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Statement of Purpose

The aim of the Department of Religion & Human Values at the University of Cape Coast is to promote excellence in the study of religion and human values. The Department is concerned with making the study of religion relevant to the social, economic and political needs of society. In doing this, the Department promotes research on religion and society in the areas of Ethics and Philosophy, African Tradition Religion, Islam and Christianity both as separate phenomena and in so far as there has been and continues to be a cross-fertilisation between these faiths.

The policy of this journal is therefore to give equal opportunity and space to scholars in these fields to present scholarly and insightful research in these areas of study. Every effort shall therefore be made to ensure that every edition of the journal has at least one article from each of these areas. This is the second edition of the journal. The journal is published once in a year. We hope to maintain far the articles we publish are concerned. Our aim is to make this journal very high standard of scholarship and originality as the journal of reference in Africa as far as the study of religions is concerned.

Oguaa is the ancient and indigenous name of Cape Coast. It is the name by which the natives refer to their town. In Ghana, Oguaa is the citadel of learning and academic excellence. We have thus named the journal, the Oguaa Journal of Religion and Human Values, first to recognize its setting as being within the Oguaa Traditional Area, and secondly to reflect the town's tradition of academic excellence, which this journal hopes to promote.

Author Guidelines

This journal adopts the footnoting style of citation, following the Kate Turabian style or Chicago Manual of Style (15th Edition). The full bibliographical detail of the book or journal is cited in the first instance and subsequently, only the last name of the author and the first two or three words of the title and page number is provided. If more than one book by the same author is used, they should be differentiated by their titles. For example, if one used Amina Wadud, *Qur'an & Woman: Re-reading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Amina Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam* (Oxford: One world Publications, 2006). The first time any of these books is cited, the full bibliographical detail should be given. Thereafter, they should be distinguished in the following manner: Wadud, *Qur'an & Woman...*p.7 and Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad...*p.45. We accept both American and British spellings. However, it is important that contributors maintain a consistency of spelling.

An electronic copy of the article should be sent to: oguaajournal@gmail.com or oguaajournal@yahoo.co.uk.

EDITORIAL

This second edition of the Oguaa Journal or Religion and Human Values covers very important issues for consideration in academia and for the development of society. The issue or salvation in world religions has been an issue for centuries. The so called monotheistic religions for example laid an almost exclusive claim to salvation. Chiedozie Okoro challenge assumption. He argues that African indigenous conceptions of salvation more inclusive and hold a better key to understanding salvation than the so called monotheistic religions.

Cremation is one of the forms by which humans dispose of the dead. However, among the Mafi-Ewe of Ghana, cremation means more than mere disposal of a dead body. It is a form of punishment that the society metes out to people who were believed to have committed a heinous crime during their lifetime. And what could be more heinous than taking human life? Harry Agbanu examines the concept of cremation among the Mafi-

Ewe, which is called amememe and its significance for the people as they deal with the realities of crime and death.

For Islam, seeking of knowledge is part of worship and the first Qur'anic commandment that the Prophet of Islam received was a commandment to seek knowledge. Subsequently, the Prophet instructed his followers to seek knowledge even if they might travel to China. Abdulsalam Hashir argues that, there is no excuse for not educating a child. He provides a framework for education within Islam, which will help raise all rounded children with a sound moral character.

There is the general notion that women are marginalised and often at the periphery of decision making in Africa. Using the Akan as an example, Vincent Assanful proves that the notion that women are at the periphery of decision making in Africa is not entirely true. He uses the Obaahemaa's Stool as a concept that clearly explains the power and authority that women hold in some African societies.

In "Salvation in Catholicism & Islam: A Challenge for Better Human Relations in Nigeria," Patrick U. Nwosu argues that we can exploit the concept of salvation to promote peaceful co-existence among Christians and Muslims in Africa and the rest of the world.

Augustine Mary-Mensan takes up the issue of interpretation. Interpretation is at the heart of most religions. Every interaction with scripture is an opportunity for interpretation. How people behave and act within religious sphere depends on their understanding of scripture. Translations have often provided the source for understanding scripture, since most adherents of world faiths cannot read and understand texts in the original languages of the religions that they profess. Mary-Mensah argues that mistranslations can render a totally different meaning to scripture, other than its canonical intent. He uses the death of Rachel in the Bible to amply demonstrate this point.

This second edition of the Oguaa Journal of Religion and Human Values is a must read for academics, students and policy makers alike. It has an important wealth of resource for shaping the future of African societies.

GOD IN HUMAN EXISTENCE:

A HERMENEUTIC APPRAISAL OF THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

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Abstract

This essay intends to do a hermeneutic delineation of the doctrine of salvation in a pluralistic world. It operates on the assumption that reality is multidimensional, just as human belief systems and cultural perspectives are diverse. More importantly, is the point that most counties on the African continent house a potpourri of belief systems, prominent among which are Christianity, Islam and Traditional African religion. Again, the essay neither intends to examine the meaning of God nor is it interested in analysing how God manifests Himself in human existence. Rather, the basic objective is to consider the various ways in which salvation has been conceived in relation to the human condition. In the process of our delineation, it shall be shown that salvation as a doctrine can be conceived from two principal angles: (a) the perspective of religion and (b) secularist perspective. Whereas the first presents an other-worldly account of salvation, the second presents this-worldly account of salvation. The import here is that since in the most ordinary sense, God is all about perfection and human goodness, it implies that the quest for salvation in whatever dimension, deliberately or inadvertently, amounts to the search for God. Consequently, the burden of this essay is to show that salvation is an ideal state of reality which humankind is striving to attain. Bearing in mind that humans as free beings have the capacity to interpret salvation either anthropocentrically or theocentrically, thereby, making the myriad presentations of salvation possible; one is of the view that metaphysical notions of reality are also contagious of salvation. Hence, for monists and reductionists the way to salvation is narrow and single, while for the pluralists the way to salvation may be narrow but diverse. Thus, since the hermeneutic

appraisal of salvation is hinged on the assumption that belief systems are diverse and multi-faceted, the essay preferences the pluralistic presentation of salvation over and above the monistic presentation of salvation.

Introduction

A hermeneutic delineation of any issue is meant to yield interpretations which are intended to reveal or bring to light facts which hitherto appear hidden. The hermeneutic procedure is sometimes referred as the dialectics of concentric circles because, the hermeneutic method is usually cyclical in projection, propped up by the principle of duality, which in turn, mutates on a trilogy. The trilogy in the hermeneutic procedure comprises analysis, revelation and synthesis. This makes the hermeneutic discussion to proceed in circles or simply cyclical. The cyclic nature of hermeneutic discourse shows that things in the universe are interconnected. This is in spite of the conflict in the universe. In essence, the hermeneutic method does not see the conflict of opposites as antagonistic. Hermeneutic appraisal of events or arguments sees the conflict of opposites as natural and therefore, complementary. The complementarity of opposites in this instance, defines what we have designated as the concept of duality in hermeneutic discourse.

Due to the peculiar nature of the hermeneutic procedure, Martin Heidegger makes strict distinction between logos as logic and logos as discourse. The former depicts logos as ratio, logical deliberation or ratiocination, while the latter portrays logos as understanding, intelligibility, that which reveals or brings a thing into light. This act of revealing things in a new light is designated by Heidegger as the hermeneutic situation."

Accordingly, he explains that: "The function of logos as discourse' is to make clear that which is talked about." The distinction made between logos as logic and logos as discourse marks the difference between traditional logic and hermeneutics. Whereas the former delights in critical discussion of issues, the latter moves from critical discussion of issues to interpreting issues in a new light in such a way that vistas of images are opened up, which would crystallize into new concepts.

Expectedly, the hermeneutic appraisal of salvation is bound to proceed cyclically and in this concentric cyclical delineation, new interpretations

¹. Martin Heidegger, *Being & Time* (trans) J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 275

². *Ibid.*, 59

Shall be created which would seem to deflate existing platitudes. Nevertheless, the intent is not to foist meaning upon existing theories, but to review them in a new light. Besides, the subjection or the doctrine of salvation to be hermeneutic crucible, privileges the juxtaposition of views, thereby, making the procedure of our discourse rigorous and the language terse. The rigour of discourse and the terseness of language here posited, derive from the fact that our act of theorizing intersperses three principle philosophy, religion and politics. The objective is to examine how philosophical discourse can assist in fashioning out a way of mitigating religious conflict, which in turn generates political unrest, thereby, making our discourse to be speculative, comprehensive and technical.

Furthermore, the hermeneutic appraisal or Salvation is meant to be existential, it is neither existentialist nor is It about existentialism. The noun existence or human existence in general. The word existentialist can either be a noun or an adjective. As a noun it refers to a philosopher who belongs in the school existentialism itself. The term existentialism, on the other hand, is “a philosophical movement which begun in the 19th century centre on individual existence that denies that the universe has any intrinsic meaning or purpose, it requires people to take for their own actions and shape their own destinies Microsoft Encarta Premium, 2009). This means that whereas the word existential refers to the totality of human existence or human existence in general, existentialism would refer to a thought process for speculating about human existence, while existentialist describes the person who speculates about human existence as well as this act of speculating about human existence.

From the hermeneutic point of view therefore, we regard salvation as the soul or mind of humankind striving to attain an ideal state of reality. It is a transition and a transformation to perfection. In religious terms, perfection would mean a state of total freedom, emancipation and finality, beyond which there is no further change. But from the secular point of view, perfection is ongoing activity to which there is no end. In phenomenological terms, we Speak of the theory of self-reflexivity as that way of cultivating the attitude of

watch over self otherwise described as the attitude of a vigilance. Again, in religion, humans as finite, sentient and imperfect, yet free beings, strive ceaselessly towards the attainment of perfection by way of letting their souls harmonize with an ideal state of infinite, perfect and absolute reality called God. Religion assumes that man is finite and imperfect, this accounts for the reason why man strives to attain a state that is infinite and perfect. Religious notion of salvation as such is the struggle of the finite to become infinite, the imperfect to become perfect and the transformation of the mortal into the immortal, the immanent into the transcendent etc.

Religiously, man conjectures that there are “this world” and “the other world”, “the world of there” and “the world of here”. In this sense, salvation becomes the struggle by man to attain the statues of the God reality. Hence, the bases for religious notion of salvation include factors such as evil, sin, judgment and after life. Because there is afterlife, there is death (i.e a transition from mortal to immortal). Besides, concepts such as hope and faith (in the unknown) make sense because there is eternal life. Perhaps it is in this sense that Norris Clerke states as follows:

In some real and genuine way God is affected positively by what we do, that he receives love from us and experiences Joy precisely because of our responses; in a word, that his consciousness is contingently and qualitatively different because of what we do... it is that God is constantly working in and through us with his Supportive and collaborative power, supporting both being and action or every creature. But he allows this power to be determinately channeled by the respective natures, especially the free will decisions of creatures. God lets us be according to our own free initiatives (1977: 92 & 96).

In religion, God as infinite spirit supposedly stands detached from, yet directs the affairs of mortals who are expected to call upon their free-will and Use their initiatives to bring into reality God's plan. This sounds paradoxical if not contradictory. To overcome this anomaly in religious notion of salvation, secularism makes the quest for salvation an entirely human affair. Hence, in the Kantian sense, we say, the quest for salvation is a self-imposed obligation.

Secularism treats salvation as the struggle by humans towards self realisation, self-actualisation and self-emancipation, which should result into the improvement of the human condition. This may be the reason why contrary to Sartre, Heidegger appraises death in a positive sense. From the Heideggerian perspective, death is regarded as a

natural process of ensuring the survival and continuity of the human race. The fact is that without death the earth will become impossible and uncomfortable. Death inspires our hopes, it makes us to be resolute and focused, and it rekindles. This view of Heidegger seems to confirm the secularist position that salvation is entirely a this-worldly affair. Perhaps, it is along this line of thought that Sartre completely rejects the idea of a cosmic policeman who oversees human affairs. Sartre and most existentialists see the cosmos and the things therein as utensils for the use of humans. Faith then becomes ambition, while hope is propelled by aspirations.

Nevertheless, religion and secularism hold issues as void or nothingness, culture and morality, and Judgment and punishment as germane to the doctrine of salvation, though with some degree of differences. The void or nothingness we talk about here simply refers to a primeval state or point from which formation began, regarded to be boundless and limitless. For instance, in the Egyptian and Christian cosmogonies, the cosmology of Thales of Miletus and Darwin's evolution theory, water remains a primary stuff from which all things evolved. And whereas Thales identified water as the elementary substance from which every other thing derives, the Egyptian cosmogony states that life began from "primordial abyss, Nun boundless and the hidden, while tefnut (air) however over the face of the void. Again, the Christian cosmogony states that in the beginning "the earth was without form, and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Genesis 1: 2). Following Darwin's evolution theory, extensive geological investigation shows that in the early geosynclinal period, the water that permeated the earth's surface continually transported dissolved substances from their places of formation to their places of accumulation and concentration. Beyond the biological stage of evolution, the physical perspective states thus: "In the beginning it was dark and cold. There was no sun, no light, no earth, and no solar system. There was nothing. Just the empty void of space. The foregoing simply shows that both secularism and religion accept void, emptiness or nothingness, as a primordial beginning point,

1.C. Onyewuenyi, *The African Origin of Greek Philosophy: An Exercise in Afrocentricism* (Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press, 1994), 179

E.K Ogundowole, "The Origin & Definition of Man" in *Man, History & Philosophy of Science: A Compendium of Readings* (ed), E. K Ogundowole (Lagos: UNILAG Department of Philosophy, 2002),6

Bilt wiliams, Stage Lighting Design, Parts 1-4, Editions 2c & 2d, 1999, 1 (Internet)

implying that the quest for salvation is in actual fact, the search for the ultimate beginnings, and in that line of thought, also signifies the quest for the ultimate end.

Besides, whereas both secularism and religion agree that tolerance and discipline are required for peaceful-co-existence, social harmony, social stability, societal progress and good neighbourliness; religion, on its part goes a step further to state that the aforementioned merely helps to prepare us for salvation in the hereafter. For this reason, religion advocates that living a pious or holy life is a basic criterion for overcoming sin, meaning that once anyone is capable of leading a sinless life; such individual is qualified to enter into heaven. Secularism, on its part, may not bother so much about after life, its basic concern therefore, would center on living a fulfilled life guided by reason here on earth.

Furthermore, whereas secularism and religion regard punishment and judgment as measures for controlling human conduct for the purpose of societal cohesion; religion, however, further assumes that there is judgment in the hereafter (i.e. the last day) and eternal punishment for sinners. In line with this eschatological discourse, Christianity speaks of the Second Coming of Christ, while Islam speaks of the coming of the Mahdi. The eschatological discourse is taken to a different dimension by Marxism. According to Chinwezu Marxism presents a secularist perspective to the issues of God, prophet, priesthood and heaven.

For though it is officially atheistic or Even anti-theistic, Marxism has history as its God, Marx as its Prophet, Leninists as its Priesthood, the Kremlin as its Holy of Holies, Red square as its Mecca and Communism as its Heaven

Marxism opines that the contradictions characteristic of human history will be overcome with the emergence of the communist state. But it appears that there is controversy about what Marx really meant by the communist state. E. K. Ogundowole explains that the Moscow institute of Marxism Leninism and Martin Milligan hold that by communism Marx meant "crude

Chinwezu, "Gender & Monotheism: The Assault by Monotheism on African Gender Diarchy" in Anatomy of Female Power (New Edition) (Lagos: Pero Press, 2005), 145

equalitarian communism." Dirk J. Struck and Donald Hodges, on their part hold a Contrary view. In the view of these two Since Marx speaks of Communism as the necessary shape of the next future, as the negation of negation, communism for Marx may well mean human emancipation beyond the abolition of private property, after alienation has been conquered.

The latter assertion of Dirk Struck and Donald Hodges about communism made available by Ogundowole, seems to capture more appropriately Marx's view. As Marx (1969) states in the 1844 Paris Manuscript:

Communism is the necessary pattern and the Dynamic principle of the immediate future, but communism as such is not the goal of Human development the structure of human society.

It can only then be inferred that for Marxism, communism in way, represents an ideal state of affairs called heaven. This teleological view of Marx which states that the dialectics of matter and history will culminate at the evolution of communism has come under serious criticism. Some like Chinwezu describe Marxism as a secularist religion. And by this statement, Chinwezu means that Marxism is merely an atheistic and secularist representation of Judaism and Christianity. Just as Judaism and Christianity speak of the end of the world, so too does Marxism.

It would seem then that Marxism presents a more consistent secularist account of the doctrine of salvation. However, it is interesting to note that existentialists, particularly Sartre and Heidegger, disagree with this Marxian description of human existence. For existentialists, human existence precedes human essence. Besides, existence is an ongoing activity which cannot be achieved outside human history. From the existentialist perspective therefore, salvation is not just a self imposed obligation, rather, as Sartre posits, the non-existence of God puts on humans the heavy burden of the endless quest for freedom. The quest for freedom is endless because every new stage of existence that humans attain presents higher levels of challenges.

***E.K Ogundowole, Self-Reliancism: Philosophy of a New Order (Lagos: John West Publications, 1988), 88
Ibid.,***

Religious Interpretations of Salvation

In this segment, we make an evaluation of the doctrine of salvation within some world religions from two principal perspectives namely (a) monistic or monotheistic religions to which belong Judaism, Christianity and Islam (b) non-monistic or non-monotheistic religions to which belong Confucianism, Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism and Traditional African Religion. The term non monistic or non-monotheistic is used instead of the term polytheism because; it is sometimes argued that Confucianism, Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism are not religions in the strict sense, let alone being polytheistic. Besides, it can also be argued that Traditional African Religion is not polytheistic, but pluralistic and humanistic. This point has been aptly made in another paper titled "The Critique of Monotheism as the most Advance form of Religion". For now, our focus is on the object of the segment of this paper which is intended to examine the religious perspectives to salvation. This apart, monistic religions create a dichotomy between here (i.e. earth) and the hereafter (i.e. heaven), in which case, for these religions the universe progresses upon a linear dialectical scale. Non-monistic religions, on the other hand, do not create a polarity between this-world and the other-world, in which case, non-monistic religions assume that the universe progresses cyclically or on a scale of the dialectics of concentric circles. However, in both monistic and non-monistic religions, belief systems or thought processes are built around some personalities who are regarded as saviours, prophets, sages or divinities. We now proceed to the treatment of the object of this segment, which is about the religious evaluation of salvation.

Finitude makes humans seek eternity. But finite humans have an infinite essence which is metaphysical or spiritual. To realise this infinite essence in concrete terms, humans project their metaphysical essence into the supervoid. Perhaps, it is based on the foregoing that J. I. Unah states as follows:

There is a divine essence in man which he tries to actualize in his daily commerce with the world. The universally recognized institution for the actualization of such divine essence is religion

The above merely re-enacts the assertion of Feuerbach that God is nothing but the alienation of our metaphysical qualities. To paraphrase Sartre, emptiness like a void lies deep in the heart of humans, which makes

.L Unah, *Essays in Philosophy (Lagos: Panat incorporation, 1995), 74*

them seek after eternity. Besides, the mysterious nature of the universe fills humans with awe. In this perplexity over the mystery and awesomeness of the universe, humans explore into the void that lies within and conjecture of a supernatural essence which is the source or at things. Thus, like Sigmund Freud posits, humans conjecture of a fatherly figure in whom they trust and depend. Perhaps, it is in this sense that religion speaks of a heavenly father who oversees human activities. The latter point is succinctly captured by John B. Noss in the following words:

All religions say in one way or another that man does not, and cannot, stand alone. He is vitally related with and even dependent on powers in Nature and Society external to himself. Dimly or clearly, he knows that he is not an independent center of force capable of standing apart from the world

Almost all religions talk about man's mythological fall from glory. For this reason, all of our earthly existence consists in the endless struggle to re-attain the glory that was lost. The religions then outline piety or righteousness as a criterion for re-attaining the lost state of glory. This means that religion as a social institution has an earthly purpose. The aforementioned point is amplified by Nurudeen Alao who states thus: "There is a common grape that is at the heart of every religionist. That grape is often buried under a heap of procedural verbiage. The grape that is common to all religions is not in their rituals; the grape is in their common object of helping man to actualise the divine in him, of assisting man to ascend to the pedestal of goodness. It lies in the objective of making each man his brother's keeper and of eradicating all evils in the society." The foregoing point is also reiterated by J. . Unah thus: a socio-philosophical survey of religions the world all over would reveal that all religions have a common Object: (a) that of enabling man to rise to the pedestal of goodness and eradicating all evils in society, (b) that of assisting in moulding social

John B. Noss, Mankind's Search for God (New York: Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, 1990), 14
N. Alao, "Designing Peace, Tolerance & Understanding" being introduction to
Nigerian Studies in Religious Tolerance Vol 1: Religions & their Doctrines (ed) C.s
Momoh, M.S Zahradeen & S.O Abogunrin (Lagos: Centre for Black African Arts a
Civilisation & National Association of Religious Tolerance, 1988), .

behavior and (c) that of ensuring a dialogical and meaningful human relationship. Along this line of thought, . D. P. Bah outlines five characteristics of religion thus:

1. The conceptions of God (or the gods).
2. The conceptions of man in relation to the cosmic order (stressing more the spiritual than the corporeal nature of man).
3. Human behavior founded either on human or non-human reality.
4. The aim of a particular religion in relation to man's earthly life.
5. The destiny of man, that is, as it pertains to individual and collective goals for our earthly existence.

There are a number of ways in which philosophy helps to orient religious notions of salvation. In the first place, metaphysics helps religion to address the nature of reality; epistemology by its probing nature helps to substantiate religious knowledge; ethics as the science of morality assists religion in upholding the debate about good conduct; logic on its part provides the thought process upon which to institute a religious plan of action. Again, a combination of metaphysical and epistemological principles helps to prop up the debate on mind-body relationship which further substantiates arguments in religion about the dual nature of man. For instance, idealism and rationalism would easily support the idea about the immortality of the soul or that God is spirit. Materialism and epiphenomenalism, on the other hand, would readily dispute the point about soul, implying that they would logically reject the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. In the same vein, ethics, by explaining why we must live a moral life, provides a basis upon which religion makes a case for a blissful life in the hereafter,

Furthermore, most Idealistic philosophies see matter as being antithetical to spirit or mind. This, at least, is true of the philosophies of Hegel and Plotinus. In like manner and as earlier stated, almost all religions see the world as evil and human nature as essentially sinful. To be clean, humans have to go through some sort of spiritual purification. By Christian standard

J. I. Unah, Essays in Philosophy...74

.D.P Bah, "Religion, God & Foreign Culture in Africa" in Philosophy & Metaphysics: A Critical Introduction (Lagos: Obaroh & Obinaka Publishers Ltd, 1997), 577-158

for instance, humans, by nature, are said to be sinful, meaning that we are incapable of holiness or any good act, except through the grace of Christ who is the way to God. The central theme of the Pauline epistles is that grace comes only through Christ. In his epistle to the Romans one is righteous all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But by the free gift of God's grace all are put right with him through Christ who sets them free (Romans : 23 to 24). One way to be righteous is through Jesus Christ is to be "born again" (John 3: 3). Once born again, is believed to be washed clean by Jesus blood. The grace of God abounds for all because "God so loved the world that he gave his only gotten that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have eternal life" John 3:16). Through Jesus Christ comes grace, righteousness and eternal life or salvation. Christ is the saviour who redeems humankind and sets sinners free from the bondage of Satan. Christianity therefore contends that self-discipline or self righteousness is like a filthy rag before God. The only way to amazing grace and salvation is through Jesus Christ.

But within Christendom a debate ensues between Catholicism, Protestantism and Pentecostalism as to the correct interpretation of salvation. This point is aptly made by Francis Schaeffer in his work *Escaped from Reason* (1968). In what he calls the struggle between the upper and lower chambers, which depicts the struggle between nature and grace, faith and reason, Schaeffer explains the difference in perspectives between Catholic Humanism and what he calls the "autonomous of Protestantism Within Catholic Humanism, Thomas Aquinas represents the point at which Platonism and Aristotelianism converge. In Aquinas, says Schaeffer, though there is a unity between nature and grace, but grace is placed over nature. This means that God is over and above man. In spite of the fall of man, he (man) still has the intelligence (i.e. portraying independence or

autonomy to rationalise about the grace of God, which in Schaeffer's view, portrays Aquinas as one who truly represents "the real birth of humanistic Renaissance. But with John Calvin and Calvinism, emerged the Reformation's view of salvation which is opposed to the Renaissance view. "The Reformation repudiated both the Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic presentation... It said that the root of the trouble sprang from the old and growing Humanism in the Roman Catholic Church, and the incomplete theory of the fall in Aquinas's theology which set loose an autonomous man.

The Reformation accepted the biblical picture of a total fall. The whole man and

F.A Schaeffer, Escape from Reason (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968),. 10

been made by God, but now the whole man is fallen, including his intellect and will... only God was autonomous."6 Thus, contrary to the Catholic and Aquinas's notions of humanism, which set us free, the Reformation holds the view that there was no autonomous person. By the expression autonomous freedom is meant a freedom in which the individual is the centre of the universe. Autonomous freedom is freedom without restraint."

The line was thus drawn between Catholic "orthodoxy" and the "religious existentialism" or "the modernism" of Protestantism and Pentecostalism "Aquinas opened the door to an independent man downstairs, a natural theology and philosophy which were both autonomous from the scriptures. But the Reformation denies knowledge of such a theology and philosophy. With this emergent dichotomy says Schaeffer: "Religious truth is separated from the historical truth of the Scriptures. Thus there is no place for reason and there is no point of verification. This constitutes the leap in religious terms."

Whereas for Catholicism, salvation is won through "the Revelation of God in Christ alone Christ died for our salvation, but man had to merit the merit of Christ." This involves a divided work of salvation in which the humanistic element is very important. The Reformation, on the other hand, tries to overcome the dualism in the Renaissance, a process in which Humanism becomes the modern man's sorrow. For the Reformation, "God made the whole man and the whole man is important he is interested in the whole man, and the result is unity. The Reformers held a contrary view about man's redemption. For them, salvation is a finished work, man has no part in it other than to accept and believe in the finished work of Christ. Opposed to Catholicism, the emphasis for the

Reformers is "Scripture Alone and Faith Alone. In this new Scheme of things, comments Schaeffer:

No autonomous or humanistic, religious or moral effort of man can help; one is saved on the basis of the finished work of Christ as he died in space and time in history and the only way to be saved is to

O F. A Shaeffer, Escape from Reason...19

Ibid., 4

Ibid., 51

Ibid.

2bid., 20

bid., 28-29

22 Ibid.

raise the empty hands of faith and, by God's grace, to accept God's free gift Faith Alone.

Schaeffer further asserts that the campaign for faith as the criterion winning salvation attained its climax in the philosophy of Soren Kierk or who placed faith over and above reason. According to Schaeffer Kierkegaard was concerned with the fact that reason had overshot bounds. He therefore, refuted the absolutism and obscurantism that characterised Catholicism and Hegelianism. Again, within the arena of religion, Kierkegaard was concerned with the meddlesomeness of sacrament, church and the clergy in the relationship between believer and their God. Thus for Kierkegaard, organised or centralised religion is a fraud in agreement with this line of thought J .. Unah posits as follows:

The gist of Kierkegaard's polemics against organised Christianity is that it puts emphasis on numerical strength which weakness the paradox in the passion and that such emphasis on number is a counterfeiting of Christianity and distancing of God.

With the advent of Christian modernism or religious existentialism, the era of Christian "born again" religion emerged, which is more pronounced in Pentecostalism than in Protestantism. Christian Pentecostalism is known for the dictum is it in the bible? The assumption is that all that we need to know is already contained in the Bible. Therefore, all that we require is to confess that Jesus Christ is lord and saviour. This was how absolute

faith entered into the Christianity. AS time wore on, absolute faith became blind faith. Little wonder existentialists describe Christian religious faith as a blind leap into a dark hole. In this wise, there is no much difference between Christian notion of salvation and that of Judaism and Islam which see salvation as deriving from total surrender to the will of Yahweh or the will of Allah. One cannot even think of believing or not believing in God, because, humans as part of God's creation remain significant, insofar as they surrender to the will of God. By implication, our quest for salvation merely part of God's plan.

ibid.

J. Iunah, Essays in Philosophy..35

Consequently, when Feuerbach in *The Essence of Christianity* compares Christianity with Judaism, and goes ahead to describe Christianity as the religion of "a free-thinker, of criticism and of freedom which distinguishes inward moral purity from external physical purity, "one understands this assertion to be indicative of Christian orthodoxy, not Christian existentialism. Feuerbach describes Judaist notion of salvation thus: "The israelite trusted himself to do nothing except what was commanded by God; he was without will even in external things; the authority of religion extended even to his food." The above assertion is likewise true of Islam and Christian Pentecostalism. For these two, God controls the totality of our lives; He (God) knows every minute detail of our lives.

The religions of the Far East and Traditional African Religion seem to hold Views that differ from those of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Unlike the Semitic and Hellenic religions, the African and Asian religions do not believe in the termination of the physical universe. Rather than speak of the final termination of the physical world and the evolution of a purely spiritual world, African and Asian religions hold that the physical universe is inconstant evolution, such that it keeps augmenting the spiritual world. Again, for African and Asian religions, prophets and messiahs do not play so much important roles. Salvation is won individually through self-discipline, not by belief in any prophet or messiah or God for that matter. This is so because God -the great essence is already in every individual person as a little or accomplished life to win salvation. Further, unlike the semitic and Hellenic religions, African and Asian religions do not speak of an appointed date for final judgment, nor do they distinguish between eternal salvation and eternal damnation or

perdition. There is no eternal punishment anywhere either here or in the hereafter, Punishment is here and now. By the law of retributive justice or karma, each soul keeps reincarnating until it attains perfection or salvation. It is in this sense that Hinduism speaks of samsara, Buddhism of anata and Traditional African Religion of the ancestral world.

25 Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1989),
Ibid.

Within the confines of Traditional African Religion for instance, God is a "Wholly Other" who is both transcendent and immanent. To buttress this point. Eboh makes reference to the Igbo ontological world view of the cosmos thus:

Chi is seen as a small big-life. Chukwu is Life, Life Per se, Lye rar excellence. Every other the Big-thing that exists has a life in so "portions out or allows t a share of the bio life. So, chi 1s the tre prinCiple which is given to everything that exXists by the Big-Life Principlee Par Excellence, or cni 1s d Fortioned out life" ineverything, "a small Big-LIJe in everything.

The above aptly captures the African thought process which regards the world to be organic or alive. This makes African religious world view to be cosmological, whereby, the visible and the invisible are intertwined. Salvation is thus a process or cyclical progression in which a soul through a centrifugal and centripetal movement (1.e. reincarnation) until it attains perfection. An accomplished soul passes on to the ancestral world a the past, souls awaiting rebirth belong to the spirit world as the future, while living mortals represent the present.

For Hinduism, salvation 1s a matter of relationship between Brahman and Atman, technically rendered as Brahman-Atman. Brahman-Atman is the "the doctrine in the Upanishads of the connection between the universe and humanity, the ultimate and the individual God and man Atman is the true inner self of all." St. Elmo explains that "Brahman is God, the ultimate, without attributes or any quality representing the image of man, described by any human words or categories of thought." Atman, on the other hand, represents the ultimate principle translated as self or soul. What St. Elmo means to say here is that atman defines the identity and individuality of things. But this does not mean that atman is more ultimate

B. O Eboh, "God in Igbo Ontology" being a paper delivered at an international Conference organised by the Nigernan Philosophical Association at the University of Lagos Conference Centre, 1993, 3

28 Ibid., 4

Nauman st Elmo, Dictionary of Asian Philosophies (London: Routledge t Nega Paul, 1979), 21

Ibid., 20-21

than Brahman because, "every atman whether in man, beast, fish, insect or plant, is one with the infinite" that is, Brahman, since atman as the identity and individuality of things derives its source from Brahman, it means that the totality of existence is represented by Brahman-Atman, By logical entailment, it also means that Brahman-Atman alone exists and "if Brahman Atman alone exists, the universe can be said to be one with unity of purpose. In Hinduism therefore, salvation is attained when atman becomes one with Brahman or attains a state of unity with Brahman. To buttress this point St. Etmo makes reference to Martin Luther King Jr, who in one of his sermons described Hindu notion of salvation thus, "On the Hindu view, truth lies within. Self-realisation is the supreme goal. One reaches ultimate reality by an inward journey. This inward ascent is marked by discipline and persistence."

Confucianism is mostly regarded as an ethical than spiritual religion. It is rather concerned with realising ones purpose on earth and about how societal existence can be organised for the good of all, Confucius describes human self-actualisation in the following words; "If you have become one with the infinite, you have no personal likes and dislikes. If you have become one with the great Evolution (of the Universe), you are one who merely follow its changes. "

Confucianism as such is more concerned with the search for useful knowledge to "self" and to "others", About this matter St Elmo makes Chu His's view about Confucian conception of salvation assessable as follows: "Great Ultimate involves both matter and form.. it is the principle of things to be actualised, than to remain purely a potential. Actualisation then requires both principles (1.e. matter and form or the mind of Heaven and Earth) as its actuality." Chu His goes ahead to accuse other Asian religions of having anti-social tendencies. According to him, Buddhism for instance, "held nature to be empty whereas Confucianism held it to be active and full of potentialities." The point is that Buddhism portrays more of an idealistic philosophy than a religion. Perhaps, it is 15 For this

reason that Buddhism is fondly referred to as an atheistic religion. It does not hold in gods or God, it has no notion of messiah Or prophet who acts as intermediary between

Ibid., 7

Ibid., 7-8

Ibid., 8

Ibid., 8

bid., 8

Ibid.

Humans and their creator or through whom humans come to gain salvation. Buddhism is entirely about self-development, it is about self-reliance, and its aim is to train humans on the act of self-mastery. To attain the state of perfection which in Buddhist terms is called nirvana, individual souls must rely on “self” or the “overself”. For this reason, Buddhish pays homage to man’s overself. This can be seen in the Buddhist chant – Om1 Mani Pad-me Hum – meaning “Hail to man’s overself. For Buddhism, therefore, our souls keep going through a circle of rebirth unit it tattains the state of mirvana. The way to attain nirvana is through internal self-discipline or “integral yoga”.

In *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1968) Emile Durkheim sheds further light on the Buddhist notion of salvation. He explains that though Buddhists recognise the importance of figures such as Buddha, Indra Agni and Varuna but not as prophets or messiahs. For Buddhists, these figures are important only as they show the way to Self-mastery. Buddhists believe that though Buddha founded Buddhism, but he wasn't one perfect he became perfect, he wasn't eternal, ne became immortal. This means that for Buddhists, salvation is gained through self-development, self. actualisation and self-realisation. The focus for the Buddhists is not Buddha, but the attainment of the state of nirvana realised through the observance of the tenets of Buddhism. It is in the light of this that Durkheim wrote:

Buddhism consists primarily in the idea of salvation, and salvation supposes only that one knows the good doctrine and praise it. To be sure, this could never have been known if Buddha had not come to reveal it; but when this revelation had once been made the work of Buddha was accomplished. From that moment he ceased to be a factor necessary to

the religious life. The practice of the four holy truths would be possible, even if the memory of him who revealed them were completely obliterated."

3T. L. Rampa, *The Third Eye* (London: Gorgi Books, 1956), 10

Nauman St Etmo, *Dictionary...*9

Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 47

In Buddhism, nirvana as a state of perfection is not represented in any mage, ether of God or of man. It rather represents an ideal state of perfection comparable to Plato's *eidōs*. A typical Buddhist sees the world as a place of suffering and all he/she intends to do is to escape from this hellish world to a state that bears no resemblance whatever to this world. But in this giant stride towards perfection, the individual alone is capable of winning his/her salvation. All one needs to do is to practice the four cardinal truths which include the following:

(a) that suffering is an accompaniment to the perpetual change of things, (b) that human desire is the cause of suffering, (c) that the suppression of desires is the only means to suppressing sorrows, and (d) the three stages once traversed, one arrives at the end of the road, at the deliverance, at salvation by Nirvana.

Another Asian religion which has a similar conception of the world and of life as Buddhism is Jainism. Jainism is one of the great Indian religions. The striking thing here is that Jains behave like Buddhists. Durkheim makes Barth's view on this matter assessable as follows:

Like the Buddhists, the Jains are atheists. They admit of no creators; the world is eternal; they explicitly deny the possibility of a perfect being from the beginning. The Jain became perfect; he was not always so.

According to Durkheim, Barth further explains that the attitudes and beliefs of Buddhists and Jains are quite contrary to that of Christians. The point here is that Christianity is "inconceivable without the ever present idea of Christ and his ever-practiced cult; for it is by the ever-living Christ sacrificed each day that the community of believers continues to communicate with the supreme source alt life."

Ibid.,

Ibid., 48

Ibid., 47-48

From our evaluation of religious notions of salvation it can be seen that every religion has its own conception of salvation. The same can be said of secularist notion of salvation to which we now turn.

Secularist Interpretations of Salvation

Secularism as a philosophical tenet can be regarded as those theories concerned with the analysis of our perpetual struggle towards freedom and perfection. In secularist delineation of salvation, the question of freedom cannot be separated from the question of perfection. Perfection in this instance is a never ending quest towards the actualisation of human freedom. In secularist terms, therefore, and especially from the Sartrean perspective, what religion classifies as absolute freedom, that is, the doctrine that man can attain eternal bliss in heaven, turns out to be prison life from which man must liberate himself. For philosophers as Kant, Hegel and the existentialists, human freedom is an endless quest. Since for the secularists the questions of perfection and freedom are intertwined, it follows that the search for perfection is a continuum.

Before Hegel and Kierkegaard, Immanuel Kant attempted in his philosophy to posit a basis for secularism. Kant asserted that the human mind is active, meaning that phenomena appear to us according to the spectacles of our minds. What he means to say here is that we as the editors of reality, decide what truth and value are. By this assertion, Kant gave back to us the moral freedom which Newtonian Mechanics and Copernicus heliocentric theory denied us. Besides, Kant in the Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View made a distinction between physiological anthropology and psychological anthropology. The former evaluates the human condition under the ordinance of nature; the latter examines the human rational capacity to transform the environment, thereby freeing humans from nature's tutelage. Coupled with this is Kant's definition of the Enlightenment as the challenged to the modern man to use his intelligence to free himself from self-imposed suffering. In the light of the foregoing, Francis Schaefer refers to Kant as a philosopher of freedom. Complications however, arise over Kant's bifurcation of reality into Noumena and Phenomena. By this bifurcation, it seems that real reality is unknowable According to

Kant, what we are capable of knowing are appearances. It then appears that there is a high level of indecisiveness on the part of Kant and this must have been somewhat influenced by his reluctance to decisively deal with law and religion. Had he pursued his moral philosophy to a logical end, he would have succeeded in discovering a secular morality for peaceful co-existence, instead of a transcendental religious morality. But by admitting the probable existence of a hereafter where the morally upright could garner succor, that is, in spite of the fact that noumena is unknowable, he unwittingly gave gratis to religion. Little wonder Friedrich Engels dismisses Kant's indecisiveness as an attitude of "agnosticism" or what he calls "philosophical crotchets of agnosticism.

Hegel's philosophy and Kierkegaard's existentialism provide grounds from which both religious and secularist notions of salvation emerged. Hegel in his analysis of the dialectics of spirit and history stated that freedom in history is instituted through the itinerary triad of spirit. Spirit attains autonomy or freedom by entering into a rapport with the material universe, and having elevated material existence to a higher level, spirit disentangles from matter and reconciles itself to itself. From this Hegelian assertion, two brands of Neo-Hegelians developed. The Right-living Hegelians interpreted Hegel's philosophy religiously. To such school belongs Alfred North Whitehead's notion of "God of Process" who is considered fellow sufferer, a co-accomplisher, and a great companion who bears and feels with us. Since God is in sympathy with suffering humanity, salvation becomes like walking limbo in the sense that the Giant Absolute Spirit is too weak to wrest itself from humanity, let alone redeeming it. However, salvation, in this sense, becomes an ongoing process, a continuum. Karl Marx belongs to the Left-Wing Hegelians who developed Hegel's thesis of freedom and salvation into a secular one. Marx's thesis has earlier been discussed in the introduction of this essay.

Reflecting on the influence of Kierkegaard's existentialism on both religion and secularism, Schaeffer states that, "from Kierkegaard there are two extensions secular existentialism and religious existentialism."

The main ethos of Kierkegaard's religious existentialism has already been discussed, leaving us with the delineation of his secular existentialism. In *Essays in Philosophy* J. 1. Unah argues that "it is the bastardization of religion by over systematization and centralization that provoked Kierkegaard's orchestral blast upon Christendom. Thus;

The paradox of faith is such that we cannot even say of others that they are Christians or Muslims let alone speak of a Christian nation or Muslim state. To speak thus is to rationalise religion. Yet

rationalised or organised religion is a fraud, distraction and a delusion which robs the individual of his religious inwardness.

s V. N Kuznetsov, Engels Ludwig Feuerbach & the End of Classical German Philosophy (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1987), 35

F. A Shaeffer, Escape from Reason...48

J. I Unah, Essays in Philosophy...55

For Kierkegaard, salvation is a personal or individual thing. But organized religion denies the individual of the franchise to freely relate with God thereby infringing upon the capacity of the individual to attain salvation. Kierkegaard's criticism of absolutism (be it in philosophy or in religion) and his analysis of themes such as fear and dread, paved the way for the emergence of secular existentialism. In contemporary times, secular existentialism and Marxism have been described as atheistic philosophies. The reason for this is that most existentialists engage themselves strictly with the analysis of the human condition. Some like Heidegger make Being the ground of God, while others as Nietzsche and Sartre either declare the death of God or deny outrightly the existence of God. Marx on his part totally debunks the idea of spirit and by implication, the idea of God. Besides, his description of religion as opium of the people seems to suggest that religion is the deliberate manipulation of humans, which must be combated. But this secular atheistic opposition to religion is much expected, if not, mankind will forever remain under religious tutelage without hope of liberation in sight. In this wise, atheism is not just an opposing view to theism, it is rather a clarion call for humankind to imbibe the attitude of self-reliance. In which case, the goal of atheism, it would seem, is to liberate fettered humans from the grip of religion. In which case, the intention of the atheist is to assert his/her freewill without fear or favour of the intimidating views of theism which hangs the guilt of God and the world on the frail neck of man. And like T. D, P. Bah asserts:

The atheist is a religious man and moreover, he is a fanatic believer. He believes that he has found the truth which other men cannot discover. His truth, however, is different from that of Jesus or Mohammed. The atheist is one who has come with another message about man, about Science, about technology. Unfortunately the atheist's criterion of truth is not any better than the religious leader."

Ibid.

Salvation for the existentialists involves living an authentic life as opposed to a life of forfeiture. To lead an authentic life is to be free and to free means to be responsible. Mankind has to strive to square up with life's challenges; to do otherwise is simply an act of bad fate. In the views of Sartre and Heidegger, because human existence is characterized by nothingness, the march towards freedom is unending. Jean-Paul Sartre says that "man is a being who is not what he is and who is what he is not. For Martin Heidegger, man is a being who is more than what he is at any given time. Since nothingness constitutes the foundation of human existence, it means that human life is futuristic and open ended, making us beings of transcendence. This ontological endowment makes us beings of possibilities with insatiable desires. This way, the quest for salvation becomes a continuum.

From the philosophies of Heidegger and Nietzsche developed what can be described as "New Theologies". Following Heidegger's theory of *dasein*, Paul Tillich developed a new concept of God in which he describes God as the being or beings or the ground of beings. Tillich as such, speaks of the "God behind God - with the first God totally undefined."*" By this Tillich's doctrine, says Schaeffer, salvation faces a comatose. The search for salvation becomes like a hopeless quest or a hovering in the dark. In the same vein, Nietzsche's declaration of the death of God became a hangover for some Christian theologians such as Thomas Altizer and William Hamilton who developed "The Death of God" theology also variously known as Radical Theology, Atheistic Theology, or Christian Atheism. The central message of this movement is that God ceased to be transcendent from the moment he incarnated in the person of Jesus Christ of Nazareth who finally died on the cross. From that moment humans won their total freedom. According to Christian Atheism, the death of God is "good news" to humans. Consequently, what Christians should do is to announce to the world the historic death of God, which signals our freedom, Our salvation. In the words of Altizer:

T. D. P. Bah, "Religion, God & Foreign Culture..159

48 J. P Sartre, Being & Nothingness (London: Methuen Co Ltd, 1969), 23

F. A Shaeffer, Escape from Reason.52

True, every man today who is open to experience knows that God is dead, that the Christian knows that God is dead, that the death of God is a final and irrevocable event, and that God's death has actualized in our history a new and liberated humanity.

Another angle to secularist notion of salvation is liberation theology which combines the tenets of Marxism, Existentialism and Christianity. Liberation theology locates God and humans in the daily existential, historical and economic activities of the society. According to Bonino, liberation theology;

was born in the context of the struggle for the liberation of man. it very much emphasizes a concrete man in a concrete historical situation for only such a man needs liberation, not an abstract nor an invisible man.

Liberation as used in this context refers to the struggle by humans to emancipate themselves from the shackles of oppression. The apostles of Liberation theology include such names as Ruben Alves and Jose Miguez Bonino, with Paulo Freire providing the educational foundation for the movement or what can be called pedagogy for the liberation of the oppressed.

The beauty of liberation theology is that it is concerned with the liberation of all humans. For total liberation to be achieved, both the oppressed and the oppressor must be emancipated. In the first place, there can be no oppressed without the oppressor and vice versa, and both suffer from the psychology of fear and domination. Complete freedom, and by implication complete salvation can only be achieved when the oppressed and oppressor have been emancipated. Paulo Freire describes this constant strive towards freedom (i.e. salvation) as man's ontological vocation." Alves on his part, sees human existence as a "creation of history and this is made possible through man's historical exercise or power to overcome the contradiction (negation) of man's inhumanity towards freedom and

Thomas Altizer, The Gospel of Christian Atheism (London: Collins, 1955), 15
E. E. Uzukwu, (ed) Religion & African Culture (Enugu: SNAAP Press Ltd, 1988)
Ibid., 177

transcendence. It is by constantly striving to negate human inhumanity that harmony can be achieved on earth and by so doing actualise the dream of a kingdom of God for humans. As Bonino wrote:

God builds his kingdom from and within human history in its entirety; his action is a constant call and challenge to man. Man's response is realized in the concrete arena of history with its economic political, ideological options. Faith is not a different history but a dynamic motivation, and its eschatological horizon, a transforming invitation.

Thus far it can be seen that secularism like religion presents different conceptions of salvation. These various conceptions of salvation, religious and secularist, show that reality is multidimensional, multifaceted and diverse and so is salvation. Since salvation cannot be pigeonholed, it is then left for everyone to choose a perspective out of the so many theories of salvation.

Hermeneutic Appraisal of Salvation

The whole talk about salvation centers on the question of human freedom. Are humans truly free to make their own choices from the notions of salvation catalogued above or not? The answer(s) to the foregoing question will go a long way to further enhance our understanding of the issue at hand. If really humans are determined, then there may be some reason to fight for liberation. And if humans are totally free, would there still be any need to strive for salvation or for emancipation? Sartre offers us a clue to this puzzle. The fact that man is not in any way determined does not mean that he is free from challenges and responsibilities. Whichever way we look at it, without some hurdles to scale and some goals to achieve, human life would be completely worthless. This particular fact, makes the debate on salvation worthwhile. The greater trouble however, concerns the point that monistic notions of salvation, whether religious or secular, have the tendency to limit our freedom to decide on our perspectives of salvation. This is why this essay privileges non-monistic and non-

Ibid., 178

Ibid.

Monotheistic notions of salvation over and above the monistic and monotheistic notions of salvation.

In *Essays in Philosophy* and "Gender and Monotheism: The Assault by Monotheism on African Gender Diarchy philosophy and religion. Unah for instance, holds the view that the seeds of intolerance and fanaticism were sown by the Greek search for certainty which has fossilised into vengeful metaphysical systems. This sort of metaphysical thinking manifest itself in two main forms. Either that it reduces all reality to some common substance or that it focuses attention on an ultimate divine Being. The result is that it narrows down the telescope with which the whole of reality is viewed. The narrower a metaphysician's position becomes, the sharper his/her perspective, but the sharper his/her perspective, the greater the scandal such perspective perpetrates against other aspects of reality not accommodated by his/her system. This lack of courage to accept opposing views says Unah is injurious to human progress because:

By insisting that his perspective encompasses the totality of being, the metaphysician creates an orthodoxy a total system of norms and values from which every other mortal must not deviate, thereby extolling an attitude of fixism, fanaticism and intolerance. On account of this, we say that metaphysical thinking which is both nihilistic and vengeful threatens the human vocation to "see" and say.

Chinwezu holds a contrary view to J. I. Unah. According to Chinwezu the source of monism, fanaticism and intolerance can be found in the evolution of religious monotheism in ancient Egypt. The earliest known monotheism in the world says Chinwezu, appeared in Kemet in the 14 BC, that is, about 34 centuries ago. It was created by the heretic Pharaoh Akhenaton, and it lasted some thirty years. "Though it vanished, its brief life brought into the world the great evils of monotheism and its propensities for monomania, monolatry and zealotry. Atenist heresy, says Chinwezu, triggered off:

J. I. Unah, Essays in Philosophy...67

Chinwezu, "Gender & Monotheism...139

The intolerance of diversity, the abhorrence of pluralism and dualism, the monomania, zealotry and the neurotic drive to persecute or exterminate all rivals - all of which Akhenaton had displayed. These features would be replayed in the psychology of subsequent religious monotheisms and their secular offshoots.

From Atenist monotheism evolved patriarchal monotheism namely Judaism or Yahwehism, Christianity and Islam. These three can be regarded as West Eurasian heirs

to Atenism. Along with Atenism, the West Eurasian monotheistic religions imbibed "the monistic attribute to deity, the masculinisation of the sole deity and the rise of cultural monolatry. Aten was addressed as: hou sole god like whom there is no other. In Judaism and Christianity, this attribution of uniqueness is rendered as the injunction by Yahweh/Jehovah to his worshippers: Thou shalt have no other God before me. With Islam the prima donna demand for precedence becomes the declaration: There is no God but Alah, an absolute denial of the existence to all other gods. The level of intolerance propagated by these religions is seen in how they "sanction their believers zeal in eradicating the cults of other gods, so as to deny them recognition, precedence or existence.

Atenist monotheism with its matrilineal posture, not only permeated west Eurasian religions, but the intellectual life of the region as well. As a logical sequence therefore, patriarchal monotheism naturally gave rise to monistic and absolutist trends of thought in western scholarship. This explains how the monistic attributes of zealotry or intolerance, monolatry and monomania, also became inherent of west Eurasian secularism. This is most pronounced in the West Eurasian secularist doctrines namely liberalism, Marxism and Feminism. The trauma liberalism (capitalism per se) and Marxism caused the world most recently (1.e. the 20 century) cannot be easily forgotten. The world lived in constant fear of the outbreak of nuclear war. Needless to say, such Fear of Outbreak Of nuclear war has been rekindled in the 21st century by the rift between Israel, Europe and the United States on one side, and Russia, China, North Korea and Iran on the other side. Besides, as Chinwezu states:

Ibid., 140

ibid., 140-141

Further, in the Feminism or the late 20th century liberalism and Marxism have jointly spawned movement for the propagation of their gender ideologies. Through its liberal and Marxist wings, feminism seeks to carry out the agendas of liberalism and Marxism. Thus, like liberalism and Marxism, feminism attacks gender dualism.

Since both religion and secularism espouse temperaments that promote dogmatism, absolutism and intolerance, it means that there is a need to make evaluations of both perspectives with a view to ameliorating the anomalies inherent in them. This might be the reason why Ludwig Feuerbach mercilessly lashed at religious anthropomorphism. He

accused anthropomorphic religions of alienating humans from their essential attributes and of investing such qualities on an intangible God-Head, who contributes nothing of substance to human development. Feuerbach goes ahead to argue that God is man's self-projection. As he wrote:

Consciousness of God is self-consciousness, knowledge of God is self-knowledge. By his God thou knowest the man, and by the man his God the two are identical. Whatever is God to a man, that is his heart and soul, God is the manifested inward nature, the expressed self of a man.

By enriching God, humans impoverish themselves. Worst of all, the God they end up creating is a self-centered being who cares little about their plight. Let's hear from Feuerbach once more:

To enrich God, man must become poor; that God may be all man must do nothing. God, the Almighty, infinite unlimited being, is a person, he denies human dignity, the human ego; he is a selfish, egoistical being, who seeks himself alone, his own honour, his own ends.... God is the very luxury of human egoism.

Chinwezu, "Gender & Monotheism...142

Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*... 13

Feuerbach sees religion as the source of human disunity and unhappiness. The way out of this human disharmony, sorrow and alienation, is for humans to reclaim what they have invested upon God so that they can re-attain the God's status. In the light of this, Feuerbach embarked on the secularization of religion. The central goal of human life, he argues, is to ascend the pedestal of love and happiness, and this happens to be the aim of religion as well. V. N. Kuznetsov makes Feuerbach's view on this matter available as follows:

Love is the supreme law of human life; it is the most profound essence of man. Love assumed fantastic forms in all religions. But in reality, it is itself a true religion. Love is God himself, and outside love there is no God.

The problem here is about what temperament or orientation can assist man to achieve the objective of making love become the true essence of life? Unah finds the solution to the foregoing question in Martin Heidegger's fundamental ontology, while T. D. P. Bah and Chinwezu find the answer in the African thought system known as metaphysical symbiosis or the metaphysics of integration.

According to Unah, "fundamental ontology grounds metaphysics in the being of man who is a being contingent and being-free. By grounding metaphysics on our being, fundamental ontology makes us to imbibe the attitude of openness. his attitude or openness is the same as the phenomenological attitude of - live and let live which has the tendency to promote religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence. The point here is that openness promotes intersubjective discourse which when internalized cures the individual of the disease of speaking interminably. The interminable way of speaking is that attitude of arrogating the power to speak to one's self without listening to others. Needless to say, this way of speaking is absolutist, hence, has the tendency to fuel up intolerance and

Ibid., 26-27

V. N Kuznetsov, Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach..55

J. I Unah, Essays in Philosophy...68

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Conflict. Heidegger describes phenomenology as the path to ontology, while ontology is itself is the science of being. The phenomenological assessment of being shows that truth and value are perspectival, meaning that there is no absolute truth or absolute value. Following this line of thought, Unah believes that the adoption of the phenomenological attitude will expose us to the greater understanding of being, which in turn, will inculcate in us the humane spirit of tolerance.

By way of analogy, Unah makes reference to African pantheism or what Bolaji Idowu classifies as "diffused or implicit monotheism which like Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology, also propagates the temperament of tolerance. At this point, we like to state that Unah's analogy is intended to show that the attempt to make a serious case for peaceful co-existence based on Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology is not after all utopian. Chinwezu for Africans and the rest of the world to look to African spirituality,

wherein is locked up the principle of metaphysical integration, for solution on how to effectively tackle the perpetual conflict foisted upon the world by monistic doctrines. But what is the basic feature of this African metaphysical system which endows it with the propensity to solve the problems of absolutism and intolerance?

The essential character of the African thought process is that it acknowledges the multi-dimensional nature of reality. The African world outlook operates on the principle of duality. In duality, opposites and contraries are seen as being complementary. This is opposed to dualism which bifurcates reality and by so doing posits that opposites and contraries are antagonistic and therefore, in perpetual conflict of annihilation. The African thought system abhors the law of exclusivity, instead, it operates on the law of inclusivity, and by this law, opposites and contraries are said to be in mutual reciprocity. It can now be well understood why the Igbo South-East of Nigeria insist that in terms of social intercourse, contending parties should adopt the attitude of - live and let live. Reason why the Igbo say *egbe bere ugo bere; nke si ibeya ebela nku kwaya*: meaning let the hawk and the eagle perch, whichever says the other should not perch, let its wings be broken, And the Yoruba south-west of Nigeria say *oju orun to gbogbo eye lati fo*: meaning the sky is big enough for all birds to fly. The point here is that African thought system, like the phenomenological temperament, acknowledges the fact that Conflict and contraries are parts and parcels of

Bolaji Idowu, Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief (Lagos: Longman, 1982), 204

the universe, and of course, human existence, but if we adopt the “win win” attitude of live and let live, there would be greater harmony in the world making it a better place to live in.

Conclusion

The free spirit of interpretation which propagates pluralistic temperament, such that truth and value become perspectival, is very much pronounced in both Heidegger's fundamental ontology and African integrative metaphysical system. The essence of such free spirited interpretation of reality in pluralistic terms is that it allows for salvation to be seen from perspectives that are multidimensional. The multidimensional interpretation of salvation allows for harmony and peaceful coexistence, making the quest for salvation more realisable and practicable. By this approach, the march towards

salvation becomes wholistic, comprehensive and all-inclusive. This way, the kingdom of God will come down to the doorpost Or everybody. This way, we desist from departmentalizing or compartmentalising God into various water-tight belief systems, sects denominations, mind sets, etc, all of which encourage discrimination, intolerance and conflict. Once we desist from departmentalising and compartmentalising God, God becomes "the way that gives all ways.

By the above submission, we imply that God is not wholly a concern for religion. In the first instance, God is referred to as creator, meaning that He is wisdom and mystery personified. The mystery and wisdom behind God is that creativity, like invention, is purely metaphysical or spiritual (i.e. it is a non-physical act), which derives from that limitless and boundless expanse called void or nothingness, making the ability to create or invent inexhaustible. Hence, religiosity does not amount to godliness. In the light of the foregoing, we can then go ahead to make a distinction between the religious sense of God and the non-religious sense of God. The former is about approaching the reality of God religiously; the latter is about approaching the reality of God secularly. But whether we go religious or secular, it is impossible for human beings to live meaningfully without the pursuit of an ideal. Without the idea of an ultimate or ideal point of reality, human life would have no meaning. Thus, we may dislike the name of God, but being metaphysical or spiritual beings, we are condemned no name to seek for an ultimate reality beyond the physical, in whatever name.

J.1 Unah, Essays in Philosophy...61

The highpoint of our hermeneutic appraisal of salvation therefore, is that we should be practical and pragmatic in our approach to God. Rather than spend precious time quarrelling about which perspective salvation is the most original, it is better for us to display godliness, terms of the demonstration of the ability to be creative, inventive and innovative in solving human problems. Really, we go to God because He is a problem solver. This means that to be godly is to be problem solvers, not to create problems. When we solve problems, we not only demonstrate godliness, but end up making our earth more habitable. In such a way, our march towards the ideal state of reality, which we have christened salvation, becomes everybody's concern, hence, easily attainable. This sort of orientation, we believe, would help to mitigate much of the religio-political conflicts the world over, which in the first place, do not in any way demonstrate godliness.

**A CRITICAL CONSIDERATION OF THE AMEMEME (CREMATION) RITUALS
AMONG THE MAFI-EWE OF GHANA**

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Abstract

The Mafi-Ewe, like all African societies, abhors evil particularly moral evil. They have structures and institutions that encourage members of the society not only to appreciate and admire but also to practise what constitute(s) to them the good life. Everything possible is done to make the wrong unattractive. Among methods to discourage wrongdoing has been the application of various punishment regimes ranging from fines, banishment, amememe ('cremation') and in the past, nyikofofu (the death penalty). The sort of punishment one received was determined by the enormity of crime committed. The death penalty, for instance, was applied on hardened criminals who threatened the security and solidarity of the Mafi-Ewe society. They included evil doers like rapists, robbers, adulterers and murderers. The amememe ritual or sanction, on the other hand, has been the preserve of those who are believed to have terminated human life through the use of evil magic, witchcraft, sorcery and or abortion. The amememe ritual is seen among Mafi-Ewe as the severest punishment for the most heinous crime. It is the worst thing that can happen to an individual with serious repercussions for both immediate and extended families. The paper takes a critical look at the amememe ritual as practiced by the Mafi-Ewe of Ghana and draws attention to the fact that even though majority of Mafi-Ewe, particularly the youth, are calling for the abolition of the ritual, it persists and is even spreading to other areas which hitherto were not practicing it. This makes the rejection of the amememe sanction appear to be theoretical, since those who object to its application lack the ability and power to stop it. The minority comprising adherents of the traditional religion who favour the performance of the ritual, almost always have their way.

introduction

The negative impact of moral evil on nature and on human relationships is well acknowledged in all societies, especially traditional African societies. As a result, attempts are made in every human society to minimize, if not completely eradicate moral evil and its devastating consequences on human-human, human-nature and human-divine relationships. These attempts usually involve the promulgation of laws and other restrictions which become the moral code of the society that members are required to observe. To make sure that members are aware of and appreciate the moral Standard expected of them, conscious and concerted efforts are made both formal and informal to educate them on the moral principles and standards that society cherishes and also to inculcate in them the desired virtues.

The Mafi-Ewe of Ghana, like any other African society, abhors evil and encourages the good life. Evil to these people is that which creates enmity, disharmony, division and confusion in society and also that which leads to destruction of life and property. The good, on the other hand, is that which promotes harmony, unity and general well-being or individuals and society and respects the dignity of life in general and human life in particular. Therefore, individuals, groups and the entire society are encouraged through various means to conform to the unwritten but well inculcated moral code, standards, principles and stipulations of the society.

Deviants are subjected to several kinds of punishment all with the aim of reforming and transforming them and also to serve as a deterrent to others. One of such punishment is cremation (amememe also known ashomtodzoe). There are certain categories of criminals like witches, sorcerers, murderers and abortionists whose evil activities are 'secret and cannot always be detected, even though some are detected by various means. But upon death and through divination by a priest or herbalist reputed to have expertise in this procedure, these criminals are detected and are made to go through amememe rituals (cremation) without which the spirit of the deceased criminal is believed to linger on in this world, plaguing and tormenting members of his family or lineage.

The amememe ritual is a traditional religious practice among most communities in Tongu involving the exhumation and 'cremation' of the corpse and certain properties such as underwear, walking sticks, beads and other items imbued with magical power which are burnt into ashes or Cremated. in other words, the corpse of the supposed 'evil person is not given the normal traditional funeral rites.

Amememe or cremation among the Tongu-Ewe in general and Mari-Ewe in particular should not be confused with cremation as it pertains in other cultures or religions. For the Mafi-Ewe, amememe is a complete disgrace and embarrassment not only to the deceased but also to his or her immediate family, Amememe appears to be the worst thing that can happen to the person and dignity of man.

Mati-ewe or Ghana practice amememe as the most appropriate funeral ritual for those who are accused of certain types of moral evil, regardless or not only the apparent problem and difficulties inherent in the practice, but also some philosophical issues the practice raises.

The Mafi-Ewe regard human life (quantity and quality) as the most valuable thing. As a result, whatever they do, be it in their social, economic, political and religious life, the ultimate goal is the enhancement and preservation of human life. Therefore, taking human life is the greatest evil any human being can commit, irrespective of one's socio-political status or any other privileges one has over others in society. The death penalty, the greatest punishment, was meted out to those who without any cause whatsoever terminated human life through any physical means among Mafi-Ewe in the olden days. The amememe punishment, considered the most shameful and most degrading of all punishments among Mafi-Ewe, was and is still administered posthumously on only those who through such spiritual means as witchcraft, sorcery and evil magic or induced abortion have terminated human life.

Underpinnings of the amememe (cremation) ritual

Apart from taboos, (whose moral status has been challenged by some scholars) there are many laws, Customs, regulations and observances, all of which constitute the moral code and ethics or the Mati-Ewe. Some aspects of this code are considered sacred, as they are believed to have been instituted by *Mawu* (God), *trowo* (divinities) and *Torgbuiwo* (ancestors). It follows that any contravention of this moral code is regarded wrong not only because it is harmful to social order and peace but also because it signifies disobedience to the spiritual order.

The good is that which is approved by the community, while the bad is that which does not have such approval. The right builds up society, while the wrong tears it down; one is social the other anti-social. Thus, in an effort to promote the good and live up to the requirements of society, there is a long list of moral rules, some of which are identical to those in the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament.

These include prohibitions to kill, steal, disrespect the elderly and people of higher status, having sexual relations with another man's wife or with one's sister or close relatives or children, to use bad words, backbite, lie, despise or laugh at a disabled person, insult a woman's private part, among other similar prohibitions.

The moral rules can be classified under major and minor prohibitions, depending on the types of punishment and or penance and sacrifices associated with their contravention. AS noted by Abotchie of Ewe in general;

The forms of punishment range from fines to the death penalty. Crimes such as wilful murder or homicide through witchcraft or evil magic are considered grievous enough to justify capital punishment or sometimes total banishment..... Incurrible thieves may be condemned to death, banished into exile or sentenced or ignominious public torture. The incestuous, adulterers, rapists and violators of taboos are required to perform specific purificatory rituals in addition to paying the appropriate fines, while contempt of court, assaults, and insults are punishable by fines.

indeed, offences that attract the death penalty must be grievous and for that matter major prohibitions, while the minor prohibitions are those crimes which require specific purificatory rituals in addition to paying appropriate fines. It is important, however to note that the death penalty for certain crimes among the Ewe, about whom the above observation was made, is a thing of the past. The power to decree the death penalty as was

Community among Mafi-Ewe comprises a host of spiritual beings, the living, as well as those yet unborn.

C. Abotchie, Social Control in Traditional Southern Ewe Land of Ghana: Relevance for Modern Crime Prevention (Accra: Ghana universities Press, 1997), 54

vested in the traditional chief has long been taken over by modern law courts. It is therefore a criminal act for anyone else irrespective of his/ her status in society to impose and execute the death penalty.

In this paper, the term *amememe* is preferred to *homtodzoe* for two reasons. In the first place, the practice is known as such among the Mafi-Ewe. Secondly, *homtodzoe* is a coined term from two words: *hom* (exhume me), and *todzoe* (burn it) which literally means "exhume and burn me. As conceded by Ametewee and Christensen, who first used

the term *homtodzoe* is somewhat a misnomer, as exhumation is not always involved: They observed:

In the case of an individual who has been admitted to being a witch, and causing death in the community, interment following death would not occur. While the corpse is laid in state people from the community come to the house and condemn and curse the witch. Instead of a normal burial the corpse would be dismembered and cremated.

In this regard, the term *homtodzoe* does not fully capture the entire spectrum of the ritual, but rather only an aspect of it. To cater for the ritual in its entirety, therefore, the term *amememe* is here preferred to *homtodzoe*.

The *Amememe* is one ritual that is widespread among Tongu-Ewe of Ghana. It is one of the cultural practices among these people which have actually stood the test of time. One would have expected that with modernity, urbanisation, formal education, influx of foreign religions, especially Christianity and Islam which have greatly influenced African Cultural values, a ritual like *amememe* would have been abandoned alongside with other practices.

Amememe is a kind of punitive sacrifice aimed at "destroying sin, as well as making a person pleasing to the gods and even more important to utterly destroy the sinner first. It is specifically reserved and inflicted on very wicked people, such as witches, sorcerers, evil-minded medicine men and abortionists. Witches, sorcerers and medicine-men are categories of

V. Ametewee, & J.B Christensen, "*Homtodzoe. Expiation by Cremation among Some Tongu-Ewe of Ghana*" in *Africa*, 47 (4) 1977, pp. 360-370.

People who through supernatural means, influence peoples' lives either positively or negatively. The Mafi-Ewe have no problem with people who use these supernatural powers for benevolent activities. However, when it is detected that one has used his or her powers for malevolent activities, in former times, one was burnt alive.

However, not all such people were found out and punished before their death. It is for such people that the *amememe* ritual was instituted, based on the belief that people who had lived wicked and horrible lives could not enter the home of the righteous. They continue, even after death to haunt and harm people. When it is known, through divination (*Xoyoyo*) that a person continues to cause havoc even after his death, the only

way, according to Mafi-Ewi belief to end such destruction is to exhume and cremate the body.

It is important to note that for the Mafi-Ewe, it is not the use of supernatural powers for every malevolent activities or every wicked or horrible conduct or behaviour that attracts the amememe ritual. There is only one specific act which is so abominable to them that it attracts punishment even after death; namely the destruction of human life or taking human life. When a life is destroyed, Mafi-Ewe would want to ascertain the mode of destruction. It is only when a secret supernatural means such as witchcraft spirit and sorcery are used in the destruction of human life or through induced abortion the life of a foetus is terminated, that the *amememe* ritual is performed for the offender after his or death.

Investigations have revealed that those who destroy human life through physical means either, unintentionally did not want and do not go through the amememe ritual. Killing at war or in an interpersonal duel was seen as an act of bravery or to say, however, that the Mafi-Ewe encouraged murder of all sorts. because, even those authorised by tradition to kill on special occasions like brafo (state executioners) had to periodically go through elaborate purificatory rituals to cleanse them of their 'sins'. Those who confess killing through physical means are made to go through elaborate purificatory rituals without which they could ruin their lives through suicide or may become insane. It appears that the Mafi-Ewe attitude towards murder or any destruction of human life through physical means is influenced by their history as a warlike group. The death penalty (*nyikofofa*) was also an institutionalized form of punishment for certain crimes.

Concerning the category of persons who officiate at the amememe ritual, the observation by Ametwee about the Tongu Ewe that "there are no special people who carry out this ceremony, nor special powers or protective medicine required, is the direct opposite of what happens among the Mafi-Ewe. It is not anybody at all who performs this ritual. The ritual is strictly the preserve of ritual specialists who have properly acquired the requisite powers and protective medicine. Even those who assist the ritual specialists in the performance of the ritual and those who out of curiosity would want to be present during the ritual ceremony need to be adequately 'fortified' to ensure their safety. This is done by the ritual specialist administering a concoction of a herbal preparation (ti) and an alcoholic beverage (aha) to those present.

There have been reported instances when people who were not properly fortified during the amememe ritual suffered derangement and took to the bush and had to be

apprehended and cleansed before they could regain saneness. Again, there are times that the ritual would have to be repeated just because the ritual specialist who performed it the previous time was not 'qualified' to do so and therefore the deceased was dissatisfied and demanded that a qualified ritual specialist should be engaged to perform the ritual for it. It is really a dangerous undertaking for anybody without the requisite power and protective medicine to engage in the execution of the amememe ritual, since it could result in a supernatural encounter leading to dumbness, disease and even sudden death.

Procedure in the performance of the amememe ritual among the Mafi-Ewe

Like all other African people, the Mafi-Ewe seek explanation for information and direction on life in general, and on specific occurrences from the supernatural realm through various forms of divination. From birth to death, direction is sought from the spirit realm as to what to do in order not to disturb the equilibrium in the relationship required between the spirit and physical realms to guarantee peaceful life of the living.

In this regard, when death occurs, the first place of call is the shrine of the fiasi (medium) to ascertain the cause of death and also to determine the appropriate burial for the corpse. Xoyoyo (divination) among the Mafi-Ewe is

Africa, 47 (4) 1997, page 362

A specialised profession. Calling into this profession is mostly done by the gods through various means such as strange and unremitting sicknesses, accidents and general misfortunes including frequent loss of children and property and interminable failure in every endeavour. Of the forty-one (41) diviners (fiasiwo) interviewed almost all of them were called into the profession through strange circumstances. Those or them who resisted the call knew no peace until they finally succumbed.

Would-be diviners undergo elaborate training⁵ E well-qualified diviners for a number of years after which they are tested and passed to practice the profession. Depending on the trainers, the would-be-diviners acquire various methods of divination such as using divination stones, cowries, palm reading, seeing images in pots of water or in mirrors and using seaces by means of which they get in touch with the spirit world. Xoyoyo is one religious practice that greatly impacts on the lives of people in the Mafi area. It is a practice that keeps people in constant touch with the spirit realm.

It is through Xoyoyo (divination) that the spirit of a deceased person reveals the cause of his or her death, whether or not he or she has been accepted by the ancestors at tsiefe (the spiritual abode of the ancestors) or whether he or she has been rejected by the ancestors due to a sin committed while alive and the kind of burial that he or she wants. Usually, it is the spirits of those who are denied entry to tsiefe due to a heinous crime committed while alive who demand amememe to enable them settle among the outcasts (amevodiwo).

This means that, the Mafi-Ewe identify two worlds after death; one for the righteous (amedzodzoewo) and other for Sinners (nuvowolawo). This is similar to the Christian notion of heaven and hell. The apparent remarkable difference, however, is that disqualification to tsiefe is tied to a particular crime: the destruction of human life through supernatural means, while in Christianity any kind of sin has the potential of landing one in hell.

Because of the significance attached to the amememe ritual, Mafi-Ewe do not depend on the outcome of their consultation with one diviner. They normally would want to cross-check whatever information they have in their first consultation with another diviner and when there is a Confirmation, they go ahead with the ritual. But when the second consultation contradicts the earlier one, they consult again and again until they are fully satisfied.

One important information that is sought for during Xoyoyo (divination) is the kind of materials and animals to be used for the amememe ritual. Even though fowls and goats are normally used, there are occasions where the deceased demands some 'special' animals such as frog, crow, cat, dog, pig and even vulture. The choice of animal depends on the animal the deceased was believed to have used as means of transport, messenger, or familiar agent for his or her nocturnal activities. Witches are particularly believed to use certain 'special' animals as their agents, so that any amememe ritual without these special animal agents is inefficacious.

In addition to the 'special animal agents demanded by the deceased for the amememe ritual, the deceased may also request that certain materials be 'cremated with the corpse. These materials may include walking sticks, beads, trinkets, clothes, handkerchiefs and stools. These materials are believed to have been infested with the spirit of the deceased such that the continued existence of these materials, even after the complete annihilation of the body of the deceased, is believed to cause harm to relatives. This is because, once the spirit of the deceased is active in them, it continues to harass the living. There have

been reported cases where long after the amememe ritual had been performed, the spirit of the deceased continued to plague the living relatives until certain seemingly insignificant materials like beads, snuff-container (asragoe), fragments of discarded clothes, among others were burnt to ashes.

Similarly, the spirits of deceased evil persons who were unknowingly buried are believed to show certain manifestations to press home their demand for the amememe rituals. They could manifest in the form of haunting spirits (ghosts), revealing themselves to family members. In other cases, they are believed to be the cause or some strange sicknesses and certain accidental deaths.

Furthermore, some deceased also give direction regarding how their funeral should be organised. Some demand that there should be no wake-keeping for them, nobody should cry during their funeral and some even select those who should officiate at their funeral. Others also enjoin that they should be hooted and mocked at and dragged through the village or town as part of the amememe ritual.

In effect, therefore, the amememe ritual is not an imposition on the deceased by the living based on their (the living) Judgement of the quality of life led by the deceased while alive. Rather, it is something that the deceased 'voluntarily' demands of the living to enable his/her spirit settle 'peacefully' at the place allotted to outcasts (*amevodiwodome*), having nothing to do whatsoever with the world of the living.

Before a formal request is made to the god detailing out the specific assignment(s) expected of it through the fiasi (diviner), there is one thing demand of the individual or the delegation seeking the help of the gods. This is known in the local parlance as *dzadodo*. *Dzadodo* is the presentation of some specific materials to the god through the fiasi to invoke the spirit of a god into action and also as a token of appreciation for the services of the god.

Materials required for *dzadodo* (*dzadonuwo*) differ from shrine to shrine depending on the taste of the god. However, of all the shrines visited in connection with invoking and contacting the spirit of the dead, the materials included some amount of money ranging from forty cedis (c40.00) to e100 cedis (e100.00 approximately between \$50 and \$100) and a bottle of an alcoholic beverage mostly *akpeteshie* (a Ghanaian liquor). Part of the drink is used to pray and entreat the god to produce the spirits of the deceased and also to beseech the Spiit or the paternal great-grandfather or his representative to accompany the deceased for consultation.

The arrival of the spirit or the deceased is noticed by the Fiasi through his/her medium of divination: using divination stone, cowries, seeing image in a pot or calabash of water or 1n a mirror. It is at this point that the god possesses the fiasi and enters into a conversation with the spirit of the deceased. The deceased reveals the cause(s) of his/her death, confesses the heinous crime he or she committed while alive, gives direction(s) as to how his or her burial should be conducted and gives any other information as may be required by the consulting party from his or her family. It is based on the information gathered through the Xoyoyo that the 'appropriate' burial as demanded by the deceased is performed. When the deceased demands the amememe ritual because he or she has destroyed human life, either through *dzoduame* (sorcery), *adze* (witchcraft), *fudede* (abortion) or because, he or she collaborated in one way or the other with another person or other persons to destroy human life, the services of the specialist vested in the ritual are sought.

The ritual specialist (amemela) and the amememe ritual

As stated earlier, the *amememe* ritual usually requires a ritual specialist with the requisite power and protective medicine to ensure a thorough and exhaustive performance of the ritual. With materials as prescribed by the deceased through the fiasi assembled, the family head (*fomemetsitsi*) of the deceased now invites the ritual specialist for the ritual to be performed. As a matter of rule, the invitation to the ritual specialist is accompanied with *dzadodo*, comprising an amount of money usually determined by the ritual specialist and a bottle of a local gin (*akpeteshie*). With the *dzadonuwo* (materials for *dzadodo*) provided the day for the ritual is fixed.

On the appointed day, the ritual specialist and his apprentices honour the invitation. On arrival, they make their way to the deceased's family head, or whoever invited them. They now decide on the conditions for the performance of the ritual. What the ritual specialist demands as payment for his services is 1nfluenced by a number of factors. These factors include the condition of the corpse, the relationship between the ritual specialist and the deceased's family, whether the family initially refused the demand of the deceased for the ritual, but had to rescind that decision because the ghost of the deceased continues to disturb the family with sickness and death, and the level of "spiritually" of the deceased. This is to say that there are people who have acquired so much spiritual power that they are not easily subdued during the ritual.

If the corpse is either fresh or completely decayed leaving bones, the amount of money demanded by the ritual specialist is less but if it is at the decomposing stage, more money is demanded. In the same way, if the deceased is known to be spiritually powerful and the specialist therefore, requires thorough fortification and the involvement of several other spiritual forces to be able to subdue and subjugate his or her spirit, the ritual specialist demands more for his services. However, on the other hand, if the performance of the ritual poses no spiritual danger to the ritual specialist, because the deceased is not all that powerful, much is not demanded. Again, the relationship between the deceased and the ritual specialist affects his demands for his services. Particularly, if the deceased is a member of the ritual specialist's family, only a token is demanded as payment for the ritual. In any case, an amount of money ranging between eight cedis (GH80.00) and one hundred cedis (GH100.00) and a fowl is charged in addition to drinks for the execution of the ritual. With the fee agreed upon, the ritual specialist and his entourage are taken to the graveside for the commencement of the amememe ritual proper.

Stages in the performance of the amememe ritual

Stage 1:

At the graveside of the deceased, the ritual specialist makes libation using *akpeteshie* to the ancestors of the deceased. This libation prayer is said to officially inform the ancestors of the demands of the deceased and also to obtain permission from them and *anyigba* (earth) to carry out the ritual.

To make the libation, the *akpeteshie* is poured into *konko* (a small drinking glass) and drops of it poured on the ground with the accompaniment of appropriate words thus:

Eeee, mieyomi, teee mieyo mi, Eeee mieyo mi lo.

Anyiba madzo fli, mieyo wo.

Torgbiwo mieyo mi.

Miase gba ya da be

Nyitso mia vi.vadzo le miagbo.

Ke mieyo la, ebe afo yile yezo menyo O.

Ke ebia be woawo konu naye

Mia atenu awoe le miafe manyamanya nu o.

Ke esi mieva be miawo konua la,

Aha sike le enu la, miato enye si.

Miva xoe nu, fafa neva.
Ka amesike atsitre de nusi wofe mieva nu la
Mia gbee abe agba ene
Kebonu manye etre fe gbagba o!
Dagbe neva, Dagbe neva.
Kuse, Kuse, Kuse.

Literally, the prayer may be translated thus:

Eeee, We call upon you, Eeee We call upon you Eeee, we call upon
you

You earth that cannot be ignored, we call you.

Ancestors, we call on you

Sometime ago, your son/daughter (name of deceased) left us

When we called him/her he/she said he/she offended you,

He/She said He/She did not walk well.

He/she has demanded certain rituals to be performed for him/her,

But we cannot do this without informing you

Today that we have come to perform the ritual,

His is your share of the accompanying drink, come and drink.

Let there be peace.

But if there is anybody who is against

What we are coming to do

Break him/her as a pot,

Not as a calabash.

Let there be life, let there be life, let there be life,

Peace, Peace, Peace.

Stage 2

With the same drink, the ritual specialist offers libation prayer addressing the deceased thus:

Eeee, wo (amekuku la fe nko)

Nusi nebia be woawo na ye la,

Egba mieva be mniawoe na wo.

Wo aha enye si, naxoe
Nano anyi miaho wo
Awo nusianu nawo pepepe.

Literally the prayer means

Yes, you (name of deceased)
What you have asked for,
Today we have come to do it for you.
Here is the drink we have brought to you,
Take it and be there for us to exhume you;
And all the rituals you yourself have asked for,
We shall perform for you

After the prayer, black-powder made of certain special herbs is mixed with the rest of the drink and shared among all those present at the graveside or those who would be present during the ritual. This is believed to fortify those present against any attack from the spirit of the deceased or any other power(s) the deceased might have acquired when alive, which might have sensed the subjugation of its authority. When the Ritual specialist satisfies himself that everything is in place, the corpse is now exhumed.

Even though it was the desire of the researcher to know the names of the herbs processed into the black-powder so as to give Do e English and botanical names, the ritual specialist advised against it. They claimed that the herbs are not "ordinary" herbs and that they are so potent that they could destroy whole villages when not properly handled. They also expressed the fear that if the names of the herbs are documented, some people out of curiosity might misuse them.

Stage 3:

The ritual specialist orders his attendants to dig the grave open. With the aid of implements such as hoes, pick-axes and shovels, the attendants dig the grave and bring out the coffin containing the corpse. Every attempt is made to make sure that no material used in burying the corpse is either left in the grave or taken away by anybody. After the ritual specialist and the attendants are sure that all bits or material are completely collected from the grave, the grave is then refilled with soil.

In the situation where the coffin and the corpse have completely decayed, the remaining bones or skeletons and imperishable materials such as coins, beads, rings and necklaces are collected before the grave is refilled.

Among the Mafi-Ewe, there is almost always some form of 'exhumation' involved in the *amememe* ritual. This is because even when a person dies and it is clear that the ritual will be performed for it, there is still some form of public "burial, though the grave may not be covered with soil. The ritual is normally performed at night. In a few time instances, however, the corpse is dragged through the village to announce to all that it is deserving of the *amememe* ritual.

When the researcher inquired as to why the ritual is performed at night the response was that, because the ritual is a disgrace to the relatives of the deceased, efforts are made to conceal it from public eyes; hence it is normally performed in the night. Another ritual specialist also added that during the ritual the *luvo* of the deceased becomes aggressive and could cause harm to anybody around the place of the ritual not properly fortified. And to avoid any such harm to unsuspecting people who may be around, the ritual is performed in the night to be sure no one will be around.

With the exhumation of the corpse follows an important aspect of the ritual, which is, making sure that the *luvo* (soul) is invited to be cremated. Without the *luvo*, the ritual will have no effect on the deceased; he or she would still be active and be causing havoc to the family until the ritual is re performed. With the paraphernalia (*kablee*), the ritual specialist invites and literally binds the spirit of the deceased up. The *kablee* comprises *ametsiwume fe fu*, (the bone of someone who dies through an accident), the bone of an animal that escapes a hunter's attack and dies on its own, an old used local ladle made of wood (*tsii*), a twine (*bodziea*) or any other strong rope. The ritual specialist shouts out the name of the deceased several times and orders him or her to make him or herself available to be tied up.

The ritual specialist stands facing the East with the *Kablee* in hand. His attendants and others witnessing the ritual, stand a few metres behind him. Looking into the sky he shouts out and commands thus:

(Name of deceased) Eeee!!

vayi kame

... Eeeel

Vayi kame, ne mabla wo.

Vayi kame, vayi kame vayi kame.

Literally meaning:

(Name of deceased) Eeee!!

Come into the rope

(Name of deceased) Eeee!!

Come into the rope for me to tie you

Come into the rope, come into the rope, come into the rope

As the ritual specialist loudly shouts out calling the name of the deceased he frantically ties the rope around the *kablee* to signify that the *luvo* of the deceased has been arrested and ready to face the *amememe* ritual.

Mati-Ewe believe that *tsiefe* is in *yedzefe* (the East) hence the ritual specialist faces the East when inviting the *luvo* of the deceased.

At one of the *amememe* rituals witnessed by the researcher at Mafi Mediage on Friday 23 January, 1998, after the ritual specialist shouted out the name of the deceased for a number of times, there was a feeling of strange presence and a wind blew pass. The ritual specialist interpreted that to mean the presence of the *luvo* of the deceased. After he tightly tied the rope around the *kablee* and left it on the ground, the *kablee* started jumping around for some time. The ritual specialist was, therefore, convinced that he had overpowered the deceased and thus went on to the next stage of the ritual.

It must however, be pointed out that, it is not always that the ritual party led by the ritual specialist experience a strange presence. At four other *amememe* rituals that the researcher witnessed, there was no feeling of a presence, but at one of the rituals, the *kablee* slightly moved. During another, those around claimed they heard the deceased respond *agooo* when the ritual specialist shouted out its name. However, the researcher did not hear the response of the deceased.

Stage 5:

After making sure that the *luvo* or the deceased has been "arrested" and bound, the ritual specialist knocks the forehead or the (deceased's) corpse with a ritual axe (*fiavi*) and a herbal concoction dropped into its eyes and nostrils accompanied by an admonition in words Such as this:

Never again behave the way you did,
Evil is abominable.
Do not do it again

According to Torgbui Lostu Azavor, a ritual specialist in charge of the Adzakpa Shrine at Mafi- Mediage, the significance of knocking the forehead

This was recorded at Mafi Mediage on 23 January, 1998.

The Adzakpa shrine is one of the powerful shrines involved in the amememe ritual.

of the deceased with the *fiavi* is that, among the Ewe in general and Mafi- Ewe in particular, elders show disapproval of the actions of their children by knocking the forehead of children with their fore finger (*asitoto nugonu*). The *fiavi*, therefore, represents the fore finger of the gods and ancestors who have disapproved of the behaviour of the deceased, and are as such, showing their indignation by knocking the forehead of the deceased. The *fiavi* is also the hand of the ancestors which can be used to bring blessings and prosperity or condemnation and destruction to the living depending on their deeds.

After this, the exhumed coffin containing the corpse is turned upside down onto a well arranged pyre composed of a highly combustible combination of firewood and tyres, with additions of kerosene, petrol or coal tar. The coffin is turned upside down onto the pyre because by tradition, the Mafi-Ewe bury their dead with their faces upward to enable the dead to still see whatever goes on among the living. So the 'evil person is cremated with the face down in order to prevent him from having anything to do with the living.

While the corpse is set ablaze, a goat representing the *luvo* of the deceased is slaughtered and the blood used to make a circle round the *Kablee* three times, and the head of the goat thrown into the fire to burn with the corpse. It is believed that once the blood of the goat is used to make a circle round the *Kablee* which is believed to be holding the *luvo* of the deceased, the *luvo* is transferred to the goat whose head is burnt with the corpse.

Meanwhile, participants at the ritual standing at the windward side at a distance from the burning pyre drink akpeteshie, prepare and cook the flesh of the goat and share among themselves. Everyone is expected to consume every bit of meat there without taking any home. If you could not consume all, you throw it away.

Partaking in this meat meal is considered a solemn thing. Therefore, care is taken in its administration. This is because, it is believed that whoever had a sexual relationship with any spouse of the deceased and goes ahead to participate in the meat meal would contract a dry cough called alokpui which could be fatal. It is usually a problem for men since women do not normally participate in the amememe ritual, and therefore, do not partake in the meat meal.

However, according to one ritualist interviewed, apart from a goat which is always the ritual animal during the amememe ritual, there are cases where some deceased demanded other animals like dog, crow, vulture or cat to be included in the ritual. The category of people who demand these animals is believed to include witches and sorcerers who use any of these animals as medium of their nocturnal activities either as an agent or a means of "transport. These animals are thrown into the burning Pyre either dead or alive depending on the demand of the deceased.

Hunuo Kofi Liti of Mafi Amegakofe narrated an experience he had some years back. He said he performed the ritual for a certain old lady. But after some time, the old lady started harassing her relatives again by making her own daughter very sick. When they (the family) consulted the oracle, it was revealed that the old lady was changing into a pig before attending her witchcraft meetings when she was alive. Therefore, unless a pig was used for the ritual, she, (the old lady) would not be satisfied. As a result, a pig was bought and the ritual performed again before the old lady stopped worrying her family.

It should be noted that it is not only animals that are used for the ritual. Other materials such as cloth, beads, walking sticks, gold ornaments, red bands and others could be requested by the deceased to be added to the corpse in order to make the ritual complete.

When the ritual specialist and his entourage are satisfied that the casket, the corpse and the other materials included in the ritual are fully consumed by the fire, they are provided with a fowl by whoever contracted them for the ritual to escort the kablee home (kakplono). This fowl accompanies the kablee to the shrine of the ritualist and becomes a property of the shrine and could be used for any ritual in the shrine at the discretion of the ritual specialist.

Stage 9

The final stage of the ritual is signified by the *asidede* agbame ceremony. This ceremony usually takes place early the following morning after amememe ritual. During the ceremony, all the movable properties of the deceased are assembled, ownership of which the ritual specialist literally assumes. Anything the ritual specialist finds useful to him among the belonging of the deceased, he takes for his personal use.

Anything the ritual specialist finds useful to him among the belonging of the deceased, he takes for his personal use.

He symbolically, sells all the other items for a token amount to the family of the deceased. What the ritual specialist takes for his own use is usually not valuable. It could be a pair of shorts, a piece of cloth or some other things of less value. This is done with the belief that it connotes the cessation of the deceased's right over the properties so that he or she could cause no harm to anybody who uses them.

With all the properties of the deceased 'sold' or 'bought', the ritual specialist now puts a herb flatokpoe) in water and sprinkles on everyone present and the properties as a sign of cleansing (flaxoxo). With this done, the amememe ritual comes to an end and the family of the deceased now breathes a sigh of relief, in the hope that the spirit of the deceased cannot cause any harm whatsoever to anybody, since his or her spirit can now find rest among his or her colleagues (nuvowolawo).

Philosophical reflections on some aspects of the amememe ritual (cremation)

It has become abundantly clear that the Mafi-Ewe impose the amememe ritual on people who are deemed to have committed a specific moral evil; namely, taking human life through spiritual means and abortion. The ritual is believed to execute four important tasks. In the first place, it serves as punishment for the deceased and also as deterrent to the living. Secondly, it enables the *luvo* (soul) of the deceased to settle quietly among the evil doers (*amevodiwo*) in the land of the dead (*tsiefe*).

Thirdly, the ritual terminates any influence of the *luvo* on the living. Finally, the ritual ends the earthly physical existence of the deceased by preventing the deceased's soul from reincarnating. The above notions associated with the amememe ritual call for some philosophical reflection on what constitute(s) human life (agbe) to the Mafi-Ewe. Does life mean only the ability to breathe or are there other elements that constitute and make life real and meaningful: If there are, why then is it that any infraction or termination of any of these elements does not attract the ritual? Again what makes ability to breathe the most basic and most essential constituent of life, such that even an attempt at 1ts

termination constitutes the most heinous evil and therefore attracts the severest punishment?

These questions are what a philosophical reflection on the Mafi-Ewe conception of life will try to address.

Life among the Mafi-Ewe

To the Mafi-Ewe, the ability to breathe is not all there is to life, yet breath is that seed of life or is that one element that all other elements help to sustain. In other words, breath is that one element which indicates physical existence or life, which factors such as industriousness, healthy relationship with both God and man, and good health give meaning to. Industriousness, for example, helps the Mafi-Ewe to produce the material wealth which makes life not only possible but also pleasant, whilst a healthy realism teaches that though there is evil in the world, evil is not overwhelming: in fact, as they see it, good predominates in the world. This realism also teaches that there are different ways of bringing about the same results, and so there is no need to sit around brooding over the lack of such and such an item.

Even though breath signifies physical existence, the quality of one's life is measured against the kind of relationship that the individual establishes with others, his or her health and the contribution one makes to society through his or her industriousness. This is why the Mafi-Ewe differentiate between amenoagbe-kuku (alive but dead) and amekuku-noagbe (dead but alive). The amenoagbe-kuku is the one who for one reason or the other is unable to have any meaningful interaction with others and is incapable of making any contribution to the welfare and progress of Society, even though he or she is deemed to be physically alive because of the ability to breathe. The amekuku-noagbe, on the other hand, is one who, though dead physically because he is unable to breathe, remains perpetually in the memory of people because of the positive impact he or she made on the people and the society as a whole. Such a person is seen living through principles that he or she stood for and defended to the admiration of all. He or she is seen through the quality of life bequeathed to society and sometimes in his or her physical contribution to the well-being and development of the society. Though a person may be physically dead, these contributions are living memories of him or her and therefore he or she is regarded as amekuku-noagbe.

The distinction between *amenougbe-Kuku* and *amekuku-noagbe* as found among the Mafi-Ewe shows that the people's understanding of life goes *gbogbo*. Hence to them, *gbogbo* is the 'root of life, while all other factors are seen as the "function of life.

According to respondents, when *gbogbo* is tampered with, resulting in the physical death of the individual, there is no way by which that life can be restored. Termination of *gbogbo* means complete physical annihilation of the individual. In contrast to this, there are remedies for any infringement on the functions" of life. They pointed out, for example, that when one is made ill as a result of spiritual attack, this can be remedied through magic and medicine. Or even if one is made poor due to activities of witches, the extended family system and the general communal nature of the society would help in alleviating the effect of such attack.

This attitude to life appears to point to the fact that the Mafi-Ewe are more interested in "quantity of life and not quality, since those who deny others "function" of life are not dealt with severely. They believe that *ati deka metsoa ave o* (one tree does not make a forest) and that "quality" is more enhanced by "quantity. That is to say that there is strength in numbers and with numbers the quality of life can be enhanced through the contributions made by the various members. This is manifested in the fact that Mafi-Ewe boast of large families, though they make no actual conscious efforts at raising the quality of these families. It must be admitted that this attitude makes it extremely difficult for them to accept the current family planning concept. The abundant incidents of unwanted pregnancies, teenage parenthood, and single-parenthood are all indications of the lack of preparedness on the part of the people to accept the Government's family planning programme, and this needs thorough study.

This attitude towards life by the Mafi-twe is well couched in an Ewe proverb which says *agbe doe metia agbeto o* (though a life may appear hopeless, it is still valued by its owner). The proverb is emphasising the fact that it might sometimes be very difficult, if not impossible, to get supplies of basic necessities that make life worth living and meaningful, but once breath has not ceased there is hope for the future. In fact, this view is rooted in the people's realistically healthy regard for life which among others, teaches that "there are different ways of bringing about the same result, and there is no need to sit around brooding over the lack of such and such an item".

Wanjohi G. Joseph- *The wisdom and philosophy of the Gkuyu proverbs: The Kihooto world-view* (Paulines: Publications Africa, 1997), 168

beyond the mere ability to breathe. Life to them is a complex phenomenon which involves many other factors, the infringement of any one of which could lead to a reduction in the quality of that life.

If it is true that the Mafi-Ewe have such a copious and holistic view about life, the question then is, why should a ritual that is supposed to preserve life be limited to only one of the elements that constitute life? What makes that element so special that it deserves such a protection?

The ritual and the preservation of human life

The *amememe* ritual, according to Mafi-Ewe, has it as its primary concern the protection and preservation of what is most valuable to them; human life. But this appears not to be too clear, because one would have expected that with such a broad and holistic view of life, as held by the people, anything that impinges on life such that its meaningful functioning is retarded or destroyed, should attract the same condemnation as that which results in extermination of the very existence of that life. In other words, if for instance, one could work to feed him/herself and the family and also be able to contribute to the growth and development of society and thereby realize meaningful living, but has been denied that ability and capability by any means such that the one becomes a social misfit, the cause of such deprivation should not be regarded too differently from what would have sent the one into the grave.

However, the Mafi-Ewe rather somehow distinguish between the 'root of life and the 'function' of life. To the Mafi-Ewe, the 'root or the foundation of life is breath (*gbogbo*) without *gbogbo*, all other elements that ensure and promote meaningful functioning of life such as industriousness, healthy relationship with God and man, good health and healthy realism are of no use. But, on the other hand, physical existence is acknowledged when one is able to breathe, even though he or she might not be able in any way to support him or herself let alone contribute to societal development. Such inability could be due to sickness or physical disability which has so rendered the individual so helpless that he or she has become liability to family and society. But once he or she is able to breathe, he or she is not dead but alive.

In other words, the Mafi-Ewe see *gbogbo* as necessary to physical existence and all other factors that enhance meaning to life such as industriousness healthy relationship, good health and healthy realism as contingent on

The optimism that the Mafi-Ewe have towards life cannot at all be said to be an exaggeration, because there are several things that can be pointed Out which happen against people's will and which prevent human life from being a paradise on earth. For instance, there are situations when individuals or groups are faced with the loss of those important to them; individuals fail to fulfill expected obligations, like children not caring for their parents or even treating them with indifference or hostility: people experience broken betrothals and marriage vows, dishonoured business dealings and betrayed friendships and loyalties. Again, there are times when largely uncontrollable and unpredictable natural forces disturb the vital social concerns of food supply and health. Such phenomena include pain and diseases, earthquake, fires, flood, pestilence, hurricanes and famine. All these experiences occasion emotional frustrations for individuals, groups and whole societies.

The pains, the agony, the frustrations notwithstanding, the Mafi-Ewe believe that with the right attitude, right decisions at the right time and appropriate efforts, excruciating situations in life can be changed for the better as long as *gbogbo* is not terminated. Therefore the Mafi-Ewe attach more importance to *gbogbo* as the 'root of life than any function of life. Hence the amememe ritual is limited to only those deemed to have terminated *gbogbo*.

Even though crimes such as rape, robbery and assault, among others, can impinge on the smooth function of life of the victim, it is "crimes such as wilful murder or homicide through witchcraft or evil magic" which involve the extermination of the 'root of life, *gbogbo*. It is these crimes that are grievous enough to attract capital punishment.

Mbiti also made a similar observation when he said:

Each community or society has its own set form of restitution and punishment for various offences, both legal and moral. These range from death for offences like practicing sorcery and witchcraft, committing murder adultery, to paying fines of cattle, sheep or money for minor cases...

Again, in most civil societies today, murder is one of the few crimes that attract the death penalty which is regarded as the severest punishment. In

John S. Mbiti. *African Traditional Religions and Philosophy, Second Revised Enlarged Edition* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1989), p.206.

Ghana, for instance, section 46 of the Criminal code clearly states that: Whoever commits murder shall be liable to suffer death. In spite of the fact that people commit crimes that can cripple the normal functioning of their victims' life forever, unless it is proved beyond all reasonable doubt that the act amounts to murder, the perpetrators receive lesser punishments. For example, someone can be maimed as a result of the carelessness of a motorist or an attack by armed robbers but unless ire is lost, the death penalty is not usually imposed.

Though the Mafi-Ewe share the same position with some other traditional African societies as well as civil societies in identifying the termination of human life as the most heinous crime, which demands the most condemnation and severest punishment, there seems to be more concern with the form or mode of the termination of life by the Mafi-Ewe

As mentioned earlier, the amememe ritual which is the severest form of punishment among other things for the Mafi-Ewe, is performed not for the termination of human life (gbogbo) per se, but for using particular modes to cause termination; spiritual means such as magic (dzoduame), and witchcraft (adze). Indeed induced abortion (*fudede* or *fugege* or *fudzodzo*) is the only physical means by which if human life is terminated, the ritual is performed.

In view of the foregoing, it can be seen that life is held as the "highest good", and that it must be protected. It may also be understood why amememe is used to protect it. What is difficult to comprehend is why only the two particular modes of terminating life attract the amememe punishment. One may be tempted to regard the whole thing as arbitrary. One would have expected that if the ritual is really designed to protect human life, then any act or means by which life is destroyed should attract the punishment, be it suicide, poisoning or the use of weapons of any kind. But it seems that a position like this would not be very justifiable, without taking cognisance of the history and the environment within which the people's beliefs and practices developed and are rooted. The closely nature of the Mafi-Ewe society like any typical traditional African society and the fervid desire by every family to cleave and maintain a good name for her members made it

nearly impossible for atrocious crimes to go undetected, particularly those committed through physical means. As Abotchie has observed:

Henrietta J.A. N. Mensah-bonsu, The Annotated Criminal Code of Ghana (Accra, 1996), 50

As a proud and Scandal-detesting people, the paramount need for members of the lineage to avoid being thrown into the socially shameful state of penurious insolvency 1n consequence of the criminal proclivities of its members, or indeed, the need to avoid the dreaded sanctions of the gods, gave each lineage member, a moral mandate to keep surveillance Over the actions of other members.

Anybody who terminated human life through any physical means without justification was easily apprehended and dealt with according to the custom and tradition of the people. By the wisdom of the elders, punishments ranging from death to banishment were imposed and executed. It should be noted here, that the execution of the death penalty, for instance, was done with the active approval of the culprit's kinsmen. This amply demonstrates the gravity of the obligations felt by the family to observe to the full the prescriptions of the moral code of the society as instituted by the ancestors.

However, on the other hand, those who "justifiably" killed in self defence, through accidents and for ritual purposes considered crucial for the survival, peace and prosperity of the Mafi State were applauded. Even in situations like these, the culprits went through elaborate purification rituals to avert the consequences of having terminated human life. The use of spiritual means such as the invocation of a curse or hex upon the victim through the agency of witchcraft or sorcery and induced abortion is considered more serious than the use of physical means. This is because, the use of these spiritual means is secretive and very difficult, though not always impossible, to detect. It is therefore those who use these secretive and spiritual means to cause the death of their victims and who were able to avoid detection while living who are made to go through the *amememe* ritual punishment upon their death. The punishment appears to target those who in the physical pretend to be law-abiding and contributing to the overall welfare and well-being of society but hide beneath the limitations of the mundane world to cause havoc to their neighbours. To the Mafi-Ewe, these

C. Abotchie, Social Control in Traditional Southern Eweland of Ghana: Relevance for Modern Crime Prevention (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1997), 14

are the most dangerous elements in society who must be flushed out by all means and at all cost.

In response to why it is only those who terminate through spiritual means who are made to go through the amememe sanction, while those who kill through physical means are considered heroes, the Mafi-Ewe have various answers.

Some think that those who kill through spiritual means have no other reason apart from sheer wickedness. They are envious and greedy and are people who hate progress. Their actions are pre-meditated and their motive is just to destroy and cause havoc. They are just wicked and even pretend they love their victims. Killing physically, on the other hand, could be due to several reasons. It could be in self-defence, or out of extreme provocation or by accident. This category of killers cannot hide their crime due to the nature of the Mafi-Ewe society and even their victims could have the chance to defend themselves. They are easily apprehended and dealt with according to the custom and tradition of the land.

It is not clear whether, in this case, it is the motive of one's action (killing) that determines the sanction one receives. This is because, the Mafi-Ewe would insist on the amememe ritual even if one has a "justifiable" motive for terminating human life through spiritual means. On the other hand, apart from abortion, one who kills physically with "unjustifiable" motive is not made to go through the amememe sanction.

For instance, there were these issues that came out for discussion. A man who in his attempt to help preserve law and order, during a chieftaincy dispute, was alleged to have acquired some magical powers that he used to eliminate those who in his estimation were fomenting trouble. At one end of the day, peace and tranquillity prevailed and the right candidate was chosen and installed as chief.

By eliminating the trouble-makers, the man facilitated the resolution of the conflict and rapid return of society to normalcy; the desire of all well-meaning people in times of social upheavals. But when the man died, he was made to go through the amememe punishment. The discussants contended that even though the outcome of the man's action was "good", the action was still wrong. The reason is that the Mafi-Ewe do not determine the rightness or wrongness of human action in society by reference to the outcome of the action. They explained that consequences are one of the several factors considered in determining the rightness or wrongness of an action. The most important or all the factors, according to the discussants, is the intrinsic nature of the action itself or its conformity with rules or principles.

For this reason, the discussants contended that society was justified when a man who killed his own brother through poisoning and married the deceased brother's wife was not made to go through the amememe punishment when he died. This was on the grounds that he did not use any spiritual means to terminate the brother's life. As a result, he did not break the rule or principle which demands that no one should terminate human life through any spiritual means. However, the corpse was fined, and a ritual performed for it before burial.

In this regard, one can say that, the immediate concern of the amememe ritual is to discourage the use of evil magic through the agency of witchcraft and sorcery, even though its ultimate purpose is the preservation of human dignity and life, since the only offences that attract the ritual are when human life is terminated by the use of evil magic and induced abortion.

In fact the amememe ritual is one of the greatest humiliations that can befall a person, his or her immediate family as well as the extended family. People actually object to its imposition, and even when they have to accept it, they want to be very sure that their deceased person actually committed the alleged crime. They move from one shrine to another until they are satisfied before they allow the ritual to be performed.

The amememe ritual is a humiliation to the deceased person because it signifies a complete annihilation of the individual. He or she becomes an outcast and is not mentioned during libation prayers. He or she cannot reincarnate again and has nothing to do either with the living or the ancestors. Actually, it is as though the deceased had never been born into the Mafi-Ewe society. The corpse is hooted at and denied the fitting burial the Mafi-Ewe give to their deceased persons. The funeral is treated as that of a child regardless of the age and one's social status in society. Even when a deceased person is buried with all the dignity before his or her evil acts are exposed, that dignified burial is deemed null and void.

Among Mafi Ewe, the death of an infant is treated with scorn; people are encouraged to rather make merry instead of mourning. This is believed to make the spirit of the child know that its death is not valued so that when it comes back again it will not die at that tender age but will rather die at an advanced age.

The amememe ritual reveals some philosophical notions of life among the Mafi-Ewe. To them life is a continuum, stretching into now one is buried and beyond. Hence if one lives as apparently great, successful and respectable life but is disgraced in death, one's whole

lire 1s tainted. The end is what matters and not just the beginning. Again, 1t appears that the Mafi-Ewe are of the opinion that no one can cheat or mock God and that one will always be found out at the end of the day. One will surely and definitely reap what he or she has sown. In fact they are against those who pretend that they are what they really are not.

Moreover, the humiliation is not borne by only the deceased. Both the immediate and extended families are also adversely affected. Though individual rights and concepts of individualism would not admit of one person's evil being visited on others, the communal nature of the Mafi-Ewe Society makes others share in the failure or success of others. As a result, the imposition of the sanction on a member of a family exposes the family to public ridicule and disrepute. This is so because it implies that both the immediate and extended families have failed in their duty to give the needed and adequate moral education and social integration to their members. It could also mean that such evil spiritual powers have been with that family and are being handed down to other members. People are therefore suspicious and keep wondering whether other members of the family do not possess such evil powers.

Again the family of the deceased os adversely affected by the amememe ritual because the wealth or whateve good thing that family is endowed with could be attributed to evil magic and therefore, not valued anymore. It becomes an insult to the family for a long period of time.

Furthermore, in the Mafi-Ewe society where marriage is regarded as not only a union between two individuals, but also a union between families do not allow their daughters and sons to marry from a family whose member has gone through the amememe sanction. It must be pointed out, however, that it is now very difficult to get an "innocent" family in Mafi none of whose member has ever been made to go through the amememe ritual. It 1s, therefore, no more as disgraceful as it used to be to have a family member go through the authority that the families and to disapprove or marrying from a particular family has greatly waned. Even sometimes before the family realises, their children have already "married" without their knowledge.

Conclusion

Moral rules, regulations and norms abound in Mafi-Ewe society. These moral rules and injunctions do not only ensure the well-being and solidarity of the society, but they also help maintain a balanced relationship with the spirit powers, belief in which the Mati-Ewe

society cannot do without. Most of the moral rules are validated by the religious sanctions they receive.

A contravention of any of the moral laws attracted commensurate condemnation and punishment ranging from fines to banishment and even death. The degree of condemnation and punishment depends on the enormity of the offence. For the Mafi-Ewe, the heinousness of a crime is measured against how a particular crime impinges on the well-being, solidarity and the very survival of the society. The well-being, solidarity and survival of the society is in turn determined by the healthy relationship among human beings on one hand, and the relationship between human and spirit powers on the other hand. These relationships create a condition in which humans live in harmony with their environment without fear or intimidation, a condition which affords human beings the exercise of their creative abilities for a fulfilled life.

To the Mafi-Ewe, therefore, the cause, the effect and the end of all moral rules and regulations is the protection and maintenance of human life; human life is the single most important thing, the greatest good for the Mafi-Ewe. Anyone who directly or indirectly does anything that leads to the termination of human life commits the most heinous crime and therefore receives the severest condemnation and punishment. However, the Mafi-Ewe attitude to human life presents an apparent interesting inconsistency; while the Mafi-Ewe consider it a heroic act to physically terminate human life in war situations and resort to purificatory rites to remove the adverse consequences of such an act, those who employ spiritual means such as witchcraft, sorcery and juju and abortion do not escape the consequences of their actions but rather are sentenced even in death.

The amememe ritual is a kind of punishment for those who terminate life through abortion and spiritual means such as Sorcery, witchcraft and juju. Life', to the Mafi-Ewe is not only the ability to breathe. There are other factors such as industriousness, healthy relationship with God and man, good health and healthy realism which constitute life to the Mafi-Ewe. However, these factors are seen as the function of life, since they cannot exist independently. They are rather contingent on the "root of life which is *gbogbo* (breath) without which they are of no use.

To the Mafi-Ewe, therefore, though industriousness, healthy relationship good health and healthy realism are important for the smooth meaningful functioning of life, *gbogbo* which is a necessary element of life is the most important aspect of life. As a result, those who impinge on these 'functions' of life, are not made to go through the amememe

sanction. The sanction is reserved for only those who destroy the 'root' or 'foundation' or life, namely, *gbogbo*.

The ritual is believed to perform three (3) different functions. In the first place, it enables the spirit of the deceased to settle quietly at the abode of the wicked and thereby prevents it from having anything to do with the living. Secondly, the ritual also averts any attempt of the soul of the deceased to reincarnate. Thirdly, completely burning the corpse into ashes makes it impossible for any malevolent spirit to impersonate and use the frame or body of the deceased to perpetuate evil. In fact, the ritual is meant to end the life and being of the person completely and decisively. Taking human life through spiritual means is the most heinous crime; therefore, its perpetrator must never again have anything to do with the living.

The ritual has over the year positively impacted on the moral life of Mafi-Ewe, not only by creating enormous awareness of the sanctity of human life, but also actually preventing the taking of life. Yet attitudes towards the ritual today are varied. Whilst mostly the youth and those who towards have had the either the complete abolition or modification of the ritual, the traditionalists insist on an unadulterated performance of the ritual. Currently, however, the traditionalists appear to be winning the struggle.

CHILD EDUCATION: AN ISLAMIC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

Islam places a great premium on education and this is the reason why the first five verses of the Qur'an (96: 1-5) to have been revealed emphasise the importance of reading, which Muslims generally interpret to mean knowledge acquisition. There are also numerous Prophetic traditions in Islam which declare that acquisition of knowledge is from the cradle to the grave. It is in view of these two positions that this paper attempts to examine the effect (importance) of acquiring knowledge. This paper posits that acquiring knowledge at a tender age is critical to the ultimate development and wellbeing of humans, irrespective of any natural impairment that the child may have. It unravels the symbolic position of a child who had access to education at his tender-age. The philosophical implication of a child's education will equally be expounded.

Introduction

Knowledge is not the exclusive possession or preserve of an individual. That is why the volume of knowledge possessed by people varies from individual to individual. Given the environment within which an individual grows up, the acquisition of knowledge will go alongside the individual's environmental factors: peer group, friends, colleagues and even the contemporaries. Since religion is a powerful agent of socialisation and since the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions constitute the basis of the Islamic faith and the core or Es Store Or Knowledge, efforts will be made in this paper to rely mainly on the contents of the Quran and the Prophetic traditions as the basis of my discussion.

Meanwhile, I need to dilate a bit on these factors in order to draw my points home. These factors in this context are referred to by the sociologists as agents of socialisation which either make or mar the progress or otherwise of a child. The lifelong socialisation process involves many different social forms which influence a child's life and alter his self-image. For example, family is the most important agent of socialisation especially for children. Obviously, one of the family's primary functions is the care and nurturing of

children. It is through the family that a child develops an initial sense of self. Most parents, therefore, seek to help their children become competent adolescents and self-sufficient adults, which means socialising them into the norms and values of both the family and the larger society. In this process, adults themselves experience socialisation as they adjust to becoming spouses, parents and in-laws. Family thus, influences the life pattern or life-style of a child.

Like the family, schools have an explicit mandate to socialise, and especially so, children into the norms and values of one's culture. Schools foster competition through built-in systems of reward and punishment, such as grades and evaluations by teachers. Consequently, a child who is working intently to learn a new skill can nevertheless come to feel stupid and unsuccessful.

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Peer group, also, influences the children a lot as family becomes somewhat less important in his or her social development. Instead, peer groups increasingly assume the role of parents. Peer groups such as friendship cliques, youth gangs and special interest clubs frequently assist adolescents in gaining some degree of independence from parents and other

Viktor Gecas, "Contexts of Socialisation in Social Psychology: Sociological Perspectives (ed) Morris Rosenberg and Ralph D. Turner (New York: Basic Books, 1981) 65-199

Samuel Bowles & Herbert Gintis, Schooling in Capitalist America: Education Reform the Contradictions of Economic Life (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 131-132, 147

Richard T. Schaefer, Sociology (New York: Library of Congress, 1989), 108

authority figures. It is being acknowledged that peer groups provide for anticipatory socialisation into new roles that the young person will later assume.

In the recent years, technological innovations as radio, motion pictures and television have become important agents of socialisation. Television in particular, is a critical force in the socialisation of the youth in our contemporary society. Many parents allow the television set to become a child's favourite playmate, consequently, children in our society typically watch over three or more hours of television per day.

Remarkably, between the ages of 6 and 18, the average young person spends more time watching games of different types and more importantly football in the English Premier League. Consequently, the standard of education and morality is dwindling. Apart from sleeping, watching television is the most time consuming activity of young ones in our society. There are other agents of socialisation which time and space may not allow us to dilate upon. These include among others religion, politics and workplace.

Theoretical Framework

The work will be carried out within the framework of the phenomenology of religion. Phenomenology of religion is a method of adapting the procedure of epoche and deitic intuition to the study of the varied symbolic expressions of that which people appropriately respond to as being of unrestricted value to them. In phenomenology of religion concerns the experiential aspect or religion describing religious phenomena in terms consistent with the orientation or the worshippers. It views religion as being made up of different components, and studies these components across religious traditions so that an understanding of them can be gained. The essential components are enumerated by the Glorious Qur'an when it refers to the hearing, sight and intelligence in Q. 16: 78 which form the basis of this work.

Husserl defines phenomenological method as a descriptive theory of knowledge which begins from within the person, the subject and seeks to move outside the person into an objective description of the world. He discovered when he contemplated the content of his mind were such acts as

Ibid., 109.

Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology* New York: Springer Publishers, 1999)

remembering, desiring and perceiving which are in tandem with the reference to the Qur'anic content.

In the phenomenology of religion, Ninian Smart begins to take a few steps further towards explaining the apparent difficulty in resolving the disparate forms of religious experience by making the thought experimental leap from the religious experience, whichever form it may take, to the reality of something inconceivable. As far as the subject is concerned, what he has experienced is real, and it is not for the scholar to argue. Otherwise (the believer is always right).

To Smart however, phenomenology is a very useful tool for reducing a concept to its simplest form. To this principle, this writer subscribes to the position held by Smart because any tool that simplifies a particular concept to its simplest form will definitely assist the learner. This is the method adopted by the Qur'an in its bid to prepare man for knowledge acquisition. From this end, an appreciation of the phenomenology of religion proves central to an understanding of what is involved practically, cognitively and affectively in both learning and religious way of life. The Qur'an, in this regard, will be used to analyse issues of importance to this study.

CHILD AT BIRTH

The Quran gives us a vivid and graphic description of a child's incapacity for anything at all at birth. It (the Quran) however, provides tools or instruments for the acquisition of both formal and informal education which will prepare the child for future challenges. The Quran states in this regard that;

It is He who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when you knew nothing and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affections, that you may give thanks (to Allah) Q 16:78.

The verse gives us four essential components for learning after having illustrated the process of child-birth. It is understood that it is Allah, the Omnipotent, who has brought man forth from the womb of his mother and he knows nothing, identifies nothing and comprehends nothing. In order to prepare him for knowledge acquisition, He (Allah) provides him with hearing at the first instance. The hearing precedes the sight because of its significant position. At birth these organs mentioned by the above Qur'anic

verse cannot perform the primary functions immediately. However, a psychologist is of the view that hearing, first and foremost, becomes effective in the child's life development cycle. This theory, to him, takes effect within the first few months of its birth. Thus, hearing seems to be the most essential tool in the learning process.

Oladosu narrating his experience while he was a student at Azhar University in Cairo, indicated that a good number of Imams in some respectable and popular central mosques were blind. Some of them were born as such while others became blind due to plaque-affliction. The issue here is not the cause of blindness, rather, the effect of the hearing in the learning process. Sight is also important in the learning process and is second to hearing in the hierarchy of the senses as contained in the Qur'an. The role of sight in the learning process will be discussed later. The importance of sight cannot be overemphasized. However a good number of scholars abound who are naturally blind as they are born blind and their educational pursuit was not jeopardised. Abdul-Hamid Khisk (d.1996) of Cairo was blind and a scholar of note. Tah Husein also of Cairo was a blind scholar and the author of *al-Ayyam* (vol.I) which is being used for Advance level Arabic Literature in West Africa (West African Examinations Council).

Shaykh Nurul Hakim (d.2012) a Nigerian was a blind man, a product of Azhar University in Cairo and a reputable scholar. Shaykh Sisse of Nigeria also was born blind. He is a living legend and a scholar of note. A lot of blind people had been trained in different Universities in Nigeria. The summary of this is that blindness should not constitute a barrier to education, more importantly in this age of technology. Various institutions are established to train handicapped people of various deformities. The opportunity should not be allowed to slip away particularly for those who are in this category. Knowledge could be acquired at any one's stage of life. The prophet is reported to have said that "knowledge is from the cradle to the grave". Hearing is another important milestone and tool for learning. Indeed it is the hearing that afforded the blind scholars in Cairo and elsewhere the Opportunity to absorb, assimilate and comprehend what was being taught to

D. Rogers, Issues in Adolescent Psychology (New York: Ace Meridith Co Ltd, 1972),

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them. Another Quranic text lends credence to the importance of hearing in the learning process when it states;

Say: 'It is He Who has created you and made for you the faculties of HEARING, SEEING, and UNDERSTANDING; little thanks it is that you give (Q: 67: 23)

Yusuf Ali, alluding to the importance of the essential faculties, describes them as the source of all growth and development". The implication of this stems from the fact that the hearing faculty enhances quick absorption and easy assimilation of lessons. It is further stressed that through the faculty of hearing we can judge and attain to higher and higher spiritual dignity. Thus, individuals can be granted wisdom through the instrumentality of the faculty. Meanwhile, let us now examine the next faculty, which is sight as enumerated by the Quranic verse, which is the basis of this discourse.

Sight and seeing are used interchangeably. The first Quranic verse 16: 78 uses sight while Q: 67: 23 uses seeing in the same context. This means that sight and seeing portend ability to see and acknowledge. Sight or seeing, therefore, is another essential tool and instrument theoretically. Its instrumentality stems from the fact that it is used as a mode of identification of letters, words and sentences, all of which are special means or modes of imparting knowledge to people so as to have a firm grip of the rudiments of the particular lesson or course.

The two essential instruments are complementary to each other; hearing assists sight or seeing and vice-versa. For an individual who possesses the two would undoubtedly have quick assimilation and comprehension. The two are instrumental in providing or producing effective and efficient resources needed for human, social and economic development; so as to meet the ultimate challenges of globalization and modernity. The uniqueness of the two tools are spectacular as they are symbiotic and interconnected. Though hearing, as earlier inferred, is more effective, sight too is complementary as earlier submitted. The firmness of the grasp for the candidate involved depends largely on the cooperative assistance of the two tools. It is believed, however, that in the absence of

*Yusuf Ali, The Holy Qur'an: English Translation of the Meanings & Comment
Madina: King Fahd Holy Qur'an Printing Complex, 2001), 1/68
Ibid.*

One of the two, the other becomes exceptionally powerful. This has been the reason why the blind scholars in Egypt became more renowned. This is possible when it is the sight that is missing.

Examples abound in this part of the world too to illustrate this point. Gbadamosi, a Nigerian and blind man finished his first degree in Islamic studies / Education at the University of Ilorin with Second Class Honours (Upper Division), a feat that many students of both hearing and sight could not achieve. Similarly Maliki Zakarriyah, a Ghanaian and blind man has just finished his degree programme at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. Currently, Gndha s inister rOr Chieftaincy & Culture, Seidu Danaa is a blind man. All these examples are eloquent testimonies that the instruments or tools provided by Allah are very essential in knowledge acquisition.

The next stage of our discussion centers on the word intelligence which is translated in Arabic as *af'idah* (Q. 16: 78) by Yusuf Ali (2001) as "understanding". Thus, intelligence provides understanding. That means both the hearing and sight could not be effective without the repository tool which is intelligence. It is interesting to note that the three i.e. hearing, seeing and intelligence are placed, by the Intelligent Creator, Allah adjacent to each other within the same container, head; so that the interconnectivity will be fast in the assimilation and effective comprehension of anything that it is taught through the hearing and sight, thereby bringing about reflective and positive thought. From this concept, it can be understood that knowledge is a special endowment from Allah and He bestows it to whomever He wishes whether or not the essential ingredients are complete. He uses these instruments as symbols and means of acquiring them. Millions of people are there with the ingredients and yet the ability to assimilate, comprehend and understand becomes difficult. There could be serious problem at the very foundation starting with the mind-body problem which is outside of this treatise.

Yusuf Ali used two different words for *af'idah* in his translation probably because the possession of intelligence leads to understanding of a particular material or subject being taught. Intelligence is largely responsible for the type of personality that emerges in later life of a child. Thus, there is the need to give a proper educational foundation to the

D. Rogers, Issues in Adolescent...34

Gbadamosi was one of the best students that the University of Ilorin produced. He has a few publications to his credit.

S. A. Jimon, *"If Gold Rusts, What Will Iron Do? Being the 89 Inaugural Lecture delivered at the University of Ilorin (26 February, 2009), 33*

children during the critical period in life's development circle, particularly between the ages of three and seven or seven and ten as the Prophet Muhammad postulates:

Command your children to Observe prayers when they attain the age of seven and beat them (slightly) on it at the age of ten i.e. (if they are hesitant) (Bukhari and Mustim).

The simple reason for this Prophetic tradition is that the first few years of a child's life span are crucial in his social, emotional and cognitive development. This prophetic postulation is the basis of the wise but philosophical saying of the Arabs that "knowledge at tender age of a child is an inscription on the rock", thus children passing through this phase of life need extra parental care. Intelligence should therefore, be used to earn the pleasure of Allah in this world and in the hereafter.

The last leg of the verse as expounded by Yusuf Ali 15 the word "affection" Arabic equivalent of which also is *af-Idah*. One wonders why this word emerges in the translation when there is no other Arabic term that is added. If it were to be in bracket, it could have been assumed that it is added for the purpose of further education. But taking the whole verse together, one will agree with Yusuf Ali that after the hearing, sight and intelligence have comprehended or assimilated a particular learning, the container that preserves that type of knowledge is the heart, and that is why Ali says: that "hearts are considered the centers of affections, and in *Arabic idiom, of intelligence also*".

Heart is thus seen as the centre of both intelligence and affection. This is the reason why the verse 1s concluded thus that you may give' thanks (to Allah)." Man should therefore give thanks to Allah and not to imaginary deities or powers or forces. In support of this position particularly on the position of heart as the centre of intelligence, Imam Shafi in his poetic stanza thus;

My knowledge is with me.
Wherever I go, it accompanies me.
My heart (bosom) is its container.
And not in the box, where I Keep (my books).
If I am in the house, it (Knowledge) is with me,.

And while I am in the market, It is also there.

Yusuf Ali, The Holy Qur'an... 756

The poetic stanzas are graphic description of the place where knowledge resides. Thus, from our discussion so far, it could be deduced that higher cognitive functions are a function of the brain activities which could be derived from the use of the three essential ingredients that we had mentioned, i.e. hearing, sight and intelligence. The three are provided for man to facilitate his learning processes. In any learning situation, the three ingredients must be alert and alive so that mind space is used as container of the mind objects while memories with reflect states of the total system. All the three will be put to work for proper assimilation and understanding.

In a situation where sight and hearing are at work but with the absence of learning through the mind space, the comprehension will equally be absent. The position will then be like a man or a learner with his body in the class but the mind is in the market trading. In that situation, there will be no assimilation and understanding. Since the three ingredients are adjacent to each other, the purpose is to allow the three to function together for effective comprehension and understanding. The functions of each mode of the network are an approximation to the activity of the brain. The brain will be more effective if all these ingredients are fully utilised. Children at a tender age are susceptible to this as external thoughts and forces are yet to be rearing their heads. This situation leads us to the knowledge acquired at a tender age which is the issue being considered in this small piece.

THE PLACE OF KNOWLEDGE FOR A CHILD

Early Childhood experiences, undoubtedly, influence the development of a child and child in this Context is a child within the range of four to ten or eleven years of age. According to S A Finckh, "this period is characterised by emotion of love and hate, approval and disapprovals." This is because it is a period that determines the type of personality that will emerge in later life as earlier submitted. Additionally, knowledge during the early years is a necessary condition for the formation of any enduring and consistent moral habits.

Going back to the verse which was the conceptual frame-work of this write-up, Allah reminded us that "it was He who brought the child from the womb of his mother. At this

time, he (child) knew nothing, and in order to prepare him for the challenges of the world, he gave him hearing, sight and intelligence which become effectively functional from the age of three or four. At this age, these tools provided by the Creator become open

As quoted in S. A Jimoh, "if Gold Rusts..." 34

getting adequately prepared for learning. The reason is that no other preoccupation for the child in terms of bogus ambition or determination exists. The brain is empty trying to absorb and comprehend any available training.

It is because of this that the child must be guided correctly as his intellect or intelligence is like a magnet that attracts anything at its disposal-tabula rasa, an empty slab or slate which nothing has been written on or deposited. Any article deposited at this material time becomes glued to it. During this period, a child is at a vantage position to either receive what benefits him or otherwise depending on the parents, caretakers, nannies and mother surrogates under whose tutelage the child will grow.

D. Rogers submits in this regard thus: there is need to give a proper foundation to the children during what the psychologists refer to as the crucial period in life's development circle. This period, according to Gragey," is critical in the social, emotional and cognitive development of a child as earlier on alluded to. Further to that, children, during this period, are opportune to have access to educational pre-primary and primary schools respectively. The bulk of youth population is found here. Thus, whatever system of education the children receive remains with them permanently, because the period is considered as a formation stage. At this period also, certain immoral acts such as stealing, disobedience, truancy and the like could be noticed among them. Thus, if proper training is not inculcated into them, at that crucial period of their life, the propensity remains that, there would be juvenile delinquencies, and these immoral acts will be brewing. The Arabs wise saying vividly describes this scenarios thus who ever grows up on a particular habit becomes addicted to it at old age

or adulthood'. It is therefore instructive to submit that roles of the parents at this level are imperative. Winnicef's position is apposite here as he submits;

We have to provide the young ones in infancy and childhood and adolescence, in the home and in school, with the facilitating environment in which the individual may grow his or her own moral capacity ...and find his or her own way of using the moral code and general cultural endowment in our age.

D. Rogers, Issues in Adolescent Psychology...34

"As quoted in 5. A Jimoh, "If Gold Rust... 11

The above quotation summarises the position of a good parent regarding moral instruction to his child. Thus, the home and school, which is another reflection of different family background, must provide adequate models for the youth. A youth who is not morally upright and well brought up, engages in nefarious activities. Institutions of higher learning are witnessing all sorts of dastardly attitudes which in effect depict the training the students received from home.

Role of Parents in Child's Education

Specific functions had been allotted to each of the child's parents, that is, the mother and the father particularly on the child's upbringing. The mother's role starts from giving suck to her offspring. The Qur'an states;

The mothers shall give suck to their offsprings for two whole years, for him who desires to complete the term, but he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing (Q 2:233).

Right from birth, it is the responsibility of the mother to nurse and breastfeed her child as contained in the above verse in order to have necessary tools for appropriate development. In addition, the mother shoulders the responsibility of caring in terms of proper feeding, clothing and rearing until the child is weaned. Mother is considered the first school for her child in terms of informal education and home training. A poet is reported to have said:

Mother is the first School for her child, if he/she is properly prepared or trained, a good and virile nation is built.

informal education imbues in the child a sense of discipline and beautiful orientation upon which formal education is built. The mother prepares her child for future challenges and responsibilities through guidance and counseling. The mother's main role for her child's upbringing is moral instruction/education, home training, beautiful exhortation and physical training, including house (chores) works. All these are

D. w. Winnecef, "The Young Child at Home & at school," in W. A Miblet, Moral Education (New York: Faber & Faber Ltd, 1963), 11

complimentary to format education which shat be received after the child has attained a certain age.

The father's role however is also complimentary to the ones enumerated above. Meanwhile, the bulk or expenses lie with the father. The Prophet is reported to have said "A father should give a good name to his child at birth, educate him when he becomes of age and get him/her married when he is matured (for it) (Bukhari and Muslim).

Looking critically at this prophetic statement, one is not in doubt that the responsibility of giving a child a sound education rests on the father. Provision of essential tools for education for the child is the father's duty. The summary of this all, is that while the father is taking care of the entire household, he should not lose sight of the children's educational pursuit. Moral lessons and keeping watchful eyes on the children are parts of his responsibilities.

Religion is central to the life of the people and parents are contributory factors to a viable and virile society. In other words, it is good homes that make good societies, hence the saying charity begins at home". Because of the high number of good homes, the societies, in the past, were characterised by peace, tranquility, harmony and progress. Equally, because of adverse influences, the present societies are lacking in sustainable tranquility, harmony and progress. It is a common knowledge that individuals make homes and homes influence the society.

Finally, the three main tools and instruments as expounded by the Quran should be judiciously used by the children at their tender ages through the instrumentality of their parents. If this is done, whatever they learn would remain indelible. The parents too, should not jettison their responsibilities to either the teachers in the school or the society. The roles of both the parents and the children should be seen as being complementary in order to have a virile nation.

Conclusion

Attempts have been made in this small piece to analyse the divine tools originally provided for the children's education as expounded by Quran chapter 16: 78. We have therefore looked at the divine instruments of hearing, sight and intelligence as the basis

for effective and efficient means of acquiring knowledge. such knowledge should be based on the principles of service to humanity and God who is the provider of these unique materials. The resume is that parents should influence effectively the use of these golden tools to better the lots of the children in particular and the society at large. The complementary roles of both the parents and the children should therefore be seen as a framework for the moral and social development of the society.

**THE OBAAHEMAA'S STOOL: A SYMBOL OF POLITICAL & RELIGIOUS
AUTHORITY IN AN AKAN STATE**

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Abstract

The Chieftaincy institution was and continues to be an important institution among the Akan of Ghana. The power behind the Akan stool has been women who help in the making of a chief. The *Obaahemaa* (queen mother) as a co-ruler with the chief has the sole responsibility of selecting a male to sit on the stool of her ancestors. Her stool (Ohemma Adwa) is considered the senior stool and takes priority over the Ohene Adwa (chief's stool). The paper discusses the political and religious roles of the Obaahemaa in an Akan state. These roles are manifest in powers conferred on her stool by customs and traditions of her people to nominate a male to sit on a vacant stool and to perform those religious duties conferred on her stool. The paper using the Akan of Ghana shows how this important stool functions in the Akan society. The paper discusses her political role especially in the nomination of a new chief and her religious roles in the performance of certain rituals in the society. The paper concludes that among the Akan of Ghana, despite influence of social change, the Obaahemaa's Stool continues to enjoy the same respect and authority recognised by custom and the secular state.

Introduction

This paper investigates the Obaahemaa's Stool in the political and religious life of the Akan. The institution of chieftaincy is an important

Obaahemaa is the Queen Mother of an Akan state

Institution in the lives of indigenous Akan of Ghana and is well developed among the Akan. It has as its head the chief who is selected from among the Adehye who have the right to the headship of the town and sometimes of the whole state. In selecting a royal to become a chief, the sole right according to Akan customs and traditions rests on the

shoulders of the *Obaahema*. The main aim of this article is to discuss the significance of the *Obaahemaa's* stool in the political and religious sphere of the Akan. In this vein, I will discuss the role of the Stool in the administration as well as the religious activities of the state.

The Akan political structure and organization

The Akan is the largest ethnic group in Ghana constituting 47.5% of the country's population (Ghana statistical service, 2012). The Akan is made up of the Adanse, Asante, Akuapem, Akwamu, Akyem, Assin, Bono, Ahafo, Denkyira, Fante, Gomoa, Kwawu, Sefwi, Twifo and Wassa. The Akan is organised into eight clans with each identified by a totem. The clans and associated totems are

Clan	Totem
Aduana	Dog
Agona	Parrot
Asakyiri	Vulture
Asenee	Bat
Oyoko	Hawk
Asona	Crow
Leopard	Buffalo
Bretuo	Leopard
Ekona	Buffalo

Clans, generally, are the largest family groups, members of which believe in their common descent, by birth, from a common, though unknown, and nameless ancestor or ancestress. The family or Abusua is matrilineal and

Adehye are the royals from whom an Obaahemaa can select one to occupy a vacant stool

Kwame Arhin, Traditional rule in Ghana: Past and present (Accra: Sedco Publishing 1985)

Ghana Statistical Service, 2010 population and housing census (Accra: Ghana Statistical Service, 2012)

K, Kyeremanteng-Nkansah, The Akan of Ghana: Their Customs, History and Institutions (Kumasi: Sbewie de Ventures) 26

each Akan belongs to one of them. Every person whose mother is an Akan belongs to one of these Abusua, and it is along these lines that inheritance is determined with regard to Akan stools or family properties. Warren using the Asante as an example makes this point: *The political organisation of the Akan is largely based on the kinship, each lineage being a political unit with its own headman acting as its representative on higher councils. The household head is mirrored in instituted officers of progressively larger political unit; for the Ashanti their hierarchy begins with the household head. (abusuapanin), the village headman (odikro), the territorial chief (ohene), the paramount chief of a division of the Asante Confederacy (Omanhene) and finally, the head of the Asante Confederacy the Asantehene.*

At each level of the Akan political structure the stool is the symbol of authority and each level has a stool for the *Obaanemaa* and *Ohene* (male chief) respectively.

The Obaahemaa's Stool of an Akan State

The Obaahemaa in the Akan State is a co-ruler with the Chief in the indigenous Akan political system. The Obaahemaa was a female relative of the male office holder, and could be any or the following to him: a mother, or mother's sister, a sister or a mother's daughter's daughter, a sister's daughter or a mother's daughter. The *Obaahemaa* was supposed to look after the women's affairs and was a member of the Council of her political unit. It is for this reason that she also has a stool on which she sits. One

Arhin, 14

Dennis, M. Warren, *The Akan of Ghana* (Accra: Pointer, n.d)

Stoeltje, Bervely,j. (n.d). "Narration and negotiation: A woman's case in the Queen mother's Court in Ghana." In E. Adriaan D. Von Kouveroy van Nieuwaal& Werner, *Zips (EOs.) Sovereignty, Legitimacy, and Power in West African Societies: Perspectives from Legal Anthropology.* 172-190

Arhin, 17

Arhin, 17

Becomes Obaahemaa when she sends 'apology' through a chief or an elder to the chief, stating her intention to occupy the stool. When her request is accepted by the chief and elders, she is summoned to meet the chief and his elder where her nomination formally announced by the chief to his elders. The new *Obaahemaa-elect* would then be placed on a new white stool prepared to become the new *Obaahemaa*. The importance of the *Obaahemaa's* stool is seen in her position in the Akan state. She is the only one who as

the right to rebuke the chief and his elders publicly. No decision concerning the State by the chief and his elders can be taken without her input. The *Obaahemaa* is responsible for the overall administration of the women in the community. It is her responsibility to ensure that women are not sexually exploited and this means placing the full responsibility for all unauthorised sexual relations and adultery on men. The *Obaahemaa*, again is responsible in ensuring that husbands do not inherit their wives private property as the couple do not belong to the same *Abusua*, family, and therefore do not have community of property. The *Obaahemaa's* role in the community accordingly is to ensure that women's level of self - hood and respect is maintained.

Significance of the Obaahemaa 's Stool

The Obaahemaa' s stool is Very significant as it ranks equal if not senior to that of the chief. Rattray describes the Obaahemaa's stool as the *akonmwapanyin* (senior stool) to the chief's stool. The Obaahemaa's Stool is one of the most important indigenous religious symbols of the Akan because it represents spiritual authority. The stool confers on the *Obaahemaa* sacred status and this status is emphasised by taboos. Her position in the Akan state becomes more significant as it fits into the central role of women in the Akan worldview, All the clans of the Akan trace their

Osei Kwadwo, An Outline of Asante History (Kumasi: O. Kwadwo Enterprise), 14

Check the following for a discussion on this (Arhin 1983; Busia, 1951; Meyerowitz, 1958; Oduyoye, 1979; Rattray, 1923)

Takyiwah Manuh, "Asantehemaa's Court and its Jurisdiction over Women: A study In Legal Pluralism." In Research Review, 4(2), 1988), 50-66.

R. S. Rattray, Ashanti (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1747h

origins from a putative ancestress. The Obaahemaa serves as the principal advisor to the chief and his elders. When a chief offends his elders, custom demands that they lodge a complaint with the *Obdanemud* who puts in place a mediatory team to help her settle the dispute that has arisen.

POLITICAL AUTHORITY OF THE OBAAHEMAA'S STOOL

The making of a chief

In the Akan political set up, no one can become a chief if he has not been nominated by the Obaahemaa from the appropriate royal house. Busia writing on the nomination of a new chief for the Wench Traditional Area made this observation:

When a chief died and a new one had to be appointed, the elders held a meeting at which the Kontihene" presided. At the meeting the elders selected two from among themselves to approach the Queen-Mother and ask her to nominate a candidate for the stool,. The Queen Mother then held a meeting with all the adult men and the senior women... of the eligible candidate in turn and chose the one they considered most suitable.

According to Arhin', the Obaahemaa has three chances of producing a candidate acceptable to the community. if she fails, the representatives of the community could select a candidate. Adotei and Hagan (eds.) noted a similar procedure as Busia in the nomination processes that culminated in the selection of Barima Kwaku Duah who was enstooled as Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, Asantehene in 1999. The processes were set in motion after the burial of the late Asantehene, Orumfuo Opoku Ware II. seven candidates

Odotei, "Women in Male corridors or Power In . Odotei & A.K. Awedoba (eds.) Chieftaincy in Ghana: Culture, overance and Development (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2006), 81-102

O Kwadwo, (2000), 14

"Kontihene is responsible for the administration of the Akan state. He could be described as the governor or the Akan state.

K.A Busia, The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti (London: Frank Cass, 1968), 9

Arhin, (1985)

K Odotei & G. Hagan (eds,). he KingA Returns (Legon: Institute of African Studies, 2002), 6

The Asantehene is the King of the Asante State which spans the whole of the Ashanti Region and some parts of the Brong Anafo Region of Ghana

expressed interest in the vacant Golden Stool, the symbol of authority of an Asantehene. As opined by Odote and Hagan, in the Asante tradition, it is the responsibility of the *Asantenemar* traditionally recognised as the "mother" of the Asantehene and the Asante nation, to nominate a successor to the Golden Stool the Stool or the King of Asante. She

was assisted in this important task by the *Abusuapanyin* (head of family) of the *Royat Oyoko* Family and the Chiefs or *Kokofu, Juaben* and *Bekwai*. Others were the chiefs of *Nsuta* and *Kutenase*. By tradition, the *Gyaase* had the right to reject the nominee of the *Asantehemaa*.

If the *Asantehemaa's* choice is rejected, she has two more chances. If all her three nominees are rejected, the *Gyaase* and heads of the clans of the Kumasi state would then point to the royal of their choice who will have to be confirmed by the *Asantehemaa* as true royal.

It must be well noted that the power to nominate a person to occupy a vacant stool among the Akan is the sole prerogative of the *Obaahemaa*, recognised by the Akan customary laws and the 1992 constitution of Ghana. This position was affirmed by the Supreme Court of Ghana when in a landmark case brought before it, it ruled that the enstoolment of one Kwadwo Nyame Nketia as Paramount Chief of Wenchi, a town in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana was null and void because the nominee did not have the blessing of the *Obaahemaa* of Wenchi Traditional Area, Nana Atoaa Sramgyedua III.

The Asantehemaa is the Queen Mother of the Asante state and responsible for nominating a candidate to occupy the vacant stool of the state

The Golden Stool is the stool on which the Ningo or Asante sits on. The stool was said to have been commanded down by the legendary Uomro Anokye during the reign of Osei Tutu I

Abusuapanyin in the Akan state is the head of the lineage, family or clan. He performs such duties exercising authority over the members of the family, preside over all meetings of the family especially over marriage contracts and burial, administers family properties etc. In the areas of the state. He is considered to be the owner of the chief's stool as well as the ruler of the chief himself,

**The Royal Oyoko Family is the royal lineage that sits on the vacant Golden Stool must hail from the Gyaase constitute member of the royal household whose primary duty is to serve the needs of the King. In the nomination and enstoolment processes, they are customarily required to accept or reject a nominee for the vacant stool.*

Ghana, 1992 Constitution of Ghana. Chapter 22

S. Y. Bimpong-Buta, Koko Queens Enstooling or Destooling a Chief (Daily Graphic, 2012),

The case as Bimpong-Buta reports is as follows. Nana Abrefa Mbore Bediatuo VII chief of Wenchi died. After his death there arose a dispute with one Nana Kusi Appea, a former chief of Wenchi, staking a claim for the vacant stool. The case was resolved by the Brong

Anato Keganat House of Chiefs. The House ruled in favour of the Wenchi *Obaahemaa* who had opposed Nana Kusi Appea. After the resolution of the dispute by the House of Chiefs, the king makers of Wenchi requested the *Obaahemaa* to make a nomination for the vacant stool. The *Obaahemaa* responded that she needed three weeks to make her choice. This did not go down well with the king makers since they could not wait for that long. The *Obaahemaa* still insisted on being given three weeks to make up her mind since she needed to do wide consultations. The king makers approached the *Obaapanyin* (Senior Woman) of the Royal Kutenase Family, Abena Frema Atuahene, who performed the customary function which would have been performed by the *Obaahemaa* in respect of the nomination and enstoolment of a paramount chief. Consequently, the *Obaahemaa* and three other chiefs within the Wenchi Traditional Area initiated legal proceedings against the enstoolment processes. The case travelled through the Regional House of Chiefs where the *Obaahemaa* lost. The *Obaahemaa* appealed to the National House of Chiefs Judicial Committee which upheld their petition and entered verdict in the favour of the appellants. The respondents in turn appealed to the Supreme Court of Ghana. The Supreme Court panel consisting of their Lordships: Brobbey, Dr. Date-Bah, Baffoe -Bonnie, Aryeetey and Akoto Bamfo delivered a unanimous ruling on October 20, 2011. In their ruling, the Supreme Court averred that nomination should take place before all the other processes would follow. If there was no nomination at all, or where the nomination was flawed or faulty as to be void, there would be no basis for performing the other processes. Since nomination was sine qua non to the making of a chief, the Supreme Court per His Lordship Justice Brobbey said

When it became apparent to the appellants that the queen was not going to nominate a candidate within the time that they wanted, the kingmakers were alleged to have contacted the Obaapanyin of the family by name Abena Frema Atuahene. It is not clear if she had nominated the first appellant for the position of paramount chief of Wenchi... if the one who performs the function is not a queen, she is not qualified to perform that function... she did not have the capacity to make the nomination or perform the function exclusively assigned to queen. Her nomination was therefore invalid."

Bimpong- Buta commenting on the ruling of the Supreme Court makes the point that the *Obaahemaa* could not be said to have unreasonably delayed because she could not meet the timeline of the kingmakers. The consequences of not giving the *Obaahemaa* enough time to make her nomination meant that the purported nomination and enstoolment of the chief was not valid.

Arbitration and settlements

The political authority of the *Obaahemaa* also enjoins her to adjudicate on matters of state involving the women of the community and in some instances involving men as well." issues addressed by the *Obaahemaa* may include marriage disputes, divorce and maintenance. The *Obaahemaa* according to Manuh also has jurisdiction over the markets in her community. All disputes arising from the markets are addressed to her. It is her responsibility to settle these disputes and ensure harmony in the markets. The markets queens according to Manun bring foodstuffs to be (used to) cooked for the ancestors on feast days.

Religious authority of the *Obaahemaa's* stool

The Akan are very religious and the *Obaahemaa* is very much involved in the religiosity of her people. The *Obaahemaa* is in the middle of some rituals in the community. Her roles in the rituals during festivals, puberty rites, sacrifice, and moral control of women and girls in the community will be discussed.

Roles during festivals

Festivals are important occasions which illustrate among other things historical events, coming of age, harvesting of crops, and appeasement to

Bimpong-Buta,

Bimpong-Buta,

R. S. Rattray, Ashanti Law and Constitution (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), 316

Manuh, 1. (1988), 9

Manun, T. (1988), 57

various gods for protection against enemies epidemics. The *Obaahemaa* performs important religious functions during celebration of festivals. Among the Akan, one important festival that is celebrated is the Aday festival. This festival is an ancestral one and during the celebration, important rituals are performed to propitiate the ancestors. In all these celebrations, the *Obaahemaa* has important functions to play. Since the festival is an ancestral one, the ancestors are fed in a ceremony performed in the *akonwa fie* so (stool room). The *Obaahemaa* is responsible for the preparation of the ritual meal to be

used in feeding the ancestors. Rattray reports of how an *Obaahemaa* celebrated an Aday where she prepared a ritual food *eto* and fed the stools of her ancestress on whose stool she sat. The *Obaahemaa* can keep the chief in waiting for as long as she wants. The chief cannot retire home after an Aday festivity until he has greeted the *Obaahemaa*.

Roles during puberty rites

The *Obaahemaa* in the Akan state is also responsible for the performance of puberty rites on girls who have menstruated for the first time. This rite has a religious significance. This significance is seen in the belief by the people that any violation on the part of a girl who gets herself pregnant without going through puberty rituals could incur the wrath of the ancestors. It is also a taboo for a girl to undergo this ritual if she is not a virgin. It is for this reason that the *Obaahemaa* will be required, according to customs and traditions of her people, to first ascertain the virginity of the girl before the ritual is performed. Abotchie commenting on a similar practice among the Ewe of Ghana states:

Modupe Oduyoye, Festivals: The Cultivation of Nature and the Celebration of History" in E.A. Ade Adegold (ed.), Religion in West Africa (Ibadan: Sefer, 1998), 150-169

This festival is celebrated during the dry day Akan calendar period. During this period, two celebrations are observed. These are Akwasidae (Sunday Aday) and Awukudae (Wednesday Aday).

Vincent Assanful., Indigenous Religion and Development: The case of Assin Atandasu of Southern Ghana. (Sauron Academic Publishers, 2012), 37

R. S. Rattray, (1923), 106

"Eto is a local dish made from mashed yam mixed with oil served with eggs. This food which is prepared during festive days is served to the ancestral stools.

The evidence of virginity is traditionally not accepted upon the mere verbal declaration of the fact by the girl, it is ascertained. The mode of certification which takes place on the eve of the initiation ceremony consists in an ordeal administered by the senior kinswoman, The ordeal entails the testing for the intactness of the hymen by an attempted insertion of a boiled egg into the vagina. The vaginal cavities of girls who have lost their virginity (woman's virtue) a rare happening in traditional society are receptive of the egg, upon which such girls are declared unchaste and, therefore ineligible for the ritual.

Roles during the offering of sacrifice

The *Obaahemaa* in the Akan state has an important role to play in the worship life of the people. Sacrifice is an important component of worship which may consist of libations of water, rum or beer, and small quantities of food. Or they may take the form of killing an animal, pouring out the blood on the altar or the ground and cooking the rest for participants. In the ritual of sacrifice among the Akan, the Women play an important role in the whole drama. They are led in this drama by their leader, the *Obaahemaa*, whose duty it is to ensure that the ancestral spirits are well fed and given water. When the *Obaahemaa* is unable to perform her religious function of feeding the ancestral stools as a result of menstruation, a taboo for the ancestors, she delegates that function to the *Obaapanyin* (senior woman) of her house to perform.

Social change and the position of the *Obaahemaa* stool

The position of the *Obaahemaa* in modern times has been seriously affected by social change. The presence of Christianity and to some extent Islam coupled with western education have altered completely the position

C. Abotchie, Social Control in rural southern Ewe land of Ghana: Relevance for Modern Crime Prevention in Accra: Ghana universities Press, 1997), 26

E. G. Parinder, African Traditional religion (third edition). (London: Sheldon Press, 1974), 87

Of the *Obaahemaa* Stool among the Akan. It must be noted that her role in the political sphere has not been considerably altered since she is still expected to nominate a candidate to sit on a vacant stool on the demise of the occupant.

In the area of the traditional puberty rites, the *Obaanemaa* no longer gets the opportunity to ascertain the virginity of the girl before the rituals are performed since most parents do not even submit their daughters to this rite as they have become Christians and consider the rite as unchristian." In the arena of settlement and arbitration, though the position of the *Obaahemaa* has not been totally removed, most people today will prefer to send cases to their pastors or the law courts.

Conclusion

The *Obaahemaa's* stool in the Akan political organisation is such an important stool that no one can become a chief in any Akan community without the approval of this stool. The

Obaahemaa's stool is not only politically relevant but also has religious relevance. As a leader of the women in the community her main occupation is to see to the wellbeing of the women in her community. The *Obaahemaa's* stool still enjoys considerable respect and attention despite the influence of social change.

**SALVATION IN CATHOLICISM AND ISLAM: A CHALLENGE FOR BETTER
HUMAN RELATIONS IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

For centuries Christianity and Islam have been in competition for souls. They have both been locked up in competing truth claims that have sometimes resulted in bitter rivalries and conflict, in Nigeria in particular, clashes between Christians and Muslims have resulted in enormous loss of lives and property. This paper however argues that, in spite of their competing truth claims, Christianity and Islam can co-exist in peace and harmony. Using the concept of salvation in Catholicism and Islam as the basis, this paper posits that there is common ground for creating peace, understanding and harmony.

Introduction

Religions function, among other things, to correct people's journey on earth and provide them with right guidance to attain spiritual and bodily happiness. In other words, religions are concerned at once with message of salvation and ways to salvation. This function of religions is applicable both at the individual level and at the level of the human society as a whole. In this regard, Hans Kung sees religions as approaches to life and basic patterns that embrace the individual and society. According to him, "religions are transcendently grounded and immanently operative system of coordinates, by which man orients himself intellectually, emotionally, and existentially. If religions function to provide comprehensive meaning for life, and create unconditional norms for humans and community cohesion, how does anyone

Fans Kung, Christianity & World Religions (New York: Orbis Books, 1986), xvi

explain the fact that the same religions serve as sources religious tension, differences Conflict, and violence among human beings? It is a given that religious differences exist globally and in Nigeria. But is it not a contradiction that the management of religious differences in Nigeria is counted among the causes of the problems facing people in the 21st century.

The above questions that bother on the value of religions throw up the issue of salvation and human relations, especially within the background of the many religious and ethnic crises in Nigeria in the past and recent times. In contemporary Nigerian society, it was incredible to witness what 2001 to 2011 brought to bear on human relations in Jos and its environs. The irrational passion was let loose which triggered the destruction of Churches and Mosques. Several people have been displaced as homes and businesses were destroyed. People watched their loved ones maimed or killed. Consequently, the communal nature of human existence has been disrupted as people divided by the crisis were forced to live kilometers away from each other. Thus, in some parts of Nigeria, there are areas where Christians or Muslims cannot go; there are roads where Christians or Muslims cannot follow even when adherents of both religions seek for eternal salvation. This goes a long way to confirm that religions have the capacity to draw out the creative energies in human beings, giving its adherents an absolute purpose, and a clearly defined direction in life. In Nigerian context, "members of a given religious group, with its shared vision, values, and sense of cohesion as a community, tend to draw a sharp line of distinction between themselves and those outside the group." This sharp divide often turns to an attitude of "us" and them, and consequently, degenerates to stale relationships. Therefore, conflicts, violence among individuals, ethnic groups, and communities easily arise in the name of religions. And contemporary Nigerian society has had a painful experience of such conflicts and violence. For example, Ine Guardian newspaper reported one of such painful experiences in Nigeria thus Anu- Bomb Squad Mobile policeman deployed in Jos, Plateau State for peace keeping was killed, and sadly by a butcher that he ought beef from. ne butcher killed the security operative by ripping off his stomach with a knife. He watched the policeman

David R. Brockman & Ruben F. Habito (eds.), The Gospel Among Religions (New York: Orbis Books, 2010),

As he gasped for breath, slumped and died on the spot. Youths who watched the scenario played out took to violence”.

The Good News of Jesus Christ is that God’s reign is in our midst, and that all people are called to enter into God’s Kingdom. Similarly, Islam is the religion of peace. Therefore, in this paper, we intend to examine the pursuit of salvation in Christianity and Islam. This would help to evolve solid grounds to challenge people of these religions to recognize that everyone has humanity as a datum that precedes any religious affiliation. It is in this regard that the paper, using historical, comparative, and analytical methods, argues that efforts to achieve better human relations in Nigeria must transcend absolute truth claims.

Theoretical Framework

In order to understand properly the concept of salvation and put in perspective the fact of human relations, it is necessary to build up a theoretical framework. The concept of salvation and human relations are closely connected. To sever links with fellow humans is also to sever relationship with God. In other words, better human relations and salvation go hand in hand. Consequently, this paper applies the framework of inclusive pluralism of salvation in the light of Augustine, Cyprian of Carthage, and Second Vatican Council. However, it could be said comparatively speaking that the concept of salvation in Islam does not exist in a form that might mirror the Catholic Christian conception. Hence, inclusive pluralism becomes an appropriate conceptual framework.

In traditional Catholic Community, the people of God regard themselves as the ark of salvation. Outside the ark, which is understood as the church, there is no salvation. The Latin formula used to express this claim was *"extra ecclesiam nulla salus"*. That is, outside the church there is no salvation. This could also mean that there are no prophets outside the Catholic Church.

It was Augustine or Hippo who first muted the idea that the Catholic Church exists for the salvation of the world. He saw authority and holiness residing in the institutional church. According to him, "since the worldwide church, founded by the apostles, was the only true church, whoever left it

Isa Abdulsalami, "Jos Monarch Relocates from Palace as 12 Die in Violence" in *The Guardian* (Wednesday February 16, 2011)

was self-evidently wrong. Cyprian of Carthage made the traditional Catholic position on salvation famous and “*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*” became applied universally in the Roman Catholic Church. During this time,

The Church mediated salvation through baptism and the Eucharistic community. Accordingly, whoever did not seek this remained Outside of salvation. Afterwards the formula was extended to all non believers.

In 1302, Pope Boniface VIII endorsed Cyprian's teaching on salvation. In a papal bull, the pope stated thus, "we declare and proclaim that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff." In similar vein, the Ecumenical Council of Florence in 1441 stated in clear terms that, not only pagans but also Jews, heretics and unbelievers will have no share in eternal life. They will go into the eternal fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels, unless they become aggregated to the Catholic Church before the end of their lives. Here, one encounters an extreme form of Christianity or Catholicism; as there could as well be extreme form of Islam. Extreme forms of Christianity and Islam manifest themselves when people believe that there is no salvation outside the Church and the *Umma*. Olupona, quoting Pierre Bourdieu calls this approach to religion, symbolic violence; "a clever use of force which aims to convince people that one's own religious affiliation holds the key to salvation." Symbolic form of violence is a tall out from Western and Arab missionaries who sought to superimpose their faith on native African culture and subsequent Africanised forms of Christianity and Islam. Symbolic violence is a strategy used to protect foreign forms of capital over indigenous ones. This form of violence contradicts African worldview that is deeply anchored on indigenous social practices. These social practices include concern for communalism, peaceful co-existence and the ethos of "*Egbe bere, Ugo bere*", that is, live and let live.

Peter Brown, Augustine of Hippo: A Biography (London: Faber Limited 1967) 259

Heinrich Dumont, "Salvation" in Karl Muller, Richard Bliese, et al (eds.) Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives (New York: Orbis Books, 1997)

Quoted by David J. Bosch, Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 218

Juan Luis Segundo, The Liberation of Dogma (New York: Education Orbis Books, 1992) 8

Jacob Olupona, "Nigeria at the Crossroads: Religion, Education and Nation Building" in The Guardian (Monday February 14 2011), 59

However, contemporary Catholic Church has tried to reach a broader understanding of Cyprian's "*extra ecclesiam*", reinterpreting it in a step forward direction. The traditional Catholic position is, nowadays, no longer the official position. Vatican II Council (1962-1965) not only considered the goodwill of the individual as a way of salvation but also regarded the faith traditions, outside Christianity, as orientation towards salvation. The Council states it thus, "Men and women who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ and his Church, but who sincerely search for God and who strive to do his will, as revealed by the dictates of conscience, in deeds performed under the influence of his grace, can win eternal salvation.

In the light of the above, people of other faith traditions, like Islam can win eternal salvation. In this regard, the way of salvation becomes inclusive and is no longer confined to Christianity alone. This broader approach of contemporary Catholic Church on the issue of human salvation now serves as bedrock for genuine human relations and interfaith engagements in the 21 century. Hence, salvation acquires another meaning which points to the capacity for continually intensifying the depth and breath of relationship with the religious others, nature and God.

What is Salvation?

Salvation as a concept or religious doctrine is predicated on the dualistic view of reality that has dominated most faith traditions. It is not the concern of this paper to dwell on the issue of dualism which has been problematic in religious circles. But it suffices to note that the world religions differentiate between this world and the next world. Hence, salvation involves deliverance from this planet earth. Jains (adherents of Jainism) strive to free their souls from material bondage and endless rebirths. This is further explained by Mahavira in his teaching on salvation as escape from Karma and freedom from ire. He taught that, "salvation is absolute from the totality of actions through the absence of the causes of bondage and exhaustion of past Karmas

Vatican II, Constitution on the Church (1965), No16

Walter J. Burgnarot, Justice: A Global Adventure (New York: Orbis Books, 2004),

"Tattvartha sutra, 10, 2.

Hindus and Buddhists concern themselves with liberation from the cycle of reincarnation. Christians and Muslims who are the concern of this paper, long for a joyous life with God and life after death in paradise respectively." Adherents of Christianity and Islam fear divine Judgment and eternal punishment in hell. Within this context, salvation is understood as deliverance from sin, afflictions, and transformation that linger forever.

At the level of speculation, Peter Koestenbaum points out that salvation is situated within the basic structures of human consciousness. In other words, he meant that salvation is natural to humans. Koestenbaum submits that, "man's condition is to reach for some perfection, some otherness, that leads to a region beyond his personal ego.⁵⁰ salvation, in this paper, could be defined as wholeness, deliverance from destructive forces, and regeneration of broken relationships with God and fellow humans.

In the light of the above, the remaining sections of this paper would deal with the pursuit of salvation in Christianity and Islam including the extent to which salvation is brought about by human effort. Thus, the question at stake is: what part do relations with people of other faith traditions play in the drama of salvation in Christianity and Islam within the Nigerian context?

Biblical Salvation

The Old Testament (OT) presents salvation as an experience of people, experience of liberation and deliverance from hostile condition. In this light, Israel confirmed the reality of Salvation "in the wonderful acts of liberation that the people experienced: liberation from Egyptian slavery; assistance while wondering through the desert; help against... hostile neighbouring peoples. Overtime, in the o history, the meaning of salvation shifted to include an era in which God alone would guarantee peace for all people. In this regard, the concept of salvation expanded to reflect individual expectations before God for healing, and preservation

Roger Schmidt, Exploring Religion (Belmont: Wadsworth Press, 1988), 51

Peter Koestenbaum, "Religion in the Tradition or Phenomenology" in J. C. Fever & W. W. Horosz (eds.)

Religion in Philosophical & Cultural Perspective (New York: Van Nostrand Press, 1967), 181

Dumont, "Salvation... 407

from death. At this point, God appears as "the God of my salvation" (Psalm so: 16). Hence, Heagle writes that,

Salvation is an emergence from any form of bondage or exploitation. In human history, it involves the long struggle to become free from oppression and destructive violence. The first creation story of Genesis opens with the... Spirit of God moving across the face of Chaos to create the stunning beauty of the cosmos. It is the Bible's first account of God's saving role.

It can then be said that salvation in the OT means holistic redemption in body and soul, in the here and now and at the end of time made possible by God alone.

The New Testament (NT) understood the "passing over" of Jesus through his death to new life as the core sign of salvation for all people. The Book of Revelation closes with the early Christian community longing with radiant hope for the coming of the risen Christ as the final salvation into the heavenly community. The contents of this longing are the reign of God, the disarming of all powers hostile to peace, liberation from broken relationships with nature and fellow humans, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as a community-building force. This is the meaning of the New Testament "good news. This salvation comes about when human beings turn in faith to Jesus, who becomes their saviour. In the same way all who follow him will experience salvation. For salvation was merited on the cross for all people and for all times.

These ideas of NT salvation were developed further by Paul. He presented salvation as new creation, justice, and eternal life. Thus, in the NT Jesus bears in his very name the Hebrew word for salvation: *Jehosu'a*, which means Yahweh saves. Rossano therefore, submits that,

The chief assertion of Christianity is the saving intervention of God in the course of human events through the agency of Jesus Christ, an intervention

John Heagle, Justice Rising: The Emerging Biblical Vision (New York: Orbis Books, 2010. 4 Dumont, salvation... 407

which continues through time and gives meaning to the life of the Christian and to his view of history.

In other words, salvation is always a fact of the whole Person in his/her society and culture. Efforts for just and equitable society, a life of communion and inclusive belongingness constitute ways of obtaining salvation.

In the 21st century discourse, "liberation" comes to be another word for "salvation". Both terms deal with God's desire to free people from sin, oppression, and ultimate death. The slight difference between salvation and liberation is seen in the fact that salvation traditionally connotes what happens after one dies, in the afterlife. On the other hand, the issue of liberation gives attention to what happens in this world, in history without making a sharp distinction between this world and the next. Groody affirms this when he maintains that,

Liberation theologians insist on making the integral connection between God's Kingdom on earth and God's Kingdom in heaven, between the secular and sacred, and between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. Liberation then deals with God's action in history to free people from all that oppresses them right now and at the end of time.

Contemporary discourse presents the concept of salvation in a very expansive way to include the unfolding in all creation, not just with humans. Therefore, salvation in the Christian context today means "the unfolding of the universe through the evolution of energy, matter, biological life, and human consciousness. In this sense, the challenge to build better human relations and take responsibility for the care of the earth become an invitation to experience salvation. Matthew 3:39-46 clearly points out that ultimate salvation is based on acts of kindness and cordial interpersonal relationship rather than acts of war. And this criterion of judgment cuts

P. Rossano, "Salvation in Christianity in Paolo Marella (eds.), Religions: Fundamental Themes for Dialogistic Understanding (Rome: Editrice Ancora, 1970), 93

Daniel G. Groody, Globalisation, Spirituality and Justice (New York Orbis Books, 2007), 184

Heagle, Justice Rising...4-5

across religions and cultures. In fact, the criterion of judgment is predicated on people's response to the needs of one another, including the needs of one another, including the need of those we meet on the streets

Qur'anic Salvation

Islam is a way of life that is all embracing. It can be described as a living web of life, religion, culture, politics, law and arts. Hans Kung describes Islam as an "all-embracing view of life, an all-involving attitude towards life, an "all-determining way of life. Thus, amidst the activities of this temporary life, Islam proposes a way to eternal life or a way of salvation. Osasona rightly notes that, "it is not a divine initiative to rescue man from himself and from his sins, but as a human endeavour to escape God's anger and punishment which threaten all sinners." Such escape is made possible through faith-influenced adoration of one God and the proclamation of His uniqueness. The Vatican II acknowledges the true and holy there are in Islam as a reflection of divine revelation and within this context this paper makes analysis of salvation in Islam.

As a universal religion, Islam addresses itself to the entire human person, covering all aspects of the life of man and woman on earth. In this regard, Caspar, a 20 Century Islamic scholar, maintains that,

It is for this reason that in the social and political domain what is profane is not to be separated from what is religious; the state is not to be separated from religion. Islam intends to ensure man's happiness in this life and in the next."

Islam does not neglect bodily Life and at the same time, it encourages due attention to the soul. Hence, it did not say to any of its adherents "go, sell your possession and come follow me." But the Qur'an conveys a message of social justice as a way to escape future punishment. We see this in Qur'an 99: 6-8:

Kung, Christianity & World Religions..22

J.O Osasona, "Plurality in the ways or salvation: A Theological Problem in Christian-Muslim Relation" in EPHA Ekpona Journal of Religious Studies, Vol 2, No 1, June 1998, 65

R. Caspar, "The Pursuit of Salvation in Islam in Paolo Marela (ed.), Religions:

R. Caspar, "The Pursuit of Salvation in Islam" In Paolo Marella (ed.), Religions: Fundamental Themes for a Dialogistic Understanding (Rome: Editrice Ancora, 1970), 108-100

on that day will men proceed in groups sorted out, to be shown the deeds that they had done. Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it! And, anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it.

It is within the background of preaching social justice and life after death by Prophet Muhammad, that the ideas concerning salvation derive their meaning in Islam. Again, the act of faith in Islam preserves one from hell and makes paradise a certainty. (Qur'an 15:88; 71:28). Therefore, to believe means "to protect oneself from the danger of Judgment and hell." (19:72; 44:50).

Like Paul of Christian religion who says that faith without work is dead, faith that leads to salvation in Islam is not a mere declaration. The desire to experience salvation must be translated into actions. This is because salvation is of this earth as well as being heavenly. It is the privilege of the believer to put his/her faith into practice by exercises of worship, and by caring for the poor. Mahmoud Ayoub, from the context of what we have elaborated above, brings out additional meaning of salvation from Islamic tradition. According to him, salvation in Islam "involves people dealing with their own sin through repentance, fasting, prayer, and giving to the needy." Here, Ayoub teaches that in Islam, salvation involves believers dealing with their sins through prayers, fasts and sharing their wealth with the poor

Following this general overview of Salvation in Islam, Zuhayli gives what he sees as the juridical aspect or salvation in Islam. He writes,

Anyone who believes in God, holds fast to the strong rope of faith, and performs righteous deeds will be among those who will attain salvation. It matters not whether he lived as a Muslim, Jew, or Christian, or was one of those who had irrevocably abandoned their religion and accepted Islam.

Mahmoud M. Ayoub, "Towards an Islamic Christology: The Death of Jesus: Reality or Delusion" in The Muslim World 70, NO 2, 1980, 93

For Zuhayli, good deeds rather than religious affiliations are the fundamental cause of salvation in Islam. He went further to acknowledge the intimate social and human relations that the Qur'an legislates for Muslims with the people of other faith traditions. Qur'an 5:5 states it thus,

This day are all things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the people of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them.

Yet, in Nigerian situation, some Christians and Muslims live a life of contradiction whereby their religions, which are supposed to be based on love, create an unprecedented suspicion and animosity in daily human relations. This is further enhanced by the competitive posture of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria to gain territorial control in various parts of the country. To counteract this attitude, Religions are encouraged to focus on human engagement both 1ndividually and collectively in the pursuit of salvation. This was the thinking of Heagle when he emphasized that "today Islamic scholars tell us that jihad has come to mean an inner struggle too Overcome vengeance with compassion."

Disfigured Truth

Christianity and Islam, particularly 1in Nigeria, promise temporary and everlasting happiness, but they are divided over the place of human relations with adherents of other faith traditions in the struggle for salvation. In his brief commentary on Qur'an 2:62 Sha'raw advises anyone who follows a religion that came before Islam, to abandon that religion and accept Islam. To such a person, sha'rawi strongly says,

God, glorified and exalted be He, has definitively dealt with this 15sue in His saying, anyone who seeks a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him, and His saying," surely, the true religion with God is Islam."

Quoted by Irfan A. Omar (ed.), A Muslim view of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue (New York: Orbis Books, 2007), 194

Heagle, Justice Rising.../1-/2

Quoted by Irfan A. Omar, (ed.), A Muslim view of Christianity... 195

This is an unusual and uncompromising interpretation or the word of God from the scripture, which does not encourage dialogue and acceptance.

On the other hand, in Nigeria, Christian fanaticism anchors human relations on the truths they possess or by which they are possessed. Therefore, the truth, which might be mistaken, limited or incomplete, becomes obstacles which prevent constructive human relations. For example, the religion that insists that it is her duty and resolve to proclaim Without fail Jesus Christ who is "the way, the truth and the life (Jn.14:6)

cannot be promoting meaningful human relations. The quest for better human relations is possible on the basis of religious and cultural pluralism. This means that Christians and Muslims in Nigeria must accept the fact that God did not speak only Hebrew, Greek, or Arabic, "but rather he speaks to every people in their own tongue and to their own cultural and spiritual situation." Islam and Christianity claim to derive from one God. But unfortunately some people are prepared to disobey God by always looking forward to maim, kill and destroy properties of other people without hindrances.

The greatest difficulty faced by adherents of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria today is the falsification of truth. Some religious leaders falsify and deface the truth of religions. They present the truth belonging to their own religion as more attractive and present the truth belonging to the followers of another religion as less attractive. As noted by Al-Jaber, these diverging truths are only the "work of men themselves..., they are not truths but pseudo-truths, half-truths, sometimes non-truths." There can be no better truth than the one that helps to "transform our human existence to human co-existence and provides a source of life, meaning and beauty.

As noted earlier in this paper, salvation, particularly Biblical salvation is not for souls but for persons, for the natural world (Rom. 8:19,19), and the universe. The blessings of salvation encompass everything sustains life. It is not only limited to the private sphere of the individual person but also has to do with the social, political, economic, and other

Irtan A. Omar (ed.), A Muslim View of Christianity..242

Khaled Al-Jaber, "Pathways of Dialogue: A Muslim Point of View" in Oasis International Studies, No. 8, 2008, 45

P.U Nwosu, "Search for Coexistence: The Okonko Ethos" In Benue Valley Journal of Humanities, Vol 8, No 1& 2, 2009, 58

dimensions of life. However, in Nigeria it has been difficult practicing the concept of salvation in the relationships of Christians and Muslims. This difficulty, among other reasons, is because in Nigeria religion is very much connected with ethnicity, culture, politics and even economy. For example, in Northern Nigeria, the Islamic culture permeates all aspects of life to the extent that Hausa-Fulani identity is tied to Islamic religious identity. Therefore, religion could be appealed to very easily to galvanise people's sentiment to achieve certain goals.

Again, Nigerians, especially Muslims and Christians are always busy participating in ritual activities like pilgrimage to Makkah, Madina, Jerusalem and Rome without a corresponding concrete effort to put into practice the important values that bring about salvation. For instance, "duty towards God and duty towards fellow human beings" is a cardinal principle of religions in Nigeria. But most adherents of Islam and Christianity fail woefully in putting it into practice. Within this context, Olupona correctly notes that, "this attitude permeates our national life and is reflected in social conditions of our communities, our underprivileged youth and the poor among us."

However, to promote peaceful co-existence and pursuit of salvation among Nigerians, particularly, Christians and Muslims, the Governments at the Federal, State, and Local levels support faith based associations like the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Council of Imams and Ulamas. Through these associations, the Government builds bridges across the country and provides enabling environment for Christians and Muslims to enjoy their religious rights. To enhance the efforts of the Government and enable the concept of salvation to take roots in the hearts of Nigerians, Christians and Muslims are encouraged to truly love their fellow human beings. Sincere efforts in the area of dialogue and doctrinal understanding are needed especially when adherents exhibit gross ignorance and insensitivity towards one another's doctrinal stance. Salvation is not, and cannot be a monopoly of any particular religion. The fact that God appears to people of different races, at different times and in environments suited to their culture makes it impossible for all humanity to be of one faith.

Carlos H. Abesamis, "Salvation in Virginia Fabella, et al, (ed.), Dictionary of Third World Theologies (New York: Orbis Books, 2000), 181-182

Olupona, "We are Ruled by greedy individuals who Joy in Seeing Others Hungry" in The Guardian, Saturday July 16, 2011, 25

Conclusion

In this paper, it has been argued that the nature of the human person that desires salvation is the same both in Islam and Christianity. This fact gave the paper the platform to x-ray the doctrine of Salvation in the broader perspectives of Roman Catholicism and Islam.

While Islam and Roman Catholicism may be standing apart on the role of the individual person in the pursuit of salvation, both religions have a common ground on the belief that salvation is about joy and liberation. Salvation in both religions means liberation from oppression, injustice, hunger and violence against human beings. The paper argues the fact that one cannot experience salvation without a cordial relationship with the adherents of other faith traditions. It holds that all selfish inclinations presented as truths ought to be transformed into service of God and humanity. This is necessary since God's will is about building cordial relationships among humans and across communities of faith. To achieve the foregoing, the paper submitted that Christians and Muslims should pay closer attention to the problems of human disobedience, violence, discrimination, and killings in the name of God, especially in Nigeria. This is in line with the New Year Prayer for Peace of Ehusani. He notes that, "the truly brave and truly heroic are not those who can kill, oppress, dominate and cause untold hardship for others. The truly those who can forgive, those who can love in return for they brave are who can transform an enemy into a friend," irrespective of and political, those ethnic and religious affiliations.

THE DEATH OF RACHEL: AN INTERPRETATION OF A BIBLICAL STORY

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Abstract

This article examines the story of the death of Rachel (Genesis 35: 16-19) and argues that the matriarch died of breech delivery. But a mistranslation of the Hebrew text by Standard English translations has obscured this diagnosis, resulting in the failure of readers to identify this fatal obstetrical complication that caused the death of the young woman.

Introduction

The death of Jacob's younger wife, Rachel, has been interpreted variously. Some think she died as a result of her uncompromising wish for sons, and others that it was the curse that Jacob her husband pronounced on the family, defending them against Laban's accusation that they have stolen his gods killed the young woman. All these reasons are in spite of the general interpretation that she died of childbirth.

See Robert alter, Genesis (New York: W.W Norton & Co., 1996), 198-199. Alter's suggestion may be based on Gen. 30:1. There, Rachel is presented as badgering Jacob to give her sons. If it is, ten although Rachel is presented as hankering after sons, one is still of the vie that it is difficult to tell or conclude from this story of her death how her death could be explained as resulting from her desire for children. Unfortunately, Alter does not explain how it does.

See Frymer T. Kensky, 'Rachel in Women in Scripture (Grand rapids W.B Eerdmans, 2000), 139. The story is found in Gen. 31:30. Jacob is reported to have cursed, advertently, the member in his raveling party who might have stolen Laban's 'gods.' This was when Laban caught up with while he (Jacob) was fleeing from him for fear he might prevent him from going away with his daughters he had married.

A careful reading of the text, however, indicates that there is more to either the reasons offered or the general interpretation. It indicates that Racnel died as a result of a fatal obstetrical complication. That complication is breech birth and the clue to arriving at this is the pronouncement of the midwife who attended to her; her pronouncement as

regards the sex of the child at the time when Rachel was in labour and the birth had not yet been completed. Unfortunately scholars, both ancient and modern, appear to have missed this diagnosis.

The reason can be attributed to two factors. The first is the lack of knowledge about basic obstetrics. This goes particularly, for ancient biblical commentators. Obstetrics, in particular midwifery, was in antiquity a vocation for women and the biblical scholar, who, in ancient time, was a male, would hardly know of breech birth if, as suggested in this paper, it is what the Masoretic reading offers as killing Rachel.

Indeed, evidence that the ancient bible scholar lacked such a knowledge is borne by Talmudic and midrashic sources. For example, 1n a discourse on what causes women's pain during childbirth, the Talmud has the sages teach that it is the birth of girls. Girls, they teach, appear in the opening of the birth canal with their faces upward. It is the position, they indicate, females take during sexual intercourse and it is that which, they claim, causes the woman pain; because, as the Babylonian Talmud has it, "the female emerges in the position [the female) assumes during intercourse, and the male emerges in the position [the male assumes during intercourse].

The second is a mistranslation from the standard English versions of the pronouncement of the midwife concerning the sex or the child. This goes for the modern exegete; for while the Masoretic Text has the present tense for

Terrence E. Fretheim, "Genesis 1n The New Interpreter's Bible (Vol 1: Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994) 340/4 (85); see also Israel Finkelstein & Neil Asher Silberman, The Bible Unearthed (New York: Touchstone 2001), 31

Midwifery is the profession that offers care to a childbearing woman during pregnancy, labour and birth and during the postpartum period. It differs only from obstetrics in the sense that obstetrics is the science that deals with illness related to childbearing and in surgery. See for example, Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, Witches, Midwives & Nurses: A History of Women Healers (Toronto: The Feminist Press, 2010), 85

Talmud Bavli, Niddah 31a & t Sotan 11b (trans 1 Epstein; London: Soncini, 1936)

the pronouncement or statement, the Standard English versions have the future. It is this error in the translation of the Hebrew text that has swayed modern bible readers and caused them to miss this breech birth diagnosis which the Hebrew *vorlage* provides as the cause of Rachel's death.

This article then, by a close reading of the Hebrew text, a reading that focuses on plot, characterization, figurative language, narrative viewpoint, among others, demonstrates that it is breech birth that killed Kachet and suggests what might have caused the error or mistranslation.

Breech Delivery. What is it?

Breech delivery is the birth of a baby from what is described as a bottom-down position. In other words, the baby in breech delivery, appears in the opening of the birth canal with first its bottom and lastly its upper part that includes its head. The process is also called breech presentation. It is opposed to the delivery that has the child appear in the opening of the birth canal with first its head and lastly its lower part which includes its bottom and genitalia. This latter is known as the head-down or the vertex or cephalic position, it is the normal way of child delivery and about ninety-one percent babies are said to be in this position in the uterus when pregnancy is at term.

The causes of breech delivery are due to certain factors. One is prematurity, considered to be the chief cause. There is also multiple pregnancy, then foetal anomalies, and then uterine abnormalities.¹ Breech delivery also exists in categories. There is what is called Frank breech. In this type of breech delivery the infant appears in the opening of the birth canal with its bottom; it has its legs flexed at the hip and then extended at the knees and its feet up his or her ears. Also called Extended Breech, Frank Breech is known to be the more common of the breech presentations. It is thought that sixty-five to seventy percent of breech deliveries are in this position.

Another category is Composite Breech. Like in Frank breech, Composite Breech has the baby also appear in the opening of the birth canal with its bottom. His or her hips and knees area also flexed. But unlike in Frank

Lone Krebs, "Breech at Term, Early & Late Consequences of Mode Delivery," Danish Medical Bulletin 52 (2005), 234-52

Krebs, "Breech at term... 243

Breech, the baby sits cross-legged in composite breech; his or her calves against the back of his or her thigh and the feet just above or beside his or her bottom.

Another category of breech delivery is Footling Breech. In Footing Breech the baby has one or both feet emerge first, with the buttocks at a higher position. This type of breech delivery is known to be rare but common with premature foetuses.

Lastly, there is Kneeling Breech. This type of breech delivery has the baby appear in the opening of the birth canal in a kneeling position with either one or both legs extended at the hips and flexed at the knees. But, as with Footling Breech, this type of breech birth is also known to be rare.

Labouring Breech birth is thought to be difficult and prolonged and fatal. The fatality is as a result of the haemorrhaging that usually occurs or it may be as a result of infection. Thus when a birth is suspected to be breech, unless the birth attendant is skilful or known to be experienced in breech delivery, the advice is that the pregnant mother be sent to the hospital or clinic, especially if the child is her first, so she can have a Caesarean delivery (a Caesarean is an operation in which a baby is lifted out of a woman's womb through an opening cut in her abdomen). It is thought that delivering by Caesarean is safer than vaginal delivery as the latter can be hard and risky for the mother or child or both. The question thus arises: 'Was Benjamin's birth by breech?

The Birth of Benjamin and the Death of Rachel (Gen 35:16-19)

The Hebrew text reads:

wayyis 'ümibbêrêlwayhf "6dkivrathâ äretslävo

'ephretähwattêledrächêlwatt qasD Tiatanwayniv nagsotahb lidtähwatto'merläh
hamyalledet'al" tir iki gam

zehlächbênwayhib tsë tnapshahkimetanwatugra's móben'ôniw

lóvinyáminwattamõtráchêlwattiqqaverb derekh ephratähhiw' bêtläkhemn

And they journeyed from Bethel and when they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel started into labour and she had hard labour. And it happened when she was labouring hardest in the birth that the midwife said

Krebs, "Breech at Term.." 243

to her, 'Do not fear, for also this for you a son.' And it happened, as her life ran out, for she was dying, that she called his name Ben-oni, but his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died and was buried on the road to Ephrath, that is, Bethlehem.

As already indicated the diagnosis of breech birth in this story lie in a grammatical construction. That is, it is in what the narrator has the midwife say as regards the sex of the child while Rachel was in labour. As labour became very difficult for Rachel, the narrator has the midwife say to her, *altir ik gamzehlâchben*, which in Hebrew literally translates, "Do not fear, for also this for you a son.

The clause *ki gam zehlâchben* ('for also this for you a son'), describing the sex of the child is, as observed, without a verb. This is significant. In Hebrew grammar, such a statement, when it is without any defining term or context, has the tense or temporal reference in the present tense. The tense of the midwife statement is thus in the present and should read: "for also this is for you a son.

If this is true of the grammar and its rendering into English, then one is right in suggesting that Benjamin's birth was by breech. Because what the use of the present tense implies is that the midwife was making a statement of fact; that is, a fact borne out of what she had already seen, namely, the sex of the child. Note that her pronouncement was made, not after the birth had been over but while Rachel was still in labour, at the time when it is said that labour had become very difficult for her (*v'haqšotâhb'liddâh*, v 17). If so, then the question is, how did the midwife come to realise the child was a boy:

It was because the birth was by breech. Benjamin had come to be born by appearing in the opening of the birth canal of her mother not with his head first but with his bottom that includes his genitalia. This way of a child appearing to be born is what makes for a birth to be described as breech. The child appears in the opening of the birth canal, to be delivered, with first his or her bottom that includes his or her genitalia before finally his or her head. Thus, if the midwife could tell that Rachel's child was a boy when it is said Rachel was still in labour, that the birth had not yet been completed, then it is to suggest that Benjamin's birth was by breech. The notice that it was a difficult birth and that Rachel died soon afterwards,

The translation of the passage is my own

After naming the boy *ben tbn* (v 18), a name that literally translates, 'son of my pain, further underlines this breech birthing.

Significantly, the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible and the first in the series of translations of the Hebrew text also has the midwife's statement in the present tense. It has the midwife tell Rachel, *gar houtossoiestinhuios*, a phrase which literally

translates, 'for this for you is a son.' The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Aramaic Targum Onkelos, both in the first century CE, also translate the phrase correctly in the present tense.

But not so many influential standard English translations. Such translations like the Revised Standard Version (RSV), the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), the Douay-Rheims Bible, the King James Version (KJV) and the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB), all have the midwife's statement in the future tense. Thus the RSV: for now, you will have a son; the NRSV: 'for now you will have another son'; the Douay-Rheims Bible: "thou shalt have this son also"; the KJV: "thou shalt have this son"; and the NJB: "this is going to be a son. It is such readings that have led scholars astray, making them overlook the breech delivery diagnosis; because the future tense reading turns the midwife's statement into a prediction rather than a statement of fact. The future tense predicts that Rachel will have a boy, not that she is having a boy.

This way of understanding the midwife's statement is because the translators of the standard versions appear to have taken the midwife's pronouncement as alluding to Rachel's prayer recorded in Genesis 30:24. There, Rachel is presented as having prayed to Yahweh, at the birth of Joseph, to give her another son (yosefyhwh/iben acher). In translating the midwife's statement as future, it does seem then that the translators or commentators of the modern standard versions understood the statement as merely an attempt by the midwife to assuage the anguish of Rachel in her difficult birth by assuring her that her wish for another son' (bên 'achêr) would be answered, so Rachel should not give up (cf, Kivthou shalt have this son')

In Hebrew grammar, the two verbal conjugations, traditionally called perfect and imperfect, usually mark distinctions of aspect, not tense. That is, they do not locate a situation or event in time, but view it in its relation to time. It is the context that indicates whether the situation or event is past, present or future, See for example, J.C.L Gibson, Davidson's Introductory Grammar Syntax (Edinburgh: T & T Clerk, 1994), 60

This understanding of the midwife's statement foreshadowed by the NRSV's use of the word "another ('achér), a word that is found in Gen 30:24 but not in Gen 35:16-19. Other modern commentators also tend to understand the statement this way as evidenced by the translation of Victor Hamilton: *for you are having a son this time too (italics mine).*

The cause of error

The question may be asked: if the Hebrew text served as *avorlogeor* as one of the main sources for these standard versions, as most indicate in their introductions, why then do they render the midwife's statement in the future tense and not in the present? The answer, one suggests, can be traced to the Vulgate, the Latin translation of the Hebrew text produced by Jerome in 405 CE. It too is seen to cast the midwife's statement in the future tense. *Quiaethuncfiliumhabebis*, it translates the midwife's pronouncement, a translation which rendered into English is, "for you have this son also.

It does seem then, given the preeminent position the vulgate occupied in Western Christianity especially from the thirteenth century to the early Modern Period when its phraseology and wording permeated all areas of the culture that the error in the standard versions concerning the translation of the midwife's statement in the future tense might have come from the Vulgate. Indeed, it is known among scholars how the Vulgate was central to the translations of the King James version and the Douay-Rheims Bible. The latter, for instance, is said to have had its translation completely based on the vulgate.

The word qasah is used twice in the story, in V 16 in the Piel & in V 17 in the Hiphil. The Hiphil form illustrates the relative use of the Hiphil, see for example, E.A Speizer, Genesis (AB Garden City, N.Y; Doubleday, 1964), 2/3, Victor P. Hamilton, The Book of Genesis Chapter 18-50 (NICOT; Grand Rapids: WMB. terdmans, 1995), 383

See Hamilton, The Book of Genesis, 383

See for example, Adam Kameser, Jerome Greek Scholarship & the Hebrew Bible: A Study of the QuaestionesHebraicae in Genesim (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 90

See for example, Northrop Frye, The Great Code (New York: Harcourt, 1982), xii

See for example, Bernard Orchard, A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture (Nashville: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1951), 53

With the Vulgate's position as the preeminent Bible and its long period of dominance of Western culture and Christianity, it can be understood why it is not only the King James

Version produced in 1611, and the Douay-Rheims Bible published in 1609 which have their translations influenced by it but also other Bibles and Versions like the Revised Standard version produced between 1881-1885 and even later publications like the New Jerusalem Bible (1985) and the New Revised Standard Version (1989) all have their translations influenced by the Vulgate. One then understands why they persist in the future tense (mis)translation of the midwife's pronouncement.

Conclusion

Today, newer Bibles and versions like the New international Version (NIV, 1978), the New Jewish Publication Society Bible (NJPS, 1985) and the New American Standard Bible (NASB), although employing the word 'another,' correctly translate the Hebrew text and have the midwife's statement cast in the present tense. An example is the New Jewish Publication Society's reading "for it is another boy for you. Thus, after a long wait, one can now know what might have caused the death of Rachel. It was breech birth.