

ETHICS, RELIGION AND HUMANITY: RETHINKING RELIGION IN 21ST CENTURY AFRICA.

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ABSTRACT

First and foremost, religion is a human activity. Part of this understanding is that man is at the center of religion. This holds two implications. One, man is religious for self-development and betterment. Two, since man is thrown into existence with other social beings, his religiosity directly and indirectly affects other social beings. He is therefore not alone in his religious activities. Thus, there is a relationship between religion, ethics and humanity. However, more often than not, religion is alleged for being a root cause of all human predicaments; that it provides viable and abundant fuel for conflict such that in every continent of the world, there are troubled spots rooted in religious conflicts. Although this allegation may have its older roots in Marx and Lenin, however, the condemnation it has received in recent times is sequel to the various lives and properties that have been wasted on account of it. More so, exploitation, corruption and other evils have been committed in the guise of religion. This, notwithstanding the paper attempts to argue that religion qua religion is absolutely virtuous and not necessarily vicious and that the above allegations are the results of inhuman and unethical practices in religion and that these problems can be minimized when religious adherents appreciate the relationship between religion, ethics and humanity. The paper through its analytic and expository character exposes with concrete examples these inhuman and unethical practices in religion with reference to Nigerian experience and thereafter calls for reorientation on the part of religious practitioners and the consequent repositioning of religion for all- human benefits.

KEYWORDS: Religion, Marx and Lenin, inhuman, unethical.

INTRODUCTION

Man is not alone. He is self-transcendence (vertically, with God and horizontally, with other humans) in his religiosity. It is because man is a social being, that he is a moral being. In other words, morality presupposes the social realities of man. Since his religion is practiced in the context of other social beings, it is not out of place to say that his religion has a social dimension, and as such, a moral dimension as well. It is when we are talking of how man ought to relate socially or within the context of the society that morality comes into play. Since man's religious dealings are not only with himself but also with others, morality (ethics) sets a standard of conduct in man's religious activities. Ethics is also brought to bear in his dealings with the transcendent since this is done within the communal context. Seen in the above light, there is therefore, a conceptual relationship existing between ethics, religion and humanity. Religion, though a transcendental

experience i.e. a relationship with the transcendent, is however done within the communal context. One's religious faith and practices affect other people directly and indirectly; and in so far as one's religious actions hold implications (good or bad) for other people, there is therefore, inescapable need for ethical appraisal of one's actions. This is because the goodness or badness, the rightness or wrongness, the appropriateness or inappropriateness of one's actions, is the concern of ethics. Thus, the intricate relationship among our three concepts: ethics, religion and humanity. In this paper therefore, we shall be grappling with such pertinent issues as, what is religion, what should constitute a right religion, should our religious practices be brought under ethical appraisal? Within the context of humanity, what is the right attitude to be adopted by religious practitioners and adherents? Our focus underscores the point that right religion practiced within the dictates of sound ethics can enhance

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human flourishing.

The various human predicaments plaguing the world in general and Nigeria in particular leave much to be desired. Central to these human predicaments is the eruption of violence and conflicts. There is a constant and recurrent effort at addressing these conflicts and predicaments plaguing human society. What is of great concern is that most of these conflicts and predicaments are traceable to religion. Indeed, experientially speaking, religion has its share on the precarious condition of human existence the world over and Nigeria in particular. On the global scene, terrorism which is at the moment a hydra headed monster shaking even the most powerful nations, is and can be traceable to religion – there is a religious dimension to terrorism (Olson, 2002: 37). In the Nigerian setting, it has been a catalogue of conflicts, bloodshed, lootings and all kinds of exploitation. This seems to confirm the Marxist perspective on religion. Lenin (1979:102) writes:

Religion is one of the forms of spiritual oppression which everywhere weighs heavily upon the masses of the people over – burdened by their perpetual work for others, by want and isolation ... those who live by the labour of others are taught by religion to practice charity while on earth, thus offering them a cheap way of justifying their existence as exploiters ... Religion is the opium for the people. Religion is a sort of spiritual booze in which the slaves of capital drown their human image their demand for a life more or less worthy of man.

This opprobrium against religion is further confirmed in the writings of Ilega D.I. (2001: 6) when he quotes Maduabuchi Dukor as saying that “in every continent of the world, there are troubled spots rooted in religious conflicts”. Ilega, in the same work further quotes Huston Smith who states, “We live in a world that is scourged with animosity, factions, fractions, hatred and war ... religion gets implicated in these conflicts”. These and many more are such opprobrium, though some have been largely exaggerated.

Be that as it may, our mission here is not to argue the contrary (that is, that some of the human predicaments plaguing our world today especially Nigeria can be traceable to religion) for

to do that will amount to arguing against the obvious; it will amount to intellectual bias and prejudice and as such fallacious. This is so because the realities on ground, the various conflicts, wars, bloodshed, and exploitations are enough evidence to confirm the indictment against religion. However, the strength of this paper lies in its attempt to argue that the said conflicts, wars, bloodshed, wanton destruction and looting of properties, exploitations etc., are results of “bad religion” (Obioha 2005: 46), inhuman and therefore unethical practices in religion by religious practitioners. Religion qua religion is intrinsically no evil. Religion is absolutely virtuous rather than vicious. This is so because there is a strong relationship between religion and morality. Given this anomaly on one hand, and this relationship on the other hand, the paper therefore calls for a change in attitude on the part of religious practitioners and the consequent repositioning of religion for full human and societal benefits. Bringing ethics to bear on our religious activities and to see to it that our religion does not interfere with the well being of others can do this.

The Meaning of Religion.

The debate about the meaning of the word “religion” is yet to be resolved. This problem becomes more acute in our time as there is increasing emergence of many sects, cults, and movements, all seeking the title “religion”. Because the word “religion” affects almost all areas of human life, it has come to mean so many things to so many people; each person defining it from the perspective it best affects him or her. As such, it has been defined philosophically, anthropologically, psychologically, sociologically, phenomenologically, culturally, theologically and even spiritually. The philosophical approach tends to an abstract identification of the pure essence of religion as such; Anthropology of religion studies how religion functions in the culture of a people; sociology of religion tries to discover how the beliefs and practices of society function and contribute to social structure; a phenomenological approach tends to search for certain visible characteristics common to each of the world major religions. In theological religion, efforts are made to isolate one religion as the only viable option; psychologically religion is defined from the point of view of the feeling of absolute dependence, the experience of the ‘holy’. Thus defined, its negative implication leads to an understanding of religion as that which

happens or comes into existence at the very point where human beings can no longer bear their sense of dependence, their anxieties, their wishes, or even their poverty, as argued by Obilor John (2002: 62). From a functional perspective, religion is located at the intersection of sociology and culture. Here, religion is defined within the context of the role it plays in responding to and in meeting with the social needs and how it shapes culture.

In the light of this; some examples of how religion has been variously defined by religious scholars or philosophers of religion will suffice. Etymologically, religion is derived from the Latin noun 'religio'. This is closely allied to other three verbs 'religere' meaning "to turn to constantly" or "to observe conscientiously", "religare" which means "to bind oneself (back)" and 'reeligere' meaning "to choose again". Meanwhile other definitions have been offered. Esthin Carpenter holds that religion denotes the whole group of rites performed in the honour of the divine being. These make up a particular cult or worship ordained and sanctioned by authority or tradition. It means a body of religious duties, the entire series of sacred acts in which the primitive act is expressed (Esthin, 1913: 4). According to A.D. Gilbert (1980: 5) religion

describes any system of values, beliefs, norms and related symbols and rituals, arising from attempt by individuals and social groups to effect certain ends, whether in this world or any future world, by means wholly or partly supernatural.

Gilbert accepts that the term supernatural is fraught with complexities in certain contexts. However, the merit of this definition is that it does not limit religion to a belief in a God or gods and more so, it does not forget the religious dimension of man, which opens him beyond himself and towards a superior power, a supernatural reality. To W.P. Alston (1967: 40) religion is "the belief in an ever living God, which is, in a Divine mind and will, ruling universe and holding moral relations with mankind". According to A.C. Bouquet (1914: 16) religion is a fixed relationship between the human entity, the sacred, the supernatural, the self-existent, the absolute or simply God.

Joseph Omoregbe and John Obilor provide another definition that captures the relationship between the human self and the divine being. Omoregbe defines it as essentially a relationship, a link established between two

persons, namely, the human person and the divine person believed to exist (Omoregbe, 1993: 3). To John Obilor, religion is "the whole complex of attitudes, conviction and institutions through which we express our deep fundamental relationship with Reality and not excluding the created order (Obilor, 2002: 63). In this definition, Obilor expresses the social dimension of religion: it does not only involve our relationship with the supernatural, but also our relationship with other created beings, humans inclusive. Conceptually understood, religion is self-transcending. According to Obilor's definition, it involves a whole complex of attitudes that solidify into and also define our relationships both with the supernatural (God) and fellow humans. Our conviction about God, His nature and the demands He makes on us daily, surely determines our attitudes and relationships towards other fellow humans.

Be that as it may, what we can discover as characterizing any definition of religion are belief in a supernatural being, rituals, the concept of the sacred, prayer, religious feelings – such a sense of mystery and awe and equally the sense of intersubjectivity or human relationships. Thus according to this author in another work (Obioha, 2005: 39), he sees religion as involving a feeling of dependence on a higher power as providing the ultimate foundation for morality or as encapsulating the truth about the universe, man's place in it and human relationships.

The Meaning of Ethics.

Although the meaning of Ethics is equally fraught with conceptual difficulties such that a conflated definition of Ethics has been elusive, yet all scholars seem to agree that whatever the definition of Ethics may be, it must be premised on the determinateness of the rightness or wrongness of voluntary human actions. Thus, Ethics is the science and art of proper behaviour; the branch of Philosophy that studies human actions in terms of their being right or wrong, licit or illicit. It is the science of good and evil. The good being that which is to be done and the evil that which is to be avoided. As a science of the rightness or the wrongness of human conduct and behaviour, it bothers itself on the actions, which are permitted and may be done or actions, which are forbidden and may not be done (Pantaleon, 2005: 22). When Thomas Higgins (1956: 8) defines Ethics as "the philosophical" science which establishes the moral order of human acts", he was attempting to provide a guideline, an ethical code and yardstick against

which human actions are measured. Any action which measure up to this code is right otherwise it is wrong, unethical and therefore not permitted to be done. Such actions or inactions cut across all spheres of human endeavour be it religion, economics, politics etc. Because Ethics deals with values, standards of human behaviour and determinants of social actions, it helps to evaluate human actions and inactions in any sphere of human endeavour and pronounce them good, permitted, virtuous or bad, evil, forbidden and vicious. The essence of this is to make possible a harmonious and peaceful coexistence in the society and for the realization of happiness, which is the raison d'être of human existence.

The relevance of this in religion and religious practices is underscored in the relationship between religion and morality. Now, we are well aware of the difference between morality and ethics, however to the extent that ethics is the standard or the science that judges the morality or otherwise of human voluntary actions, and morality the principles concerning good or bad, right or wrong actions or behaviour, to that extent we may use the two terms interchangeably. Although some scholars like Bernard Haring (1964: 123) have argued that morality is inseparable from religion, it is worthwhile to note that ethics or morality is not religion, nor is religion synonymous with morality. This is because it is not necessary to be religious or to belong to any religion in order to be moral. However, there is a strong relationship between religion and morality. Morality is the judge of religion. Any religion that preaches or encourages immoral actions reveals itself as a false religion or at least it shows itself ipso facto to be under an illusion (Omoregbe, 1993: 8). We know and do see religious leaders make moral mistakes; we do see religious leaders do morally reprehensible things. In 1970, for example, Jim Jones, leader of the People's Temple, commanded his followers to drink Kool – Aid laced with cyanide and to give the drink to their children as well. Those who would not follow the command were either injected with the poison or shot. The episode, known as 'the Guyana Massacre', is a chilling example of how religious leaders can go wrong. The more traditional religions have been known to make serious moral mistakes as well. The Roman Catholic inquisition, which involved the execution of religious heretics, provides a frightening example of moral error (Callahan, 1988: 13). Directly and indirectly these moral mistakes hold serious implications not only for the well being of the person making them, but

also for other social beings. At this level, these mistakes become more worrisome.

Religious reasons are perfectly good reasons for deciding how one will conduct one's own life when one's actions are self regarding. But when the liberty and welfare of other persons are involved, interfering with liberty or harming another acquires a moral justification that must be able to stand on its own philosophical feet, independent of appeals to religious authority. One does not have the right to violate the moral rights of others or to otherwise harm others for religious reasons those others do not share. This explains why the self-acclaimed prophet Emeka Ezeugo widely known as Rev. King of The Christian Praying Assembly in Nigeria was recently tried in the law court for murder and attempted murder of some of his church members on the account that they are committing fornication. In fact, this is morally and legally reprehensible.

Morality is therefore the yardstick with which true religion is distinguished from false religion, and true religious actions from false religious actions. If any body claims that God commanded him to perform an action that is immoral, he reveals himself to be under an illusion, for God can never command or demand anything that is immoral. We note further that if any action is morally reprehensible, it is equally ethically wanting. It is on this logic therefore, we want to look at the relationship that exists between Ethics, religion and humanity in our society. Religion void of ethics is a human tragedy.

Humanity

We see humanity as comprising the human race considered as a whole. Humanity in this context represents the human person who is a being-towards; a teleological being. It has a purpose and an end. The ultimate end of human existence is human happiness, it is the human good. Whether we see it from the perspectives of Aristotle's ultimate good or Aquinas' summum bonum, the good life for man consists in the steady enhancement of the human person. The human person is the basis of our practical judgment of the good. The concept person is the key concept in any discourse that involves the meaning, dignity or destiny of man. With this understanding, every human activity is meant to serve the dignity and destiny of man. Every field of human endeavour is an index for the flourishing of humanity. Politics is valuable so long as it adds to human destiny. Economics is

supposed to enhance the dignity of man by developing paradigms for meeting human needs and wants. We engage in the science of society (Sociology) because we want to better understand the workings and structures of human society all for the benefit of humans. We get into religion to find meaning for our lives and existence, to derive faith and hope in hopelessness and receive courage when life seems meaningless and absurd. Religion builds in man the right attitude for friendship and other intersubjective relationships. In all of these, the ultimate goal is the flourishing of humankind and desirable social harmony. But when religion (and indeed any other human endeavour) is practiced against the dictates of sound ethics, everything falls apart and human life becomes precarious. Therefore, for religion to contribute its own quota in human good, every practitioner of religion must have the destiny of man in view.

Religion Void of Ethics and Human Face: The Nigerian Experience.

Like we briefly stated in the introduction about the opprobrium being mounted against religion, such ill sentiments against religion is not without some reasons. Unfortunately enough, these reasons are overwhelming and therefore viable pointers to the fact that religion has been used as an instrument of oppression and exploitation; that religion is central in all human predicament; that in every continent of the world, there are troubled spots rooted in religious conflicts; that we live in a world that is scourged with animosity, factions, fractions, hatred and war, and that religion gets implicated in these conflicts.

Granted that, the thesis we put forward in this paper is that religion that is void of ethics is a human tragedy. We therefore strongly advise that every religious practice should embody sound ethics, which is capable of enhancing human flourishing both at the individual and societal levels. One major indictment against religion is that it breeds conflicts that most often have led to wars and massacres. Examples of such wars and massacres are readily available at least in Nigeria. Nigeria in the 80s was marked by conflict, turmoil and stagnation. Between 1980s and now, the state has been engulfed in a religious quagmire that threatens to destroy it. Several properties and lives were lost in the Maitatsine uprising in Kano city from 18th to 29th December, 1980; in the Bulunkutu uprising in Maiduguri from Tuesday, 26th to Saturday, 30th October 1982; in the religions riots in Kaduna

from Friday, 29th to Sunday, 31st October, 1982 and in the violent demonstrations in Sabon Gari, Kano by the Muslim Student's society on Saturday, 30th October 1982 (Lawuyi, 1991: 230). Other more recent conflicts have occurred in Kaduna, Kano, Bauchi, Katsina, Lagos, Yola, Jos etc. with attendant wanton destructions of properties (Anyanwu, 2002: 70). The occurrence of these conflicts cannot be divorced from the activities of religious leaders both of the Christian religion and Islam, which are the two major religions in Nigeria and between which these conflicts often occur. Religious leaders manipulate the emotions of adherents to serve their own selfish ends. Our so-called religious leaders are often involved in setting one religion against the other. This they do by claiming that their own religion is the best and the only true religion. This is a manifestation of intolerance, the "Us against Them" philosophy. This is the way our literary giant Wole Soyinka captures it in his Annual lectures on Religion delivered at the University of Ibadan on 25th January 1991 (Oladipo, 1991: 128).

I believe, therefore I am, you disbelieve, therefore, you are not, and therefore, you count for nothing. You are subhuman; you are outside the pale of humanity, outside the concept of community.

They persuade and teach their followers to believe that their religion is the best and the only true religion. Others are no religion or worse still false religions. Even within religions, some religious leaders bar their members or followers from visiting other groups or sects, listening to them or participating in whatever they do. These religious leaders do this because they deify themselves and pose themselves as "Gods of men" having monopoly over knowledge and rationality. The ethical implication (of this) is that by this, they abuse the fundamental rights of their followers – their rights to freedom of worship, association and most fundamentally gag their freedom to exercise their rationality to choose or not to choose. These so called religious leaders think their thoughts for them make their choices for them and most worrisomely render them *zombies* and robots having no freedom and liberty. These leaders do incite their followers to carry out wanton destruction of lives and properties at the least provocation. The part the 'Alamajiris' have played in this is a good example. This is unethical, and a factor responsible for unhealthy competition, conflicts,

intolerance and animosity. Thus, one of the social consequences of the phenomenon of religious intolerance is “the denial of human value of the sanctity of human life. Whether our point of reference is Lebanon, India, and Sri Lanka or, even Nigeria, the result is the same – lack of mutual understanding between religions and the promotion of worsening interactions among their adherents. Although some people could argue that most of these problems are psychological and religious-linguistic problems, which will require psychological and religious solutions rather than moral rescue. We do not deny the fact that there are psychological and religious dimensions to these problems, rather we argue that these problems do affect the well being of others and to that extent, are ethical matters which also require ethical solutions.

Another disturbing practice in religion, which is void of ethics, is the issue of commercialization of religion. Writing on this, George Ekwuru (1999: 104) says, “...that the two flourishing business institutions today are the commercial banks and the religious commercial institutions”. The mad rush for money and the excessive desire to get rich by all means possible have turned religion into a business venture. Religion, which is supposed to be an antidote for atrophied materialism, has been overpowered with the lobotomy of secularization. Religion in its various ramifications is gradually losing its social significance and influence on the social character formation. The prevalence of excessive materialism has altered the value system and has immensely diminished the significance of religion in the life of the people. Today, people put on the sacred masks of religion to commit all kinds of ritual atrocities for material purposes. The motive of some people to set up religious organizations is to exploit the people. This is how George Ekwuru (1999:106) puts it.

The bebies of confused people, hard-beaten by the relentless sinister forces of hunger, ignorance, lack of initiative and creativity are assembled in their dazed state of hallucination to give them the hope of financial resurrection and physical well-being, only to be robbed of the little they have by the New Ministers.

This cannot be farther from the truth for we see instances of this from time to time. People have been told to kneel down for prayers,

and in the process their money and personal belongings disappeared (The Statesman, July 20, 1998). In the name of religion, people have been maltreated, abused and forced to do what is against their personal values and convictions. The followers more often than not succumb to their leaders because they (their leaders) wield enormous powers and influences over them. However, some do not and are ready to face the wrath of their leaders. The earlier examples of Jim Jones and Rev. King are good examples. Be that as it may, religion or what we may now call ‘true religion’ is of great value and importance to human life and the society. How these values can best be realized is the focus of the next section.

Ethics, Religion and Humanity: Towards realizing Religious Values.

There is no gainsaying the fact that religion is a veritable tool for the enhancement of human existence and national development; that religion is the only legitimate phenomenon that answers those fundamental questions that lie outside the competence of science (Obioha, 2005:33-49); that religion is a potent factor capable of building a nation where peace and justice reign supreme (Ilega, 2001:11); that without religion, the flowering of human family and the survival of the human race will be impossible; that it is religion (with its values of love, selflessness and brotherhoodness) which turns democracy into the service of a people by the people and for the people (Obilor,1988:29); that religion, ... is the beacon which lights up all our human knowledge; our power of knowing is a reflection of the Divine word...Religion is the ally of reason, of its very nature it is on the side of intellect, it has predilection for philosophy – that is for disciplined thinking. It demands honesty, insists that the mind should not function in an artificial, capricious, or vacillating fashion, but generously, perseveringly, penetratingly (Montini, 1960:643); that Democracy and National survival will continue to elude Nigeria unless everybody in government carries the ideals of his religion into whatever he does (Odumuyiwa, 2001:94). These and many more are the values of religion rightly practiced as argued by the above thinkers.

However, these values of religion will be far from being realized unless the relationship that exists between ethics, religion and humanity is appreciated and maintained. This relationship shows that morality is the foundation upon which any meaningful religion is grounded. It also shows that religion well practiced is and should be a powerful contributor to the flowering of

human society. But when religion is badly practiced, it mars this relationship and provides viable and abundant fuel for conflicts and predicaments plaguing human society. This should not be because religion is meant for man in that it is a process through which man authenticates his life towards anything, which he holds sacred, and towards his fellow human beings. Religion therefore helps to birth the authenticity of man in his personality and humanity. In fact this is the supreme value of religion, I suppose. The clue to the meaning of ultimate reality, in fact any reality, is found in the human person. Religion as a part of reality finds its *raison de départ*, *raison de arrivé* and ultimately its *raison d'être* in the human person.

Humanity is an end in itself and every reality including religion is meant to serve this end. Failure to recognize this fact and serve this end jeopardizes the concept of humanity and makes nonsense man's authentic existence. This is why respect for personality and humanity is the cornerstone of ethics. In this context, ethics interrogates religion, keeps watch on it so that it (religion) can achieve this virtue and value. Anything short of this is religiously unethical. It is unethical to abuse the fundamental rights of people – their rights to freedom of worship and association in the name of religion. When religious leaders bar their members or followers from visiting other groups or sects, listening to them or participating in whatever they do; when the followers cannot exercise their rationality to choose or not to choose certain courses of action not because these actions are morally wrong, but because their leaders do not subscribe to them, it becomes a denial and an abuse of their freedom. This is unethical because religion is a means through which man authenticates himself. Freedom as an ontological attribute of man is part of this authenticity. Anything that gags this freedom affects man's authenticity.

Religion does not gag man's freedom. Any religion that does this is pseudo religion. Religion does not depersonalize and dehumanize man. Rather it helps man to know and appreciate his freedom by perfecting his personality. This is because God the center of religion is the perfect personality, the supreme cause of all things, while all finite personalities are faint reflections of him. The interest of man is at the heart of religion. Corroborating this, James says, 'True religion and undefiled before God and the father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction...' (James 1 vs. 27). True religion is always interested in bettering the lots of

humanity. God is a communion and we are called to share in this communion among ourselves and with God. The good of the individual is contained in the good of all. True religion believes in and enhances the unity of humanity. Religion does not encourage racism, segregation and separation of human beings. It does not consider one race as being superior to another, for in God both the Jews, Greeks and Gentiles are one. In fighting for and enhancing the cause of the individual person, it enhances the cause of all humanity. This is because humanity is created in the image of God (*Imago Dei*) and as a result all share in the same ancestry – God the father of all. Every human person is first God's child before he is a member of any religion. So, religion among other things unites and enhances our humanity. We therefore state that any single denominational religion, which regards itself as being superior, is making a preposterous, immoral and sinful claim. Defining the oneness and brotherhood of all mankind along religious views and affiliations is doing disservice to humanity.

In his religious practice, man is free to owe allegiance to his religion, but when that allegiance conflicts with the will of God and the common good of man as man, that religion shows itself to be immoral. Any religion that degrades human personality or encourages its degradation is unjust and ipso facto immoral. This is because anything, any system, any ideology, any human action, that provides a situation under which a person or group of persons suffered without a morally sufficient cause is unjust and immoral. We therefore call on all religious adherents to recognize the relationship that exists between religion, ethics and humanity. In so doing, they should cultivate the right attitude that will promote the values and ideals of religion for individual and societal benefits. All adherents of religion should imbibe the attitude of tolerance, live and let live, but must seriously eschew the spirit of 'us against them' philosophy. They should know that no religion is truer or holds the absolute truth than the other and that no particular religion is God's favourite.

CONCLUSION

We have been arguing that there exists a relationship between ethics, religion and humanity. We have tried to establish this relationship by showing how they affect one another. Religion is a human activity which must be done with the good and destiny of man in view, and since it is a human activity, it is subject

to ethical appraisal. We noted that 'bad religion' or unethical practices in religion hold grave implications for humanity and so for humanity to flourish, religious adherents and practitioners must adhere strictly to the dictates of sound ethics. Part of this sound ethics is to imbibe the attitude of tolerance, live and let live and also eschew the spirit of 'us against them' philosophy and must also realize that no particular religion is God's favourite.

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