

Religious fundamentalism: A threat to African Union

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Abstract

One of the factors that led to the fall of the defunct O.A.U and that may contribute to the collapse of A.U, if no adequate precaution is taken, is the poor understanding of the essence of religion or obscurantism of religion. Poor understanding of the essence of religion has led to its attendant evil of religious fundamentalism and consequent crises. Poor understanding of religion in the sense that some members of a particular religious extract erroneously feel that the only way to salvation is through their own religious teachings (fundamentalism). And this consequently has led to forceful conversion on others and resultant tensions, maiming and outright killing of people (crises). O.A.U confronted with this problem of religious fundamentalism, and other factors, such as, mismanagement of public funds and tribalism, found among its heads of state in different African countries, collapsed. This ugly phenomenon of religious fundamentalism, no doubt, one feels, stares the A.U in the face, and as such, calls for urgent redress. With the above, through the philosophical method of critical analysis, this paper therefore is (a) out to expose the dysfunctional role of religious fundamentalism which includes intolerance, lack of freedom of worship, witch-hunting, sexual abuse, loss of hard earned properties and lives (b) to proffer massive education as a primary means of salvaging the already deteriorating situation and subsequently avert a threat to A.U.

Key words: religion, fundamentalism, threat, African Union, education

Introduction

It is said, once bitten, twice shy (Hornby 2005, 1018) It is on the strength of this aphorism that this study critically examines the current state of African Union (A.U) since its birth at the demise of the Organization of African Unity (O.A.U). Thirty nine years before the birth of A.U., O.A.U was in existence. Among other purposes, O.A.U have the primary objective of promoting the unity, security and solidarity of African States. Confronted with many challenges, among which is religious fundamentalism, O.A.U under the weight of those challenges (mismanagement of public funds and tribalism, in addition) collapsed and became defunct. In its place now is A.U. It was on July 9, 2002, in Durban, South Africa, that African Heads of State launched the A.U to mark the end of O.A.U. This African Union is loosely patterned after European Union and has a like aim of continental integration, among other aims and objectives.

Since the creation of A.U., one may ask, the challenging circumstances, such as, mismanagement of public funds and tribalism that bedeviled O.A.U especially religious fundamentalism, have they disappeared or not? Arguably, the answer is in the negative. This is evidenced in the media, both print and electronic, where religious related issues - religious fundamentalism and its crises- are constantly making headlines. Faced with the above described challenge, is the A.U not about to go the way of O.A.U?

Fuelled by the desire to address the questioning above, this discourse unfurls in the following sequence: section I elucidates on religious fundamentalism, showing their effects on the society as a whole owing to the inextricable link of religion to almost, if not all, the spheres of human endeavours; section II through dialogical processes x-rays the threat of religious fundamentalism

to A.U., while section III ends the discourse with concluding remarks.

Religious fundamentalism

Religion is one of the concepts that defy universally accepted single definition. Among the definitions given by scholars, however, one deduces a thread of meaning that is common to them all. And that is the fact of relationship between the divine and humans, and among humans themselves. In proffering a definition of religion, Arinze sees it in two ways: subjectively and objectively. "Subjectively, religion is the very consciousness of dependence on a transcendent being and the very propensity or inclination to exhibit cult or to worship. Objectively, religion is a complex of truths, laws and rites by which men are subordinated to the transcendent being" (Arinze1970:8)

For Ugwu, religion entails faith and practices involving the relationship between mankind and what are regarded as sacred (Ugwu 2000, 2) Generally, he maintains as well that, religion includes the belief in the supernatural and a code of ethical behaviour (Ugwu 2000:2).

From the above, one observes that religion touches the core being of man as it borders on man's dependency on the Supreme Being and the ethical codes that guide man's relationship to his fellow beings. This is so because no human being denies his or her limitedness in the face of daunting challenges of human existence. In the face of these, man takes recourse to the supposed all-sufficient Being, hence, man's dependency on this Being and the corollary of laws that will guide man in order to live according to the will of this divine Being. This phenomenon, debatably, cuts across all human experiences. This is why religion is overridingly basic in human existence. Underscoring this point,

Madu opined that as it were, religion is the “Strongest element in man and exerts probably the greatest influence in man. It is made manifest in beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and officiant like the priesthood (Madu 1997:19)

The strength element of religion and its influence in man permeate every aspect of man especially politics. It is in recognition of this fact that Melissa Yates cited Perry as arguing thus:

One's basic moral/religious convictions are (partly) self-constitutive and are therefore a principle ground of political deliberation and choice. To "bracket" such convictions is therefore to bracket -- to annihilate-- an essential aspect of one's very self, (Melissa Yates 2007:883).

The struggle of the West whence Christianity originated (Huntington 1996,70) and , by extension other civilizations of the world to separate religion from politics, its success or failure, bears eloquent testimony to the interconnectedness of religion to other spheres of human existence, nay, politics. It is on the strength of this that Habermas admitted the inseparability of the two but advocated that truth contents of religion should be made to have general accessibility to all the participants before it is allowed into the public sphere, what he summarized as translation proviso (Mendieta and Vanantwerpen 2011,25)

From the preceding, one can sense the all-important nature of religion to man. At the same time, due to the unscientific base of religion, its unreliability on empirically proven facts, its rest on historical figures who most times, themselves did not put down in writing their teachings, what one may in sum term fluidity of

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religion; religion leaves itself with large room for distortion and manipulation, hence, the issue of religious fundamentalism as a result.

“Fundamentalism is a concept rather than a label and it relates not simply to religion but to any ideology.” (Hoffman and Graham 2009, 399) Before proceeding further, it is pertinent that we briefly trace the historical development of this concept laden with controversy, Fundamentalism. The coinage of the word “Fundamentalism” is ascribed to Curtis Lee Laws, the editor of a conservative publication named *Watchman-Examiner* (Fazhur Rahman 2013) The word, “Fundamentalism” owes its origin to a series of pamphlets published between 1910 and 1915 called *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*. These pamphlets were written by leading evangelical churchmen and were given free of charge among clergymen and Seminarians. Pointedly, fundamentalism was a reaction to the loss of clout traditional revivalism experienced in America at the advent of liberalizing trends of German biblical criticism. Again, the arrival of Darwinian theories about the origin of the universe made conservative churchmen to react. The result of these reactions was the publishing of the pamphlets (Fazhur Rahman 2013) As said earlier, Curtis Lee Laws, a journalist by profession and a Baptist layman; coined the word ‘Fundamentalist’ as a name for those who were prepared “to do battle royal for the fundamentals.” (Fazhur Rahman 2013) In the year 1920, in the United States of America, “Fundamentalism” was given birth to (Fazhur Rahman 2013) Their stand is that The Bible is the sacred text of Christians and must be understood as literally true. Equally, they see themselves as the guardians of the truth and exclude, more often than not, others’ interpretation of the Bible (Fazhur Rahman 2013) This self-proclamation of the sole

guardian of truth equally showed itself in Fundamentalism of other faith traditions as well. Types of fundamentalism can be identified below: (Fazhur Rahman 2013):

1. Theological fundamentalism – this is the preoccupation of the Christian theological movement saddled with the defense of traditional Christian doctrine in opposition to philosophical and humanist thinking.
2. Political fundamentalism – this is the coming together of theological fundamentalism and the individual devotion of religious believers to fight worldly evils.
3. Cultural fundamentalism – this is the combination of the preceding two above, to form a caricature of culturally unenlightened persons who are insistent on preserving tradition to the detriment of progress.
4. Global fundamentalism – this is informed by many religiously inspired politically influential groups operating in different religious traditions and political systems.

The above types of fundamentalism in the view of the researchers smacks of parochialism and excessiveness. This is because each type relies on their thought contents, and as such, looks down on others. Life is not a one-way traffic. No school of thought has an exclusive preserve of knowledge of reality in its entirety. For a balanced and better life in a particular society, there is need to accommodate different shades of knowledge knowing full well that no one or school of thought knows it all. An epistemic attitude of accommodating others' views is urgently needed to avoid the avoidable harms of parochial reasoning and attitude. This epistemic attitude of accommodating views other than one's should be inculcated in all through massive education.

For a balanced and better society, theological, political, cultural and global fundamentalisms should open up to the views of one another and harness the positive views therein for the progress of society. Relying on their individual thought contents alone and thereby relegating the views of others to the background is indicative of excessiveness which does not augur well for any society at large.

Having seen the origin of fundamentalism and its types, one now articulates its meaning in clearer terms. As noted above, fundamentalism is not restricted to religion alone but to any ideology. The object of this discourse, however, is religious fundamentalism, but a bird's eye view of the concept will not come amiss for a better understanding of the term. For Karen Armstrong, fundamentalism is often misunderstood and incorrectly applied. Therefore, for her, fundamentalists are mostly not violent and fundamentalism in all religions, represent a push back against some form of external imposition and a profound fear of "annihilation", often from modern secularists (Karen Armstrong 2013) Rt. Reverend Chane says that it is a western invention and that the fundamentalist narratives are often framed as a reaction to modern economic and cultural changes (Karen Armstrong 2013) According to Bruce Lawrence, fundamentalism is "the affirmation of religious authority as holistic and absolute , admitting of neither criticism nor reduction; it is expressed through the collective demand that specific creedal and ethical dictates derived from Scripture be publicly recognized and legally enforced." (Bruce Lawrence 1990,78) For Bruce Lawrence therefore, fundamentalism means a specific stamp of religious ideology that is against modernity but not modernist. That is, a jettisoning of the philosophical rationalism and individualism that

follow modernity while at the same time benefitting from some technological improvements that designate modern time.

For Geering, it is a new and modern religious phenomenon which does not faithfully represent the faith in the manner it purports.

Fundamentalism takes possession of human minds and blinds them to the realities which most others accept as self-evident. Fundamentalism fosters a closed mind, restricts the sight to tunnel vision, hinders mental and spiritual growth, and prevents people from becoming the mature, balanced, self-critical persons they have the potential to become (Lloyd Geering 2013)

For James Barr, “Fundamentalism is the imposition upon the Bible of a particular tradition of human religion, and the use of the Bible as an instrument of power to secure the success and influence of that religion.” (James Barr 2013) Lending his thought to the above, Geering says this is seen by the way fundamentalists can violently disagree with one another in terms of how particular passages are to be read and comprehended (Lloyd Geering 2013).

With the origin of fundamentalism stated and its meaning exposed accordingly, one may ask, what is the core, binding elements of religious fundamentalism? What denotes fundamentalism in contrast to religious beliefs as a whole is, the principle of intolerance. To be fundamentalist implies, *inter alia*, imperviousness to dialogue and deliberation (Jose Luis Marti 2013).

Consistent fundamentalists do not value or respect others' views and perspectives when these are different from their own. And for that reason, they do not treat others as autonomous beings, but as simple means for or obstacles to their religious ends (Jose Luis Marti 2013).

Tolerance is here seen as a type of moral weakness, and as such, an unjustifiable agreement with falsehood and evil (Lloyd Geering 2013). Specifically on religious fundamentalism, Lloyd Geering says:

Religious fundamentalists see themselves as the champions and faithful guardians of the ancient truths and moral commandments which constitute the essence of their particular faith. In other words, they claim to be the true exponents of the religious tradition they represent. They often speak of themselves as Torah-true Jews, born-again Christians or true Muslims (Lloyd Geering 2013).

With the foregoing, one cannot but see the absence of what true religion should be. No wonder Geering says: "Far from being the loyal defense of Judaism, Christianity or Islam, fundamentalism is a religious aberration." (Lloyd Geering 2013)

Manifestations, activities of this religious aberration are bizarrely shocking, most times. Innocent worshippers are killed in their different mosques and churches. Young lives are cut down abruptly in their prime. Invaluable properties are destroyed

wantonly. Learned scholars are hunted down and killed. Women and young girls are sexually abused. They generally make life unworthy of living. Seeing the aberration of religion as fundamentalism, one cannot but ask, what then embodies true religion? The insightful definition, interpretation of religion by Lloyd Geering comes in handy here. He says that, the Latin word *religio*, whence it is derived implies devotion or commitment, “a conscientious concern for what really matters.” (Lloyd Geering 2013) Therefore to be religious in any culture is to be devoted to whatever is strongly accepted to matter most in life. Accordingly, religion has been aptly articulated as “a total mode of interpreting and living of life.” (Lloyd Geering 2013) From the foregoing, Geering submits that because human cultures are always changing and evolving, the “conscientious concern for what really matters” shows itself in widely different forms.

Indeed, the modern concern for basic human rights, for the abolition of slavery, for the liberation of women from male domination, for the eradication of racism, for the realization of international peace are a few example of today’s conscientious concerns. Moreover, they often reveal the inadequacies of the conscientious concerns of our pre-modern ancestors, Christians though they were (Lloyd Geering 2013).

The above insight by Geering implies openness and use of one’s rationality in debating about the unfolding developments in

human existence in the background of tolerance. It does not condone evil or foreclose some areas of discussion as untouchable. That is true religion, that is, the function and purpose that true religion serves. Again, none of the world's famous religions in their true nature preaches or promotes intolerance how much more violence. In comparing Christian and Muslim religions, for instance, Omoregbe maintains that, none of them teaches violence, hatred, killing one's fellow men, as the right way to serve God (2012, 62) It is simply man's avarice that brought in the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism. And this should be condemned in no uncertain terms.

Apart from the responses by the conservative churchmen as regards loss of influence traditional revivalism experienced in America and the encroachment of Darwinian theories about the origin of the universe, "whatever religious cause there may be, fundamentalism is rooted in particular cultural, political and socio-economic circumstances and it carries an evident political dimension." (Jose Luis Marti 2013) It is basically an opposition against modernization. "...cardinal feature of modern societies that fundamentalists find objectionable is the notion that all individuals should be accorded the same liberties irrespective of their faith and piety." (Jose Luis Marti 2013).

Man by nature is a dynamic being, natural environment equally changes; it is preposterous, therefore, for some group of people to stick to an old way or ,worse still, dubiously, out of self-interest advocate return to the past that never existed leaving in its wake wanton destruction of properties and lives.

X-raying the threat of religious fundamentalism to African Union through dialogical processes

Africans as a people had their own way of life unique to them. In their traditional setting, they lived among themselves happily and had what one may call, an idyllic existence. This does not mean that they had no squabbles that normally characterize any human community life. In this traditional, original African setting, they had their own religion unique to them as well, called African Traditional Religion. It is an African tradition based on African belief system handed down from their forebears from one posterity to the other which is autochthonous; indigenous to them (Ugwu 2000, 24) This African traditional religion is uniquely non-proselytizing.

This is a religion that has no written literature yet it is 'written' everywhere for those who care to see and read .It is largely written in the people's myths and folklores, in songs and dances, in their liturgies and shrines and in proverbs and pithy sayings (Awolalu and Dopamu 1979:26)

Again,

African religion is the product of the thinking and experiences of our fore-fathers. They formed religious ideas, they formulated religious ceremonies and rituals, they held proverbs and myths which carried religious meanings and they evolved laws and customs which safe guarded the life of

the individual and his community (Mbiti 1975:24).

This religion, among other beliefs and practices, believed in the existence of Supreme Being, Ancestor cult anchored in high morality, etc. It is a religion that emanated on its own through the instrumentality of African forebears.

In the course of history, however, this idyllic existence, so to speak, by Africans anchored on their unique religion was disturbed for good through the encroachment of Western colonialism and the Christian religion that accompanied it. This incursion shook and troubled the consciousness of being of the African people. With further contacts of the African world by other cultures through trading, Islamic religion equally made its inroad into the psyche of the African people.

With the above incursions in the African milieu, the consciousness of being of the African people was thrown into serious crisis as these religions quite unautochthonous and essentially proselytizing wrestled with the indigenous African Traditional Religion. The crisis worsened as Africans were made to view their own religion as fetish, primitive and paganish. The result is that till date, most Africans are neither fully Christians nor Muslims. The rivalry that accompanied proselytizing religions that have entered African continent, tore Africans apart that today religious fundamentalism is a cancer that is gradually but increasingly trying to atrophy the unity of the continent.

In sourcing the causes of the demise of the defunct of O.A.U., Anyaele maintains that, one of it is religious fundamentalism. That the understanding of the member-states of O.A.U. of differing religious beliefs deteriorated into two parallel lines that never met on any issue. Hence, causing a lot of conflicts

within and among member-states of the organization and coupled with other factors, O.A.U. failed to achieve its set objectives (Anyaele 2003, 236).

The question that necessarily emerges is, does this religious fundamentalism still exist? It not only exists, but poses a threat to now African Union. In Africa today, the instances of the existence of religious fundamentalism and their nefariously atrocious activities are palpable. For instance, in Nigeria, Boko Haram group has affected other neighbouring countries like Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Benin Republic. Also:

The threat of religious fundamentalism is nothing new in Uganda; its government has been dealing with the Lord's Resistance Army insurgency that seeks to establish a theocracy guided by the biblical Ten Commandments since 1987. The LRA, composed mainly of forced child-soldiers, has been accused of abductions, rape, sexual enslavement of young girls and murder of innocent Ugandans (Michael Mungai 2013).

Another one is a Sunni group founded in Algeria. It is highly responsible for the renewal of Islamic insurgency in North Africa with the set goals as the overthrow of the Algerian government and the enthronement of an Islamic state instead. With its merger with al-Qaeda, it has become internationalized and with its name as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Its activities went beyond the Sahel to include attacks in Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad, to kidnapping of various European tourists in North Africa (Daniel Bodirsky 2013).

In Nigeria, it is Boko Haram. Boko Haram in Hausa language means that “Western education is sinful”, as such, its agenda are opposition to any interaction with the West and rejection of modern science on the pretext that it is against Islamic teaching (Daniel Bodirsky 2013).

In Somalia and the Horn of Africa is found Al-shabab. Sequel to their hard line ideology, al-shabab’s list of enemies includes the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia (TFG), the United States, the African Union itself and Kenya (Daniel Bodirsky 2013).

In Mali is found the newest religious fundamentalism that emerged in 2012 to hijack the control of northern Mali, Ansar Dine. Their activities have been vicious — banning of music, destroying Sufi shrines in Timbuktu. For the leader of this group, Salafist Lyad Ag Ghaly, “... the word of God does matter—a great deal. Long gone is the man who used to smoke and keep company with the musicians from Tinariwen.” (Binoy Kampmark 2013).

The presence of al-Qaeda cells is apparent along the east coast of Africa, including Tanzania, Zambia, the Comoros, and perhaps other countries....The worry is that these cells allow international terrorists to find safety from arrest and extradition, to raise funds, and to transport people and material for terrorist purposes elsewhere....In all these countries, there are reports of reinvigorated religious activity supported from abroad, particularly from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Much of this is

in the form of building mosques, providing imams and preachers, and developing Muslim social and welfare organizations. These are normal and respectable activities. But if the experience of Kenya, Somalia, and other countries is any guide, these activities can also provide cover and openings for radical influences (Haberson J 2016).

The above is the list which by no means is exhaustive, but the list of major religious fundamentalism as seen in Africa today. Their activities and utterances by no way diminish the reality of their threat to the African Union. They hark back to a past that they seek to re-enact which is heavily doctored with mythology. Their retrieval is ‘selective’ and ‘innovatory’. They chart a route to the past that never existed. Hence, not all Muslims, Christians, members of Judaism, etc., are fundamentalists. The leaders of fundamentalist movements are not theologians, but social thinkers and political activists. (Hoffman and Graham 2009, 389) “...what they attack are the emancipatory traditions, the belief in freedom, equality and self-government, that have characterized modern ideas since the Enlightenment.” (Hoffman and Graham 2009, 389)

Religious fundamentalism is neither Extremism nor Radicalism, it is not Conservatism either. Extremism or Radicalism borders on the degree, range. That is, an ideology can be more or less extreme or radical in the light of how intolerant it is. Conservatism seeks to preserve the authentic existing state of affairs and to avoid mostly sudden or overhauling change. But fundamentalism is total acceptance or total rejection character of

attitudes, tenets, beliefs, creeds, etc. Fundamentalism has no middle way; it is either this or that. Due to its intolerance, fundamentalism is more akin to fanaticism. According to Lloyd Geering, fanatic is from the Latin word *fanum* which means a temple. Hence, the fanatic is a person who believes himself to be fully inspired by divine power, and as such, unyielding to reasoning and will not rest until his or her goals are accomplished with the vehement belief that God's will is done and not his or her own.

The activities of religious fundamentalism in Africa will arguably land A.U., in the same fate of O.A.U. if adequate measures are not timely taken. This is because they will escalate social unrest (killing of innocent people, kidnapping, rape, etc) which is insecurity. This insecurity will scare away foreign investors (which often times are the targets) which is tantamount to economic doom to the continent. With corresponding political instability from the preceding, African Union will be in disarray thereby scuttling the continental integration it set out to achieve. To avert the impending doom, therefore, massive education on the part of all Africans especially the heads of state should be carried out.

Fundamentalists and non-fundamentalists are human beings with rationality. Painstakingly appealing to the rationality of all, educating all through print and electronic media and other informal means, on the irrationality and evils of fundamentalism (in sum, intolerance) will go a long way in salvaging the already deteriorating situation and steer the Union off the course of continental disintegration. In this education, it will be made visibly clear that religious fundamentalism is as a result of individual selfish interest: the hunger for political power and wealth. That they do not in any way represent truthfully the

teachings they purport to portray. It is imperative therefore that people should curb their cupidity, the quest for selfish gains in the guise of religion.

In this education as a way out also, it should be etched of the hearts of the fundamentalists that it is unjust for them to impose a particular way of life unto others whereas they themselves abhor totally such a move from others. Is it not an act of selfishness, for one to dictate for the other while the other is not allowed to dictate for one? Is it not an act of injustice? Is it not the height of irrationality? As a corollary, this education should uncover the deliberate suppression of the use of rationality on the part of the fundamentalists. That is why they refuse dialogue, and as such, are intolerant. Through emphasis on the profundity of reasoning's revealing power, its power of uncovering truths, realities: use of critical thinking should be emphasized and encouraged to permeate facts, issues of life so that people will not be led or follow others sheepishly.

The preceding ushers in the necessity of building schools. Heads of state in African countries should of necessity take up the issue of bringing education to the grassroots as in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as articulated by UN. It is lack of proper education that makes religious fundamentalism to thrive. This is evidenced by the fact that most people recruited into these groups are illiterates, uneducated people in Africa. Well-structured education trickling down to the remotest areas in Africa will lessen the current hotbed for religious fundamentalism in Africa. Education as advocated in this piece should have philosophy enshrined in the curriculum as a course, introduced from primary to tertiary levels. This will enable the young that form the recruitment base of religious fundamentalism in Africa to have minds of their own that is not unduly influenced by the

so-called elderly ones. This is because, through the instrumentality of philosophy as the discipline that has the power to unlock the prison gate of people's use of reasoning, these youths will be able to critically dissect issues and choose the rational options available. Hence, seeing for themselves the evils of religious fundamentalism, and as such, abhor it in its entirety.

Equally, Heads of State, opinion leaders, African statesmen and the generality of well-meaning Africans should embark on aggressive awareness campaign. This campaign should be done with every available channels of communication: media print and electronic, workshops, seminars, village square meetings, etc. The onus of this campaign should be to expose the ills of religious fundamentalism as has been shown above and to emphasize the use of one's rationality.

People should appreciate the fact that change is part and parcel of human existence and that modernization is nothing but natural occurrence that has to be appreciated instead of opposition to it. This discourse in no way advocates the erosion of cherished good African values or useful values from other cultures but rather espouses an assimilation of good values through rational dialogue that guarantees general understanding and peaceful co-existence.

When the above remedies are carefully and thoroughly implemented, African Union would have then dumped the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism in the dustbin of history. This is because the core of religious fundamentalism-lack of dialogue, intolerance- would have been turned on its head. That is, enthronement of the use of rationality which breeds dialogue, tolerance and peaceful co-existence would have become a commonplace. With this, mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence will be the order of the day.

In line with the above advocacy for the use of rationality, critical view on issues; Habermas' sense of communicative rationality dovetails well with the stand of this piece when he said that:

This concept of *communicative rationality* carries with it connotations based ultimately on the central experience of the unconstrained, unifying, consensus-bringing force of argumentative speech, in which different participants overcome their merely subjective views and, owing to the mutuality of rationally motivated conviction, assure themselves of both the unity of the objective world and the intersubjectivity of their lifeworld (Jürgen Habermas 1984, 10)

Concluding remarks

In this piece, the researchers are not of the view that religion in itself is bad. Rather, religion has essentially the positive attribute of uniting, promoting, integrating and bonding people of different backgrounds. But again, it can be used to achieve the exact opposite. In this paper, we are saying that man has manipulated religion to his selfish and negative ends, hence, the issue of religious fundamentalism. To avert this poor understanding of religion and the disadvantages it present, the remedies as proffered in this work need to be hearkened to.

Man is a dynamic being with differences living in an ever evolving world. To appreciate and benefit from these differences, critical mind and tolerance engendered by education are of utmost importance. It is through critical mind and tolerance that man, in

the background of rational dialogue, can peacefully co-exist irrespective of different religious bents. For African Union, therefore, to achieve its set goal of continental integration, massive education as advocated here: well-structured into the fabric of African States, with philosophy as a course compulsorily etched on the curriculum of schools from primary to tertiary stages and, aggressive awareness campaigns on the ills of religious fundamentalism, are the hallmarks.

How will this type of education come about, one may ask? It calls for restructuring of curriculum of education in Africa. That is to say, curriculum planners in Africa should bring in elements of philosophy into primary school level and upward not only in the tertiary institutions. This will enable every African child to begin early to imbibe the art of radical and critical thinking. It will enable them to be independent minded, and as such, not ready tools for religious fundamentalism and its attendant evils. At this point, one will anticipate the reservation that most Islamic parts of Africa will frown at this postulation because Islam seems to be impervious to such ideas. One thinks that this reservation is unfounded. This is because, in the history of philosophy, one reads about such Islamic scholastic philosophers like Al-Ashari, Avicenna, Averroes, Algazel, etc. This shows that Islam is not antithetical to philosophy, and as such, the ideals above. Those who portray Islam to be averse to philosophy and dialogue are simply those reaping from the current unjust structure whereby they use the uneducated, illiterate Muslims to achieve their selfish political ends. With these said, African leaders of Islamic extract should have a rethink and have the interests of African development (universal and objective thoughts) uppermost in their hearts and not their narrow selfish gains (particular and relativistic thoughts). It is this rethinking that will urge them to

throw wide-open the establishment of philosophy departments in their universities where it is hitherto not established. So that African youths in that area can think on their own and have the opportunity to know what is good and right and act accordingly. It is in this manner that mental de-colonization of Africans in those areas will start.

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