

# HUMAN FORMATION, RELIGION, AND VIOLENCE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE.

**John Segun ODEYEMI, Ph.D**

*Department of Theology*

*Dusquene University, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, USA.*

*fjay1368@gmail.com*

## **Precis**

As our world continues to evolve and grow, we recognize a spike and an upward curve of violence across the world. Within the complexities of our common humanity which has made remarkable advancement in scientific and technological developments we find an intricate and hydra headed space of unbridled capacity for carnage, terror and violence. In this essay, I seek to explore the idea of human formation, which ought to lead to wholesomeness and the creation of good citizens. I place the ideal especially against the idea of 'religion' and religious violence, which has become volatile and prevalent in various regions of our world. In this paper, I simply lay out a format, which challenges assumptions, and hopefully provokes further reflections and seeks to question the contradiction of religion(s) and why they breed violence. In addition, I will explore the ontological assumptions about human formation and the intersections of the nature of this unholy alliance.

## **Introduction**

We live in a complex world of multi dimensions and inter-dependence with many aspects of our existence constantly intersecting with or without our conscious awareness. In this essay, I intend to explore the varied levels of intersections between religion, the wholesome and moral formation of the human person in the society and how violence is yet a reality between human formation and religious beliefs. Naturally, religion, among other factors is observed to be one of the fundamental bedrock of the formation of an ethically upright person and citizen. It is therefore a conundrum worth exploring, when religion itself becomes

violent and when religious persons embrace violence. To proceed, there is a necessity to clarify a subtle yet quintessential shift in terms used in the title of this paper. In my research, specialists in the area of life coaching in modern psychology and studies in human behavioral sciences have brought me up to speed that they no longer speak only of human formation; rather, there is a deeper reflection on the totality of the formation of the human person. The distinction between these two ideas will be explored further in the next section. For this essay, the term 'religion' will be employed essentially in reference to the Abrahamic and monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Remarks will be made briefly about other religions only to buttress points and support arguments. Even though many scripts have been written specifically looking at religion and violence, this paper adds a new dimension as it relates the formation of persons with all its implications and the propensity for the same religious persons and their religious beliefs to become agents of violence.

### **The Idea of Human Formation and the Formation of the Human Person**

Lou Vallone is a leading figure among life coaching experts of the Human Formation Coalition (HFC). They focus on helping individuals particularly people preparing or already in ministry within the Catholic and Protestant denominations. Vallone makes the distinction between human formation and the formation of the human person understood from the perspective of development. He asserts that while human formation is viewed broadly as one aspect, the formation of the human person encompasses some aspects that comes together to build an integral whole. Within the newer approach, the formation of the human person includes intellectual, spiritual, pastoral formation (or relational formation), and human formation. Vallone and other coalition members insists that the program of the formation of the human person is more all embracing than the outdated model of a broad human formation approach. Within the intellectual formation, the person undergoing formation is helped to understand their intellectual abilities/capabilities. They are intellectually reinforced to be successful in their ministry by their insertion into the appropriate intellectual traditions of where they belong and will function. Here you build the mind. For an integral formation to take place, the spirituality of the tradition remains paramount with the hope that this formation leads to the development of a personalized spirituality. Here you build the soul. Within pastoral formation, Vallone and the coalitionists speak of relational or professional formation, which creates a matured person who is able to interact with others in a healthy and balanced manner. Here you train a

person, mind and body to re-engage and interact in the field. It is the combination of these various aspects of the human person when properly annexed that can produce a balanced citizen or a person who carries out a specific role within the society. Finally, this is the kind of human formation that is geared towards behavioral and psychosomatic development of the individual, now approached under the title of the “Formation of the Human Person.”<sup>1</sup>

### **The Nature of Religion**

Religions broadly are a set of belief system, which forms a pattern of practices, behaviors, worldviews, morals that relates to the connection between the human and supernatural world. Religions of the world, according to leading scholars cannot be classed, categorized or defined under one simple category. Generally, religions have sacred stories, rites, rituals, symbols, holy places, and doctrines, which often times are preserved or transmitted by sacred texts. Fundamental to the practice of religion is an attempt to understand the origins of human existence, the origin of our universe (and sometimes, its impending dissolution), and the notion of a transcendental being often referred to as God. In classic antiquity, particularly deriving from its Latin etymological roots, *religio* is understood as a sense of moral rectitude, ethical obligation or duty towards others, nature and even God. At this stage, *religio* did not reference the idea of doctrine or ritual practices. Religious beliefs and practices are many and varied around the world the usual common trends include the belief in the supernatural, omnipotent being/deity who is responsible for the creation of the world. This supernatural being expects a specific moral rectitude in this world as to earn a reward either in this world, in the next or in both.

Organized religions has been traced back by anthropologists to the Neanderthal age, and religious speculations goes even further back to the earliest dawns of human history. Religions remain relevant because it has the power, through symbols, texts, rituals, liturgies to evoke a sense of mystery that ‘legislate’ order in existence. According to Raymond Scupin and Christopher DeCorse, “A religious worldview helps people to discern the meaning of pain and suffering in the world. Sacred myths help people make sense of the world and also explain and justify cultural values and social roles.”<sup>2</sup> While some claim that religion as faith contradicts reason, others argue that faith and reason are interlinked, so that when they are properly annexed religion tends to bring forth a properly mannered individual. Religions of the world could almost be marked out distinctly by regions, however, the majority of self-professed practitioners of religion in the world belong to the three monotheistic and Abrahamic faith of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Hinduism and

Buddhism closely follow these. In recent times, a certain demographic known as religiously unaffiliated, who are either self-acclaimed atheists or agnostics are yet found to have some religious beliefs or tend to some spirituality especially of the Eastern types. In the United States for instance, while many Americans no longer go to the Christian Churches, many are found to be attracted by various Eastern religious philosophies like yoga or meditation.

While ontologically, religion should be the ideal space for an alternate world of peace, justice, truth and non-violence, historically, religion has been known to be the harbinger for violence. Tikva Frymer-Kensky sums it up thus,

Religions find themselves actively engaged in violence. Islam confronts the rise of militant extremism and the world's perception of Islam as a violent religion. Judaism is coping with the challenges of having military power and with the national struggle with the Palestinians and the immediate threat of suicide bombing. Hinduism faces the issue of the violent confrontations between Hindus and Muslims in North India. Buddhism must deal with the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka and the genocide in Cambodia and its aftermath. Even Christianity, which has a past of violent conflict, now must reevaluate its concepts of just war, now that technology makes limited war very difficult and the issue arises of whether to intervene militarily in order to prevent genocide or other atrocities.<sup>3</sup>

It is important to note that from a purely historical perspective, when religions become violent, at the very root of that violence usually is found people who manipulate and hijack religion for personal purposes. It could be for political gain, economic gain, the oppression of minorities or for cultural gains. Therefore, we can establish that innately, religion is not per se violent but it can be used to perpetrate violence.

There are various reasons why religions may turn violent, and these reasons will be explored carefully later on in this paper. For now, it suffices to point out an underlying theological problem that is often not identified when there is a conversation about religions. Most religions require faith, a strong belief based on personal spirituality and conviction, without physical proof, in the existence of a benevolent higher being known as God. Religion can exist epistemologically but the true act of religiosity is faith. Therefore, it is possible for an individual to be religious but the same individual is not a person of faith. Religion can be likened to a container, and its content is faith. Relying primarily on the Abrahamic and monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and even though we can trace a history of violence among them in gargantuan proportions, yet we can find littered all through history, great men and women whose goodness and positive

contributions continues to inspire humanity even today. The relations between religions and violence or in a more specific manner the relationship between practitioners of religions and the religions they practice are quite diffused; in proximity, religions, persons and their environment can be violent and can be kind. I argue that most people are introduced to religion but never quite make the next step; a personal growth into faith. It is my position that it is within the various camps of religionists that the world has produced extremists thereby giving birth to religious violence.

Some argue that violence is embedded deep in the DNA of every human person. And given the right conditions, motivations or even provocation, the beast in everyone can come to the surface. There are also those who opine that there is a natural cosmic evil, an eternal battle between light and darkness, between good and evil, and more succinctly when couched in religious language; it is the eternal battle between God and the devil for the human soul. J. Harold Ellens debunks these assumptions by arguing, "The notion that evil is cosmic and that reality is split, from the transcendental level down to our empirical experience, is profoundly untrue. There is no evidence on the basis of which to conclude that there is such a thing as cosmic evil or that some grand warfare between good and evil, God and the devil, rages in the universe or in our personal world."<sup>4</sup> Ellens continues, "...the suffering of this world arises from our actions or our failure to act, either from inadequate or bad will, or from inadequate or bad information, or from inadequate or inefficient effort, or from lack of power or ability to do better or indifferently."<sup>5</sup> Ellens submits that religious violence is born out of the nature of humanity still grappling with understanding the power of nature and the complexities of the world around us. Outside of the erroneous belief in ontological evil or cosmic conflict between good and evil, Ellens avers that violence by humans broadly "...are just communities of inadequate, ignorant, and sick humans trying to find their way to meaning in a world of radical freedom, constant growth, the perpetual change attendant upon growth, and the pervasive pain that accommodating change always brings."<sup>6</sup> Ellens surmise that humanity is naturally capable of devising violence, "without metaphoric prodding or genetic pathogenesis. The Palestinians and Israelis have no mortgage on violence; al Qaeda is not unique, but typical, of the universal human pathology; we need only to look within our own psyches or souls."<sup>7</sup>

Faith is personal, dynamic and specific that requires a commitment of the will to something abstract and otherworldly. When religion leads to faith, it requires a certain kind of clarity and self-understanding that makes one commit to justice, equity and not perpetuating hate and violence. Conversely, religion without faith creates fundamentalism of

the negative type. It believes narrowly and exclusively, insisting that he or she possesses a monopoly of God and true religion.

### **The Definition of 'Violence'**

Violence has become commonplace in society that many people have become inured to its effect. We encounter violence on our streets on daily basis; in the beatings meted out by the police or the army to protesters, to the pickpocket who is caught and summarily condemned by mass hysteria and set on fire on our streets. The simple acts of jostling to get on a public transport is violent in nature but accepted as the norm. When a worker eventually makes it home and settles into the sanctity of his home, he encounters violence on the TV news, violence from a spouse bitter for lack of adequate funds to run the house. When eventually he attempts to sleep, he is confronted with the violence of high temperatures without electrical power to combat it by the use of any kind of cooling device, and sometimes, the singsong of mosquitoes who remind you of how poor you really are.

All of these may be perceived as a collage of separate actions, however, violence of all sorts are interconnected, "by a web of actions and behaviors, ideas, perceptions, and justifications. While the individual and situational dynamics of violent behavior may vary somewhat, they all share a number of essential characteristics that bind them together into what we can call the unity of human aggression."<sup>8</sup>

One must not presume definitionally or otherwise that violence is limited only to physical aggression, bodily harm or injury; violence can also be emotional or psychological. In this light, I find Leonard Berkowitz's definition of violence apt, "any form of behavior that is intended to injure someone physically or psychologically."<sup>9</sup> An attempt to trace the continuum of violence exemplifies the depth and range of how violence subtly has become a subculture in modern times. Within the spectrum of violence, we can include, physical assault, murder, serial, mass, spree killings, domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, crime of passion, street crimes, hate crimes, mob violence, genocide, verbal and psychological abuse, terrorism, kidnapping, gang violence, ethnic violence and religious violence.

Religious violence are usually born out of delusions that subjectivises and personalizes truth. Harold Ellens encapsulates religious violence very succinctly thus,

Violence is always the product of such worldviews. Whether it is violation of the truth, or violation of persons, property, and appropriate procedures for human social and juridical order, it is violence. Whether it destroys persons, the necessary conditions of healthy human existence, or useful understandings of the real world, it is violence. Whether it

corrupts freedom, constraints legitimate liberty, or fouls the human nest with mayhem and bestiality, it is violence. Whether it oppresses persons or peoples with the force and power of empire building, represses hope and the resilience of the human spirit with mass-casualty fear and intimidation, or terrorizes the tranquility of children with media reports of those kinds of mayhem, it is phenomenally destructive violence.<sup>10</sup>

Religious violence therefore is a creation of a person or persons whose ethical formation is flawed and thriving on absolutists' and fundamentalistic positions degenerates into psychosis. This is a dangerous psychosis because wherever it is found it is usually dogmatic, ideological and exclusivist in nature. It cannot be reasoned with, it cannot be reviewed or critiqued, it is rigid, unchanging and cannot tolerate any other truths outside of its own, neither can this position accept amendments or new insights. Whenever the absolutist feels cornered or threatened by an opposing idea, in their demented mind, to defend their own truth is to result into violence.

### **When Religion Become Violent: From Fundamentalism to Extremism**

Core to religious violence is the conflict between orthodoxy, liberalism and modernism at crossroads for the modern person in contemporary times. Overtime, religious violence has been fomented by those who claim orthodoxy, be it the Catholic crusades, the never ending Jihads of radical Islam and the Jewish- Palestinian conflict; they are grounded on orthodoxy. However, it has become even more problematic when it is re-translated as orthodoxy against liberal post modernity. Events of 9/11 remain a poster child and watershed for an outrage incomprehensible or imaginable to the normal human psyche until it happened. Beyond perhaps, political and economic reasons, this act of brazen terrorism is primarily an ideological one. In one act of savage violence, the world experienced the collision of extreme Islamic orthodoxy against a perceived extreme Western liberalism and the 'waywardness of Western modernism.' Sadly, and according to Ellens, "The tragedy of that terrorism is severe enough at the physical and material level to gain global attention and concern."<sup>11</sup> This writer states that the real tragedy of this violence lies in the fact that "it is a state of the soul or psyche, conditioned and twisted by specific religious archetypes. Those terrorists apparently really believed that their action was an execution of the will and intentions of God and for it they would have 'exceedingly great reward'."<sup>12</sup>

Conversely, we must consider what Andrea Riccardi refers to as 'The Decline of Religion'; a situation where postmodern liberalism has jettisoned the idea of religion and twentieth century industrial and

technological civilization has found a new god. Some contend that modernity with its new humanism has sounded the death toll for religious belief. Within modernity is the evolution and creation of the new political order, the state. Riccardi states, "The state's view has been a secular one, and the secular view has even been an ethic that has become as it were a lay religion, with its own social rites... Society has ceased to identify itself with religion."<sup>13</sup> In this view, summarily, The twentieth century continued with the idea that modernity was sweeping religion away from its role as a protagonist in history... religion came to be associated with fanaticism or with the memory of the wars of religion which had stained Europe with blood or which had been fought between the Christian world and the Muslim world. The elimination of religion from social life was regarded as a factor of progress and stability.<sup>14</sup>

Subliminally we must also reflect on the relationship between the origins of the political state and religions. While Islam and Judaism can lay claim to a religion that is embedded strongly in the culture and nationhood of the environs in which it originated, Christianity does not share the same history. In fact, for the first three centuries of its infancy, Christianity was persecuted by the state and its political machinery. In contemporary times, the infractions of the state against religion, albeit, Christianity as a religion in the separation of Church and state is worthy of evaluation in another paper. It suffices to say that religions can become violent depending on how the political state impinges on religious liberties or how it favors one religion against the other in a multi-religious space.

Emmanuel Ojeifo in a newspaper piece written and published by This Day newspaper on March 19, 2020, while reflecting on religion and violence argues that when people become entrapped in what he calls "mental and theological prisons of sectarianism", they become blind and unable to perceive what is valuable due to globalization and how it impacts the religious sphere. Ojeifo states, "They think to welcome this good [of globalization] is to put their faith at risk of extinction. The reaction to this is therefore, one of intolerance to difference, which finds expression in the rhetoric of 'We' vs 'Them' or 'The Chosen vs. The Rest.' When this intolerance is pushed to the extreme, it leads to the vilification and demonization of the other."<sup>15</sup> And in the classic Wole Soyinka saying, we then move quickly from "I am right, you are wrong," to "I am right; you are dead"! It is within this scope that poorly formed individuals turn into a menace to society. While religious formation, formal education, societal education, peer education all fail to produce a worthwhile citizen, you end up with a maniac, closed minded absolutist ready to cause mayhem if his way is not the only way.

Edward Schillebeeckx extrapolates on two claims made by religious adherents, which quickly devolves into violence; first, he points out the claim made that one religion is the only true religion. According to him, "Here the right of the other religion to exist is consistently denied. In a multicolored society such a negation is in itself a virtual declaration of war."<sup>16</sup> Second, is what he calls the established guarantee of the wellbeing of human society based on 'my God alone' syndrome. He avers, "This second foundation for religious violence is the conviction... on the basis of its claim that the god whom they confess is the direct guarantee of the wellbeing of human society."<sup>17</sup> Schillebeeckx, submits that "Even if a religion recognizes itself as one alongside many other religions, it can incite violence because of all kinds of alliances or presumptions, hidden or open, which are in fact bound up with it and therefore because of an implied distorted picture of God."<sup>18</sup> In his final summation, Schillebeeckx states,

...the whole of human kind is the elect people of God. All historical forms of belief in a religious election must be at the service of and subject to the criticism of universal election; otherwise the self-understanding of election in individuals, peoples, or faith communities also pose a threat, involves danger and violence, to those of other faiths or none at all. This can prove a breeding ground of violence.<sup>19</sup>

Religions therefore, to remain through to its classical definition and foundational authority remains true in so far as it does not make absolutists claims to truths about God-even when there are doctrines or scared texts that make these claims. No government or persons can legitimize this sort of claim without leaving the back door open for violence. Anyone can choose to believe in what they believe in, but no one can impose their beliefs on others even when it implies an eternal or temporal damnation of body or soul.

Fundamentalism usually is born of orthodoxy and it is not limited to the religious sphere alone. According to J. Harold Ellens, "Fundamentalism is a psychopathology that drives its proponents to the construction of orthodoxies in whatever field it is in which those proponents live or work."<sup>20</sup> Ellens is of the opinion that "Today we would certainly be forced to include in that category of most dangerous movements both Islamic religious fundamentalism and fundamentalistic Israeli politics. All three of the great Western religions that derive from ancient Israelite religion of the Hebrew Bible are plagued by the presence of this sick psychology and its heretical products."<sup>21</sup>

Most dangerous of all is the danger of misinterpreting sacred texts. Religions mostly approach their sacred text as revealed or divine.

As such, the message of sacred texts are taken seriously. History has shown that many times, religious violence erupts because of the interpretations without context, without an understanding of history, worse still, without education in the field. D. Andrew Kille opines that, "To understand the role of sacred scriptures in shaping violent attitudes and behavior we must recognize that texts do not do anything in themselves. It is only in the dynamic encounter between the text and a specific reader, in a specific community, in a particular historical and cultural context that individuals engage, interpret, internalize and ultimately act on these texts."<sup>22</sup>

It is therefore easy for individuals to take a text out of context and run with it. The sacred texts can be approached from proper exegesis or simply from the point of eisegesis. The combination of wrong interpretation of sacred texts coupled with fanatical extremism is the most dangerous recipe that can quickly result into religious violence.

### Proposals

Even though religions may have been used historically as a tool to back up violence, to maintain power, to subjugate others and often times to disenfranchise the less powerful, religions remain essential to the equilibrium of persons and the society. Religion wields its own power over people's minds and lives. It affects how many relate peacefully or otherwise in a largely pluralistic society. Religion can be used to form cooperation between nations and it can be used to cause wars among sovereignties. No matter how much contemporary culture lays claim to civility, the litmus test is found often in how we employ religious tenets to build or tear down communities. In Olusegun Okedairo's work, titled *Africanism*, he asserts,

...a country may have all the means of modern technology but should it lack the necessary properties... then rather than be said to be civilized is uncivilized. A country's constitution that features the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion among other rights is a civilized one. In the same vein, one of the indices of a country's holy writ that is uncivil or a man's incivility or lack of culture is the absence of these fundamental rights. Hence anybody who discriminates, ridicules, attacks, maligns, maims or kills another on account of religion is not only wicked...but strictly speaking, he is not civilized, he is a pagan, bush man or ill mannered. Call him a zombie, you will not be wrong, because you would have beyond this planet to find a more striking example of mechanical religionists, blind adherent to a verbal

formula without any regard for conscience or common sense.<sup>23</sup>

Politicians, religious leaders and all who hold positions of authority over others must turn away from the seduction of using religion to illegitimately maintain and perpetuate personal gain and power. Rather, leaders ought to explore means by which religions can be a tool for ameliorating all sorts of class misunderstandings. Helena Cobbans is right when she avers, "At their very best, religious ideals and precepts can, when confronted with the chaos and the bottomless tragedy and perversion of the natural order that are induced by war, be used in ways that provide succor to afflicted and healing at all levels of society from the individual person through the group to the nation."<sup>24</sup> If bad people can manipulate religion for personal gain, then good people must work tirelessly to make sure religion is a veritable tool for development and growth.

In recapitulating as part of a few proposal, we can result to a simple antithesis of the problems already enumerated. Namely, we need to pay attention to the fundamentals of the formation of the human person; rounded and wholesome. Anything else creates the conducive atmosphere for the breeding of anarchists and extremists. The interpretative approach to the reading of sacred texts in all religions, when not attended to respectfully and intellectually will continue to be the ontological basis for religious violence. Sacred texts are powerful and portends possibilities for peace or violence. The proliferation of religions around the world into conservative, moderate, liberal, ultra-modern, etc, and the re-interpretation of scriptural texts under these varying traditions remains an underlying factor for religious violence. Unfortunately, very little can be done in correcting this error. It is important also to study and come to an agreement of the interaction between 'Church and State.' There is a need for an anthropology particular to a place and its people to know the degree of separation. Traditionally, some cultures are very religious and their civil codes derive from their religious worldview. In some other climes, this is not so, especially as it can be found in most of western democracies. Most importantly, religions should not be used as a political advantage against other religions within a body politic or as a leverage for the maintenance of power. For religion not to turn violent, it must not be used to give undue advantage to adherents either for jobs, appointments or admissions. Finally, wholistic human formation should create citizens whose altruism is not based on indices like religion, ethnicity or political alliances rather, these citizens must be focused on the thriving of the commonwealth, peace building and non-violence.

## Conclusion

As part of our efforts as religious people or civil society to engage in attempts at proper formation of the human person, we must keep in mind that the world will never embrace one faith or one religion. In living the reality of pluralism of religions, all citizens must accept the task of learning the maxim, 'live and let live.' On this Andrea Riccardi states, "Reality and the religious traditions have constantly given rise to a demand for dialogue and understanding between the different religious worlds. This orientation contrasts with the tendency to retreat into narrow identity and to engage in conflict, and with the use of the religions for nationalistic or bellicose ends."<sup>25</sup> It is for this reason that many countries now create channels to engage differing religious groups within their enclave in constructive dialogues.

In contemporary times, the monotheistic religions must take the lead in a new re-orientation of its adherents towards peace building through more ecumenical and dialogical relationships. Hermann Haring sums it up as a need for "a revitalization of communication, a democratic attitude and an appropriate differentiation of functions."<sup>26</sup> Haring goes further to state that religions for modern man will be less violent if dissidents are not suppressed or condemned as *kafirs* or heretics but engaged and taken seriously as dialogue partners, violence then can be averted. According to Haring, "Those who want to overcome violence credibly must overcome its legitimization, whether manifest or concealed, in their own communities... That makes the chances for the future all the better, the less Christianity and Islam succumb to the seduction of worldly power."<sup>27</sup> We know from history that none of the great religions of the world can be exonerated of the complicity in violent conducts. It is the duty of religion in the modern context to oppose violence in all its forms and overcome its productivity. Yet this nonviolence must not become passivity especially in reaction to political and class oppression of the masses. Religion necessarily must be at the forefront of forming the human person in consciousness, social responsibility and when necessary civil disobedience and active resistance.

More than at any other time in history, religion must become more a synonym for peace in practical ways. For instance, the gathering of world religions and their leaders in Assisi to pray for peace at the invitation of the Pope. We cannot but recall the role of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee in post independent South Africa and the same work done after the Rwandan genocide. The work groups in Islam, even though overshadowed by mainline political Islam must be encouraged and given a spotlight. Groups such as Muslim Peace Fellowship, Muslim Civil Rights Protection Center, and an emerging

number of Muslim intellectuals and authors who all seek nonviolence and means of peaceful resolutions to conflicts. The Eastern religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Brahmanism and so forth, already notionally have the idea of nonviolence within their believe system. Like the West, they have not always fared well in keeping peace. But they also have a chance to reclaim their own history and antecedents to do no evil to anyone.

It is a duty binding on anyone involved in the formation and educating of others to seek to open the minds of those educated that the world does have grey lines, and so it is never directly black or white. For religious violence to be overcome we need a new generation devoid of the psychopathology of religious extremism of all sorts. The greatest challenge of all is to educate people who understand that responding to violence-by-violence will never yield any meaningful or positive results. True religion that has transited to faith will always seek the paths of grace, of peace and work for the welfare of the human family. True religion must abhor violence and imposition of its own creed on non-adherents. True religion must always be committed to the work of healing a broken world and uniting a fragmented people. Outside of these, it is no longer a religion; it is a mechanism of oppression and suppression disguised by those who stand to gain by it as religion.

## Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> Oral interview with Rev. Lou Vallone, MDiv., MA JCB, Coach/Trainer HFC. Interview was held at his residence on March 5, 2020

<sup>2</sup> Raymond Scupin & Christopher R. DeCorse. *Anthropology: A Global Perspective. 9<sup>th</sup> Edition.* (Los Angeles: Sage Publication, Inc., 2021)(Instructional Copy) P. 467

<sup>3</sup> Tivka Frymer-Kensky. *Religions and Violence: An Analytical Synthesis.* The Ecumenical Review.\*

<sup>4</sup> J. Harold Ellens. (Ed.) *The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.* First Edition. (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004), P. 3

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. P. 8

<sup>7</sup> J. Harold Ellens. *Sacred Scriptures, Ideology, and Violence.* First Edition. Op.Cit. P. 256

<sup>8</sup> Alex Alvarez & Ronet D. Bachman. *Violence: The Enduring Problem.* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications Ltd., 2021) (Instructional Copy), P. 3

<sup>9</sup> Leonard Berkowitz. *Aggression: Its Causes, Consequences, and Control.* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), P. 3

<sup>10</sup> J. Harold Ellens. *Sacred Scriptures, Ideology, and Violence.* Fourth Edition. Op.Cit. P. 122

<sup>11</sup> J. Harold. Ellens. Op.Cit. P. 264

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Andrea Riccardi. "Between Violence and Dialogue: The Religions in the Twentieth Century" in Wim Beuken & Karl-Josef Kuschel *Religion as a Source of Violence?* Concilium 1997 Number 4, P. 72

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. P. 73

<sup>15</sup> Emmanuel Ojeifo. "A Global awakening of the Spirit." This Day Newspaper, March 18<sup>th</sup> Part 1, March 19<sup>th</sup> Part 2

<sup>16</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx. "Documentation: Religion and Violence" in *Concilium*, Op.Cit. P. 132

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup><sup>18</sup> Ibid. P. 133

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. P. 136

<sup>20</sup> J. Harold Ellens. (Ed.) *The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. Fourth Edition. (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004), P. 120

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 121

<sup>22</sup> D. Andrew Kille. "The Bible Made me Do It": Text, Interpretation and Violence. In J. Harold Ellens. (Ed.) *The Destructive Power of Religion*. Op.Cit. P. 56

<sup>23</sup> Olusegun Okediaro. *Africanism*. (Lagos, Nigeria: Kofo-David Graphics, 2006), P. 165

<sup>24</sup> Helena Cobbans. "Religion and Violence." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. Dec., 2005, Vol. 73, Number 4, P.1125

<sup>25</sup> Andrea Riccardi. "Between Violence and Dialogue: The Religions in the Twentieth Century." Op.Cit. P. 80

<sup>26</sup> Hermann Haring. Overcoming Violence in the name of Religion (Christianity and Islam) in *Concilium*, Op.Cit. P. 88

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. P. 91