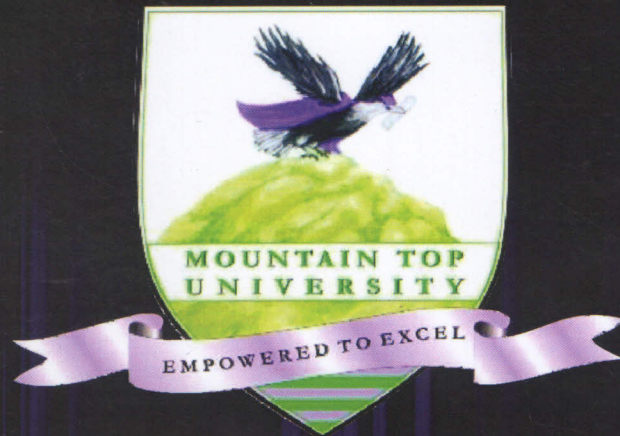




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CHAPTER 5 A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SALVATION AND ESCHATOPRAXIS AMONG WORLD RELIGIONS IN THE POST-MODERN PERIOD

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Abstract

The concept of salvation is all-inclusive and all-embracing in virtually all the living religions. In other words, salvation which means to save or deliver is the pivot of all religions. As a matter of fact, salvation means different thing to different people. Some religions believe that salvation lies in the eschatological future when our own death will be put behind us. Some adherents believe that salvation will be attained in the hereafter, while some believe that salvation is mutually exclusive as it is realized here on earth with one's egoless enlightenment, and while the materialists vehemently and diametrically disagree with Christian, Muslim and Asian mystical traditions. On the other hand, eschatopraxis is actualizing the future ahead of time coupled with the end justifying the means. However, these two concepts have overlapping submissions. To this end, this paper adopts historical, hermeneutic, descriptive and exploratory approaches leading to the fact that salvation is not dogmatic, and also not all world's living religions believe in the hereafter. The paper postulates that since salvation and eschatopraxis have pre-occupied the 21st century religions, good deeds and moral life are expected from the adherents of these religions as pre-requisites for the here and now and the world of the forms. The paper, therefore, concludes that individuals should prepare

adequately as no particular religion has the monopoly of salvation and eschatopraxis.

Keywords: *Salvation, Religions, Eschatopraxis, Dogmatism, Post-Modernity*

Introduction

All the world's living religions assert a motif of salvation everywhere. Whether such religion is God-centred, Atheistic-centred, or Godless-centred, salvation is the pivot. In fact, the concept of salvation or its equivalent does not necessarily mean the same in every religious tradition. Thus, the problem of universal salvation brings to the fore the essence of overlapping submission and discourse. For instance, in Christian tradition, the approach to salvation is a holistic salvation. While, in the New Testament, it is what God has done to death in the resurrection of Jesus. The Gospel is the announcement that in one man's history, death is no longer the eschaton, but only the second to last thing. Our final salvation lies in the eschatological future when our own death will be put behind us. In which case, salvation in the Gospels itself is to be attained in the hereafter. Meanwhile, in Asian mystical religions of Hinduism and Buddhism, salvation is mutually exclusive as it is realized here on earth with one's egoless enlightenment, in the realization of the oneness of the self with the whole of the cosmos, and with the escaping of the wheel of rebirth so that the finite material world can be left behind forever. In the same vein, the materialists disagree with both the Christian and Asian mystical traditions. The Christian doctrine of resurrection poses difficulty from the point of view of the mystics. From the mystical point of view, the Christian hope in resurrection appears to be an impediment to true salvation because it amounts to the illusory hope for an eschatological return to ego-consciousness. If the Buddhists think salvation consists of enlightenment beyond ego-ness, then the Christian gratitude for forgiveness would appear irrelevant.

Again, in Hinduism, there are almost four ways that lead to salvation, but these four ways contradict other religions that believe that salvation is linear or one-way, with emphasis on the resurrected life of being escapist, of fostering belief in the happiness of another world that eliminates motivation for improving on this one. Therefore, putting the happiness of another world behind us makes us to do the future ahead of time-eschatopraxis within the context of the 'end justifying the means', because the end is proleptically present and operative before hand, rehearsing our ultimate expectation. Therefore, the concept of salvation and eschatopraxis seem the pre-occupation of all the living cum post-modern religions. It is the intention of this paper to critically look at salvation and eschatopraxis, and the re-visitation of both concepts in the post-modern beliefs where various theologians have the licence to make submissions.

A Conceptual Meaning of Salvation

The word salvation is derived from the Latin *salvare*, which depicts "to save". Salvation according to the *Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English* (2000: p.1038) means "the saving of a person's soul from sin and its consequences; the state of being saved in this way". *Encarta Dictionaries* (2009) defines salvation as the "act of saving from harm, the saving of somebody or something from harm, destruction, difficulty, or failure." Salvation according to the Christian science means belief in the supremacy of life, truth, and love, and in their destruction of such illusions as sin, illness and death (Zehnle, 1969: p. 420). In another development, salvation therefore means the action or result of deliverance or preservation from danger or disease, implying safety, health and prosperity (Zehnle, 1969: p.420). From the Christian perspective, salvation by Gaudeul (1997: p.1) implies

The whole drama of sin, its consequences in terms of man's alienation and disintegration both as an individual and as a social being, and God's

intervention to give back to man his full dignity, a salvation that is described as transformation of a new creation, that is at the present, in its incipient stages of development and will be completed on the last day.

From the mystical school of thought as espoused by Umejesi (1998: p.10), salvation means *Moskha*-a release from the wheel of birth, death and rebirth. According to him, this concept of salvation has both negative and positive attachment. Negatively, it connotes release from enchantment to the phenomenal world of transitory form and suffering; a release from bondage of worthless form of existence where the soul is imprisoned to the body and fettered to the wheel of births and rebirths (Umejesi, 1998: p.10). Man therefore will not be able to get out of this cyclic existence until he attains the absolute. On the positive side of it, it represents a state of calm, sense of serenity, fulfilment, a blissful state that defies description and imagination. The positive aspect of this release can best be appreciated from the Hindu scripture where the major trend is to consider *Moskha* as 'merging into Brahman' the supreme principle, as a river merges into the sea' (Umejesi, 1998: p.11). To this end, salvation depicts a deliverance from restrictions, sin, failure, limitedness and its consequences towards a platform of freedom, escape, preservation, bliss and prosperity.

Eschatopraxis: An Account

The word eschatopraxis can be bifurcated into 'eschaton' and 'praxis'. Eschaton means last thing, final event, while praxis means action, custom and among others. Nwala (1980:p.109) opines that praxis is an action in the sense that it aims at human happiness; it is rather the continuous activity of living a good life...proper to man. What man acquires in this domain during this life is not theoretical wisdom nor the enhancement of his skills, but practical wisdom which is concerned with human affairs and with matters about deliberation is possible. Therefore,

eschatopraxis connotes events or final actions that would bring about human happiness, good life and *sumum bonum* (highest good) to humankind. Pannenburg (1969: p.111) asserts that the value of eschaton is that it locates the *sumum bonum*, the highest good, the lured toward which we are being drawn, the ideal of the future we wish to make actualized in the present. Carl Braaten (1974: p.121) sees eschatopraxis as

Doing the future ahead of time...in proleptic ethics it may truly be said that the end justifies the means, because the end is proleptically present and operative beforehand, rehearsing the qualities of the eschatological kingdom-peace, love, joy, freedom, equality, unity-in the course of history's forward movement.

Ted Peters (2000: p.379) emphasizes that not only does eschatology stimulate action; it is the very foundation of ethics once we apprehend God's will for the consummate future proleptically in present human action. As a concept that originated in the 16th century, Ted Peters (2000: p.379) buttresses further that we need to think and act in terms of an action programme made up of middle axioms that will move us from the comprehensive vision to the challenges we face amidst current future consciousness Eschatopraxis is within the domain of practical or pragmatic activity, and this pragmatic goal is oriented, towards the attainment of happiness in the here and now, which will be dragged to the hereafter.

Salvation and Eschatopraxis in the Post-Modern Religions

The foregoing analysis shows that salvation is synonymous with religions. Likewise eschatopraxis depicts action programme that would help us from the futuristic vision to the challenges we face in the midst of current future awareness. In this section, we shall be looking at some post-modern religions with their functional and expressive understanding of salvation and eschatopraxis.

African Religion

In African religious societies, as Alamu (2010: p.154) argued elsewhere, salvation is synonymous with the religion. This is intimated with the fact that in the face of practical evils and suffering, humankind must be upright, just and honest with his/her neighbours and environment. This is necessitated by the fact that humankind must be rewarded with the life of felicity of the good consciousness embedded in the hereafter. The consciousness of the hereafter brings about the ideal of good heaven and heaven of potsherd. Oshun (2003: p.138) posits that since life in Africa is cyclical, afterlife is an enlargement of the bliss and felicity of this world void of sorrow, labour and pain. Therefore, good conduct and reincarnation are pre-requisites for attaining eternal bliss. Awolalu and Dopamu (2005: p.98) add that the aged who lived extra-ordinary, spectacular and mysterious life worthy of emulation also become an ancestor on earth while part of the deceased still remains in the hereafter. In the final analysis, for humankind to attain salvation in African worldview, the experience of the past existence must undergo purification through the wheel of rebirth, until victory over every frailty will eventually result in ultimate salvation of the individual by the final emerging of the spiritual self of every individual (Alamu, 2010: p.158).

Eschatopraxis in African Religion as a phenomenon of post-modern era has in its various manifestations taught us about fragmentation and its value, about the importance of disentangling privileged majority from suppressed or overlooked minority viewpoints. It has equally taught us a hermeneutics of suspicion. George Newlands (1997: p.18) argues that in practice, post-modern assertion continues to defend our inherited positions, to the disadvantage, that far from leading to more mutual tolerance, may lead us to suggest that each group has the right to make up its own rules and operate them without regard to others. Newlands (1997: p.19) adds that

ours is post-modernism of resistance which arises as a counter-practice not only to the official culture of modernism, but also to the false normativity of a reactionary post-modernism. But it rather appropriates and reconfigures these modes of thought and action in new circumstances, often quite radically.

In actual sense, our contention is putting theory into practice in the post-modern era where fragmentation and interpolation have taken place, thereby romanticizing with a hermeneutics of suspicion. In fact, pioneered African scholars like Mbiti, (1980), Idowu (1996), Awolalu and Dopamu, (2005), Dime, (2000) Metuh-Ikenga, (1996) and among others have passionately presented African religion with various descriptions and adverbs of religiosity. These include 'Africans are notoriously religious'; 'Africans are incurably religious'; 'Africans are uncompromisingly religious'; and 'in all things...religious'. These adverbs-notoriously, incurably and uncompromisingly of how religious Africans were, made salvation to be within the reach of the people. But, post-modern Africa is no longer sympathetic to the pioneer African scholars who so described them wonderfully and religiously, rather, a handful of Africans have turned Idowu's (1996: p.1) description upside down. Here, we would sympathize with Idowu (1996: p.1) who said "in all things Africans are religious". Of a truth, today indeed, in all things they are religious. Some people "kill religiously, they are corrupt religiously; they rig elections religiously; kidnap religiously; siphon and misappropriate the government coffer religiously; they abduct religiously, they rape religiously and they elope and escape religiously" (Alamu 2011: p.11). Thus, the structures Africans have depended upon have been destroyed. The spiritual is now blind to the mundane, African divinities, ancestors and spirits are made to rest in peace. They no longer know, feel and watch over their siblings because post-modernity has taken over their position. If Idowu and his African compatriots had envisaged post-modern Africa, they

would have been cautious of their description of Africans. Today, as a matter of emphasis, a handful of Africans are no longer religious as depicted by Idowu (1996: p.1) and others, rather western orientation of materialistic possession, greed, and acculturation have ravaged Africa and we do not see anything wrong with them. However, the core African ethical value of we-feelings, brotherhood, neighbourliness and sanctity of life should be consciously brought back so that they can create new possibility of the future and to begin consciously to redirect the course of African history of the hereafter, else salvation will be a mirage, which to us is 'otherworldly'.

Hinduism and Buddhism

Both religions evolved in Asian subcontinent and both believe that the whole lot of human existence is all about suffering, either, physical, moral or spiritual from which salvation is sought in order to overcome this suffering, which is inseparably tied to Karma and Reincarnation-Samsara. According to D. Dhavamony, (1970:p.175) it is this serious and physical problem of how to overcome these practical evils that made human beings aware of the urge for liberation.

Salvation in Hinduism can be achieved in one of the three general ways: the way of knowledge, which is truly a part of the Ultimate Brahman and into separate entity; the way of devotion, which is love, prudence and obedience to a particular deity; a way of works, or following ceremonial rituals. These are the primordial rudiments of salvation from a seemingly endless cycle of birth, death and rebirths. Umejesi (1998:p.11) establishes a pluralist understanding of salvation from Hindu perspective. He argues that being one with God, the Brahman, is the Ultimate goal of the Hindu. He explicates the evils from which man strives to overcome and maintains that salvation is one but that sages call it by different names. Meanwhile, Hinduism and Buddhism believe that salvation is exclusive and it is realized here on earth with your egoless enlightenment, in the

realization of the oneness of the self with the whole of the cosmos, and with the escaping of the wheel of rebirth so that the finite material world can be left behind forever. This mystical experience is 'this-worldly'.

In the era of post-modernity, Hinduism seems to add grace-*Prasada* to the concept of salvation. Parathsaky (1986: p.130) argues that this is a product of westernization and since there is the wave of acculturation everywhere, Hinduism and other traditions must be affected one way or the other. As a matter of fact, before now, Hinduism has been battling with her belief which made Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism to be established as a result of the power of the Vedas, excesses and the rigidity of the caste system and sacrificism in Hinduism. Salvation is still being preached but it is not dogmatic like Christianity. Also, the new role of these religions in the modern period is evil, because, for the first time, Robertson (2009:p. 225) complains that people are less religious, because religion on account of its powerful emotional appeal has often sought to be dragged into political and social arena by various interest groups. According to him;

In political arena, religion is no longer oriented towards faith, rational or irrational, but towards evolving a religious identity, a primordial consciousness for its political utility...Politicians, clerical and lay, are engaged in manipulating religious symbols as one technique in the struggle for power, sometimes cynically but more often through the same process of rationalization by which interests become disguised as principles in politics everywhere (Robertson, 2009:pp.225-227).

In the light of the above, it is clear that post-modernity does not spare neither religion nor politics, and bringing the two phenomena together poses danger and they are not healthy for the present global politics. The end-product of this trend is to

welcome irreligiosity, and secularization. The 21 century discourses have however brought in worldliness and secular polity mainly through colonialization (Robertson,2009:p.238).

Jainism and Sikhism

These two religions are from the same Asian stock and they are called protest religions or reformatory religions, because they evolved from Hinduism. They emanated from Hinduism as a result of the excesses and abuses of the Vedas, rigidity of caste system and sacrificism in Hinduism. Jainism as a protest religion was established by Mahavira the Jain- the conqueror. This religion promotes non-violence-*Ahimsa*, pacifism and harmlessness. As regards salvation, Jainism believes in good conduct-*karma* and *samsara*. It strongly believes that man must work out his salvation here on earth, and since the founder did not believe in the existence of God, salvation is to be achieved here and now through one's effort.

Sikhism as a protest religion founded by Guru Nanak, is also described as a syncretistic religion. It combines the good part of Hinduism and good aspect of Islam to form Sikhism. Salvation is therefore resident in the true Name. It has been argued that the true Name might be the Supreme Being, while others do not subscribe to that. Salvation is resident in mentioning the True Name. This claim is most important because it is to be recited here on earth. Therefore, beyond this natural world has not been stressed.

Nevertheless, the religious action of today in these religions is against civility. Robertson (2009: pp.225-227) observes that "using religion for political gains is against civility, and it promotes the debate between modernity and traditional mind-set". Again, it was during the freedom struggle that a sense of separation was injected in the minds of Hindu and Muslim middle classes which are instrumental to articulating their respective political ambitions. The elites of both the

communities freely made use of religion, culture and language for this purpose. Still, religions are being re-interpreted to provide the ideological support for political systems seeking to increase the capacity to direct socio-economic change. Religion is a mass phenomenon, politics is not; in transitional societies of praxis, religion can serve as a means by which the masses become politicized. At the same time, it can be ignored that in societies characterized by religious pluralism, each community may become in some sense a political actor. These are not healthy institutions for religions whose focuses are geared towards salvation and eschatopraxis.

Taoism and Confucianism

It is essential to note that the period the founders of Taoism and Confucianism lived was engulfed with social unrest. Occasioned by this situation, hundred schools sprang up in China. Consequently, only two schools of Lao-Tzu of Taoism and Confucius of Confucianism emerged. Lao-Tzu- the old master adopted mystical approach to nature, while, Confucius adopted pragmatic approach to nature. No doubt, the two philosophers did not bring in the concept of God. With regard to salvation, Lao-Tzu asserts that humankind must follow the Tao-the way, path, road or a sort of divine legislation regulating the universe. Tao is the ground norm of all existence and the mother of earth, believed to be the will of heaven. Instead, humans are urged to model themselves to 'that which is so by itself. The 'that which is so by itself'; may not represent the concept of God. Rather, human should model their lives towards Tao-the way. In fact, good virtues are *sine qua non* for salvation (Alamu, 2012: p.160).

Confucius also enjoins his followers to cultivate good virtues and good rapports with fellow human beings. Therefore, Heaven will bear witness. According to Confucius, he said 'heaven knows me'. Although, he did not believe in God, but he

said 'heaven knows him'. Whether or not heaven exists, good virtues and good human relationships are required for salvation, since Wing-Tsit Chan (1963:p.304) claims that:

The Heaven of earlier sages was the same as the Heaven of later sages. Heaven does not change, and its material forces do not alter. All were endowed with the original material forces, which are pure and harmonious and are not different in earlier or later ages.

Both Taoism and Confucianism believe in good virtues and good human relations as *sine qua non* for salvation. As philosophical religions, the two belief-systems have passed through transformations in the present time. Nobody waits for nature to direct him/her. Rather, it is considered too late to wait for nature to direct the course of human history. Today, lack of patience has brought humankind to a level of translating ideology to reality. In fact, since the period of Chairman Mao Tse Tung in 1949, China has benefitted immensely from transforming her ideologies to pragmatism. But, with all sense of modesty, this pragmatism has made many to be irreligious and considered mundane things in disproportionate level.

Shintoism

Shintoism is the national religion of Japan. Clark Offner (1976: p.190) describes Shinto as denoting "the traditional religious practices which originated in Japan and developed mainly among the Japanese people along with the underlying life attitudes and ideology which support such practices". As a nature religion, Shintoism promotes the culture and beliefs of the Japanese people. In the area of salvation, human beings should not be wanting in all areas of life. Even human beings are cautious in Japan because there are institutions that prohibit some carelessness and frivolity such as *hara-kiri*, *Jigal* and *kamikaze*. Except they pass through *O-Harai* for great purifications.

Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism was established in Babylonia by Zoroaster around 660BC. As a religious leader, he used his medical ability to heal war victims. He was interested in establishing his own belief in one heaven and a hell. With regard to salvation in Zoroastrianism, the completely good, the righteous, upright and perfection of holiness are the criteria. However, the concept of God is contestable. *Ahura Mazda* (wise lord) has the attributes of God and equally people describe him as one true deity to be worshipped (Mc Dowell and Stewart, 1982: pp.121-123). He believed that at the end, Zoroastrianism would be the only one to teach an Ultimate triumph of good over evil. There would be punishment in the end for the wicked and reward for the righteous. Nevertheless, it has been argued that Zoroastrianism has a profound influence upon the teachings of the Bible. But, Mc Dowell and Don Stewart (1982: p.128) disagree with the above and insist that if there was any influencing one by the other, it is Zoroastrianism that has been influenced by the Bible, not the opposite.

Christianity

In Christianity, assertion is to be made in retrospect with the old and New Testament as the holy writ of Christianity. In the Old Testament, Ogedengbe (1998:pp. 24-27) observes that salvation can be understood from the Exodus' deliverance of Israel. She sees salvation from historical to eschatological conception whose elements include: forgiveness of sin which results in the abolition of punishment called redemption. While, in the New Testament, Obi (1998:p.1) expresses that salvation is transitory. According to him, the transition is along the Lutheran tradition of '*scriptural gracia*' that is justification by grace received through truth alone' which finds expression in catholic declaration: *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Sallus*, meaning 'Outside the church no salvation'. This statement means inclusivism in terms of salvation and it also depicts that it is through Christianity that

there is universal salvation. Thus, this universal salvation in Christianity has always raised a fundamental problem on other religions especially Islam as if Christianity has the monopoly of salvation. We shall turn to this later in our evaluation.

Meanwhile, in the gospels, salvation is what God has done to death in the resurrection of Jesus. The Gospel is the announcement that in one man's history, death is no longer the eschaton, but was only the second to last thing. Our final salvation lies in the eschatological future when our own death will put behind us (Ted Peters, 2000: p.365). This transition of salvation according to Christianity ends in heaven which is beyond humankind. Thus, this transition in Christianity is in threefolds- The acceptance of Jesus Christ and be born again; working out one's salvation with fear and trembling; and entering heaven at the consummate end.

John Hick (2015: p.4) maintains that Christians should recognize the 'arbitrary and contrived notion' that the salvation of all persons depends on their believing in the Trinity and resurrection. He further argues that despite the differences among religions, in at least one crucial respect all are fundamentally similar. Each can be viewed as offering a path to salvation, a way of shifting believers from self-centredness to concentration on a divine reality. In light of this consideration, Hick urges that all religious adherents to reject the view that their own religions are superior to all others. On eschatopraxis, Hick (2015:p. 4) opines that it develops a long similar progressivist' lines. Hick's (2015:6) eschatopraxis loses the Christological dimension developed by Richard Teilhard, and therefore has more affinity with earlier liberal thinking in this regard. Furthermore, Hick (2015:p. 7) empties eschatopraxis of the historical sphere of this world for the kingdom, or rather the human fulfilment, will not be realised in this life. Hick (2015) returns therefore, to a more individualistic interpretation compared to Ted Peters' eschatology. Interestingly, Hick (2015)

later criticises the tendency to place humanity at the centre of such an immeasurably vast universe.

Be that as it may, in the post-modern era, when eschatopraxis is taking the central stage awaiting the end time, according to some systematic theologians, Christianity is battling with worldliness. In fact, worldliness has entered into some neo-pentecostal churches such that you hardly separate the 'chaff from the wheat.' Today's activity in some of these neo-pentecostal churches is centred around 'prosperity Gospel.' Meanwhile, salvation message is almost given extinction to wear. John Hick (1976:p.56) again argues in his 'Eschatological Verification Reconsidered' that the majority of people in our modern world cannot differentiate the ambiguity of divine experience from the mundane. He asserts that contemporary people do not participate in that form of experience and are instead conscious of their own and others' lives as purely natural phenomena, so that their own experience leads them at least implicitly to reject the idea of a transcendent divine presence and purpose. He further buttresses that if people are philosophically minded, they may well think that the believers' talk is the expression of what Richard Hare has called a blik, a way of feeling and thinking about the world which expresses itself in pseudo-assertions, pseudo because they are neither verifiable nor falsifiable and are therefore factually empty. Even greed and materialistic possessions are the messages of today's neo-pentecostal churches. Christianity is religiously secularized and spirituality is on its way to Armageddon. No doubt, there is still room for repentance.

Islam

As a religion of total submission and peace, Islam enjoins strict observance to peace and total submission. In Islam, salvation is to be earned by strictly adherence to the Articles of Faith and by following the Pillars of Islam religiously (Mc

Dowell and Stewart, 1982: p.177). Sin, therefore, is lack of disobedience to God, making man to be sinful only by act. With this knowledge, paradise is awaiting humankind at death. However, in the post-modern period, some Islamic believers have misrepresented the tenets of Islam with suspicion and disunity among the *Ummah*. Quadri (2013:p.39) asserts that:

Today, Muslims, all in the name of God are divided among themselves and the major causes of differences are ignorance, deficiency in knowledge, overzealousness and holier-than-thou attitude (Qur'an 53:32) Everybody now sticks to his views and ignorantly declares a fellow Muslim a *kafir* thereby causing disunity of the *Ummah* contrary to Qur'an 3:103.

Jehovah Witness and Theosophy

Within Christianity, there are divergent views about salvation. Jehovah witnesses believe that (144,000) people will be saved and they are already saved; and outside these numbers, others would inherit the earth and flourish here. But, their pre-requisites to reign here on earth are good works and virtues that are human friendly. Till date; Jehovah Witnesses still stick to their belief and remain unfazed and unequivocal. This very earth would become a paradise of New Jerusalem, and they will dwell here forever. Most of the people living will be in the second group, along with pre-Christian believers.

For Theosophy, they are Christian scientists of ages. They suddenly drew their inspiration from the Roman and Jewish kaballah. Thus, salvation to them is the belief in the supremacy of life, truth, and love. Theosophy as Christian scientific religion believes that life is cyclical and once human beings die, they will reincarnate immediately and there is no room for judgement at one life experiment. John Scotus as quoted by Udoh Etuk (2002: p.118) asserts "that any soul lost to hell would diminish God, Now since God cannot suffer any

deprivation or diminution, it follows that no soul will be lost when everything comes to be considered". There have been disagreements over this issue as the theosophists have drawn their analogy from the Roman kaballah that strongly believes in reincarnation. Within the context of reincarnation or salvation, good morals are essential conditions for better life in the here and now, even in the hereafter.

Grail Message and Mormonities

Writing from the angle of the Grail message, Akhilomen (1998: pp.81-97) opines that the idea of salvation is holistic; it embraces the individual soul, both mental, spiritual and physical liberation and the universe. The way of salvation is thus through illumination brought about by knowledge and truth which the *personae* of various world religions' founders have preached. Nevertheless, it is sad to note that since salvation is holistic in the Grail message, a handful of individuals do not know that knowledge needs to be sought, let alone, they need to develop their totality mentally, spiritually and physically. Today, many are ignorant of this truth. People do not seek for knowledge any longer which is why there is no illumination to be derived from knowledge. That is while the burial ground is always green because potentials and un-used potentials are buried altogether (Albanese, 2007: p.159).

Mormonites, also referred to as 'church of the Latter day saints' is a Christian scientific religion. Their God is not an infinite and Omnipotent creator; Rather in a universe that has always existed, God is a finite being who does not have the world totally under control, does not interfere with human freedom, and cannot prevent evil. In fact, Mormons hope one day to enter the celestial kingdom where they, too, will be 'as Gods'. To them, salvation is to be worked out here and now, so that at death, they would assume God's statue, in which case, there is no superiority between the Mormons and God. The history and destiny of the

individuals are theologically based and they do not need to be 'spiritualized'(Ted Peters,2000: p.364).

An Evaluation

Thus far, we have been looking at salvation and eschatopraxis in the 21st century religions, and we discovered that it is only in Christianity that salvation is inclusive as a result of the salvific works of Christ and the universality of Jesus' saving work. As a matter of fact, salvation consists of Christ's forgiveness of sins and the gift of a transformed and renewed life in the kingdom of God. This Christian doctrine of resurrection appears problematic from the materialist to mystical points of view. Marxism accuses the Christian emphasis on the resurrected life of being escapist, of fostering belief in the happiness of another world that eliminates motivation for improving this one. From the mystical point of view, the Christian hope of resurrection appears to be a hindrance to true salvation because it amounts to the illusory hope for an eschatological return to ego-ness, then the Christian gratitude for forgiveness would appear irrelevant. Therefore, salvation is mutually exclusive.

On the question of universal salvation as embedded in Christianity is seriously raising fundamental issues. John Hick (1976: p.199) is intolerant of the Christian ideal that some people might spend eternity in heaven and in hell. He says "is as scientifically fantastic as it is morally revolting." He opposes diametrically the concept of a double destiny. In the same vein, Ted Peters (2000: p.367) points out three different- and perhaps even incompatible things in the New Testament with respect to double destiny and universal salvation. These three inconsistencies include first, the New Testament seems to say that salvation will apply to some people and not others on the ground that one must have faith in order to be saved and only some people have faith while others obviously do not. (Rom 1:16) and (John 3:16).

Secondly, a double destiny is obviously articulated by those passages that claim that salvation is relying upon the virtuous works we perform. (Matt 2:5). And the last category is salvation is dependent upon God's grace and not human works that all conditions are precluded (Eph2:8; Rom3:24) God's grace is universal. It appears that we have three irreconcilable positions within the New Testament. Theologically, they pose inconsistencies and incoherence. To this end, John Hick (1976: 201) submits that rather than a ruthless and capricious despot, God is a loving father, gracious in disposition, just in his judgement, sympathetic in feeling, and caring in action. Therefore, if hell exists, must be temporary, and once it passes out of existence all will be taken into the consummate kingdom of God. This position is also supported by the Theosophists. According to Christe-Murray as quoted by Etuk (2002: p.120) states that since God is loving, just and merciful, no soul would be lost to hell, because any soul lost to hell would diminish God and since God cannot suffer diminution or deprivation, it follows that no soul will be lost when everything comes to be considered. Corroborating Hick and Christe-Murray, Ted Peters (2000: p.370) asserts that if hell exists, it cannot last forever and that salvation is for the whole of God's creation. According to him; The power and love of God would forbid the everlasting existence of hell. For textual evidence, one can cite the dramatic conclusion of the apocalypse of John where the devil, death, and hades itself are all destroyed when they are thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:14). Perhaps this is a vivid way for the New Testament to make the point that when the kingdom of God arrives in its fullness, there will be no room left for hell (Ted Peters, 2000: p.287).

Since the issue of everlasting hell has been debunked by some scholars as a result of the Omnipotence of God, likewise there is also plurality in the way of salvation. Dopamu

(2009:p.28) adds that since salvation is mutually exclusive, every adherent of all religions would be judged according to the tenets of such religions. In short, the content of salvation differs from tradition to tradition, and salvation in one case rules out salvation in other cases.

Conclusion

The paper has revealed salvation and eschatopraxis among world religions in the post-modern period. Salvation as exhaustively examined has revealed that it is synonymous and central to all religions and it is mutually exclusive. Equally, eschatopraxis again has made humankind to consummate the future now with the attainment of total happiness. But the very foundation of this eschato-praxis has many challenges that have so far taken humans away from faith and subsequently made them irreligious in the pursuit of ephemeral material possessions. This trend has made human beings to scramble for riches through dubious means thereby permitting greed, secularization and exploitation in the religious circle. Therefore, the paper postulates that whether or not heaven and hell are real; whether or not, salvation is inclusive or exclusive, we need moral and virtuous preparation in all ramification. Since eschatopraxis is action-packed, pragmatic-oriented and is right here with us, we should adequately prepare for the lured cosmos because we move from the known to the unknown. Plato submits that this world is a caricature of the world of the forms and therefore the world of the forms might be the ascendancy of our finality.

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