

TRENDS IN THE SHATTERED MICROCOSM OF RELIGIOUS CHANGE IN AFRICA

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Abstract

The religious change in Africa, which is movement from African traditional religion to Christianity and Islam, has been explained by many scholars through pointing out one factor or the other as responsible for the change of faith or religion. Some argued on the side of non-religious factors as the cause of the religious change found in Africa, while some argued on the religious factors as the main cause of the change. The shattered microcosm of Trimingham attributed the movement of religious change to the collapse of traditional structures and African world views. The African structures that originally are based on rural or tribal structures and thrive on rural subsistence economies were shattered with the sudden but steady impact of Western civilization which came in form of colonial subjugation, technological advancement, industrial economies and education. This precipitated the massive change or movement from African traditional religion to the two world religions that invaded the African soil. In this write up, we are going to trace the trends and the implications found in this theory of religious change as explained by Trimingham and what has become of religious change today in Africa whether the change is real change in terms of conversion or change of cults.

Introduction

After the invasion of Africa by the colonial masters with their own world view, technology advancement, culture and religion, so many changes began to take place in the lives of the Africans, their world view started changing, and this of course changed their attitudes to life in general. The structures of African society began to undergo a foundational change by responding to the new structures coming into contact with it. This contact with the incoming religions/cultures produced a lot of changes in all spheres of African structures. The religious change that took place in Africa permeates every aspect of their lives, for Africans are by nature religious. Religion, again, defines everything Africans do or perform, that is why the maxim “to be an Africa is to be religious” holds true. Just like other world views, African world view has adaptive potentials which respond to the impulses of change and yet retain strongly and loosely its culture and vitality, as case may be (Metuh, 1985).

The tide of religious change in the last years in Africa assumed a form of phenomenal change or dimension without much change in the content of the African world view. Hence, we found out that many Africans are reversing back to their original religion, though with new structures and world view added to it. This is against the backdrop of the view that African gods are on retreat and the collapse of pagandom is imminent. The wind of change in the religious sphere in Africa was so great that many predicted its collapse in a matter of time. But the tide of change now is completely opposite of what took place years back; the gods are coming back with great force and in various ways and means. This necessitated the search for new terms or explanation suitable among the scholars in describing the new religion found in Africa which will accommodate the ingredients of African religion and ingredients of new religions (Christianity and Islam) and still remain the true African religion, with its culture embedded in it tightly and loosely, as the case may be.

Trimingham (1955) x-rayed the cause of religious change in Africa which is the main focus of this write-up. The views or notions of Trimingham on religious change many years ago will be discussed in relation to the religious change that is taking place today in the African society. Obviously, time and tide have changed greatly and structures in the society have become strong and complex. One discovers that the process of religious change examined or discussed by scholars in various fora tend to emphasize either the continuity or discontinuity of religious and cultural elements. Trimingham's theoretical assumption is based on socio-structural factors which emphasize more of non-religious factors as the cause of religious change in Africa. According to Metuh (1985), Trimingham ascribed the large scale of religious changes during the colonial and post-colonial periods to the collapse of structures of traditional societies and traditional religious system to which they were closely knitted.

The collapse of traditional African society started crumbling in the face of the experience or contact with the macrocosmic society which is not for clan or tribal society. Hence, for microcosm of village to survive in the realm of bigger structural society, there must be some adaptation in itself for its continuous existence in the society. This necessitated change in the traditional society in the way things are being done and carried out for its survival. The way of worship, the habit of eating, agricultural production, economic change, informal education to formal education, manner of addressing and mode of dressing, means of transportation and so on, all changed. These changes took place with the level of macrocosm that existed in or influenced the tribal society of the African society.

This write-up again will focus more on the implications or trends being generated by Trimingham theory of religious change with regard to Igbo/ African world. Attempt will be made to see if the destroyed microcosmic structure was completely destroyed, or it is a question of continued survival in another form. The widely accepted

view from different quarters concerning African traditional religion is that its collapse is imminent and its gods are on retreat, either to come back in full force or remain incommunicado or remain as non-performing gods. This is attested to recently by the destruction of Indian gods by some Indian natives because of the inability of their gods to protect or care for the natives during the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic.

The Theory of Shattered Microcosm

The theory of shattered microcosm by Trimingham (1955) tried to explain the religious change that took place in Africa many years ago. According to Trimingham, the movement from traditional religion to Christianity and Islam resulted from the collapse of the structures of African traditional worldviews and African traditional societies. Ideally, the African traditional worldviews and its structures are bound up with their social, cultural and religious structures. None is separated from each other. This, without being told, led to the collapse of the entire system and structure, when attacked by external forces or influenced by macrocosmic culture. The theory of shattered microcosm dealt with the African world views as it was before or during its contact with the Christian and European cultures. Hence, there will be some gap or lacuna in applying the theory of shattered macrocosm while describing or explaining the religious change that is taking place in the African world today (Metuh, 1999).

Using the Igbo worldview for example, which is a microcosm in African worldview, the underlying mentality and philosophy of Igbo worldview is based on the principle that every effect must have a cause. According to Onuh (1992), one finds this principle operating in every system of life of people in Africa. Accidents have no place in the mentality of Africans because every effect is traceable to a cause. Metuh (1999) described the African universe as the one fluid, coherent unit which is in continuous interaction. On this continuous interaction found in African universe, Uchendu (1965) affirmed earlier that:

... the Igbo world is a real one in every respect. There is the world of man, peopled by all created beings and things both animate and inanimate. The spirit world is the abode of the creator, the deities, the disembodied and malignant spirits, and the ancestral spirits. It is the future abode of the living after their death. There is a constant interaction between the world of man and the world of the dead; the visible and the invisible forces. (pp. 11-12).

The above African worldviews and their structures contained therein, enumerated by some scholars, were shattered with the coming of a higher and stronger culture, according to Trimingham (1999). According to him, the sudden impact of Western technological advancement and civilization, industrial economy and formal education dominated and upset the social structures of African societies. The African economy and structures originally were based on tribal structures and subsistence economies. According to Afigbo (1981), a detailed study reveals that the pre-colonial African society was strikingly variegated; this was so, not only in the area of language where almost every autonomous society evolved its own dialect, but also in the spheres of political, economic and social institutions. This implies that each society or village group has its own economy which they were known to thrive on. Hence, this economic activity by which each society or group is known played an important role in the survival of the Africans as a society and in determining the character and quality of their culture, religion and cosmology.

But the Western industrial economy in its macrocosmic nature, with its structures, overturned the economic foundations of the Africans, which according to Afigbo (1981) has two sides of economic foundations. The first deals with the economic sub-structure on which the African society rested. The second economic foundation

determines the character of each African society and culture. These economic foundations dwindled suddenly and continuously in the face of the impact of Western civilization and globalization. This collapse certainly started taking place because African traditional religions, according to Metuh (1987), are so bound up with their social structures that the collapse of one institution necessitated the collapse of the other ones, even that of the religious life. Hence Trimingham (cited by Metuh, 1987) concludes that “ the indigenous religions, being primarily local and ethnic , have no future in their organized forms, and the religious future of the African lies between Christianity and Islam, on the one hand, and secularism on the other”(p.12).

From the above, it is obvious that Trimingham (1955) regarded the African traditional religion as being ethnic and local in the sense that it is meant to service a section of African society or group of people. This view may negate the African spirit or view that Africans carry their religion wherever they go or in whatever they do. For Trimingham (1959) argued that:

Village religion is serviceable only within the circumscribed bounds of village life. When horizons were widened, its limitations were felt, and this led many to adopt either Islam or Christianity parallel to those aspects of the old religions which are still serviceable. (p. 21).

Trimingham may have erred from the above quotation or argument, for religion is not something that is there as an object or machine used for production, as the case may be. Rather, traditional religion is a way of life of Africans which has been with them for generations wherever they go, or whatever they do, they go with it, and in it they have lived and solved their existential problems from time immemorial. Again, Horton (1971), in his explanation of religious change in Africa, was able to cast or equate African traditional religion as one of the world religions. Recent statistics shows that

adherents of African traditional religion are growing and deepening since the beginning of 20th century. The influence of African traditional religion continues consciously and unconsciously among many Christians, Muslims and other religions of the world. Even new religious movements have taken over African traditional religious beliefs and moral values (Kanu, 2015).

On the issue of proliferation of churches (that is Afro-Christian churches) in the African soil, Trimingham (cited by Metuh, 1987) was of the opinion that it was caused by two major factors, namely; firstly due to intolerance of missionary Christianity, and secondly, the tendency of new converts to introduce the elements of their own traditional religion into Christianity, while the Islamic religion was more tolerant than Christianity in its syncretic tendencies or practices. The refusal of Christianity to tolerate mixing with other religions led to the formation of breakaway groups or sects in Christianity. Horton (1971), just like Trimingham, explained that the proliferation of independent churches in Africa can be seen in the roles the world religions played in Africa as catalysts. Though the Christian religion was reluctant to or never played the role of a catalyst, the Islamic religion accepted the role of a catalyst entirely. Horton argued that:

The (intellectualist) theory enables us to understand the rather differential institutional histories of Islam and Christianity in Africa. As I have said, it casts the world religions the role of catalysts; and it seems to me that the fates of these religions and institutional bodies are very much determined by the extent of their willingness to accept this role. During the more recent part of its African career, Islam seems to have been fairly content with its catalytic role. It has been tolerant in allowing the individual to make his own particular selection from official doctrines. It has accepted that those who come to the mosque form a continuum rather than a band of total converts; and it does

not nag excessively at those who lie towards the pagan end of the continuum....Missionary Christianity, on the hand, has never been content to play catalyst. It has been rigid in its insistence on the individual's total acceptance official doctrines. Hence the orthodox churches find them continually discomfited within the walls of the churches. The result is the proliferation of dissenting breakaway sects that Peel and others have described so vividly. (pp. 104-105).

From the above argument, it shows that Trimingham (1955) is correct even in this age of globalization. For Christian religion has not come up on the term or the means to integrate African cultures or values into Christian values, hence one keeps hearing the terms like Christianization, adaptation, Africanization, inculturation and so on. But the Muslim religion accepted the African values.

For Trimingham, conversion in Africa was necessitated by the perceived condition of African traditional religion, having come in contact with the world religions and their widely advanced values. Hence, according to Metuh (1985), the adherents of African traditional religion turned to Islam and Christianity as a convenient means of coping and surviving the widely changed situation in and outside the African soil. However, the shattered microcosm theory underscored and admitted the fact that the average African converts (if not all) retained their traditional beliefs and values, but in a changed form or condition. It is not a doubting fact that religious change took place in Africa, but the real and disturbing question or situation remains: whether that can be called a conversion. From the above analysis, one can infer that Trimingham took conversion to mean a religious change that involved African traditionalists moving from traditional religion to any of the world religions.

Certainly, nobody can dispute the fact that the rapid social, economic, political and religious change that took place in Africa was

tremendous, and it shattered the microcosmic structures of African traditional society, upon which it has been surviving for years. Hence, the different explanations or theories of religious change tend to emphasize or portray the continuity or discontinuity of traditional values or beliefs, depending on theoretical assumptions. On the normal parlance, some talk of routing of African gods and collapse of traditional beliefs or fall of pagandom (Metuh, 1985).

The Shattered Microcosm: Its Trends and Implications

Almost all the theories of religious change emphasize that religion as a system of beliefs does not really go into extinction. This implies that not all aspects of religion or culture are thrown away or shed out while undergoing a change or transformation. Certain aspects of culture or religion are lost or gained; some change significantly for better, while some others slide into extinction because of their negative impacts in the society like human sacrifice. African worldviews, on the other hand, have adaptive potentials which respond to the impulses of change and yet hold reasonably some aspects of their own culture or religion. However, religious change, like conversion, according to Metuh (1985), is a continuous process and complex in nature, which cannot be explained or happen in a straight way. The causes of religious change vary greatly from one factor to many factors, though many theories of conversion tend to point or claim that one factor can be the cause of religious change.

Fisher (1973) made different explanations on the term “conversion” and went ahead to differentiate it with adhesion, which is normally taken as conversion itself. For him “conversion is the deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety to another, a turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right”(p.33). And he described adhesion as people who stood with one foot on either side of the fence, adopting the new worships as useful supplements. This seems to be agreeable with Horton’s (1971) explanation on conversion to be

responses given by members of different socio-economic categories confronted with Islam or Christianity at a particular time or space. Explaining further, Metuh (1985) gave the different senses in which the term “conversion” can be used. Its meaning may range from mere change of membership (affiliation) to change of conviction. This religious change could be a change of affiliation from traditional religion to a mission church, or from a mission church to an independent African church, or going back again to African traditional religion, which is what is happening in the religious circle of African people.

One may ask: what are the possible implications of this religious change as explained by Trimingham in the African society? And the trends seen in the society are because of religious change or combining of cults being carried out by different religions in the Africa. For example, with the collapse of African worldviews and their structures in the face of Western advancement and colonial domination, which according to Trimingham (1955) resulted in the mass movement of traditional votaries from African traditional religion to world religions, has this movement affected the life of Africans positively or negatively? Or has it resulted in the collapse of African religion, as many scholars predicted? It is obvious that Trimingham may have pointed out what happened to African traditional religion through his theory, but Metuh (1999) pointed out that world views of people change from time to time, so it is imperative to look at what has changed from the African worldviews from the time of colonial masters to post-colonial masters till the present age (globalization age) in Africa with regard to religious change.

African traditional religion did not collapse, but some changes took place for its sustainability and development. One of the negative effects of religious change that took place in Africa is the proliferation of churches among the Africans. Worshipping places (churches) are seen everywhere, yet morality is very low in the society. However,

Trimingham (1955) attributed this phenomenon to the intolerance of missionary Christianity, and the tendency of new converts to introduce the elements of their own traditional religion into Christianity. Obviously, things have gone weird in this regard. Opening of churches now is a way of making money for oneself and not for building up of morality among the people and avoidance of taboo, which African traditional religion propagated and maintained initially. This scramble or zeal for opening of churches dealt a death blow on the African religion and values, which is originally introduced or caused by early missionaries. Kalu (1980) observed that even the early missionaries themselves considered the competition by the various evangelical bodies to be undignified and wasteful. Kalu (1980) observed that:

...there was a cut-throat competition between Anglicans, Methodist and the African Independent Churches. The last two bodies contained men who had broken away from the Anglicans to protest against the shabby treatment they had received from the younger generation of white missionaries who had succeeded Bishop Crowther. Thus, in the west both African and missionary Church leaders sometimes paid lip service to the need for cooperation and unity, but never tried to implement it. (p. 341).

This is one of the disadvantages of missionary work in Africa; the missionaries, while scrambling for members or new converts, planted a seed of discord or disunity in the African soil and structure which were once stable for the Africans. This has led to all sources of atrocities with regard to low level of morality and building of a just society among the Africans. From the destruction of the structures and worldviews of African people, it is obvious that a new type of God has

been introduced in Africa which is strange to the Africans. Idowu (cited by Kalu, 1980) argued that:

It is now obvious that by a misguided purpose, a completely new God who had had nothing to do with the past of African was introduced to her peoples. Thus, there was no proper foundation laid for the bridge built between the old and the new; the church has in consequence been speaking to Africans in strange tongues because there was no adequate communication. (p. 333).

Here again, we see the predicament in which the churches in Africa found themselves, for the missionaries introduced to us a church that is not coordinated, without theology that will suit the Africans, without its own liturgy, without policy, and without any background. It is a serious problem, considering the effort that is being made today by African theologians to Africanize, indigenize or acculturate African values and religions with new ones that came in contact with it. It is true and certain that Christian and Muslim religions have spread enormously in Africa, yet the resultant effect is religion that is weak, money-oriented preachers and morally deficient preaching. Hence, in many quarters, there is call for moratorium so that the churches in Africa can organize themselves and stamp their feet in the African soil. Concerning the above view, Kalu (1975) observed that:

Recently the cry has become more strident. Some are suggesting a drastic surgical operation, such as a complete moratorium. Others are advocating a range of ecumenical programmes including organic unity. It is imperative that Christians learn to understand again the culture of Africa before they can succeed. This does not imply advocating the romanticisation of the African tradition, as Camera Laye did in African child. But it does imply that Christianity must be traditionalized in African culture in such a way that

the dead wood in both will be destroyed, thereby enabling a new form to emerge. (p. 24).

Again, the African traditional religion, which is known not to proselytize, has today changed from that culture to membership drive. Describing the nature of African traditional religion, Awolalu (1976) said that:

It is largely written in the people's myths and folktales, in their songs and dances, in their liturgies and shrines and in their proverbs and pithy sayings. It is a religion whose historical founder is neither known nor worshipped. It is a religion that has no zeal for membership drive, yet it offers persistent fascination for Africans, young and old. (p. 26)

This has largely influenced the African society morally, as we mentioned earlier, for the pastors or overseers of a particular church or domination find it hard to preach the gospel as their master did in the scriptures. Many of the pastors or founders are afraid to lose their congregation who probably are seen to finance the church projects or that enrich their personal pockets through offering or paying of tithes. Hence, this accounts for many religious houses seen everywhere in the African society, yet morally the society is full of kidnapping, banditry, scamming, and corruption of different types abound in the governmental and private offices. This was not the case in African traditional religion before the coming of Europeans and their religion. The Africans have moral codes and they were afraid of going against these moral codes, for the African gods or spirits will descend heavily on the defaulters. Even when the defaulters are not seen immediately, the ancestors will indicate through evil events that are bound to take place in the community concerned.

Still on the proliferation of churches in every nook and cranny of the African societies, the identity of the person who proclaimed himself or herself as a prophet or pastor is not known, unlike in the traditional religion of Africa where one knows and confirms who is a *dibia aja*. But today everyone calls himself or herself a priest because he/she founded a church. Obiora (1998), in describing the above issue or crisis, listed some of these names which they call themselves or they are known for, as thus:

...self-appointed super priests, hanky-panky pastors, arch-deacons, spurious prophets, obnoxious and nefarious prophetesses, self-called senior apostles, ragtag supreme Evangelists, unschooled rabbis, mercenary and sham preachers, self-proclaimed messiahs, self-declared archbishops, self-ordained patriarchs, self-consecrated men of God, overnight venerable and levites, ...all invoking and claiming to be mandated and sent by Christ. (p. 14).

These proprietors of the spurious churches, according to Obiora, most times claim divine authenticity, divine mandate directly from God, and to be presenting a better and purified version of religion. One will immediately ask if all these prophets and self-made evangelists are factually and really sent by God? Certainly, the Jesus Christ they are preaching or claiming to represent came as an obedient and poor servant of God, which are virtues lacking in them.

Another trend found among these proprietors of churches is affluent or luxurious way of living which all the time questions whom they are representing. The richest pastors in the world came mostly from Africa; many of them are richer than kings and queens, politicians, and some of them own the most expensive private jets, houses, cars, with chains of businesses around the world. This again negates the real priesthood in African traditional religion, whereby most of their

functions as priests of deities do not give them so much wealth, and in some cases most of their functions are done to serve rather than to gain wealth. The Jesus Christ of Christianity equally had nothing while on earth; even the common ass, that beast of burden on which he sat on that memorable day He entered Jerusalem in style, belonged to whom nobody knows, but certainly not to Him (Obiora, 1998).

Onyeachonam (2021) listed top ten richest pastors in Africa as of January, 2021, the jets, cars they drive, and their net worth. The first among them is Alph Luka, with an estimated net worth of \$1 Billion. He is the founder and pastor of Alleluia Ministries International in South Africa which he founded in 2002. For now, he is believed to be the richest pastor in Africa. Bishop David Oyedepo, with an estimated net worth of \$150 Million, is the founder and lead pastor of the Living Faith Church, popularly known as Winners Chapel. Shepherd Bushiri is another top African pastor from Malawi, with an estimated net worth of \$150 million. He is a prophet and convener of the Enlightened Christian Gathering (ECG), with its headquarters in South Africa. Bishop Ayo Ortisejafor followed the list with an estimated net worth of \$120 million. He is the leader and founder of the Word of Life Bible Church, with headquarters in Warri, Nigeria. Pastor E. A. Adeboye is among the richest pastors in Africa. A mathematician turned preacher, with an estimated net worth of \$65 million. He ascended the throne as the lead man of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, after the death of his predecessor. Uebert Angel, another top pastor in Africa, with estimated net worth of \$60 Million, is a founder and senior pastor of the Good News Church, formerly Spirit Embassy, with headquarters in the United Kingdom. He founded the church in 2007. Chris Oyakhilome, with an estimated net worth of \$50 million, is another top-ranking pastor in Africa. He founded his ministry, Love World Incorporated, popularly called Christ Embassy, as an undergraduate with a healing school. There are other pastors that made up the list, but there is serious contention

about who is greater than the other in terms of Christian followers and their net worth.

Another brand of trend being generated by the proliferation of churches in Africa is the culture of superstition and witchcraft allegations. These have been among the African traditional religion, but they have taken another dimension these days when the structures of African traditional religion have collapsed considerably. There are many reasons to the above situation which can range from social to economic failures in the life of the African people. The modern day-to-day pastors in African soil hide under these difficult conditions to manipulate people in the name of religion or that witches are after them. This, of course, heightened the travails of the people or individuals concerned. Agazue (2015) clearly states that:

Belief in witchcraft is endemic. The common believe that people can become witches and then take the form of animals so that they can confront their enemies (or whoever they feel like attacking) is not new; it is as old as African indigenous religion itself. Further, the belief is not restricted to Africa, if one considers the witchcraft eras in early modern Europe and America. However unlike in Western society where civilization, modernization, academia and science have largely eroded superstition such beliefs are currently being reinforced in Africa by the exorcism merchants prophesying that witches are responsible for illness, accidents, poverty, infertility, relationship problems and many more. (p. 24).

Almost everything happening to someone in the African society is termed to be ill-will of his or her enemies. Even when it is obvious that the event or condition is purely accident of some nature, the new African money-making preachers will call it something else to deceive their followers. Through this way, the preacher knows that Africans

are to their worldviews. Instead of teaching them properly, he continues to propagate the culture of superstition and witchcraft to his congregation. With the allegations of being termed a witch, what follows is the persecution by the people or sometimes by the community concerned. This can be in form of ex-communication and beating till death, unless the person agreed to the allegations leveled against him or her. Sometimes, one is compelled to take an oath in a famous deity or shrine of the accuser's choice. One notable lesson to be learned is that witch-hunting arises from a culture of superstition being propagated by the modern-day self-acclaimed preachers.

The pastoring job pays greatly in Africa, hence many men and women abandon their jobs or occupations to become pastors or healers. Going further, another trend that is coming with a great force is making money through money rituals. Some religio-commercial pastors, through their tactic or magic, have convinced most Africans that they can be rich overnight through performing some rituals with animals or sometimes with human body parts. This led to missing body parts of people in the African society where it is taboo to kill somebody. The sacrifice is sometimes done near the rivers or high mountains where no one can find them, with blood as means of cleaning the age-long poverty that has been blocking the clients from enjoying their lives. This superstitious or widespread paranoiac belief in ritual killings enables the fake pastors to be wealthy every day, because they are having clients who want to be rich overnight, in a culture where hard work is known to be a virtue.

There are many ugly situations or trends being generated by this proliferation of churches in the modern African society; the worst of it all is that any attempt to intervene in the situation by enlightened persons or groups in the society to caution those who are being captivated or exploited is met with strong opposition or resistance by adherents whose absolute trust is in these pastors. This situation is

growing every day in different ways and forms which means that the end is not in sight.

Suggestions and Conclusion

Trimingham has analyzed to some extent the religious change that took place in Africa, in which he explained, among other things, that the African society was invaded by two world religions with their technological advancements. This led to mass exodus of African people to another religion. For the African religion was only serviceable for a tribal or ethnic society, where it worked efficiently but collapsed when faced by a wider society. Hence, there comes the need to adopt or reinforce its worldview in order to continue in existence. Again, Trimingham pointed out the reason for the proliferation of Afro-churches in the African soil, which is common and keeps multiplying daily, yet its values or morals are not felt in the African society. Rather, what everyone is seeing is the adverse effect, as the society is full of disorder and polluted with all kinds of evil. The issue at hand is how we can curb this menace going on in the society in the form of religion.

Proliferation of churches more than anything else (not even political or economic problems in Africa) has done a great harm to the African worldviews and African traditional structures and continues to erode and destroy the values in traditional African settings. This is also highlighted by Anyaegbu (2020) who noted that Pentecostalism as practiced in Africa has continued to erode solid traditional Christian values. The more traditional Christian authorities look on, the more they apparently felt dumb-founded about the situation at hand. Going further, Anyaegbu stated that one of the major reasons why proliferation of churches is going on with their false messages of hope and prosperity gospel is because there is failure of elementary services by the government. He states that:

If majority of Nigerians (Africans) are properly educated, they would resist anybody

who would try to intellectually deceive them into the state of non-resistance. Unfortunately, it would take a long way before our educational institution becomes what it should be. Yes all the other areas of service should be upgraded if we are to successfully pull ourselves from the clutches of Bible-carrying ravenous wolves. (p. 157).

The solution offered above is good for a start, since knowledge is power, though one still runs into the danger of being deceived again by the over-craftiness of these money-making preachers; because we are aware of people being duped every day in doing business and signing of contracts and so on, yet they are highly educated people. For the same people that brought us the new religion or gospel came back again to dupe us again through another means.

Metuh (1999) was of the view that most scholars make the mistake of judging the Africans with the worldviews they had before the colonial and post-colonial masters. This of course cannot work, for things keep changing as the world around them keep changing on its own. For any meaningful solution to be given on the current situation of proliferation churches, the mind-set or worldview of the African people needs to be looked into or studied again, for what they know now or the values they hold now are considerably different from the values they held in the time of the colonial and post-colonial masters. The mind-set of the Africans, therefore, needs to be looked into or enlightened, for many things have taken place since the time of their forefathers. Hence, Anyaegbu (2020) remarked that enlightenment is a factor that we hear in histories, yet it seems as if Africa is never part of the changes that are taking place in the world.

Poverty has been the bane of the African continent; hence, commercialization of the gospel becomes an easy occupation or

access to make money for daily living. Many countries of the world believe that religion thrives in Africa because of the economic hardship in the African continent. Whatever this standing may mean or point to, one may have to agree to some extent because the identity of the founders of the churches in Africa is questionable. Most of them were not successful in their economic life before joining the business of being preachers. Again, most of the wealthy people or politicians hardly attend church services unless there is an occasion taking place in the church, or they will be recognized and installed as high members of a particular church. There is need for government of the day to improve the welfare of the common people through education, creation of jobs, improvement of medicare, paying just wages, and provision of basic amenities and so on. This certainly will reduce the proliferation of churches in Africa, especially by those who engage in it for monetary dividends.

For sanity in the religious circle, there is need to curtail the proliferation of churches by the government, when it starts issuing certificates to pastors who are founders. This entails that they must have some basic educational qualifications and training before being founders of any religious group. And the license or authority to operate will be taken away from the founder when he or she misbehaves. This may not stop the proliferation of churches entirely, but the quacks and unqualified religious founders can be eliminated reasonably. It is on record that the Rwandan government had formerly closed down 5000 churches for lack of authentic theological certificates from a recognized theological institute (Anyaeibu, 2020). Through that way government has definitely closed down a major source of propagating ignorance and superstition among Africans. Though many will kick against such a move by government, but it is a good venture, since companies operating in any place or coming into any foreign country are given license to operate before they resume operation.

At this age of globalization and technological advancement, there is need to advance a model of religious change in Africa to curtail the continuous shattering of African worldviews and African religious structures. Having gained the knowledge of other world religions, there is need for a kind of moratorium, which will help the Africans to worship God without being deceived or absorbing in a forced way the ingredients of another culture, either by force or by superiority. That was the case in the time of the colonial masters, when they practically forced everything on Africans and forced them even to throw away some values without consultation or knowing what it meant for Africans. At this point, the Africans can voluntarily choose what they want and when they want it. Since the indigenization, traditionalisation and inculturation processes employed have failed to produce an authentic African people. There should be a new kind of strategy that will reformulate our understanding of the encounter between the traditional religion and other world religions to discover the creative forces within each religion and trigger a good religious change.

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