

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND MORALITY: ON WHETHER THE MULTIPLICITY OF RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS HAVE IMPACTED POSITIVELY ON SOCIO-ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

Emmanuel Kelechi Iwuagwu (Ph.D)

Department of Philosophy, University of Calabar. Calabar, Nigeria

ABSTRACT: *Morality until recently has been seen as a brainchild of religion and thus an essential part of religion from which it is inseparable. This assumption has even led some scholars to hold that there can be no morality without religion since morality is intrinsically a part of religion. It is therefore assumed that a religious person is essentially a moral person and that a moral life may not be possible without religion. If this assumption is upheld it will mean that with the multiplicity of major religious denominations the world will be a better place. Whether this is so is an issue that elicits fierce divergent views among scholars and people of various orientations. This work critically examines the relationship between religion and morality to determine whether the above claims and expectations are justified. Employing the philosophical tools of critical analysis, exposition and evaluation of facts experientially acquired as well as information from the works of researchers on the issues of religion and morality, the work examines whether there is a definitional relationship or connection between religion and morality and whether they are related through their concerns, preoccupations or constituent elements. This connection was not seen. The work further examined the opinions of scholars with regard to their relationship as well as what the consequences will be if ethics depends on religion. In trying to find out the root of the assumption the work critically examined the contentious issue of the impact of the multiplicity of religious denominations on socio-ethical behavior. In conclusion the work decried the lack of synergy between morality and religion, holding that though there may be no definitional connection between them and their concerns, preoccupations and constituent elements may differ, morality and religion are complimentary in forging a better society. If they synergize their efforts the world will be a better place.*

KEYWORDS: Religion, Morality, Socio-Ethical Behavior, Religious Denominations.

INTRODUCTION

The critical question of the relationship between Religion and Morality which has been an old pre-occupation of western philosophy has currently re-surfaced on the philosophical front burner. This question has elicited variety of opinions differing from the traditionally held opinions from Greek philosophy, Judaism, Christianity and other religious confessions that religion and morality are closely interwoven and thus inseparable.

With regard to this perennial and topical question of whether or not morality requires religion, Socrates in Plato's work *Euthyphro* posed the famous question of whether goodness is loved by the gods because it is good or whether goodness is good because it is loved by the gods. Although Socrates favored the former proposal, many other scholars have argued that morality is unthinkable without God. Dostoevsky, for instance, insists that "if God does not exist, everything is permitted."

Before the modern period of philosophy, it was generally agreed that religion is the indisputable foundation of morality, thereby implying that without religion there can be no morality. This widespread and deeply ingrained notion that religion is a precondition for morality is still being held today as is promoted by scholars like Laura Schlesinger who insists that “morality is impossible without believe in God” and Zuckerman who claims that “declining moral standards are at least partly attributable to the rise of secularism and decline of organized religion.” This assumption and all built upon it no longer appears very strong because some other modern and contemporary scholars have argued with facts that many religious doctrines and practices have failed the test of morality, hence the argument that religion is neither necessary nor sufficient for morality (Pierre Bayle). This view contradicts the age long position that morality has divine origin: either God created man with moral sensibility or man acquired the knowledge of good and evil, right and wrong from lessons learnt from religious teachings.

The moral crisis being experienced in our contemporary world in spite of the multiplicity of religious denominations raises a greater objection with regard to the impact of religion on morality. If religion has such great influence on morality, one may ask, why the moral decadence beclouding our present day society where moral values are being discarded in spite of the very loud, clear and sustained preaching by uncountable religious denominations in virtually every corner of our contemporary society.

This work employing the philosophical tools of critical analysis, exposition and evaluation of facts experientially acquired as well as information from the works of researchers on the issues of religion and morality, examines whether there is a definitional relationship or connection between religion and morality and whether they are related through their concerns, preoccupations or constituent elements. The work also explores the various shades of opinion regarding the relationship between religion and morality, the consequences of morality's dependence on religion, the synergy between religion and morality as well as the impact, if any, of religion on socio-ethical behavior. In conclusion the work calls for a complimentary relationship between religion and morality recommending that there should be a synergy between them in building a peaceful, just and egalitarian society.

Definitions of Religion and Morality

Both from the etymological definition and their regular usage the definitions and meaning of religion and morality (ethics) have no close affinity or semblance. Both have different value system with morality based on reason while religion is based on faith. With regard to the Etymology of the word religion, St. Thomas Aquinas proposes three Latin root words; *religio*, *reeligere* and *religare* which were used by Isidore and St. Augustine. Isidore says “according to Cicero, a man is said to be religious from *religio*, because he often ponders over and as it were, reads again (*relegit*) the things which pertain to the worship of God” (*Etym.* x). For St. Augustine religion may take its name from the fact that “we ought to seek God again, whom we had lost by our neglect” (*De Civ. Dei* x, 3). (St. Augustine plays on the words *reeligere*, i.e. to choose over again and *negligere* to neglect or despise). For St. Augustine also religion may be derived from *religare* (to bind together). He says “may religion bind us to the one Almighty God” (*De Vera. Relig* 55).

Employing the three Latin words above; *religio*, *reeligere* and *religare* St. Thomas Aquinas concluded that religion “denotes properly a relation to God. For it is he to whom we ought to be bound as to our unfailing principle, to whom also our choice should be resolutely directed

as to our last end; and to whom we lose when we neglect Him by sin, and should recover by believing in Him and confessing our faith (*Summa II- II*, Q. 81, Art. 1).

From the foregoing, not being oblivious of many other definitions of religion, one can say that religion consists of a system of beliefs and practices that admits a binding relation to a supernatural Being or beings. Religion entails man's relationship with a deity or divinity, with the human being as the inferior partner in the relationship.

On the other hand morals and morality, which are understandably interchangeable with ethics because of their common etymological origin, is derived from the Latin word '*mos*' (plural *mores*) which means 'custom' or 'habit' which is the equivalent of the Greek word '*ethos*' which also means 'custom' or 'habit'. The two terms morality and ethics are roughly interchangeable in contemporary usage though some scholars try to demarcate them. For McClendon; "when a distinction is made "morals" nowadays refers to actual human conduct viewed with regards to right and wrong, good and evil, "ethics" refers to a theoretical overview of morality, a theory or system or code. In this sense, our morality is the concrete human reality that we live out from day to day, while ethics is an academic view gained by taking a step back and analyzing or theorizing about (any) morality" (45-46).

This compartmentalization by McClendon is surely defective. A better clarification of the terms morality and ethics arising from their root words is provided by Fagothey who used them interchangeably without making much fuss about their difference. According to Fagothey by derivation of the words, ethics (*ethos*) and morals (*mos*) study human customs some of which are mere conventions, such as table manners, mode of dress, forms of speech and expression of courtesy which vary from place to place and at different times.

For Fagothey "these are manners, not morals". But there are other customs that seem more fundamental such as telling the truth, paying our debts, honoring our parents and respecting the lives and properties of others. These conducts are not only customary but right and to deviate from them would be wrong. These, says Fagothey, are morals and it is these alone that ethics deals with. Ethics therefore is the study of right and wrong, of good and evil, in human conduct (Fagothey 1-2). The same ethics is called moral philosophy. Thus morality can be seen as "a system of principles and values in regards to standards of right or wrong behavior which has as its constituent elements, moral standard with regard to proper behavior, moral responsibility referring to our consciences and moral identity with regard to every right thinking moral agent" (Iwuagwu 23).

Bringing together both the etymological and the general usages of the terms religion and morality (ethics) it definitely shows no correlation between them but as to whether they influence each other is undisputed. According to Green "morality and religion, however intertwined, are at least conceptually distinct phenomena. Religion involves beliefs, attitudes and practices that relate human beings to Supernatural agencies and sacred realities ... in contrast; morality has usually being thought of as a way of regulating the conduct of individuals in communities." The question of whether one is the foundation of the other, whether one cannot exist without the other and whether religion has positively or negatively impacted on morality is highly disputed. This work will continue to outline their areas of convergence and divergence as well as their relevance to each other in promoting a better society.

The Concerns, Pre-Occupations and Constituent Elements of Religion and Morality (Ethics)

As the argument with regard to the synergy between religion and morality continues it will be pertinent to examine their concerns, pre-occupation and constituent elements to see their semblance or difference.

Unlike religion which essentially preoccupies itself with man's relationship with a Supreme Being or superior deities, ethics deals with man's relationship with his fellow human beings whether inferior or superior. Hence the subject matter of ethics (morality) is human conducts, which are actions which a man performs consciously and willfully and for which he can be held responsible (Fagothey 3).

In examining human conduct ethics is concerned with the rightness or wrongness of behaviors, that is to say, whether such actions ought to be performed or ought not be performed. The actions that man ought to perform are considered right or good actions while those that he ought not to perform are considered wrong or bad actions.

It can, therefore be said that a distinctive feature of ethics (morality) which separates it from every other field of study is "its investigation of the 'ought'" (Fagothey 2). Ethics is principally preoccupied with value judgment rather than the worship of a Supreme Being or beings.

Hence ethics concerns itself with firstly, those acts that the human being ought to do; secondly, those actions he ought not to do and thirdly, those actions he may either do or not do. Ethics has no specific places of practice or temples, no rituals, no symbols, no hymns, no objects, no ceremonies, festivals etc as religion does.

Unlike ethics, religion is an organized system of belief in a Supreme Being or beings as well as a well-articulated mode of relating with him (them) both in worship and in promoting his values. Among the constituent element of religion are the following:

Firstly religion is concerned with belief even without any rational explanation or proofs, such beliefs include belief in God, deities, heaven, hell, angels, dooms day, good and bad luck etc. All religions believe in the existence of some spiritual and supernatural forces capable of influencing human situation and environments.

Secondly, religion has a well-organized structure. Without organization religion cannot propagate itself. Hence religious organizations propagate their tenets, rituals and emotions.

Thirdly, sacred places of worship and object exist among many religions. Different religions have their different places of worship as well as sacred objects like temple, church, mosque, shrine, idols, cross, Bible, Koran, river etc., which are used to relate to the supernatural beings.

Fourthly, religion employs the use of rituals and ceremonies. These rituals and ceremonies enable man to adjust his disposition to the superior supernatural deities. These external ritual or ceremonies include: prayers, hymns, fasting, ablution, incantations, anointing, sprinkling of holy water etc. In some instances failure to perform these rituals are considered sinful and capable of spoiling one's relationship with God.

Fifthly, religion uses signs and symbols. These signs or symbols are enshrined in sacred images, places or books. Some of these symbols are also demonstrable by gestures or vocal pronouncements which give some religious meaning hidden to the non-believer or non-initiate.

Sixthly, basic to many religions is the existence of sects. Sects emerge in religious groups as a result of over-zealousness, over-piety and fanaticism whether in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism etc. sects abound who have various versions of their religious teachings and practices. These sects also promote different methods that will facilitate man's salvation, as well as specific procedures of worship

Finally, religion promotes the use of emotions. Religion in some cases raises emotions higher than reason. It inspires the sense of the sacred and dread of the sinful. Components of religious motions and emotions include fear, reverence, hope, faith, humility, sense of guilt, tears and joys (cf. Farooq & Mondal).

In considering the concerns, preoccupations and constituent element of religion and morality as well as their etymological foundation they appear to be two parallel lines with little or no connection, yet it is generally believed that a religious person is most likely to be a morally sound person. Where is the root of this assumption? Before accepting or rejecting this assumption we will consider some conflicting views on the relationship between religion and morality.

Different Shades of Opinions With Regard to the Relationship Between Morality and Religion.

According to *Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, "for many religious people, morality and religion are the same or inseparable, for them either morality is part of religion or their religion is their morality. For others especially for non-religious people, morality and religion are distinct and separable; religion may be immoral or non-moral and morality may or should be non-religious. Even for some religious people the two are different and separable, they may hold that religion should be moral and morality should be religious, but they agree that they may not be." (400-401).

The variety of opinions on this matter may be classified into three major positions namely;

1. The position that religion is harmful to morality
2. The position that religion has little to do with morality
3. The position that religion and morality are complimentary i.e are of great importance to each other.

The Position that Religion is Harmful to Morality.

This assertion that religion is harmful to morality is premised on the argument that many religious teachings and practices are essentially out of accord with sound ethical thought and practice and that some features of certain religions are inimical to morality.

This school of thoughts argues that some religious doctrines contradict sound ethical principles. For instance the Christian doctrines of "the fall" and "original sin", it is argued, may imply that, by virtue of his corrupt and sinful nature, man is incapable of performing good actions. This school further argues that some religious teachings have promoted grievous practices which are morally harmful. Religious teaching have encouraged its adherents to commit litanies of horrendous crimes like genocides, terrorism, jihads, inquisition, suicide bombing etc. all these morally reprehensible atrocities are tacitly or explicitly approved by religion.

This position also argues that religion encourages its adherents to pay more interest to a future world (other life) while despising this present world and its affairs. Thus it is said that religion makes its adherents bad citizen who are preoccupied with another world at the detriment of the present world. Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism etc, are accused of this other worldliness. Often referred to in this complaint is Rousseau's attack on Christians "they would make poor soldiers, have little heed of their rights and political privileges." It must be out rightly said that though religion may have another worldly dimension, it is unfair to accuse adherents of religion of being uninterested in worldly affairs or of being inactive in socio-political and economic affairs of their society. Though there abound myriads of atrocities perpetuated by religion along the centuries, these provide an insufficient basis for blanket condemnation of religion. History is replete with many good things that have been abused. We must therefore assert that in spite of these dark sides of some religious teachings and practices there are very many remarkable good religion has done to promote morality.

The Position that Religion has little to do with Morality.

Those championing the view that religion is morally indifferent argue that religion has very little substance and on its own account has played inconsequential role in history. This opinion denies that religion is synonymous with morality and frowns at the view that morality depends on religion. They argue that the two have no definitional relation and that both conceptually and in principle their value system and action guides are different.

This school of thought view morality as an active process which requires critical thinking and consideration that enables one to do what there is the best reason for doing without overlooking the interest of others, whereas religion which is based on faith require its followers to strictly adhere to religious codes, dogmatic rules and practices without questioning them.

This position, therefore, concludes that moral behavior does not in any way rely on religious beliefs not oblivious of the discrepancies between different religious teachings and practices with social norms.

The Position that Religion and Morality are Complimentary.

This appears to be the most widely accepted view in the discussion of the relationship between religion and morality, it is an undeniable truth that all religions have well-structured value frameworks, its dos and don'ts which are meant to guide the socio-ethical behavior of its adherents. These value frameworks that outline what is right and what is wrong are contained in oral traditions and holy books and are interpreted and taught by religious leaders.

It is based on the above assertions that the proponents of the complementarities and supportiveness of religion and morality hold, among other things, firstly, that religion is nothing but ethics, and that ethics is part and parcel of religion. Secondly they insist that religion provides the foundation of ethics which depends wholly on religion. It is argued that what is morally right is simply what God has commanded. Hence nothing can be justified apart from what God has ordained and religion is the vehicle that promotes moral values and practices thus without its help it will be difficult to carry out the demands of morality.

Thirdly, a more balanced position in this complementarily view holds that religion and morality assists each other in promoting their values and both are engaged in the same purpose of positive character formation of the individual and to achieve a harmonious and peaceful co-existence of people in a just and egalitarian society. This position, therefore concludes that both

are interwoven to the extent that they promote each other and share similar goal, making the individual a good person in order to build a just and peaceful society.

The Consequences of Ethics' Dependence on Religion.

If we agree that religion is the basis of morality or that it defines morality and is inseparable from it, we may be faced with certain grave consequences which may include the following:

Firstly, if we accept that morality depends on religion and is inseparable from it we will be forced to accept some offensive and morally reprehensible religious beliefs, teachings and practices as moral. In this regards condemnable religious practices such as jihads, inquisition, torturing and burning of witches and infidels, swearing with idols, unethical religious treatments meted out on widows, female circumcisions and other religious prohibitions that infringe on fundamental human rights will surely be accepted as moral as long as they are religiously approved.

Secondly, if it is accepted that morality depends on religion we will be freeing non-believers (atheists) from every moral obligation. We will be denying atheists the right to speak in terms of good and bad, right and wrong in the proper sense. They will no longer be morally accountable since they deny the source of morality, which religion sees as God. This will adversely affect our conception of morality (ethics) which should be binding on all humans irrespective of religious sentiments. To say that morality and religion are inseparable or that morality depends on religion may imply that those who reject religion and its teachings and practices may also reject morality. This will be totally unacceptable, because even if one denies the religious teachings of the existence of God and of another life, he is still expected to behave morally. To steal or swindle is evil and reprehensible both for religious and non-religious people and an atheist who goes on to practice this evil is condemnable.

Thirdly, if morality depends on religion and both are inseparable, the question will arise as to which religious doctrines and practices ethics should be based on, in so far there are many religions. Should ethics be based on Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism or African traditional religion? Different religions, as we know, have different doctrinal definitions of the notion of sin. There may be some agreement in certain areas with regard to what is good or bad, right or wrong, yet there are sharp doctrinal differences in these regards. Hence unlike some elements of morality which appear to be universal, religious denominations lack a common baseline with regards to their ethical prescriptions. If morality is to depend on religion there will surely be confusion just as there are doctrinal disagreements among religions.

Fourthly, if morality depends on religion or is inseparable from it some moral or legal codes which conflict with religious beliefs and practices will be considered morally wrong because of their lack of religious backing. Hence the UN declaration of human rights which prohibit practices such as murder, torture, genocide, slavery, gender inequality, racism, freedom of worship etc. will be regarded as unethical for confronting religious practices and doctrines.

Finally, it may be argued that moral principles are not the sole prerogative of religious people. Atheists and agnostics share the same moral principles with religious people and even in some instances behave morally better than them. Some humanists have proved to be morally impeccable and have been identified with many laudable humanitarian and charitable courses. If religion and morality are synonymous, then humanists, agnostics and atheists who reject the

existence and worship of God cannot be seen to embark on such moral projects which only have its source from religion.

The Impact of Multiple Religious Denominations on Socio-Ethical Behavior.

The question of whether religion has positively or negatively impacted on social behaviors is as contentious as the question of the relationship between religion and mortality. One's response to this question depends on the side of the divide one stands on, i.e., from the religious or atheistic divide. Adherent of religious denominations will outline myriads of positive benefits religion has bestowed on the human society. They insist that religious beliefs and practices are responsible for the moral and other foundations necessary for a stable, healthy and just society. For them religion is instrumental in the formation of a good conscience which promotes the practice of justice, moral probity and integrity in the society. This position argues that a good adherent of religion who practices his religion sincerely cannot but be morally impeccable.

According to Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso: "All the world's major religions, with their emphasis on love, compassion, patience, tolerance and forgiveness can and do promote inner values. But the reality of the world today is that grounding ethics in religion is no longer adequate. This is why I am increasingly convinced that the time has come to find a way of thinking about spirituality and ethics beyond religion altogether." In this era of materialism-driven religion most religious denominations lack spirituality and morality. This makes it difficult for some of the religions to positively influence socio-ethical behavior. This does not mean that in principle religion is devoid of moral codes, doctrines and practices to propel sound ethical behavior. It is only regrettable that these ethical contents of religion are submerged by the vociferous gospel of materialism which tacitly approves unethical behaviors.

The impact of religion on socio-ethical behavior cannot be denied in many instances. We are aware of some persons who because of their religious affiliation are very charitable, who abstain from bribery and corruption, do not commit adultery, do not cheat their employees or embezzle from their employers, who are very ready to forgive injuries and who do not steal nor renege in their promises. Such people live this life of moral integrity on religious grounds.

According to David Myers, in one US National Survey, frequent worship attendance predicted lower scores on a dishonesty scale that assessed, for example, self-serving lies, tax cheating and failing to report damaging a parked car. Hence cities with high percentage of church attendance record low crime rate. According to him, "in Provo, Utah, where more than nine in ten people are church members, you can more readily leave your car unlocked than in Seattle, where fewer than a third are." The same survey affirms that the most benevolent people when contributing to charitable causes are those who are involved in religious activity; that the highest rate of volunteerism are by the religious and that the most delinquent crimes are committed by youngsters who have low level of religious commitment (christiancourier.com).

A contrary position being floated by non religious people on the other side of the divide argues with empirical evidence that there are no noticeable difference between a religious society and a non-religious one. Citing the widespread presence of immoral and criminal behaviors as well as their consequences in religious societies, they insist that religion has not really impacted positively on social behavior. They point to high rate of corruption, hatred, injustice, teen pregnancy, homicide, greed, armed robbery, kidnapping, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases (STD), suicide, nepotism and other condemnable anti-social behaviors in religious

societies to justify their position that religion has done very little in changing the face of their society.

In many non-religious countries, most people argue that morality has no need of religion which in most cases causes more harm than good. It is argued that the countries with the worst human rights records are highly religious countries. Such countries are the most violent, unstable and intolerant. According to Vexen Crabtree, using the Social and Moral Development Index which concentrates on moral issues and human rights, violence, public health, equality, tolerance, freedom, etc., it is clear that social and moral development is at its highest in less religious countries whereas “as religiosity increases, each country suffers from more and more conflicts with human rights, more problems of tolerance of minorities and religious freedom and problems with gender equality.” Arguing for dispensability of religion in moral issues Jackson Wayne says that “there are some people who have no religious philosophy: they profess not to believe in any Supreme Being, in spite of this, they lead reasonably respectful lives. They do not murder, commit adultery, or embezzle from their employers. On the other hand, there are those who profess to be quite religious, and yet, clearly, they are far from godliness as one can be.” (christiancourier.com).

David Hume also corroborates this position saying: “the greatest crimes have been found in many instances to be compatible with a superstitious piety and devotion. Hence it is justly, regarded as unsafe to draw any inference in favour of man’s morals from the fervor or strictness of his religious exercises, even though he himself believe them sincerely” (30).

Irrespective of the above position insisting on the absence of positive impact of religion on moral behavior we cannot deny the positive impact of religions like Christianity on the formation of individual moral character and conscience as well as the formation of civil laws based on the Christian tenets of love, justice, peace, equality and human dignity. We cannot deny the appeal to reason that holds that one who believes in God and sincerely accepts and practices the moral teachings as contained in the sacred books of his religion will be most likely to have respect for other people than those who have no religious affiliation. A good religious person will surely be better than a non-religious person. George Washington must be listened to when he warns that it is folly to suppose that “morality can be maintained without religion” (cited by Jackson). Many studies including those of Myers and Wilson have justified this stand. Corroborating this position of Washington, Wilson warns of mass breakdown in morality in the West if the religious underpinnings of moral propriety were forgotten. Wilson, describing how secularization resulted in the breakdown of morality in Western societies says: “When in the West, religion waned, when the rationalistic forces inherent in Puritanism acquired autonomy of their religious origins, so the sense of moral probity waned – albeit somewhat later, as a cultural lag. Following the decline of religion ... and the resultant process of moral breakdown ... we should have genuine concern about the role of morality in contemporary culture (52, 87). As for Armstrong, “myth is essential for good ethics and meaningful living.” We can assert that when a society discards the sense of the sacred which religions always promote, it will surely lose the moral sense. Religion must synergize with morality to achieve a just and peaceful society.

The Lack of Synergy between Religion and Morality, the Bane of our Contemporary Society

Although there may be no etymological or definitional connection between religion and morality nor are their constituent elements, concerns and pre occupations similar, it is generally

believed and assumed that religion positively influence the moral lives of its adherents. Hence it is supposed that a good religious person is also a morally sound person. This supposition is premised on the assumption that religion more than every other institution encourages its adherents to live moral lives based on love and justice. Christianity for instance, helped immensely in reforming the laws of the Roman Empire through its teachings on love of neighbor, justice, forgiveness, common brotherhood of all men and moderation in the punishment of criminals. The Roman laws, as much as we know, highly influenced the laws of the Western world as well as those of the South American and African nations colonized by the West. Religion admonishes its adherents to be heroes of faith or saints by living exemplary moral lives as outlined in their sacred books like the Bible, Koran etc. These moral codes, precepts, statutes, ordinances and commandments contained in the sacred books if fully embraced and practiced will make its adherent living saints, heroes of faith and morally impeccable characters. This will in turn impact positively on the society thereby making the world a better place.

It is unfortunate that many religious denominations have deviated from this ideal. What is currently being preached by its leaders in their unwritten codes is no longer in line with its written sacred codes. What we have now proclaimed is the gospel of prosperity and materialism at the detriment of moral probity. Contemporary religious teachers have deviated from the path of admonishing their adherents to remain steadfast in moral uprightness, self-discipline, selflessness and justice. The unethical maxim of the end justifying the means seem to be acceptable and promoted in religious circles. This disconnect between morality and religion has created a culture of corruption, injustice, selfishness, nepotism, cheating, insincerity, sexual immorality, stealing, violence, homicide and other innumerable social ills which are morally reprehensible.

The promotion of materialism as against spirituality by religious leaders is the basic cause of this lack of synergy between religion and morality. When one disregards moral and sound religious rules of conduct to achieve a selfish end the action cannot be moral and acceptable. If religious leaders insist that their followers live their religious lives in accordance with the dictates of sound ethical principles with regard to what is right, good, just and honorable, then adherents of the various religious bodies will be morally impeccable. Unfortunately this is not the case. Some religious leaders in order to retain their members have compromised the truth, thus finding it difficult to reprimand their members when they derail morally. The resultant effect of this compromise is the rising rate of criminality, corruption, teen pregnancy, abortion, prostitution, marriage infidelity, embezzlement of public funds, injustice, selfishness, armed robbery, kidnapping, violence, nepotism and many other fraudulent practices which are unethical.

The very noticeable dichotomy between morality and religion and the apparent lack of visible impact of religion on socio-ethical behavior especially when a religious society is compared with a non-religious society stems from this failure of religion rather than the foundational difference between morality and religion. This failure is caused by religious leaders who have excluded morality and spirituality from their preaching and prefer rather to preach the material wellbeing of their members irrespective of the means employed in achieving these.

Basically religious doctrines and practices are embodiments of moral codes and principles. If religion lives up to expectation in insisting on its codes of conduct, religious people will surely be morally sound individuals and the society will be a better place devoid of morally reprehensible behaviors. The failure of religion is the basic cause of this lack of synergy

between religion and morality which has consequently resulted in the visible moral bankruptcy in contemporary society. Hence this lack of synergy is the bane of our contemporary society which has slumped into all sorts of social ills that are affecting the peace and stability of our society.

CONCLUSION

The assumption that religion is the source of morality which still holds sway in moral theology is no longer tenable in contemporary philosophical discourse. This assertion does not mean that morality has nothing to do with religion as some extremist may hold, but that morality does not depend on religion. The famous age long question raised by Socrates in Plato's work *Euthyphro* as to whether "goodness is loved by the gods because it is good or whether goodness is good because it is loved by the gods" can be answered by saying that goodness is loved by the gods because it is good. Morality can stand independent of religion. Religion needs morality to promote a better society just as morality may need religion to promote its principles. Religion and morality are therefore complimentary and not exclusive. Though their concerns, preoccupations and constituent elements differ and there is no definitional connection between them, morality and religion are complimentary in the development of a balanced personality as well as the creation of a peaceful, just and egalitarian society. The problem of the Contemporary society is the lack of synergy between religion and morality which in some instances makes the impact of religion not visible with regard to the eradication or reduction of some unacceptable social behaviors like corruption, violence, prostitution, armed robbery, kidnapping, teen pregnancy, infidelity in marriage, stealing, injustice among other social evils. If every religious body upholds sound ethical principles, preaches them to their adherents and insists on them, this will most likely make religious persons moral persons and the world will be a better place for all. But as long as there is lack of synergy between religion and morality, as long as religion fails to raise moral individuals but spends its efforts in preaching prosperity and breakthrough where the end justifies the means, as long as it fails to promote moral integrity, justice and selfless love, the multiplicity of religious denominations will be inconsequential and a peaceful, just and egalitarian society will continue to be a mirage.

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