

The Cacophony of Emotional Spiritualism

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Abstract

Spirituality has been a major part of human development. However, before spirituality got the strand of religiosity, both spirituality and emotion were relatable. As human development has grown, the concern now is that spirituality has been consumed by religiosity. The missing link, however, is that humanity is no longer the prevailing factor between humans. Tradition and religion have taken over the place of human emotions such that human beings are no longer exhibiting pure humanity. Here are the key questions that this paper will seek to answer: 1) Are traditions proportionate to true humanity? 2) Is religion greater than humanity? 3) Could there be true humanity without emotions—positive or negative? 4) Can religion be blamed for certain human manipulations? 5) Is it possible that religion and tradition actually diminish the human ability to continue to grow in wisdom? This paper makes a case for humanity being superior to tradition and religion. Even God (whom I believe the world's greatest Data Protection Officer) has given man the free will to choose between right and wrong. Case studies that reflect the contradictions between religion and several aspects of human engagements like politics, commerce, etcetera, will be talking points in this paper. Likewise, anti-Semitism will be a strong talking point in this paper. Part of my argument is that tradition seemingly provides a cover that permits hypocrisy. Likewise, I am opposed to the act of prophecy. It seems the human race is more ruled by our emotions which dictate our traditions and religions. But behind every tradition is a die-hard emotional connection that forms the belief that certain religions and traditions are superior to others. Another focus of this paper is "Humanity in Pretense", brought about by cowardly manipulations of religion and tradition. Some case studies here will be the story of the great philosopher—Socrates who was condemned by religion and tradition after he was found guilty of "impiety" and "corrupting the young", sentenced to death, and then required to carry out his own execution by consuming a deadly potion. Furthermore, the possibility that religion and tradition actually diminish the human ability to continue to grow in wisdom has raised much concern. I am of a strong belief that divinity enhances humanity

and that, “It is spirituality that gives vitality to physicality”. This is proven by evidence that divinity inspires humanity, but “divinity finds expressions through spirituality”. However, this process takes us to spirituality rather than religion; occurrences of dreams, telepathy, trance, prophecies provide case studies of divinity coming to the assistance of humankind. Unfortunately, these divine interventions in the human adventure can also be manipulated and commercialized, where it is possible for there not to be divinity but people try to replicate or manipulate encounters by faking prophecies or misinterpreting as eschatology. Hence, this paper argues that these divine interventions are real, but not all of their deployment is.

Keywords

Emotions, Politics, Culture, Values, Beliefs, Religion, Tradition

1. Aim and Objectives of Study

The aim of this study is to highlight the socio-political exploitation and manipulations on religion.

The following study objectives would facilitate the achievement of this aim:

- 1) A brief history of the importance of spirituality will lay the basis of the study.
- 2) The overlap of religion and culture.
- 3) Case studies of social and political exploitation of religion.
- 4) How these events have manipulated the emotions of humanity.
- 5) Making a case for politicians and society influencers to be conscious of abusing religion.

2. Literature Review

Religion and Politics, however differently and independently they may be analyzed, are more interrelated as far as societal influence goes. [Kunkler and Leininger \(2011\)](#) posit that the relationship between these two integral facets of society is one of “interdependence”. Why is this the case? While this paper provides some history, it is important to first set the undertone for what will be reported throughout the study.

Peter Berger in his publications in 1967 and 1999 ([Berger, 1967, 1999](#)) rendered a definition of religion which has turned out to be one of general acceptance in the social sciences. He defines religion as, “a set of beliefs that connects the individual to a community, and in turn to a sense of being or purpose that transcends the individual and the mundane.”

When I came upon this definition, it resonated so much that I was finally able to connect the dots of what it was that I wanted to say without fearing the risk of being misunderstood. This paper is not purposed to call-out religious leaders all over the world for their political involvement in their communities. On the con-

trary, [Parker's \(2006\)](#) dissection of Voltaire's and Rousseau's 18th century Enlightenment Strategies provide evidence that there are inherent cracks in religion and politics that will allow easy penetration and resultant manipulation of values and ideals for both institutions.

From Berger's definition of religion, we can correctly infer that man has always sought a reason to understand his own existence. Religion filled this void very perfectly and because religion is so deeply rooted in community, individuals establish all sorts of connection with this community. Consequently, given man's free will, political influence, just like with many other reaching aspects of society, is presented with an opening to propagate.

Furthermore, Lord Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of the House of Lords, at a seminar in 2011 ([House of Lords, 2011](#)) highlighted the difference between the state (governments and politics) and society (communities). During his submission, he argued that religion could be both a blessing and curse to society, stressing that if left alone to serve society, religion could pose more beneficial impacts; but that it could be dangerous if its influences were allowed on the state.

Religion has, over the centuries, guided ideas and outcomes in substantive events like political campaigning, electoral processes, crisis resolution (in some cases), as well as short- and long-term governance. As is the case with among some leading democracies of the world like the United Kingdom, Italy, Greece, as well as some non-democratic nations like there are in the middle east, there is a recognition of an accepted religion by the state ([Kunkler & Leininger, 2011](#)). Cultures and traditions are even built on the back of these nationally-recognized religions. This goes to show that the influence is deeply immersive, which in itself, is not a terrible outcome. The problem lies in the exploitation of these outcomes for selfish political gains.

How does this happen and how can it be corrected? How much religion should be admitted into politics? Can and should these two aspects of society just be completely isolated? These questions and some others are what the rest of this paper will look to answer.

3. Introduction

Spirituality as a phenomenon is older than even humanity. But human inclination to it is borne out of the quest to discover the meaning of life and give definition to the essence of human existence ([Greenstein, 2016](#)). Based on the belief that there is a higher power behind the seen world (and sometimes, certain experiences to back up the belief), ritual practices of different sorts are observed to get answers to puzzles that human reasoning can't solve.

A consciousness of it is what initially led to faith. While it is personal, humans are social beings as everyone belongs to a family and a community. This means that spirituality cannot be expressed by one person without others being influenced or affected. Essentially, a system of belief to be commonly shared by a people becomes necessary for uniformity and order to prevail. Hence religion is

born. From a spiritual encounter such as a trance to research that leads to an illuminating discovery, religion can start or be formed by any means. When it is carried on through generations, it constitutes an integral part of tradition.

Religion by default serves as the breeding ground upon which society's collective sense of right and wrong is established. As submitted by Stephen [Gaukroger \(2012\)](#), "It was generally assumed in the 17th century that religion provided the unique basis for morality, and that without religion, there could be no morality". This includes the morality of emotions to feel at certain times and in given situations.

The fact that emotions are an inherent part of human nature is a factor that keeps religion prevalent. With promises of favorable aftermaths, it provides a psychological escape from harsh realities of life. For example, the death of a loved one naturally brings sorrow, but many religions present solace through promises of a better place in the hereafter.

But what seemed beneficial to humanity begins to take humanity out of humans, using the same factor upon which it thrives—emotions.

Selfishness is one of the most dominant human traits which religion preaches against. But with its organized nature, this innate attribute becomes more amplified by the conducts of custodians of religious doctrines who weaponize the emotions of their faithful that look to them for direction and solutions as codified in the books. By this means, people's propensity for logical reasoning is diluted through gimmicks in the guise of miracles, such that make the lazy replace hard work with prayer, and make the sick replace doctor's prescription with objects of transference of spirit for cure. This is not to cancel the validity of miracles, but to highlight the inordinate desire for patronage by instilling blind optimism in people for the attainment of power, popularity and economic gains.

These are the ills which constitute the spirituality-based cacophony that plague the society, driving people out of tune with humanity and have them develop less realistic approaches to their problems. Hence, this paper takes a look into the bane that religion has become, taking into account the numbness it has created to humans' sense of reasoning, empathy and justice.

While humanity in some sense refers to the biology of mankind, in the context of this paper, it connotes moral and ethical values, such as; empathy, brotherly love, benevolence and every other synonym that expresses the quality of being humane. What does this mean?

[Slim \(2019\)](#), in an article publicizing the 2019 meeting of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to promote "The Power of Humanity", classified humanity into 3:

- Humanity as a species.
- Humanity as an ethical behavior.
- Humanity as a global identity.

Humanity, in the sense of morals and ethics is the human behaviour that governs the expression of emotions and feelings between humans ([Antony, 2020](#)). But how exactly does emotion define humanity?

4. Emotion as the Core of Humanity

Emotions are an innate human feature. They are inherently programmed in our brains, and developed through time, events and interaction with others. From infancy, humans display gestures expressive of certain emotional states. These include facial expressions, crying indicative of anger, and smiling to express happiness.

Robert Plutchik (1990) postulated that there are eight basic human emotions, namely; anger, anticipation, joy, trust, fear, surprise, sadness and disgust. Each of these emotions has a polar opposite and following each of them, there is a physiological reaction as laid out below (Table 1).

Table 1. Different emotions and their corresponding physiological reactions.

EMOTION	Joy	VERSUS	Sadness
PHYSIOLOGY	Connect		Withdraw
EMOTION	Fear	VERSUS	Anger
PHYSIOLOGY	Get small and hide		Get big and loud
EMOTION	Anticipation	VERSUS	Surprise
PHYSIOLOGY	Examine slowly		Jump back
EMOTION	Disgust	VERSUS	Trust
PHYSIOLOGY	Reject		Embrace

Other emotions are the result of the interplay of the basic emotions (Plutchik, 1990). For example, when anticipation combines with joy, optimism develops.

Humanity is instilled in humans through sound moral responsibility as informed by a proper channeling and regulation of their emotions. In establishing this fact, it is imperative to reference the non-deliberate nature of emotions, which is one of its two central features (Ben-Ze'ev, 1997). The non-deliberate nature of emotions explains the spontaneous reaction that comes in its own accord in response to certain situations. When a baby's toy is snatched, the baby naturally gets angry and snaps. As adults, we may think of our peer's success and become envious. It is impulsively generated through spontaneous evaluation. With such negative non-deliberate emotions, decisions taken or actions triggered can be disastrous and injurious to the individual with the emotion and/or other people who may be affected. This is because it is not preceded by a reflective meditation process, though it may appear so. In reality, there already has been a ready-made mechanism of appraisal (Ben-Ze'ev, 1997).

The non-deliberate nature of emotion, and its potential consequences when negative, are what necessitate moral responsibility. For this to happen, reflective thinking must take place.

To attain the state of reflective thinking, the partial nature of emotions, which is the second central feature, must first be acknowledged. Emotions are partial in

two senses: first they are focused on one side or area of a matter, and secondly, they reflect perspective of personal and sentimental interest, rather than balanced conclusion based upon a broad view. This translates to suggest that “emotion influences attention”, making us preoccupied with one thing while impervious to others.

Quoting Ben-Ze’ev (1997), “the partiality of emotions is clearly demonstrated by their intentional components, namely, cognition, evaluation, and motivation”. Hence the cognitive field of a lover is limited to the appealing qualities of the loved one, and blind to their uncharitable qualities; similarly, the reason for hate may be the only field of view of a hater, even though the hated has qualities that are worthy of admiration. Aristotle helps with a clear illustration of emotion as reflective of partial and narrow judgment when he likened it to dogs that bark if there is a knock at the door, before looking to see if it is a friend.

To get past the partiality of emotion and attain reflective thinking, the cognitive field must be widened. By this means, new pieces of information are received, thereby creating new and positive evaluative patterns. This means that patterns that inform acts of cruelty as ruled by hatred are erased by widening the field of focus to find other reasons to act with kindness. Such reasons could range from seeing the good sides of the hated person to discovering back stories that may alter the hater’s prior perception that informed the emotion of hatred, leading to positive evaluative patterns that speak of kindness and friendliness. By the same means, envy can be converted to admiration.

Selfishness is at the base of every negative emotion. But they become replaceable by positive ones through intellectual deliberations that involve extension of cognitive field, so as to go from self-interest to empathy by trading places with others mentally. By this means, moral responsibility is developed and humanity finds a footing. We now proceed to highlighting how religion has influenced human emotions over generations.

5. The Role that Religion Has Played on Human Emotions

Even without religion, people are able to develop positive emotion through reasoning, and carry out actions reflective of certain moral standards. It is no wonder that many irreligious folks end up becoming the strongest humanitarian voices around the world. Positive emotions of empathy are achieved by trading places with others, and this is how conscience is constituted. But people also develop different degrees of humanity as shaped by culture and tradition, which may or may not include religious influence.

From the foregoing, it would seem that humanity is sustainable without the input of religion. But history says differently. In every society, from “Genesis to COVID”, religion has always been a major influence. Since man has to co-exist with other social beings, his religious activities and conducts are not without an effect on others. Religion does not only consist of the relationship between him and the supreme being that he submits to, but also with other beings. He has to

relate within the context of society, for which reason morality comes to play. The morality or ethics are what guides his interactions as demanded in his religion.

The first point of morality in religion is brotherliness—the quality that compels one to treat others as one would treat oneself. Evident in religious texts is the fact that religion has always made a case in favour of humanity. Sahin abu-Bukhari reported from the Hadith of Anas Ibn Malik that Prophet Muhammed said, “none of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself” (Sahih Abu Bukhari, Book 2, chapter 7). Expressing the same doctrine, Jesus Christ is recorded to have said, “*And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.*” (Mark 13: 30-31).

The above portion of the Bible gives credence to the submission of [Obioha \(2009\)](#) that man is “*self-transcendent (vertically, with God and horizontally, with other humans) in his religiosity*”.

While this brotherliness is achievable through empathy, it is worthy of note that not every human could have been able to reach the point of empathy towards others. Also, the selfish nature of man means that while he can be empathetic in some occasions, he might not be in other occasions. The constant here is that human conscience is subject to perversion. Therefore, the relevance of religion lies in its ability to put man’s interaction with his environment in check by subjecting his consciousness to a realm that is beyond his control.

Ergo, just as emotion is the wave that humanity rides on, it is a higher wave upon which religion soars.

This way, many orthodox folks who lack the will to act with humanity in mind, can be checked by fear of a supreme being, whose abode is in a realm from which humans are watched. By implication, man gets religious to become better in every way possible. This suggests that religious faith is, in part, a kind of emotional coherence which goes to show that religious beliefs can be adopted just for the satisfaction of fitting with emotional needs and attitudes ([Brill, 2005](#)).



Figure 1. Man as God, God as Man. (Source: The Conversation)

6. Tradition and Religion: An Enduring History of Double Standards

Religion and culture are two sides of a coin, so intertwined are they that separating them from each other is unrealistic. Being passed down through generations, they constitute the tradition that direct the way of life of every given society.

Before Christianity and Islam got to Africa, the traditional religions created the framework of their cultural practices, and their culture in return elevated religious beliefs. The ethical and cultural foundations of the western world are also attributable to Christianity as an institutional religion (Ugorie, 2017). Just as the history of each African society cannot be separated from the history of their deities, the history of western culture is also incomplete without recounting the history of the spread of Christianity. When Christianity began to spread through colonial contacts, cultures began to go through alterations. In summary, religion and culture are inseparable. This is reflected in arts, literature and law as well as offers a template for political and economic engagement of all civilizations and the context for love and war (Bainton, 1964).

The big question is, does religion interfere with the authenticity of humanity? Also, could there be a possibility that religion may have in fact (either intentionally or otherwise) created some doctrinal bottlenecks to continued access to the benefit that divinity has to offer on man's consciousness expressed in humanity through spirituality and morality?

Commendably, religion, in its unadulterated form, has always delivered on its expectation as a custodian of virtues that upholds humanity. However, its weakness lies in the fact that it thrives on sensationalism (of course, this is no denying the efficacy of spiritualism). Humanity thrives on love and empathy, which religion preaches. But more notably, religion thrives massively on fear. Hence most religious people are ruled by fear—fear of punishment such as damnation for non-believers.

The flip-side of this, however, is the hope of reward for doing good. But it is also what makes room for perversion of religion by its custodians through politicization of doctrine. As a result, many inhumane phenomena have been birthed and now endure around the world, including anti-Semitism, terrorism, slavery and other forms of oppression, a major example of which is apartheid in South Africa and Jihadi in the Middle East.

These are the factors that bring about the notion that the world would be better off without religion. The vices mentioned are the result of selfish motives which take humanity out of focus in religion, underlining the fact that human tragedy is inevitable when religion is void of ethics (Obioha, 2009).

So, whilst it is possible for a person to be spiritual and not necessarily be religious, the big questions remain:

- Is it possible to have a relationship with deities, sovereign creators and the supernatural, without the nuances of religion?

- Is it possible for religion to reform?

7. Socio-Cultural Factors that Have Influenced Religious Practices

A number of social and cultural events that were prevalent in the past played big roles in influencing religious practices all around the world. Some of them are discussed below:

7.1. Persecution of Christians in the Early Church

Dating back to the first century of the era of Christianity, Christian missionaries and new Christian converts have been targets of antagonistic persecution, even to the point of martyrdom.

Likewise, we have seen all sorts of difference of opinions about religious doctrines. Take for instance, the differences about the torah between the Pharisees and Sadducees. According to [Goodman \(2017\)](#), the Pharisees, who were the rabbis and custodians of the Torah, believed that the Torah was enough to guide man's religion through "oral law", hence the temples were not needed. With the Sadducees, on the other hand, these were the upper class who were very wealthy and associated with the priests. They were of the belief that the Temple was essential for religion and completely rejected the Pharisees' practice of oral law. There are other instances where these differences of opinions have led to prosecution of Christians.

7.2. Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism has been a long tradition in Europe ([Wyrwa, 2011](#)). It dates back to the history of the European people, which is inseparable from the historical account of the spread of Christianity.

It is ironic that most of the actions against the Jews after the establishment of Christianity were perpetrated by Christian people, sects and nations. This is because at the initial spread of Christianity, it was seen as another form of Judaism. And in fact, Jesus Christ, his disciples and the earliest apostles were Jews.

Clearly, the intolerance of Jewish people remains a classic example of how religion can be a destructive tool and a cover for hypocrisy in the hands of the people who have an undying thirst for power. Even dating back to the Bible days when the differences in doctrines practiced by the gentiles and Jews resulted in a falling out between Apostles Paul and Peter (Galatians 2: 13-16).

Crime against humanity has been prevalent in its full form ever since Christianity first became the state religion of the Roman empire, following the conversion of the emperors which started in A.D. 280-337 with Emperor Constantine. Since the early church fathers pushed hard for Christianity to succeed Judaism, the refusal of Jews to accept Jesus, Judaism and its adherents were perceived as threats to the state and to the faith.

The crusades were a religiously charged aggression. Pope Urban II ordered

European Christians to take up the sword and cross to liberate the Holy Land from the Muslims in 1095 AD. The consequence of this action crushed Jews as the Crusader army, who took the form of a mob invaded the Jewish communities massacring the Jews and raping the women, all “in the name of Jesus”. This was the pogrom that birthed the organized massacre of a targeted group of people.

The presence of a hated race can spark enough desperation to fabricate lies just to have an excuse to annihilate them. This was the case in the 14th century when the Bubonic plague swept through Europe, killing a third of the population. In the heat of desperation to blame someone, the burden fell upon the Jews, who were accused of poisoning wells, even though the Jews themselves were also dying. Earlier between 300 and 600 CE, institutionalized discrimination of the Jews had already been established, whereby Jews were forbidden from marrying Christians. This was backed up by myths about them in Northern Europe, one of which was that they possessed horns and tails and initiated ritual killing of Christians.

The ritual killing is popularly referred to as “blood Libel”, as coined by Thomas of Monmouth in 1150 as an explanation to the mysterious death of a Christian boy.

About 100,000 Jews were burnt alive in Germany and Austria as accusations continued to pile up against them. Including but not limited to using blood of Christian boys for Passover Matzoth.

Then there was Martin Luther, founder of the 16th century Reformation and Protestantism, and author of a pamphlet titled *The Jews and Their Lies*. Based on his claim that the Jews thirsted for the blood of Christians, he urged that they be slain.

It was the Blood Libel that Hitler referred back to in order to instill fear and hate towards the Jews, claiming that the Jews would contaminate the blood of Germans, whom he referred to as the superior race.

In 1997, Pope John Paul III addressed age long anti-Semitism at a Vatican Symposium. He expressed displeasure at the “*erroneous and unjust interpretations of the New Testament regarding the Jewish people and their alleged culpability*”.

He admitted that while there were Christians who did their best to save the Jews even with their own lives on the line, “*the spiritual resistance of many was not what humanity expected of Christ’s disciples.*”

7.3. Slavery

In justification of slavery in the centuries when slaveholding was the order of the day, there was hardly any medium of communication without where the orator or speaker did not make references to the Bible as the authorizer of slavery. This was in defense of moral grounds upon which every attack on, criticism of slavery was based. Since is always something to speak against and those opposed to slavery claimed that it was a sin, the fundamental place of the right and wrong ar-

gument something for the religious slave holders had to strive to justify. AT this point, they must desperately defend themselves. Hence, the heavy weighs of slavery in Southern America erected a moral defense for her inhumane practices.

The biblical justification of slavery and the treatment of black people is found in the book of Genesis. They follow the story of Ham, son of Noah, giving account of how he dishonored his father. When in drunken state Noah was naked, Ham called his brothers Shem and Japhet, who covered their father with a blanket to prevent further embarrassment. This action caused Noah to curse Ham to be slave to Shem and Japhet. Based on the description of Ham's skin color in the Bible, he's believed to be the progenitor of black people who, according to them, have inherited the curse to serve the white race.

Building upon the supposed destiny of black people, the New Testament is further referred to as believed to contain law which they must follow.

One of the points of reference is Ephesians, VI, 5-7: "*Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.*" Almost verbatim, the same words were repeated by Paul in the third chapter of his Epistle to the Colossians (Rae, 2018).

This hypocritically justified culture contradicts the virtues of love and kindness which are part of the fruit of the spirit contained in the same Bible, as written by the same apostle. This is no doubt evidence of negative emotions of selfishness, pride and greed.

7.4. Apartheid

When apartheid system prevailed in South Africa, it was not without biblical justifications too. One of the proponents of the system was Afrikaans poet and Bible translator Prof J D du Toit (better known as Totius). In an address that he gave in 1944 at the National People's Congress ("Volkskongres") on Race Policy he, began with "Die Godsdienstige Grondslag van ons Rassebeleid [The Religious Foundation of our Race Policy]" It should be noted that Totius was a prominent theologian in the Reformed Churches of South Africa, (known then as the Gereformeerde Kerk). His presentation as a full-blown defense of racial segregation. And of course, the starting point of reference for him was Genesis 1. He purported that God creates a beautiful unity. But then he also acts as the Hammabdil, i.e., the Separator or Divider ("Skeidingmaker"). Being the "great Divider", God made a distinction between light and darkness, the dry land from the waters, the living creatures according to their kind. He made things not as a mixed mass, but as separated and segregated.

With reference to Acts 17: 26, Totius accepted that all nations were created out of one blood, however, the verse further states that God marked the boundaries of their territory. His speech also included a reference to the 11th chapter of

the book of Genesis, an account of how people built a tower in an attempt to resist and outwit God. Then he once again acted as the divider by causing them to speak in different languages. Consequently, the people dispersed and got scattered around the earth (Genesis 11: 9). Premised upon this, Toitus declared that “*nations should stand their ground (“hulleself handhaaf”) against this Babylonian spirit of unification (“die Babiloniese gees van eenmaking”)*”. He further condemned the idea of “gelijkstelling” (equalisation) of races as defended by what he calls “die humaniteitsmense” (“the humanist people”), with their references to texts such as Colossians 3:11 and Galatians 3:28. He purported that the unity being referred to in these parts of the Bible is spiritual unity in Christ in which distinctions and separations remain intact (Vosloo, 2015).

In support of this belief, the Reformed Church of South Africa, the; largest denomination at the time, worked doggedly to ensure the conversion of Black South Africans to Christianity and have them worship in their own church.

Another person who strongly defended the system was F. Potgeiter, one the most respected theologians of the Reformed Church of Africa. In his words, “*It is quite clear that no one can ever be a proponent of integration on the basis of the scriptures. It would be in direct contradiction of the revealed will of God to plead for a commonality between whites, colored, and Blacks*” (Giles, 2016).

Considering the fact that the Christian missions belonged to colonialists who invaded a land and subjected the original dwellers of the land spoke a lot about how religion becomes a useful device in the hands of oppressors.

7.5. Terrorism

One of the sources of harsh criticism religion is passing through is the extent of sufferings and devastation that humanity is being subjected to in the name of religion (Ugorie, 2017).

This condemnation of religion is buttressed upon by Ilega (2001: p. 6). Quoting Maduabuchi Dukor, he wrote “*in every continent of the world, there are troubled spots rooted in religious conflicts*”. He also quoted Huston Smith who said “*We live in a world that is scourged with animosity, factions, fractions, hatred and war. A religion gets implicated in these conflicts*” (Obioha, 2009).

When it comes to terrorism, fingers are mostly pointed to the Islamic world. The reason for this is obvious: from Africa to the Middle East, religiously-charged unrest has been the order of the day for ages, courtesy of groups like Al-Shabbab, Al-Qaeda, ISIS and Boko Haram, all of which claim to be striving in the course of Allah.

This brings to mind the idea of Jihad, and begs the question, how does a religion that claims to be of peace become the perpetrator of unrest? But like other religions, all vices seemingly attributable to Islam is birthed by inordinate passions and selfish desires. As expected, there is a promise to count on, namely the infamous expectation of the 72 hours (virgins) in the hereafter, an irresistible appeal to the emotion of lust, and a strong bargain for deliberate loss of life

though suicide missions.

Yet, the idea of Jihad which has been widely spread is a total departure from the original intent.

The line of thought that Crusaders and al-Qaeda militants tread in justification of their incursions within their respective religions are as different as the religious traditions themselves. But they share one thing in common: the context upon which their campaign is based is believed to be a religious obligation to “*liberate foreign and sacred lands from oppression*” (Izant, 2010).

Based on these uncharitable manifestations, Bertrand Russell, regards religion as a source of untold misery to the human race (Ugorie, 2017).

So, how does religious manipulation dictate society? Using Modern Nigeria as a case study, we now take a look at this very potent “drug” that has got many people hooked.

8. Mass Hypocrisy through Recontextualization of Morality: Examining the Socio-Religious Environment of Modern Nigeria

Religion has always been a dominant influence in the history of many societies. If the order of occurrences is considered, spirituality or spiritual inclinations birth organized religion and endures as its lifeblood. The spiritual realm is the source to which all instructions codified in religious books are ascribed to guide humans’ moral conduct. They constitute state laws in theocratic nations such as Saudi Arabia, Vatican City and Afghanistan, and units within nations, examples of which are states like Sokoto and Kano in the northern part of Nigeria.

These laws dictate virtues that promote healthy conscience. One of such virtues common to all known religions is honesty. In Buddhism, steering clear of falsehood and deception is one of the five basic precepts of morality (Kramer & Sharrif, 2016). In Christianity and Judaism, stealing and bearing of false witness which constitute dishonesty are forbidden in the ten commandments of the Bible. A Hadith of Sahih-Bukhari gives account of Muhammad once saying “*when honesty is lost, wait for the hour*”. The hour here refers to the judgment day (Kramer & Sharrif, 2016).

The contradiction we see, however, is that honesty as preached in religions cannot be said to match the same weight in practice, even in heavily religious nations like Nigeria. What is witnessed today is a form of hypnosis through conversations, making it possible for inhumane practices from the deceptive corridors of religiosity to gain acceptance. This serves as evidence that religion, like politics, has the power to influence the attitudes of its adherents even against their logical sense of judgment. Usually, such inhumane practices are re-contextualized as evidence of religious concepts such as grace, miracle, destiny and a demonstration of faith. Again, while not denying the efficacy of spirituality or divinity, it can be justifiably said that human emotions are being fed upon here.

The most common of these practices is the exploitation of desperate congregants by religious leaders in return for phony miracles, some of which are ac-

tually staged in pure acts of deception. But we cannot take out the act of divinity in authentic congregations where miracles happen without emotional manipulations. After all, “miracles are man’s interpretation of God’s common sense”. If there is a creator, it is common sense to believe that every manufacturer would have spare parts to replace components of their creation. With this, healings and miracles are justified in divinity. When spirituality is emotionalized, there is the belief that the only way to tap into divinity is through religion.

This confirms Karl Marx’s submission that religion is the opium of the people. Opium being a painkilling drug is deployed as a fitting metaphor for psychological numbness to the harsh realities that demand pragmatic steps to conquer. And as it stands, poor souls easily become religious junkies, chained to the bondage of religiosity. This lost touch with reality means practical wisdom is blocked from flowing through the human mental domain. Hence in poverty, they can declare to be rich. In sickness, they declare to be strong. This complacency and willfully blind optimism are very often recontextualized by religion as faith. Meanwhile, without, it is made clear from the Bible that faith without works is dead.

A common religious justification for misconduct, or allegations thereof by religious leaders is “touch not my anointed”. This distaste for criticism of actions and speeches of religious leaders by the faithful, contradicts the examples set by the Berean Christians of whom the Bible bears witness thus:

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” (Acts 17: 11)

Today, whoever goes against authority is termed a rebel. This trend is reminiscent of the trial of Socrates accused of impiety. According to his accusers, he behaved impiously by inventing new divinities, showing disrespect for the gods of the city and corrupting the young. Meanwhile, going by the account of Plato who wrote that Socrates’ wife was dissatisfied by his failure to be part of his sons’ upbringing, but instead invested in the intellectual development of the young boys of the city, it is apparent that he wanted the youth to have a mind of their own. This must have posed a threat to the egoistic desires of religious people of the time, just independent thinkers do the modern faithful.

Drawing from biblical accounts of figures like Nathan and Elijah, who both played prophetic roles in the governance of their days, it may seem as though the act of prophecy in political applications is justifiable. But critically speaking, it is far from the truth. For one thing, the governments of the Bible days were theocratic; and for another, their roles were more akin to activism, and not spiritual sagacity for validation or ostentation.

Clearly, politics and prophecy are mutually exclusive, especially in a democratic government where leaders are chosen by the people and not by God.

One philosophical credence to this line of thought is given by Fredrick Nietzsche, a German philosopher who believed that self-development is key to achieving any feats so desired by humans (Adeagbo, 2022). Therefore, either in

politics, academics, business, or any endeavor, doing your homework by positioning yourself rightly, rather than sitting around waiting for miracles or prophecies, is the requirement for accomplishment to be realized.

As evidence of perversion of religion, the recontextualization of morality cascades down to the followers, as evident in other engagements such as in business and politics. Morally questionable characters are defined by religious folks according to the affiliation of who is involved. Therefore, if a non-believer gets a job through nepotism, it is corruption; but if a believer gets a job by the same means, it is termed grace.

In the same vein, followers of Christianity, Islam, Buddha, and other faiths are urged by their leaders to pray for political leaders who oppress them economically by depriving them of dividends of democracy. The justification: they are ordained by God to lead. In other words, regardless of how corrupt they are, they emerged as leaders by virtue of destiny.

9. Tolerance of Political Corruption in the Religious Systems

Continuing to use political systems like Nigeria's as a case study, it can be said that another major form of double standards promoted through religion is the religionization of political corruption (Yagboyaju, 2017). Whilst this is not only prevalent in Nigeria or other African countries for that matter (in fact, much can be said of this with respect to the American and British systems), vast number of politicians and public office holders with a notoriety for abuse of office are well known to be friends of notable church leaders, with whom they openly associate. While adherents may take a critical stance against such politicians, they accept them through their General Overseers when they make an appearance in religious gatherings as their religious minds have been appealed to.

Similarly, in the United States, there was the case, during the collation of the 2020 Presidential election results, of Paula White dramatically calling down angels from Africa and South America to deliver positive results for Donald Trump. Some say that she successfully manipulated Donald Trump into renewing his interest in Christianity, assuming the role of his spiritual adviser.

As it is with Christianity, so it is with Islam in Nigeria. Before launching into examples of religionization of political corruption, here is an explanation of what Islam is according to Yagboyaju (2017):

“Islam is not a religion or faith in the Western sense, nor is it linked with their sort of power, politics and state. It cannot be reduced to any of them, though it must include each of them. It is a total and unified way, both religious and secular; it is a set of beliefs and a way of worship; it is a vast and integrated system of law; it is a culture and a civilization; it is an economic system and a way of doing business, it is a policy and a method of governance; it is a special sort of society, a way of running a family; it prescribes for inheritance and divorce, dress and etiquette, food and personal hygiene, it is a spiritual and human totality for this world and the other world” (p. 146).

The broad definition of Islam given above testifies to how all-encompassing the religion is, providing a template for how to live in every aspect of life, including spiritual, civil and professional conducts. It is no wonder then that Muslims particularly in northern Nigeria advocate for Sharia as state law, believing that it has the capacity to address corruption in any of its fashion (Yagboyaju, 2017).

Islam sufficiently emphasizes on rewards, especially ultimate reward of heavenly bliss for good deeds and eternal damnation in hell for evil practices such as injury to others.

In spite of this, there has always been unceasing perpetration of corrupt practices by Muslim public office holders, which goes without being condemned by the Islamic religious communities.

10. Conclusion and Recommendations

10.1. Conclusion

In the final analysis of religion, tradition and humanity in this paper, it is concluded that humanity is of a higher necessity than tradition and religion. This is because tradition and religion are subject to both positive and negative alterations, consequently eroding the sacredness of mankind through manipulations and oppressions in different forms. Humanity on other hand leads humans to positive outcomes at all times. And in fact, tradition and religion must give way for humanity if they must continue to be relevant.

It has also been established that there can't be humanity without emotions and they are inherent in humans. In fact, understanding, regulating emotions in such a way that positive emotions are channeled and negative ones are eliminated is how true humanity is sustained.

Additionally, if we consider how atrocities such as economic and political exploitations, slavery and terrorism have degraded human dignity, it is perfectly fitting to blame religion and tradition in their perverted forms for serving as enablers.

Conclusively, the suspension of logical reasoning through religious and traditional manipulations is an attestation to their ability to hinder humans from growing in wisdom. Most religious people are and will remain emotional, if only to hold on to their beliefs, but it will be unfair on humanity for their emotionally-guided spirituality to be exploited and manipulated for selfish gains.

10.2. Recommendations

As much as religion is justifiably blamed for many ills, especially such that erode humanity, its impact in human development and civilization is not to be disregarded. Religion laid the ground for formal education in Europe and Arab, which was received in Africa.

Furthermore, the ethics known to most people today was derived from religion, being that it shaped how people make sense of the sanctity of human life,

liberty, equality, religious freedom, family values and right attitude to work. However, religion, in itself, emanates from spirituality which forms when human beings are able to access and interact with the sovereign creator, deity or angels.

In view of all the body, I therefore submit that there is hope for humanity to be restored and religion can be a viable tool, going by its original intent. To achieve this, religion would need to focus more on empathy, love and humanity than fixation on doctrines, cultures, rules and destructive emotions.

I therefore recommend that leaders should have another look at their respective doctrine, dogma and creed and modify the ones that undermine values that advocate for human development.

Furthermore, efforts should be intensified to establish common ground for cordial interfaith and inter-doctrinal relations (within the same faith) as there are beliefs common to the different religions and sects.

I further submit that religion should be used as a platform for the sensitization of young people to wake up and step fully into the power of their minds to create solutions rather than waiting on miracles. They should also be made to see reasons to think independently while maintaining the virtues of righteousness. This way, they can attain higher wisdom and break out of the bondage of limiting traditions, and at the same time, regulate their freedom with moral consciousness to continue to place value on humanity.

“Humanity needs more kindness than it does commercialized prophecies.” It needs more collaborations than enforcing our opinions on others. It needs to connect more with spirituality rather than deceptive assertion in the name of eschatology or interpretation of the apocalypse. We should be wary of the act of prophesying in some quarters that are proliferated by ulterior motives rather than through connectivity with divinity through authentic spirituality.

With this, I hereby conclude that, religion should be sacrosanct of the politics of electioneering, divisions and scaremongering. Rather than use the name of God to express preferred candidates, choices or interests, the religious bodies should focus more on raising people of good character, values and vision, who can be useful for the growth of their communities through the instruments of democracy. Doing otherwise is tantamount to a cacophony of emotional spiritualism.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix A: An Open Letter; The Role of the Church in Politics and Governance Today [By: Abraham Great]

Dear beloved Leaders, Elders and Fathers, peace and grace be multiplied to you and to every reader of this message. Let me begin with this Yoruba proverb “oro ki wuwo ka f’obe bu” which simply means “words cannot be too heavy to require cutting it with a knife.” With the just concluded election in mind, it is necessary to appeal to us on the need to bridge our religious, tribal and political divide, step by step, piece by piece towards building a sustainable “one-nation”, Nigeria.

As a body with unique and unfettered access to God’s gift - the Holy Spirit, our greatest strength is to divinely align our congregants and the nation to the will of God Almighty.

We can gain greater influence both economically and spiritually if we position ourselves as the light of the nation, and not just the star of our individual churches, and continue to broaden the light that shines collectively within us that darkness and its elements cannot comprehend. We should be the bridge between communities, the hope for reconciliation, and the resource center for integrity, ethics and values.

Based on the countless challenges that faced our nation on her path to greatness, now is not the time for us to retreat into our shells, look the other way or move on “as if nothing happened” or to distance ourselves from the current administration. Instead, this is the time that we should lend our hands of support in prayer, faith and anointing, as our leaders continue to demonstrate the virtue of loyalty to the country, the body of Christ, and to God. The recent moves from CAN to stretch a hand of fellowship to the government in power should be commended rather than criticized.

Though it is conspicuously evident that our nation has been polarized by greedy politicians who take advantage of the already existing divisions in the land to further create a split even within our folds while their sanity is at the mercy of grandiose delusions. As with politics, there will always be more than meets the eye. It also not a hidden fact, that Nigerians have been manipulated, in many ways by various beneficiaries of the democratic process.

As the body of Christ, we must remain 100% committed to non-partisanship as a founding principle of our mission and in our work, as a unifier, not a divider, not undermining any conversation pertaining to the state of affairs in the nation. Although in the past, we might have erroneously ignored some conversations, brazenly taken sides, and appeared clandestine in our support for candidates that appease to our minds, even from the pulpit. We need to do more than those. Now is the time to launch re-invigorated dialogue and movement.

There is no doubt that the world is under a great turmoil at the moment, even the greatest countries in the world are having a moment of disunity, obstructions, abuse, waste and corruption. These are all in fulfilment of the scriptures concerning the last days and the attendant difficulties.

Our role as the church:

- This is the time to stay awake, alert, participate in whatever ways we can to create understanding, knowledge, and a more peaceful Nigeria to shine the light in the midst of this gross darkness that has crept in on the World.
- To amplify our collective voice for support, nonviolence and peaceful co-existence.
- To teach our members value for righteousness, justice, forgiveness, unity, love and equity in our churches.
- To begin grooming and investing in young men and women who would eventually penetrate the political sphere bearing the doctrine of honesty and integrity.
- Aligning ourselves with our brothers and sisters in power and giving them maximum support, they need to help function effectively in their assignment.
- As a body, we need to invest in research and development, take interest in analytical data gathering, endeavor to institutionalize standards, frameworks, procedures and best practices around the world.
- Let us negotiate with the present government to set up a committee who would revisit and review the 2014 National Confab Report so that would have been justified that no stone is left unturned by this administration towards economic growth, wealth creation and poverty alleviation. We have an opportunity as a people to harmoniously rewrite the history of our nation.

Without the above mentioned, it would be almost impossible to mitigate the tribal, religious and cultural divides amongst us, our members are already broken into factions and mini denominations within us. Suspicion and mistrust due to political leanings is at an all-time high and very worrisome. The adversary can only prey on our lack of response to these situations. However, we can do better by responding with wisdom, and by building systems for structural reform.

Although with so many changes that are happening in our political process lately, I would enjoin all our leaders to re-double their commitment in forming strong allies with leaders with credibility for the common good, doing everything they could to bring us to the shore, influencing nations, understanding political permutations, engaging in innovative economic reforms, reviving our infrastructure while preventing every atom of corruption. Such leaders will not merely be heroes, they will be forever cherished.

This should begin with us engaging members of other faiths in constructive dialogue on issues such as security, skills acquisition, poverty eradication, and education. We must never forget that we are not just the light of the church; but the light of the world. When a leadership that is impacting a nation is trying to engage all stake holders in nation building, it is rewarding that we embrace such dialogue.

Let me conclude by submitting that it is way too late for anyone to Islamize our great nation, Nigeria. And it will help if we stop propagating this anecdotal rumor, which breeds fear, despair and above all spread hatred and inhibits our primary mission; soul winning. Let's invest our energies gainfully and for the

glory of our Lord Savior.
With gratitude to God.
It is working...

Appendix B



Figure B1. How has religion played a role in Donald Trump's presidency? (Source: America Magazine).



Figure B2. White during her controversial political prayer session (Source: BBC).



Figure B3. Most Kenyan Churches Ban Politicians from Pulpits, except for Methodists (Source: Christianity Today).



Figure B4. Former President of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan visits Lord's Chosen Church, says politicians should not use churches for campaigns (Source: Daily Post Nigeria).



Figure B5. Can political candidates speak at churches? (Source: Religion News Service; Credit: Reuters).