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Review

Religion and National Development: A Critique

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The praxis of religion in Nigeria today has become very dicey. In fact, it is in a state of dilemma and some are even of the opinion that religion will kill the nation if it is not tamed. The focus of this paper is to critique this current praxis (mode of practice) of religion and recommend ways it can enhance national development using Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria as a case study. Our methodologies are evaluative, phenomenological and analytical, while our sources of information are both the primary and secondary. On the primary source, we administered a thousand questionnaires which cut across the three major religions in Nigeria and people of various fields of work, such as: civil servants, farmers, business-owners, etc. The analysis of the questionnaires was done using the simple percentage. The finding of this paper is that the present mode of religious practices in Nigeria is faulty and has done more harm than good. However, religion remains indispensable in terms of its moral and functional values as the moral sewer of society and as such it is needed to facilitate national development. Therefore, the paper recommends that rather than the present religious hypocrisy, malpractice, bigotry and adverse indoctrination, the emphasis should be on moral values that are derivable from these religions that will be of great relevance and benefits to mankind which will facilitate national development.

Keywords: Religion, National Development, Critique, Facilitate, and Praxis.

INTRODUCTION

The place of religion in society has become increasingly contentious in recent years. Religion as practiced in human society has been said to exert the greatest influence on development. This could be evaluated both from the negative and positive. But in this paper, we choose to look at the negative influence of religion on the Nigerian nation in terms of National Development. Whereas, there are discourse of this subject matter on the nation in general and some parts of the country, especially the north, there is the need to also search out the effects

of the phenomenon in our own environment in terms of politics, economy, and socio-cultural matters of the Esan people. This is why we restrict ourselves in this paper to Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria.

From the current religious praxis in Nigeria, we can agree that religion, although claiming to lead people towards the truth, actually leads them in the opposite direction. It nurtures censorship, suppression and domination of the majority by a few. Indeed, it is not unreasonable for some to claim that religion is at best self-gratifying and at worse thoroughly evil. However, worthy of note here is the fact that religion in itself is not evil but the way it is practiced. As Makinde, (348) puts it, "One may even argue that religion by itself may not be an opium. Rather, its effect on

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people through misinterpretation or misapplication may turn out to be like an opium...”

The basic problem of religion in Nigeria presently is a break in transmission between the practice of religion and religion itself as well as its tenets. Religion as a social institution is relevant in the ordering of society. The idea of man’s humanity to man through love and selfless services might have been taught to us in the biblical injunction “Love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt. 19:16-24 and 22:36-40) or in its derivatives as a moral imperative of Immanuel Kant, “Do unto others as you would wish them do unto you” (qtd in Makinde, 336).

In our society, we might be able to identify a religious man, in spirit and action, as the one who obeys and acts in accordance to this biblical injunction. When a group of people of like minds who share the same belief about God proclaim themselves as Christians and Muslims for instance and are prepared to follow the teachings and activities of Jesus Christ and Muhammad, we should assume that the society to which they belong have got some men and women whose activities, as a result of their religious beliefs, would be a model of good conduct in the society. And the social effect of the contact of this group of people who call themselves believers (regardless of their religions) with other people will be such as to purify the society of its moral depravity such as: greed, perversion of human sexuality, graft, embezzlement and all kinds of societal ills. Religion should be able to achieve this much in a society if the practice of religion is consistent with religion itself and its tenets. As we have already mentioned, there is however a problem of a break in transmission between religion and practice. And this according to Makinde (337) is precisely because man qua man is involved “religion in its purity has been contaminated by the ugliness of human actions”.

In this effect, religion has come under severe censure by some thinkers who see it as a source of many of our social problems today. And the censure of religion has been demonstrated with scathing remarks on theism and religious institutions and, in a dramatic way with the glorification of atheism as a form of social and political protest. Consequently, as thinkers of religion, we hereby rise to the occasion of lending our voices against the malpractice, misinterpretation and misapplication of religion but simultaneously in defense of religion as a phenomenon. Hence, the reference to the critique of religion throughout this paper shall imply its practice.

Conceptual Clarifications

Religion: Defining religion has remained a herculean enterprise; that is why scholars in the field of religion do not have one acceptable definition of religion. It is either some definitions are too narrow and exclude many belief systems which most agree are religious, or they are too vague and ambiguous, suggesting that just about any and

everything is a religion (Cline, qtd in Onimhawo and Adamu C.A., 310).

As many scholars there are who have shown interest in religion so are the definitions. The psychologists’ definition/view of religion differs from that of the sociologists and the anthropologists’ definition/view of religion differs from that of historians as well as that of the philosophers. However, a number of religious practitioners and scholars have attempted different working definitions of religion. One of such definitions is the one offered by Oxtoby and Alan E. Segal (559). According to them,

Religion is sense of power beyond the human that is apprehended rationally as well as emotionally, appreciated corporately as well as individual, celebrated ritually and symbolically as well as discursively and, transmitted in conventionalized forms as a tradition that offer people an interpretation of experience, a view of life and death, **a guide to conduct** [*emphasis ours*], and an orientation to meaning and purpose in the world.

What we desire to give attention in the above definition in the light of our subject matter is the clause, “religion offers people a guide to conduct”. Bourdillon therefore is not far from our concept when he defines religion thus:

...Religion normally involves a belief in powers that in some sense control the world or events in our lives, religion is concerned with values and the way people are expected to behave, it is also concerned with understanding and meaning sometimes of everyday things and sometimes in the more remote sense of providing some kind of ultimate meaning for life. (qtd in Afella, 45).

Besides, Haralambus (459) notes on religion is apposite here. He noted that religion is supposed play the role of maintaining social stability by allaying the tension and frustration which could disrupt social order. However, religion is currently playing a different role in Nigeria. It has become a major disruptive force of peace and social stability in the country.

The foregoing therefore would have betrayed the angle of religion that we are toeing which is the morality of religion. Like Immanuel Kant, we wish to affirm religion as man’s recognition of duty as divine command because religion is the moral sewer of society. Immanuel Kant’s definition of religion has been criticized for reductionism, in that, he reduced religion to morality. But our usage of his definition in this case is different; inasmuch we do not reduce religion to morality but amplify morality as an integral part of religion in order to convey an apt message

to a nation in dire need of it as a matter of necessity. Religion ought to give man the moral consciousness to conduct his affairs in an accountable and transparent manner whether in his private life or public office. Ideally, religion is expected to order man aright on how to live in society. Although, it is true that morality can stand on its own without religion like in philosophical ethics, religion however reinforces the tenets of morality in its requirement of good moral behaviour in the practice of religion. Religion from its Latin etymology "religare" or "religree" means "to bind together, gather or put together (Hastings, 221). From this etymology, religion ought to be a strong bond of unity in human society. It is supposed unite people in harmony, peaceful co-existence and tolerance. Religion is a means of communication between human beings and the divine beings of the invisible world. Thus, religion is a social factor which deals with man-to-man relationship. It is interwoven with culture and it is a cultural and part of our society. In this paper, religion refers to African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam because these are the three major religious traditions that cut across ethnic cultures and nationalities in Nigeria. Consequently, these are religions of the Esan people. Inasmuch, our paper is limited to Esan North West Local Area of Edo State, Nigeria, we shall return to this later.

National Development: National Development is a composite concept which requires a separate treatment of the two words combined "nation" and "development". As for "nation" there have been difficulties in finding generally acceptable definition(s). In this sense, Seton-Watson (2), said, "I am driven to the conclusion that no scientific definition of a nation can be devised; yet the phenomenon has existed and exists." (qtd in Isiramen, ed, vii).

According to *Webster's New College Dictionary*, "a nation is a stable historically developed community of people with a territory, economic life, distinctive culture and a language in common". Similarly, the *Thesaurus Dictionary* defines nation as:

People of the same ethnicity, a community of people who share a common ethnic origin, culture, historical tradition and language, whether or not they live together in the same territory or have their own government.

In the light of this, Isiramem (viii) argued that if we assess the meaning of the term nation as put forward by the two definitions above, Nigeria will not qualify to be called a nation with its over 250 ethnic groups, and different languages. The Nigerian people cannot be said to be of a distinctive culture, common language, "same ethnicity", common ethnic origin, etc, as spelt out by those definitions. Nevertheless, from another light, Nigeria can be said to be a nation with many nationalities given the above definitions. In the Nigerian context, one can talk of the Yoruba Nation, the Igbo Nation, the Hausa Nation, the

Urhobo Nation, the Edo Nation and so on because these are communities of people who share common ethnic origins, cultures, historical traditions and languages.

Besides, the *Thesaurus Dictionary* gives a definition that seems more suitable to qualify Nigeria a nation. It defines nation as, "people in a land under a single government; a community of people or people living in a defined territory and organized under a single government." Satyendra who corroborates this definition opined that:

...a nation is not simply an ethnic group, neither is a nation simply an economic togetherness. It is a political togetherness...concerned both with the structure and exercise of power... It is a togetherness which gives expression to the share's aspiration of people for equality and freedom and to establish, nurture and maintain the institutions necessary for that purpose.

With these latter definitions, Nigeria can safely be called a nation. It exemplifies political unity as it reflected in the shared aspirations of the people for "equality and freedom". (Isiramen, ed, viii).

Development like religion is multi-dimensional in meaning. According to Chrisma, "Development is a process of societal advancement, where improvement in the well-being of people are generated through strong partnership between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society". (qtd in Aghayere and Walter Idada, 4). Alele-Williams (89) sees development as "the process whereby an economy undergoes social and economic transformation geared towards an improvement in the quality of life of its citizen". Emphasis is placed here on social and economic development. Also apposite in our context is the definition offered by Nyerere (110) who sees development from the perspective of "rebellion against the conditions, material and spiritual that inhibits the efforts of man, the individual and man the species, to become his best." The foregoing definitions place man as a member of society at its centre and denote development as creating conditions that will enhance his well-being. And sequel to the above views, the supposed quality of human life could include the creation of new factories, increased output, or greater national income and its equitable distribution, recognition of, and respect for human rights, freedom of association and other things. One can see from the above that the idea of development has not also embraced morality. Aitufe and T.E.M. Oderotor (323) have queried these definitions when they call them "a parochial approach of development and therefore a misconception." Their argument is that the concept of development that is solely limited to mere material wealth is insufficient for a true judgement of development. For Onimhawo and Abu (qtd in Aitufe and T.E.M. Oderotor, 323) "...a country cannot truly be said to be developed if it is rich financially,

but her citizens are no better than brutes, robots and machines, if they are not able to live their individual lives meaningfully with good conscience.” It is reasonable to note hence that development is not only an economic exercise but also consists of moral and religious development besides other elements that often consists development. In other words, true development is that which embraces the well-being of man’s moral judgement and disposition. It will take moral soundness for religious adherents to reconcile religious practice with religion itself. As aforesaid, our interest in these concepts –religion and development is the moral dimension which itself is the substratum of national development. If it is wanting in the citizenry, other things would fall apart. Hence, things are what they are in Nigeria today because they are the reflection of the moral condition of Nigerian citizens. Any call for national development must therefore begin with moral re-armament otherwise our efforts and that of others will be futile. Religion which is metaphored as the conscience and moral sewer of society, unfortunately, is at the verge of failing the nation and we hope this work would be part of the efforts towards repositioning it for national development.

Esan West:

Esan West is a Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. Its headquarters is in the town of Ekpoma. It has an area of 502 km² and a population of 125,842 at the 2006 census. The major towns in this Local Government Area beside Ekpoma are Idoia, Ogwa, Urohi, Ukhun, Egoro and Ujiojba. The original occupants of the land are known as the Esans. The Esan people speak Esan Language and English. Their religions in percentages are Christianity 95%, Islam 3%, and African Traditional Religion Religion 2%. (Wikipedia at online Wikipedia.org).

Religions in Esan West

With rapid expansion of communication and migration, there has come what is known as religious pluralism whereby people have their respective religious beliefs and experiences. But strictly speaking, these religious beliefs and experiences fall under three major world religions, African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam.

African Traditional Religion: This is the indigenous religion of Africa that shares common features among the people. These features include belief in God, divinities, spirits, ancestors and the practice of magic and medicine. This religion has no founder and it is as old as the history of humanity itself. The different inhabitants of Esan West recognize God as a spirit, invisible, infinite, creator and sovereign ruler of the entire universe. The guiding principle that regulates this religion’s activities and commitment of adherents is centered on prohibitions called taboos (Katsina, 194). Often, the Supreme Being is worshipped

through consultation or communion with lesser deities and ancestral spirits. The deities and spirits are honoured through libation, sacrifice and festivals. The will of the Supreme Being is sought by the believer(s) also through consultation of vascular deities, or divination. There is a belief in a cyclical nature of reality and the living stand between their ancestors and the unborn.

Ethically, African Traditional Religion’s view of evil consists essentially in doing harm (in any way) to other people. Apart from the vices such as stealing, adultery, killing, telling lies, suicide, incest, etc, which are prohibited by the universal moral law, compassion and kindness to others are virtues particularly dear to the African Traditional Religionist(s). The essence of virtue consists in doing good to others. Hospitality, generosity, humility, respect for elders, honesty, etc are among the highly prized virtues in the ethics of African Traditional Religion. According Omoregbe (70), “The average African is... very ‘family conscious’; ‘community conscious’ and ‘God conscious’”.

Christianity: This religion was established in Palestine through the person and activities of Jesus Christ of Nazareth in the first century AD. It has through disciplines grown and become a universal witness to the extent that it is now rated as having the largest adherents among the world religions. (Katsina, 194). In fact, Christianity has the largest adherents in Esan West. The Christian Religion is all over the land with the establishment of churches and schools.

The focal point of the Christian enterprise is summarized by Benz thus:

The personality of God, as the creator, as the Lord of history and judge. The Old Testament presents God as a person, he is often described with some human attributes of goodness, wisdom, grace, love, and kindness, in addition to holiness, righteousness, as his exclusive attributes. As the creator, Christian’s view God as having an omnipotent power, which enables him fashion whatever He decides to create based on some principles and laws known only to Him. As the Lord of history, God selects for himself... but Christians see themselves as the new covenant community, which is commissioned to teach other people about him (qtd in Katsina, 194).

On ethics, the core is to be found in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5,6 and 7) in which Jesus improved on the ethics of Judaism. Whereas Judaic ethics forbid killing, Jesus added that even anger and insults were also forbidden and should be avoided. Again, whereas Judaic ethics forbid adultery, carried out physically, Jesus added that even adulterous thought or intention amounted to

adultery already committed in one's heart. Jesus discouraged oath-taking, which is caused by dishonesty. If we were all honest, our "yes" is really yes and our "no" is really no, then oath-making would be unnecessary. Jesus therefore discouraged oath-taking and enjoined honesty—our yes should really be yes, and our no should really be no, and with that there shall be no need for oath-taking. He rejected the Judaic law of retaliation which allowed retaliation provided it was not more than "an eye for an eye" and "a tooth for a tooth". On the contrary, Jesus enjoins that, if anybody strikes you on one cheek, instead of striking him in retaliation turn the other cheek to him. Although this injunction is not to be taken literally, the message is clear, avoid retaliation. The Judaic moral code enjoined one to love one's neighbors and hate one's enemies. But Jesus improves on that by saying that even the enemy should also be loved. Jesus warns his followers against hypocrisy. He warns against blowing one's trumpet about one's good deeds with a view to drawing other people's attention and winning their praise or admiration. He also warns his followers against excessive preoccupation with money or material possessions at the expense of the service of God. "No man can serve two masters... you cannot be the servant both of God and of money" (Matthew 6:24). One has to choose, between God and money, which to serve, since no man can serve both at the same time. Jesus rounded up this ethical teaching in his Sermon on the Mount with the Golden Rule; "So always treat others as you would like them to treat you." It should be noted that Jesus expressed the Golden Rule in a positive form rather than the negative form in which it is generally expressed – "Do not do to other what you would not like others to do to you."

Islam: This religion was founded by Prophet Muhammad. The subject matter is simply complete submission to the will of Allah. It is built on the Qur'an which sees man as a religious being created by God to worship Him. To Muslims, there is no distinction between the religious and other aspects of human life. This religion can be comprehended by referring to the articles of faith, which are beliefs in God, angels and the prophet, as well as the five pillars of Islam – profession of faith in Allah, prayer, almsgiving, fasting and pilgrimage.

Islamic ethics is centered on God' consciousness and universal brotherhood. All human beings are creatures of God who is all-knowing and all-serving. God knows and sees all that we do. As his creatures we owe him the duty of serving him and leading upright lives before him "Be careful of your duty to God, for God is aware of what you do" (Sura 5:9). "The most honorable among you in the sight of God is the best of you in conduct; God is all-knowing, all-wise (Sura 49:13). Islam teaches that God demands justice, compassion and mercy in our dealings with other people. He demands kindness and almsgiving to the poor, the needy and the orphans. "The best and

most beautiful of my creation" says Allah "is a compassionate man who gives arms." Since whatever we legitimately have was given to us by Allah, he therefore expects us to give part of it to the poor and the needy. Patience and forgiveness are also demanded of us. Allah is a God of justice, and nobody can please him without practicing justice. He hates injustice (Omoregbe, 58). "O you who believe! Be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for God even though it be against your own selves or your parents or near relatives...And if you distort or turn away from the truth, surely God is aware of what you do" (Sura 4:135).

Religion and National Development: A Critique from the Esan Socio-Cultural, Politico-Economic and Religious Milieu

The words of Prof. Wole Soyinka as published in the *Punch Newspaper* of Friday January 13, 2017 at pages 1 and 7 under the caption **If we don't tame religion, it'll kill Nigeria** are apposite here. Condemning killings in the name of religion, the Nobel Laureate quoted President Muhammadu Buhari who had said "If Nigeria did not kill corruption, corruption would kill the country" and stated thus:

I would like to transfer that cry from the moral zone to the terrain of religion. If we do not tame religion in this nation, religion would kill us... one has to be realistic. Only the religiously possessed or committed would deny the obvious. The price that many have paid, not just within this society but by humanity in general, makes one wonder if the benefits have really been more than the losses.

The first impression the above gives is that Soyinka is against religion; but that seems not to be the case, considering the fact that he also said, "I do not say kill religion." He only wondered when and how religion has become a killing machine, adding that the word religion in Africa and invariably Nigeria often induced anxiety, leading to trauma "rather than solace and the consolation of spirituality which many religions claim for themselves. (The Punch, Friday, January 13, 2017). In that publication, Soyinka recalled the killings in Southern Kaduna of December 2016/January 2017. Others who also featured in that same column were: The Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, Prof. Bolanle Awe and Matthew Hassan Kukah. They all denounced the killings, violence, crises and manipulations that have been orchestrated in our nation in the name of religion and they mostly pointed to the North. Same goes with other publications that exist on the misuse of religion in Nigeria. The points we are bailing out here are:

1. That there are other subtle forms of religious malpractice, misinterpretation, misapplication and misuse other than violence, killings, crises and even intolerance.

2. These forms of the breaking points between religion and practice abide throughout the nation.

3. That the forms of religious misapplication that is evident in the Northern part of this country is relatively different from that of the South as we are about to see from Esan West Local Government of Edo State, Nigeria as our case study.

Whereas, in the North, the misuse of religion has taken the toe of violence, riots, crises, bigotry and intolerance, in the South, the misuse of religion is basically that of moral permissiveness. The brand of Christians and Muslims in the North seem to be more ethically ardent than those in the South. Here in the South, as we are seeing in the case of Esan West, there are fraudulent business dealings which can practically be called exploitation; especially with the present inflation. The businessmen and women would tell you, "na so we see am", whereas, the exchange rate phenomenon notwithstanding, the price-hike as we see it here in the south and Esan West in particular has an undertone of exploitation/fraud; though the government is not justified. Politicians on the other hand pay lips services to their campaign promises. During elections, politicians tour religious places of worship, the church in particular, for campaigns and immediately after the elections they are nowhere to be found. It is hard right now to take people by their words even if they swear by the name of God or Allah. As at now our roads in Esan West and Ekpoma the headquarters/host of the state university are in lamentable condition. In fact, one wonders if there are political figures in the Local Government.

As for dressing, nudity is being celebrated as fashion and as a sign of "civilization". Promiscuity has almost become a normal lifestyle especially in Ekpoma being a university town. Those who engage in cheating, examination malpractice, bribery, cultism, adultery, fornication, rigging of elections, looting of ballot boxes, assassinations, arbitrary abortions, violation of traffic laws, evasion of taxes, robbery and other social vices are mostly adherents of one religion or the other. Honestly speaking, it is difficult to differentiate a believer from a non-believer in matters of ethics and public life in Esan West. The issue of manipulation of religion is also with us in gender matters, in that, religion has also been used to perpetuate the subordinate place of women.

There is an African proverb which says, "There is too much grass, and because of that, it is difficult to identify the snake that is blind". This summarizes the current moral permissiveness of our environment under appreciation.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Given the fact that documented evidence on the misuse of religion from the Esan milieu is lacking, it becomes necessary for us to administer questionnaires. And out of the 1000 questionnaires circulated, 920 of them were gotten back which cut across the three major religions in Esan and our respondents include civil servants, private business owners, farmers, and clergy. The simple percentage method was used for the calculations. Twelve closed-ended questions were asked in all. These responses were ranked Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD) and were coded 5 to 1 respectively. The bases for the analysis of the data collected were religion, sex, age, social status, educational attainment and occupation. The percentages of the respondents according to their religions were as follow: Christians: 73%; Muslims: 20%; African Traditional Religion: 7%

On the religiosity of the Esan people in terms of activities, about 67% of our respondents agreed, while 23% strongly agreed that the residents in Esan land are very religious, both indigenes and immigrants alike. However, 10% of the respondents disagreed with this position. Similarly, a large percentage of the respondents asserted also that there has been no incidence of religious violence, riots, crises or intolerance in Esan. But then, about 8% expressed a contrary view which shows that in their opinion there have been some slight elements of intolerance, irrespective of the fact that there has not been an open violence, riot(s) or crises.

Another thing this research revealed is the open acknowledgement of inconsistency between religion and its practice in Esan by our respondents. From the research, 60% strongly agreed, while 39% agreed that many people in this area, irrespective of their religions do not practice what they preach. And that this is evident in the commercial, political, sexual and even religious life of the people. Ninety percent of our respondents expressed the view that there is so much emphasis on materialism (prosperity) to the exclusion of morality which has accounted for avarice and crazy drive for money by those who claim to belong to one religion or the other. Amongst the ninety percent (90%) of the respondents on this point are about thirty percent (20%) Muslims. So, this is not only a Christian problem. And among the three religions under study, the most materially frugal among them ought to be the African Traditional Religion, but one may even be confuted given the fact that it is this same religion that is most known for ritual killings today. Below are our recommendations alongside that of our respondents:

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In order for religion and practice to correspond, the various religions should discipline openly their members who have erred against the universal good to serve as deterrence to other intending deviants. And according to S.O.J. Ojo, one of our respondents, “efforts should be made to correct evident compromise” in matter of faith that intend to jeopardize people’s lives.

2. For religion to be practiced ideally, poverty must be reduced to barest minimum among those who are adherents of religion.

3. Religious leaders and institutions should therefore desist from mortgaging their consciences on the altar of money and rather invest on the needy among them in order to reduce manipulation of the indigent with money.

4. Adequate teachings should be done in every sector – schools, offices, etc, on religion and its practice with the objective to challenging the moral standard of those who profess religion.

5. For the improvement of religion practice for national development, there should be inter-faith relationship and religious dialogue between adherents of the various religions in our communities and society and by expectation, this will bring about a tolerant and peaceful society.

6. There should be sincerity and trustworthiness in religious practice and people should live to expectations the moral values of their different religions; not the ones perverted and hijacked like that of Boko Haram against Islam.

7. The government should intervene in the area of regulating particularism, extremism and fanaticism instead of manipulating religion to actualize selfish aims.

8. Religious leaders should be properly trained and their activities regulated by higher religious bodies and if possible by independent bodies of the state.

9. In the Nigerian case, religion is indispensable in the discourse of national development because God is the source of goodwill which is essential for national development. Therefore, true religiosity should be advocated in Nigeria even if with machinery of the state.

10. The various religions should meet and discuss the issues of morality and strongly enjoin their members to hold it high before all other necessities of life.

CONCLUSION

Religion is very essential to human survival. Every society both traditional and modern needs religion to enable its members live together, maintain and modify working arrangements about the social order, social regulations and to cope with the environment. Religion performs the role of moralizing the masses and of course it’s an agent of social control in Nigeria and Esan West respectively. It is difficult therefore to have a social life, social organization and order without religion. And as such, religion that is

worth its sort should be practiced truthfully. And truth aptly defined is a propositional correspondence to reality. By implication, our profession of religion should correspond with our actions or vice versa. Our profession of religion should be matched with corresponding noble actions by those who practice it. It is on this note can religion be an antidote against the ills of our society instead of being a contributor to the problems. Second Timothy 2:19 says “But God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are his; and, let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity’”. Similarly, the society knows those who are truly religious and those who name the name of religion (who profess religion) should depart from iniquity – stop using religion to perpetuate criminality.

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