

“RELIGION WITHOUT GOD?” A CRITIQUE OF RONALD DWORKIN’S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

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ABSTRACT

Ronald Dworkin’s philosophy of religion is built on a concept of atheistic religion or religion without God. He divorces religion, as an interpretive concept, from God, founding an atheistic religion based exclusively on objective value, a sort of religion of value. For Dworkin, the possibility of the existence of God does not make any difference to the objective truth of atheistic religious values. This religion of value could be shared together by theists and atheists, bringing harmony and peace, and ending religious wars and conflicts. The main objective of this study is to make a critique of Dworkin’s philosophy of religion. The research problem is to find out whether it is proper for a state to endorse or support a particular religion. The research method is hermeneutics of religion from the point of view of Dworkin. Finally, this study submits that inasmuch as religion is not purely capricious, impulsive, whimsical, irrational or temperamental, it is not a private issue. It is justifiable for a state to endorse a particular religion. However, in a multi-religious nation like Nigeria, no particular religion should be given a pride of place over others in the public sphere: leadership, politics, and every other area of human endeavour because no religion has the monopoly of truth.

Keywords: Dworkin, Atheism, God, Religion, Theism, Unity of Value.

INTRODUCTION

In *Religion Without God*, Ronald Dworkin seeks to make his case that religion is not restricted or circumscribed to the world of theism and that religious atheism is not an oxymoron – conjoining contradictory terms (Francis, 2015, 679). He develops a new concept of religious liberty, which is in part an upshot or outcome of his approach to religion. Directly and without evasion, he turns to and addresses the crucial queries of what, according to him, people should understand religion to be for political and legal purposes. He grounds ethics and morality in the unity of value. He cautiously differentiates any idea of God from objective value, propagating the idea of “religious atheism” that is based on objective value. For him, the traditional theistic beliefs are simply one subset of the morally esteemed, reputable, and upstanding beliefs (Dworkin, 2013, 1). Atheists, just like people with traditional theistic beliefs, also hold encompassing and extensive conceptions of what is of value concerning human life. So that everyone can meaningfully talk of an atheist religion (Dworkin, 5).

When this particular non-theistic interpretation of religion is accepted and acknowledged as any other conviction concerning the meaning and importance of human life; then all can interpret freedom of religion as protecting the right of every individual to live his/her own life in accordance

with his/her own understanding of life well lived. He regards freedom of religion as emanating from the chief liberal value of ethical independence, that is, the idea that ethics has its own independent domain of enquiry and justification, with its own criteria, authority, and independent validity; which should be adhered to when determining the nature of laws, policies and political decisions.

THE CONCEPT OF RELIGION IN GENERAL

Religion is a set of rulings or beliefs considered as founded or established in some manner by a supreme authority beyond the challenge of man. The practical quests/pursuits that are attached to or involved in obeying a religion are often organized through institutions and rites. The basic principles of a religion may be observed merely as part of a ritual habitual procedure or routine, or they may be particularly expressed as a declaration of faith. In the first mentioned of the two, which is that of tribal religion, the practitioner does not need to have any particular knowledge, a matter often left for priests or medicine men (Workman, *The New Caxton Encyclopedia* Vol. 16. 1967, 5041). On the other hand, in established religions declared publicly or made widely known by a prophet or master, where faith is expressed and clearly communicate, a conscious commitment is required; in its slighter forms, this involves a definite belief concerning the ultimate or supreme nature of things, the authorship and destiny of the world. In this way, a dogmatic explanation or account of the religion is produced, from which any systematic deviation, or ‘heresy’, may likely lead to the formation of a separate sect (Workman, 5041-5042).

VARIOUS CONCEPTIONS OF THE SUPREME AGENCY

The supreme agency may be conceived either as a general principle, or, more broadly, as some supernatural being or person. Different religions conceive their gods distinctly. For example, in Sumerian times, the god who made the world thereafter withdrew, retired and took no further interest in human affairs. Conversely, Christianity has traditionally considered God as guarding, looking after and concerned by the ways of human beings. In polytheistic religions, the whole field of human interests and concerns is divided into different departments, each department is attended to or taken care of by a special god with its own cult; “this conception survived to some extent even in Christianity in the form of patron saints for various activities” (Anyaoah, 188; Callaway, 22). Most religions are practiced through certain formal rites/rituals carried out by priests in special holy places or shrines. Again, by joining certain forms of behaviour on humans, religion itself constitutes a force making for social cohesion. Such primary injunctions of many religions as those, for example, that forbid killing, lying and stealing are actually preconditions or assumptions that are taken for granted for any viable, and worthwhile human society (Divine, 2010, 41).

SPECIFIC ENDS OF REGION TO THE ADHERENTS/BELIEVERS

The specific ends that religion holds for the adherent or the believer who abides by its code vary massively according to different religions. In Buddhism, the ultimate salvation lies in a release from being, a state of dreamless nothingness (Donigeret *al.*, 1999, 915). Christianity preaches

eternal life after death, in which the penalty for evil-doing on earth is separation or severance from God, the Supreme Being. Hinduism has a series of transmigrations of the soul; this gives scope for punishment, for the bad re-emerge in their next incarnation in a lower form of life (Workman, *The New Caxton Encyclopedia* Vol. 16.1967, 5042). Islam teaches that there is a permanent abode with Allah for human beings who must have done His will while they were on earth. Jainism has no divinities, rejecting gods, spirits and demons alike, but follows the general pursuit of asceticism, fight against the passions and bodily senses in order to gain omniscience and the complete purity of the soul that represents the highest religious goal in the Jain religious system. The ascetic who attains this omniscience and purity is called a *Jina*– *Conqueror* or *Victor*, hence, adherents to the tradition are called “Jainas” or “Jains” (Donigeret *al.*, 549).

RONALD DWORKIN’S CONCEPT OF PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

In his posthumously published work, *Religion Without God*, Dworkin points out that religion is not a very simple term to define for legal and political purposes (Dworkin, 2013, 2). Either it is defined too narrowly/slenderly, as theistic religion, and by so doing, the atheists are deprived of the protections of religious freedom without any justification, or it is defined too widely or largely, as religion without God, or any sincere conviction about what gives meaning to life, and it covers too much. Therefore, he proposes that the issue of religion be approached with caution for legal and political reasons (Dworkin, 2013, 152-153).

Against this background, Dworkin draws on an important difference, which he actually started talking about in *Justice for Hedgehogs*, between two kinds of rights: general and special rights. General rights are protected when the government does not directly disregard or violate the freedom in question in a deliberate manner. However, the government may regulate general rights if authorities appeal to appropriately neutral reasons that respect individuals’ ethical independence. While the government must not appeal to the superiority of one way of life over another, it can appeal to neutral reasons to justify policies that interfere with the way of life of her citizens including their religious way of life (Dworkin, 2011, 152-157; Dworkin, 2013, 129-130; Laborde, 2014, 1259). On the other hand, special rights need a greater level of protection. They protect special interests and can only be regulated/modulated if the government provides a persuasive, powerful or weighty justification for doing so (Dworkin, 2013, 151; Laborde, 1259). He explains that such rights place much more coercive and general constraints on government. Dworkin places freedom of speech in this class of special rights because the government cannot routinely constrain it in pursuit of otherwise legitimate goals. So, even speech that would gravely or severely undermine a government’s policy must not be abridged or restricted (Dworkin, 2013, 131; Laborde, 1259).

For Dworkin, freedom of religion should be considered as a general right. A general right to ethical independence gives religion the fitting and suitable amount of protection. Government, on her part, must not directly infract or violate religious activity or exercise, and should not appeal to the veracity or untruth of one religion or ethical view in striving for its objectives. In *Justice for Hedgehogs*, he also argues that human dignity provides the sincere justification for religious freedom (Dworkin, 2011. 376). A claim of dignity is a claim for independence from government on matters concerning ethical choice, that is, the right and the responsibility of every individual to

decide for himself or herself how to make something valuable in his or her life (Dworkin, 2011, 379).

Also, in *Is Democracy Possible Here?* Dworkin maintains that there is no specific right to freedom of religion, a special right reflecting the special importance of religion, but only a more general right to ethical independence in foundational matters, which protects people's responsibility to find value in their lives (Dworkin, 2006, 66). There is no basis, according to Dworkin, for considering religious freedom as limited to the protection of theistic religions. If the concept of religion is opened to non-godly religion, that is, if we break the link or connection between the idea of religion and God, there is no compelling distinction between religion and other human attitudes (Domingo, 2013, 372-373).

Religious freedom should be protected like other human attitudes in foundational matters (Dworkin, 2013, 151), and adherents of theistic religions should accept the requirements of ethical independence and equal concern in the leadership and political spheres/arenas. These other foundational matters, for him, include choices in intimate personal commitments, for example, marriage, reproduction and sexual orientation, as well as ethical and political ideal (Dworkin, 2011, 368-369). The list of ethical foundational matters is open to additions as long as we can identify other matters affecting the convictions that define personhood by which one creates value in one's life. An advantage in this manner of protecting religious freedom is that it does not require legislators to develop sharp legal definitions of religion in order to protect the relevant rights. For Dworkin, the general right to ethical independence fixes the boundary or restriction more precisely by forbidding government constraints in all foundational matters (Dworkin, 2013, 130-131; Domingo, 374).

In addition, granting special rights of exemptions from laws on religious grounds, for Dworkin, would aggravate or worsen the risk that the government would arbitrarily, and even willy-nilly, discriminate against non-religious citizens. Highlighting on this, he satisfactorily cites the highly significant and landmark judicial decision of the United States' Supreme Court in *Employment Division vs. Smith* 494 U.S. 872, (1990). Should members of a Native American Community be entitled to an exemption from drug laws because they use a hallucinogenic drug called peyote in their ritual ceremonies? Quite the contrary, says Dworkin. First, because the purpose of law is general, nondiscriminatory and is extended to protect all citizens against a substantial health risk and, second, because there is no principled way of differentiating between "religious" and other uses of drug (Dworkin, 2013, 125-126; Laborde, 1260). If there is no morally pertinent and applicable limit between religious and other kinds of attitudes towards life, it becomes impossible and even unimaginable to carve out a specific area of protection from the law. So, Dworkin avers that if religion cannot be circumscribed or limited to theism, "the priority of non-discriminatory government legislation over private religious exercise seems inevitable and right" (Dworkin, 2013, 137; Laborde, 1260).

In *Is Democracy Possible Here?* Dworkin strongly maintains that in a tolerant secular society there is no justifiable reason for according special value to religion as a phenomenon (Dworkin, 2006, 61). As opposed to John Rawls's political liberalism (Rawls, 2005, 458-462), Dworkin's theory does not restrict or limit the use of religious convictions or firmly held beliefs in public debate. He considers the Rawlsian strategy of insulating political convictions from religious convictions as wrong. The only limitation that Dworkin proposes is not to accept any kind of subordination: faith must be a matter of conviction from within, not force or compulsion from without (Dworkin, 66;

Anyaoah, 189). He stresses that people would have to take personal moral responsibility for ethical conviction, including religious ones, but the state or government may not express religious values in order to promote a definite or concrete religious culture (Dworkin, 77; Domingo, 2013).

Dworkin's *Religion Without God* is replete with passages that reveal awareness of its subject position in the culture wars. It is full of regret at the disagreements, splits and divides in different communities, countries and societies among the adherents of Abrahamic religions: Christians, Jews and Muslims; and between the religious and non-religious (Dworkin, 2013, 7). According to him, the brute divide between people of religion and people without religion is too crude and rude. Dworkin now rejects the idea of "special right to religion," restating his earlier argument in *Justice for Hedgehogs* that "the appeal to special rights and obligations, rooted in racial, ethnic, religious and linguistic connections has been and remains a powerful source of evil" (Dworkin, 2011, 324). Without any shadow of doubt, passages in that earlier book about people killing themselves; destroying, ruining and wrecking their communities in the name of some supposed group right or group destiny preview his conclusion in *Religion Without God* that "religious war is, like cancer, a curse in our species. People kill each other, around the world, because they hate each other's gods" (Dworkin, 2013, 7-8).

Dworkin's philosophical intervention in this "war" is that religious freedom should be anchored on a concept of atheistic religion or religious atheism, that is, religion without God, which he developed (Dworkin, 2013, 9). He recommends an understanding of religion that lies "deeper than God" (De Freitas, 2013, 142). Having been inspired by Albert Einstein's religious ideals in *The World as I See It* and by his good friend Thomas Nagel's approach to religious temperament in *Secular Philosophy and Religious Temperament*, Dworkin argues for the existence of a religious attitude that holds that human life and wonder at the beauty of the earth, humanity and universe have objective intrinsic value. This religious attitude is the ability and capacity of human beings to discover or recognize value in everything that exists (Domingo, 375; Einstein, 2007, 384-393; Nagel, 2010, 20; Dworkin, 2013, 10-11).

This religion of value is wholly and entirely independent of scientific explanation of the facts, and also of the existence of any god or gods. For him, the possibility of the existence of God does not make any difference to the objective truth of atheistic religious values (Dworkin, 2013, 10; Domingo, 375). This beauty of all objective inherent value plays a corresponding or similar role to that played by God as an uncaused cause in the Abrahamic religions: Christianity, Islam and Judaism. According to him, this religious attitude could be shared by both theists and atheists, and thus could ground or be used as a basis for a broader right to religious freedom, protecting both theistic and atheistic religions (Dworkin, 2013, 146; Domingo, 375). Millions of people who regard themselves as atheists have convictions and experiences similar to and just as deep and profound as those that believers regard as religious (Dworkin 2). His worry or concern is that the concept of religion has been generally perceived as limited to traditional religions. This motivates him to separate "God" from "religion," and this separation, he feels, would help in palliating the discord between the traditional religions and other beliefs. So, he postulates an understanding of religion that is more profound than God.

According to him, theists and what he calls "religious atheists" agree that human life has objective meaning or importance and that nature is not just a matter of fact but is itself sublime: something awesome, excellent, splendid, of intrinsic value, marvelous, and wonder. The upshot is an unnoticed common ground – a basis agreed to and accepted by all parties for reaching a mutual

understanding: “Theists share a commitment with some atheists that is more fundamental than what divides them, and that shared faith might, therefore, furnish a basis for improved communication between them” (Dworkin, 2013, 2). Therefore, atheists can accept theists as full partners in their most profound religious ambitions. Theists can also accept that atheists have the same grounds for moral and political conviction as they do (Koppelman, 2014, 1250-1251; Dworkin, 2013, 146-147). Dworkin’s legal and philosophical authority on this is the United States’ Supreme Court decision on *United States vs. Seeger*, 380 U.S 163 (1965), which proposed that an atheist’s system of beliefs may have a place in the life of its possessor collimate or parallel to that filled by the orthodox belief in God.

Finally, Dworkin evinces a hope, desire or expectation in *Religion Without God*, that if people come to realize that they share a fundamental religious impulse that has manifested itself in various convictions and emotions, “theists and atheists may come to accept that what they now take to be a wholly unbridgeable gap is only an esoteric kind of scientific disagreement with no moral or political implications” (Dworkin, 2013, 146-147; Koppelman, 1251; Anyaorah, 190). In this way, he proposes to re-tailor or reorient the understanding of religious freedom to include and accommodate “religious atheism” or “religion without God,” because for him, the category of religion is expansive or expandable. So, the core issue becomes “ethical independence,” which requires certain limits on governmental restriction of that freedom. Not only in *Religion Without God*, but also in *Life’s Dominion*, there is an emphasis that religious belief or conviction need not presuppose a god (Dworkin, 1993, 4).

RELIGION AND LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA

There are three recognized religions in Nigeria: Christianity, Islam and Traditional Religion. Christianity and Islam are currently predominant, therefore, exercise considerable influence and even control. Islam is numerically parallel to Christianity in Nigeria. Muslims are dominant in the northern states, and they are also important in the western states. The Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri, Nupe and a significant number of Yoruba people provide most of the country’s Muslim strength. Christianity has its main intensity or strength in the south-east and other ethnic groups in the south-south states, and a number synchronous to that of Muslims in the Middle-Belt and the Yoruba south-west. On the other hand, The Traditional Religions have their main strength in the central plateau. The following people are estimated/guessed to be more than 80% traditionalists: “Afo, Ankwe, Bunu, Chakwai, Daka, Dibo, Jerawa, Jukun, Kadara, Lungu, Mumuye, Ngamo, Shanga, Vere, and Wargawa” (Barrett, Kurian & Johnson, *The World Christian Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, 2005, 550; Anyaorah, 190). Just like in other parts of Africa, Nigeria traditional religions place special significance or importance on ancestral spirits and magical practices, while keeping in their minds the idea of a Supreme Being.

Irrespective of Nigerian secular constitution, religion has become increasingly necessary in the leadership and public spheres on account of the political emancipation and the level of autonomy granted to the state government in the federal system of the Nigerian constitution. Studies have revealed that relationships between the State and Christian/Muslim organizations are ambivalent, uncertain and even doubtful on many occasions: while the two religions provide moral and spiritual guidelines for groups and people to coherently and intelligently articulate and enunciate their demands and critiques of the State, they also challenge institutions provided by the state. The

Muslims' critique of the secular legal system led to the introduction of Shariah Law in some core Muslim states. From another point of view, the Christians' constant and urgent request for a re-privatization of erstwhile or one-time Christian mission schools that are currently under the state management might revitalize Muslim bad situation in the education sector (Anyaorah, 191).

Meanwhile, the recent killing of many Christians in their homes, churches and farmlands in the Middle-Belt by Islamic extremists and Fulani herdsmen, especially in Benue State, and the inability to hold any culprit responsible by the federal government that controls the nation's main security forces, is what beats the imagination of many Christians not only in Nigeria, but also beyond the African continent. Before the end of 2025, the United States government promised to step in to protect their brethren in the Christian faith. Furthermore, the fact that the incumbent Nigerian President and his Vice are practicing Muslims in a multi-religious nation like Nigeria, appears to give credence to the allegations of the marginalization of Christians in the country. However, the Nigerian government has vehemently denied the allegations, pointing out that both Christians and Muslims are susceptible to attack in the very volatile regions.

In addition, the critique of the failure of the Nigerian government/leadership to offer good welfare services to its citizens, even as the nation's economy worsens; the prices of commodities in markets skyrocket; and the nation's legal tender devalues without missing a day, is the uniting factor that binds the two religious groups together. This actually indicates the obvious fact that religious groups themselves can be very crucial and decisive participants in a national dialogue with regard to the future of the country. What is more, the frequent meetings between the state and religious organizations have simplified the process of peaceful negotiation and dialogue. Very unfortunately, the uneven and unparalleled integration of religious groups into leadership positions in the Nigerian political system has often generated and escalated religious rivalry at both the federal and state levels (Anyaorah, 191). Almost in every Nigerian state, politics within each of these religions: Anglicanism, Catholicism and so on among the Christians; and Shi-'ahs and Sunnis among the Muslims, does immeasurable injury to good leadership spirit.

REVISITING DWORKIN'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

In *Religion Without God*, Dworkin contends that "religion is deeper than God" (Dworkin, 2013, 1). It is a deep distinct and comprehensive worldview: it holds that inherent objective value permeates everything. According to him, theism is just one possible manifestation and public demonstration of this worldview. He maintains that the moral ideals necessary to live a good life are independent of any God or gods. People's recognition and acknowledgement of objective values, he points out, must be prior to anything they say about God. It is certainly prior to any role that divine command or example can play about ethics. Dworkin seems to concord with Immanuel Kant who argues that "even the Holy One of the Gospel must first be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before He is recognized as such" (Kant, 1994, 21). According to him, if a religious attitude lies at the foundation of ethics, no doubt, it must be religion without God (Dworkin, 2013, 1).

At this juncture, Dworkin's argument that religion is deeper than God cannot be accepted as it stands. Rather, God is very much and extremely deeper than religion. God is more profound, unfathomable and bottomless than any religion would portray Him. He is the ineffable God. His

name is too sacred to even be uttered or described. Religion, in the first place, is God's gift to man to come close to Him from whom man has his entire being. Meanwhile, according to Rafael Domingo, the key to understanding Dworkin's proposition is the 'unity of value,' which concentrates or holds attention on the strong connection between ethics and morality, that is, between the ethical 'I' and the moral 'we'. So, his main stress on the "unity of value" is totally incomplete because it is not founded on the "unity of person," as religion is with reference to some transcendent anchor (Domingo, 2013, 389).

Domingo avers that Dworkin limits the transcendent dimension of the human person to the ethical 'I,' keeping away from any political limitation on religion, but also denying religion as a social phenomenon, that is, as a 'we' phenomenon. The unity of value should be an expression, manifestation, and reflection of the integrated unity of the person. An absolute, perfect and whole unity of value is accomplishable only from the unity of the person (Domingo, 389; Anyaorah, 191). So, the *terminus a quo* - starting point of a proper understanding of religious freedom is neither the idea of value nor even the idea of religion, freedom or right; rather, it is the human person, as a special, unique, peculiar, free, moral, ethical, legal and religious being (Anyaorah, 191).

Therefore, the unity of the person compatibly and pleasantly blends and integrates the three basic and fundamental dimensions of the human person: (1) the individual, (2) the social, and (3) the transcendent. The individual dimension refers to the person as a self, 'I'. The social dimension regards or makes reference to the person in relation with other persons, 'we'. Finally, the transcendent evolves when a person comprehends and adopts the greatest and crowning sense of his or her own life, aware of his or her creaturely finite human condition and seeking the divine and ultimate plan of the creator. Having a relationship with the divine is one meaningful and significant dimension of living well, or having a successful life. On this, Domingo adds, "By starting from the unity of the person, it is easier to achieve the unity of value. However, Dworkin took the opposite path: he turned his theory of the unity of value into his own atheistic religion protected by his own doctrine of religious freedom" (Domingo, 392; De Freitas, 150) and by so doing, he ends up being dogmatic.

In religious interpretations of morality, "the ultimate fulfillment" of such morality "is thought to inhere in a loving relationship with God Himself," who is a Friend with whom it is a supreme joy to be (Smith, 2014, 1340-1341). Furthermore, living a life that is in accordance with the commandments of God or a personal god is actually what living a successful life means for almost all religious believers around the world, especially believers in Abrahamic religions: Christians, Jews and Muslims. After all, the content of having a successful life is provided or made available by different religious teachings themselves. For instance, the Bible says: "Honour your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the Lord your God has given you (*Deut.*, 5: 16). Also, where it says: "in their hearts humans plans their course, but the Lord establishes their steps" (*Prov.*, 16:9).

Therefore, without at least acknowledging or admitting the possibility of the existence of God, it is not possible to open the doors to this dimension. The individual dimension is supported by individual freedom, the social dimension by political freedom and the transcendent dimension by religious freedom (Domingo, 389). So, Dworkin's separation or disaggregation of the religious attitude from God or a personal god may turn out to be his *Achilles' heel*— serious weak point, and an obstacle or impediment for many people towards accepting his arguments. *Religion Without*

God is apparently full of regret at the divide and disagreements between the religious and the non-religious, between Christians and Muslims; and between Jews and Muslims. Dworkin attempts to bridge that divide through the theory of religious atheism or religion without God. Unfortunately, he is oblivious of the fact that the transcendent dimension of the human person, as already mentioned, rightly evolves when a person recognizes and adopts the ultimate sense of his life and searching for the divine plan of the creator who is the beginning and end of his/her entire existence. (Anyaorah, 192)..

In a multi-religious and multi-ethnic country like Nigeria and many other nations in Sub-Saharan Africa, that need good governance, good laws and order in order to bring the people together for peaceful co-existence, genuine openness to transcendence is a *sine qua non*. This openness to transcendence, especially in Nigeria, should be ordered in accordance with legal justification, procedures and standards to prevent people who are religious extremists going into leadership positions or being among the followers. This is because religion strengthens law by enlightening and shedding light on the reasons for protecting human rights and establishing links of solidarity among human beings and political communities. The law in turn has to protect religion because religion is an expression of human dignity; and by so doing, the law protects itself. Actually, “the province of religion is different from the province of law, but they converge and have to act in harmony according to the unity of the person” (Domingo, 384).

Therefore, Dworkin’s concept of ‘religion without God’ should not be used as a model or philosophical intervention to solve the problem of religious conflicts in Nigeria and anywhere. Rather, Nigerians should appreciate one another’s religion, always conscious of the fact that “God is deeper than religion;” unlike Dworkin’s argument that “religion is deeper than God.” Also, Nigerians should always bear in their minds the fact that religion is not an end, but a means of going close to God, and that no religion has the exclusive control and possession of truth. Once it is well understood from this perspective, Nigerians, and indeed people of every other nation, will equally acknowledge the importance of what is called “religious/devout leadership theory.” True religious and devout leadership is the attitudes, behaviours and values necessary to intrinsically motivate oneself and others to have a sense of religious survival through calling and membership (Fry, 2003, 698-699; Anyaorah, 192). Again, for Dworkin, the political community should not dictate ethical convictions to society’s members, but his demand of a right to ethical independence is in itself a dictate of an ethical conviction which is, according to him, to be enforced upon citizens and societies (De Freitas, 150).

Most importantly, both Dworkin’s philosophy of religion needs to imbibe some crucial religious values for harmonious relationships and leadership success. As already pointed out, true religious values like honesty, humility and integrity have been found over and over again to be the defining or central elements of leadership success. For instance, personal integrity has been shown to be the most important element for engendering the admiration, respect and trust of followers. Also, good religious teachings encourage and urge everyone especially leaders to adopt the practice of approaching other people with compassion and love, demonstrating respect for other people’s values, fair treatment of others, expressing caring and concern, listening attentively and responsively, and appreciating the contributions and gifts of other people (Reave, 2005, 656-657). Unfortunately, Dworkin never indicated whether his atheistic religion or religion independent of God will encourage or urge its adherents to imbibe the above-mentioned essential religious values for harmonious living in the society.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study has argued that Dworkin's concept of "religion without God" will not help matters, even in countries with religious crisis and weak leadership. It will even compound and heighten the human problems because man is a religious being. Generally, there is a way people regard atheists, people who do not believe in the existence of God, of course not positively. David Hume (1711-1776), for example, was a great Scottish philosopher. Destined to become a leading figure in the British empiricist tradition of philosophy, Hume was from an early age attracted to the study of philosophy and history. However, he lost so many opportunities because he was an atheist. He failed to gain the chair of moral philosophy at the University of Edinburgh in 1744, on account of charges of atheism. Again, in 1751, he applied for the chair of logic at the University of Glasgow, previously held by Adams Smith, unfortunately, he was again rejected (Workman, *The New Caxton Encyclopedia*, Vol. 10, 1967, 3125; "Hume," *Gale Encyclopedia of American Law*, Vol. 5, 2010, 336).

Religion is necessary for successful relationships and leadership in the society. It makes someone trustworthy because he has already put his own trust in a Supreme Being, unless the person proves otherwise. Nigerians should appreciate one another's religion, recognizing that God is deeper than religion. For Nigeria, this study also advocates true religious/devout leaders with crucial religious values for leadership success. As already pointed out, the religious values of integrity, honesty and humility, and the religious practices of treating others with fairness and respect, expressing caring and concern, appreciating others, listening attentively and responsively have all been linked to having positive effects for individuals and groups, societies and States. They actually cause leaders to be judged as more effective by their contemporaries, followers and people put under their care, and they lead to enhanced performance (Anyaorah, 193).

Finally, this study has argued, unlike Dworkin, that as long as religion is not capricious, impulsive, whimsical and irrational, it should have a place in the public sphere, endorsed by the state. So, it is justifiable and obtainable to treat religion as special in leadership and politics. This is the acknowledged legal practice in most States. Not only in Islamic States like Afghanistan, Bahrain, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen; Buddhist States like Cambodia, Sri Lanka or Thailand; or a Jewish State like Israel; but also, in Christian States like all the countries in the South American continent and most countries in Europe (Anyaorah, 193). In fact, the original 1853 Argentine Constitution included a clause stipulating or specifying that the President and Vice President of Argentina had to be members of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church. Spain was the first and only foreign nation to establish a colony in Argentina; they equally established their religious beliefs there. Nevertheless, this requirement was removed in late constitutional reforms, showing evidence of religious freedom and separation between the state and the church. In the same manner, in a multi-religious State like Nigeria, no religion should be deemed superior or inferior to the other. None should be enforced or State sanctioned. No particular religion should be given a pride of place over others in leadership and political arenas because no religion has the monopoly of truth. Meanwhile, exhibiting atheistic tendencies – rejecting any belief in God or gods, may suggest that someone is obstinate in his/her own ideas and self-opinionated.

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