the denigrators the way they sounded in defence of Religion. For example, some of them were even said to have used their personal view of the world as a basis for approaching other peoples Religion. No doubt, some of them in Europe then were great church men, some Philosophers of Religion etc. Best example of

this European category of rehabilitators are Don Cupitt and Sir Eddly Leeah. Some of them looked at Religion as poetry. They claimed that Religion is something that cannot be talked about literary but symbolically, hence they used religious symbols to describe God/gods. They also argued that it is wrong to use Religion to describe worldly reality. They were all classical rehabilitators of Religion, but because of the way they presented/defended the religious matter, people were skeptical about their belief in God. Hence in the opinion of scholars like Robin Horton, they can best be described as symbolists because they expressed religious language symbolically. Horton prefers calling them “dangerous atheistic rehabilitators” on the grounds that they attempted pulling Religion away from social realities (oral interviews with Horton on 31st January, 2012).

There are other categories of rehabilitators whom Horton calls “Christian rehabilitators” because they too in their attempt to speak for or defend Religion used only Christian models to define Religion. According to this group of rehabilitators, all Religions are monotheistic and all Religions maintain sacredness, which are only westernizing approach to Religion. Best examples of this rehabilitators include Mircea Eliade, Evans Pritchard, E. B. Idowu etc. But not all Religions are monotheistic, some are polytheistic, while some are non-theistic, as we had explained earlier. This approach of disagreement was amply demonstrated in the ways some of these scholars equally attacked this interpretation through the writings of scholars like Babayemi, who criticized Idowu’s monotheistic concept of Yoruba Religion as a mere missionary approach. Robin Horton article entitled “*Judaeo-Christian spectacles; Boon or Bane to the study of African Religion*”, Donatus Nwoga’s book entitled “*Supreme Being as a stranger in Igbo Religious thought*” and Okot P’bitek’s *African Religion in Western Scholarship* etc. In all these arguments on godlessness,

African society is different because African Religion is part and parcel of African society as both are emerged.

Those denigrators who attempted to write-off Religion as a useless phenomenon are in fact mistaken because they refused or rather failed to understand what Religion is all about. As I argued elsewhere (**Wotogbe-Weneka** 2001:90) it seems unreasonable doubting phenomena which are beyond one's comprehension. Religion is only one way of reasoning or knowing.

In other words, there is the need for us to realize that it is not everything that can be known empirically even science itself has not and probably cannot make such a claim. There is a limit to which rational or empirical investigation could go in matters of Religion for anything outside the domain of this limit falls in the realm of the mysteries, and that is what makes Religion religious.

MODERN DENIGRATORS AND REHABILITATORS OF RELIGION IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A. Modern Denigrators of Religion

It is rather surprising that after several hundred years since majority of the world population has accepted or rather recognized the place of Religion in the affairs of humans, human beings are still vociferously denigrating Religion. This sparks off the following posers. Are religious institutions of the world offering what they set out to offer mankind or are they aberrations of the known Religious ethos? How useful are these unmitigated attacks on religious institutions and the religious in terms of national development? In other words, how are these obnoxious aspects of religious practices and the adverse comments on Religion and the religious occasioned by these irreligious activities affecting the development of Nigeria as a nation? Are there things intrinsic in religious institutions per se that attract to Religion and the religious these unabated criticisms in modern times? As once remarked by E.B. Idowu "in every case of man's revolt against

Religion, the revolt is invariably not against Religion qua Religion, but against a scheme of Religion or a religious institution which is a prostitution of essential Religion, or something in Religion that contradicts its basic spiritual moral claims (Idowu, 1973:3). These are the consideration this section of our lecture will now be focusing on.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, modern denigrators of Religions still persist because the religious practitioners have regrettably practised Religion, especially in our Nigerian society in ways that betray the essential ethos of what Religions stand for in terms of national development as the following highlights of our survey will confirm shortly. It is a fact that recorded history contains gruesome accounts of horror arising from atrocities committed against mankind in God's name whenever there is an interreligious or even intra faith competition. As Takaya (1992:110) informs us, the political history of even the major immigrant Religions in Nigeria (Christianity and Islam) are more or less annals of violence, bloodshed and misery crystallising in the political clash in a war of territorial control with particular reference to the Crusades and the Jihads. And as I had once queried (**Wotogbe-Weneka** 2010:7), "how can peace be attained in the midst of discord and all pervading suspicion of one religious group on the other? "In Nigeria today, Islam and Christianity are in a keen competition for one another's adherents, let alone what is happening in their various sects and denominations by way of "sheep stealing". Sometimes, the sacred texts of Religion seem to provide the warrant for justifying violence, although it depends on the interpretation given to the texts. The point I am making is that religious texts, if not read within their proper textual and historical contexts, are easily manipulated and distorted to achieve pecuniary interests.

As it stands now, to many people, Religion may rather be seen as the culprit for every form of violent uprising, rather than a

purveyor of peaceful co-existence. Is it surprising that to such people they would rather look elsewhere for enthronement of peace in human habitation than on Religion? It has often been taken for granted that Religion is expected to promote peace. But has it always been so? Recent events indicate that Religion even in this country has not helped matters much in this direction. Regrettably today, religious bodies and many of their members are engaged in fanning the embers of discord and religious bigotry. It can even be argued that the first impediment to peace is Religion since the practitioners of Religion are using it to foment trouble rather than bringing about peaceful co-existence. Historically too, almost all Religions of the world like Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism are in one form or the other so tainted with violence that some observers have posited that violence can possibly be inherent in Religion and that Religion is a major disruptive force (Rotgak I. Gofwen 2004:4). One begins to ask what kind of religious beliefs could cause a person to behave so destructively that Religion should be blamed for the violence of a country"? Like S.D. Audu (2008:91) would ask "is there certain "religiousness" that violence assumes"?

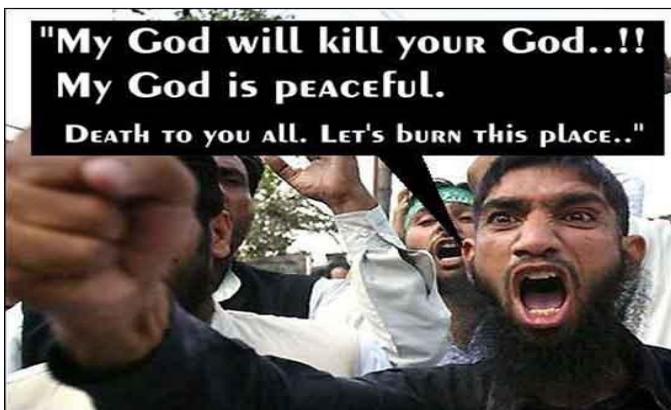


Fig. 17: Negative mission of Religiosity with their imposing banner. (Source: Google Images)



Fig. 18: Negative mission of Religiosity with their imposing banner.
(Source: Google Images)



Fig. 19: Picture of burnt victims/causalities of a Boko Haram Bomb blast in Jos, Nigeria. (Source: Google Images)



Fig. 20: Picture of church premises burnt by Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria. (Source: Google Images)

P. Ade Dopamu has attributed the religious crisis the Nigeria nation is constantly experiencing to what he called “religious particularity”. This is when practitioners of one Religion claim that their own Religion has absolute and exclusive claim to truth and revelation (P.A. Dopomu in Olubitan 2008:124). For instance, both Islam and Christianity claim to be ultimate truth that holds the key to the salvation of human kind as can easily be gleaned from some scriptural texts of both Religions.

The Judeo-Christian Holy Bible asserts in John 14:7,
I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father *except* by me”.

The Muslim Holy Quran equally asserts even more emphatically in Quran 5:3, 3:19 & 3:85.

This day have I completed my favour upon you and chosen for you Islam as your Religion (Q5:3). Therefore, the Religion with Allah is

Islam (Q3:19), and who so desires any other Religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he will be among the losers (Q3:85).

Even though some scholars have attempted a softer interpretation to these texts, the general opinion of practitioners of these respective faiths is that no one can attain salvation both in this life and in the hereafter outside these two religions. Thus, adherents of these two faiths have often resorted to arms, to settle their differences where their values have clashed, each believing their values have divine sanction. Even in cases where a conflict is apparently devoid of any religious flavor, adherents of these faiths have tended to give such conflicts a religious meaning. A typical example was during President Obasanjo's National Conference of 2005 or so, when he appointed a Southern Christian Judge-Justice Niki Tobi as Chairman of the Conference and appointed a Northern Christian Rev'd Fr. Mathew Kuka (now Catholic Bishop of Sokoto) as Secretary of the Conference. Notwithstanding the fact that Rev. Fr. Kuka is a Northerner, the simple fact that he is a Christian generated such a serious controversy/furore that the President was forced to appoint an alternate Muslim Secretary to the Christian Secretary Rev'd Father Kuka.

Similarly, the interethnic conflict in Nigeria had generally had a religious element to it. For example, riots against the Igbo in 1953 and in the 1960s in the North were said to be fired by religious conflict. The riots against the Igbo in the North in 1966 were also said to have been inspired by radio reports of mistreatment of Muslims in the South. In the Maitasine religious killings of 1983 in Kano serious religious outbreaks between Christians and Muslims occurred in Kafanchan in Southern Kaduna State in a border area between the two Religions (F. J. Imaekhai in C. O. Isiremen 2010:57). Obviously, these situations arise in Nigeria because of religious fanaticism. Instead of using their religious beliefs as a

basis to transform the country, some religious fanatics are trying to establish a theocracy in which their own Religion will be dominant, thus occasioning religious intolerance and tension all because these fanatics refuse to recognize Nigeria's secular state status. As the French philosopher, Blaise Pascal (1632-1662) once opined "men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction (quoted in S.D. Audu 2008:91).

One would then continue to ask, what role does Religion play in promoting peaceful co-existence, especially in our country Nigeria where peace seems to have eluded us since the past number of years brought about by religious intolerance? Is Religion rather than promoting peace exacerbating an already mutual suspicion of one Religion of the other, by fanning embers of discord and disunity? Even though it is taken for granted that Religion is supposed to promote peace, yet the question remains: has it always been so as recent events all over the world indicate that Religion has been fingered for some of the most gruesome killings in different parts of the world. For example, the 1994 Burundi genocide, involving the Hutu and Tutsi, led to massive wanton destruction of lives and property. It is on record that the conflict was precipitated by ethnic distrust and rivalry, yet Religion was fingered again to have helped to fan the embers of animosity and recrimination which led to the eventual decimation of about 800,000 lives of Burundi and Luanda population (Falaye 2011:86-88). George Ehusani (2004:296) laments how the November 2002 Kaduna mayhem which shockingly extended to Abuja the nation's capital debunked the myth of Abuja being thought of as the last bastion of neutrality in matters of Religion and ethnicity all because of the fundamentalist religious extremism to the embarrassment of many level-headed Nigerians and to the consternation of the international community.

In our recent experience also, the year 2000 Sharia related religious riot during which hundreds of lives were lost, churches,

shops, cars and buses belonging to Christians and southerners were burnt shortly after became regular features in Kaduna, Kano, Jos, Zaria and Bauchi; where a large population of Christians live alongside Muslims. The more recent Boko Haram onslaught has also become regular occurrences in most states in the northern parts of Nigeria with a preponderance of Muslim population. Unfortunately, some unprincipled politicians have used Religion as a pawn to achieve their nefarious aims of formenting trouble to become relevant among their unwary and ignorant fellow adherents of their own religion. Because of lack of understanding, fueled by religious intolerance is usually what makes believers in one religious tradition to assume that apart from their own members, every other religious believer, would go straight to hell fire at death. As it stands today, while some people believe that the ill-wind of terrorism and other forms of ethnic-religious violence in the northern part of Nigeria as manifested the activities of the Boko Haramists is not an offshoot of the Usman Dan Fodio Jihad but politically motivated, some Nigerians and members of the international community strongly believe that the unfortunate Boko Haram saga has some under current grand design to Islamise Nigeria through violence despite the secularity of the Nigerian state (U.Achonwa 2011:23).

Corruption said to be a canker worm ravaging the Nigerian nation has not spared even the religious practitioners in the country as evidences of corrupt acts are reported in the scriptures of world Religion, including Religions without written scriptures. Yet, must Religions of the world enjoin their members not to indulge in corrupt acts and go further to spell out the penalties against offenders (**Wotogbe-Weneka 2007:642**).

Violence in all its forms, religious bigotry and intolerance often orchestrated by religious institutions which have unfortunately become the lot of this nation of recent cannot continue while we justify the existence of Religion. Religious

emblems and symbols characterize the public life of the Nigerian nation, yet the people do not live according to the dictates of their faiths. Otonti Nduka (2012:4) views as suspect, the way churches, mosques, religious organizations and huge religious crusades and their promises of miraculous cure and solutions to problems dominate the thinking of the masses of Nigerians, yet the masses are nevertheless weighed down by illiteracy, ignorance, poverty and superstition. There is now commercialization of Religion with the multiplication of churches, mosques, prayer houses and all sorts of religious strands with equally multiplication of “fake” men of God, prophets, Imams, priests, without a corresponding multiplication of morality in the Nigerian society. Countless Religious Crusades and Revivals go on everyday with flamboyant outward display by some of these powerful men of God, yet in practical terms, the thinking of the masses of this country (the rulers and the ruled) is immorality and irreligiosity. Few examples will suffice here. The 1999 riot at Owerri, Imo, State was as a result of ritual murder allegedly committed by some rich people who are members of a Pentecostal Church (the Overcomers Christian Mission), following which some irate youths were reported to have discovered two human skulls as they ransacked the premises of the church (Grady, 2002:38). In 2006 also, a Lagos High Court found one Rev. Pastor Chukwuemeka Ezeugo (alias Rev. King) guilty of murder of late Anna Uzor King, a member of his church, who was also said to be his “sex partner”. He burnt her to death amidst plea for mercy from the late Anna. He was also sentenced to 100 years for attempted murder of 7 others whom he also burnt with the use of petrol and matches, accusing them of various offenses. It was further alleged that he flogged them mercilessly

without caring about their age. Most members of his church were reportedly held hostage and were unable to return to their families (Mathew & Owoyele, 2007).

That the church is growing numerically observes Familusi (2011:100), is an established fact. However, the rate of the growth does not correspond with moral consciousness. Examples abound of fraudulent practices and crimes committed by religious leaders all over the places, leader who are supposed to be moral crusaders and role-models in society.

Again, the Police in Zone 5 headquarters, Benin City, paraded a couple, Mr. & Mrs. Benjamin Ojobu on television, who were arrested for being in possession of fresh human heads in their house. It was alleged that the couple use human heads to prepare rituals for church members. The couple confessed that they prepare prosperity rituals for their clients (S. Enegbulem in *Vanguard*).

Of recent (about August 2012), it was alleged that “a man of God” one Rev’d David Ogulu was linked with the awesome murder of Comrade Oyerinde, the Principal Secretary to Edo State Governor. The case went to court. It was alleged that he promised the murderers ₦20 million naira. He has since been freed by the Judge for want of evidence.

In fact, as I had observed “to many today, what is uppermost in their minds is how to make it materially with little or no regard to morality (Wotogbe-Weneka 1988:54).



Fig. 21: God and Mammon worshippers (with money (Dollar) and Holy Bible in both hands)

Is it not an irony that while it is a known fact that Africa has the fastest growing church, especially in Nigeria in the world today, yet Africa has the fastest declining church. This is a situation which makes J. D. Gwamna (2006:49) to comment that for the numerical growth to far outpace spiritual depth and maturity in African Christianity implies that African Christianity is shifting grounds away from Biblical Christianity. Priests and Imams of some religious organizations are committing on daily basis sexual crimes and sometimes aberrations which in their sacred scriptures they had sworn to avoid at their ordination or institution (Lev. 18:19-25, 20: 20-21). A case in point is the Homosexuality, Lesbianism and Same Sex Marriages currently rocking the boat for the once united Anglican Communion worldwide.



Fig. 22: Picture of a male Gay Priest with braided hairdo to make himself attractive to his male gay priest husband.
(Source: Google Images)

As Dapo Asaju (2005:83) would ask “if teachers and preachers of the word of God contradict it in their personal philosophy and life styles, then the fundamental basis of the Christian ministry is undercut”. Arising from these socio-religious aberrations, I had also observed in some of my works,

Our societies today can best be described as “inverted”, whereby white has become black and black has become white. Thus, vices have become virtues. As naked realities of our contemporary societies, they undoubtedly pose unquantifiable challenges to this nation. This is because people have undermined or neglected the ways of the gods. Ironically, however, those social malaise are happening at a time of great proliferation of

churches and religious groups without corresponding moral value in the society (**Wotogbe-Weneka** 2012:18).

No wonder E. A. Odumuyiwa of the Department of Religious Studies, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye, Ogun State, could declare in his Inaugural Lecture titled: *A Religious but Criminal Society*, that, “Nigerians are so religious, even though they are less moral”, (E. A. Odumuyiwa, 2001).

Faking of miracles is another negative characteristics of our religiosity today and many people are falling victims to prayer contractors and miracle hawkers. Our churches, local traditional religious shrines and mosques today are full of so many people, “priests” and “Imams” and “many who claim that they are “called of God” (the God has called me syndrome), yet under proper examination of the life styles of the so-called “called of God, both at home, society and in their religious organizations in particular, one begins to wonder if such people are really called of God. As such, they hypocritically camouflage under the guise of those “called of God”, yet their methods of operation suggest that they are really not called by any god/God” but are rather perhaps “called by their stomachs” (**Wotogbe-Weneka** 2001:219). Is it not an aberration and a bastardisation of the priesthood that some priests today are accused of drunkenness, sexual immorality and even patronizing of the “native doctors” to seek power from such diabolical ends (**Wotogbe-Weneka** 2001:237). Can one be really blamed for asserting that what we have today in Nigeria is “spiritual 419” all over the place in the name of Religion. The prosperity gospel or “success all the time” is rapidly taking the place of “no cross, no crown”

on which the Christian Religion hinges, notwithstanding the fact that Christianity offers boundless hope, including prosperity. Ironically, songs and prayers are couched in such parlances, and pastors of such churches interpret biblical texts to suit their flamboyant life styles by exploiting their gullible members e.g.

They would interpret Christ hosting of his Last Super with his 12 disciples in a large upper room furnished and ready (Mk 14:14-15) to mean modern day “Five Star Hotel and so, those who would hire them for whatever services must not lodge them in a less glamorous hotel etc; whereas Christ they claim to serve was an embodiment of humility.

However, in Mathew 11:29-30, Christ had said “take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden light”.

In John 16:33^B he also stated “in the world you have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”.

G. O. M. Tasié (2012:56-81) in bemoaning these obnoxious traits of modern day Christianity in a recent public lecture reminded Christians of the critical credentials and facts of history of Christianity which particularly derives their origin from Jesus Christ the owner of the Religion when he equally said,

That to feed his guests, Christ the head of the church, had to borrow from a young lad in his audience; that to pay tax he taught his disciples the dignity of labour when he asked them to go fishing in the sea to find the money and not to expect manna from heaven. That at death, he was buried in

a borrowed tomb, that in life he lived a contended homeless life, that at birth, it was in a manger.

What do we notice in our churches today? The complete opposite of what Christ represented.

Countless different churches in Nigeria are not even helping matters because of their perceived differences. They most times openly criticize and antagonize one another to the amazement of non Christians, each claiming to be the true church. They can scarcely speak with one voice, even with the existence of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) (Enegho & Inaghor, 2002:99). A case in point was some years ago when Cardinal Anthony Okogie of the then Lagos Catholic Archdiocese felt disappointed on discovering that those who were against his criticism of the Lagos State Government takeover of then mission schools and hospitals were his fellow Christians and not government officials. Those who kicked against Okogie then did so because they were convinced that they would no longer cope with the discipline and moral standards of mission controlled schools and hospitals, not because government is a better manager (C.P. Ryan 1992:3). Is it any wonder that Transparency International not long ago rated Nigeria the third most corrupt country in the world?

The present day nationally embarrassing scourge of the Islamic sect, *Boko Haram* bombing and killings have made even the religiously unwary to conclude that the ultimate aim of the perpetrators of this avoidable international disgrace is to Islamize the country with the way they are going about their neo-Jihadism in this country, irrespective of the secular state of the country as enshrined in the country's constitution. It is on record that Islam began without a jihad and eventually arrived Nigerian without a jihad. Unfortunately for Nigeria, the spread of Islam in Nigeria experienced a jihad brought about by Usman Dan Fodio in 1840.

Since then, myopic and fanatical Muslims in the country, especially of the Fulani North extraction, have always mirrored him as a model for Islamisation.

C. O. Isiramen (2010:333) has, however, attributed religious crises in Nigeria to six factors, namely, religious reason leading to fanaticism and intolerance in defiance of the Nigerian constitution, economic reason hence, people, especially jobless youths are ready to fight and die for peanuts like the case of the *Almajiri* youths, foreign sponsorship by some oil- rich Islamic countries, which sponsor these suicide bombers cum promises of financial assistance to any country that declares itself Islamic state; there is also the political reason whereby politicians who lost election and became less popular will quickly champion religious crisis like the introduction of Sharia in order to be heard and become relevant in the society once again. We also have people who are really ignorant of the country's constitutional provision on freedom of worship/Religion and diversionary reason on the part of some corrupt past leaders/politicians who are about to face probe. They quickly resort to religious confusion/crisis and in the process, attention of the probe panels is diverted and before you realize it, nothing is heard again about the probe.

The big question still remains, are the above realities/happenings in the name of Religions and the religious what Religion should be? Are they the ideal things that Religion as a human institution should be associated with? There is no denying the fact that religions as practiced in Nigeria and many Religious personnel of the country have bastardised the essence of Religion. The recent barrage of religious crisis, bombings and killing of innocent citizens in order to champion one's religious course leaves much to be desired. Foreign investors are on daily basis being scared from coming to invest in the country as those who have already invested are on daily basis relocating to other African countries. Do you blame them for fleeing this religious hot

seat/tense/volatile country? When religious people shed blood as it is often done in Nigeria today rather than think of how to pursue development and peace, wipe out corruption that has become a hydra headed problem of the country, it becomes obvious that they are chasing shadows rather than substance. In fact, it can be said that if Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud were alive today, they would have felt vindicated for writing off Religion as denigrators. Following the religious climate of the Nigerian nation today, one can say that the survival of our nation is in doubt. If these problems of the country are associated with Religion, why must the Religious of today blame those we have referred to in this lecture as “Modern Denigrators of Religion”? If this scenario continues, it is obvious that more modern denigrators of Religion would be in the offing. Nevertheless, the fact that not all the religious practitioners are involved in the despicable aspects of religious life, and the fact that Religion and the religious (modern rehabilitators) are still visibly seen doing what in fact makes Religion religious, it is therefore necessary at this juncture for us to survey what the modern rehabilitators have done and are doing to present Religion in a better light. In other words, why is Religion still relevant in contemporary Nigeria?

B. Modern Rehabilitators of Religion

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, modern rehabilitators of Religion in the context of this lecture are those who are not discouraged by the activities of those “religious people” who have painted Religion in bad light by their proven activities as already demonstrated in this lecture. They are active participants in religious affairs, either as members of one religious group or the other or as religious leaders in their own religious tradition from which category one can have those we call, sacred specialists (like the priests/imams/gurus), who perform some basic sacerdotal functions as well as serve as intermediaries between the worshippers and their objects of

worship. The two groups are marching on in their efforts to do what Religion and the religious are supposed to do, even in contemporary dispensation, notwithstanding the activities of those who had produced the modern denigrators of Religion.

Modern rehabilitators of Religion see Religion as germane to the spiritual, political and social life of any society as Ademolekun rightly observes “it can serve as a springboard for the inculcation and improvement of ethical values which are fundamental to political development, productivity and nation building” (T. Ademolekun 1999:19). The element of spirituality which Religion alone provides can in fact be regarded as a central theme in all the Religions of mankind. This fact becomes clearer when we realize that utterances which ensued from the divine had in most cases materialized. And as I once observed, through the advice or directive from such spiritual agencies, obvious enigmatic phenomena had been unraveled in the past, even where western medical advice seemed to have failed. As I observed elsewhere, aquatic spirit priests and priestesses are contributing to the country’s health care delivery in the indigenous way. The uniqueness of their role stems from the fact that their curative ability is mystically oriented (**Wotogbe-Weneka, 1998:134**).

For centuries, religious institutions like churches were among the first institution to provide asylum for accused criminals, which is the precursor to modern day Prison Yard which was a religious idea aimed at reforming the criminal before being integrated into the society once again.

Notwithstanding the level of our scientific development, the fact remains that witchcraftcy related diseases/sickness cannot be determined in the science laboratory but through the traditional African devices. That is why some sincere western medical scientists even confess what they cannot find out in the science laboratory and advise that cure for the sickness be tried through the alternate medication method, and sometimes this

works. Of course, we all know that some orthodox medical scientists conspicuously write in their hospitals “we treat but God heals”, that is the power and relevance of Religion. Many of the present day religious leaders, especially the New Religious Movement leaders hold science degrees, yet they all abandoned their science degrees and embraced Religion where they are presently making great exploits for God. For example, W. F. Kumuyi of Deeper Christian Life Ministry and Enoch Adeboye of Redeemed Christian Church of God were both Mathematics Lecturers at the University of Lagos (Now Moshood Abiola University), while Archbishop I. C. O. Kattay, of the Niger Delta Anglican Province is a Mechanical Engineer. Are we unmindful that the traditional religious medical therapy that is gaining popularity in Nigeria today does so because those traditional roots, herbs and barks of trees, rivers, sands etc employed in their healing process has one traditional religious belief system or the other attached to them? This may explain why a person under treatment in the orthodox hospital may have additional traditional medicine brought to him by relatives and sometimes, while the patient is still on the hospital bed, the traditional spiritual treatment will be going on for the sick concurrently in one local shrine or the other, (E. B. Bolunde 1978:65). Many litigants who still throng the traditional shrines today seeking justice cut across different religious traditions and strands in Nigeria and most of them see no contradiction whatsoever in this liberal attitude to Religion (Elechi Amadi and **Wotogbe-Weneka**, 1993:114). This is why I had observed in some of my works that in spite of conversion to Christianity and Islam, traditional rituals continue to play vital roles in African societies and hence it is dangerous throwing overboard, indigenous cultic and civic laws the way Africans seem to be doing for certainly it is not everything traditional African that is evil as some are wont to interpret (**Wotogbe-Weneka**, 2001:217, 220). Whatever we may say, the fact

remains that man in most African societies seems to have abstracted the world around him in its most profound religious leaning, hence, he has dragged Religion into every aspect of life in his daily experiences (Wotogbe-Weneka, 2009:55).



Fig. 23 : Muslims at Friday prayer in a mosque in Kuwait.
(Source: p 317 of J. C. Livingston’s *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 2005).



Fig. 24: An African Traditional Religionist pouring libation to his ancestors during morning prayers.
(Source: Omuiknume, Omagwa, Ikwerre L.G.A., Rivers State, Nigeria).

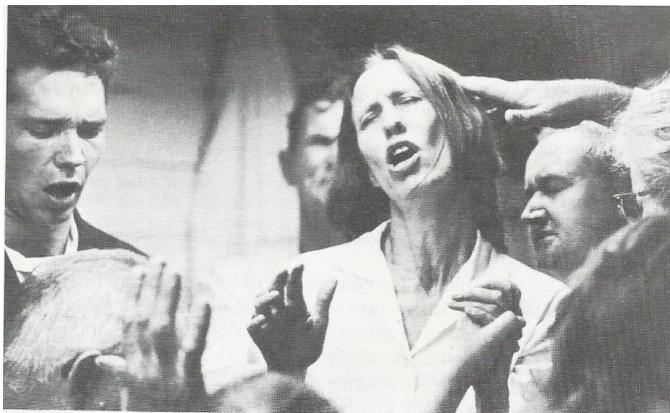


Fig. 25: The emotional and ecstatic aspects of much religious devotionalism are reflected in a revival meeting. The woman experiences the personal presence and power of the Holy Spirit. (Source: p 309 of J. C. Livingston's *Anatomy of the Sacred*, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 2005).

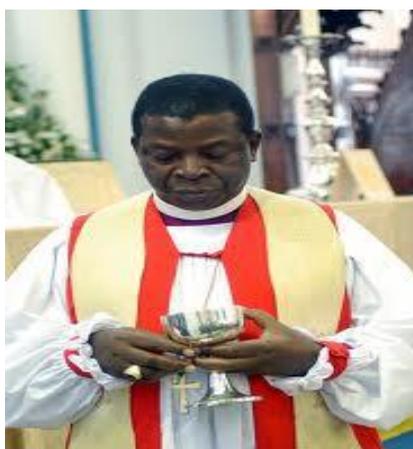


Fig. 26: Primate/Archbishop Nicholas D. Okoh of Nigeria Anglican Communion celebrating the Eucharist at a National Service in Abuja, Nigeria. (Source: Google Images)



Fig. 27: Picture of the Anglican Bishop of Ikwerre Diocese (Bishop Blessing C. Enyindah) performing a new Church Foundation Laying Ritual (Source: Pictures on the Occasion)

Mr. Vice Chancellor and Chairman, Sir, the point I have made so far is that Religions being practised in Nigeria and their values have the wherewithal to salvage the Nigeria nation from its current moral doldrums/decay. Religion, if properly practiced, can bring back all that have derailed spiritually and morally as well as comfortably play their leading role among the comity of social institutions of the nation.

Without achieving the cardinal goal of moral restoration, then the essence of religious institutions is defeated. Religion provides explanations and assigns values to otherwise inexplicable phenomena of life. Christian churches, Islamic and other religious strands in the country had made and can still make tremendous contribution to national development. For example, we see religion's usefulness through the schools and health institutions they established in various parts of the country. It will be recalled that basic objective of such Religion based schools established

then and now is to additionally instill moral uprightness in the products of such institutions (Odumuyiwa 2009:138). Again, the influence of Islamic and Arabic way of life was very strong in many parts of northern emirates at the dawn of European civilization. The British were so impressed by the political structure of the Hausa-Fulani emirates of northern Nigeria that these emirates became the springboard for the policy of indirect rule through native authorities (Oyeshola 1991:35). Religion and the values for human life are intrinsically inseparable. The disintegrating use of Religion as being demonstrated daily in our national life is obviously an anomaly. Since Religion emphasizes good neighbourliness, it is the aim of Religion to serve in actuality in promoting peace and human dignity - the essence of human existence.

Religion is providing employment to thousands of jobless Nigerians in these days of joblessness. It is a known fact that the daily mushrooming of new religious movements in the country today is partly as a result of joblessness; for, before you realize it someone has suddenly realized that "God has called him/her" and floats a ministry and becomes the GO (General Overseer) and in the process employing some jobless youths apart from himself. Related to this is the fact that many media houses today generate much of their revenue from religious programme broadcasts thus expanding their capacity to employ many jobless Nigerians. For instance, it is said that prior to the clamp down on Religious programmes in March 2004 by the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, the African Independent Television (AIT) Chief Operating Officer (Chief Tony Akiotu) was said to have revealed that the station earned about ₦30 million every quarter from four (4) churches alone which present their religious programmes on the station, while Channel TV realized 20% of her annual income from three (3) churches that air their programmes on the studio (A. F. Adetunji, 2011:129). Again, many Nigerians earn their living

today through religious music by gospel musicians who produce these music in CDs/cassette and through instruments; and because music appeals to emotions, such music are in high demand as such musicians are hired to perform from time to time, even in Islam, especially among the Yoruba Muslims.

The role of countless faith-based organizations in positive developmental process of various countries of the world cannot be easily forgotten, especially in war time and at emergencies as they willingly offer relief materials to displaced refugees and the depressed during such emergencies. Best examples can be cited of the World Council of Churches, Catholic Caritas, the Islamic Relief, Adventist Development Relief, Catholic Relief Services, The Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Christian Council Nigeria (CCN), etc. It is an irony that those practicing Religion are those who are equally responsible for the bad actions for which Religion is being denigrated. I suggest that critics of Religion should redirect their attack on the practitioners, not on Religion as a human institution. In my view, there is nothing wrong with Religion if the followers of various Religions act according to the tenets of their Religions. For instance, in the Islamic Quran (5:35), Allah states that killing one person is tantamount to killing the whole human race, and that one who saves one person from death is like one who saves the whole human race. Allah says that social peace and tranquility are very important goals of life and human society. One again wonders whose cause the Islamic sect known as Boko Haram is championing, considering the human lives members of this sect have wasted in our recent experience in this country.

It is not enough criticizing the Islamic Sharia laws and their implementation in the country, it would be more important to appraise what the contents of the laws are, viz-a-viz what in actual fact should be what a Religion is supposed to advocate or abhor or geared towards guiding people to paths of moral

rectitude. What is wrong in the Sharia laws provision forbidding sexual promiscuity that sometimes comes from improper dressing of men and women; abstaining from intoxicants, banning of pornographic literatures and movies and prohibition of everything that encourages or allows sexual immorality. And as has been observed, “the Sharia ... stipulates norms and standard of morals that regulate man’s life in the best interest of God and man himself” (Ejizu 2008:33). Even though the argument is made that the Sharia laws should not be imposed on non Muslims, but sincerely speaking, is there any Religion that should condone any of these social ills?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, we have surveyed the phenomenon called Religion on the basis of what it really is, what its human practitioners and users are making of it, thus occasioning those people our lecture today has categorized as modern denigrators and rehabilitators of Religion. It will now be apposite at this stage of the lecture for us to suggest or rather recommend, some possible reconciliatory measures to the religious denigrators and religious rehabilitators. Without this, Religions as practiced in Nigeria, would continue to cause more problems than they are supposed to solve and hence, their relevance in contemporary Nigerian society may be seriously questioned. I would peg the discussion of what remains under the following five headings:

1. Why Religions in Nigeria must co-operate for national development.
2. What the individual religious personnel in Nigeria should do to enhance national development.
3. How to remove the negativities found in the practice of Religion for national development.

4. What governments of Nigeria should do to reposition Religion for national development.
5. The teaching of Religion in schools as an academic discipline for national development.

1. WHY RELIGIONS IN NIGERIA MUST CO-OPERATE FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Talking of Religions co-operating, we are in fact talking of people practicing the various religious traditions found in Nigeria and not necessarily Religions as abstract entities/realities. It is obvious that through frequent Religious crisis, intolerance, bombings and killings made worse by the recent Boko Haram onslaught, Nigeria is now religiously volatile. No meaningful national development can be attained in an atmosphere of religious crises. Worse still, if the religious crises persist and Religions themselves are consumed in the process, emerging national development without religion will be incomplete.

The Religions practised in Nigeria, through those practicing them, must co-operate and work together for mutual understanding because they have more common problems which do not discriminate among religious practitioners e.g. the current national security challenges affect believers in the three Religions. Their other challenges are unemployment, scarcity of food, corruption and general underdevelopment. Religious leaders should intensify efforts in making their followers to appreciate and encourage or promote the positive elements of all Religions while discouraging the negative elements. For instance, at the back of every religious quest is the promotion of peace and tolerance, justice, forgiveness, good neighborliness, respect for human life, mutual understanding and respect for one another and their beliefs, etc. Christians and Muslims in Nigeria should realize that apart from the fact that every Nigerian is a citizen in one nation, every person is also a child of God, no matter his or her religious

inclinations. Even if the cause of Religious intolerance is from the fanatical/fundamentalists of the Religions, other members who are not in support of their stand can do something to promote religious tolerance. For instance, the Judeo-Christian Bible and the Muslim Quran devoted copious passages to enjoin peace, co-existence, oneness of mankind and tolerance among their members.

See Holy Bible – Mathew 5:9, 20, 40, Romans 12:17-21, Acts 10:34-35, Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 2:14-15).

See Holy Quran – Quran (Sura 6:83, 59:23, 6:125-127, 24:53).

A passage from each of the major religions in the country need to be quoted to affirm the point being made here.

In the Judeo-Christian Bible it states,

God shows no partiality but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him (Acts 10:34-35).

Prophet Mohammed is quoted to have expressed.

Surely Allah and his angels bless the prophet. O believers call for blessing on him and pray for peace (Sura 33:56).

African Indigenous Religion (Ikwerre) – *Egbhe bheru, Igo bheru, keka ibea bhe nkwua kwa* (let the kite and eagle perch together, the one that prevents the other from perching let the wings break).

In addition, the traditional African Religionists cherish the values of fair play, justice and peace as is reflected in the African names for people and places. Among the Igbo of South Eastern Nigeria the following names suggestive of peace are common: *Udo* (peace), *Udoka* (peace is greater), *Udodiri* (let there be peace), *Udobata* (let peace enter in), etc (**Wotogbe-Weneka**, 2010:17).

It is clear that Islam as a Religion of peace, does not allow its propagation by violence. The Holy Quran states that God has warned the prophet and also mankind, that Religion cannot be

forced on one person by another. He himself has refused to do so as the following passages of the Quran show.

Let there be no compulsion in the Religions, truth stands out clear from error; whoever rejects evil and believes in God has grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks, and heareth and knoweth all things (Sura 2:256).

A. A. Akanni (2010:49-50) has identified a number of common grounds between the Christian and Islamic Religions in terms of their founders.

- Both Jesus and Muhammad first delivered their messages to people who were hostile to them. Jesus to his fellow Jews and Mohammed to his tribal people of Mekkah.
- While hostility led to the crucifixion of Christ which is commemorated by Christians on Good Friday and Easter today, that of prophet Muhammad led to a forceful emigration from his place of birth Mekkah to a place of refuge (Madinah) and is also celebrated by Muslims world-wide today as the Hijrah.
- Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus Christ and one Abdullahibn Ubayy betrayed Muhammad.
- Apostle Paul (Saul) was initially a staunch enemy of the Ministry of Jesus, while Caliph Umar was initially the strong enemy of Muhammad's ministry.
- The two in both Religions later changed to be great propagators (with greater zeal), the ministry they had initially vehemently opposed.

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, I am currently on a project I would like to caption "*JESUS IN THE HOLY QURAN*" and "*MUHAMMAD IN THE HOLY BIBLE*" respectively, in order to promote peaceful co-existence and religious understanding among believers in the two

major faiths of this country. It may interest you to know the equivalent of the following names in the two religious scriptures,

JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN	-	ISLAM
1. Adam	-	Adamu
2. Abraham	-	Ibrahim
3. Isaac	-	Ishaq
4. Ismael	-	Ismailah
5. Jacob	-	Yakubu
6. Joseph	-	Yusufu
7. Moses	-	Musa
8. David	-	Daodu/Dawodu
9. Solomon	-	Suleiman
10. Jesus	-	Isa

Furthermore, the narrative concerning these great religious personages in the two scriptures, starting from the Adam-Adamu story in the book of Genesis agree substantially until the story divided along Isaac-Ishaq and Ishmael – Ismailah in Christianity and Islam respectively.

Other smaller countries in the West African sub-region such as, Ghana, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Senegal are all living peacefully with minimal religious friction, if any at all. Why is it that Nigerians of the two faiths cannot live in peace? The Quran states that the closest believers to Islam are the Christians when it says “you will find the nearest to the believers (Muslims), those who say “we are Christians ... because amongst them are men devoted to learning and monks and because they are not arrogant” (Quran 5:82). Again, Prophet Muhammad himself is reported to have said that “both in this world and in the hereafter, I am the nearest of all the people to Jesus, the son of Mary” (Al-Bukhari Ibu

Ismail p. 434). Religious practitioners in Nigeria should close ranks and co-operate because every other human institution in the human societies seem to be looking up to religious institutions to save them from the barrage of world problems. Billy Graham (1965:1) seemed to have graphically expressed this view when he declared;

Our world is on fire, and man without God will not be able to control the flames. The demons of hell have been let loose. The fire of passion, greed, hate and lust are sweeping the world. We seem to be plunging madly towards Armageddon.

Whatever, the modern denigrators of Religion may say about Religion, it is obvious that Religion is needed by those who find value in it because the world cannot do without Religion since Religion remains a source of inner strength for the religious. The religious must need that inner strength provided by Religion to enable them overcome many challenges confronting mankind in the contemporary world. Prior to the advent of modern means of social and moral control, it was through the indigenous religious means of social and moral control that Africans were able to govern their indigenous societies and regulated life through the fear of the supernaturals and other sacred agencies (**Wotogbe-Weneka** 2000:33).

That is the relevance of the indigenous Religion that made people still uphold the tenets of the traditional religious values, even though, as I once observed when I said that, “it is foolhardy for people to think that for one to be in tune with modern life meant abandoning and undermining every aspect of the indigenous Religious life as some Nigerians seen to be doing because western values and ideologies are rapidly permeating

every aspect of the indigenous life of the people (**Wotogbe-Weneka** 1996:146).

2. **WHAT THE INDIVIDUAL RELIGIOUS PERSONNEL NAY, NIGERIANS SHOULD DO TO ENHANCE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Religious leaders, observed R.D. Abubakre (1993:v), need to be aware of the fact that religious particularity cannot be over emphasized in a pluralistic religious society such as Nigeria if true unity, peace and progress are to be achieved.

Again, practitioners of Religions in Nigeria should be encouraged to live out their religious faith in what is called “practical religiosity”, rather than the high degree of hypocrisy going on all over the place today in the name of Religion. Robin Horton (oral interview) has advocated for an abiding faith in the *GOLDEN RULE* principle which, he believes, cuts across all the Religions of the world, namely, the principle of “doing unto others what you would like others do unto you” and vice versa. I agree entirely with him. Jesus Christ of the Christian Religion consistently told his audience. “Not everyone who calls me Lord, Lord is acceptable to me but he who does what my heavenly father wants”.

Just last year’s Christmas season, most staff of this University were pleasantly surprised to cart away a bag of rice each as a wind fall from savings made. Although, I am yet to properly assess the religiosity of the current Vice Chancellor, that singular act of his administration to me demonstrated practical religiosity. And so, it is not about Religion, per se, but doing (even if unconsciously) what Religion requires. The various killing of fellow human beings going on in the name of Religion, like the one perpetrated by the current Boko Haram Islamic sect, killing for traditional religious rituals and all sorts of blood spilling arising from irrational fanaticism characteristic of various Religions being practiced in Nigeria should be stopped because

there is nothing religious about them. The level of human development in today's world has definitely outgrown that level of crudity in human behavior being perpetrated and perpetuated all over the places today in the name of Religion. As I observed elsewhere,

Any Religion that hopes to survive and expand in contemporary world must be sensitive to the changes occurring in the society where it is being practiced and hence be flexible, adaptable and dynamic (**Wotogbe-Weneka 1993:22**).

When religious crisis occurs, adjudicators in the matter should maintain the spirit of what I call in my research, “agnostically neutral standpoint” along with empathy capable of eschewing suspicion in the minds of contenders in the dispute. Unless this understanding is adopted, contenders will not be willing enough to open out to adjudicators. In other words, adjudicators should eschew favouritism of one Religion against the other. The irony of our situation in the country today is that in an attempt to embrace foreign values, including their Religions, most Nigerians have lost touch with the valuable African traditional religious morality in which at least a modicum of sincerity still remains in its practice, and at the same time, they are unable to fully understand the demands of the foreign values they claim to have embraced. That is why in my recent article, I have advocated “a back to traditional religious morality since it appears foreign Religions have not led us to “the promised land”. As I further observed: “the alarming moral depravity of today's Nigeria affects not only the traditional society but even Religions, including the foreign Religions such as Christianity and Islam (**Wotogbe-Weneka 2011:149**).

3. **HOW TO REMOVE THE NEGATIVITIES FOUND IN THE PRACTICE OF RELIGION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Individuals, including the religious leaders who profess whatever religious faith of their choice should be sincere about it and follow the tenets of their Religions. The Judaeo-Christian Scriptures underscore the importance of this point when Christ declared “God is spirit, they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). It is obvious that there is a high degree of hypocrisy all over the place in the name of what goes for religious people in this country. The infighting, greed, mudslinging, rancor and all sorts of “spiritual 419s” that go on among those professing Religion in our land cannot be said to be a true reflection of what Religion stands for. Recall the title of E. A. Odumuyiwa’s Inaugural Lecture in 2001 at Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye, Ogun State earlier referred to “A Religious, but Criminal Society”.

In a recent public lecture (Bishop Elenwo Annual Memorial Lecture) in 2011 at Ogbakiri, Rivers State organized by the Anglican Diocese of Ikwerre a revered professor of church history, Prof. Godwin Tasie bemoaned what he described as “mind bogging and agitating”, characterizing the modern day 21st century Christianity and Christians which in their intent and purposes contradict the essential ethos of orthodox Christianity of yester years like in the following examples.

- The emergence of new crop of what he described as intimidating “multiplicity of Men of God” some of them with doubtful ecclesiastical credentials, particularly with regard to their apostolic authority as settled in Orthodox Church history, describing such category of men of God as “opportunistic charlatans”.
- Many spurious and bizarre claims of the many “so called or self elevated men of God, who would want to be

addressed as “powerful men of God” and floating leaflets/T-shirts and sign posts in which they reflect the claim about their anointing, healing gifts and miracle galore, coupled with their audacious pomposity of telling their gullible audience and congregations fantastic things like “God said to me last night”, “I decree”, “I command”, “I bind”, “I prophesy”, “I declare to you that all your problems are terminated from this moment”, “I decree that from today your sickness is healed”, “I decree and prophesy that by this time next year all who are listening to me today will own their own houses in Jesus name, Amen”. Some would even judge some “Amen” response, as not loud enough for God to hear, and how not surprising, in response and unintelligently and gullibly, the congregation would shout a much thunderous “Amen” as if prayer has turned into drama. He then asked, “is the very loud “Amen” to God, for the priest or to the sleeping Baal (as the prophet Elijah would jeer)?

- Crazy and endless search for “miracles’ instead of salvation which is the goal of most Religions.
- Much more advanced competitive, persuasive, effective advertising industry whereby the many gullible, hungry, needy, poor clientele are usually easily exploited.
- Attributing whatever mishap or misfortune to Satan/devil/demons/forces of darkness/enemies thus creating the impression in the thoughts, proclamations and practices of Christians today that there are more evil forces than actually existing with the fallen angel contingent of the Christian Holy scriptures.
- Churches condemning corruption and yet publicly lauds and prays (not for repentance), for persons with dubious sources of income.

- The now near commercialization of Knighthood because of Nigerian craze for titles in church and society.
- Modern day religious pilgrimages becoming almost merely tourism motivated.
- New generation churches prayer styles devoid of reverence, orderliness, sobriety, solemnity and penitence as if prayer is dictating for God what He must do, “now, now, now”, yet, “they pray silently” during confession of sins, why?
- Importation of drama or some trivialization into the worship of God (otherwise a very serious matter deserving reverence) whereby, a pastor suddenly turns the pulpit-preaching session into Nollywood drama session, abandons the pulpit, jumps up and down in the church etc.

In effect, that lecture drew the attention of today’s Christians to realize that true Christianity, nay true religiosity is not always “milk and honey”, but also contains moments of sacrifices and suffering as Christ’s life exemplified. That is why J. D. Gwamna (2001:61) has opined that “if the Bible upon which the Christian experience is based does not include suffering then the story of Job must be a farce, or even the death of Jesus on the Cross”.

4. WHAT GOVERNMENTS OF NIGERIA SHOULD DO TO REPOSITION RELIGION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In view of the abuse or rather in defiance of the constitutional provisions on Religion, governments of Nigeria (the Federal Government in particular), should set up a regulatory agency to properly scrutinize and evaluate (a sort of religious taxonomy), all that parade themselves in Nigeria as Religion/Religious Strands/Religious Cults etc. With such a taxonomy, all religions and religious personels that have no known pedigree should be banned or if allowed to operate be heavily taxed. This I believe will

make those “religious charlatans” to fizzle out of existence or rebrand themselves to the religiously sanitized order to be brought about by the Religious purge being advocated here.

Nigerian governments should continue to make Religion a constitutional issue, while guarding the country’s secular nature jealously, no matter the religious persuasion of the ruling leader in all states of the federation. The 1979 Nigerian constitution states: We the People of the Federal Republic of Nigeria having firmly and solemnly resolved to live in unity and harmony and as indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation *under God* are dedicated to the promotion of inter Africa solidarity and peace. Again, section 10:B states,

The government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria or of a state shall not adopt any Religion as a state Religion, while section 35:17 states “every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and Religion, including freedom to change his religious beliefs and free to manifest and propagate his Religion or belief”.

It is sad to note, however, that the situation in the country today is at variance with the provisions of the country’s constitution as religious intolerance has sadly become common place in our national life, especially since after the then Military Head of State, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida surreptitiously and unilaterally registered Nigeria as a member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in the mid 1980s.

Governments should honestly arrest and charge for assault all those who attack their fellow citizens in the name of Religion. For now, they seem to be treated with the kid gloves, thus encouraging them and hence, perpetrators of series of mayhem in the name of Religion continue their religious crimes with impunity.

The governments' over-emphasis on scientific and technical education at the expense of Arts education is not helping matters for the religious/spiritual development of this nation. It is not in doubt that scientific technological discoveries and inventions have helped humanity a great deal, but governments of the day need to bear in mind that humanity will have a balanced development when both Science and Arts subjects like Religion combine to make needed impact on human society. Religion and Science must be understood to compliment each other in the overall development of any society. It is on record that some of the earliest scientists such as Copernicus, Roger Bacon and Grosseteste were monks, who combined life in the monastery with interest in scientific inquiry. Max Weber's classical book *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* expounds eloquently how modern capitalism was in fact started by Calvinist Monks in the monasteries when they found themselves in possession of great wealth they could not make use of by virtue of their self imposed Ascetic Life; hence, they lent such great wealth out to those who could invest with them and in the process, modern capitalism originated. This is the attitude that makes science graduates receive preferential treatment in scholarship and available job opportunities than graduates of Arts subjects like Religion in this country, whereas in technologically advanced societies, both Science and Arts students are equally treated. Here, on the other hand, for instance, government is not interested in religious education.

It is obvious that through much breakthroughs in scientific and technological discoveries there is now a global decline in civility and morality. A renowned Christian Theologian, Paul Tillich was quoted to have warned in his book: *The Shaking of the Foundation* that when we leave God out of our human activities,

The state of our whole life is estranged from the ground of our being, because we are estranged from

the origin and end of our life. And we do not know where we are going ... we hear the voice or feel that something radical, total and unconditioned is demanded of us, but we rebel against it, try to escape its urgency.

The inventions of science when not accompanied by ethical standards can spell doom, for as Francis Collins was quoted to have observed, “faith and spirituality can help fill the void science leaves (C. Piramen p.126).

5. THE TEACHING OF RELIGION IN SCHOOLS AS AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Religious Studies Departments like any other Department in a University are established solely to ensure that the spiritual and moral growth of the national life are attained for a balanced national development. The teachers and products of such Departments in our University system are supposed to be people best qualified to bring about this quest. As such, the Department should be viewed and understood as important and as relevant as any other Department in a University. This is against the backdrop that most ignorant people tend to equate The Religious Studies Department with Theological Institutions which, as a matter of fact, the government is not interested in establishing, anyway. I had earlier in this lecture, Mr. Vice Chancellor, drawn attention to the distinction between Theological Studies and Comparative Religious Studies which is my area of study in the first place. As such, there should be intensified study of Religious Studies, particularly of the three constitutionally recognized Religions in Nigeria by way of increasing the quota in JAMB admission for this Department, considering its obvious imperative in national development.

Efforts should be made to teach Nigerians, especially the youths, the basic knowledge of the two major Religions in Nigeria i.e. Christianity and Islam. At such teachings, important scriptural passages in the two Religions which make for peace and tolerance should be taught as well as Inter-Religious Dialogue. For example, it is interesting to know that the Islamic Quran contains such relevant passages like “you have your Religion, and I have mine” (Q109:6) and “there is no compulsion in Religion” (Q2:255) (Sikirullahi A. Alabi 2011:118). In this regard, and considering the volatility of what Religion has become in Nigeria, I strongly recommend as a matter of urgency, the establishment of an Institute of Inter-Faith Studies, not only in Uniport here but throughout the tertiary institutions in Nigeria, including those which are purely Science and Technology based. One of the courses to be taught is Religious Dialogue. This is where you will find the bulk of our future leaders who are usually often used to forment and carry out religious crisis. Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, I assure you that you will have qualified personnel to run the Institute in our Department of Religious & Cultural Studies.

Again, it is obvious that the way of teaching of religious knowledge in primary and secondary school levels is not encouraging the development of Religion as a discipline. At such levels of education, religious knowledge is taught as part of Social Studies and most times, it is taught by people who have no basic training whatsoever in Religious Studies. Here, it is taught by political scientists, sociologists, economists, historians, in short, it is an all-comers affair at those levels of our educational institutions, possibly because they expect them to teach what they call “moral instructions”. The question that agitates one’s mind is “what sustainable morality can those without religious studies background effectively teach in a society almost completely overwhelmed by secularist and atheistic ideologies that infatuate and confuse many young minds in the country today?”

At the tertiary level of our educational system, the matter is even made worse. Here, in the University of Port Harcourt, for example, notwithstanding the existence of a Department of Religious and Cultural Studies, the Peace and Conflicts Resolution Institutes recommended by NUC has been established, but it is domiciled in the Faculty of Social Sciences, manned by social scientists. Why was it not thought necessary to incorporate Lecturers from Religious Studies in such a Peace and Conflict Institute? Again, the now floated Institute of Arts and Culture (a.k.a. Arts Village), is manned by Theatre Artists. While not disputing the fact that Religion and Culture are part of known human social structure, one wonders what religious and cultural expertise scholars of those Departments of the University possess as against scholars of a supposedly Department of Religious and Cultural Studies where such Institutes should naturally have been domiciled, considering their scholarly training on such matters. I now recall why in the early 1990s when my then Head of Department nominated me to represent the Department in a committee set up by the University administration to fashion out a Post-ACE programme syllabus for the Faculty of Education which had made provision for Religious Instruction, I was shocked to be told on getting to the first meeting of the Committee that they could make do with a colleague who came from the Social Sciences only. It is instructive to know how and why we fail in many things we establish in this country. Indeed, rather than Religion being made optional as it is currently the case, at least, a course in Inter-Faith studies should be made compulsory for all students at the tertiary level of the country's educational system, while making it compulsory for all students at the lower levels of education and Religious Studies experts recruited to teach such courses. This is the only guarantee for the nation to come out of its multifaceted woes, which fundamentally hinge on Religion, for as a friend of mine once remarked, "the problem of this country is

spiritual and its solution must be spiritual”. We shall continue to thank the maker of the world for the series of prayers of intercession pouring in on this country from all religious persuasions in the country, otherwise this country would have disintegrated long ago, considering the shattering experiences it had gone through. That is definitely what Religion offers and is ready to continue to offer this country in its national development efforts.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, I am on the verge of rounding off this lecture. By way of conclusion, may I reiterate the salient points of this lecture.

The fact that cannot be controverted is that man is religious to the core. Man’s sojourn in life is greatly guided by Religion and at the point of his exit from the world; he cannot be without Religion as we earlier showed from the origin of Religion itself in this lecture. And so, man cannot do without Religion, if the world and its inhabitants must be saved from destruction. The importance of Religion cannot be overemphasized. I agree with the view that humanity is heading gradually towards the doldrums and subsequent extinction without Religion (Isiramen, 121). I have consistently maintained in this lecture that any envisaged national development cannot materialize in the absence of God consciousness, for as had been observed elsewhere, ‘the superstructure of any development could hardly be achieved without Religion because it is Religion which provides the moral, psychological, social and spiritual infrastructure on which every development could be imposed (Oloyede 2010:2). Again, as Brunner has equally stated “without Religion, ethical standards can hardly find their fulfillment because they will have no supernatural anchor to prevent humans from deviating” (E. Brunner 1994:53).

The seemingly endless rivalry between the Christian and Islamic religious followers in Nigeria which may largely be occasioned by the attempt of followers of each of the two Religions to have a greater percentage of the people of this country need not discourage us as for us to jettison Religion and all its lofty ideals geared towards the promotion of holistic national development. Peaceful practice of Religion with respect for other people's religious views is considered a *sine qua non* for national development in this country, while violence, bombings/killings and destructions on the other hand are considered inimical to national development.

Neither the founder of Christianity nor Islam advocated the use of arms in the propagation of their Religion, and hence, like Nigerians would always say, those who are championing religious crisis, violence and intolerance in Nigeria 'are on their own'. Because of the principle of "no compulsion in Religion", Islam as a Religion recognizes Judaism and Christianity as well as the Traditional Religion as Religions that predated it when the Quran says:

Say ye, "we believe in God and in the revelation given to us, to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes (a possible reference to traditional Religions) and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that to (all) prophets from their lord; we make no difference between one and another of them (Sura 2:136) quoted in Dopamu 2010:13).

We have sincerely advocated for the imperativeness of Religious education which must be taught by experts in Religious Studies. Any society where human beings seek to live in peace and harmony must encourage and promote religious education because ignorance as we have shown in this lecture plays a key role in promoting religious crises Nigeria as we have been witnessing. The apostles of "Religionless Society" and their fellow

religious denigrators who are championing the jettisoning of Religion in preference to science and technology only in human society are advised to reappraise their stand. After all, it is not in doubt that the scientific feats they are adoring are equally fraught with devastating consequences as proven from nuclear weapons of mass destruction and the celebrated means of transportation such as in the recent DANA Air disaster of June 3, 2012.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, the imperativeness of Religion to our national survival is amply epitomized in a line of the University of Port Harcourt's ANTHEM – the line renders in diminuendo thus, “OUR HOPE IN THE FUTURE IS ROOTED IN GOD ALONE”. That is simply Religion for you. Without what Religion provides, UNIPORT cannot survive as it will have no hope. But with what Religion affords, there will be hope for University of Port Harcourt.

Finally, having identified the place of Religion in national development of this country, the Religions practised in Nigeria and their practitioners are called upon to wake up and assume their natural responsibility of providing succour for our national survival. In this regard, I consider these three religious quotations apposite in concluding the lecture,

- (A) Judaeo-Christian Bible,
Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its saltness, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another (Mark 9:50).

- (B) Islamic Quran,
Do ye enjoin right conduct
On the people, and forget
(To practice it) yourselves
And yet ye study the scripture
Will ye not understand?(Sura 2: 44)

- (C) Ikwerre Indigenous Religion,
“*Nhe sni nsni, be bujne a osumini. Osumini ke sni nsni, be bujne a hele*”? (Meaning – when something is dirty or stinking, it is carried to the river to be washed or purified. But if the river itself is dirty/stinking, where do we carry it to”?)

Thank you all for your wonderful attention. Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, I say thank you for the opportunity you granted me to pay my dues, having today fulfilled this my academic obligation to this Unique UNIPORT as a Professor. To you my esteemed listeners, who had been patiently listening to my Inaugural Lecture for the past one hour or so; I lavish you with the “Good Students Award”. May God bless you all. Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, I am done.

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CITATION

ON



**Ven. Professor Wellington Ornyezinuchimm Wotogbe-
Weneka,
B. A (HONS) Calabar, M. A; Ph.D (Ibadan)**

BIRTH, EARLY UPBRINGING AND EDUCATION

The man Ven. Prof. Wellington Ornyezinuchimm Wotogbe-Weneka was told that he was born a second son and a third and last child of his parents (Late Catechist Robinson Wotogbe Weneka and his wife, Mrs. Lydia Ekeaku Wotogbe-Weneka of Omohia Imogu - Omagwa in the now Ikwerre L.G.A. of Rivers State, Nigeria). He was told because he neither saw nor enjoyed any biological parents care in life. For instance, he was only 6 (six) months old (sucking breast), when his mother (late Madam Lydia Ekeaku Wotogbe-Weneka (Nee Okafor of Umuoti Inyishi in the

now Ikeduru L.G.A. of Imo State) died. He was only 7 (seven) years old when his father (Late Catechist Robinson Wotogbe Weneka) also died. That such a child could even survive as a human being in an era of no nearby orphanages or even Baby-milk of today, is nothing other than God's special miracle.

With his mother's death, God used his paternal aunts (two childless sisters, Wohuruaku and Wichegbule Obuah of Agwuo-Nu-Awhua, Omueketu Omagwa), to bring him up to the weaning age (being fed with coconut milk, as he was told). When his father also died when Wellington was only 7, these childless sisters again, took over the upbringing and primary school training of Wellington and his elder sister, Beatrice and his elder brother, Allison still at Agwuo-Nu-Awhua village. In fact, it was only after the Nigerian Civil War that they returned to Imogu Omagwa, their village. To the glory of God, the three of them are today Ministers of God in their own right and in their different churches.

COMPLETION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION

As it was becoming very difficult for their foster-mothers to cope with the obviously expensive £8 (Eight pounds) per annum school fees of Eastern Nigerian Government in those Pre-Civil War days, the hope of completing primary school by these "orphans" became uncertain. As a result, his sister was given out in marriage in 1962, his brother ran to their uncle (Late Mr. Edwin Okafor), in the now Imo State, in 1965, where he completed his own primary school at Atta Central School, Atta. That of Wellington was still hanging in the balance.

Meanwhile, at the age of 12, Wellington was already handling the Children Section Service (what is today Anglican Children Ministry [ACM]) of St. Martin's Anglican Church, Omagwa (and surprisingly, his fellow children were obeying him at that age). This was the role that brought Wellington into limelight in the entire Omagwa community then, and the role one

Catechist (later Venerable) A.C. Nwaigwe, (now late) of Aba Anglican Diocese recognized when he was posted to St. Martin's Church, Omagwa as a Catechist, and took interest in Wellington's academic career on hearing that Wellington was an orphan. Thus, in 1966, Catechist A.C. Nwaigwe convinced the then Parochial Church Committee [PCC] of St. Martin's Church, Omagwa, of the need to grant Wellington scholarship to enable "the orphan boy" who was conducting their Children Section Service to at least, complete his primary school education. This was accepted, and Wellington found himself living with and being cared for by Catechist Nwaigwe and his wife, Keziah, in St. Martin's Church Mission yard, under the church's scholarship, and being called at the time *Nwo Mission* (Mission Child). Wellington did not disappoint his church as he not only passed, but passed his First School Leaving Certificate Examination with Credit (the only Credit level pass that year, 1966). He also served as a Local Helper to Catechist Nwaigwe. Before this time, Catechist Nwaigwe had sponsored his Common Entrance Examination and subsequent Interview into County Grammar School Ikwerre/Etche, which he passed and obtained prospectus for new-entrants.

With the exit of Catechist Nwaigwe in January 1968 (following his admission into Trinity Theological College, Umuahia), and the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War, there was another "End of Road" to Wellington's education. Catechist Nwaigwe then recommended to the PCC that Wellington be allowed to continue as a Local Helper to his successor, one Catechist (later Revd) J. Nwogu, now late, so as to understudy him and eventually be posted to his own station as a "Church Agent" (equivalent of Church Teacher today). This was equally accepted. After the Nigerian Civil War, and in now Rivers State, Wellington went back to St. Martin's Mission yard, and served in the same capacity under Late Catechist Jonah Nwoha, a native of Imogu-Omagwa.

POST PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION

With the Civil War over, and with the liberal scholarship policy of Lt. Commander A. P. Diets Spiff's administration in the old Rivers State, Wellington at last found ample opportunity to further his education.

On gaining admission into a 5 year Teacher Training College (TTC), Okordia Zarama (in the now Bayelsa State) in 1972, Wellington never stopped reading any year from that 1972 until he bagged his Ph.D in February 1990; a total of 18 years of Continuous Reading. In his third year (1974) at the TTC, Wellington attempted the "dreaded" University of London GCE, Ordinary Level and passed 4 subjects with credits in Ancient History, British Constitution (Government), Economics, and Distinction in Religious Knowledge (all through self tuition, buying and reading of textbooks), because he had no money to enroll in the then reigning Wolsey Hall College Tuition that was preparing candidates for the then annual January University of London GCE. Emboldened by this feat, he attempted WAEC's, GCE Ordinary Level in his fourth year (1975), and passed with Distinction in English Language, Economics and Government, and Credit in Geography, Christian Religious Knowledge and Commerce. By his fifth year at the Teacher Training College when he wrote the Teacher's Grade II Certificate Examination in 1976, Wellington had become very matured in examination writing at such levels, and hence he made the best result in Rivers State that year, passing with "A" grades in Education (Principles and Practice), English Language, History, Geography, Agricultural Science and Religious Knowledge, "B" grades in Physical and Health Education, Practical Teaching and "C" grades in Arithmetic.

At the completion of his Teacher Training College in 1976, Wellington was posted to teach as a Pivotal Teacher in a Secondary School (Government Secondary School, Isiokpo),

instead of Primary School. During his brief stay in this school, Wellington among other subjects found himself teaching Government, Economics and Civics (subjects which no human being ever taught him). Here, the students nicknamed him "INTERWOVEN", "INTERWO" for short, because of the dexterity with which he was explaining to them in Class, the relationship between Government and Civics and made the statement that the two subjects are "Interrelated and interwoven"; (words which the students felt were "Big Grammar" for them at that level). Within the 10 (ten) months he taught in this secondary school, Wellington in 1977 sat for and passed the Advanced Level GCE in Government, Economics and. Religious Knowledge (all through self Tuition, buying and reading of textbooks).

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

Now very qualified for University education, Wellington learnt of one Ikwerre man who read Religious Studies, and who was lecturing at University of Jos, named Dr. G.O.M. Tasié of Isiokpo, whom he never knew and never met. He then wrote to the man, intimating him that he too would love to read Religious Studies, inquiring how he would gain admission into UNIJOS. Dr. Tasié replied his letter encouraging him, but added that UNIJOS had finished with her admission for that year by the time he wrote, except he was willing to wait till the next session. Luckily for Wellington, University of Calabar (UNICAL), had just advertised for her own admission of new students. Wellington then applied, and was admitted to read Religious Studies at UNICAL in 1978.

His Ghanaian Head of Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy (Prof. Christian Gaba), was always giving him letters to deliver to his friend (now Prof. G.O.M. Tasié), who had then also become the Provost of Rivers State College of Education in 1980. Unknown to Wellington, Prof. Gaba was always intimating his friend (Prof. Tasié) of Wellington's progress in

Religious Studies in UNICAL, and urging him to see how he could assist the young man to lead academic life, having identified the academic potentials in Wellington. In his final year at UNICAL, Wellington emerged as the best in his graduating class of 1982, with a Second Class (Hons) Upper Division in Religious Studies.

After his NYSC year in old Anambra State in 1983, Wellington found himself teaching at Women Training College (WTC), Isiokpo, ostensibly to become a school principal eventually. He taught for 2 months there, before Prof. Tasia sent for him through an Omagwa lady (Mrs. Florence Ogwo), who was a student at COE then where Prof. Tasia was the Provost. It was then that Prof. Tasia disclosed to Wellington how his HOD in UNICAL (Prof. Gaba), had recommended him highly to be encouraged to lead an academic life; and wondered what Wellington was doing at WTC Isiokpo then. Wellington was recruited on the spot as a Graduate Assistant (without interview), and posted to Ndele campus of COE. He taught few months there and left for University of Ibadan, (UI) for his Post Graduate Studies.

At the end of his Masters' Degree Programme at Ibadan in 1986, Wellington was among the three (3) out of eleven (11) of his classmates that made what Ibadan University calls Ph.D Direct Admission grade. He then commenced his Doctorate Degree Programme at UI straightaway. It must be acknowledged with gratitude, that it was Prof. Tasia who lent him the initial money with which he paid for his school fees for this Doctorate Degree Programme at Ibadan.

Meanwhile, Wellington attended teaching interview at the University of Port Harcourt, Choba, and was found appointable, more so, with some publications to his credit already in his discipline, even before he commenced his Ph.D programme. He switched over to Uniport in 1988, and eventually bagged his Doctorate Degree at Ibadan University in record time in 1990. He

then commenced serious academic life of teaching, research and examination before he got to where he found himself today, having been promoted to the professorial rank in 2005. Between 1987 and 1989 also, Wellington enrolled at Trinity Theological College, Umuahia for his theological training, and on completion of his course, became ordained as an Anglican Clergyman.

As a professor, Wellington has over 60 academic publications (books and peer reviewed journals) to his credit, both in Nigeria and Overseas out of which seven (7) are books, including a comparative analysis of God's concept in various Religions with the title ***God: the contemporary discussion*** which he co-edited with E. A. Odumuyiwa and **W. O. Wotogbe-Weneka**, 2004, and his personal **W. O. Wotogbe-Weneka, *Themes in Comparative Religion*** (2005) and he is still researching and writing more, excluding his monumental publication on his Anglican Church such as his *The BISHOPRIC OF SAM O. ELENWO 1981-1999* (2000) and his *ANGLICANISM* (1997) which had been circulated throughout the almost 170 Nigerian Anglican Church Dioceses and other Anglican Provinces in Cameroon and Ghana. He has delivered over 40 public lectures.

SERVICES WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

- Academically he had been his Department's Head of Department (HOD), being the first HOD of Religious Studies when the then Department of Philosophy & Religious Studies was demerged in 2001 during which time he laid the basic office and administrative infrastructure for the take off of the new autonomous Department of Religious Studies, including bringing in Culture into it as now Department of Religious & Cultural Studies.
- He was once his Faculty of Humanities representative at University Senate, and on becoming a professor now a permanent member of University Senate.

- Member, Post ACE Syllabus Review Committee, 1993.
- Faculty of Humanities Representative, University Time Table Committee 1989 – 1993.
- He had successfully supervised 11 Ph.D Dissertations, 20 Master Theses and over 50 Bachelors degree Long Essays (projects) to his credit.
- He had served and serves as an External Examiner in his discipline at various Nigerian Universities including the University of Uyo, University of Calabar, University of Jos, Niger Delta University Bayelsa, University of Ibadan, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Imo State University and will soon serve at University of Benin.
- He is the Editor of his Departmental Journal, *Journal of Religion and Culture*, Uniport.
- He was the Associate Editor, *Journal of Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions* (NASR), an academic professional association he belongs to.
- He is also a Member, National Association for African Religions and Culture.
- He was the Regional Coordinator (Eastern States), Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS) and
- He was the National PRO, Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS) 1999 -2003.
- He was a Visiting Scholar at the Institute of Foundation Studies, Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Nkpolu Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt in 2005.
- Member, Ethics Research Committee, College of Health Sciences, Uniport since 2009.
- Member, Ethics Research Committee, University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital since 2010
- Member, Senate Committee on Examination Malpractice
- Member, Faculty of Humanities Elders Advisory Council.

- Member, Faculty of Humanities Books Assessment & Pricing Committee
- He is currently a visiting Professor, Anglican Church of Nigeria's Bishop Crowther Graduate Theological Institute, Abeokuta on "Anglican Studies and Comparative Religion"
- He is currently the Chairman, Post Graduate Studies of the Department of Religious and Cultural Studies, Uniport.

SERVICES OUTSIDE THE UNIVERSITY

As a dedicated and Senior Anglican Clergyman, he had served and still serves people, church and society in the following capacities;

- Served as a Curate, Emmanuel Anglican Church Okoro-Nu-Odo 1987-1991.
- Vicar, Emmanuel Anglican Church, Okoro-Nu-Odo, 1991-1996
- Vicar, All Saint's Anglican Church, Rumuokwurusii 1997-1998
- Vicar, Holy Trinity Church, Choba, 1999
- Vicar, St. Nicholas' Anglican Church, Aluu/Uniport, 2000-2007
- Vicar, St. Luke's Church, Emohua 2007 – 2011.
- Archdeacon, Emohua Archdeaconry, Diocese of Ikwerre 2007 – 2011.
- Currently, Archdeacon in the Cathedral, St. Peter's Anglican Cathedral, Isiokpo since January 2012.
- First Director, Clergy Continuing Education, Diocese of Niger Delta North 2000.
- Current Director, Diocese of Ikwerre Council on Education and Training.
- Member, Provincial Standing Committee, Niger Delta Province, 2003-2006

- A Church of Nigeria General Synod Delegate in 2006 in Diocese of Niger Delta North and currently in Diocese of Ikwerre since 2007
- In his Post Primary School days he had served as Chapel Prefect (Sacristan) and President Scripture Union (SU) of TTC, Okordia Zarama 1973-1976.
- In his undergraduate days at Unical, he served as Zonal President, Student Christian Movement (SCM), covering Old Rivers and Old Cross River sector), Chairman, Anglican Students' Fellowship, Anglican Students' Representative, Protestant Chaplaincy Management Committee, Unical etc.
- He had once served as Chairman, Care Taker Committee of Ikwerre LGA, Rivers State, 1994-1996.

HONOURS & AWARD OF EXCELLENCE TO HIS CREDIT INCLUDE

- Best Graduating Pupil in St. Martins (Ang.) Primary School, Omagwa FSLC examination 1966. (The only credit level pass as there was no distinction pass that year).
- Best Graduating Student Teachers Grade II Examination in Rivers State with 6 A's, 2 B's and 1 C. (TTC Okordia-Zarama), 1976.
- Best Graduating Student, Department of Religious Studies, University of Calabar (Second Class Honours, Upper Division) 1982

- Best Performing Local Government Caretaker Committee Chairman, Ikwerre in Peace and Security Maintenance and Social Justice, 1994/95 year.
- Federal Government Scholar for MA Degree Programme at University of Ibadan 1985/86 session.

Above all, he is married to Gloria Wotogbe-Weneka (Nee Elechi Amadi of Omagwa) and they are blessed with six children, 4 girls and 2 boys. By March 2011, he had become a grandfather of 3 children, 1 boy, 2 girls.

Mr. Vice Chancellor and Chairman, Sir, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it is my honour and privilege as I present to you a life teacher, a clergyman from age 12, an unassuming academic giant, a gentleman per excellence, a Professor of African and Comparative Religion, University of Port Harcourt, our 98th Inaugural Lecturer, the man, **PROFESSOR WELLINGTON ORNYEZINUCHIMM WOTOGBE-WENEKA.**

by

University Orator – Professor Adaye Orugbani
29th November, 2012.