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RELIGION INTERFACING MORALITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG THE IGBO OF SOUTH-EASTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The relationship between morality and religion has generated a lot of controversies among people that had previously written on ethics. It is noteworthy that the controversies have remained unresolved till date. Morality is an offshoot of ethics which further compounds the problem, particularly when it gets to who sanctions morality. That the moral code is accepted and is effective depends largely on the source of its sanction. This affects society that either accepts the moral code based on the source of moral sanction - which enforces the law, or rejects it to the detriment of the growth and development of society. It becomes pertinent to look into the relationship between morality and religion with the view of determining the implications of the said relationship to the development of Igbo society. This paper used Phenomenological Approach. The data were analysed and described in the course of the research. In writing this paper, the writer used primary source and secondary sources, like observation and books respectively. It was discovered that despite what Philosophers, Humanists, Anthropologists, Sociologists, Atheists and even some religious writers have written on the independence of morality from religion, morality was not independent of religion, they were intrinsically linked and inseparable. However, there were visible flaws that needed to be controlled for this relationship between morality and religion to be cordial and more meaningful. The writer recommended that for morality to be an effective tool in checking the moral lapses of society there should be cordial marriage of morality with religion which will result in the overall development of society.

Key words: Ethics, Morality, Society, Development, Religion

Introduction

Ethics is an English word that is derived from the Greek word, *ethos* meaning *custom, habit* or *conduct*, while morality is derived from the Latin word, *mos* (singular) and *mores* (plural) that means habit, custom and manner of living (Shields, 2004). Anyacho (2005) opines that “Ethics is basically concerned with the nature of human behavior and social approval”. Ethics is not mere description of moral feelings, religious beliefs, opinions, habits and customs; it is concerned with the judgment of actions to ascertain whether they are good or bad (Gbenda, 2006). Ethics is a mechanism for the regulation of everyday life in human interactions. It sets a standard of behaviour to ensure harmonious relationship that is acceptable in society. It determines whether an action is right or wrong (Fasoro, 2006). Ethics is the science of human conduct. It is a science that prescribes rules that regulate society. That is why it is regarded as a normative science (Alexander, 2007). Egbekpa (2017) asserts that ethics “is considered as a study of voluntary human actions with the purpose of determining what types of activities are (sic) good, right and to be done and what actions are bad, wrong and to be eschewed so that man may live well”. Moral code sees to the maintenance of the unified system that will bring about social harmony, peace and good of man and the entire society (Opoku, 1978). Morality is a code of conduct that is generally accepted in society or subgroups that make up a given society (Agha, 2003).

Morality and religion can be separated in other societies of the world, but it is difficult to divorce morality from religion without causing harm to either of the two or both in some African societies, especially the Igbo tribe. The separation of the two: morality and religion, has weakened morality that has become a mere toothless bulldog. Religion and morality are victims of forceful disintegration. Morality and religion were bed fellows for centuries, until recently when antagonists of the cordial relationship between them untied the string that held them together, thereby causing a colossal damage to religion, which hitherto used morality in guiding its adherents on the will of the gods for stable society and cordial relationships. In the olden days, people observed customs and traditions, and showed respect for totems. This is not always because they wanted to observe and respect them, but because they were motivated to, especially being aware that refusal to do so will attract severe punishment from deities, ancestors, earth goddesses and divinities. There was a belief that the observance of the moral code as spelt out in the customs and traditions usually brought rewards from these supernatural agencies to society.

The importance of morality cuts across religion to other disciplines like education, politics, business, marriage, and human relations. Character is prized highly owing to the fact that it is the determinant for national development. For instance, in Igbo land, good character (*agwa oma*) is the basis of informal education, traditional, political and religious leaderships, business transactions, marriage proposals and human relationships. In fact, it is a criterion for judging social and religious activities.

However, the decline of morality among the Igbo has given birth to so many atrocious evils. The social ills range from murder, armed robbery, kidnapping, prostitution, cultism, disobedience to constituted authorities, disregard for customs and tradition and a host of other societal ills. This ugly development has caused hardships, crisis, wanton destruction of lives and property, insecurity, anxiety, fears, breakdown of law and order, among others. It has become a necessity for these ethical problems to be addressed in order to restore the lost glory and usher in a stable society where peace, justice, fair play, love, progress, etc. abound. There is no way moral observances can be effective if they are not linked to religion. This paper, therefore, will explore the relationship between morality and Igbo Traditional Religion and its implications to social development in Igbo land.

Morality Incompatibility with Religion

Some opposition to the relationship between religion and morality insist that a person can lead a good life without recourse to religion. They argue that conscience is enough to guide human beings in their decisions and choices. This position is informed by the belief that morality originated from the moral law that God wrote on human conscience (Wotogbe-Weneka, 2005). Morality is beyond religion and other social institutions - family, school, government, economy, etc. These institutions are subjected to morality that scrutinizes and ascertains their credibility. The antagonists of the dependence of morality on religion argue that religion is primarily concerned with worship and not morality. Morality is the basis of ethics and not religion. Ethics is independent of religion which positions it to evaluate every religion with the intent to determine whether it is true religion or false religion. Morality is the basis of judging religious actions which helps to distinguish true religious practices from the false religious practices (Omoregbe, 1993).

The inability of people to ascertain the existence of God and His commands makes it difficult for them to know what ought to be done. Even if God wills certain actions, it

does not mean that His will must be good. To know what is good, human beings have to judge what God wills independently of religion to find out whether it is good or bad (Nielson, 1966). Religion is negatively viewed as a tool that beclouds people's sense of reason that would have helped them to know what is good without recourse to God. Religion makes moral principles absolute and prevents people from exercising their freewill as moral agents. Intermingling morality with religion is like mixing morality with religious doctrines which renders the exercise futile. Religious doctrines have nothing to offer ethics except it is the will of God, and man has to obey it. Religion is not needed for the knowledge of good and bad (Smart, 1966). Religious doctrines are meant to teach the adherents of religion about the religion and have nothing to do with ethics that is judgment of what is good and bad. Religious doctrines are borne out of theological interpretations of the scriptures, but not all religions have scriptures - there is no way ethics or code of morality can be disregarded on the grounds that the doctrines are not written down. After all, there are unwritten moral principles that are more powerful than the written ones.

Ethics of other religions like Christianity relies on Supernatural Revelation in the Scriptures and oppose natural revelations that have been a source of conflict between Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) in the formulation of ethical judgments (Geisler, 1989). This conflict becomes glaring when an African Christian is faced with decision-making on polygamy, divorce, traditional marriage, ancestor worship, second burial, use of charms, amulets (objects of protection), witchcraft, magic, secret societies, rituals, reincarnation, taboo, totems and belief in divinities which are rejected by ethics of Christianity, but are held in high esteem by traditional ethics and beliefs. The moral choice of the African may degenerate to syncretism- that is mixing two conflicting ethical codes together in a bid to arrive to African Christian ethical judgments and actions if time is not taken. The ethics of Christianity is a colonial and western ethics that are not relevant to African context and situations, hence the call for decolonisation, contextualisation, inculturation, and adaptation of Christian ethics to the African context, so that it will be more productive and relevant to the African moral and societal needs. A school of thought insists that the only way to resolve the conflict between Christianity and ATR is to separate morality from religion. Apart from resolving the conflict, it will create moral code that is acceptable to the adherents of these religions, thereby creating a platform for dialogue and peaceful coexistence. This measure may be counterproductive in African societies where separation of morality from religion is foreign and unacceptable to the people.

Dada (2014) states that religion and ethics are interrelated in the sense that religion sees to the maintenance of harmonious horizontal and vertical relationships among human beings, human beings and God, respectively. Without morality, it will be difficult to maintain these relationships. This underscores the handing over of African traditional ethics from one generation to another orally. This becomes the case in Igbo land where the elders are respected as custodians of morality. Unlike Christian ethics that is individualistic, African ethics is the social and communal ethics that take the ethical needs of the community into consideration by regulating human actions and inter-human relationships for justice, equity and honesty to prevail (Kunhiyop, 2008). Ethics of indigenous religion is God - conscious owing to the belief by the Igbo that God is omniscient and omnipresent which make it possible for him to know and see things that are done in secret and reward accordingly (Omoregbe, 1999). Igbo morality is driven by religious prescriptions and sanctions and moral law is derived from religious laws. Morality plays the role of

influencing social conducts, relationships and cosmic order. Supernatural agencies like deities, the ancestors and the elders are revered custodians of morality (Nwala, 1985). The weakness of African ethics is corporate responsibility for the evil committed by a kinsman. In other words, the gods punish the entire community for the offence of one man. This is parallel in Christian doctrine where humanity suffers for the sin of one man - Adam.

Inseparability of Religion from Morality

Religion and morality are two indivisible entities that cannot be separated. Religion, under the cloak of morality stipulates what is good and what is bad, what is just and what is unjust, what is virtuous and what is criminal (Ebhomienlen, 2016). It is noteworthy that morality divorced from religion is limited to mere judgment of human actions without the commensurate power to enforce what is good and deter bad acts. Morality is not only related to religion, it permeates other areas like culture. It promotes protection of the citizens and peaceful co-existence (Akpotor, 2014). The Igbo believe that the ancestors partner with the earth goddess in enforcing morality based on the fact that ancestors are buried in the earth which has made them to be close to the earth goddess in the realisation of moral society (Umeanolue and Anizoba, 2017). Some moral philosophers that advocate for the separation of religion from morality are Immanuel Kant, John Hick and Bernard Williams that hold the view that morality and reason are related not religion (Ani, 2012). They insisted on the relationship between morality and reason as a means of producing ethical code that is universally accepted. Despite their efforts to unite religion and reason and discard morality and religion, people still look forward to relationship between morality and religion owing to their belief on the indispensability of the gods in realising moral aspirations.

The traditional moral agents punish perpetrators of ungodly acts severely, until appropriate rituals are done to appease the gods. Punishment and reward are linked to covenant relationship between gods and humans of which the breach of the covenant attracts punishment while its observation brings reward. Therefore, the parties involved in the covenant are expected to abide by the rules and regulations that guide the relationship (Awolalu and Dopamu, 1979). Morality revolves around covenant-making aimed at sustaining physical and non-physical cohesion. In Igbo traditional society, covenant binds the living and the Supernatural Being (that is regarded as religion's role) and the principles of the covenant take care of the moral obligation for the covenant to bear the desired fruit - cordial relationship. Unlike in Christianity, anybody is free to initiate covenant and the gods are under obligation to do theirs or risk withdrawal of honour, thanksgivings, substitution with other gods and, in extreme cases, may be driven to oblivion. Awolalu and Dopamu (1979) notes that morality is borne out of the necessity of curtailing natural rebellion and excesses in human beings which are capable of endangering the welfare of other people in society.

Some people feel that it is unnecessary arguing about the dependence of morality on religion when it is convenient for morality to depend on natural law that is discovered by human reason. This contradicts the sources of the natural law that are Decalogue and scriptures of other religions (Ogunwola, Kilani and Odili, 2020). Morality is derived from religion and whatever morality condemns is treated as irreligious act by religion. Religiosity is ascertained by the practitioners of the religion based on the commitment to their moral obligations (Adewale, 2014). The inseparability of religion from morality stems from the African belief that there is no demarcation between the profane and the sacred, everything

is interwoven. In Europe, America and other developed countries there may be departmentalization of morality and religion which is supported by western worldview, but the African worldview is against it. This is what the Christian Missionaries did not understand when they imposed ethics of Christianity on the African with impunity. Apart from the material intertwining with the spiritual, the material is the vehicle of the spiritual. To divorce ethics from religion is a denial of society the Supernatural sanctions that cannot be provided by secular society. Unethical acts are tantamount to breaching the relationship between the African and the Supreme Being. They are believed to be threats to social order like land, cattle, rain, bodily health, the family, the clan, and even the state. So, violation of social norms can be instrumental to famine, drought, infertility, and sterility (Parrinder, 1974). Even Christian ethics is Christocentric and Theocentric which necessitates its focus on God and Jesus' conducts and their relationships with their creatures (Agha, 2004). Christianity is not exempted from the relationship between religion and morality, irrespective of the fact that it has its origin from countries where there is dichotomy between the visible and the invisible. Polarisation of the sacred and the secular spaces notwithstanding, religion has been a major influence on morality.

The proponents of natural ethics which has nothing to do with religion have forgotten that human beings are naturally selfish, which makes it difficult for them to think about the welfare of others (Sibani, 2014). This does not rule out the possibility of politicisation and "religionisation" of morality for it to be used as machinery for advancing selfish, tribal, political, sectional and religious interests. "Religionisation" is used in the context of this paper to mean imposing religion on morality with the ulterior motive of using it to achieve religious and political ends. Subjective view of morality holds that morality is what a person feels about what is good or bad which takes precedence above the standard laid down ethical code. The critics of the dependence of morality on religion insist there are atheists and agnostics that have broken jinx as far as morality is concerned by living an upright life while some religious men and women have become morally bankrupt (Sibani, 2014). They betray their knowledge of human aberration by making this allegation against religion which cannot be used as a yardstick of condemning other religious men and women that have distinguished themselves in morality and have been canonized as saints. For instance, Late Father Iwene Tansi was canonized by the Roman Catholic Pope and since then, he is revered among the Catholics as a Saint.

Morality and Social Development

The bone of contention is no longer the relationship between religion and morality; what is expected to occupy the attention of religious scholars, philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists and theologians is the dependence or independence of morality on society and not religion. Durkheim compares religion with society on the grounds that the important attributes found in religion: the gods are greater and more powerful than man. These attributes are found in super human beings or extra-social powers. The symbols of society are mistaken for the symbols of religion (Spiro, 1966). Even though ethics and morality are products of society, it is designed to preserve and safeguard society. Morality evolved from code of conduct enacted by society for the smooth running of society (Adewale, 2014). Emile Durkheim who studied Australian Aborigines discovered that the object of worship or awe is not God, but society. It shows there is no distinction between God and society. Society like religion is the source of values and traditions aimed at preserving itself. It is

society that confers sacredness on the tradition for the members of society to conform to their moral responsibilities. When people observe the moral code, they do it with the intention of pleasing society that is respected to be God who sanctions morality (Aderibigbe, 2006).

It is said that morality is independent of religion on the grounds that morality is the product of society and it has nothing to do with religion. It is held that man is born without a sense of morality; it is the society that plants morality in him as he grows up. He has no choice than to accept the society's standard of judging good and evil as it is obtainable in society. The relationship between religion, morality and society lies on the latter creating the former for its control. It is discovered that among the Igbo, religion and morality are employed in exercising control over the members of the society. It is through religion and morality that society influences human actions and moulds the minds of its inhabitants (Adamu and Victor, 2013). Sociologically, it seems there is no dichotomy between religion and society. This is evident in Emil Durkheim's postulation that religion is society and society is religion. He refutes the belief that God is the object of worship by saying that society is the object of worship which implies worshipping God is worshipping society (Aderibigbe, 2006). Anthropologists maintain that religion and morality are not related due to the function that was hitherto performed by religion for morality has been taken over by society that enforces morality through public opinion (Uche, 2011).

Sociologists, like Emil Durkheim substitutes religion with society by saying that it is society that sanctions morality and not God by showing disapproval of actions through reward and punishment. However, it has been discovered that God and not society is the source of rewards and punishments of human behaviour which is a proof that God is concerned with morality (Parrinder, 1969). There are minor offences that can be sanctioned by society that does not mean that it has usurped God. On the contrary, it is performing the task on behalf of God who is too great to meddle into minor human actions. In fact, it is believed among the Igbo that aspiration for morally sound society is a collective responsibility that will not be left for God alone. This morally sound society translates to social order – it is the balance between the physical world and the spirit world known as sustenance of the equilibrium. For this state to be realised there is always avoidance of bad acts and encouragement of good deeds. The Igbo people are motivated to observe the customs and tradition for the realization of Igbo “paradise”. As stated earlier, this goal is collectively achieved by moral agents like traditional rulers, traditional priests, individual deities, ancestral spirits, divinities and earth goddess (*Ala*) that collectively enforce morality (Isiramen, 2015). In the olden days, the ancestors, divinities, earth goddess were feared more than the Nigerian Police, the Military, Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Courts and other anti- graft agencies in fighting corruption, crime, indiscipline and other human misconducts.

Morality lubricates the fabric of communalism in which communal spirit supersedes individualism. It encourages communal sharing that is hinged on social welfare rather than selfish interests. This communalism that was linked to morality collapsed with the arrival of colonialism and western economic system (Igbo and Anugwom, 2011). The west criticises the African, particularly the Igbo, of not evolving a philosophical ethics like the western ethics. The Igbo's non-philosophical ethics does not in any way makes the Igbo less human and their ethics irrelevant. Ilogu (1994) gives explanation on this matter by pointing

out that the Igbo moral code is not philosophical; it is pragmatic in addressing the practical challenges and daily activities of the people. Morality and society are related because morality has associated with society for a long time, to the extent that thinking of separating one from the other is impossible, considering the fact that morality is employed to checkmate the excesses of the members of society. (Onuoha, 2018). This becomes obvious when it is recalled that morality did not start from the vacuum and cannot be practiced in a vacuum. If morality is disentangled from society, such morality will become extinct. In fact, morality is irrelevant in the absence of society. Again, society needs morality to be stable, but where it is not available to guide society, criminality, lawlessness and other social ills will abound. The separation of morality from religion dates back to the age of Enlightenment which was championed by Rousseau and Kant. It is contrary to the Igbo moral system in which ancestors are responsible for control of property, sexes and children-parents' relationship (Haselbarth, 1976).

Morality is higher than religion and other social institutions. Morality is not invented by an individual; it is a social system designed to regulate behaviours of the members of society and it predates human existence. Humans inherited it and participated in it. Morality will outlive the individuals that constitute society. People come and go while morality remains (Frankena, 1997). It cannot go into extinction, but that is not to say that it cannot undergo reform for it to suit the needs of society. Observance of moral code ushers in righteousness, justice, peace and good neighbourliness believed to be God's will for society (Chukwuma, 2008). In spite of that, moral code varies from one community or social group to another; where it applies to a given group, it raises social consciousness of the group members to the extent that every member of the group is ready to forego his personal interest for the interest of the group to prevail. It focuses on relationship and awareness of relatedness of members of the group with one another (Okwueze, 2003). The forces of change have impacted traditional morality positively and negatively, but they have not been able to wipe it out. African traditional morality has borrowed some elements of Christian ethics and vice versa. The resilience of African traditional morality is evident in its resurgence in African Initiated Churches (AICs), cultural revivals, apostasy - drifting of some Christians back to their former religion and enforcement of African traditional morality by parents, traditional rulers, customary courts, age grades, diviners, traditional medicine men, council of elders, women's groups, youths, secret societies, quasi-religious groups, paternal daughters (*Umuada*).

Morality and Underdevelopment of Society

Prior to the advent of colonialism, Africans, especially Igbo people, were living morally good life. The advent of colonialism meted a deadly blow on traditional ethics. This was evident in the involvement of warrant chiefs who were the custodians of traditional ethics in bribery and corruption by receiving bribes like tobacco and wine from the colonialists which induced them to exploit their people (Dike, 2015). The Igbo traditional morality has been influenced by colonialism, Christianity, Islam, secularism, modernism, education, social media and other forces of change that have come in contact with it.

There is no doubt that the Igbo Traditional Ethics (ITE) has undergone a remarkable change since its contact with Christianity. Christian ethics is competing with ITE over moral space among the Igbo. It is believed that Christianity has come to stay which has necessitated its adaptation to the Igbo soil instead of remaining foreign to Igbo moral

aspiration. The opponents of Christian ethics argue that Christian ethics is a product of Christianity which is regarded as the relic of western colonialism that was imposed on Africans by the white people. They fight to resist Christian ethics from displacing the traditional ethics (Turaki, 2001). Christian ethics is exotic and has nothing to do with the African worldview. There is a necessity for the Christian ethics to be decolonised for it to be more relevant to Africa. The African needs Christian ethics that will judge his actions to find out whether they are good or bad in his context. Christian ethics differs from traditional ethics in some areas which have been a source of conflict between the latter and the former. The only remedy to this perennial clash is for Christian ethics to be contextualised, adapted, inculturated and indigenised to African environment and worldview for it to be more relevant to the people. Christian ethics has not made much impact in the life of the people since Christianity came to Nigeria in the 19th century. The reason for the failure is not farfetched; it has remained at the periphery of society, unlike the African traditional ethics that permeates every fabric of society. Turaki (2001) states that this accounts for the ability of morality to hold social, natural, and ontological orders so as to prevent people from disrupting these orders for the sustenance of the equilibrium.

Critics of African Traditional Religion have criticised traditional ethics for lacking written book which will provide a reliable source of morality for people to live a good life. These critics have not taken notice of traditional ethics that is written on every aspect of the people's life. The ignorant tend to dismiss African ethics on the basis that it is not written down like Christian ethics and Islamic ethics. Others despise it as primitive, unchristian, pagan, uncivilised, heathen, and idolatrous. There is no doubt this is one of the consequences of the encounter between traditional morality and western ethics during the colonial period, in which the later was raised above the former to assume superior status over African traditional morality. Socialisation is a means of inculcating morality in the hearts of the young ones. The moral values are inculcated in the minds of the people using myths, proverbs, fables, folktales, poems, customs, religious dances, festivals, farming, hunting, crafts and games (Dzurgba, 2014). Morality is an embodiment of social expectations that are geared toward maintenance of peace and order in society. The Igbo used to frown at dishonesty, stealing, injustice, murder, incest, poisoning, idleness, laziness, falsehood and conspiracy, lack of respect, especially to the elders, ill-gotten wealth, cheating and rebellion. This is hardly the case at the present where there are indiscriminate pollution of the earth with the blood of innocent people, ritual killings, stealing, armed robbery, kidnapping, prostitution and bribery and corruption to mention but a few.

The dreams of companies, businesses, corporations, ministries, private businesses, schools, banks and even religious bodies of hiring people of integrity have been dashed. Society has witnessed counterfeit civil servants, political leaders, religious leaders and public servants who claim to be influenced by Christian ethics or Igbo Traditional ethics, yet they display all manner of bad behaviours that negate the principles of Christian ethics and Igbo Traditional ethics. (Achunike, 2004).

The economic development of the pre-literary people was characterised by absolute dependence on nature (Robinson, 1960). This belief highly influenced their ethical orientations to think that wrong behaviour will affect their crops and environment. The punishment for wrong behaviour was capable of causing drought, famine, poor harvest, misfortunes, and environmental degradation. It should be noted that the Federal Government had initiated programmes aimed at tackling ungodly behaviour among its

citizens which attested to the fact that Nigeria, particularly the Igbo were facing moral bankruptcy which necessitated the revitalisation of Igbo Traditional Ethics (ITE) that was used by the forebears to checkmate unethical and irresponsible acts of the community dwellers. Ikubaje (2006) says that campaigns were launched by military and civilian governments against corruption, indiscipline and lack of manners that posed obstacles to national growth and development. These measures were the formation of War Against Indiscipline (WAI) by the Buhari's administration. In the second Republic, Ethical Revolution was formed to provide orientation platform on moral ethics to the morally bankrupt Nigerians. Also, Mass Mobilization for Self Reliance (MAMSER) was formed by the Babangida's military administration. These measures did not bear the desired results due to lack of political will to enforce and sustain them. It is true that there is no antagonism between politics and ethics here, the measures suffered setbacks owing to the fact that they were not rooted in the traditional ethical system.

The effects of violation of ethical rules are not limited to the punishment of the gods, disgrace of oneself and family, guilt or shame, but its effects have transcended family, community, tribe and nationality to international level. This led Nwanolue (2010) to note that the image of Nigeria has been shattered in the national and international communities. This is a result of the rampant violation of ethical rules by some Nigerians in Nigeria and abroad. It is argued that evil and sin differ from each other. Africans are concerned with evil and not sin that is the preserve of Christianity. Metuh (1981) makes this point clearer when he stresses that evil is any action that hurts the community; based on that, sin and evil are not the same. Sin causes guilt, whether it harms the community or not, as far as the action contravenes any commands of God which will result in punishment of the individual and not the community as is the case in African morality. Misconception of Igbo traditional ethics has given birth to the assumption that it is oppressive and unjust. They lay much emphasis on killing of twins, human sacrifice, tribalism, slave trade and inter-tribal wars as evidences (Diara, 2001). In the past, indecent dressing was unheard of but today it has become the order of the day, with parents no longer condemning it.

Conclusion

The belief that Igbo traditional ethics is ethics of minority group is no longer tenable owing to the fact that Igbo people irrespective of their religious inclinations and classes directly or indirectly subscribe to it. Igbo traditional morality is not independent of religion which accounts for the numerous roles it has played in checkmating bad conducts and encouraging good morals among the people despite obvious obstacles that work against it. Perpetration of social evils is common nowadays, and this justifies this paper which focuses on the interface of religion and morality to determine the effect of separation or subsumption of morality and religion on society. The forces of change coupled with globalisation have given a deadly blow to Igbo traditional morality which makes people to cling to pessimism that it may not recover from the debilitating external and internal attacks. To such people, Igbo people cannot afford to go back to the 'primitive era' in a bid to recover what might be lost in the encounter between Christianity, western culture, colonialism, western ethics and urbanisation. What the practitioners of Igbo indigenous morality need to do is how to enter into dialogue with these agents of change with the aim of borrowing elements as well as discarding some aspects of these agents of social change for it to be accepted by the elites that have discarded the traditional moral system that governs the people. The dialogue will

create a platform for them to learn from one another for relationship that is rooted in give and take to issue. It is discovered that if the encounter between Igbo morality and the agents of social change are managed well, they can complement one another.

The separation of morality from religion is a responsible factor for the high rate of social problems that have ravaged Igbo land at present. What the Igbo need now is to encourage their children to be God-fearing, whether in Christianity or Igbo Traditional Religion which will be a unifying force between morality and religion. Through this paper, it is believed that the Igbo will be sensitised on the necessity of submitting themselves to the ethics of their choice and professions in order to produce people of integrity. The practitioners of Igbo traditional ethics have to apply caution so that it will not degenerate to fanaticism. To allay fear of syncretism, the dialogists are expected to avoid the intermingling of the two religions. They are to borrow similar lofty aspects of Christianity that will help to make Igbo morality appealing to the Traditionalists and Christians alike. As said earlier, marriage of morality and religion will resolve perennial conflict between morality and religion. It will also pave way for deeper dialogue between morality and religion and its attendant cordial relationship in future. Above all there is no way morality can be effectively carried-out devoid of religion, hence the need to unite them for society to be morally sound.

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