

CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES IN PERSPECTIVE

Science has done a great deal as far as enlightenment is concerned and in relation to the problems and solutions of climate change. However, the point at which science concludes is where religion and other factors that affect the lives of the people in different parts of the world, which include cultural as well as religious beliefs, begin. These important aspects of the lives of the people regardless of where they are or come from cannot be wished away but be taken into account when making plans, especially such that will also require the input of these same people.

Looking at what the Christian religion believes in respect of the art, one thing that is very noticeable from the onset that differentiates the religious from the scientific perspectives is the place of heaven. Science makes no mention or reference of heaven in its understanding of the problems of climate

change, and to that effect, makes no connection with it in proffering solutions to the problems. The indisputable source of knowledge of the Christians, for instance, is the Bible. The Muslims have the Koran as their source of understanding of God, and from it comes the laws that govern their activities. There are the traditional worshippers who are neither Christians nor Muslims, who also believe in the existence of God. In Africa, for instance, the traditional worshippers have been on ground before the Christian and Muslims came. To the Christians and the Muslims, God is believed to be absolute in His powers. They attribute whatever changes we see in our climate to the working of His power.

The Muslims of the northern part of Nigeria have as a culture the habit of going out in procession when there is drought and the rains have ceased to fall for a long time to appease God for rain to come. From experience, there had never been a time when the procession was held that the people were not sent back to their homes by the rains, and the rains would not cease until it had performed its functions. These cultural beliefs, which have religious flavor in it, will definitely affect the thinking of people from this part of the world regarding the problems and solutions of climate change.

The traditional believers whom we use to refer to wrongly as idol worshippers also have evidences to prove that they worship the true God. There are



myths through which they received knowledge about the dos and don'ts of their religion. For instance, they assign most of the major areas of natural happenings to certain demigods, which they call divinities. Some of these areas include rain, thunder, harvest, oceans, iron and so on and so forth. The divinities are connected directly to some of these activities and things mentioned. Sango is one of the ancestral fathers and Orishas (divinities) of the Yoruba, Caribbean and certain Latin American people. He is the highly revered god of Thunder, Lightning, and Electricity who was also the third Alaafin of Oyo. He was a powerful ruler who brought prosperity to his land. Sango is believed to be connected with thunder, and festivals are held in his remembrance. To this god of thunder, people offer sacrifices as a medium to reaching the higher God in matters related to the rains. That is why, from experience, if someone is trying to organize a party, say like in a village, and representatives of the worshippers of this god of thunder approach him with a demand and in most cases where such demands were turned down, the end result was that such parties were destroyed by heavy rains.

There are festivals held to commemorate the planting and the harvest seasons. These activities are religious as well as cultural. A harvest festival is an annual celebration which occurs around the time of the main harvest of a given region. Given regional differences in climates and crops, harvest festivals can be found at various times throughout the world.

With regard to planting and harvesting of crops, in some African countries, the natives believe in approaching the god of the soil before they plant their crops. They are expected to observe prescribed sacrifices with a view to making them realize or have a bountiful harvest. The least of cultural and religious activities that have shaped



the thinking beliefs of the African communities over centuries cannot easily be wished away or discountenanced by science.

Christianity as a religion is more flexible and dynamic, and that is why it has to a large extent understood the place of science and even allied with it for a synergy which has resulted in the achievements of greater successes, especially in the field of medicine. In spite of this collaboration, the Christian religion to the Christians is the surest source of information, especially such that pertains to the creation of the heavens and the earth. The Bible is believed also to be the only authentic book from where the knowledge of fixing the world on a permanent basis and with a guarantee for perfect peace can be achieved. For instance, the Bible makes it clear that the earth, which God created, and confirmed as good was cursed because Adam and Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden. As grievous as the punishment for their sin was, the same Bible also provides a way out. It is believed that Christ died for the sins of the world and turned around the



curse into a blessing, however, only for those who accept the gift of God to the world in Christ. These are those who are on course and no longer under a curse. "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."—Genesis 3:17–19. A reversal to the above curse on man and the ground is found and presented in the Bible as follows: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree"—Galatians 3:13. Because of the Western Civilization, especially the formal education that the Christian religion romances with, agreements can be reached on some scientific discoveries which are problems that need to be solved scientifi-

cally. An example is the use of technology to capture carbon as well as other scientific interventions on the climate change. Beyond these scientific interventions is the place of divinity, which is believed to be over that of humanity. Take cognizance also of the Biblical evidence about the flood into which the whole world was submerged. "And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights."—Genesis 7:12. Christian religion attributes some of the problems of climate change to the sin that human beings commit from day to day. For instance, the story of Abel and Cain, the two brothers through whom the first case of murder was committed also reveals to us that the ground reacts to all the evils that are committed on it, such as murder, extrajudicial killings, rape, domestic abuse, slavery, racism, and the like.

From the Bible, we understand that just the same way as the CO2 from the greenhouse emissions pollute the atmosphere, so do our sins pollute us as humans first and then the earth, making it restive, and hence, the problems that we face which are not just the effects of climate change but the lack of peace in the world.

Let us, at this juncture, now consider how best the message of climate change can be introduced to the traditional worshippers as well as Muslims and Christians. The problem of reli-

gious identity is a serious one. This is more prominent in international politics, where in the name of liberality, a country is expected to naturalize itself from any form of religion and this, to a large extent, has made it difficult for a religious adherence, especially the leaders to come in and contribute their quota to problems affecting the people at various or different levels of government. In the United States, for instance, there are laws that separate the state from religion. As good as this may be conceived to be, it has, on the other hand, crippled religious activities in certain places where they are most needed, and this accounts for the problems, especially social problems that seem to have become contractible in our societies.

Science has to a great extent undermined the religious and social/cultural beliefs of many communities in the world. It has made identifying with a religion become like a stigma in the society, and that is why most of the presidents of the world have their religions identified by their names and not their fruits. The Christian president for instance is expected to be able to bring the power of God to bear on his administration, and such manifestation is not expected to be hidden, but because this is a difficult thing to do if not impossible, science has stolen the day making the entire world to exist at its mercy.



One major problem that science has to solve for the African religious believers where rains can be made at will by the people is how to stop rain from falling at will. In other words, where there are rainmakers, let there also be rainstoppers.

Going forward, there is need to convene a climate change conference of religious leaders both of the Christians and the Muslims. Governments of countries where traditional religions are still being practiced have it also as a duty to convene a conference of all traditional religious leaders. The purposes of these conferences are the same. They are to make the leaders contribute their knowledge to solving the problems of climate change. Their inputs will in no small measure create a new way of understanding climate change from other perspectives, and this will result in new or modified methods of approach to solving the problems. Because the problem of climate change is that of everybody and therefore requires the support of everybody, it is therefore not out of place to make sure that everybody understands at their own levels what the problems are and with a view to getting global cooperation.

In conclusion, as there is reliable and well-researched data to support the call for action on climate change, so there are also great and reliable myths, Bible stories, and verses of the Koran that prove God as omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. To this end therefore, scientists, international organizations, the United Nations, AU, Ecowas, and leaders of governments as well as international agencies at the continents' and regional levels should deem the inclusion of all religious entities into the movement of confronting and converting the problems of climate change.

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