

MORALITY: TRULY AFRICAN, TRULY CHRISTIAN

Paul Okwuchukwu AZUAKOR

Abstract

Morality has to do with principles of conduct or behaviour regarding what is accepted by society as right or wrong, good or bad, correct or incorrect. It could be related to a people's or an institution's code of conduct. The African continent, as well as other continents, has a notion of what is regarded as the acceptable way of doing things or living, the contravention of which is considered immoral. African morality may not be well-documented, but it is discernible from the acceptable ways of life of Africans, as well as their proverbs, folklore, traditions, and culture. The Christian Religion also has its acceptable ways of behaviour, and this can be deciphered from the stipulations of the Holy Bible as well as other Christian documents on Christian conduct, and from the preaching, teachings, and exemplary lived lives of practising Christians. This paper aims to highlight the originality of African and Christian moralities, showcase their compatibility, and explore the possibility of producing a sound and balanced African individual, as well as a more well-rounded global humanity, through their fusion. This is particularly pertinent in the modern era, which appears to be lacking a truly objective morality. An in-depth study and presentation of Christian and African sources are crucial to this paper, with an emphasis on the Nigerian context.

Key words: Morality, African, Christian

Introduction

For about four decades, African thinkers have been making an effort to study, portray, and elucidate African moral and ethical ideals. Like every other human, organized and functional society, the African society has evolved beliefs, values, rules, and principles of conduct for a harmonious and meaningful interpersonal existence and relations in the society. Gyekye (2010) is of the view that African societies, without a doubt, evolved ethical systems intended to guide social and moral behaviour. Gyekye argues that the notion of moral language must be taken seriously as moral language gives deep insight into the moral thinking and beliefs of a people.

The Christian religion also, being rooted in the religion of the Jews- Judaism, has evolved from and transcended that religion and developed a moral conduct for its adherents which incorporates but also surpasses Judaism, in such a way that the Christian is different from a “Judaizer” and is unique in terms of all-round beliefs and moral obligations.

But morality, being, in the extended sense, a human phenomenon, has aspects that can be regarded as culturally and religiously universal; yet there are aspects of religion which both Christianity and Africanity agree on, but the modern world is inclined to jettison. Such aspects shall be pointed out in the closing parts of this discourse.

Morality in General

Morality has to do with rules, norms, and principles of conduct that determine man's way of living inasmuch as man is a being that has found himself in coexistence with other human beings in society. Without society, there will be no morality, and without morality in society, there will be anarchy. Put another way, morality is the set of rules, norms, and principles that depict what is considered acceptable or unacceptable, right or wrong, good or bad, correct or incorrect in human conduct in society. Ethicists have morality for their subject matter, though ethics and morality are sometimes used interchangeably.

Pazhayampallil (1997) has it that “Morality ... deals with regularity. And there is no regularity in man’s actions without a rule or norm; hence morals treat of norms for man’s actions” (p. 3). For his part, Fagothey (1959) defines morality as “quality of human acts by which we call them right or wrong, good or evil” (p. 112). And so far as all human beings are rational and have a sense of judgment to discern right from wrong in their actions, then all human societies possess morality.

Notion of Morality in the African Context/ Possibility of African Morality

While the moralities of the Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa/Fulani, and Akan, respectively, may not each qualify as a microcosm of African morality, it is safe to say, *mutatis mutandis* (allowing for necessary variations and adjustments), that they collectively qualify as African ethics. Gyekye (2010) demonstrates that the concept of morality is aptly captured by the concept of character in Africa, following from the depiction of this in several African tribes studied. Thus, among the Akan of Ghana, when one wants to say “He has no morals” or “He is immoral” or “He is unethical”, one would invariably say, “He has no character”- *Onni suban*. Among the Ewe of Ghana, it would be *Nonomo mele si o*, that is, “He has no character.” Then, among the Yoruba of Nigeria, Gyekye continues, that the word *iwa* in Yoruba means both character and morality (and also means being or nature); while among the Igbo of Nigeria, character is *agwa*, and to say *onweghi ezi agwa* is to say “He has no morality”. For the Shona language, spoken by a significant majority of Zimbabweans, *tsika* refers to morality or ethics. Still, when people want to say that a person has no morality or is unethical, they would use the word *hunhu*, which means “character,” such that Haana hunhu means “He has no character” or “He is not moral” or “He is unethical.” Again, in South Sotho, a particular language spoken mainly in Lesotho and Southern Zimbabwe (Matebeleland), there no equivalent word for “morality” or “ethics”, but if references are to be made to moral or ethical behaviour or life, they use words signifying character or behaviour. Thus, *maemo*, which means character or behaviour, can be used thus: *maemo a mabe* to mean “He has a bad character” or “His behaviour (action) is unethical”. But when they want to talk about good character or acts that are morally right, like “He has a good character”, they use the words *lokileng* or *boitswaro*, both of which mean good behaviour/character.

Dike (2015) in his field work regarding morality and ethno-philosophy in a community (Ogba) in Rivers State, Nigeria demonstrated that the Ogba traditional society had a system of public order, and very important in this system are the norms of public morality. Dike shows that “The measures for the maintenance of public morality were articulated in the spirit of the Ogba Traditional Religion, which not only prescribed the sanction against public immorality but also stood as an indispensable agent of social control in all areas of public morality and probity” (p. 172). In an interview conducted in Ogba land by Dike, the interviewee, Chukwudi outlined the following as abominations (or what Dike also called Adamic sins) which a moral Ogba person must avoid: Murder, Suicide by hanging, Incest and other prohibited sexual relationship, Various forms of stealing, especially of objects regarded as sacred such as yam, Adultery by the wife or sexual relationship during a prohibited early period of widowhood, Dying what was considered a “bad death” resulting from unusual causes or diseases, such as enlargement of the stomach or the scrotum, leprosy, small pox etc.; A cock crowing at odd times in the night; A coconut with two tendrils (“two heads”); All forms of unusual or abnormal developments at child-birth or child development, such as multiple births, cutting the upper teeth first, etc. Other abominations added by Dike include: Kidnapping, dishonest life, indifferent attitude to fellow mankind, lack of respect for elders, overindulgence in worldly pleasures, cheating, unjust means of acquiring wealth by misappropriation of other people’s wealth and money, etc. We can safely say that these outlined “abominations” are writ large “abominations” among the Igbo.

The Concept of Moral Personhood in Africa

Menkiti (1984) believes that in Africa, during childhood, one still has an “it-status”, but as one grows, one begins to attain a widened sense of ethical maturity marked with set obligations and responsibilities,

without which personhood would be considered to have eluded such a person. According to Gyekye (2010), who agrees with Menkiti, in Akan, the word for person is *onipa*, which also refers to a human being, the plural form being people. “In the Akan society, when an individual's conduct very often appears cruel, wicked, selfish, ungenerous or unsympathetic, it would be said of that individual that ‘he is not a person’ (*onnye onipa*).” This paper holds that this also applies in the Igbo and Yoruba worldviews. For example, among the Igbo, if someone is considered to lack morals, it is said, “O bughi mmadu,” which means he is not a person or human being. On the contrary, both in the Akan, Igbo, and Yoruba ideologies, if somebody is seen to be full of such virtues as kindness, humility, hard work, charity, goodness, etc, such a one is considered to be a person- “*O bu nnoo mmadu*” (He is really a person- Igbo language); *oye onipa paa!* (He is truly a person- Akan language). What all this means is that among the Africans, belongingness to the class of humans presupposes possession of desirable qualities sanctioned by certain norms or principles of acceptable and right conduct. This is all the more true in the Igbo concept of person, where *mmadu* or *mmadi*, that is person or human being, literally translates as “there is goodness or goodness exists” or “there is beauty or beauty exists”.

Gyekye (2010) holds that “African humanitarian ethics spawns social morality, the morality of the common good, and the morality of duty that is so comprehensive as to bring within its compass what are referred to as moral ideals (such as love, virtue, compassion), which are considered supererogatory in Western ethics” (p. 228).

Sources of African Morality

The sources can be found in oral tradition, embedded in the wise sayings of the people, their idioms, folklore, and proverbs, among other things. For Gyekye (2010), among the Akan of Ghana, we glean moral principles from proverbs such as: “To possess virtue is better than gold,” or “When virtue founds a town, the town thrives and abides” (p. 228). For Nzomiwu (1999), among the Igbo, *Aboka ife atunye isi*, which means “Over revenge will kill or undo one” (p. 72). This calls for the virtue of restraint in retaliation. Gyekye goes on to hold that the moral language of Africans inspires the concept of character and moral personhood.

Studies have shown that Africans are notoriously or incurably religious. The experience of the earliest colonialists lends credence to this. This has led many scholars to conclude that African morality is inextricably a religious morality. True, there may be connections between morality and religion for a society that is so deeply suffused with religion, but how and to what extent that connection exists must be clarified. So, Gyekye argues (and I quite agree with him) that if morality is a set of social principles that guide a people’s conduct in society, then African morality cannot be said to be dependent on African religion as such since unlike Christianity and Islam, African traditional religion is not a revealed religion where the hero of the religion becomes the oracle of the gods which must be listened to for the conduct of human life. It is in this context that Gyekye (2010), citing K.A. Busia, a Ghanaian sociologist, states that the gods are treated with respect if they deliver the goods, that is, if they succeed, but with sneering contempt if they fail to deliver the goods. This means the people already have their norms and expectations, which the gods are expected to satisfy. This is not different from the Igbo idea of destroying a deity’s shrine and replacing it with another if it fails to deliver the expected goods. Thus for Gyekye, when Akan traditionalists were asked the source of moral norms, none of them made any reference to them being what was acceptable, pleasing or demanded by Onyame (God) but rather, the good is made up of deeds, behaviour patterns, habits considered worthwhile by society because they have consequences for the welfare of humans. Thus, they have humanistic, non-supernatural origins. However, Anderson (2013) argues that among the Akan of Ghana, and by extension, Africans, every sphere of life is suffused with religion; therefore, it is not traditions and society that are the source of morality, but rather religion.

The present writer differs with this position. But whether it is religion, society, or tradition that is the source of morality in Africa, the truth is that there is truly an African morality.

Religion in Africa is not the ground for morality, though it can have an influence. Thus, Azenabor (2008) holds that in Africa, “authority of morality is not identifiable with the Gods” (p. 233). Oluwole presents this as follows: “The implication of making morality a religious concern is therefore unthinkable in a society where there are almost as many gods as there are families” (pp. 233-234). In fact, to do this, for him, will destroy social cohesion. In African society, gods are primarily agents of moral sanctions rather than sources of morality. Yet, based on this, we cannot say that in Africa, as in Protagoras, that man is the measure of all things, for recognizing the limitations of man, the gods still remain those who bridge the gap between the limitations of man and absolute justice. Thus, Masquerades depicting the spirits of the ancestors are called in, in difficult cases, to mediate justice. Thus, according to Nzomiwu (1999), “for the Igbo, Justice anchors or is rooted in the supernatural” (p. 97).

For Azenabor (2008), Ekei in his book, *Justice in Communalism*, demonstrates that, in the African traditional system, justice is communal and is explained in four essential dimensions, namely: personal, social, cosmic and metaphysical, and these are the various channels for the expression of the principle of moral/communal justice. On the personal level, Azenabor argues that, to put the Golden rule principle in practice, among the Esan of Edo State, in what they call *Arumere*, the valuer/or judge, must put themselves in the person of the concerned (a kind of empathy) and to see if such an act was done against them, they could accommodate or tolerate it. On another note, Okeke (2001) holds that justice in traditional Igbo society is relatively person-centred and community-centred. Thus, theft of yam, for example, is seen as an offence against the ancestors, the earth goddess (*Ala*), and against the entire community, not just against the person whose yam was stolen.

African Morality in Various Spheres of Life:

(i)Sex and morality in the African Context

A treatment of morality in any tradition without the inclusion of sexual morality is incomplete. In the African context, sex, whether for procreation or sexual gratification, is perceived as something sacred that must be treated with a certain level of respect and sacredness. In African society, according to Ojo (2010), “traditionally, sex is restricted to family life and only persons who are joined in marriage are expected to have sex” (p. 4). And Kosemani (2000), according to Ojo, states that “when it comes to the question of what the African scale of value is, sex relates to the totality of the human condition. Any deviation is faced with stigmatization” (p. 4). But even in the business of sex, Ojo (2010) holds that certain strictures are placed on the woman such that she is not considered beautiful, in the Yoruba culture, unless she equally possesses *iwa*, that is, character. The girl is expected to experience *ibale* (deflowering) on her wedding night. If she proves a virgin on the wedding night, the bride’s family is proud and the bride too; otherwise, they are treated with ridicule by the groom’s family.

The African sexual morality may not be perfect, however, as in the *isupo* practice among the Yoruba, which Ojo (2010) refers to as surrogate sex (a kind of *adelphic* polyandry where the brothers of a man, while he is still there but can no longer perform, have sex with the woman and produce children for their brother with social approval inasmuch as she has the sexual relations only within the husband’s family) or, according to Azuakor (2021), as in the *Nwunye nhachi* among the Igbo where a woman in a family without males is made to stay back and beget children, especially a possible male child, so as to perpetuate that family, and thus was just like a sextop gratifying the sexual desires of all comers.

(ii) Africans also respect the sanctity of human life. Among the Igbo, there is, according to Okeke (2001), the respect for “The sanctity of human life and the indispensability of the individual in the existence of his community, hence the elaborate rituals which feature at birth and at burial” (p. 139). Human life is regarded as sacred among traditional Africans and should not be tampered with ordinarily.

(iii) The sphere of justice: African morality is very clear on this. We have what is called the EBUB principle among the Igbo (*Egbe bere ugo bere...*), that is, let the kite perch, let the eagle perch, whichever among them that refuses the other to perch, let its wings be clipped. This is a call for inclusivity, without discrimination, and ultimately, for everyone to receive their due. Nzomiwu (1999) sees justice among the Igbo as meaning the following: (a) Justice as equality of rights (EBUB) *Egbe bere ugo bere nke si ibe ya ebela nku kwa ya*, (b) justice as ontological equality (*Isi ntutu akaro ibe ya*- No human being is greater than the other), (c) justice as equality of opportunity (*Ya bara onye bara onye*- Let the advantages or opportunities be equally shared). This Igbo sense of justice, Nzomiwu continues, is reflected in the names the Igbo bear, for example: Ofoka- Justice (*Ofo*), is greater, or Ofoegbu- Justice does not kill, etc. And for Azenabor (2008), “An African indigenous ethics revolves around the ‘Golden Rule Principle’ as the ultimate moral principle. This principle states that, ‘Do unto others what you want them to do unto you’ ” (p. 229). For Kant, this is the principle of reason and universality. It is categorical and so applicable to all and sundry equally (Cf. Christ’s teachings, Confucius in 500 BC, and the Edicts of Hammurabi). Additionally, for Azenabor, it is preferable to ground morality in human interest or welfare rather than in reason. Furthermore, for Azenabor, the African conception is more humanistic, pragmatic, and better in the description of morality than the Kantian/European model, even though both models are rationalistic.

(iv) Stealing: The Igbo, as well as the Yoruba, the Hausa-Fulani, and the other tribes of Nigeria, abhor stealing and regard it as unacceptable behaviour. In fact, among the Igbo, the following are regarded as serious offences for which a married woman should be sent packing: (a) stealing, (b) sexual promiscuity, and (c) involvement in sorcery or making charms. Stealing of yam among the Igbo is considered an abomination- *Nso ala*. We cannot delve into all the spheres of human existence of the African with respect to morality in this paper due to the limitations of time and space.

Morality in Christianity

De Villiers (2019) argues that, beginning from the first part of the 20th Century, there was an increasing agreement in Protestant theology, especially via the influence of Karl Barth, and in Catholic theology, especially through the influence of F. Tillmann, that Christianity has a distinctively unique morality. For De Villiers, Christians gain the idea of their morality in at least the following three ways: (i). Christians gain insight into what their moral actions ought to be in a unique way, namely, the revelation of the will of God through his Word (ii). That Christians justify their moral convictions in a distinctive way, namely, by appealing to God’s will as the foundation of their moral convictions, and (iii). Christian morality has a distinct content in that it contains moral duties which non-Christians do not subscribe to. However, the idea of a distinct Christian morality came to be doubted from the 1960s in both Protestant and Catholic circles, and an alternative position was presented, namely the autonomy of morality with respect to Christian doctrinal beliefs. It is true that the demands of Christian morality can be said to cohere with the demands of general human morality, and if this is the case, where then lies the speciality of Christian morality for it to have its own special delineation? It must be noted that, though there is this loose conformity, they are not and can never be identical inasmuch as the Christian morality is one that sees,

assesses, and judges human actions and relationships from the prism of the person, life, work, and teachings of Jesus Christ. Thus, for Mealey (2009),

Even if the demands of Christian morality are the same as those of human morality, one can still claim that Christian morality has a specific and unique aspect. The mere fact that the Christian interprets his/her life in part through the story of Jesus as revealed in the Scriptures gives the Christian search for truth a different spin. (p. 35).

Meeks (1993) regards early Christianity as a movement of converts. This means Christians saw themselves as persons who had turned their lives around, from one state to another that was deeply and uniquely better. This turning around is depicted in Greek as *epistrophē*, and in Latin as *conversio*, which translates to conversion in English. Heckman (1969) argues that Christian morality should ordinarily mean nothing more than normal customary behaviour of Christians, but rather than that, it has come to acquire a negative connotation of laws and principles commanding and forbidding certain actions: “thou shalt not do this or that”. Heckman, however, posits that following the Christians’ usual inability to keep totally to the tenets of Christ’s teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, it would not be right to say Christian morality is the ordinary, customary behaviour of Christians. This paper would then give a follow-up by saying it is what is demanded of Christians, even if not all of them succeed in keeping it completely. Just as civil morality has laid down rules for every citizen; the fact that some citizens are not able to refrain from stealing, killing, adultery, etc. demanded by civil morality, for example (as in several, if not all other moralities), does not make them no more the demands of civil morality.

For Heckman (1969), Christian morality is other worldly, for when Christ asks the Christian to offer the other cheek, “He was speaking of a type of behavior which takes men beyond mere survival, beyond even a peaceful earthly life” (p. 2). This is because, according to Heckman, following the standards of the world, the moral teachings of Christ make little sense and may not really result to peace, for the humility and meekness associated with turning the other cheek usually lead to disastrous consequences while mercy will often lead to nowhere in this world of competition and cleverness. You will not live in carpeted, air-conditioned luxury by being meek and generous. Thus, the goal of Christian morality is not fortune and luxury, nor is it a life of security and ease in this world. But Heckman further warns that “Christian meekness and mercy are not to be confused with cowardice or timidity. The moral life of the Christian, as that of its Master, raises up all kinds of opposition around it” (pp.2-3).

Sources of Christian Morality

The sources of Christian morality include: the Christian Bible, the Church’s Magisterium, Christian customs and traditions, and the writings of theologians in line with the above-stated three. Thus, writing on the scripture and morality, De Villiers (2019), referring to Bayertz, notes that in a narrower sense, morality is already present in the Old Testament, although still forming part of a comprehensive morality in the wider sense. We now make some analyses and ex-ray of samples of certain moral contents of the Old Testament, here, from the New Jerusalem Bible (1985): Ex. 20:12-17 (parallel to Deut. 5: 16-21), which makes up the contents of the second slab of the Mosaic Covenant, spells out the moral behaviour of Yahweh’s people; “Honour your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land that Yahweh your God is giving you” (Ex. 20: 12; Lev. 19: 3; Eph. 6: 2-3; Matt. 15: 4). Next is, “You shall not kill” (Ex. 20: 13; Matt. 5: 21; Rom. 13: 9). Also, “You shall not commit adultery” (Ex. 20: 14; Rom. 13:9; Jm. 2:11). “You shall not steal” (Ex. 20:15; Lev. 19:11). “You shall not give false evidence against your neighbour” (Ex. 20:16; Deut. 5:20). And finally, “You shall not set your heart on your neighbour’s house. You shall not set your heart on your neighbour’s spouse, or servant, man or woman, or ox, or donkey, or any of your neighbour’s possessions” (Ex. 20: 17, Micah 2:2). This very last commandment (desirous of a moral code like all the other ones), specifically debars Christians from covetousness and avarice. It is evident from the presentation above how the moral demands of the Mosaic Covenant are

reechoed through the Old and New Testaments for the Christian to adhere to in order for there to be a peaceful, harmonious society and in order to be heaven-focused. Tobit chapter 4 is replete with moral demands for the Christian, which are also found in other parts of the Bible, OT and NT: “My child, avoid loose conduct” (v. 13/12); “Do not keep until next day the wages of those who work for you; pay them at once” (v. 14; Lev. 19: 13; Deut. 24: 15). This demands justice and compassion which are essential for peace and orderliness in society. “Do to no one what you would not want done to you” (v. 15; Matt. 7:12; Lk. 6:31). This is the Golden Rule; the moral demand that is so crucial for meaningful coexistence. “Do not drink wine to the point of drunkenness” (v. 15; See Gal. 5:21). Drunkards exhibit socially unacceptable conduct.

In the New Testament, moral requirements for the Christian are already clearly evident. First Thessalonians is a letter of moral advice from Paul: “God wills you all to be holy. He wants you to keep away from sexual immorality, and each one of you to know how to control his body in a way that is holy and honourable” (4:3-4). In verse 9, he spoke about the need for brotherly love. “...make a point of living quietly, attending to your own business and earning your living” (v. 11). Here, Paul encourages industry and for people not to be busybodies. These are so important for the progress and welfare of society. “Be at peace among yourselves” (v. 14). “Make sure that people do not try to repay evil for evil” (v. 15). We can also get a lesson on hard-work from 2nd Thessalonians 3: 10, “We urged you when we were with you not to let anyone eat if he refused to work”. This equally appeals to the sense of justice. The following can be gleaned from the book of Hebrews 12 on Christian morality: “Seek peace with all people” (v. 14; Psalm 34:14); “My son, do not scorn correction from the Lord, do not resent his training” (v. 5; Prov. 3 11-12). Peace is a prerequisite for harmonious living and development in society, and the acceptance of correction leads to improvement in virtues, a diminution of vices, and to personal and social development.

Regarding the Magisterium (the Teaching Authority of the Church), in line with the provisions of the Sacred Scriptures, the Church has established definitive positions on various moral issues affecting Christians. For the sake of brevity, a few key areas will be discussed here. With respect to sexual morality, the Church, in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, CCC (1995) has the following: concerning homosexuality, for example, “Basing itself on Sacred Scriptures, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that ‘homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.’ They are contrary to the natural law” (CCC no. 2357. Confer Gen. 19: 1-29; Rom. 1: 24-27; 1 Cor. 6:10; 1 Tim. 1: 10; CDF, *Persona Humana*, 8). So the Church teaches that moral Catholics should not be homosexuals, but that persons who have such tendencies should practice chastity (CCC, no. 2359). With respect to adultery, the Church teaches, “The sixth commandment and the New Testament forbid adultery absolutely” (CCC no. 2380). Cf. Mt. 5: 32; 19:6; Mk 10:11; 1Cor 6: 9-10. Further, the Church sees adultery as an injustice (CCC no. 2381). It undermines the institution and covenant of marriage, transgresses the right of the other party of a given marriage, and could compromise the good of human generation and the welfare of the children of the marriage (CCC no. 2381). With respect to theft, the Church teaches, “The seventh commandment forbids unjustly taking or keeping the goods of one’s neighbour and wronging him in any way with respect to his goods. Some of the positive moral injunctions, not prohibitions, of the Church are that Christians should tell the truth in all circumstances and also live the truth: “Since God is ‘true,’ the members of his people are called to live in the truth (CCC no. 2465. Cf. Rom. 3:4; Ps. 119: 30.)” On justice, the Church calls Christians to give God his due (the duty of religion) and to also give men their due for harmony and order in society. It also calls Christians to fortitude by which they remain resolute in the pursuit of good, and firm in the right irrespective of difficulties (CCC nn. 1807-1808). On human life, the Church via the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, CDF (1987) teaches that human beings have a primary and fundamental right to life and thus, life must be respected, protected, and promoted at all costs.

Theologians: Karl Barth holds that when Christians want to know the morally good, they look to the will of God as the final measure, and moreover, God reveals what his will is through his Commandments. Villiers holds that following A.A. van Ruler's view, the revelation of God's will for our morality is through what Ruler called "theonomic reciprocity", whereby the Holy Spirit does not just work in or at us but works with us such that our actions can really be regarded as ours. So, for De Villiers (2019), God reveals his will in and through the process of moral deliberation whereby Christians know what is morally right in given situations.

Heckman (1969) regards the source of Christian morality as coming, for example, from the teachings of Christ, wherein he outlines the normal way of life that should be customary to a Christian. Thus, for him, in the famous "Sermon on the Mount" (Matt. 5-7), Jesus taught that those who follow him should be humble, merciful and pure in heart, that they should seek peace, strive to be righteous even in the face of persecution and ridicule; that they should not strike back if stricken, no matter how difficult it might be, but rather to return good for evil done them; that if their things were stolen they should not sue the thief but rather give them more; and most strange of all, that they should love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them. For Heckman, the source of Christian morality is whatever makes the Christian blessed and happy. Jesus did not receive his position on the matter from the religious or social leaders of the day, for they were themselves full of hatred, jealousy, pettiness, and arrogance, and were the ones who eventually murdered Jesus.

Evaluation – Afro-Christian Morality: A Possible Paradigm for the Modern World

This idea is relevant inasmuch as, even for Gyekye (2010), it is not at all the thinking of moral philosophers that the results of their reflective activities are to be restricted to their own societies as such, nor do they imply it. On the contrary, they believe that, in the light of our common humanity, which touches the common sentiments, responses, hopes, purposes, and aspirations of all human beings relative to certain situations, the conclusions of their reflections would, definitely, have implications for the great community of humankind, for the universal human family. This being the case, Christian morality and African morality are a possible applicable paradigm for all of humanity, though still subject to fine-tuning. Stealing and murder, which are universally abhorred, are both abhorred in Christian and African moralities. But when it comes to such a matter as suicide, while Christian and African moralities abhor it vehemently, some modern thinkers and some societies think it could be allowed in certain circumstances, for example, under what they call euthanasia. Christian morality abhors adultery completely, while it might be permissible for males in most African societies. Most of the world's modern societies abhor it, though some modern thinking is inclined to allowing extra-marital sex, for example, though adultery is still legally relevant in South Africa, it is no longer a crime. The Transvaal High Court (as it was then in 2008) confirmed that the innocent spouse, however, still has the right to claim delictual damages against the third party.

While Christian and African moralities would never condone premarital sex (at least in principle), modernity is at home with it but advocates the use of condoms and what they call safe sex even for the unmarried. Homosexuality is abhorrent to authentic Christian morality and to African morality, but modern law is championing it in many societies. These areas of agreement between Christian morality and African morality, as discussed here, which many modern societies are at variance with, are proposed by this paper for possible consideration for universal acceptance, as was previously the case. This is because the truth is always one and unchanging, no matter how it may be bent for convenience or to satisfy certain ideologies.

Conclusion

Of a certainty, there is a Christian morality and there is also an African morality. This has been amply demonstrated in this paper. Both are in agreement in many areas. Both are also rational and thus universalizable. Some of the areas of agreement between Christian morality and African morality, such as total rejection of premarital sex and suicide, should really be reaffirmed universally. It is not a matter of being anachronistic but rather a matter of holding to true reasoning, non-gratification of the self, and being other-worldly in focus. Modernity has even influenced some Christian Churches to accept homosexuality (but the Bible in the OT and NT condemns this totally), and this paper wonders what the holy writ for such Christian Churches is. This is also true in the case of abortion, which African morality and traditional Christian morality abhor. This paper, therefore, calls for a return to unadulterated, original Christian and African moralities in the areas discussed in this paper, which are rational and humane. There is nothing anachronistic or ridiculous about adhering to cherished, correct values, even though the modern man haughtily disparages them.

*Paul Okwuchukwu AZUAKOR

Department of Social Sciences, School of General Studies
Federal Polytechnic Oko
Anambra State, Nigeria
frpaulokwy4all@gmail.com
08035440767

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