

Ethical Monotheism as the Foundation for National Transformation in Nigeria

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Abstract

Historical and contemporary events seem to indicate that humanity is dealing with the confusion of marriage, sex, standards and values. Other such obstacles include but not limited to; disregard for the sanctity of human life, abuse of human rights and social injustice, religious extremism, ecological crisis, corruption and social inequality. In view of the myriad problems confronting humanity today occasioned by her deplorable moral standard, this paper highlights a credible alternative in the search for the solution. This is anchored on God, the moral Sovereign Creator of the universe who demands ethical behavior. Ethical monotheism is the belief in only one God with consequent ethical implications for human conduct and practical life. Ethical monotheism espouses that people act towards another with justice, peace, mercy, and love as the foundation for national transformation. Accordingly, this paper using descriptive research method reveals that ethical monotheism is the safeguard to mankind's inclination towards evil, subjecting them to temptation, and lustful desires that would pollute their minds, corrupt their spirit, and eventually destroy their bodies. Without mincing words, this paper reveals that God's moral and ethical guidelines create strong communities free of crime, emotionally strong families, and emphasis on spiritual commitment to God. Therefore, without hesitation, it recommends the adoption of ethical monotheism as a panacea for ills in Nigeria and for national transformation. This is because man cannot understand himself, his dignity, and vocation without God.

Key Words: Ethics, Ethical Monotheism, Panacea, Secularism, Transformation.

Introduction

Recent attempts at addressing some of the teething problems of our time like bribery and corruption, ethno-religious violence, mismanagement of public funds and property, electoral malpractices, kidnapping, ritual murder and assassinations, secret cult activities, child and women trafficking assume that these problems are caused by injustice, marginalization, maladministration, abuse of power, and disregard for the welfare of the people (Iroanya, 2023). There are also attempts at explaining these phenomena on the basis of deprivation brought about by hunger and lack of access to basic necessities of life. These attempts as useful as they may appear to be addressing the symptom of the problem instead of the disease itself (Asouzu, 2003:5). Accentuating to this, Omeregbe (2002:x) affirms that our country is sick, morally sick, and it can only be cured through a moral regeneration. Indeed, such regeneration is imperative if the country is to make any meaningful progress in development.

Regrettably, humanity is dealing with the confusion over marriage, sex, standards and values. This is further complicated with the numerous religions and faith beliefs now on the world scene. It is this scenario for Akanni (2007) in Iroanya (2014:626) that has led to the over increasing call for acceptability of worldly perceptions in all spheres of life. Consequently, there is the call for the recognition of same-sex marriages, same-sex families and other strange doctrines. At the heart of the family, national and global crisis there exist a pervasive lack of

spiritual insight, responsible for the attainment of moral quotient critical to moral leadership in all sectors of the society. Our collective mishap, Jimoh (2013) in no less authority than Iroanya (2014:3) punctiliously states is

Traceable to our clear departure from the divine tenets of the Creator and reliving our own crafted ideology in our utopian society. The lack of moral leadership is demonstrated in the continued uncovering of unethical behavior from the family to the highest corridors of power.

Against this background, it is only a moral regeneration that can cure Nigeria and remove the greatest obstacle obstructing her development. Therefore, Osundare (2005) in Oyeranmi (2011:13) advocates that "the evil system that has brought Nigeria to its knees needs nothing but the sharp edge of excoriative word; nothing but the truth whose sharpness heals like the surgical knife."

In this regard, nothing short of ethical monotheism could rescue the visibly enfeebled Nigeria, and equally galvanize her into national consciousness for overall transformation. The researcher identified an apparent practical knowledge gap in the prior research concerning ethical monotheism. The prior research did not address ethical monotheism as a foundation for national transformation. This encompasses several unexplored dimensions that have lately attracted research attention in religion, politics, and society (Miles, 2017). To underscore this, Agha (2003) explores religious ethics in a permissive society. Fox (2012) examines ethical monotheism as the reason why Christians cannot rightly back down. Similarly, Prager (2012) espouses the conceptual framework for the phenomenon. No study to date has directly attempted to evaluate ethical monotheism as a foundation for national transformation. Accordingly, ethical monotheism should be explored further to provide an understanding as the foundation for national rebirth and the actualization of the transformation or renewed hope agenda of the present government.

This paper using descriptive research method states that man cannot understand himself, his dignity, and vocation without God. It is in the light of this that the study of this nature becomes absolutely imperative as part of the ongoing efforts towards the historical awakening of Nigerians. This paper will inter-alia provide a conceptual framework of the study. It focuses on the unbreakable nexus between ethical monotheism and national transformation; bringing out the relevance of this link especially in this era of globalization, secularization, materialism, consumerism, and the prioritization of wealth over persons. It will analyze what a country like Nigeria in search of her soul; and the hunger for industrialization among her youth population could gain from such non-materialistic and an uncompromising, relentless, and monolithic monotheism which is the foundation of the three greatest missionary religions of the world, namely: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Conceptual Framework

Here, one shall be concerned with defining four terms that are very central to the discussion in this paper. These are; ethical, monotheism, ethical monotheism, and transformation.

Monotheism

According to Answer.com monotheism is the belief in One God and One God only; there are no other nor any other external influences on a person other than God (2012:2). Perhaps the most succinct definition is that of Albright (n.d) in Packer & Tenney (1980:110) who says that

monotheism is the belief in the existence of only One God, who is the Creator of the world and the giver of all life . . . who is so far superior to all created beings . . . that He remains absolutely unique. The term commonly refers to Israel's belief in One God, taken over by the Christian Church. Contrasted with animism, polytheism and henotheism or monolatry, it then characterizes Israel's religion over against her neighbors.

Hence, in the ancient world, only Israel was fully monotheistic. Israel was thus unique with its belief in One God, who made new things happen, who was the Lord of this world and this life. He was also one who could criticize His people as well as support them. Laying credence to this, Youngblood (1997:9) asserts that the pure form of monotheism described in the Old Testament (hereafter OT) is unique to biblical religion. The God of the Old Testament is the transcendent Creator of everything that exists. He stands outside the universe; He is not part of it. There are only three religions in our modern world that share this viewpoint. Significantly, all of them are based on the revealed religion of Israel, namely; Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Therefore, it is one of the inspired insights revealed to the covenant people by the one true God Himself.

Ethical

Looking closely at the term ethical, one can conclude initially that the term ethic is present, connoting that it deals with morals and ethical codes, a way in which an individual can live their lives by abiding to one or perhaps many rules and laws. Analytically, Agha (2003:2) states that ethics is the science which deals with what a man should desire, and what he should avoid, and this gives the basic application to man's chief forms or patterns of conduct, what he ought or ought not to do. On this score, Omoregbe (1990:3) affirms that ethics deals with the morality of human actions; or that branch of philosophy which studies the norm of human behavior. It is also the systematic study of the fundamental principles of the moral law or as the science of human conduct. Admittedly, ethical following deals with a set of moral principles or values. Again, being ethical has involvement in deontological ethics as well as teleological ethics too, where absolute morality is established. Impliedly, ethics is universal and unchanging at all times when abided to.

Ethical Monotheism

Ethical monotheism is a term made up in fairly recent times to describe the type of belief system shared by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The term ethical monotheism is made up of four separate words or parts; ethical, mono, theos, and ism. However, it is easier to split the term into two separate words; ethical and monotheism. Both have very different meanings and together have one meaning that is followed by millions of people today. The clearest teaching of ethical monotheism is that God demands ethical behavior. As Haag (n.d) in Prager (2012:3) describes it, the invisible God not only insisted on being the only and all powerful God He also developed into a moral God. More so, ethical monotheism suggests more than that God demands ethical behavior. It means that God's primary demand is ethical behavior. It means that God cares about how man treats another more than He cares about anything else. Accordingly, ethical monotheism's message remains as radical today as when it was first promulgated.

For instance, once God told Moses that human sacrifice is wrong, it was wrong. There was no competing god to teach otherwise. Thou shall not murder (Ex.20:13) means that murder is wrong for everyone, not just for one culture. It means the killing of a daughter or sister who lost her virginity prior to marriage, practised to this day in parts of the Arab world, is immoral. It

means that the cutting off of a girl's clitoris (female circumcision), a ritual practised on almost one hundred million women living today in Africa, is immoral. It means that homosexuality as practised in some parts of the Western world, is gross indecency and unnatural act (Prager, 2012). Accordingly, ethical monotheism emphasizes One God and one morality. Ethical monotheism is thus a term used to describe a theological system which distinguishes a rule based and ethic-minded monotheism from other kinds of monotheism that may be more arbitrary, charismatic, or even malevolent ones. It is often believed that all ethical standards are derived from their deity and that they are therefore dependent upon the divine in this way and sometimes that those who do not heed their own religious dictates are also ethically incapable or corrupt.

In particular, ethical monotheism results in belief in a singular God who establishes a system of moral values and principles (Answer.com, 2012:2). This means that God's law is perfect and unchanging as well as being universalistic. In order to fulfill the ethical part, one must also follow all laws that are stated to the best of their ability. More so, morality must be good as due to being set by God, who is the highest standard. One cannot go against His decisions as they are simply the highest standard. Moral guidelines are not just a way of living one's life. They link directly into the monotheistic side of the whole term whereby moral behavior is an actual form of worship in itself. Again, ethical monotheism involves the understanding that absolute standards are unchanging and are usually demonstrated in the holiest of scriptures in religions. The law remains always the same. It does not change with circumstances or apply only to some situations and not to others. Accordingly, ethical monotheism is a way of life for all individuals who follow it (Iwe, 1979; Agha, 2013).

Transformation

According to Watkins & Watkins (1992:731) transformation means to change completely in form, appearance, or nature. Equally, transformation denotes the process of making institutions and organizations more democratic. With the above, transformation entails the transformation of people's minds, lives, and environment in such a way that will increase national consciousness. This transformation can emphasize knowledge and character formation that comes with changing our general orientation in terms of values and attitudes. With sound knowledge of God, man, and society, Nigerians will appreciate the danger of murder, idolatry, and sacrifices to their Idols. The transformation would include acquiring skills and ideas that can change the mind. In the case of Nigeria, national transformation includes: increasing degree of national consciousness of Nigerians, increasing the degree of tolerance of one another by Nigerians, increasing the quantity, and quality of things that make for good life in the socio-economic sectors (Oyeranmi, 2011).

With good character formation whereby citizens imbibe Christian values, Nigeria will become major resource for economic and spiritual growth, technologically driven and responsive to environmental concerns. This will minimize corruption, illicit economy, and conflict shock, improve human relations, and increase our productive capacity for personal growth and communal dignity, stability and economic prosperity. From the above conceptual framework, ethical monotheism is the sure foundation for national social engineering. It is the moral way of life, that is, the way of honesty, integrity, altruism, and selfless service which leads to internal harmony, peace of mind, happiness, and self-fulfillment. Ethical monotheism spotlights social responsibility, peace as abstract ideal, and love as the foundation for national transformation. Overtly, to reject ethical monotheism is to accept the immoral way of life; the way of dishonesty, fraud, selfishness, banditry and kidnapping, electoral and examination malpractices, terrorism,

corruption, embezzlement of public funds and property.

It is only against this background that one can possibly explain the incessant chaos, conflict shocks, the 2023 Christmas Eve massacres in Plateau State; and the increasing propensity towards great selfishness and different forms of fraudulent practices now prevalent in contemporary society. With this erosion of ethical monotheism, national transformation becomes stalled for ever. This is the Nigerian situation. It is quite axiomatic that this way can only provoke further national chaos, confusion, infidelity, prevarication, and misery. Secularists who celebrate multiculturalism which in theory is neither original nor offensive tend to forget that in actuality, multiculturalism undermines ethical monotheism. Its underlying assumption is that there is no one universal moral code; all cultures are morally equal. To such relativists, one may ask: is ethical polytheism likely? This opens the door to the components of ethical monotheism.

Components of Ethical Monotheism

The God of ethical monotheism is the God first revealed to the world in the Bible. There is little doubt that any group of people has made so much rapid progress in ethical insight in a short period of time as the Jews. The moral heritage says Breasted (n.d) in Agha (2003:26) has come to us rather through the Hebrew's than from any other group. The Hebrew ethics was shaped by God Himself and by their own experiences and their own inner dynamism. Through it, the study can establish four primary characteristics of God.

God is Supranatural rather than Being Supernatural. This means that God exists not only outside the natural world, but also above it in the sense of being superior to it. This is why Genesis opens with, In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth in a world which nearly all people worshipped nature. The Bible's intention was to emphasize that nature is utterly subservient to God who made it. Obviously, therefore, God is not a part of nature, and nature is not God. Against this backdrop, Youngblood (1997:19) intones that the Bible describes for us the God who, as the Creator of the universe, is also

Its absolute proprietor. He who made it and sustains it also owns it and has the privilege of disposing of it as he desires. No one can dispute His authority in this regard because as He Himself has told us; Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me" (isa.43:16).

On the strength of the afore-citation, God, the sovereign father of His chosen people, has laid down rules and regulations intended for our greatest good and His greatest glory. If the faithful love Him, they will do their utmost for His highest. By doing so, they demonstrate that they love Him and that they are willing to admit that His commandments are not burdensome (I Jn.5:3).

Hence, those who trust in Him can sing with the Psalmist, my times are in thy hand (Ps. 31:15). He has created us, He sustains us, and it is to Him alone that man shall someday have to give account of his words and deeds. As God was sovereign in the individual and collective experience of Israel, so is He sovereign in the world today. The failure of our generation to acknowledge that sovereignty does not mean that it no longer exists. Sensitive Jews watched with bated breath as individual sins and national conspiracies were in turn condemned and judge by God. It is true today as it ever was that He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision (Ps.2:4). If the concept of divine sovereignty makes today's unbelievers defiant or fearful, it causes the Christian to rejoice. Those who are in Christ know that the Father has delegated all authority to the Son, our Lord Jesus (Eph. 1:22-23).

God is Personal. The second essential characteristics of ethical monotheism is that God is personal. The God of ethical monotheism is not some depersonalized force. God cares about

His creatures. Irwin (n.d) in Prager (2012:1) postulates that the world was to be understood in terms of personality. Its center and essence was not blind force or some sort of cold, inert reality but a personal God. Hereto, God is not uncaring nor a watch-maker who abandoned His watch after making it, as the Enlightenment Deists would have it. God knows each of us, we are, after all, created in His image and likeness (Gen. 1:27). It means that He knows us and cares about us. Caring beings are not created by an uncaring being. The whole point of ethical monotheism is that God's greatest desire is that we act toward one another with justice and mercy. If Nigerians subscribes to this simple belief which does not entail leaving or joining any specific religion, or giving up any ethnic identity, our nation would experience far less evil. Furthermore, Jesus taught His disciples that God is My Father, and your Father (Jn. 20:17). In other words, He showed them that God cared for them personally, just as a human father cares for his children. He dared to speak to God the Creator as a child speaks to his parent, and He told His disciples God had given Him all things (Mt.11:27).

Impliedly, God cares for the smallest details of our everyday needs (Mt. 6:28-32). Unlike the gods of Greek and Roman myths who were short-tempered and immoral, the true God is just and righteous (Lk.18:19). He intervenes to save His people from sin . . . so this holy God does not stand aloof from the affairs of men. He suffers their pain and even submits to the power of death to save His children (Packer & Tenney; 1980:544). Similarly, Templeton (n.d) in Ziglar (1998:186) posits that believe in God is the assurance that there is a just and loving God

Who has vested interest in me because he created me; that He loves me no matter what and that He hears and answers my prayers. It gives me great peace of mind because my past has been forgiven, God's presence as my Heavenly Father is assured on a daily basis, and my eternity is guaranteed. It increases my happiness substantially because I believe that one day I will again see my parents, son, brothers, sisters and friends who have passed away.

Accordingly, believing that the Creator will provide you with strength and knowledge when your resources are exhausted lifts the weight of the world from your shoulders. Knowing that you have a never-ending source of strength, love and wisdom that you can rely on is wonderfully comforting. People who lack faith in the God of ethical monotheism often carry hurt, resentment, anger and bitterness towards others. They are seldom if ever, not happy people who have peace of mind.

God is Good. A third characteristics of ethical monotheism is that God is goodness. If God were not moral, ethical monotheism Prager (2012:1) holds would be an oxymoron. A God who is not good cannot demand goodness. Unlike all other gods believed in prior to monotheism, the Biblical God rules by moral standard. In ascription of goodness to God, the fundamental idea is that He is in every way all that He as God should be, and therefore answers "perfectly to the Ideal expressed in the word God. He is good in the metaphysical sense of the word, absolute perfection and perfect bliss in Himself" (Berkhof; 1994:70). Consequent upon this, God is good in Himself and He is also good for His creatures. Berkhof (1994:70) gives a lucid and insightful expression of this when he remarks that God may therefore be called "*the fons Omnium bonorum*. He is the fountain of all good, . . . All the good things which the creatures enjoy in the present and expect in the future, flow to them out of this inexhaustible fountain." And not only that, but God is also the *summum bonum*, the highest good. We tend to take a connection between religion and ethics for granted. However, ethical monotheism demands that one's faith ought to help shape one's moral values. It is quite instructive that for much of human history, however,

worship meant making the proper sacrifices and following the proper ritual; it might have very little to do with morality.

For instance, Placher (1983:22-23) observes that various gods and goddess punish heroes for failing to offer the proper sacrifices, but they rarely call them to account

For moral failings. The prophet Amos thus proposed a new idea of proper worship when he declared on behalf of Yahweh, I hate, I spurn your pilgrim - feast; I will not delight in your sacred ceremonies Let justice roll on like a river and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (Amos 5:21-24). Yahweh, the prophets increasing taught, cared about righteousness, not ritual. He had no respect for those who sell the innocent for silver and the destitute for a pair of shoes . . . grind the heads of the poor into the earth and thrust the humble out of the way (Amos 2:6), regardless of the sacrifices they performed.

Against this backdrop, therefore, words cannot convey the magnitude of the change wrought by the Judeo-Christian's introduction into the world of a God who rules the universe morally. One ramification is that despite the victories of evil people and the sufferings of good people, a moral God rules the world. Ultimately, the good and evil will receive their just deserts. In this regard, one has never understood how a good secular individual can avoid debilitating despair. To care about goodness, yet to witness the unbearable torments of the good and the innocent; to see many of the evil go unpunished all the while believing that this life is all there is; that we are alone in a universe that hears no child's cry and sees no person's tears, has to be a recipe for despair.

God is Holy. As primary as ethics are, man cannot live by morality alone. We are also instructed to lead holy lives: you shall be holy because I the Lord your God am holy (Lev.19:2). God is more than the source of morality; He is the source of holiness. Ethics enables life, holiness ennobles it. Hence, when the Scripture talk about holiness, Stedman (2005:12) says it is truly talking about wholeness and completeness." And when God says to us, you are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, He is telling us that we are to be as whole and complete as He is. There is no blemish in God. He lives in harmony with Himself." Furthermore, holiness Prager (2012:2) declares is the elevation of the human being from his animal nature to his being created in the image of God. There is no more solemn statement in all of Scripture referring to the relationship between God and man than in Genesis 1:27, in which we find the Biblical occurrence of the verb create, three times repeated: God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them.

Additionally, in Genesis 1:31 at the end of creation God saw all that He had made and it was very good (Youngblood; 1997:20). Apparently, Adam functioned as God intended humanity to function. He bore the beauty and splendor of the image and the likeness of God. Impliedly, human beings were lovingly fashioned by God, and He looked upon man and said that they were very good. But the human race, Stedman (2005:13) notes has become misshapen and deformed by sin. Yes, God's image is still stamped upon us, but that image has become marred and damaged. We are no longer whole. More fundamentally, the holiness of God has a special ethical aspect in Scripture. Interestingly enough, it is with this aspect of it that the study is more directly concerned. The ethical idea of the divine holiness may not be dissociated from the idea of God's majesty-holiness. The fundamental idea of the ethical holiness of God is also that of separation, but in this case it is separation from moral evil or sin. In virtue of His holiness, God can have no communion with sin. Used in this sense, the word "holiness" points to God's majestic purity, or ethical majesty (Berkhof,1994).

But the idea of ethical holiness is not merely negative (separation from sin). It also has a positive content, namely, that of moral excellence, or ethical perfection. If man reacts to God's majesty-holiness with a feeling of utter insignificance and awe, his reaction to the ethical holiness reveals itself in a sense of sinfulness as in Isaiah 6:5. Accordingly, the call to holiness is the result of the nature of our God: "You are to be holy to me because, I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own" (Lev.20:26 Cf. I Pet. 1:15-16). The fact of God's holiness drives the faithful to seek to be different from the futile ways (I Pet. 1:18) of his ancestors and from "the fleeting pleasures of sin" (Heb. 11:25).

They would turn aside from all besetting sins (Heb. 12:1) by the encouragement and strengthening of the Holy Spirit. Also, the holiness of God Fubara-Manuel (2007:115) opines means for our world that God cannot stand sin in any form, that sin will be punished wherever it is found, that "God's holy eyes are "too pure to behold evil" and that God "cannot look on wrong doing" (Hab. 1:13). The holiness of God means that God will execute justice steadfastly" Failure to ground God's holiness in His essential nature, Milne (1991:68) submits is a primary cause of people's mistaken severance of the holiness from the love of God. If holiness is God's will, His acts of love and pardon must also be holy acts."

Ethical Monotheism and the Decalogue

Religion and ethics are related as foundation to building. The moral demands of the Decalogue are founded on the fact of God's redemptive activity (Ex.20:2); and much of Jesus' moral teaching is presented as deduction from religious premises (Mt.5:43 ff). The revelation of the law in the context of redemptive covenant action indicates that conformity to the law must be a gracious accomplishment of Yahweh, saving from bondage. In this context, Kline (1992:1174) contends that even the preponderantly negative form of the Decalogue serves to magnify the grace of God, who presents this protest against man's sin not as a final condemnation but summons to the godliness which is the goal of restored covenantal communion. Again, Kline (1992:1174) opines thus it becomes a divine promise to the redeemed servants of perfect divine triumph over the demonic power that would enslave them in the hell of endless alienation from God. An ethic rooted in such religion possesses the dynamic of faith, hope, and love. More importantly, the biblical ethic is rooted in biblical religion, and biblical religion is not shapeless mysticism but a structured order.

Hence, the Decalogue's main concern was not to set a fence round abstract ethical ideals, but to cement good relationships between people, and between people and God. So, the majority of its specific precepts are couched in the second person rather than the third. Thus, the strongly positive and warm attitude adopted by those under the law towards law-keeping (Ps. 19:7,119: 33 ff); and the recognition that the most serious consequence of law-breaking was not any material punishment, but the resulting breakdown in relationships (Hos.1:2). Consequently, concerned as they are with the most fundamental of relationships, the Decalogue set out the basic sanctities governing belief, worship, life, the sanctity of God's being, His worship, His name and His day; and the sanctity of marriage and family, life, property and truth. This is why slaves must be treated generously because God treated Hebrew slaves with generosity in Egypt (Dt. 15:10 ff). Equally, businessmen are not to weight their scales unfairly, remembering that it was the God of justice who redeemed their ancestors (Lev. 19:36). Strangers are to be treated with the same kindness that the Lord of grace showed to His people for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Lev.19:33 ff).

Put more concretely, God's demand is you shall keep my commandments and do them because I am the Lord . . . who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be Your God (Lev. 22: 31ff). More so, as well as being the fruit of God's redemptive work, the Decalogue has deep roots in the creation ordinances of Genesis 1 and 2. These are the ordinances of procreation and managerial responsibility for the rest of creation (Gen. 1:28); of the Sabbath (Gen. 2:2 f); of work (Gen. 2:15) and of marriage (Gn. 2:24). Field (1992:353) writes that together they touch upon all the main areas of human life and behavior and provide basic guidelines for those seeking a life-style that is in line with the Creator's ideal." On this premise, the Decalogue usually styled the moral law is the rule of life and manners. The Scripture as Chrysostom (n.d.) in Watson (1990:12) says is a Garden and the moral law is "the chief flower in it. It is a banquet, and the moral law is the chief dish in it It is an exact model and platform of religion. It is the standard of truth, the judge of controversies" Accordingly, the Decalogue is unalterable, very illustrious, and full of glory (Mt.5:17; Rom. 13:9; Jas. 2:10 f). As a corollary, the Law of Moses or the Law of God (the Torah) (Neh. 10:29) made Israel a monotheistic ethical bloc in a world invaded and pervaded by polytheism, cultivated superstition, and philosophical rationalism.

Affirming that Jewish religion invokes wonder and perhaps admiration, Iwe (1979:3) posits that

While the Greeks have held a position of originality and primacy in the spheres of the literary arts and philosophy, and the Romans secured a status of imperial pre-eminence in the fields of political wisdom, jurisprudence and military arts and strategem; the Hebrews among the people of the ancient world, enjoyed a position of incontestable and unparalleled excellence and rectitude in the spheres of religion and ethical sanity and probity. . . In the ancient world of religious ignorance, superstition, and fear, and phobia; of mamonism and polymamism; of moral decadence and universal corruption; the Hebrews remained till today the faithful custodians of primitive revelation and faith in one true God and of sound norms of ethical life.

Gleaning from the above, this religious and ethical element was and has remained the most singular, constant and dynamic factor in, and the animating spirit of, the history of the Jews; in all its tortuous complexities and chaotic vicissitudes. The Jews believed and have never ceased to believe in One God and only One God, in strict monotheism. Consequently, in the midst of a polytheistic and pantheistic world, the Jews professed faith in the One Living God. In this monotheistic belief they as a race have remained religiously impregnable, culturally imperturbable and racially and nationally united (Deut. 4:5-14, 32-40; Ps. 78:5-8). The point being strenuously emphasized is that ethical monotheism enabled the Jews to "maintain a pure and complete lineage, traceable back to Abraham and traceable forward to the Messiah (Mt. 1:1-25; Lk. 3:23-38)" (Stone;3009:34).

Manifestly, therein lies its power as the instrument of Jewish moral and religious education. Iwe (1979:16) clearly presented the position thus;

Its theocratic character and its repeated insistence on the supreme importance of the inner law of mind and conscience, safeguard it from the deadening effects that is the sure end of all mere codes of right behavior. In this insistence, Jewish law is unique in its aim of personal sanctification.

This assertion surmises that ethical monotheism hinged on the Torah is the impregnable custody of a monotheistic religion, culture, and ethos responsible for the maintenance of essentially sound ethical system in a world of moral aberration and decadence, idol worship, and child

sacrifice.

This point is sufficiently significant to stress if only because it is often neglected. Accordingly, that this ethical monotheism survived and developed in a world whose spirit and tendencies were so hostile to it is a phenomenon unique of its kind. On this point, Iwe's (1979) experience is once again pertinent. It is a feat greater than the men who bring it about, and, contrasting as it does with the milieu wherein it is produced; puts the ordinary logic of history to flight. For this monotheism is with the Jews, the popular belief. Monotheism, this belief in only one God, was and still is the backbone, soul and stamina of Judaism - the religion of the Hebrews; for the religious cult and culture of these people were impregnate with uncompromising, relentless and monolithic monotheism. Fastidiously, these moral and ethical instructions, guidelines, and restrictions reveals the mind of the Creator of the universe concerning how His people should live, treat one another, eat, and think as well as how to be successful in the journey of life (Ex.19:5-6; 20; 31:18; Josh. 1:7-9; Ps. 119:9-11).

Furthermore, it spotlights detailed information that when applied would help extend life, increase physical health, bring emotional stability, build strong families, and strong communities free of crime; and provide wisdom for wealth creation. More importantly, the judicial moral code in the Torah reveals the code of moral, ethical conduct, and civil law decisions involving family, neighbors, civil authority, and business transactions. This view is buttressed by Stone (2009:29) when he said that

The social, ethical, judicial commandments, and guidelines discuss responsibilities to follow blessings for obedience, and penalties for breaking these laws. The family codes enable a person to understand sexual purity, marriage, and raising children. For example, these codes teach: you were not to see the nakedness of nearest kin or family members (Lev. 18:6-18). You were not to have sexual relations outside of marriage (Lev. 18:20). You were not to offer your children to idols (Lev. 18:21). Men were not to have sexual relations with men or with a beast (Lev. 18:22-23). You were to honor and respect your parents and rest once a week (Lev. 19:3) . . . You were not to lie or steal (Lev.19:11). You must show respect for those who are deaf and blind (Lev.19:14). . . and not vex a stranger (Lev.19:32-34).

In this regard, Barker (1995:884) puntily states that it was in Israel that "God's righteous statutes and decrees were kept because only in Israel had they been made known. The justice and righteousness of God's rule in Israel have been especially shown in the manner in which He has dealt with their sons"(cf. Ex. 34:6-7; Deut.4:5-8; Ps. 99;147:19-20). The point to note here is that while the Law, or Torah in Hebrew and the Pentateuch in Greek contains history, much of it reveals "specific guidelines and instructions for spiritual, social and moral living; sacrificial procedures and ceremonial applications. The divine instructions in the Torah are often divided into four categories: the law, the commandments, the statutes and the judgments"(Stone, 2009:21). This exploration on ethical monotheism, the Decalogue and the Torah leads to the radical call to the mission of God for humanity.

Ethical Monotheism and Missions

Though Israel right from its birth as a religious community at Sinai considered herself a *bona fide* property, a son of Yahweh, the exclusive God of Israel at the expense of other nations regarded as Gentiles. Nonetheless, during the course of the theological development of her faith, it became obvious that Israel implicitly recognized her religion as a universal faith. When God

chose Abraham to receive personal redemption, it was not to leave the rest of the people to perish. The purpose of the choice was made clear in you shall all the families of the earth BE BLESSED (Gen.12:3)(Emphasize mine). To fortify this, Abe (2000:5) affirms that when Israel was eventually chosen as God's own people, it was not to the neglect or detriment of other peoples of the universe. She was to be a light to the Gentiles, to carry out a mission to all nations of the earth. Again, the prophets saw Yahweh as the God of the whole universe and the God of individuals, who acted in history, guiding, rewarding, or punishing His people. For instance, Amos saw himself as a prophet to both Israel and other nations. To Amos, Yahweh is the God of all nations and of all men. But more importantly, is the prophet's fundamental conviction that the moral obligations of which all men are aware and christened as Christian duties both to God and neighbors were identical with the personal will of Yahweh, the Universal God who exercises universal sovereignty and holds all people accountable for their conduct.

Furthermore, in the teachings of Jesus, one finds a more conscious return to the intent of the Abrahamic call, a more conscious effort to seeing to it that all the families of the earth are blessed. In Jesus, then Bosch (1991:27) opines was a radical call to the mission of God, to the love of God that seeks all of humanity and all of creation. This radical view about the nature of the mission of God is perhaps most clearly encapsulated by the teaching of Jesus on the kingdom of God (Beasley-Murray; 1986:40). In this kingdom (presently expressed in the Church), God requires His people to live a life of brotherly love. They are to practice the ethics of Christ and work for the redemption of all mankind (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-18; Acts 1:8). This Great Commission spurred the Early Church to take the Good News to the far corners of the Roman Empire. They had a burning desire to win lost souls for Jesus Christ before the end of time. Hence, God has uniquely called the Church as a group conscious of His will and mind, and as a group that has experienced Him uniquely in Christ to witness to God's love in the world by joining in this mission to the ends of the earth. The following section is the practical application of the study.

Implications of the study for National Transformation

The practical need for this paper for the Nigerian setting and, indeed for much of the Christianity of the world today arises from at least five factors. These are the sanctity of human life, equality before the law, religious and social dimensions of life are linked, good stewardship of life and creation preservation as well as the promotion of peace.

Respect for the Sanctity of Human life: An indispensable moral ramification of ethical monotheism is the sanctity of human life. Made in the image of God, men and women have pre-eminent places in the social order, with inalienable political, social, legal and economic rights. The fundamental question to ask about social policies according to Ede (2008:14) is how beautiful is it to people?" Covertly, creation of man in the image of God carries implications which are fundamental in forming Christian attitude to abortion, euthanasia and medical experimentation, as well as fuelling Christian anger when distinctions of race, class or gender are used to exploit any individual or group (Field 1991:233). It is therefore totally forbidden to take another's life. This is a sin resulting from the violation of the sixth commandment (Ex.20:13 Cf. Gen.4:8 ff). To illustrate the lack of respect for the sanctity of human life with farmers and

herders clashes in Nigeria will suffice.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Tajudeen Abbas has said that the incessant clashes between farmers and herders across the country has claimed more lives than any other conflict in Nigeria. The Speaker made the disclosure while declaring open stakeholders interactive session by the House Ad-hoc Committee on Recurring Annual Clashes between Farmers and Herders in Yamaltu/Debba Local Government Areas of Gombe State and Neighboring Local Government Areas, including Other Regions of the Country with similar Incident on Monday August 28, 2023. According to Hon. Abbas the clashes have resulted in avoidable loss of lives and property. It is estimated that over 60,000 people have been killed since 2001. It ought not to be so. The number of deaths, injuries and kidnapped persons constitutes an alarming situation and poses a serious national challenge for Nigeria's quest to attain food security and alternative earnings from the agricultural sector (Ossai, 2023).

Implicitly, the contemporary Nigerian society has become a theatre of genocide, bloodshed, and insecurity due to the carnage activities of terrorists, unknown gunmen, militants, and separatists agitators. Acts of terrorism are carried out at homes, in schools and religious centers, in busy markets and villages, in government and private offices; and on the roads either by government officials or private individuals (Center For Preventive Action; 2022:1). Accordingly, without hesitation, ethical monotheism is the panacea to suicide bombing, state and non-state sponsored terrorism and genocide going on in various parts of the country.

Stewardship and Creation Preservation: The principle of stewardship, Hillyer (1991:661) posits is closely linked to the concept of grace; everything comes from God as a gift and is to be administered faithfully on His behalf. There is thus both stewardship of the earth and stewardship of the gospel; stewardship of personal resources of time, treasure and talents, and stewardship of the resources of church and society. Accordingly, all property has a Social Mortgage. The earth and its resources are to be respected. By the work and activity of human beings in continuing the development of our environment, we become co-creators and stewards of God's bountiful gifts of nature. Responsible management of resources and proper accountability become obligatory. But unfortunately, naked greed, dishonesty and corruption have become virtues in our society. Nigeria is a country permeated with corruption in every sector, from government circles, government institutions and parastatals to the private sector. Embezzlement of public funds by those to whom the funds are entrusted, deals with contractors, ten percent kick-back from contracts awarded, and other fraudulent practices by government officials are common features dotting every page of our national history since independence (Abiodun, 2023; Iroanya, 2023; Tella, 2023).

In the light of this deplorable moral situation in the country, Omoregbe (2002: xi) quips "it is not at all surprising that the economy of the nation eventually collapsed, resulting in unprecedented suffering for our people. Amid the country's abundant human and natural resources, there is insecurity, poverty, fear, suspicion, disorderliness, hatred, and chaos everywhere. These issues keep rising due principally to bad governance including: rise in poverty, poor economic policies, a fall in the standard of living of the people, an upsurge of ethnic militias, an increase in corruption and criminal activities, an increase in the use of drugs

and several factors (Ekwowusi, 2022; Oyelude, 2022). Consequently, highlight of the 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) survey revealed that "63 per cent of persons living within Nigeria (133 million) are multidimensionally poor. The national MPI is 0.257, indicating that poor people in Nigeria experience just over one quarter of all possible deprivations"(Ichad;2022).

Religious and Social Dimensions of life are Linked: The social human construction of the world is not secular in the sense of being outside of God's plan, but is intimately involved with the dynamic of the reign of God (Fox, 2012). Stated more broadly, faith and justice are closely interlinked. Secularists would do well to understand what this Christianity is with which they disagree. Biblical faith asserts uniquely among world religions, that God is personal Creator and Sovereign. He is sovereign because He is Creator. Hence, only a creator can define the reason for existence of something and our reason for existence is the only objective basis for moral obligation. Moral obligation is the foundation of all other including legal obligation.

The great problem resolved by our Biblical and Anglo-Saxon tradition, culminating in our constitution, Fox (2012:1) affirms is how to submit the near monopoly on coercive force held by civil government "to the moral constraints of truth and righteousness, to obligate civil government to be truthful and righteous, equally toward all. If you do not want that kind of government, the Biblical worldview sooner or later becomes your enemy." Implicated in the above thesis is that most of these virtues are either virtually non-existent or have their existence fraught with fraud in Nigeria. Resultantly, the aspirations of the people to evolve viable nation has remained an effort in futility. The point to note here is that since there is no identifiable source of moral obligation in a secular world, all legal systems without a personal creator God ultimately rest on coercion not on moral legitimacy, for their alleged legal legitimacy.

Promotion of Peace and Economic Justice: Peace is the fruit of justice and is dependent upon the right order among humans and within nations. Idowu (1971:83) argues that peace in religion is not an abstract concept; nor a mere sentiment. It is an urgent matter of life or death. It is to be bought, pursued, achieved, attained, and maintained. A correlation to just peace is economic justice. The economy is for the people and the resources of the earth are to be equitably shared by all. Human work is the key to contemporary social security. Labor takes precedence over both capital and technology in the production process. Just wages and the rights of workers to form trade unions are to be guaranteed. This is not the case in Nigeria, where the abuse of good governance ultimately fosters the anger, distrust, severe alienation and multidimensional poverty that are the roots of many Nigerian conflict shocks. The lack of basic infrastructure such as roads, water and sanitation, shelter, electricity and employment opportunities for the teeming youth had given rise to terrorism, militancy, social instability and political violence (Okoronkwo, 2020; Iroanya, 2023).

Ostensibly, unemployment bites harder on Nigeria's youthful population, with 33.3 per cent of the labor force unable to find a job at the prevailing wage. Specifically, youth unemployment is 53.40 per cent and projected to trend around 58 per cent in 2024, while the misery index is 50.68 per cent (Lain, Schoch & Vishwanatti, 2022; NBS; 2023). Inflation of 28.20 per cent in November 2023 is making a mess of household disposable income, couple with poor workers salary and the new minimum wage of seventy thousand naira (#70,000.00) only.

In a post COVID-19 economy and the war in Ukraine, stagnation, insecurity and poverty have worsened especially in Northern Nigeria where many Nigerians lack education and access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation (Akpata, 2023.). The incidence of poverty has been aggravated by the removal of fuel subsidy by President Bola Tinubu on May 29, 2023, which has led to high cost of food prices, transportation, housing, hike in school fees, and meeting up with other essential needs. In the light of the objective of this study, the questions we must constantly ask the economy is whether the poor are helped through its decisions . . . Is man at the centre of the economy or at the periphery? (Ede; 2008:15).

Equality before the Law: In the Biblical world, the law of God is precisely that which brings all use of coercion under moral law. The law of God is that alone which can give us an ordered freedom, an order which applies to those at the top equally with those at the bottom. Without God, we find attempts at liberal democracy soon edging toward the principle, as the pigs let it be known in *Animal Farm*, all animals are created equal, but some are more equal than others" (Orwell; 1989:92). Ancient paganism and modern secularism are identical in this respect. Hebrew religion, the beginning of ethical monotheism, changed all that. King David understood himself to be under a law higher than him. This explains why Nathan, the prophet, could challenge David when he violated Bathsheba and then killed her husband, Uriah (2 Samuel 11). That amazing scene between Nathan and David as recorded in 2 Samuel 12 could never have happened in Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Greece or Rome. Manifestly, it will not happen in contemporary Nigeria. No prophet would have had the moral ground upon which to stand against the overriding coercive force of the king. Admirably, Fox (2012:1) opines that that right of open and reasoned public disagreement is fast eroding everywhere Biblical culture is being subverted. This is clearly the situation in Nigeria. Apparently, Nigeria's leaders and members of their family are above the law. However, no country makes progress under a system where leaders treat her citizens with contempt.

Conclusion

An informed deduction from the foregoing will show that Israel's great achievement so apparent that mention of it is almost trite was ethical monotheism. It was an achievement that transformed subsequent history. One may raise the question whether any other single contribution from whatever source since human culture emerged from the stone ages has had the far reaching effect upon history that Israel in this regard has exerted both through the mediums of Christianity and Islam and directly through the world of Jewish thinkers themselves? As a corollary, we indicated that any attempts to change the world that do not place God and goodness at their centre will make this world worse. We stressed that ethical monotheism is the only truly effective answer to moral relativism, to racism, to nationalism, to worshipping art, law or success. It must therefore be emphasized that man cannot understand himself, his dignity and vocation on earth without God. May His Holy Spirit accompany us in the search for credible solution to the manifold and pressing needs and challenges confronting the contemporary society.

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