

CHRISTIAN MORALITY AS AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MORLITY

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Abstract

Recent studies in the area of comparative religion have led to the understanding that all religious systems are product of the same source; and since they all stem from the same source, they all have elements of revelation, and none has the fullness of revelation, and has furnished people with knowledge about the religion of others, thus expanding the horizon of knowledge as well as what the other person holds dear. This method has often been used by Scripture scholars in trying to understand the relationship between the Hebrew scripture and the texts of the Ancient Near East religions. In this work, this same method is employed for the study of the relationship between Christian morality and African traditional morality. This research discovers that there was already the seed of Christianity in African traditional values and religion, even before the arrival of missionaries to Africa. It also reveals that religious systems are both dependent and independent from one another.

Keywords: African, Traditional, Morality, Christian, Igbo, Religion

Introduction

The climate of the time is one in which many Christians believe that it is outrageous and even blasphemous to compare African traditional culture with Christianity. This is based on the understanding that Christianity is a superior religion to African Traditional Religion. Thus, Christians describe African Traditional religion and culture in derogatory terms: paganism, fetishism, heathenism, animism, polytheism, idolatry, etc., (Kanu 2014). This believe has, therefore, created a lacuna in the academic world, with so many questions yet to be answered.

The present climate has been complicated, as many ethnologists, sociologists, anthropologists and even missionaries have argued that Africans cannot distinguish

between good and evil, and that even if they give considerations to issues of this kind, it is always savage in character: a system that cuts morality to ribbons (Kanu 2016). Pointing out the colonial mentality or perspective about African sense of morality in his time, Tempels (1959) writes:

On the subject of theft, it is generally said that the African does not see the least wrong in it, that the only thing that matters is not to get caught. Lies and deceit, it is said, are, in African eyes indications of subtlety of mind, countenanced by all moral assessment. They would not regard adultery as any infraction of morality and it would suffice if anyone caught in the act should agree to pay an indemnity. (p. 54).

Defending the African concept of morality, Tempels (1959) writes about the existence of Bantu-African morality:

The Bantu likewise reject lies, deceit, theft and adultery, on the same fundamental grounds of the destructiveness inherent in them. They also condemn, as Bantu, various very widespread usages such as polygamy, child marriage and other sexual abuses. In short, they know and accept Natural Law as it is formulated in the Ten Commandments. (p. 56).

This mentality which has persisted over time has restricted comparative studies of, not only African religions, but also African morality with the moralities of their western counterparts. This piece is not in any way an attempt to attend to the old question of the existence of African morality. It is an attempt to study African traditional morality with Christian morality. It focuses on the Ten Commandments and basic scriptural teachings of the Christian scripture and tries to relate them with already existing African traditional morality. Beyond the conventional pattern of argument which tries to show that Africa also has what others have, this work indicates that the seed of the Christian faith was already in Africa long before the advent of Christianity; and in fact, that Christian morality is African morality.

Research Methodology

The research method employed in this study is the comparative method of inquiry. The comparative method of research investigates the common sources, goals as well as the differences in religion, as regards their doctrines and liturgy. This method is used very

often by scripture scholars in trying to understand the relationship between the Hebrew scripture and the texts of the Ancient near East religions (Kanu 2015a). This approach has led to a couple of discoveries:

1. That all religious systems are product of the same source: God. This explains why they have so many things in common.
2. Since they all stem from the same source, they all have elements of revelation, and none has the fullness of revelation.
3. It has furnished people with knowledge about the religion of others, thus expanding the horizon of knowledge as well as what the other person holds dear.
4. It reveals to us that religious systems are both dependent and independent from one another.

This same research method would be employed for the purpose of discovering the relationship, in terms of sources and origin, between African traditional morality and the Christian morality found in the Ten Commandments.

Theoretical Framework

Theories are formulated to explain predict and understand phenomena and, in many cases to challenge and extend existing knowledge, within the limits of the critical boundary assumptions (Obiefuna and Kanu 2018). This section on the theoretical framework focuses on theory that would be of great significance in the interpretation and understanding of this research. It would, in fact, through the provision of a lens for analysis, help in explaining the relationship between religion and voter's behavior in Nigeria so that we may use the knowledge and understanding to act in more informed and effective ways.

The theory employed in this research is the theory of dependence. Madu (2002) asserts that it is a theory that has great relevance in the comparative study of religion. He also observes that in the study of religions, especially ancient, a couple of dependences in doctrine and patterns of documentation cannot be avoided. For instance, in the study of the similarities between African Traditional Religion and Christianity, in terms of documents, scholars have observed the presence of eight of the 42 negative confessions of ancient Egypt in the Ten Commandments of Moses, and they were believed to be included in the Ten Commandments by Moses who was born in Egypt (Kwame 2009). These 42 negative confessions, a daily way of life and being in Africa, were discovered in a manuscript known as the Papyrus of Ani and translated by

Egyptologist E. A. Wallis Budge. They include:

1. I have not done iniquity.
2. I have not robbed with violence.
3. I have not stolen.
4. I have done no murder, I have done no harm.
5. I have not defrauded offerings.
6. I have not diminished obligations.
7. I have not plundered the Netcher.
8. I have not spoken lies.
9. I have not snatched away food.
10. I have not caused pain.
11. I have not committed fornication.
12. I have not caused shedding of tears.
13. I have not dealt deceitfully.
14. I have not transgressed.
15. I have not acted guilefully.
16. I have not laid wasted the ploughed land.
17. I have not been an eavesdropper.
18. I have not set my lips in motion (against any man).
19. I have not been angry and wrathful except for a just cause.
20. I have not defiled the wife of any man.
21. I have not defiled the wife of any man. (repeated twice)
22. I have not polluted myself.
23. I have not caused terror.
24. I have not transgressed. (repeated twice)
25. I have not burned with rage.
26. I have not stopped my ears against the words of Right and Truth (Ma'at)
27. I have not worked grief.
28. I have not acted with insolence.
29. I have not stirred up strife.
30. I have not judged hastily.
31. I have not been an eavesdropper. (repeated twice)
32. I have not multiplied words exceedingly.
33. I have not done neither harm nor ill.
34. I have never cursed the King.
35. I have never fouled the water.
36. I have not spoken scornfully.
37. I have never cursed the Netcher.
38. I have not stolen.
39. I have not defrauded the offerings of the Netcher.
40. I have not plundered the offerings of the blessed dead.
41. I have not filched the food of the infant, neither have I sinned against the Netcher of my native town.
42. I have not slaughtered with evil intent the cattle of the Netcher.

After studying these forty-two confessions of ancient Egypt, Kwame (2009) observes that: "Moses was not only familiar and knowledgeable with the "42 Negative Confessions" but also with the 10 categories of sins that existed in ancient Kemet (Egypt). He was also familiar with the spiritual concept of Monotheism that Pharaoh Akhenaten had introduced to the people. Basically then, when he reached eastern Egypt (Mount Sinai). Moses prayed to Amun-Ra, the Sun God of Ancient Egypt. It was very easy for Moses to establish a new religion for his people as a result of his spiritual education and training in Western Kemet (Egypt). Moses then collapsed the "42 Negative Confessions" into the "Ten Commandments" and he continued to embrace the concept of Monotheism. Moses used the concept of fire to receive the "Ten Commandments" because in ancient Kemet (Egypt) the spiritual God-force was represented by fire. In other words, the religion of the followers of Moses today is African in origin, including Christianity" (p. 1).

This comparative study already carried out by Kwame Natambu between African morality of ancient Egypt and Christian morality, among others, have inspired further studies on the relationship between the Christian scriptures with African traditional religious culture and morality. And the current research on schedule is not an exception.

AFRICAN MORALITY

Morality deals with the right and wrong of human behaviour and conduct. That is the question of what constitutes the right or wrong, good or bad in a person's action? What theories are right or wrong in evaluating human action? This establishes the relationship between ethics and epistemology (Thiroux 1998). African morality would, therefore, refer to African ethics would therefore refer to the salient features or ideas of the African moral life and thought generally as reflected in, or generated by, African moral language and social structure and life (Kanu 2018). It is characterized by three main features: 1. Prohibitions, which include general prescriptions, such as (i) Do not take the life of a member of the community; (ii) Do not steal, especially yams, the staple food of the people; (iii) Do not commit incest; (iv) Do not defraud strangers. These prohibitions are rooted in religious beliefs and observances connected with Ala, the earth divinity. 2. Taboos, which are means of social control. The contravention of any taboo results in disturbance of the equilibrium between the living and the dead, between the sacred and the profane, leading to disruption of the life of the community. 3. Customs, which make up the third feature of African morality. They are the mass of cultural and normal activities. Customs lay down what is lawful or unlawful.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MORALITY

In the book of Exodus 20:1-17 and the book of Deuteronomy 5:6-21, we have the Ten Commandments that God gave to the people of Israel, not only to guide his relationship with them, but also for the purpose of building up the new nation of Israel. These commandments will be studied alongside some African traditional moral perspectives that were meant for the giving of a sense of direction and purpose to the African traditional society.

1. And God spoke all these words, saying, 2. “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3. You shall have no other gods before me. 4. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5. you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, 6. but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. 7. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. 8. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; 10. but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; 11. for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. 12. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you. 13. You shall not kill. 14. You shall not commit adultery. 15. You shall not steal. 16. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 17. You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor’s.” (Ex. 20:1-17).

1. Thou shall have no other gods before me:

The first commandment (v. 3) affirms the existence of other gods, however, declares that for Israel, there is only one God, that is, Yahweh (cf. Deut. 5:7, 6:4; II Kings 17:35; Jer. 25:6).

The idea of, and worship of the Supreme Being-God was part and parcel of Igbo traditional religion and thought. Evidences from a meticulous examination of oral

sources of African Traditional Religion, sacred institutions of traditional culture, Art works and symbols prove the belief in Supreme Being beyond reasonable doubt. Scholars that have demonstrated this perspective include Onwubiko (1991), Obiego (1978) and Okere (1983), among others. Beyond these indigenous Igbo thinkers, there are quite a number of Western missionaries who point to the existence of the Supreme Being in Igbo religion long before the advent of Christianity. Their insights on this issue are quite refreshing. Schoen (1842) speaking of Igbo Monotheism writes:

The Igbo are in their way, a religious people. The word ‘Tshuku’ - God – is continually heard. Tshuku is supposed to do everything [...] Their notions of some of the attributes of the Supreme Being are, in many respects, correct, and their manner of expressing them very striking. ‘God made everything, he made both white and black’ is continually on their lips. (pp. 50-51).

Thus, the idea of one God is part and parcel of African traditional religion, the confusion begins when many confuse deities as Supreme Beings.

2. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above:

The second commandment (vv. 4-6) prohibits the making of images, evidently as objects of reverence or worship, for Yahweh is a jealous God and will have no rival in the affections of his people (cf. Ex. 34:12-17; Lev. 26:1; Deut. 4:15-24).

This commandment requires some degree of interpretation. When God said that no image should be made, how do we reconcile it with God’s command for Moses to make the image of the Bronze Serpent? How do we reconcile it with God’s instruction to Israel to make Him the image of the Ark of the Covenant? God cannot give a law and break it Himself. This points to the fact for the need to better understand this text. Thus, when God asked Israel not to make images, He was speaking against images that take His place. And when Africans made images, they did not make images of other Gods that competed with the Supreme Being. They rather made images of divinities who led them to the Supreme Being. The images they made were images of the deans of the Supreme being. From this interpretation, the idea of making images that competed with the Supreme Being was not part of African religious culture.

3. Thou shall not take God's name in vain:

The third commandment (v.7) does not forbid the taking of an oath, but false swearing, and the light, irreverent, or in sincere use of the name of God.

Africans have an idea of name that communicates the power of the personality that bears the name. Thus, the name was given respect as much as the person who bears the name. In relation to God, his name in most African religious cultures reveals his power. It was, therefore, not something to be joked with. For instance, the Yoruba call him *Olodumare* or *Edumare* (The King of heaven); The Igbo call him *Chukwu* or *Osebuluwa* (Great God or sustainer of the universe); The Edo call him *Osanobua* or *Osanobwa* (Creator and sustainer of the universe); The Nupe call him *Soko* (The supreme deity that resides in heaven); The Ijo call him *Temearau* (The creatress of all things –feminine term-); The Tiv call him *Aondo* (The power above that creates and rules all things); The Ibibio refer to him as *Obasi Ibom* (The God who lives above the earth); The Akan call him *Odomankoma* and *Nyame* (full of mercy and the God of fullness respectively); The Mende of Sierra Leone call him *Ngewo* (The eternal one who rules from above); The Kono of Sierra Leone call him *Meketa* (The Immortal or eternal) (Kanu 2016). Arinze (1970), speaking from the Igbo perspective, avows that: “God is the Supreme Spirit, the creator of everything. No one equals him in power. He knows everything”. (p. 10). Being this, one thing that the African dreads most and avoids is to swear with the name of the Supreme Being.

4. Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy:

The fourth commandment (vv.8-11) enjoins the observance of the Sabbath as a holy day and a day of rest.

There are four market or Sacred days created by *Chukwu* among the Igbos of Nigeria: *Eke*, *Orie*, *Afo* and *Nkwo*. They are also regarded as deities, messengers of *Chukwu* and days of the week. Together, these days make up *Izunta* (four days), and when doubled *Izuukwu* (eight days) which is the complete round of the native week of eight days among the Igbos. Some of these days, according to Okey (2009) are considered holy; for instance, the *Eke* day is a day of oath taking. Those who die on *Eke* day, on the one hand, are considered to be guilty, and thus a special sacrifice is offered for cleansing, to avoid calamity upon the family or community. On the other hand, those who die on *Nkwoday* are considered to be righteous. It is a day when many celebrations or feasts among the Igbos begin (Kanu 2015b). The *Orie* day is the day when the opening of farming season is done or declared. Of all the days, *afo* is the

least, but it is also a day of commerce and socializing with peers, friends and to hold meetings of all kinds. There are particular deities that are worshipped on different market days. Some streams or rivers are not fetched during particular market days, for such days are considered sacred to the deity that owns or inhabits the stream or river. On days like Eke, there are communities that do not allow their members to go to the farm (Kanu 2016). Like the Jews, the Igbo-African observe these days.

5. Honour your Father and Mother:

This commandment most especially refers to the treatment of helpless aged dependents. It is called by Paul “the first commandment with promise” (Eph. 6:2-3). In Deut.5:16 prosperity is added to the promise of length of days.

Not just fathers and mothers, elders among Africans are well respected and seen as both spiritual and moral guides who are endowed with wisdom; that is why the African would say that:

1. What an elder can see when he is seated, a child cannot see even when he is standing
2. It is through the Father that a child learns of his ancestors
3. When a child carries his father from the legs to bring him down, the father’s genitals will cover the eyes of the child.
4. A child that plays draft with his parents wouldn’t know when he insults his parents
5. Mother and father are your second God
6. When parents speak, they do not just say anything, they say sensible things.

This respect is not only restricted to the elders within one’s area but to all elders, wherever they are met. It is also given to elders irrespective of social status or position. We give them their due respect because they are the custodians of traditional norms and customs. In the Yoruba culture, prostration before an elder is a form of greeting, sometimes bowing and removal of caps are also signs of respect. And because of the place the African cultures gives to elders, they must make out time in the evenings to train the conscience of young men and women through proverbs, stories and folktales. Through this practice, virtues are learnt by African children from their childhood. The names that the Igbo give to their children also reflects the esteemed place they give to elders: Nnaka (which means that Father surpasses everything); this is also reflected in the name: Nnabuenyi (which means that the father is bigger than an elephant); the father is also described thus: Nnabuihe (Father is the substance of reality- being; to

disrespected him is to lose the substance of reality).

The Odu Irete Eguntan oracle (cited in Adewale 2019) says:

Respect your mother and your father

that you may live long on earth.

Ifa says, offer sacrifice to your mother and your father,

the sacrifice of care, righteousness and humility,

that you may regenerate yourself

Ifa says, offer sacrifice to your mother and father, the sacrifice of care and obedience,
that their

curses may not rest on you.

the curses of your father and mother are the curses of the Almighty.

Ifa says, offer sacrifices to your father and mother,

the sacrifice of love and of justice,

that you may have rest,

that you may have comfort.

6. Thou shall not kill:

The sixth commandment (v. 13) is concerned with the protection of human life within the community of Israel, against destruction by fellow Israelites.

Among the Igbo, the spilling of blood is something that is avoided under normal circumstance, except during warfare. Once you spill blood, it was believed that the blood would go into the land as a testimony and Ala deity will avenge such a death. Killing oneself or committing suicide is also a taboo in Igboland, and it was so much frowned upon by both man and gods that the victim of suicide must never be buried within the community. His body is cursed and must never be buried in the land, but in the Forbidden Forest or outside the town to prevent such evils from befalling others in the community. Among Africans, there is respect for life; children are treasured and abortion is an abomination. The sacredness of human life is guarded by taboos and rituals. There is respect for the dignity of man; each man has his own inalienable *chi* (destiny) (Amucheazi, 1980).

Africans believe that life comes from God, and as such has a transcendental dimension. The sacredness attached to life due to designation of God as its source is evident in the names Igbo people give to their children: *Chiwendu* (God is the owner of life), *Chikerendu* (God made life), and as such in Igbo traditional society

IgbuOchu(murder) was the greatest abomination. Thus, “To touch a person’s life, starkly put, to shed blood, especially innocent blood is the greatest evil on earth, against the earth and against humanity. It is Nso Ala (taboo) that has the mightiest sanction in the world” (Ireogbu, 1994: 84).

7. Thou shall not commit adultery:

The seventh commandment (v.14) treats the family as a sacred social unit, and thus sees adultery as a desecration of the marriage bond.

Adultery has never been tolerated among African people. Both the elders of the land and the gods forbid it. It is believed that a woman can become mad or lunatic after of committing adultery, and a man must never taste the food prepared by his wife if he has reasons to believe she engaged in adultery – or he might be a partaker of her punishment from the gods. According to Adewale (2019):

Adultery is also an offence against the religious objects of the husband, including his ancestors. Furthermore, it is a criminal act against the gods, because marriage in the traditional context is a sacred institution sanctioned by them, and any act of unfaithfulness in the matrimonial life of the couple is punishable by preternatural beings. Right from the beginning of courtship, religious rituals are performed to stabilise and hallow the marriage; ancestors and divinities are consulted and approached for their support. Usually the wife of an adherent of the traditional religion is, as it were, "the wife of the gods" She is commended to the care and protection of the supernatural beings and she must be faithful. Rituals and ceremonies accompany or follow the occasion of wedding (p. 1).

A virtue highly honoured by Africans after life itself is ‘Purity’. It encapsulates most importantly, chastity and marital fidelity. From this perspective, adultery, flirting or premarital sexual unions were serious crimes against the family and community at large. And if a man has a sexual intercourse with a woman who he is not married to, the rites of purification would have to be performed.

8. Thou shall not steal:

The eighth commandment (v.15) is concerned with the sacredness of property.

In traditional African societies, stealing was highly frowned at. The consequences of stealing varied from one African society to another. There were places where the thief was arraigned before the whole community with the stole item tied to his body. The purpose for this was to disgrace the thief and dissuade others from doing the same. There were societies where the thief was forced to pay back whatever he or she has stolen. There were also times when the thief was asked to leave the community. This also sometimes affects not only the thief but the members of the family of the thief.

Stealing tarnishes the reputation and integrity of the family of the thief, and traditional Africans strive very much to protect the good name and image of the family. Even an irreputable family will not want their offspring to be accused of stealing, because criminal acts bring disgrace to the parents, and when people are being considered for positions and titles of honour in the society a one-time thief and his parents will not be considered for such roles of honour. Reference will always be made to the previous crimes committed by such people. Traditional Africans will never appoint a one-time robber or liar or adulterer as their leader or ruler. The loss of fame in the community and divine punishment and not force serve as a serious and adequate punishment in traditional society (p. 1).

The OduOgbe-Ale oracle (cited in Adewale 2019) warns against stealing:
*If the earthly king does not see you,
the heavenly king is looking at you.
Thus declares the oracle to the one who steals under the cover of darkness,
who says that the earthly king does not see him.
God sees the thief and will surely punish him.
seeing here does not mean mere looking, but seeing for punishment.*

9. Thou shall not bear false witness:

The ninth commandment (v.16) sets forth the principle of the sacredness of the judicial system.

In African traditional societies, bearing false witness against another is not acceptable. This is why among the Igbo, the Ofor is given to the person bearing witness as a condemnation against himself or herself if the person bears false witness. Whatever a person says is believed to be heard by the gods, and it was believed that the gods

would pay each man according to his standing with justice or falsity. According to Adewale (2019):

Even when human beings are deceived, God sees the liars and knows the truth and will punish them accordingly. Traditional Africans fear the wrath of God which leads to miseries and misfortune. They prefer divine pleasure to divine wrath, and divine blessings to divine punishment. When the Africans say "God will judge," a liar's mind or conscience pricks and a machinery is set in motion within him which makes him confess that he told a lie. He may be asked to swear, and since he knows that swearing falsely will bring about serious repercussions, he will immediately retract from swearing.

According to the oracle Ejiogbe (cited by Adewale 2019):
Be truthful, be just!
Oh, be truthful. be just!
It is the truthful that the divinities support.
Be truthful, be just!

10. Thou shall not covet your neighbour's goods:

The tenth commandment (v.17) forbids both the entertainment of covetous desire and the acts of cheating, violence, and oppression which spring from it (cf.Mic.2:1-2).

There are Igbo proverbs that teach a lot about covetousness:

- a. Covetousness is the beginning of one's downfall
- b. The person whom his god has refused to be white, if he insists on being white will become an albino.

This commandment is related to the commandments on adultery and stealing. The African traditional morality has no place of any form of covetousness.

SELECTED IGBO TABOOS AND CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURE

1. NSO NWANYI

In traditional Igbo society, women live apart from their husbands and neither cook for them or enter their husband's quarters when they are in their period. At this point, they are considered unclean. This practice is still obtainable among Igbo traditionalists, as is evident in the palace of Obi of Onitsha. Before a woman enters the palace, she would be asked if she is in her period, if yes, she will be asked to stay out.

Nso Nwanyi in Christian Scripture: Leviticus 15: 19-20

The Christian scripture says that: “When a woman has her monthly period, she remains unclean, anyone who touches her or anything she has sat on becomes unclean”.

2. ANA OBI

An Igbo man's ancestral heritage, called “Ana Obi” is not sellable, elders will not permit this. If this is somehow done due to the influence of the West the person is considered a fool and is ostracized by the community. There are cases where the relations of the man who sells his ‘Ana Obi’ go behind to re-purchase the land from the person it was sold to, just to preserve the family name and integrity.

Ana Obi in Christian Scripture: 1 King 21:3

When Ahab asked Naboth for his vineyard, he said to him: “I inherited this vineyard from my ancestors, and the Lord forbid that I should sell it, said Naboth”.

3. IGBA ODIBO

In Igboland, there is a unique form of apprenticeship in which either a male family member or a community member will spend six (6) years (usually in their teens to their adulthood) working for another family. And on the seventh year, the head of the host household, who is usually the older man who brought the apprentice into his household, will establish (Igbo: idu) the apprentice by either setting up a business for him or giving money or tools by which to make a living.

IgbaOdibo in Christian Scripture: Exodus 21:2

Scripture says: “If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve you for six years. In the seventh year he is to be set free without having to pay you anything”.

4. IRI JI OHURU

In Igboland, the yam is very important as it is their staple crop. There are celebrations such as the New yam festival (Igbo: Iri Ji) which are held for the harvesting of the yam. New Yam festival (Igbo: Iri ji) is celebrated annually to secure a good harvest of the staple crop. In the olden days it is an abomination for one to eat a new harvest before the festival. It's a tradition that you give the gods of the land first as a thanksgiving.

Iri Ji Ohuru in Christian Scripture: Deuteronomy 16: 9

The scripture says: “Count 7 weeks from the time that you begin to harvest the crops, and celebrate the harvest festival to honor the lord your God, by bringing him a freewill offering in proportion to the blessing he has given you. Celebrate in the Lord's presence together with your children, servants, foreigners. Be sure that you obey my command, said the Lord”.

5. IBE UGWU

In Igboland it's a tradition that the male children are circumcised on the 8th day. This tradition is still practiced till date.

IbeUgwu in Christian Scripture: Leviticus 12:3

Scripture says: “On the eighth day, the child shall be circumcised”.

6. OMUGWO

In Igboland, there is a practice known as "ileomugwo ". After a woman has given birth to a child, a very close and experienced relative of hers, in most cases her mother is required by tradition to come spend time with her and her husband. During which she is to do all the work of the wife, while the new mom's only assignment to the baby will be to breastfeed. This goes on for a month or more. In the Igbo old tradition, at this time, the new mom lives apart from her husband, would not cook or enter his quarters.

Omugwo in Christian Scripture: Leviticus 12:1-4

The scripture says: “For seven days after a woman gives birth, she is ritually unclean as she is during her monthly period. It will be 33 days until she is ritually clean from the loss of blood; she is not to touch anything that is holy”.

Conclusion

The foregoing has studied the relationship between morality in African traditional culture and Christian morality. It studied the nature of African morality and related it specifically the Christian scripture. This study has revealed that African traditional culture has strong ethical religious values that are still vibrant and to speak of them as straw-men theories would be inconsistent with contemporary religious teachings that still hold strongly to us, as in Christianity (Kanu 2011). It has further revealed that African traditional religion and Christianity are pregnant with rich ethical and social values that can be studied alongside each other. This study helps to understand that African traditional morality and Christian morality are united, not minding the

differences in the practice of religion. Furthermore, it reveals that there is a strong thread that unites African traditional morality with Christian morality. Little wonder Raz (2004) states that “values are universal” (p. 3). Morality is another area where there is considerable parallel between Christianity and African culture. This is probably due to the fact that morality flows naturally from religious creed.

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