

An Ethical Reflection on Religion as the Voice of the Voiceless in the emerging New World Order in Africa.

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Abstract

Religion is becoming the voice of the voiceless in Africa today because it talks about human dignity. It says that human beings were created in the image of God, (Gen. 1:27) therefore, they ought to live in accordance with this. Human beings can only do this if they are guided by religious ethics which deals with things Paul says: “What eye has not seen and ear has not heard,” (1 Cor. 2: 9). Religious Ethics interprets the world with the eye of faith, with a spiritual touch, that is beyond the understanding of human beings. The guiding principle of a religious ethicist is: “do good and avoid evil at all times,” that is following in the footsteps of God who is Holy and perfect. Jesus teaches his follows that they should be holy. He tells his followers to be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect (Mt. 5: 48). As such a person following this tries to live, behave and act like a child of God. Many times human beings find that the voice of religion has been dwarf by different things- which Jesus calls the worries of this world (Mat. 13:22), such as new technologies, multi-national co-operations, greed for riches, corruption, illiteracy and poverty especially in Africa, and sometimes laziness.

Contrary to this, Religious Ethics talks about virtuous living which enables a person to behave according to the community of believers. It talks about righteous behavior such as practicing justice, peace and love. Jesus teaches his followers in the Beatitudes that “Blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart and the peace-makers for they shall inherit the Kingdom of God, (Mt. 5: 3-10). In addition to this, Paul in his letter to the Galatians says that, the fruits of the spirit is, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, (Gal. 5: 22-23). Paul also talks about the dictates of the flesh. The works of the flesh are immorality, impurity, hatred, jealousy, (Gal. 5: 19ff), and corruption. All these lead to doom.

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The future of religion becoming a voice of the voiceless in Africa lies in creating a program of moral formation right from the family, Nursery and Primary schools, Secondary and Institutions of Higher Learning. This program should be designed by Educators, Ethicists, religious leaders and other knowledgeable people for the good of our Continent and beyond. It is however the responsibility of religion to spearhead the moral transformation campaign across Africa. Religion has the mandate of the advancement of God's Kingdom, that is a trumpet to call all people to work towards peace, justice and good governance. As the world is becoming a global village, religion needs to create a place where people see one another as brothers and sisters; love of neighbor is no longer an option but a necessity. Religion needs to speak for the homeless, the marginalized, and the oppressed, emulating Jesus' example, just as Oscar Romero of El Salvador did in his lifetime.

Keywords: Religion; Ethics; Voice of the voiceless; Human Dignity; greed; corruption; morality; Old and New Testament; Decalogue; Kerygma; Islam; Quran; Hadith; African Traditional Religion (ATR).

1. Introduction

Religion is becoming a voice of the voiceless in Africa today and in the future. In this article we intend to look at Religion and how the knowledge and practice of religious ethics can transform the lives of people in their daily lives; taking the example of Christian, Islam and African Traditional Religious Ethics. We know that the adoption of the various Ethical theories keep on evolving and changing, in other words they are not static. This is due to new changes in the world. Today, the world has become a global village, so new ideas, new technologies, such as mass media, computers etc, and advanced higher education have influenced people's thinking and hence people's way of living and behavior. Constance Bansikiza in her book says that, "Media poses a challenge to morals. For instance, banishing violence from the media is problematic. ... Forming young people morally entails educating them to understand what they watch, listen to and read in mass media." [1]. For example different Television programs shown in our living rooms; such as some Nigerian movies, or American movies which show nude men and women, killing or showing tricks of cheating, stealing or even lovers in bed, all these affect people's behavior. In addition to this the use of computers, have also led some youth to being addicted to pornography. In order to restore morals in our societies there is need for governments and religious Leaders to become the voice of the voiceless. In addition to this they should work towards instilling morals in the youth by exhibiting good examples so that Africa can have a bright future. In this way people's ethics will have a future too.

Today people's behavior is quite different from that of the first Christians or Islam or that of the people in African traditional society. The first followers of Jesus Christ looked out for one another. It is said that they were of one mind and one heart and shared everything in common (Acts 4:32). Today every person lives for him/herself caused by individualistic spirit it is possible that people do not trust one another anymore. Many people are too busy they have no time to come and be together. Those who do so meet for business they are busy looking for money. The poor are not assisted as is required of neighbors. The poor have also taken on different behaviors they search for riches in most aggressive ways, stealing, killing etc. In Traditional African society, the spirit of brotherhood was

exhibited in working, eating and drinking together. In Islam too the spirit of brotherhood was and is still practiced today. In the Quran a Muslim is not allowed to kill a fellow Muslim but in Uganda this has happened several times.

1.1. The Voice of Religion for the voiceless through Christian Ethics

First, let us look at Christian ethics. What is Christian Ethics and how is it different from other ethics? Religious Ethics is likely to guide people in the right direction than other types of ethics. Religious ethics falls under deontological theories, which focuses on the agent of human action other than their consequences. Peter Kasenene in his book says that “According to deontological ethics, some things are right and others are wrong to do by their very nature and one has the obligation to do what is right irrespective of its consequences and avoid what is wrong no matter what happens to him or her.”[2]. CEO, S. Michael Houdmann in his article says that, “Among the deontological theories is the ‘Divine Command theory’ which says that a thing (i.e. action, behavior or choice) is good because God commands it to be done and is evil because God forbids it not to be done. He continues saying that, “this argument is refuted by the so called Euthyphro dilemma stated by Plato which rejects the idea that good and evil is based on the whim of God. This line of thinking, therefore, places morality outside God hence threatening His sovereignty and independence.” [3].

The classic Christian response to Euthyphro Dilemma is that it grounds goodness in God’s nature as shown by Scriptures which are His self-revelation to humanity. For example, Scriptures show that God is good and upright, He is the Lord who shows sinners the way, (Psalm 25:8), it is also said: Good indeed is the Lord, whose love endures forever whose faithfulness lasts through every age, (Psalm 100:5). Goodness is his very nature. God’s nature is the totality of all His attributes. Therefore, because God is immutable, Surely, I the Lord do not change, (Malach 3:6). God’s goodness is an immutable goodness, all good giving and every gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there no alteration or shadow caused by change, (James 1:17), hence God’s nature never changes, therefore, goodness will never change it is grounded in God’s nature. We have to understand that when God commands certain things as good and are to be done or forbids others as evil and not to be done, it is not simply good that He commands it but because it is reflective of his very divine nature.

Christians follow the Divine Command theory because they have the guidelines from the Decalogue, victor Zinkuratire commenting on this says that, “The Ten Commandments were given by God in the Old Testament, in the Commandment God says: I, the Lord, am your God, you shall not have other gods besides me, (Exod. 20: 1-2). Human beings have the obligation to obey God’s Command because God is their origin. They want to be good and perfect just like God who is all goodness by his very nature.”[4]. Human beings especially Christians want to share in God’s nature. By imitating God and being good like God, this leads them to engage in right moral acts and to stimulate reforms, or in some cases defend the social arrangements of their societies and of the human community as a whole. As we see, Christian ethics is more likely to guide persons to the right action than the intuitive approaches. It has approaches of giving reasons and meaning to their action, the establishment of good reasons both prior to action and in the justifications of action. For example, why should a Christian not kill, or abuse or discriminate another person? This is because that other person was created in the image of God, he/she is a reflection of God

hence, he/she has the same dignity as every other created man or woman. He/she has the right to life and to be treated as equal to other persons in the world.

On the other hand, other ethics like the teleological ethical theories focus on the end result of human action and say that for example, the action is bad only when its consequences are bad. Peter Kasenene in his book says that, "According to teleological ethics, the moral quality of an act is determined by its end result, such as its usefulness, prosperity and pleasure." [2]. these ethical theories do not give clear guidelines and it is difficult to rely on them. They do not give clear practical solutions for example some people find it difficult to measure good over evil, pleasure over pain and happiness over sadness.

When we compare these other ethical theories to Christian ethics, we find that Christian ethics has its roots in the Deontological theories and Moral theology which draw from the dogmatic truth. The consequences for human actions, guides a person towards the realization of his/her final goal. It deals with the final end of man/woman, with the divine, natural and human law as the objective norms, of morality, with conscience as the subjective norm, with the realization of the moral values in human acts, with sins as morally bad actions with conversions, virtues, and man's perfection in holiness. Moral theology attempts to answer questions such as how ought a person to live, who has been gifted by God? What does it mean to live a Christian life? How should we understand moral good, good and evil, right and wrong, sin and evil? Christian moral theology comes out clearly in the scripture, the teaching of the early church and reasons inspired by faith.

1.2. Scriptural Ethics as the Voice of the voiceless

Let us now turn to scriptures and see how ethics has been tackled as the voice of the voiceless. In the Old Testament, there is a strongly developed consciousness that the moral law rests entirely in Yahweh. God has revealed His will to his people Israel fundamentally in the covenant at Mount Sinai, the Ten Commandments, and in further development through the mouth of His prophets. The Old Testament is not autonomous, it is diametrically opposed to Greek and modern philosophical ethics which attempt to build up a morality on the basis of human reason and natural law, starting from the idea of the common good. The Old Testament is convinced that its basis of human reason and its moral demands were given by God and have their ultimate foundation in his will.

The core of the Old Testament morality is contained in the Decalogue that is the Ten Commandments which is divided into two parts: The first three Commandments are about God: human beings must love God their origin, (Exod. 20: 1-11). The second part is on the love of neighbor (Exod. 12-17). The first part of the Decalogue talks about the relationship between God and human beings. The Pontifical Council for justice and peace, commenting on this relationship says that, "Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something but someone. He/she is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and freely giving...he/she is called to a covenant with the Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his/her stead." [5]. This means that human beings have a unique relationship with God. If anyone does not acknowledge this then he/she is on the wrong track. Religion has the mandate to show him/her the right

path. For example in Uganda today, there are people who are sacrificing children so that they can get riches and religious Leaders have come out to say that this is wrong because a human being is created in the image of God and not to be disfigured in that way. According to the first part of the Ten Commandments Christians are to love God and worship Him alone and not to profane His Name, and to keep the Sabbath holy.

The second part of the Decalogue (Exod. 20:12-17) talks about the love of neighbor, love your neighbor as yourself. Since the world has become a global village, the love of neighbor is no longer love for the members of a closed family or society whose citizens support each other by rendering mutual services, but now in the new world order any member of our community is entitled to this love. We need each other in the new technologies, communication, education etc., therefore, love of neighbor is no longer a matter of choice but a necessity. In addition to this when Jesus came ushering in a new world order, summarized the Ten Commandments into two: love of God and love of neighbor. In Luke, (Lk. 10:25-37), the teacher of the law asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. The man was asked what the law says and he replied that he must love God and neighbor, but was not satisfied so Jesus told him the parable of the Good Samaritan, a foreigner, helped a Jew who had been attacked by robbers. Here Jesus brings our attention to the fact that in the new world order there are no strangers we are creatures of God because we bear His image. We have the mandate to love everyone especially those who are in bad conditions like the poor, the weak, the sick, the minority and marginalized. There is no room for discrimination.

The neighbor therefore is anyone in need. Paul puts it clearly in his letter to the Galatians (Gal. 3:28), He says that, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is neither male or female, for all are one in Christ Jesus, this shows us that in the new world order there should not be any discrimination. But sometimes this voice though loud and clear is dwarfed by the rich who oppress the poor, or parents in families who mistreat children, women who abuse their husbands or men who beat and mistreat their wives or government officials who swindle money and leave the sick like the AIDS patients stranded, the roads with big potholes and pregnant women dying because of lack of medicine and care.

Let us now look critically at the ethics of the New Testament. The New Testament presents the Christian religion as the new covenant (Mk 14:22-25, 1 Cor 11: 23-25, Ex. 24:6-8. Jer 31:31). This indicates a continuation and renewal of the covenant theme of the Old Testament. The idea of the covenant is also, adopted by the latter as a means to describe the link between religion and morality. God is considered as the source and motive of the moral obligation.

When Jesus appeared, he announced that the prophetic promise of the time of salvation is at hand, and that a new relationship between God and man had begun. At the beginning of the Gospel of mark, Jesus' preaching is summarized, (Mk.1:15). First, there is the proclamation of a divine act, which has brought a new situation that is anew world order. It is then followed by the demand of a response on the part of people, summed up in the words, repent and believe in the Gospel. The implication is that, the hearers have been in the wrong and are expected to turn away from their former ways. It is a call for a radical readjustment to holiness by resolute total turning to God and a readiness to grasp the opportunities of salvation offered by him. The demand for repentance is connected with the call to faith, which is a total turning in trust and submission to God.

The outstanding or the core of Christian morality is that of fraternal love, Agape selfless love of God and neighbor and even of enemies. This was Christ's love manifested (Jn. 13: 1-17), by his entire dedication to God and his fellowmen. This love is no longer a mere law, but it is, a new reality rooted in a new communion with the divine love. In his ethical teaching, Jesus gave new guiding principles and these impose certain pattern of behavior as obligatory. The Sermon on the Mount (Mt.5-7) represents in the briefest form available of the ethical teaching of Jesus designed to be a guide to the conduct of Christians. The ethics of the Sermon, like that of the "Words" in the book of the covenant is stated in direct imperatives. This morality is not concerned with the question of how to judge the conduct of other people but only with what is required of you and me, the active self. These imperatives are convictions about the character of the human situation. The conviction is that God rules and his rule will soon become manifest. What Christ commands is what is reasonable for people to do in a world in which people God rules, and in which the apparent rebellion against his rule is bound to come to an end. What gives the ethical teaching of Jesus its special character is his certainty that the God who rules nature and history is holy love. This love is practiced and preached by word and action by some Church Leaders like Archbishop Oscar Romero and Fr. Gustavo Gutierrez of El Salvador who preached the preferential option for the poor. These two Church Leaders played an important role in convincing the Catholic Church to switch its traditional alliance with the wealthy and powerful to stand with the poor against injustice, thus living out Gospel message portrayed in the Bible. [6].

God is just, he judges every person by his own standards, with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measures you give will be the measure you get (Mt.7:2). He is just in that He makes up the unfair inequities between people granting the poor, the meek, the hungry, the mourners what they have lacked (Mt. 5:3-11). God's justice demands complete **inner integrity** because He is just (Mt. 5-48, 66). What the just God demands is what He gives before making any demand, love, mercy, forgiveness and kindness. He is the Father whose kindness appears in that indiscriminate nature which human despair regards as evidence of his non-existence or of his justice, for God makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust, (Mt. 5: 45). This is what God is, mercy and this is what God requires in the character of his children.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus goes beyond the prophetic teaching particularly in the answer to the question, "who is my neighbor"? The neighbor is no longer the member of a closed society whose citizens support each other by rendering mutual services, but any member of that community of which the universal God is the head. Jesus places emphasis on attitude towards the neighbor. He discerns that the relationship between people is not something which is obvious and external behavior but of psychological, internal attitudes. The ethics of Jesus is the ethics of a single community, the community of which God, the father, is author and in which relations to Him are always of decisive importance. In like manner, St Paul's ethics expresses the universality of human obligation and of human brotherhood/sisterhood; but it is also expresses the idea that a new society, or a new world order, the Church has been established. In this new society in which people acknowledge the one Lord, Jesus Christ, all men and women are brothers and sisters. The Christian ethics of Paul is the ethics of life in the community of which God-in-Christ is the ever present and ever active source of all good, the constant director and inspirer, and in which men and women are members of one another, and these should live in righteousness, peace and joy of the Holy Spirit.

1.3. Ethics of the Early Church as a Voice of the voiceless

Let us now turn to the ethics of the early church. The Christian Kerygma recounted in brief the life and work of Jesus Christ. It went on to declare that, in these events the divinely guided history of Israel through long centuries had reached its climax, a new world order has been ushered in. The aim of such repeated preaching was to convince the hearers that, a new era in the relationship between God and His people had begun, and that those who would put themselves under his judgment would through His mercy find the opportunity to enter upon a new life. Those who responded to this appeal became members of the new community, the Church. These members were then instructed in the ethical principles and obligations of the Christian life.

The implication was that the converts were enjoined to lay aside certain discreditable kinds of conduct, especially some of which were common and easily condoned in non-Christian society (Eph. 4:17-32), some of the typical virtues of the new way of life were set forth with special emphasis upon such virtues as purity, sobriety, gentleness, humility, generosity, and hospitality (Gal. 5:16-23). There was and still is a general reminder which calls for constant watchfulness and lays upon the Christians the most solemn responsibility as found in (Eph. 6:-18; 1 Pet.5:6-11). The unity of Christian ethics lies in its God-centered faith. Christian ethics says in many ways that the Christian life consists in the response and obedient love to God in whatever He wills. This love is both vertical and horizontal that is love of God and neighbor. Christians are supposed to know that there is always a motive behind their actions.

1.4. Islamic Ethics as the Voice of the voiceless

Islam means peace, or As-Salam meaning 'The peace.' It also means submission to the One God – Allah, as well as to live in harmony with other people and the environment. In Islamic ethics, the word conformity to the faith must be complemented by an inner sense of justice and an attitude of patience. For instance the Quran insists on treating slaves humanly. It is good for a master to free a slave who has become a Moslem. Female should not be exploited for prostitution. Islam allows a man to marry only four wives and these ought to be treated equally. A man who is unable to treat all impartially ought only to have one wife. Although divorce is allowed, a man or a woman initiating it must follow the set regulations. A man is allowed to marry four wives because of the following reasons: Barrenness, Women outnumbering men, if the wife is chronically ill, and Widows after the war. The Quran prohibits gambling, use of wine, drinking alcohol and eating of pork, because pigs are regarded as unclean animals. To crown all these is the spirit of brotherhood which exists among Moslems. In conclusion, the will of Allah is described as good and compassionate and his law as the most beneficent. A good Moslem, therefore, ought to be obedient to Allah in his\her ethical living.

Islamic ethics is based on religious sources, primarily the Quran, supported by the Hadith (tradition of Mohammed) with other elements derived from pre-Islamic tribal morality, from customs, persons and Greeks sources. However, emphasis is on conformity to the law, social and individual morality, from customs persons and Greeks sources. All aspects of life are regulated by the 'Sharia', The religious laws, social and individual morality, warfare and family.

The Quran, the primary authority, has been taken by the Moslems, as the ultimate criterion for good and evil. In the Quran, individuals and community alike are called to repentance. There is a warning to the idolaters that they will be punished while the worshipers are promised paradise. Righteousness (Quran sura2, section 2:177) as belief in Allah, and the last day, the day of angles, the book messengers and to spend one's substance out of love for him for your skin, orphans, needy, for those who ask and for ransom of slaves, to be steadfast in prayer to practice regular and to fulfill the contracts which you have made. Peter Kasenene, talking about Islamic ethics says that, "In concrete situations, a Muslim's first guide is the Quran. When a Muslim does not get guidance from the Quran, he or she tries the traditions of Muhammad known as Hadith. Prophet Muhammad is described in the Quran as 'a beautiful patterns of conduct,' (33:21) and one who stands, 'on an exalted standard of character,' (68:2). So he is taken as the model of good conduct and the best interpreter of the Quran. His actions (sunna) and statements (hadith) are followed by Muslims in every detail. The narratives of his actions, words and silent approval on a range of subjects were recorded in Hadith and constitute a guide for a Muslim's conduct." [2].

The Quran also lists most of the religious requirements of the Muslim, such as kindness to parents, kindred, the poor, and travelers, protection of the property of orphans and widows. Islamic ethics also emphasizes the religious duties of Moslems which are five fold, Belief in one God, Allah, praying five times a day, paying Zakat, fasting and making a Pilgrimage to Mecca. To these, is added the 'Jihad' often explained as holy war', but also interpreted as the struggle against evil inclinations of the soul, described as constantly inciting to wrong-doing. Islamic ethics as found in the pre-Islamic legacy, calls for loyalty to the chiefs hospitality, courage and endurance. These were later referred to an Islamized and were replaced by a religious elegance.

1.5. African Traditional Religion as the Voice of the Voiceless

Myths about the origin of evil in the world give us a clue to the relationship between God and immorality. In African view, God is not responsible for the presence of evil in the world. God is given credit for all the good that there is in the world and the presence of evil is blamed on the irresponsible behavior of a creature. In the myth about the coming of death, for example, the irresponsibility of a creature and the jealousy of an animal brought death into the world. For instance among the Baganda, the story of Nambi and Walumbe is told to show how death came into the world and Nambi was responsible. The natural inference from these myths is that God, the creator is all good. Moreover, he requires moral goodness, from his creatures. The myths distinguish between physical evils, and moral evils; good fortune is the fruit of moral goodness, just as evil, is the fruit of moral evil. This is a fundamental dogma in African ethical beliefs. The existence of moral consciousness in the African traditional religion can further be shown by analyzing more of the terms, sayings stories and practices which illustrate conscience moral values and moral code in African traditions. Some examples to illustrate moral values among the Banyoro-Batooro of western Uganda: Akaraba katahyo okarorra hamukonda : A good person is seen when she/he is still young through his or her good spirit, and actions or behavior. Akuha nomuha nizo ngonzi itafa, Exchange of gifts keep the friendship alive.

T. Tinkasiimire in her book says that, “Most Africans believe that in order to aid Man in ethical living, God has put in him a conscience that is what guides him and determines his ethical life. This is a small voice in man/woman which directs him/her to good deeds and warns him/her of evil. They believe that, this voice comes from the heart. There is a good and bad conscience. The normal state of person’s conscience affects his/her character. Some Africans believe that God punishes a person with a bad conscience. For instance, the Igbo of Nigeria, West Africa, examination of conscious, forms part of their daily morning prayer. Here is a sample of one of their prayers: Lord, King, Creator! If I killed any person, if I took another’s property, If I bore false witness, if I dug up another’s yam, If I committed adultery, Or abducted another’s wife, Lord, King, creator, take my life today.” [7].

The Igbo morality is linked with the ontological order set up by God and any infringement of the moral precepts disturbs the ontological order. Ontological order means there is order in the science of the essential properties of being; nature and relationships of being. The balance must then be restored by appropriate rituals, otherwise punishment will inevitably follow. This belief gives the Igbo morality a legalistic out look. The African moral code, unlike the Ten Commandments is not written down. Rather it is preserved in oral tradition, and forms part of the education given to its members by traditional society. Its observance is a moral as well as a religious obligation. As in many preliterate societies, proverbs, names, sayings, and folk tales are not merely instruments for preserving moral Ideals, but are very effective methods of teaching them. Many African proverbs and sayings praise virtue and condemn vice; they approve of religion and disapprove of irreligious; they predict blessings for goodness and warn of the evil consequences of bad behavior. The fact that the African moral codes are not written down, some are likely to disappear in the face of globalization. The young generation seems to treasure foreign things and ideas as modern and good. For example the dressing code of the youth in Uganda today has changed; Winter clothing is fashionable for many young people which was not the case before.

Traditional African morality emphasizes social as well as individual moral responsibility; but the supernatural takes precedence over both social and personal dimensions of morality. This is because the overriding concern in the African system of belief is the maintenance of harmony in the ontological order, in which man himself is a vital force. The basis of all morality is seen as the maintenance of a harmonious between man, God, and the rest of the human community both dead and living. John Mbiti in his book, summarizes this harmonious living when he says that “I am because we are, since we are, therefore I am.”[8]. this means that Africans live in communities, looking up for one another; the spirit of brotherhood was and is still strong, especially in rural areas. In such setting, a code of conduct binds people together. This is still true in rural areas but in towns and cities, the social dimension is eroding away. There is great need to find ways of preserving African moral codes in such settings. In towns and cities children grow up from Nursery Schools to University with minimum guidance from their parents because the latter are at work, home education is almost non-existent in such places.

The areas of convergence of Christian, Islam and African religious ethics are: all these religious ethics are based upon a belief in God’s will. It is a form of a divine command. In religious ethics, the ethic imperatives God gives are in accordance with his unchangeable moral character. That is, God wills what is right in accordance with his own moral attributes. These religious ethics are based on faith which is centered on the revelation given by God. The

validity of this, morality is grounded in communal religious convictions. The ethics goes beyond common love which has something attached and proclaims selfless love which does not expect earthly rewards.

1.6. The situation of Ethics today in Africa

In modern society, the coming of other religions like Christianity and Islam and other religious movements has had a great influence on the African Continent. Most of the 'taboos' customs and values which bound people together have been eroded by these other religious beliefs and hence, the centre cannot hold any more. Many Africans have abandoned their old ways but are not fully convinced by the new ways they have embraced, therefore, they are left rootless. For example, children are no longer the most important value in marriage hence; some people choose not to have any at all in their marriage life. In the past life was sacred but today, child sacrifice is common. Killing a relative was unheard of in the past but today, it is common because one wants to get rich without working hard for it. If a brother or a parent is wealthy, a son or a brother can kill him in order to acquire that wealth quickly. People's morals have deteriorated. What has gone wrong? There are many reasons why peoples' behavior has changed. For example there is big gap between the poor and the rich, corruption is found everywhere in many African countries and guerrilla warfare has affected many people in Africa. All these have caused a lot of suffering to many people hence have changed their ethical moral behaviors. The ethical code that bound together the Africans has been broken; the spirit of brotherhood is no longer valued. Fro example, in the past people used to share what they had like property, food etc. but today some people go hungry, many live of streets of cities, towns and urban centers. Nobody seems to care. What has gone wrong?

We also are aware that communal living and community ownership of property no longer holds as strongly as it did in the past because many people live in cities and towns and, on account of globalization, have all but given up those traditions. Yet, there are some ethical issues that are still with us today, and these we need to continue working on. For example, issues like child abuse, domestic violence and the place of women in the church. These are urgent and need to be debated and discussed so as to help people to live a life of honesty and integrity.

1.7. The situation of the Voiceless in Africa today

The situation of the voiceless is well expressed by Fr. Gustavo Gutierrez who says that, "The life of the poor is one of hunger and exploitation, inadequate health care and lack of suitable housing, difficult in obtaining an education, inadequate wages and unemployment, struggle for their rights and repression." [6]. When we look at the situation of poor in Africa we find that they live on less than a dollar daily. They often go hungry especially those who live in our city or town slums. They hardly get enough money to buy food for themselves and their families. They have no access to safe drinking water. Sanitation is a big problem that is why they are hit by water-borne diseases. They are always faced with poor nutrition which results in poor health. Most of the time they do not get proper health care because they cannot afford it and there are no drugs in government hospitals and Health Centers. The poor people who live in rural areas face starvation because they depend on the rain they do not have modern methods of irrigation.

Many people in Africa live in slum areas where there is poor housing. Some people sleep in trenches, others sleep in open spaces, under trees, on verandahs if they can find any. Such people have nothing to cover themselves with. The poor work for long hours but earn very little. In countries like Uganda, where the government has not put in place, the living wage, the poor are exploited because the employer pays according to his wishes, and because of the high unemployment rates, people have no bargaining powers. If one refuses the job because of low pay another one will cease the opportunity very fast. The poor suffer from lack of receiving good education, for example in Uganda today, the government has put in place free education for all (UPE and USE), but some parents cannot afford this because they have to pay for uniform, learning materials and building fund. Besides this the education offered in public schools is poor, so the rich people take their children to Private schools where they get the best education and are able to go on to higher levels of learning, like Universities and Colleges.

1.8. Religious Leaders as the Voice of the voiceless

Religion or religious teaching today cannot afford to concern itself with only spiritual matters while ignoring the glaring evils around, such as exploitation, oppression, corruption, indifference and gross injustice. Zablon Nthamburi in the Chapter he wrote, noted that, "One important reason that led to the failure of the Church to make the intrinsic connection between the confession of faith and the confession of justice is the broken relationship between the Church and the poor, oppressed and marginalized. The role of the Church is to be the voice of the people, especially the poor and marginalized peoples of a society." [9]. Religious leaders are to be people's advocates. Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa can be cited as an example. He worked hard to end apartheid in his country. He empowered his people by enabling them to have access to information, knowledge, skills and training. He formulated his objective as "a democratic and just society without racial divisions." He set four minimum demands to the government: he said that, "There should be equal civil rights for all people in the country; that there should be the abolition of South Africa's passport laws; that there should be a common system of education; and that the forced deportation of black South Africans to the homelands should stop." [12]. Bishop Tutu's words and actions helped save many people from oppression and marginalization. He is a man of integrity, a genuine Church leader and a people's advocate. In Uganda, Bishop John Baptist Odama is another Church leader who advocates peace for the people in the war-torn area of northern Uganda. He has been in the forefront of leading peace negotiations between government and the rebel leaders in Northern Uganda. Many people have confidence in him. In his mission of creating peace, Bishop Odama has helped people to have a strong commitment towards the promotion and defense of human rights. In addition to this he has fulfilled a special role of building a culture of dialogue, which means teaching values such as truth, justice, tolerance, sharing and solidarity. His example shows that the mission of the Church is to gather and reconcile humanity into one family.

We can use another example of the Bishops of the United States of America's Pastoral Letter: Economic Justice for all: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy, 1986, where they advocated for the poor and marginalized, hence becoming the voice of the voiceless. "They said that all members of society have a special obligation to the poor and vulnerable." [10]. This is true because when we read in Scriptures and Church teaching,

we find that the justice of society is tested by the treatment of the poor. In the Old Testament we learn that in the covenant which God made with the Israel, justice was measured by how the poor and unprotected, that is, the orphans, the widow and the stranger were treated. In the New Testament, Jesus came proclaiming the Good News to all people without any discrimination. In his teaching Jesus takes the side of the poor. For example in the Beatitudes he says that blessed are the meek and the poor, (Mt. 5: 3-10). Towards the end of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus tells us that we will be judged according on how we respond to the people in need, like the hungry, the prisoners, the sick, and in the case of Uganda, the street kids, etc. This is a big challenge to the present generation, and maybe the future generations as well. The U.S. Bishops in their Letter continue saying that, "All followers of Christ are challenged to make a fundamental 'option for the poor,' to speak for the voiceless, to defend the defenseless, to assess lifestyles, policies, and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor." [6].

Another example of the Church Leaders being a voice of the voiceless is that one of Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador in Latin America. In his pastoral teaching Romero said that, "The Church does not live for itself. Its reason for being is the same as that of Jesus: 'service to God in order to serve the world.' The essence of the Church lies in its mission of service to the world, in its totality and to save it in history: here and now. The Church must make its own, the hopes and joys, the anxieties and sorrows of human beings. The Church is sent to bring good news to the poor, to lift up the downtrodden, to seek out and save the lost. The Church must resist and denounce all that oppose God's reign, all the injustice and callousness built into society just as Jesus denounced the sins of his contemporary society." [6]

1.9. Conclusion

The religious Leaders in Africa must play their role of advocacy for the poor, marginalized and the oppressed, just as Archbishop Romero has done for El Salvador. They must point out glaring inequalities between people living in their societies. Religious Leaders who are true to their religions cannot ignore the injustice and oppression perpetuated through corrupt government officials. The religious Leaders have the mandate to point out and preach against social sin just as Jesus did in his day. They must stand in solidarity with the poor and marginalized of society. They must stop legitimating the social, political and economic interests of the dominant groups. They must also stop glorifying and spiritualizing poverty by preaching a religion that exhorts the poor and oppressed to endure misery with dignity and patience because in the end they will find reward in heaven, it must be remembered that heaven starts here and now on earth. The religious leaders must help political leaders to see that campaigns for peace must be accompanied by concern for justice. Governments must be willing to initiate procedures which will bring about a more equitable sharing of burdens and resources. Integrity and accountability must be encouraged in public life. Where these two prevail there is improved public expenditure effectiveness and allocation of budget resources through participatory tracking and monitoring systems. Integrity and accountability in leadership helps to promote good governance and the creation of commitment on the side of citizens. This will create a vision of hope for the restoration of a true humanity thus allowing the emerging new world order to become a reality.

The African Continent has been challenged by Moral Regeneration; it is facing a moral crisis, therefore, there is need for the rediscovering of its moral compass and the Continent's historical long-held societal values. God has given the Religious Leaders the mandate to be the salt and light of World, Africa inclusive. It is therefore, the

responsibility of religion and Religious Leaders to spearhead the moral transformation and campaign across Africa. The religious leaders have the mandate of the advancement of God's kingdom that is a trumpet call for all people to work towards peace, justice and good governance. This will lead all Africans to live in peace and harmony, in this way, Africa will have something to offer to the world – their long-held values and hence good morals perhaps not found anywhere else in the world.

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