

Religio-Political Cooperation for State Stability: Influence of the Egyptian 'God-King' Model on State Politics

Bruno Yammeluan Ikuli, Ph.D

Department of Philosophy

Federal University Otuoke

P. M. B. 126, Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

Phone: 08052500435, **Email:** ikulib@fuotuo.edu.ng

Abstract

Religion and politics are as old as the amassing of humans to establish communities or states. Consequently, man is described both as 'homo religiosus' and 'homo politicus.' Both are assumed to relate to each other on the ground of shared purposes of pursuit of 'human welfare' and 'happiness' in the state. However, both are also considered, based on existential realities, to live in cahoots to maintain state stability on terms tantamount to satisfying the inordinate ambitions of rulers at the expense of the ruled. The apparent partiality of this attitude raises the following questions: How is the state to be ordered so as to guarantee the peace, harmony and happiness of all its members and achieve political stability? How is inequality and the disadvantages that draw from it be addressed? Put differently, how does one justify the 'advantages' of the ruling class over the 'disadvantages' of those ruled? These questions, ultimately, raise curiosity over the origin of religion and its primal purpose. The findings of this study include the fact that the origin of religion is tied to Plato's mythical invention, "convenient fiction" and a "noble lie." This, in turn, is linked up to an earlier invocation of religion in ancient Egypt to cook up a similar myth, which confers divine status on Pharaoh for purposes of state stability. Using the analytic method of research, the study finds that religion's role in the world today serves the same purpose of political stability as Plato's political justice, where justice is doing the biddings of the 'Philosopher-King' or 'Egypt's Pharaoh,' whose 'divine mandate to rule' is a product of fiction, a 'noble lie.'

Keywords: Religion, politics, political stability, state stability, Egypt.

Introduction

The relation between religion and politics dates as far back as primeval times. Reducibly, this relationship became necessary shortly after human gregariousness sparked need for full development of state. Plato and Aristotle explained that human gregariousness or evolution of the state is a natural phenomenon, borne primarily

out of man's lack of self-sufficiency or economic needs. Hence, Aristotle says: “man is by nature a political animal.”¹ But, to live peaceably and in harmony with other persons in the state – indeed, for the state's political stability – gregariousness is not sufficient; in fact, it causes conflict of interests and occasionally coerces the state to slip down the path of chaos and decay. Social rules, thus, become a necessity in the state and morality an indispensable requirement from its members. This raises a few essential questions: How is the state to be ordered so as to guarantee the peace, harmony and happiness of all its members and achieve political stability? How is inequality and the disadvantages that draw from it be explained? Put differently, how does one justify the 'advantages' of the ruling class over the 'disadvantages' of those ruled?

To address the last question above, Plato invented a myth by fabricating a theology of imaginary and non-realistic gods; *ipso facto*, he becomes one of the first thinkers to marry religion with politics in order to prevent revolt and political instability in the state. He writes: “it would be necessary to employ a “convenient fiction... a single bold flight of invention” – that is, a “noble lie” – to “make everyone satisfied with his lot” in the state.² According to him, this 'noble lie' would be used to convince, “first the Rulers and the soldiers, and then the whole community” that the god who fashioned all men “mixed gold in the composition” of those stationed in life to rule and “put silver in the guardians, and iron and brass in the farmers and craftsmen.”³ Enoch Stumpf⁴ consequently explains that Plato's religious lie “would imply that by nature some would be rulers and others craftsmen and that this would provide the basis for a perfectly stratified society.” In his ideal state, Plato granted citizenship to the craftsmen, but subjugated them under the complete control of the

1. Aristotle, “Politics,” in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon with introduction by C. D. C Reeve (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 1129.
2. Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, (United States of America: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1989), 71.
3. Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, 71.
4. Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, 71.

class of guardians and rulers, while Aristotle denied them citizenship.

It is important to note that by denying artisans citizenship, Aristotle like, his tutor Plato, inadvertently denied freedom and fundamental human rights to the ordinary people of the state without specifically spelling it out, but implied it. This attitude, however, is not original to Plato and Aristotle, but to those under whose tutelage they studied – the Egyptians – and whose political system both copied, albeit presently differently: Plato did so idealistically, while Aristotle reproduced same realistically. Both, however, stratified and hierarchicalized the state after the Egyptian model, which ingeniously devised 'a religious lie' with the myth of 'Osiris' and 'Isis,' with which the King of Egypt, Pharaoh, was to rule the Kingdom or state unchallenged; thus, maintain political stability via absolutism. In other words, it was not in Athens, ancient Greece, but in ancient Egypt that religion was first employed as supportive tool for the political stability of the state. The question before us, therefore, is this: Is religion and its doctrines of God or gods and morality some mere political inventions devised by rulers to protect themselves and positions through indoctrinations, manipulations and exercise of influence and control over the ruled? In other words, is religion a myth fabricated by rulers to sustain the oppression of the ruled so as to secure political stability of the state? This article adopts the critical analytical methods of philosophy to review, analyze and critique the relation of religion and politics across several eras beginning from ancient Egypt to contemporary states.

Religion and Politics: A Quasi-Historical Development of the Idea and Attributes of One, Almighty and Perfect God for Social Order Regulation

This section of the article looks at what can be considered as philosophical accounts of the origin of religion, development of the idea of monotheism, God's omnipotence, omniscience, omnibenevolence, and religion's relation with morality and politics for the ultimate purpose of stability in the state.

Religio-Political Praxis in Ancient Egypt

Ancient Egypt is, arguably, the first national state in human history.⁵ Although, its foundational date is highly contested with varied opinions spreading it between 10,000 B.C. and 3200 B.C., more scholars settle for (6000 B.C.), a date suggested by Manetho the Egyptian Priest-Philosopher in his book *History of Egypt*. This ancient kingdom was constructed on a tripartite substructure. At the base lied the lower class, who were slaves (mostly prisoners of war) and peasants. They did menial jobs in road, building and irrigation construction sites. Overburdened with taxes and forced labour, they had near zero political rights. Immediately above them lied the middle class, who were the skilled labour, rich traders, teachers, artists, doctors, and scribes (highly valued for their letter writing skills). These lived modest lifestyles. On top was the upper class, which consisted of priests, the court nobility and the landed nobility. These “lived in affluence with “palatial homes, with luxurious furnishings, elaborate gardens and sumptuous food.””⁶ At the apogee of the Egyptian Kingdom sat Pharaoh.

Now, Pharaoh, from the Egyptian word “Pero,” meaning “the Great House” or “the Great Palace” and members of the royal family ranked separately and distinctly above those human classes. The royal family was considered to be divine; therefore, had to be treated specially always. Pharaoh was thought to be a “god-king” and this propaganda of his divine kingship was exploited to maintain the political stability of the ancient kingdom since as god, he had to rule his kingdom unchallenged. According to Etim, McKay, Hill and Buckler write:

-
5. Francis Ogunmodede, “Governance and Human Rights in the Ancient Egyptian State,” in *Philosophy and Praxis in Africa: The Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the Nigerian Philosophical Association Held in at the University of Benin, Benin, 20 – 21 May, 2004*, eds. Martin F. Asiegbu and Joseph A. Agbakoba (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2006), 72.
 6. Etim E. Okon, “Religion and Politics in ancient Egypt,” *American Journal of Social and Management Sciences* 111, no. 3 (2012): 3, <https://doi:10.5251/ajsms.2012.3.3.93.98>.

... pharaoh was not simply the mediator between the gods and Egyptian people. Above all, he was the power that achieved the interpretation between gods and humans, between nature and society, that ensured peace and prosperity for the land of the Nile.⁷

It was pharaoh that controlled the wealth, resources, and people of all Egypt. He was the cynosure of religion and politics in the old kingdom of Egypt. McNeill, according to Etim, says: "The divine status of the pharaoh imparted to the central government a stability never attained by the high kingship of Mesopotamia, for the doctrines of Egyptian religion gave the god-king a hold upon his subjects that had no parallel in a land whose rulers, however powerful, were not themselves divine."⁸ It is indubitable, therefore, that it is here that the political theory of 'divine rights of kings' was originally formulated; and, rightly so for the chief purpose of employing religion to protect political policies and actions of rulers. Ultimately, religion in ancient Egypt is man-made, a political device, developed to make-believe and inspire unquestioning followership among the predominantly illiterate populace. This exactly is the expected outcome of the mythological fabrication of the gods "Osiris" and "Isis" and their ancestry to the Royal Family. Obviously, this myth is meant to protect the king from being deposed by the people. In fact, it is from this myth that Plato derived the idea of his own construction of the Ideal State, however, made slight adjustments to fit his native Athens. Europe and the rest of the world would eventually copy and model their states after Plato's hierarchical political structure.

Politics and Religion in ancient Greece

Although, politics dominated and controlled religion in both ancient Greece and Egypt, relation between religion and politics differed variously and significantly in the two states. For instance, while ancient Egypt had state religion, Greece had no

7. Okon, "Religion and Politics in ancient Egypt," 3.

8. Okon, "Religion and Politics in ancient Egypt," 3

state religion, not even a word equivalent to the English word “religion.”⁹ An implication of this is that Greece was not a theocratic state: a secular state, it had no priestly caste system; although, it demonstrated a modest level of religiosity – at least, to maintain political stability. Some scholars may want to refer to Greece's polytheistic nature to buttress an argument in favour of a theocratic ancient Greece. No, Greece was not officially a religious state. However, each Greek *polis* had its own gods for supervising or protecting every human action, public or private. It made Thales develop the dictum: “everything is full of gods.”¹⁰ Greek practice of religion laid emphasis on rituals. It lacked religious dogma; so, it was not a theocracy. Hence, philosophy, science and innovation thrived in the state. Betegh writes:

Each Greek city had “sacred laws,” carved in stone or bronze and displayed at public places, to regulate ritual behaviour and to fix the calendar of public festivals. The performative side of the cult was fixed and regulated, but not its interpretation. There was no attempt to constitute and codify a creed, a corpus of indisputable beliefs about the divine and its relation to humans. In the absence of a regulatory dogma, contrasting conceptions and representations of the gods co-existed without any feeling of antagonism.¹¹

Codification of religious dogma for Greece began gradually after the death of Socrates. Greek thinkers, it seems, tended to look toward Egypt to borrow a leaf; albeit, Egypt itself lacked properly formulated religious dogma, having poorly developed theology moulded out of it, which included the myth of the god “Osiris” and his wife, goddess “Isis,” myth of the divinity of Pharaoh or the doctrines the 'god-king,' the 'Divine Right of the King,' etc.

9. Gábor Betegh, “Greek Philosophy and Religion,” in *A Companion to Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Mary Louise Gill and Pierre Pellegrin (Victoria: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2006), 626.

10. Betegh, “Greek Philosophy and Religion,” 626.

11. Betegh, “Greek Philosophy and Religion,” 627.

A clear case of defending the stability of a state using religion in early Greece entails the trial and execution of Socrates. The lack of regulatory religious dogma in Athens did not deter the democratic regime which replaced the “Thirty Tyrants” from prosecuting, condemning and executing Socrates: reason being there was palpable fear “he was a danger to the restored democracy.”¹² The *Apology* shows that Socrates, the father of ethics, “was brought on trial on charges of 'corrupting the youth' and 'not believing in the city gods’”¹³ on account of accusations laid by the Orators Lycon, Anytus, and Meletus. In the *Republic*, dread of looming political instability linked to Socrates, a man of highest moral integrity in then Athens, was so palpable, majority of the jury of 501 citizens voted he should be put to death by drinking a deadly poison, hemlock. Conclusively, however, the accusation of irreligiosity and impiety against Socrates was an act intended to achieve a political end – stability of the state – rather than pursue a moral course. It seemed to work: as, probably, to avert the fate of Socrates, maybe not, subsequent Greek philosophers gradually made adjustments to Egypt's infantile theology attempting to surpass it via pure and thorough intellections. Ancient Greece began to witness a gradual articulation of religious doctrine that favoured the state's end.

Plato, most loyal of Socrates' pupil, and Xenophanes championed the change in the relation between religion and politics. The project required time and a knocking out of the anthropomorphic and negative or limited qualities associated with the gods. Beginning with clearing out of the negatives, Xenophanes expressed dissatisfaction with the anthropomorphic representations of the gods. For example: “Ethiopians say that their gods are snub-nosed and black:/ Thracians that theirs are blue-eyed and red-haired.”¹⁴ Then, Xenophanes frowned at the theologies of the Greek poets Homer and Hesiod, who ascribed several acts of immoralities to the gods: “theft,

12. Richard Kraut, “Introduction,” in *Political Philosophy: The Essential Texts*, ed. Steven M. Cahn (New York: Oxford University Press), 1.

13. Philip Stokes, *Philosophy: The Great Thinkers* (London: Arcturus Publishing Ltd.), 268.

14. Betegh, “Greek Philosophy and Religion,” 629.

adultery, and mutual deceit.”¹⁵ Plato condemned Homer's verse in Iliad 20, where the Greek gods are depicted as locked in fierce combat: Zeus commits patricide by killing his father Kronos, reflective of the fratricidal myth of the Egyptian god, Seth, who killed his brother Osiris out of envy. Plato insists on laundering the image of the gods, because foul language, when used against the gods tantamount to “irreverence, and is moreover both injurious to us and self-contradictory.”¹⁶ The idea here is that if humans must learn from the gods, then the gods must be presented in good ethical light; they must be seen to be moral – be of impeccable characters.

The ethical issue in the foregoing then subtly shifts “the center of responsibility from divine to human agents.”¹⁷ Human beings must take responsibility for their conducts – good or bad. Plato believes that while men do wrong, the gods are good and are not the source of evil. This view too is characteristic of the Egyptian view that the citizens, being mundane and mortal, do evil, which necessitates Osiris to train them in agriculture and give them laws for social order and political stability. On the other hand, as Ogunmodede¹⁸ says, Pharaoh, the representative of Osiris:

... was in official terms called *neter nefer*, the perfect god or *neter aa*, the great god. In the Onomasticonian Hierarchy of beings, he was put before all other humans, immediately after the supernatural beings. The royal family was also exceptional and came before other human beings headed by the nobles. The royal children were born differently. They were conceived directly by the gods.

Thus positively, in the *Republic*, Plato argues that “god is good in reality, and is to be so represented.”¹⁹ That is, as Betegh says: “Plato posits goodness as the core

15. Betegh, “Greek Philosophy and Religion,” 630.

16. Plato, *Republic*, trans. John Llewelyn Davies and David James Vaughan with Introduction by Stephen Watt (Herdfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited), 64.

17. Betegh, “Greek Philosophy and Religion,” 630.

18. Ogunmodede, “Governance and Human Rights in the Ancient Egyptian State,” 74.

19. Plato, *Republic*, 62 – 64.

attribute of divinity, and then discards what is incompatible with it.”²⁰ Xenophanes, in DK 21A28, A31 and C1, had argued that the very notion of god evokes the thought that there is nothing greater; Simplicius says that Aristotle had contended that: “In general, where there is a better there is also a best. Since, then, among existing things one is better than another, there is also something that is best, which will be the divine.”²¹ Then, Betegh further exposes:

If we identify god as that which is the ultimate being in the relevant respect (goodness, greatness, power, etc.), will it not follow that there is only one god? Xenophanes' conclusion is inherently ambiguous: “There is one god greatest among gods and men” (DK 21B23.1). This wavering remains characteristic of later philosophers, too. Conceptual analysis, a theory of causes, reductionism, and requirements of theoretical parsimony in most cases drive the philosopher to the concept of a unique ultimate divinity. This one divine being, which is the first causal principle of the world and which stands in a fundamental relationship with the totality of things, is the god that ultimately interests the philosopher. This tendency is manifest already in the pre-Socratic practice of calling the underlying principle of the world “divine.” Aristotle explicitly claims that theology is the theoretical study of the first causes and first principles (see esp. *Met.* A.2, 982b28–983a10 and E.1, 1026a17–32). Then, in *Metaphysics* Λ, which contains his most elaborate discussion of the divine, he argues that there should be one ultimate divine substance on which the order of the whole world ultimately depends (Λ.7–8; see also *On Philosophy* fr. 17 Rose; *Phys.* VIII.6; *GC* II.10, 337a15–24).⁹ Then he ends *Metaphysics* Λ with a quotation from Homer: “The rule of the many is not good; let there be one ruler” (10, 1076a4 quoting II. 2.204).²²

20. Betegh, “Greek Philosophy and Religion,” 631.

21. Betegh, “Greek Philosophy and Religion,” 631.

22. Betegh, “Greek Philosophy and Religion,” 631-632.

Basically, this is how, in conformity with the idea of the perfect, greatest and all-knowing 'god-King' of Egypt, the post-Socratic Greek philosophers developed the idea of “an ultimate rational divine principle” that is responsible for all beauty and rationality in the cosmos. Plato applies this idea of a perfect God, an omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent God, to his 'Philosopher-King.' As the 'god-king' of Egypt rules over Egypt without interference by his subordinates, so too justice in Plato's ideal state require that everyone stay in their primary station of life. Permanence is justice; change is corruption, a taboo for Plato. Political stability means that Plato's Philosopher-King must always rule, while others stick to their primary duties irrespective of the social and economic situations of the state. This is no different from 'divine right of the King' policy of Egypt. According to Ogunmodede, in Egypt, “governance was at the beginning an individualistic and personalised affair of the Pharaoh. What obtained actually was a royal cabinet, which revolved round the whims and caprices of the Pharaoh.”²³ Like Egypt, where *Maat* – i.e., Truth, Justice, Love, Harmony, Order, Peace, Stability and Happiness, form the ethical basis of the Egyptian polity²⁴, Plato built the idea of his ideal state on the moral foundation of justice as harmony. It is this Egypto-Greece foundation of the state that is spread around the globe and governs how states are governed and politically stabilized over the centuries.

Religio-Political Relations in State Governance and Stability through Mediaeval to Contemporary Periods

By the end of the 'Golden Age' of ancient Greek civilization, the following philosophers had helped Greece to reach the following conclusions:

- (a) “There is one god greatest among gods and men” (Xenophanes, DK 21B23.1);
- (b) “The rule of the many is not good; let there be one ruler” (Aristotle

23. Ogunmodede, “Governance and Human Rights in the Ancient Egyptian State,” 75-76.

24. Ogunmodede, “Governance and Human Rights in the Ancient Egyptian State,” 79.

quoting Homer: 10, 1076a4 quoting Il. 2.204); and,

- (c) The ideal state is one ruled by the 'Philosopher-King' and the central moral conception of this state is justice. (Plato, Republic).

Now, in early mediaeval times, Xenophane's idea of "one god greatest among gods and men" found a match in the three revealed religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam; each of which expresses belief in one, true, omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent God. Augustine classified states into two kinds; namely, "City of God" and "City of Babylon." He associates the moral and just state with the City of God, which he tends to identify with the Church. For Augustine, "the State will not embody true justice, will not be a really moral State, unless it is a Christian State: it is Christianity which makes men good citizens."²⁵ Furthermore, he writes:

No State is more perfectly established and preserved than on the foundations, and by the bond, of faith and of firm concord, when the highest and truest good, namely God, is loved by all and men love each other in Him without dissimulation because they love one another for His sake.²⁶

At the close of the mediaeval era, political absolutism was introduced with the doctrine of the 'divine right of kings' employed by William Barclay in his *De regno et regali poteste* (1600), James I in his *Trew Law of Free Monarchies* and Sir Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha* (1680), as more of attempts to support tired and fleeting royal absolutism than invigorating practical absolutism.²⁷ However, reflecting on natural law and natural rights, Reformation thinkers – Catholics and Protestants – hold that "an unchangeable natural law exists which binds all sovereigns and all societies and that this law is the foundation of certain natural rights,"²⁸ particularly, the rights of private property. The theory of natural law and natural right imposes limitations on

25. Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Medieval Philosophy*, vol. 2 (London and New York: Continuum), 88.

26. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Medieval Philosophy*, 89.

27. See: Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Late Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy*, 311.

28. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Late Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy*, 312.

the exercise of political power by the sovereign. It involved such issues as the relation of religion – i.e., Church – to state and 'the right of resistance to the sovereign.

Ultimately, historical developments in Europe during this period highlighted the question of relation between religion and politics in connection with political stability. According to Copleston, "In Scotland John Knox stoutly defended resistance to the sovereign in the name of religious reform, while in France the Calvinists," especially, an unknown author among them states that "there are two contracts or covenants, the one between people and the sovereign, the other between the people together with the sovereign and God,"²⁹ therefore, on account of the second contract, the people have right not only to resist a ruler who tries to foist a false religion on them, but also "of bringing pressure to bear on a 'heretical' ruler." Another question in the relation between religion and politics is this: Which between Church and State should subordinate to the other? Like the Catholics, the Protestants (Lutherans and Calvinists) hold the distinction between Church and State and inferiority of the latter to Church, but conclusively advocate the submission of the Church to State power, albeit under institutionalized democracy.

The succeeding Renaissance or/and Enlightenment periods challenged the relation of religion to politics as seen during mediaeval times. Not only was the authority of the Papacy confronted by secular authorities, its powers were actively stripped off by various sovereigns. The Egypto-Greek and Roman classics, which were neglected by Church authorities were rediscovered and obsessive interest in them rekindled. Matson writes:

The Roman poets, orators, and historians, hitherto neglected though not lost in the West, became central in the education of upper-class young men (and, occasionally, women). Learning was no longer the monopoly of clerics;

29. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Late Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy*, 313-314.

theology no longer was able to claim the attention and energies of the most vigorous intellects. The 'vulgar' tongues, English, French, Provençal, Tuscan, Calatan, began to proliferate serious literatures.³⁰

Religion was attacked, sidelined from politics, its most compelling object of worship, God, was stripped of its perfect attributes, and accused of wearing royal regalia stolen from man. This negative attitude towards religion which began during the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods was carried over to modernism and into contemporary times. Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach says, in his book *The Essence of Christianity*, that the God worshipped by the religious man is nothing but 'the projected image of human nature.' Joseph Omoregbe paraphrases Feuerbach saying:

All divine attributes, all the attributes which make God God, are attributes of the species – attributes which in the individual are limited.... My life is bound to a limited time; not so the life of humanity. The history of mankind consists of nothing else than a continuous and progressive conquest of limits which at a given time pass for the limit of humanity But the future always unveils the fact that the alleged limits of the species were only limits of individuals Thus the species is unlimited; the individual alone limited.³¹

Sigmund Freud argues that religion is childishness: in fact, childhood neurosis, which results from the Oedipus complex that haunts mankind all through his adulthood. He says “religious ideas are illusions” drawn out of deep-rooted wishes.³² For Karl Marx, religion is the sign of the exploited and cry of the exploited under capitalism. Thus, he writes: “The religious misery is at the same time the

30. Wallace Matson, *A New History of Philosophy: Volume Two: From Descartes to Searle*, 2nd Ed. (Washington D.C.: Thomson Wadsworth, 2000), 297-298.

31. Joseph Omoregbe, *A Philosophical Look at Religion* (Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Ltd., 1993), 6.

32. G. A. Oshitelu, *Religion, God and Evil: Issues in Philosophy and Religion* (Orogun, Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2010), 31.

expression of the real misery, and the protest against the real misery. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the feeling of a heartless world just as it is the spirit of a spiritless conditions.”³³ For Emil Durkheim, 'religion is nothing but a dream, systematized and lived, but without any foundation in society.' Auguste Comte refers to religion as “metaphysical nonsense.”

Rightly or wrongly, these attitudes towards religion simply influenced and encouraged scepticism, agnosticism and, especially, atheism. Thus, the outburst of the thorough-going empiricist and humanist Scottish philosopher, David Hume, does not come to us as a surprise when he raged declaring:

When we run over libraries persuaded of these (empirical) principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume: of divinity or school metaphysics. For instance; let us ask. *Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quality or number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?* No. Commit it to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.³⁴

However, it was not all rejection for religion and God from Renaissance enroute Contemporary times. At least, such significant intelligentsia as Descartes and Kant left significant space for religion, particularly, the idea of God. The Enlightenment scholar, Kant, for example, considered religion as necessary for morality in the human society. He writes: “the belief in a God and in another world is so interwoven in my moral sentiment, that there is little danger of my losing the latter, there is quite as little fear lest I should ever be deprived of the former.”³⁵ For Kant, “religion is the recognition of all our duties as divine commands.” The arguments Kant and

33. Joseph Omoregbe, *A Philosophical Look at Religion*, 12.

34. Pantaleon Iroegbu, *Metaphysics: Kpim of Philosophy* (Owerri: International Universities Press Ltd., 1995), 174.

35. See: Iroegbu, *Metaphysics*, 192.

Descartes and their ilk are not sufficient to reverse the consequences of arguments of the opposition, who hold that religion is irrelevant for motivation and regulation of moral conducts of citizens in the state.

Religio-Political Relations in African States: The Western Imperialistic Model

Historically, by 1480s Europeans had started questioning and antagonizing the centrality and supremacy of religion in their cultural lives and national affairs. Resistance to religion and its dismantling had already begun at this time; yet, the attitude of Europeans in Africa regarding religion was quite the opposite of what they exhibited back at home. During this period in Europe, Europeans were bemoaning the long reign of religion in their national affairs, particularly, its influence on politics, the Papacy had been undermined, the theory of 'divine rule of kings' was challenged or jettisoned in some places, and the long rule of theology over philosophy or faith over reason made that mediaeval era to be christened the "Dark Ages" of Europe. The overall sentiment in Europe at the close of the mediaeval era was one of a sense of long-run loss of civilization; stagnation in education, learning and innovation; an era devoid of remarkable scientific and technological advancement in Europe.

Shockingly, the same Europeans who bewailed the havoc caused by religious dominance over their culture, education, scientific and technological development, sailed to Africa, insulted African psyche by casting slurs and aspersions on Africans and decried the absence of religion in Africa. Samuel Baker, for example, wrote a report to the Ethnological Society of London saying of Africans:

Without exception, they are without a belief in a Supreme Being, neither have they any form of worship or idolatry; nor is the darkness of their minds enlightened even by a ray of superstition. The mind is as stagnant as the morass which forms its puny world.³⁶

36. Olusegun Oladipo, "Religion in African Culture: Some Conceptual Issues," in *A Companion to African Philosophy*, ed. Kwasi Wiredu (Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004), 355.

However, Baker did not act in isolation. A European conspiracy to transfer their “Dark Ages” to Africa and steal Africa's human and natural resources to fund their developmental visions in Europe existed. European anthropologists, sociologists, historians, philosophers, ethnologists, etc., were tasked with responsibilities of studying Africa to determine the approaches or procedures for colonization. Negative publicity of Africa with intent to over-exaggerate the really unnecessary, unimportant and irrelevant in connection with civilization was chosen as first step activity. Africa was accused as irreligious, therefore, lacked civilization. Negative publicity was a diversionary tactics intended to psychologically manipulate and seduce Africans into believing that civilization meant being religious; greater civilization therefore requires overly religiosity. This is how Europe deceived and lured Africans into the strong, overpowering and enduring sedative snare of religion. Europe's mediaeval years had it that the Christian religion is a great sedative that puts the intellect to slumber. Besides, it reverses the roles between the lion and sheep, letting a lamb become King of the jungle as Nietzsche proclaimed.

The weakening of Italy by the Church is, particularly, responsible for Machiavelli's detestation of the virtues of Christianity. It made him urge the prince to employ “immoral means in the consolidation and preservation of power.” In the *Discourses*, he makes it crystal clear that: “it is legitimate in the sphere of politics to use an immoral means in order to attain a good end.” Nietzsche later followed Machiavelli in the condemnation of the Christian morality. He described it as promoting 'slave morality.' Machiavelli strongly blamed Christianity for weakening and retrogressing Italy, while throughout Europe aversion greeted the Christian religion which confronted new oppositional challenges. This troubled and ruffled religion in Europe is what Europeans exported to Africa on a purportedly 'civilizing mission' in exchange for Africa's human and natural resources. Njoku writes:

... a new slogan was intoned that “The Bible and Plough” will help regenerate him and his continent. Already the seeds of colonization, a

second level of mental slavery was born. Then the missionaries reinforced themselves with new vigour, being carried by the ships of their brother colonizers, they carried the Bible to African soil.³⁷

Missionary workers or volunteers were some of Europe's religious fanatics, who the growing hostility towards Christianity in Europe was depriving operational space and making practice of the faith more difficult. In exchange for costless voyage, they accompanied their colonialist and capitalist compatriots to Africa to gullibilize African minds with seeds of the Gospel. They are the reasons why Africa's land is in the hands of Westerners, while the Westerners' Bible is in the hands of Africans.

Without hindsight to learn from, Afrocentrist scholars fell for the European trick: distracted, they variously wrote in defence of African religiosity struggling to impress pretentious Europeans, who masked their hideous colonizing intents behind pious religious clarion calls. Africa is today's world centre for religious worships and the poverty headquarter of the world, Africans seem soothed with Marx's maxim: religion is "the opium of the poor." During this time, Europeans proliferate liberal democratic institutions at home, while they erect monarchical democracies in Africa. The admixture of democratic with monarchical principles, policies and institutions in Africa's political system makes it politics concurrently a non-democracy and an a-traditional political system. Over time, traditional institutions in Africa increasingly become fettered with the 'divine mandate of kings' theory, while liberal democracy matures in the West. This way, European or the West progresses, while Africa retrogresses and stays weighed down in a state of quagmire. Ultimately, for Africa, there is no advancement; rather, it's a return to a bizarre and aberrational 'god-king' monarchical facsimile of ancient Egypt couched in illiberal democratic framework.

37. Francis Njoku, "A Phenomenological Critique of the Igbo God-Talk," *Encounter: A Journal of African Life and Religion* 11, (1993): 78.

The Egyptian 'god-king' Model of Nigeria's Democracy

In 1960, the British colonialist administration established a Popperian historicist political organization called the Nigerian state headed by the Fulani on a tripodal foundation of Hausa/Fulani/Yoruba and Igbo. This state mimics Plato's political justice system with substantial ingrain of Machiavellianism and Nietzscheanism. Ultimately, however, it is the ancient Egyptian 'god-king' model of political kingdom that is guised as a democratic state. Religion's relation to politics is represented in the Oath of Office: the elected Nigerian President and Governors swear oaths by the Bible or Koran in pledge to protect the territorial integrity of the Nigerian state or state of governance and promote the welfare of citizens. The exercise brings religion in close collaboration with politics in view finally of political stability.

In this state, the Nigerian President sits at the head of government as Pharaoh did. His constitutional powers elevate him to the rank of gods, a status and powers perceivable in the attitude of most Nigerian Presidents while in office. They virtually live and act above the law, despite the constitutional equality of all the citizens. Nigeria's political structure features the order of the ancient Egyptian political hierarchy: the politicians (Ministers, Governors, Federal and state legislators, General Overseers of Churches, Bishops, Top ranking Imams, etc.) equate the Egyptian upper class consisting of priests, the court nobility and the landed nobility. They like the ancient Egyptian priests and nobilities live “in affluence with “palatial homes, with luxurious furnishings, elaborate gardens and sumptuous food,””³⁸ additionally, they fly about in private jets. Unlike Egypt, Nigeria's middle class is wiped away, those that were to live moderately on that level wallow in poverty haven been reduced to the ancient Egyptian lower class made up mostly of slaves (prisoners of war) and peasants. Like the Egyptian lower class, their

38. Okon, “Religion and Politics in ancient Egypt,” 95.

lives are overburdened with political and religious taxes with near zero political rights.

Nigeria's President, virtually, like Plato's 'Philosopher-King' lives literally above the law: he is protected in office with a clause – 'Presidential Immunity' – which is a modernized version of the 'divine mandate to rule' clause of ancient Egypt. The same applies to Governors in Nigeria, who are similarly protected in office by the 'Governorship Immunity' clause. These clauses permit unquestioned abuse of power. Religious leaders preach patience, endurance and a rewarding place called “Heaven,” not daring to condemn the corrupt practices in governance or fund scientific and technological research activities, but hobnob with politicians and reinforce multiple taxation systems in Churches using false indoctrinations. Hence, religion and superficial morality provide cover for egoism, love for acquisition, consolidation and preservation of power. The failure of religion to challenge the moral irresponsibility of government affirms the thesis of its subservience as an imperialist instrument for colonialism, neocolonialism and trans-colonialism. In other words, religion collaborates with politics in Nigeria (nay, Africa) for the purposes of stifling the use of the African intellect, creativity and reduces Africa to Europe's “Dark Ages.” Religion functions to preserve the advantage of the ruling class, while providing consolation and succour, but not liberation of the ruled and oppressed from the disadvantages occasioned by misgovernance and abuse of power.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that religion has been an invaluable collaborating partner with politics since antiquity. Although, its primary purpose purportedly is to partner with politics to ensure the 'well ordering' of society and maximization of the 'happiness' of all members of the state, religion appears to have drifted away from these initial purposes and have become subservient to aberrational politics. It actually exists and cooperates with politics to serve the interests of rulers, not quite

those of the ruled. Hence, ultimately, religion appears to stifle optimization of the intellect, violate rights of, and deny justice to, the ruled. Consequently, religion has been characterized with a strong tendency towards impeding national development – the clearest statement of this being Europe's description of the dominant era of religion in their history as the “Dark Ages.”

In other words, religion has lived up to the genuine purpose of its origination, which, according to Plato is to convince the ruled, weak and poor to remain satisfied in their destitution, because a mythical God, who created them intended their misery *ab initio*. Religion, in this sense, is outcome of Plato's mythical invention, a “necessary” and “convenient fiction... a single bold flight of invention,” a “noble lie,” that was developed to “make everyone satisfied with his lot” in the state. This lie was concocted out of an original one cooked up in ancient Egypt that conferred divine status on Pharaoh and protected his rule or misrule from discontented contenders for the purpose of political stability. Religion conferred the 'divine right to rule' on Pharaoh and Plato's 'Philosopher-King' in ancient times; today, it does same to the Nigerian President and Governors of its federated states via 'Presidential' and 'Gubernatorial' immunities, which are couched expressions of the mythical divine mandate theory.

Bibliography

- Aristotle. “Politics.” In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by Richard McKeon with Introduction by C. D. C. Reeve, 1127 – 1324. New York: The Modern Library, 2001 (1941).
- Betegh, Gábor. “Greek Philosophy and Religion.” In *A Companion to Ancient Philosophy*, edited by Mary Louise Gill and Pierre Pellegrin, 625 – 663. Victoria: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2006.
- Copleston, Frederick. *A History of Philosophy: Late Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy*. Vol. 3, London and New York: Continuum, 2010 (1953).

- Copleston, Frederick. *A History of Philosophy: Medieval Philosophy*. Vol. 2, London and New York: Continuum, 2010 (1950).
- Iroegbu, Pantaleon. *Metaphysics: The Kpim of Philosophy*. Owerri: International Universities Press Ltd., 1995.
- Kraut, Richard. "Plato: Introduction. In *Political Philosophy: The Essential Texts*, edited by Steven M. Cahn, 1 – 4. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Matson, Wallace. *A New History of Philosophy: Volume Two: From Descartes to Searle*. 2nd Ed., Washington, D. C.: Thomson Wadsworth, 2000.
- Njoku, Francis. A Phenomenological Critique of the Igbo God-Talk. *Encounter: A Journal of African Life and Religion* 11 (1993): 78 – 91.
- Ogunmodede, Francis. "Governance and Human Rights in the Ancient Egyptian State." In *Philosophy and Praxis: The Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the Nigerian Philosophical Association held at the University of Benin, Benin, 20 - 21 May, 2004*, edited by Martin F. Asiegbu and Joseph A. Agbakoba, 71-87. Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2006.
- Okon, Etim E. "Religion and Politics in ancient Egypt." In *American Journal of Social and Management Sciences* 111, no. 3(2012): 93-98. ISSN Online: 2151-1559, doi:10.5251/ajsms.2012.3.3.93.98.
- Oladipo, Olusegun. "Religion in African Culture: Some Conceptual Issues." In *A Companion to African Philosophy*, edited by Kwasi Wiredu, 355 – 362. Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004.
- Omeregbe, Joseph. *A Philosophical Look at Religion*. Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Ltd., 1993.
- Oshitelu, G. A. *Religion, God and Evil: Issues in Philosophy and Religion*. Orogun, Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2010.
- Plato. *Plato: Republic*. Translated by John Llewelyn Davies and David James

Vaughan with Introduction by Stephen Watt. Herdfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1997.

Stokes, Philip. *Philosophy: The Great Thinkers*. London: Arcturus Publishing Limited, 2007.