

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE FOR COMMUNICATION IN HUMAN SOCIETIES

Papers in Honour of Late Dr Elisabeth Amagah De Campos

Edited by

- Prof. Taofiki Koumakpai,
- Dr. Taofiq A. Alabi,
- Dr. Théophile G. Kodjo Sonou,
- Dr. Samson O. Olatunji,
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CHAPTER 25

EXPLORING RELIGION AND RELIGIOSITY IN SELECTED PLAYS OF OTUN RASHEED FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores Otun Rasheed's use of drama and theatre to underscore the efficacy of religion and its significant to the development of our society in three of his plays: *The Third World War*, *The Garments* and *The Gods are still not to blame*. It expounds on the religious culture in the Nigerian society, with particular attention paid to issues of functionalism, conflicts as well as religious interactions in the plays under examination. These religious issues are located within the context of the Emile Durkheim's functionalist theory of religion. The research method employed in this paper is the textual analysis, in which case the selected plays is analysed. It is with a view to unearthing some of the religious issues that are inherent in the play texts under review. In addition to this, we also interviewed the playwright who substantiated his ideological dispositions to issues of religion as he presents then in the plays being interrogated. The later method provides the synergetic tool that enables us to marry the religious issues in the plays and Otun Rasheed's religious ideology. Our findings reveal that the plays of Otun Rasheed are critical evaluation of functionalist issues on religion in Nigeria. He identifies roots

of religious crisis in his plays, which is why the plays are filled with religion, culture and language. His critical position on religion provides stands on the premise that religion would most likely generate social havocs that would certainly defy all basic remedies, especially if religious tenets and dogmas are swallowed without being critical of them. This study concludes that religion, in its general conception has both negative and positive impacts globally and the Nigerian society in particular; positive by instilling morality in people and negative because it has been used to orchestrate crises in the country. Based on the above, we recommend that dramatists, playwrights, actors, directors, producers, and indeed all collaborators in the arts of the theatre should take turn to address religious issues in their unique ways, just as Otun Rasheed has done. Through this, drama and theatre would be used as an active medium for social re-engineering in preaching morals and social ideals.

INTRODUCTION

Religion, over the years has assumed a very sensitive posture that has cowed the bravest men in the face of social realities. That explains why there are misconceptions and the dogmatic position taken by some who treat the issue of religion as divine, positing that it should not be subjected to criticism or human evaluation. Stemming from this, many have taken religious tenets, written in the holy books or the ones handed down in perverted versions by religious leaders and clerics as incontrovertible without evaluating their social relevance and their impacts on the society.

It may be interesting to note that some religious fanatics treat the issue of religion as sacred, irrespective of whether it is practiced in the wrong or the right direction. This accounted for why seeming errors that would naturally should not be traced to religion are found there and are treated with glove kids. This is why critical analysts submit that most if not all the social problems confronting the Nigeria nation are not divorced from religion. Arising from these challenges, people of critical minds, especially scholars decide to launch an appraisal into the religious terrain, particularly religious teachings, the resultant effect was the identification that religion has disconnected from its role as the society moral guidance. Consequently, they, in finding an alternative guidance angel finds drama and theatre as the art that is capable of taking the challenge of filling the gaps and connecting the dots of realities that religion has left uncovered in our society.

Drama and theatre, in justifying its prowess, be it stage or the film genre are described as tools that can help stem the tide of the menace that have constantly ravaged our socio-cultural and political environments. In this direction, a good number of Nigerian dramatists who have seen the lacuna and agreed that the art is capable of ameliorating the society of its many misdemeanour, have in their continuous contributions to the revival of our society, deplored intellectual arsenal towards proffer solution to the barrage of socio-cultural and political problems that religion has placed on man.

In exploring religion, we realise that there has been positive role that religion has played in the development of drama and theatre. This is copiously recorded in the Western history on the origin of drama and theatre. Hence, we note that religion has contributed in diverse ways to the growth and or the retardation of our society in different fields and at different times, particularly in the Nigerian history.

Therefore, this study underscores the role of drama and theatre in the upheavals that religion has caused this nation as we embark on the textual analysis of Otun Rasheed's *The Third World War*, *The Garments* and *The Gods are still not to blame*. We combine information retrieved from the library and the selected plays as well as Otun Rasheed's philosophies, obtained through a face-to-face interview as our research methods in obtaining our data as we examine the religious issues in his works. Specifically, this paper's scope is limited to the religious issues that are common to the Nigerian society, using the functions of drama and theatre without paying attention to issues of the rituals, worships and other general spiritualities that are associated with the conventional religious norms.

The justification for this study is in the fact that Nigerian and African playwrights know where religious problems pain and pinch inhabitants and have devour unapologetically the tool of drama to remove them, if not entirely, ameliorate them for the sustenance our national development.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Religion is one of the very prominent constituents amongst the numerous elements of culture that has attracted unmitigated patronage in Africa, especially in Nigeria. While culture subsumes everything about man; his social experiences and his environments, religion has remained one of the tools that are used to propagate it. This explains why culture has been widely described as the totality

of the ways of life and religion, the bond that keeps the society together. With a clear observance of this, Bade-Afuye (2014, p. 247) submits that, "religion and culture are two strong issues in the life of any community". This implies that the place of religion is deeply rooted among those bonds that keep societies together. Religion is the belief in the existence of the supreme God or gods with the firm commitment that such spiritually superior entities have powers over the affairs of life.

Religion emanated from the feelings of the early man that someone somewhere, whose power is essentially supernatural, must be controlling the affairs of the world. Atanda (1980, p. 28) underscores this from the ethnic point of view that religion "forms an important part in the life of the Yoruba people. The essence of this religion was the belief in one Supreme Being, which they call Olodumare or Olorun (literarily, the owner of the heaven)".

The early African men felt that such supernatural powers must be worshipped and atoned. Accordingly, Odumuyiwa (2010, p. 278) believes that religion "is man's effective desire to be in the right relation with a sacred transcendental order, controlling human destiny and events in life with a prescribed system of rituals and a belief." This shows that man is a religious being who is obliged to pay obeisance to the Supernatural Being at all times if he must be at peace with his environment. Alabi (2013, p. 14) supports the above assertion when he states that: "as the consciousness of one's dependence on a transcendental Being and the tendency to worship him, religion is a body of truths, laws and rites by which man is subordinated to the transcendental Being".

Religion is a very wide concept that encompasses processes such as: worship, laws and rites. This is why Adekola (2013, p. 181) submits that: "religion is a broad, multi-faceted, multi-layer and very complex phenomenon to define". Without prejudice to Adekola's assertion above on the difficulties in defining religion, Egbefo (2013, p. 213) states that "religious beliefs of any group of people reflect their type of tradition". This shows that religion could also be linked to the traditions of the people of different societies.

At the mention of religion in Nigerian, what is usually conceived are the diversities of religions, denominational dichotomies, issues and conflicts that are generated by the concept. Religion in Nigeria is predominantly three – Islam, Christianity and traditional religions. The traditional religions are given different names, creeds and doctrines as means of identifying them. There are several versions or denominations of these three major religions. These dichotomies and denominational borderlines have

continually generated crises among the various adherents of these various religious groups. This is why Adekola (2013, p. 181), in expanding Dauda and Bongotons' (2006) submission that "religion in Nigeria context could be aptly conceived or construed as a social and spiritual phenomenon, which involves the grouping of people around a faith perspective".

In the history of Nigeria, religion has often been associated with certain vices, crises or violence. This is obviously not limited to Nigeria, but a global contention. However, it is observable that the indigenous traditional religions are relatively less violence-provoking compared to other religions in the country. Nevertheless, religion plays vital roles in ensuring a society that is sane, orderly, violence-free and crisis-ridden. Nonetheless, the basic tenets and creeds of these religions, in few instances, often navigate people toward violence. Nigeria is currently battling with the heinous warring activities of Boko Haram, a terrorist group that hide under the umbrella of religion in the perpetuation of their evils. World over, we have the Islamic State, the Al-Shabaab, Al-Qaeda and many other terrorist groups destroying the peace of the world, and of course the properties of many years of hard labour.

Like many other countries that are ravaged by the overburdened effects of terrorism, the majority of the populace in Nigeria is pointing accusing fingers at Islamic faithful and clerics for purportedly abetting these crimes that are committed against humanities. Perhaps, this is what prompted Khalid (2015) cited in Raphymoj (2015, p. 1) who submits that:

I believe that the assailants' religion or ideology is irrelevant; I believe they were simply looking to wage an attack ... Muslims seem to lose either way. They are constantly asked to apologise for crimes they neither committed, nor supported. They, too, are victims of the violence of extremists. Still, they are asked to apologise and somehow atone for these crimes that were committed in the name of their religion. Then they must face the wrath of extremists who attack them for refusing to approve of the methods they view as the only way to defend Islam.

Giving these unfounded indictments and counter-accusations, which one religious group poses at the other, one realises that those accusations cannot be of any help to the country and the world at large. Rather, adherents of different religion should raise questions that will redirect us to identifying our real social ideals as Soyinka (2015, p. 2) advises that:

It is time to confront the long persistent question of what truly fits, unsentimentally, into our definition of humanity. Definitions by race, colour, gender or faith have ever been derogatory and untenable, contributing to the world's current dilemma in furtherance of the agenda of power. Our parameters must now transfer to social conduct, to the manifestation of blind attachment to creeds that contradict and dismiss our very aspirations as thinking, reflecting and expressing beings. If the world shies away from that task, we on the African continent should take on that duty, and announce what for us, constitutes basic humanity.

The import of Soyinka's submissions above is that it cautions that we cannot afford to follow religion and religious teachings dogmatically in this contemporary Nigerian society while we jettisoned the obvious. In the face of these ugly situations caused by religion, the Nigerian dramatists and theatre practitioners cannot keep mute, and still expect to be considered relevant to the society. Therefore, there are numerous religious issues and undertones in many Nigerian dramatic and theatre experiences. In observance of this, Adaba (2013, p. ix) in his Foreword to Ododo (2014)'s book; *It is only bent, not broken*, believes that:

Islam, Christianity and Traditional faith (Afrel) have no reason whatsoever to be at each other's throats because of shared values which should foster better understanding and tolerance. Perhaps aside from the air we breathe and basic amenities of life, one major issue that is of latent concern to most people is peace and peaceful cohabitation ... The quest by people to position their culture and religion as supreme often leads to strife and war, even death.

We have illuminated on the concept of religion, drawing from some scholarly definitions and descriptions of the term. In furtherance of this, we in this paper examine the concept of religion in relation to the Nigerian drama. In which case we focus on how drama and theatre of Otun Rasheed have been able to address the prevalent social problems, which the country has been plunged into occasioned by religious bigotry. This is because religion as a concept is a social issue which we felt should be addressed, using the tool of drama and theatre. Let us briefly consider the reactions of some Nigeria theatre practitioners and dramatists to some of these social and religious issues. As far as Otun Rasheed is concerned, most of his works (drama and theatre) address the issue of religion. This we would examine in subsequent parts of this paper.

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Wole Soyinka's (2007) *The Jero Plays*; *The Trials of Brother Jero* and *Jero's Metamorphosis* and Adeoye's (2009) *The Killers* to mention just a few are in the category of play that address the socio-religious menace that our society have had to contend with.

Soyinka's *The Trials of brother Jero* captures the experience of the Nigerian society in the 1980s where evil geniuses and tricksters, dressed in religious garments deceive the gullibly religious ones. The play is essentially in the class of plays that comment about religious issues, such as; hypocrisy, deceptions, falsehoods and pretences; especially as it related to the Christian world. In the plays, we are confronted with the character of Brother Jeroboam, a church's religious leader who cunningly manipulates his followers, public servants and even the state; all for his own selfish interests. In *Brother Jeroboam*, Soyinka presents the character of the Nigerian "men of God" that are not to be touched in the Trinitarian Bible Society (2006) version of *The Holy Bible* (Psalm 105, v. 15) sense of "touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm".

We see how Brother Jero cunningly exploits and misdirects his church members like Chume, and even his customers like Amope (Trader). He ends up causing serious crisis in the family of Chume when he realizes that Trader whom he is financially indebted to is Amope, Chume's wife. In the same vein, Adeoye (2009) *The Killers* presents a similar version of religious vices. While Soyinka identified the problems caused by a particular religion (Christianity in its denominational sense), Adeoye ex-rayed the problems caused by multiple religions. The play touches many social issues that usually exacerbate violence, amongst which religion is a notable one.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To interrogate this work, we adopt Emile Durkheim's functionalist theory of religion which proposes that religion should basically be appreciated on the note of its function to the human society. The theory posits that religion should be more symbolic and functional and be relevant to the society. In this direction, Monivas (2007, p.23) interpretation of Durkheim (1917) is apt as it underscores that the functionality of religion should harp on the believe that a society "shares principles or axioms, the beliefs which are necessary if it is to remain a society; and religion is a part of these shared principles". It is on this ground that this paper examines the functionalist tendency of religion in the contemporary

Nigeria society as projected in three plays of Otun Rasheed. The features of the functionalist theory of religion are well captured in Cosman (2011, p.5) English translation of Durkheim's French-written religious thesis thus:

At the basis of all systems of belief and all cults there must be a certain number of fundamental representations and ritual practices that, despite the diversity of forms they assume in the various religions, have the same objective meanings and fulfill the same functions everywhere.

While Durkheim is not unaware of the religious ritual practices, he is more interested in the religious functionalist tendencies of providing social harmony. He believes that religion affords social unity and social control to sustain the social solidarity of a society. This is not far from Kofoworola (2015, p. 110) assertion on art that "the value of any work of art is in its power to evoke different meaning to different people", which is in this case religious.

2.1. Brief Biography of Otun Rasheed

Ismaila Rasheed Adedoyin, whose pen name among his professional colleagues and popular reference is Otun Rasheed was born on 18th May, 1972 in Odan, C.M.S. Lagos, to Alhaji Ismaila Otun, a chieftaincy title holder of the Ojora dynasty while his mother hails from the Olubara palace in Ogun state. He is a renowned theatre practitioner, a playwright-director, actor and academic. He has many published and unpublished plays to his credit amongst which are: *The Third World War* (2004), *When The Dream Dies* (2005), *Who is Afraid of Osanyin* (2005), *Our National Flag* (2007), *Arugba Osun* (2009), *The Gods are Still not to Blame* (2011), *Wait Today* (2013), *The Garment* (2013), among others.

He obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree in Creative Arts (with specialization in Theatre Arts) in 2001 from the Department of Creative Arts, University of Lagos. In 2005, he had his Master of Arts degree in the Arts of the Theatre, and he was awarded a PhD degree in 2015, with "Theatre and Violence: The Dramaturgy of Violence in Selected Nigerian Plays" as the topic of his thesis. Virtually all his formal education took place in Lagos state, his state of origin and a state with unabated tolerance for the plurality of religion, ethnicity and tribal affiliations.

2.2. Synopsis of The Gods are Still not to Blame

The play opens with the birth of a baby boy to the Royal family of Oba Adedoyin. When the Christian clergies arrive for the christening of the child it is revealed that the child carries a bad destiny; he will kill his father and marry his mother. The Islamic clerics who arrive later also came up with the same prophesy.

Disturbed by the unfortunate fate that the new baby carries, Oba Adedoyin hurriedly sends the baby, Samuel to the land of the whites. Oba Adedoyin has other children thereafter. Princess Aderayo, Oba Adedoyin's aunt nurtures Samuel and grew to be trained as a military officer in the United States' Army. Years after, Oba Adedoyin receives a phone call from Princess Aderayo that Samuel has been killed in a peace-keeping operation in Afghanistan. Later, Oba Adedoyin is seen engaged in a controversy over ownership of a piece of land with a relatively younger man, unknown to him that the man; Laughton Jackson is his (the king's) son who is said to be dead. The controversy results into physical combat, Laughton overpowers Oba Adedoyin and his guards and kills the Oba. While he is dying he held on to the necklace of Samuel.

After the death of Oba Adedoyin, Samuel who now bears Stephen is a relationship with Olori Ademorin. This relationship is opposed by Adetunde, the eldest child among the other children of the late Oba Adedoyin and Olori Ademorin because of the age difference and Stephen's unknown background. On the tenth year memorial anniversary of Late Oba Adedoyin, Stephen is shocked seeing his necklace (the one Oba Adedoyin cut and held onto during their morbid encounter) on Adetunde's neck. With the level of nervousness and concerns which Stephen always exhibits at every sight of his necklace, he (Adetunde, a trained lawyer) becomes suspicious of Stephen.

Investigations later reveal that Stephen is the murderer of Oba Adedoyin. After a while, Princess Aderayo arrives the country and in a discussion, Olori Ademorin explains the circumstances surrounding the birth of her first child who was said to be carrying bad fate and how her husband said he sent the child to his sister in abroad. Princess Aderayo queries why they should believe in such retarded prophecy. Eventually Princess Aderayo meets Samuel the child she nurtured. Stephen who is now revealed to be the same Samuel as well as Laughton Jackson happens to be the killer of his father and the husband of his mother. In a very sad moment, Olori Ademorin walks out of the palace with his children, Fisayo, David and Michael.

2.3. The Synopsis of *The Garment*

The Garment is a play about a certain Christian denomination that has ushers in the church who are engaged in different kinds of bickering and acrimonious vitriol between church ushers. Sister Jenifer complains about posting of some ushers and want to find out why some ushers are given preference over others, querying why one Sister Dupe and Brother Anefiok are those that are "allowed to take the baskets to the vault" (p. 2). This bickering degenerate into a physical combat that the head usher has to swiftly intervene, admonishing them to remember their callings as servants of God.

Subsequently, one of the female ushers, Sister Jenifer raises the issue of the love affairs between Sister Dupe and Brother Cornelius, accusing the latter of behaving as if her life depends on the former. She also describes how Sister Dupe felt uncomfortable and angry over the new posting and why Sister Rhoda was assigned to work with Brother Cornelius. Sister Mary believes that there is nothing wrong in a sister looking for a husband in the church. However, Sister Jenifer feels it is unchristian for Sister Dupe to "flaunt herself around just for the poor brother to notice her" (p. 5). This represents the barrage of gossips that flies around in the supposedly sacred house of God.

The ushers also gossip on what they describe as irrationality and imbalance treatment which leads to why some members of the workforce like pastors and instrumentalists are paid honorarium while others are not paid. In another scenario, one of the ushers, Sister Rhoda enters the church in anger and mistakenly stepped on a woman in the course of her duty for which she severally apologised, but to the deaf ears of the woman. The woman slaps her while she also retaliated. This did not go down well with the husband and a fight which draws blood ensued.

In another development, a young man who is pressed rushes out of the church to meet some ushers who were engrossed in gossiping and could not hear him asked from them where the church toilet is. The man, unable to hold himself, runs to a corner where he defecates. The stench of the excreta alerts the workers who insist that the young man must clean his mess. The young man refuse claiming that when he needed the workers attention they were gossiping and could not notice him. As this was going on, the couple who left in bloodbath comes in with police officers to arrest Sister Rhoda. The Head Usher's admonition to the other ushers drew confession from some of them. Sister Jenifer confesses that she was the one who stole some foreign currencies that got missing some time ago. Brother David confesses that he came to the church because he heard that the church could help him

secure a job or get a visa to travel abroad. Sister Stephanie confesses that she is in the church to seduce Brother Cornelius while Brother Mark steps out to bringing out monies that he concealed in all parts of his body; inside his pair of shoes, his buttock and his armpits. After their confessions and promises of genuine repentance, the Head Usher prays for all of them.

2.4. The Religious Issues in the Plays of Otun Rasheed

Otun Rasheed's two plays that we examined in this paper appraise religion and the intrigue of religiosity such as: selfless service, humility in service to God, greed, stealing, corruption, pretense, self-serving, deceit and many others that have exacerbated religious conflicts in our society, which manifest in man's actions and inactions in his bid to please himself at the detriment of his creator. Some of these we shall examine as they manifest in the context of the two play text under examination.

2.5. Selfless Service and Humility as Requisites to Serving God

The play, *The Garment* is a religiously and morally educative play, which teaches that man can best please God by rendering selfless services to Him. The play portrays that true Christians (and it is equally applicable to other religions) must be identified with their self-sacrificing service to God, especially as preached in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The playwright termed the ability to do this as wearing the garment of service to God, hence the title of the play, *The Garment*. The essence of this metaphorical expression is accentuated by the Head Usher in her admonition to other church workers thus: "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility. Count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others" (p.3). This shows that religion and religious dogmas provide important antidotes to the problems that often confront the Nigerian society, which Durkheim's functionalist theory of religion corroborates as the three major functions that religion performs in the society. These he identifies manifest in: social cohesion to help maintain social solidarity through shared rituals and beliefs, social control to enforce

religious-based morals and norms to help maintain conformity and controlling society, and offering meaning and purpose to answer any existential questions (historylearningsite.co.uk).

The play, *The Garment* also exposes most of the societal problems that have crept into places of worship such as greed, stealing, corruption etcetera. The playwright used the medium to expose the phenomena of greed in man, act of stealing, robbery (armed robbery, pen robbery, computer robbery, etc) and corruption that have spread across board in all spheres of human life in our society irrespective of their commitment to any religious group. The play exposes the Church as well as other religious gatherings as places where all kinds of identified social vices such as: greed, stealing and corruption are deeply seated.

In the play we see the Ushers in the church confessing to different sins that bother on stealing, greed and corruption. Sister Jenifer confesses to stealing some "foreign currency" from the offering bag while Brother Mark, touched by the Holy Spirit begins to bring out various denominations of currencies he stole and concealed in various parts of his body. One thing that is observed in the play in spite of misdemeanour of man, the church is still as a saintly platform that has the magic wand to solving many societal problems, using the basic religious tenets. This accounts for the reason why all the erring *workers* confessed their secret sins voluntarily at the touch of the Holy Spirit.

In another development, the play *The Garment* x-rays the issues of pretense, self-serving and deceit, which have been devouring our society. It brings to the limelight how vices like pretense, deceit and self-serving have been major deterrents to the progress and the general wellbeing of the human race and the society. This, Otun epitomised in the characters of Sister Jenifer who complains about bias in ushers appointment and posting policies of the church. This replicates how worshipers demonstrate lack of contentment in the policies of the church. Hence, one of the ushers, Sister Jenifer in the play express their dislike in having Sister Dupe and Brother Anefiok as the "only people allowed to take the baskets to the vault", but at the end shows that her greed for money made her to feel so This sin she confesses to later in the play. In like manner, Sister Dupe confesses that she only join the church workers simply because of Brother Cornelius. The same goes for Sister Stephanie who confesses that she has the same mission of seducing the same Brother Cornelius. Brother Mark who appears to be very spiritually developed is found to be a crook. Brother David on his own part is merely in church because he feels that the church could help in securing a job or assist in the procurement of visa to

travel abroad. All these are cases point to the act of pretence, self-serving and deccits and greed that man is enmeshed in, pretending to serve God. This perhaps is what Swain (2010, p. 26) sees and in in his comments on the functionalist tendency of religion retorts that "religion is something eminently social".

2.6. Intolerance as the Cause of Religious Conflicts

Otun Rasheed tries to portray what he feels should be the social composition of religion in the contemporary world in *The Gods are still not to Blame*. In this respect, he synthesizes diverse of religions, which he channels toward his belief in the peaceful co-existence of these religions. In the play, we see Yeye Oba exhibiting a total disgust at the mention of other religions, especially Christianity. Yeye Oba (p. 3) expresses apathy against Christian religion to his child thus:

Your father, my husband died as a true Muslim. He built central mosques in several cities of Agbaye and expected you to spread the truth throughout his territory and even beyond. He sent you to *Ile Kewu* and trained you to be a Muslim but on getting to the university you decided to follow *kiriyo*.

The problem here is not about the internal strives within a particular religion as opposed to the barrage of problems that we examined in *The Garment*, but as Wole Soyinka identifies in his *Jero's Plays*, that bothers on multiple challenges posed by religion in a multi-religious and multi-ethnic diversity in our country Nigeria. Interestingly, despite her initial objection, Yeye Oba in the long run succumbs to the pleas of his son, Oba Adedoyin, to be part of the naming ceremony, which is to be presided over by Christian clergies. In tandem with religious unity that we preached, the Islamic cleric, Chief Imam who later came to the naming ceremony confirms the same prophetic proclamation concerning the fate of the boy as was made by the Clergy, bringing to fore the unity in purpose that all the religions should profess.

2.7. Man in the Web of Metaphysics, Illusion and Reality of Dreams

Otun Rasheed draws our attention to the concepts of metaphysics, illusion, reality and dream; since they often attempt to surpass human thinking or reasoning. He queries the relationship between

man and dream, in a bid of identifying if the connection is metaphysical, illusion or realistic in nature. This accounts for the reason why Narrator (p. 8), whose voice essentially represents the authorial voice, queries that:

Man and dream ... (*sighs*) Dream and man ... What determines a man's dream? Dream! Is it just a form of divine message or a summation of man's preoccupation in reality? Dream! What exactly is its relationship with reality? Can dream be equated with illusion and life reality? Like realism and reality. Our baby boy now hunts his parent, not in reality but in realism, in dream.

The above shows the bond between these phenomena, which usually transcend human reasoning and comprehensions. Men often confuse or unintelligibly marry these concepts mostly to their undoing. This is what Oba Adedoyin experienced when he is tormented by a baby after the proclamation of the bad prophecy. Narrator captures this when he warns that:

Dream! A figment of uncontrolled imagination or a potent force of divine code? Man and dream! Dream and man. Why can't man leave dream as dream and not mix realism with reality? But man, inquisitive and curious animal would always attempt to puncture emptiness and wriggles out of nothingness into the knotty abyss of nihilism (p.8)

2.8. Man's Actions and Inactions as the Fate of Man

The play debunks the concept of fatalism or destiny, as being the precursor of whatever man becomes in life. Rather, it accepts the actions or inactions of man as the root of all that befall man. This is specifically the reason why "*The Gods must still not be blame*", because Oba Adedoyin, according to Narrator "plans, makes decisions and sets his fate on course" (p. 8). Therefore, it is man that should indeed be blamed for his actions, inactions and dealings; instead of laying it all on the gods. This is succinctly enumerated in the dialogue below:

Stephen: (*Ignores him*) Do not blame the God nor lose faith in his powers. The destiny of man is a summation of his actions and inactions anchored on providence. Learn from the actions and inactions that trail my life. (*Points at the people on stage*) Their actions and inactions, my actions and inactions and your actions and inactions, that's me and my destiny, Man determines his destiny and determines the destinies of others but providence rows the boat.

3. FINDINGS

Juxtaposing the plays and the person of Otun Rasheed, reveals the weight of his interest as it relates to religion. We have been able to pinpoint that he has two dispositions to the issue of religion. The first is his penchant for a dramatic critique and social appraisal of his position vis-à-vis the concept of religion generally. The second is his inclination to diversity of religions in relation to the human society, with a view of identify, particularly the importance of religion in the Nigerian society. During an interview we had with him in 2014, that bothers on religion, religiosity in his plays, Otun Rasheed admits that "in terms of religious view, I have a different religious view. I don't like the concept of religion". When asked if his hatred for religion is because of the way Nigerians treat the issue of religion or his apathy cuts across the global religious enclave. Otun (p. 7) submits that:

Everywhere in the world; not our own concept alone... Religion has caused millions of lives, and on daily basis, people are violated. There are so many violence actions caused under the pretence of religion. It is only through religion or religious beliefs that you can commit the heinous crime and feel fulfilled. Even armed robbers, when they want to go to rob, they use God, so that they don't get emotionally attached. Out of religion, you can commit the worst of crimes, and still feel gratitude to God, and you feel completely fulfilled. It is a very insidious rum that affects people.

For the reason he provided above, the playwright prefers to be tagged a *godist*, a believer in the existence, supremacy and over-powerfulness of God but not dogmatically align with a particular religious sect or denomination. We note that he does not believe in any particular religion or religious groups as being the "only" way to the Almighty God. He believes that religion should serve man in all its capabilities, and not man following religion blindly. This is evident in most of his plays as narrated above. Otun (2014, p. 8) further explains the only condition under which he could approve religion, particularly as it concerns the belief in God but not in a particular religion thus:

What I am saying is that, goodwill to all men. All that is required is the belief in the existence of God. Not as identifying as a particular sect, group or whatever religious name you want to give it because it is a means of division. And it causes a lot of division within the society, and it has always been a problem of the world. If you look at the number of crusades; the number of Islamic worlds ... Look at us today, before the concept of these religions, in Africa, we have our beliefs in God. And you hardly see the people who support the concept of Ogun fighting the people who support the concept of

Orunmila or Sango. They all believed that these are intermediaries ... No strict religious divisions as you have it in contemporary times.

Thus, it is evident that Otun Rasheed's repugnance for religion stems from the various violence, divisions, hatreds, disaffections, and the likes that the world have allowed religion to exude. In as much as the playwright is deeply embittered with religion, he still accepts the functionalities of religion in curbing certain moral excesses of man. Still in the interview, Otun (2014, pp. 10-11) makes an historical appraisal of religion as follows:

Before the coming of these religions, African objects [token] would be placed on a product, and the owner of that product would leave the place; and nobody steals the product ... In the contemporary time, you leave this Laptop here, and you place a Bible and Quran on it, they would steal everything ... Religion has done great by trying to curb the human beings of some moral excesses. But the negative aspect of it is becoming alarming. The way miracles are made, the way people now preach prosperity; as if God has promised every human being that when you come to this world, you don't need to suffer.

From the foregoing, it is evident that religion, in the opinion of Otun Rasheed should mostly be appreciated in connections with its social functions, in accordance with Durkheim's functionalist theory of religion. This is why his plays that we have analysed above have always celebrated the functionalist tendencies of religion as preached by Emile Durkheim.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Turning deaf ears to the social issues, particularly religious issues, in any society is an invitation to chaos. Otun Rasheed as a literary seer sees this and that is why he has through his numerous plays provide possible ways out of the religious trauma which the country may be contending with. In complimenting his efforts, we want to recommend that individuals, not only the government at this point, must avail themselves of the countless of religious-induced themes in our various contributions that would help in ameliorating the prevalent religious problems as Otun Rasheed has done in his literary works. We also recommend that every individual should take actions that would encourage religious tolerance by promoting peace and security. To achieve this, all practitioners in the arts; theatre, music including literary critics should continually evolve messages that would preach religious tolerance.

CONCLUSION

The Nigerian Men of God pay more attention to methods that they could deploy to make them wealthy than faithfully attend to their calling, which was their primary calling to the ministry. This explains why moral decadence has enveloped alters where morality should be the benchmark. Religion, by all standards, is supposed to be that tool, which should cow the bravest of men, or group that are enmeshed all kinds of iniquity.

It should be noted here that in this paper we are not attributing the causes of religious violence to a particular religion. Rather, we believe that lack of tolerance for one another's beliefs and ideology, as well as extremism of all forms is the bane of all religious crises in our society. If peace would be enjoyed and sustained, religious excesses, which are threat to the security in our country, must be checked. Again, playwright must show strong concern about the social and religious issues that are prevalent in the society and use the weapon of literature to check them.

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