

MAN: A BEING TOWARDS RELIGION AND MORALITY

VICTOR CHIMAObI NwANGWU

Chimatex92@yahoo.com

The words of the late Pope John Paul II succinctly introduce this theme. He asserts thus; 'religion and science are like two wings on which the human mind rises to the contemplation of the truth'. To be both religious and moral, there is the need for rationality. The three ideas complete the tripartite attribute of the human being as religious, moral and rational. It is noteworthy to assert that before the advent of systematic religion, there had been a sort of primitive religion. Also, before this, the level of morality among human beings was comparatively low. What this entails is that there happens to be a sort of proportion between the three concepts. To reflect on this we have to stipulate proportionality on this. In doing this there has to be two versions to accommodate the various perspectives on this. One, the level of morality of a given set of people is directly proportional to the state of their religious orientations or manifestations. (This can also be stated as: the level of religiosity of a given set of people is directly proportional to the level of their morality). Secondly, the level of morality of a given set of people is inversely proportional to the state of their religious orientations and manifestations. Therefore, while one is directly proportional, another is inversely proportional. People respond differently to religion and morality. However, the problem remains, to what proportion do man respond to these two at various places and time? Is it religion that affects man's morality or otherwise? These are the questions to be explicated in this write-up.

Religion is from the Latin word *religare* which means *to bind, to connect*. Religion in this sense is therefore, what connect, binds or unites man to the divine. It is inbuilt in man to practice religion. Man constantly desires to bind himself to the divine from whom he derives his sustenance, his existence and his wellbeing. Hence even before the advent of systematic religion our fore fathers had practiced religion. This is what Christianity calls paganism and scholarship calls it traditional religion. From the beginning, man has always felt the need and the desire to acknowledge a supreme being above him. It was this idea of acknowledgment that necessity the idea of morality even in its crude form. Man having acknowledged a supreme being than he, felt

that he was going to be punished or rewarded if he did evil or good. This ultimately influenced his relationship with his fellow human beings. From the foregoing, it follows that religion precedes morality in the strictest sense of it.

To buttress this fact, I would like to present the idea of morality among Africans and Europeans. In Africa, because of their deeply religious orientation; tend to be morally sound in their actions. Europeans become less religious because of the much advancement in the areas of technological and scientific researches. These have contributed to the less level of religiosity of the people. Religion has become the concern of only the aged and perhaps children. But the fact remains that these less religious ones seem to be more civilized than the deeply religious Africans. In Africa, the killing of ones rather for money rituals accounts to the less level of morality visible in the area, this point to the conclusion that a religious man can be immoral in actions. In another sense, a moral man can be less religious in character.

Nevertheless, the seat of morality is religion. People tend to do good because of their connectedness to the divine which is a sort of religion. By religion I do not mean the systematized form of religion like the Christian or Islamic religion. Rather, I mean the deep seated sense of the divine in everyone's heart. Therefore to a great extent, these senses of religiosity affect the actions of man and make them to be either morally right or wrong.

The culture of a particular place and the religious orientation can affect the judgments of actions as either moral or immoral. Therefore, what is morally acceptable in Saudi Arabia can be a taboo in the United States of America. This is due to the diverse religious background. Our conclusion is that, although; to be moral does not depend on religion, religion nonetheless influences human actions. This is why Fyodor Dostoevsky asserts: 'if there is no God then everything is permissible.' The idea of a God makes for the rightness or wrongness of every human action. While not trying to be categorical, we could conclude that the level of morality in a given area should be directly proportional to the dominant religious orientation or manifestation in that area. Some may claim that religion is an invention of man. This is however incorrect since the idea of binding oneself to a higher being has been with man from the onset. It could only be right to say that an organized form of religion or a systematized kind of religion is an invention of man.

From the thoughts so far, it follows that between man, religion and morality, religion only has the ability to influence man through his action thereby making room for a morally right or wrong action. Religion, human acts and morality seem inseparable. This is why the struggle which was begun by Niccolo Machiavelli to separate morality from politics (which is a human action) has not been possible. To get a stable and peaceful society, the various religions in a given society should be harmoniously synthesized to come up with a uniformed understanding of what is morally right and what is morally wrong. This is because the many problem we experience in the society in one way or the other has a religious undertone.