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## RELIGIOUS VALUES AND SOCIAL CHANGE : PARADIGMS IN THEORY AND RESEARCH

by  
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AT SUCH a moment in Ghanaian social history, when the eyes of several discerning people in Ghana are focused on how to earn more foreign exchange, how to increase agricultural production, and how to capture the commanding heights of what is believed to be a tottering economy, it may appear a bit odd that religion, of all issues, should continue to be chosen as a topic for serious analysis and discourse, especially in non-theological circles.† Perhaps this is because sociologists as a whole are known to be an odd specimen, clothing in beautiful language phenomena which many people think are already obvious. The verbiage complex is said to be an attempt to keep popularizers of the discipline at bay. Besides, sociologists are often accused of abandoning their vision of relevance and of responsibility in their programmes of research. This is especially so in developing countries where academicians are expected by the wider public to produce visible results. Thus many people are seriously asking sociologists to justify their existence by making what the public deems to be concrete contribution to societal welfare. It is possible that if social scientists in developing countries enacted the occasional ritual of organizing public lectures on 'how to develop the economy of a country magically,' any such lecture room would be filled to capacity, for several reasons. National development, not through calm, calculating, rational and arduous effort, but rather through magic, has had a perennial appeal and fascination in human history, in spite of its ultimate disastrous end results.

But there are also times when human beings are confronted with the sober and stark reality that, although bread is significant, it is not bread alone that sustains human existence ; other values too, come to be seen as significant. This is why religion, however residual and marginal some people may think of its influence today, should not be left out entirely in the analysis of the functional prerequisites of social and economic reconstruction.

One of the most significant, enduring, although as yet unresolved issues in the study of human society is the role of religion in culture and history. Until fairly recently, there used to be a controversial question which, with many variations, was posed like this; had religion been a blessing or a curse in the history of human civilization? Fortunately, that controversy is not of immediate relevance to us today. That religion is universal in all enduring human societies, no serious social thinker, not even the Marxist, the latter-day positivist, or the humanist, has ever doubted, although the meaning, significance, and competence which people have claimed for religion as such, have differed both in time and in space. For instance we know of the Frankforts' analysis of pre-philosophical world-view in their famous work *Before Philosophy*.<sup>2</sup> But, as far as the present writer knows, there has not been any systematic work to date entitled *Before Religion*. A possible exception is perhaps the highly conjectural and historically non-verifiable evolutionary analysis of the development of Magic, Religion, and Science in Sir J. G. Frazer's famous *Golden Bough*, a work that assumes that there may have been a pre-religious social existence.

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The attempt to see religion objectively as a social phenomenon has often suffered from, on the one hand, an empirico-centric bias, and, on the other, what one may describe as theological prejudice. Ralph Lane, Jr. has summed up some of these impediments under three main headings: (a) parochial focus which has tended to obscure wider concerns and other dimensions, and has thus impeded the necessity to develop models of cross-cultural or trans-historical perspective for the study of socio-religious institutions and institutional change; (b) rigid replication and analysis of survey research which has also served to hamper the understanding of the new images which are emerging in religion; and (c) the plausibility fallacy, which has also had the tendency to entail the acceptance of works of conceptual elegance as scholarship, whether or not such is the case.<sup>3</sup>

There are undoubtedly several dimensions which one may choose to look at in an attempt to study the social location, as well as the social action implications of religion. Firstly, one may wish to concentrate on the extent to which modifications in the components of religious values, i.e. religious prescriptions of what is socially desirable and esteemable, and what is repugnant, may have effect on the nature and structure of inter-human relationships. Secondly, one can begin with an analysis of the extent to which social change brings about a redefinition and reassessment of man's relations to some various meaningfully cathected transcendental powers, either for good or for evil in relationship to their clientele. And thirdly, one could discuss the foregoing two propositions under the popular, new fangled, but as yet theoretically unclear banner of the 'decline' or 'demise' altogether of religion in modern society.

More nuances still remain, and suggest further pertinent questions in the analysis of the relationship between religion and society. On the one hand, the analysis can be made at the purely theoretical level, at which these two inextricably intertwined aspects of human culture can be studied conceptually as if they hang in the air, as it were. This is legitimate, in so far as it succeeds in serving to provide theoretical building blocks to help as guidelines to comparative and cross cultural empirical research. On the other hand, one can take a specific case study, say of the Nuer in all their structural and dynamic cultural configurations, or the Dinka, or the Ashanti or even the historical situation of post-Reformation Europe. The advantage in the latter approach is that one comes to see religion and society as actual entities—social facts, in Emile Durkheim's sense—that exist and are empirically observable, and none of which is meaningful in institutional isolation. A yet another level of analysis which may be of interest to students of the relationship between religion and society, especially as it is manifested in developing societies, is that of the social consequences of imported religions in some social environments. We leave this out of our present discussion, not because it is not important, but because I believe students of comparative societal change have already had enough of both intensive and extensive missionary studies. In any case, numerous journals, as well as wide range of published literature, abound with regard to one or another aspect of Christian or Islamic missiology, especially in the African context.

Although this paper may appear initially as over-ambitious, which is what happens when one sets out to discuss the large-scale social and cultural manifestations of religion, it is found necessary to deal with the topic under all the five paradigms we have touched upon so far, though not necessarily

sequentially in the way they have been presented. The disadvantage in this approach, as will be readily appreciated, is that one would be doing injustice in attempting to treat such a topic adequately in such a short essay as this. But, if one may borrow an analogy here, it is not very easy to be all adequate to all topics.

The thrust of this paper is an analysis of the evolution, nature, function, and the future of the socio-religious complex in human society. One is readily confronted then, with the inevitable question: How do religious ideas evolve and how do they gain their multifarious elaborations and differential manifestations, in terms of doctrine, ritual, rules of prohibition, techniques and modes of worship, etc.? What, in other words, accounts for the evolution of religious values in human societies? And what accounts for the occasional heightening and diminution of religious observances and of religious fervour in the course of cultural history? Students of society have tended to believe that the question of 'origins' is otiose because in any case there is no way of empirically verifying the historicity of whatever assertion one may make about the origin of religion, as of other social institutions. Professor E. E. Pritchard is a current leading persuader of this contention. On the role of religion in human society as the extant experience of the Azande world-view must have taught him, he commented later in a contribution to a B.B.C. series of broadcast talks dealing with primitive peoples:

"This then is the task of the social anthropologist, to show the relation of religion to social life in general. It is not his task to 'explain' religion. 4

It is obvious that Evans-Pritchard, and especially Professor A. R. Radcliffe-Brown under whom he studied social anthropology, were protesting vehemently against the then dubious and doubtful historical reconstructions which were current and being propagated under the banner of cultural evolution. But I personally think that this type of extreme functionalist view of social institutions, without relating these institutions to the circumstances of their emergence and later development, and even to the dynamics which are often able to bring about their possible extinction, is an untenable approach. Ignoring the question of origins could certainly be a way of escaping what may later appear as an inescapable duty in laying bare the multi-dimensional nature of such institutions. What we are obliged to acknowledge is that social institutions **do not just exist and function**. They must surely have come into existence at a certain point in time in order to function; thus we stand the risk of ignoring that useful and indispensable laboratory in social studies—i.e. history—if we brush the study of 'origins' aside altogether. Thomas O'Dea puts up the case for the indispensability of this historical dimension even better:

"If history affects the four basic dimensions of the religious phenomena and must be the concern of the sociologists, it is because the present can only be understood in terms of the consequences and precipitates of the past which make up the forms of consciousness and relationship and the particular situational configuration with which and within which men face their futures".<sup>5</sup>

There is, also, another equally significant issue to be clarified. What after all, is an 'explanation' of the origin and value of religion in human society? Even the extreme Durkheimian functionalists for whom 'origins' was an indolent, and at best an inconclusive exercise, did not fail to realize that by

explaining social facts by appeal to their antecedent social facts, they were more or less in the realm of the history of the evolution and causation of that specific phenomenon. With specific reference to religious values, we may perhaps go the round-about process by asking why it is that religious values of one type or another have become a crucial part of the texture of society. It was Lewis Browne who once wrote that

“in the beginning there was fear ; and fear was in the heart of man ; and fear controlled man. At every turn it whelmed over him, leaving him no moment of ease. Boulders toppled and broke his bones ; diseases ate his flesh ; death seemed ever ready to lay him low. And he, poor gibbering half-ape nursing his wound in some draughty cave, could only tremble with fear . . . Man had to have faith in himself, or die—and he would not die. So he had faith—and developed religion.”<sup>6</sup>

This ‘fear’ thesis, as in the case of the ‘opium’ thesis of Karl Marx, may sound as a caricature of religious institutions ; and there is little doubt that Lewis Browne himself, like the English rationalist Winwoode-Reade of the nineteenth century, was not an avid admirer of religion as it existed at the time he wrote. But the significance of religious values can be felt much more acutely when one looks at certain actual human situations in which the desire for ultimate meaning of natural and social occurrences has dawned on mankind.

Let us, for the moment, regard ourselves as people who obtain our livelihood from the sea, and who should seek proper and harmonious relationship with our natural coastal habitat. Through trial and error, we have come to acquire an accumulated experience concerning the seaworthiness of certain types and makes of canoes. We have become aware, as in the case of Malinowski’s Trobriand Islanders, which tidal waves are more propitious for abundant catch. In other words, so much have we become habituated to the exigency of our environment that, through the process of socialization, we deviate from these socio-moral imperatives at our own risk. If we have mastered all these prescriptions in our fishing adventure and we are still not blessed with the expected catch on a certain fishing expedition, what do we do ? We could pose similar questions about the farmer, the hunter, the herbalist, the fisherman, and a whole host of activities in which nature has to be bribed in order to avert unforeseen misfortunes. Centrally, the question that will emerge will not differ dramatically from that of a once powerful Jesus Christ who is reported to have cried in a moment of agony : God, why have You forsaken me ?

My humble suggestion is that this and similar questions elicit answers that serve as the keys that unlock the mystery of religiosity—the quest for answers to questions of everyday life which appear incomprehensible and do not fit into regularly expected patterns ; the assuaging of people in moments when there is a gap between aspiration and achievement. Put differently, this need for extra-empirical explanations becomes significant when men have reached the tether of human rationality, as men of science would see it. Here one may perhaps talk about credal simplicity among primitive or simple peoples ; but we do well to remember that every religious system has its symbolisms, creeds, rites, taboos, observances, implements, some sort of specialization of office, and so on. Thus whether one is dealing with religious values from Atheism to Zen Buddhism, as Richard Mathison calls this phenome-

non 7, or with some of the other several modern secular religions there is always the problem of the explanation of evil—why it is that a supposedly just God should allow injustice to operate in what is held to be an omnisciently ordered universe. One may call this the 'Job' theory of religion, a theodicy which is encountered in apparently all religious systems.

Answers to questions of this nature have differed from time to time even within a single community, but this is what makes religious values essentially dynamic; it is also what maintains the essential vitality and resiliency of such values. Religion may be regarded as a conservative social institution; fair enough. But it is not certain that many people have ever sat down to consider the innovative potential, and in fact the proven role of certain tenets in religious formulations. Nor do we usually follow in this consideration the methodological trails of situational analysis in the study of the importance of specific social institutions. Examples come readily for recall as to the innovative roles or 'transformative capacity' (Eisenstadt's phrase) of religious formulations in what Karl Marx would have regarded as a significant 'determining' factor in social change. Here, one is called upon to take into account, for instance, the witchcraft detection mechanisms that occurred between and after the two World Wars in several parts of Africa. Or, at the simpler levels of social organization and development, let us look at the cargo cults among the Melanesians, the Ghost dance of Northwest Coast American Indians, the Ethiopian movements in East, Central and Southern Africa, and the whole congeries of what modern students of social and political history have come to call proto-political cultism. It may be mentioned, in passing, that several nationalist political movements in Africa began initially as religious protest movements, as Terence Ranger accurately has stated,<sup>8</sup> although these movements, by virtue of their multipurpose aspirations, are now better described as 'independentist.' It is significant that these and such-like religious values, by the nature of their activist stance, convinced their followers—even if mostly unconsciously—that something could be done about the nature and destiny of human society, and that man is not a mere helpless pawn in a cosmic cyclical machine. In several instances, scholars of cultural contact have seen all these social actions as important adaptive mechanisms in people's response to acculturation experience.

These religious structures have given rise to new organizational procedures, new awareness of man's relationship to other men, and to the universe. The original, unified, solidary and all-embracing nature of symbolisms on which there appeared some consensus in traditional society has changed, although the degree of change has depended on the level of rigidity or flexibility in the content of the cultural forms. In any case, as Chinua Achebe would put it, things have fallen apart. But not quite; a new conception of brotherhood has been forged in place of the old, thereby bringing people of otherwise disparate tribal or ethnic groupings together.

These people come to see themselves as a fraternity of voluntarily self-chosen group with a new destiny which transcends local and primordial particularities. A typical case in point is that of Alice Lenshina's Lumpa sect in Zambia, now banned, and the various manifestations of the Kitawala chiliaric movement in Eastern and Central Africa, perhaps the two most important and vocal early movements which have had a definite detribalizing effect in those areas of Africa where they have operated.<sup>9</sup> For instance, one of the rules of the Lenshina religious movement was even more 'cosmopolitan':

"In our congregation there is no citizen or foreigner, black or white, man or woman, but we all are of the same family, therefore we must love each other."<sup>10</sup>

Even more striking, in the context of modern 16th and 17th century European history has been the 'elective affinity' which has been found to exist between certain post-Reformation religious ideas, particularly that of the calvinist notion of predestination and the emergence of a certain specific social and economic style of life. One of the leading founding fathers of sociology, Max Weber, has amply demonstrated, with enough comparative material, the extent to which this new protestant ethic, as he called it, became crucially congruent with a new and distinct mode of economic organization—a rational bourgeois form of capitalism;<sup>11</sup> and Michael Walzer, too, in his study of the **Revolution of the Saints**,<sup>12</sup> has provided enough concrete proof of the new approaches to life, to politics, and to society which characterized the early puritans in Britain who were imbued with an orientation of this-worldly asceticism. Functional sociologists tend to discuss the unintended consequences of purposive social action: the foregoing examples appear to show how, paradoxically, a businessman might become a millionaire by simply being an avid reader of the Psalms, and eschewing undue ritualism and sacramentalism in religious activity, while regarding his day-to-day mundane hard work as a 'calling.'

The little I know about the Musama Disco Christo Church, a semi-communitarian sect at Mozano in the Central Region of Ghana, as in the cases of the Aiyetoro of Nigeria, the Mormons of Utah or the Doukhobors of British Columbia, has convinced me of the manner by which an entirely new socio-religious structure, departing somewhat from a traditional model, may be fashioned in response to religious values, although these values and the changes in them, have often come through revelatory legitimation. When societies are changing, and values are shifting and unclear, there comes the need for new methods by which people may be socialized into the new dominant themes and ethic-ways of the emergent society, themes such as hard work, sobriety, routine, discipline, efficiency, acceptable conceptions of time, of rigour, and of method. It is possible that it is for these reasons that very few enlightened governments try to suppress religious enthusiasm. It should be clear, then, that not all self-selected religious groups have been as negative uncompromising, withdrawn and inward-looking as, for instance, the Ras Tafarians of Jamaica or the Black Muslims of the United States.<sup>13</sup>

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We should now look at the obverse side of the causal chain. If religion is now agreeably known to be able to create civilizations, what fates does religion itself undergo as a result of the socio-cultural forms it has unleashed? Here our concern is with, in other words, the mutations and tensions that religion as a social institution experiences as a result of social change. Perhaps a very significant caution seems appropriate here. It should not be deemed that religion is a mere reflection of society, or vice versa. All social institutions are in a dynamically active interaction, with inevitable incongruities and lags in the rate of change, and of adjustment to other institutional variables. What one is stressing, then, is that if, for instance, the rate of social change could be represented by digit x, one should not thereby conclude automatically that religious change would also have reached the rate of the x level. Otherwise one could not talk of tensions, or discontinuities,

or indeed lack of congruence in institutional frameworks. For, logically, one cannot discern change if all relevant factors within an integrated system are changing at the same rate. What is true, however, is that, contrary to what many people assert about the alleged chronic conservatism of religion, actual research reveals that no religion is ever entirely static, just as no society is entirely changeless. Meyer Barash, for instance, has studied extensively the inner dynamic which the apparently traditional religion of Islam has for some time been undergoing in Pakistan in order to accommodate the new forces of social and economic transformation in that country. In other words, Barash is interested in the changing orientations and goals of men in transition. His basic question was this :

"is a traditional religion inevitably an obstacle to modernization, as some charge, or is it capable of adapting to the need for new incentives (e.g. capital accumulation, rational calculation, a secular outlook) without losing its traditional character ?"<sup>14</sup>

In rapidly changing social structures, the question that has been posed by Barash is very significant. For it to be meaningful, religion is constantly called upon to respond to the emotional and spiritual cravings of its clientele. A god who ignores this need for proper and constant spiritual nourishment will die, and the institutional complex that surrounds such a god will peter out, as J. B. Pratt has stated;<sup>15</sup> this is why Africa may at the moment be seen in historical perspective as a museum of abandoned gods.<sup>16</sup> Students of socio-religious change would then need thinkers of analytical and historical perspective such as Hendrik van Loon to write :

"That which had meant life and death to our ancestors was here reduced to junk and rubbish. Covered with many inches of dust, there lay the abandoned symbols of a venerable faith which had been discarded by the good people of the city many years ago."<sup>17</sup>

Here one is, of course, not being invited to join van Loon in bemoaning the fate of gods which had been originally regarded as functionally immutable. Social change, as we know it now, gives rise to shifts in traditional value systems. New social status positions emerge, with new aspirations and wish-fulfillments which were previously unknown : "In almost Malthusian fashion, expectations for modern life styles grow geometrically through contacts with developed countries while opportunities grow arithmetically".<sup>18</sup> Society becomes increasingly segmented and differentiated in its stratification arrangement with a corresponding crisis in self-identity. Owing to this emergent socio-cultural pluralism and socio-cultural heterogeneity, one comes to encounter a corresponding religious pluralism, as diverse and often conflicting interpretations of the universe acquire legitimacy, especially in open societies. In such a fluid atmosphere men who come to have emotional and material investment in the existing dispensation obviously adopt the type of religious posture and formulation that sacralize the social and political order. These men adopt a respectable religion which postulates that the status quo is divinely ordained and should, for that matter, be baptized and preserved. To such people the kingdom of God has already been realized, with the establishment and freedom of operation of institutional religion right here on the earth.

But not all people benefit equally from the fruits of social change. Inevitably certain segments of the society find themselves socially and culturally

uprooted, and relegated to the margins, the peripheries, the fringes, of the social structure. Poor, deprived, disinherited, unchurched and without much prestige, these people appear to feel more at home in a religious arrangement which will satisfy their quest for ultimate answers to such perennial questions as: where did we come from? Why are things happening in the way they are doing? and, where do we go from here? As is usually the case in this kaleidoscope of history, answers to such questions have often been found in Zionist-type eschatology—the teachings of the last days. Says this teaching in its typical millennial form: very soon (if not in 1975 according to the new date provided by Jehovah's Witnesses) a millennium of literal thousand years of bliss will be inaugurated. Satan will be chained during the thousand-year period, after the war of Armageddon; then there will be an everlasting judgment whereby those who will pass the test of divine acceptability will enter into paradise forever, while those who fail will be annihilated, also forever. God will then provide a better scale of justice, which only the Creator can do. But what the millennial pursuers are sure of is that very soon the rich will become poor, and the poor will become rich through some mystical reversion of fortunes; those who are masters now will become slaves, and those who are presently enjoying the riches, pleasures and prestiges of the world shall suffer a reversal of such fortunes. One of the popular themes in the hymnology of fundamentalist religions is "When the day comes . . ." On that day the errors in the current stratification arrangement of society, with the consequent sociopolitical power and income differentials, shall be corrected forever. But while the day has not yet come, religious fundamentalists devotionally exhort their followers, again in hymns, to carry all their burdens of the world's toils and deprivations "unto the Lord." James Coleman could not have put it better:

"When religion tells the oppressed and burdened that they are the chosen people, or that they are among the select few who will pass through the gates of heaven, religion thereby gives them a release from the values of a society which locates them so low in the eyes of themselves and others." 20

What Coleman is stressing here, really, is the evident correspondence between an escapist pariah religion and an intolerable pariah social status. The disinherited segments of the population thus come to see themselves as "God's People," a title Malcolm Calley chose for this study of West Indian Pentecostal sects in Great Britain.<sup>21</sup> Far from being a powerless people, such men come to acquire a deflected self-realization, through their claim to a new, if illusory, power which provides them dignity and identity. In social structural terms, millennial pursuers in 'settler' and colonial situations have even gone further to stress that the whites shall become black, and the black people shall become white in the aftermath of the inauguration of the millennium.<sup>22</sup> This is clearly a religion of despair, as the modern psychologist of religion would see it; but it is equally a religion of hope, in the sense that it enables men, especially new migrants in bewildering circumstances of urban communities, to bear the consequences of their social and psychological discomfiture and dislocation with some equanimity. Or to put it in more psychiatric terms:

"The first and most obvious solution of this shared economic (and social) stress is to be found in the otherworldly which we have found to be characteristic of these (holy roller) cults. They look to the future life where the injustices of the present earthly existence shall be done away and sorrow shall be turned into joy . . . . In any case these 'holy rollers' are bringing to most distressed individuals release from the burden of guilt. They are

giving them hope and courage and strength to keep going in the face of difficulties"23

Other people who are also equally displaced by the whirlwind of social change which they cannot fathom, rather seek, in the fit of their status anxiety, a restoration of what they believe to be "the good old days."24 The position in this particular regard is that of traditionalism which, as EISENSTADT asserts, should not be confused with a 'simple' or 'natural' upkeep of a certain tradition :

"It denotes an ideological mode and stance, a mode oriented against the new symbols, making some parts of the older tradition into the only legitimate symbols of the traditional order and upholding them as the potentially rationalizing tendencies in the new Great Tradition. Through opposing these trends the 'traditionalist' attitudes tend towards formalization, on both the symbolic and organizational levels."25

Then, within this spectrum of differential responses to changes in social structures, there is the whole plethora of enthusiastic religion, ritualistic and retreatist, as Robert Merton would describe such responses to anomie. These take the form of spiritual healing, speaking in tongues, seeing of visions, exercising of evil spirits, palmistry, stargazing and fortune telling; all this impressive array is known to be spanning the religious spectrum of societies in tension. Some of these modern manifestations are seen as a revival of popular esoteric or occultist culture,26 and are often dubbed as syncretistic, while others may well be described as more or less neo-pagan. And, of course, one cannot fail to mention such imposing meta-religious edifices as the Akonodi shrines, Kankan Nyame, other tigari or atinga or Bamuchapi cults, money doubling, dwarf mediumship, mail-order cultism and other genuine or charlatan claims which dot the religious map of societies in rapid transition, as Ghana is at the moment.

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We are now faced, in this disproportionately short section of the essay, with a question that has had a controversial constituency in terms of the diversity of answers that have been proffered for it, especially in modern times. It is conceivable that religion, as a social institution, shall ever cease to exist when social change and modernization would have produced unparalleled affluence and material abundance in human societies? Historical and comparative material do not easily lend support to any such thesis, especially when one considers that material satisfaction is only one of the many reasons for which people embrace religion. Joseph de Bolt has suggested, on the basis of some evidence that he asserts can be obtained from history and archaeology, that "as human social systems evolved they moved from an earlier emphasis on religion and magic to an ever-increasing emphasis on ideology and science." But he was careful and humble enough to sound this caution: "The empirical evidence for this statement is somewhat speculative; the cultural definitions held by extinct societies are beyond our direct experience. Moreover, one must guard against the facile logic of ethnocentrism. 27 Besides, the rewards of affluence and abundance are never evenly spread in any social structure during any known or empirically knowable historical situation. This is because of the differential access to power and wealth that appears pretty likely to be forever going to characterize all human beings who are the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve. This social reality, however unpalatable it

may appear, is certainly contrary to the pious expectations of 'Paradise Regained' utopians.

Also as societies become increasingly technologized, so too does the world become alarmingly threatening. Thus it seems safe to assume there will continue to be a search for security and solace, both by the rich and by the poor. It is true that many of the world's erstwhile mysteries are being unravelled by science; and it is also true that the process of secularization is now generally seen as "the liberation of more and more areas of human thought and life from the dominance of metaphysical or ontological domination, and the attempt to live in these areas in the terms which they alone offer."<sup>28</sup> And Larry Shiner, too, has written that "A world of divine providence has given way to a world of human power and plans where man guides his own destiny."<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, it seems there will always be the sphere of the inexplicable and the intolerable in the world of human experience which shall be in need of an ontological explication. Especially is this the case when we consider the relationship between the ever recurrent situations of generalized social anxiety, and certain types of social action in which appeals to unknown forces feature prominently. For instance, in spite of the advances in our knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of living organisms, scientific explanations of the phenomenon of death have not been sufficient or adequate by any stretch of imagination, to cushion off people's emotion at such a critical point of man's life cycle. It is remarkable, in this respect, to recall that the United States, perhaps the most scientifically and technologically developed nation on earth today, harbours as many Nobel prizes as fundamentalist sects.<sup>30</sup>

Religious postulates and modes of man's experience of, and reaction to the 'holy', may differ in response to imperatives of social and cultural development. But it is my contention that religion as a social institution shall, like the proverbial rock of Gibraltar, continue to exist as long as there is organized human society, social change notwithstanding. As Joseph de Bolt puts it even more succinctly, in another context; "religion as a quest for ultimate understanding is likely to remain a part of human affairs. To be other than this would require the massive restructuring of modern society—an unlikely occurrence. Religion is not dead, but it is changed; the kind of answers it can provide cannot be provided by modern society in the forms and with the functions it previously possessed."<sup>31</sup>

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I have regarded it as my task in this paper to raise issues for discussion, rather than to offer any specific, let alone a definitive prognosis on the religious situation in the context of social change. But within the framework of a discussion on social values and national development, especially in the developing countries, I would like to end with this humble suggestion: If in our enthusiasm for rapid and massive economic and social development we ignore the vital but often subconscious fears and aspirations of the people we plan for, we may well come to discover that the various development plans, however lofty in theory and model, in facts and figures, will continue to hang in the air. We know that religion as a topic, scarcely appears in development plans or other planning programmes. But religious values are ultimately human values, and at every turn influence the course of social action. And I stress this point not because students of religion are afraid of a possible dispossession of their 'calling' in the fold of the humanities. I do so because of a belief, shared, I hope, by many, that a 'total' understanding of the nature

and stuff of human society will not be complete without a consideration of the religious dimension.

#### FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- † The substance of this paper was presented at session iii of a Conference of the Ghana Sociological Association held at the University of Cape Coast in March 1973. The theme of the Conference was "Social Values and National Development."
1. A useful discussion of this point, from an analytical point of view, is John E. Smith, "The Structure of Religion", *Religious Studies* (Cambridge) i, 1, 1965, pp. 63—73.
  2. H. A. Frankfort *et al* *Before Philosophy, the Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (London, 1949)
  3. Ralph Lane Jr., "Toward a New Beginning" *Sociological Analysis* xxxii, 3, Fall 1971, pp. 133—139. Similar points had been stressed two decades earlier in J. M. Yinger, "Present Status of the Sociology of Religion," *Journal of Religion* (Chicago) xxxi, 3, July 1951, pp. 194—210.
  4. E. E. Evans-Pritchard *et al* *The Institutions of Primitive Society* (Oxford, 1956)
  5. Thomas F. O'Dea, "The Sociology of Religion Reconsidered" *Sociological Analysis*, xxxi, 3, Fall 1970,
  6. See Lewis Browne, *This Believing World, A Simple Account of the Great Religions of Mankind* (London, 1927) pp.27, 29
  7. These religious and semi-religious systems have been discussed in R. R. Mathison, *Faiths Cults and Sects of America, from Atheism to Zen*. (N.Y. 1960)
  8. T. O. Ranger, *The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia 1898—1930* (London, 1970)
  9. On the origin and nature of the Watch Tower movement's activities and clashes with civil authorities in Central Africa, see especially J. R. Hooker, "Witnesses and Watchtower in the Rhodesias and Nyasaland" *Journal of African History*, vi, 1, 1965, p.p. 91—106; and J. M. Assimeng, "Sectarian allegiance and political authority: the Watch Tower Society in Zambia 1907—1935" *Journal of Modern African Studies* (Cambridge) viii, 1, 1970, pp. 97—112.
  10. This extract from the regulations of the movement is contained in Republic of Zambia *Report of a Commission of Inquiry into the Former Lumpa Church* (Lusaka, 1965) p. 17. The movement has since been banned after its armed clash with the authorities in Zambia. For further details about Lenshina's *Lumpa religious movement*, see Robert I. Robberg, "The Lenshina Movement of Northern Rhodesia" *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal* (Lusaka) No. 29, June 1961, pp. 62—78.
  11. Max Weber's monumental study, which has been the centre of a lively academic controversy in the field of social and economic history, is contained in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Talcott Parsons (London, 1930)
  12. See Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints, a Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (London, 1965). A work of equal relevance in this respect of

the relationship between puritanism and the organization of scientific orientation is Robert K. Merton *Social Theory and Social Structure* (N.Y., 1957), Part IV: Studies in the Sociology of Science.

13. Max Assimeng, *A Sociological analysis of the impact and consequences of some Christian sects in selected African Countries*. Unpublished D. Phil. Thesis, Oxford University, 1968. Religious sects which are described in greater detail in the study under reference are Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Moral Re-Armament, Salvation Army, the Plymouth Brethren, and the Pentecostal movement.
14. Meyer Barash, "The Role of Traditional Religion in a Developing Nation," Paper submitted at the international Sociological Association 6th World Congress of Sociology held at Evian, France, in September 1966.
15. James B. Pratt makes this point in "Why Religions Die," *University of California Publications in Philosophy*, xvi, 5, 1940, pp. 95—123.
16. This has been stressed before in Max Assimeng, "The Impact of Modernization on Religious Life in Ghana," an unpublished mss of a paper submitted at a Kampala colloquium on Modernization and Religious Life in Africa, August 1972.
17. See Hendrik van Loon, *The Story of Mankind* (N. Y., 1939) p. ix
18. Denton E. Morrison, "Some Notes Toward Theory of Relative Deprivation, Social Movements, and Social Change" *American Behavioral Scientist*, xiv, 5, 1971, p. 688.
19. Religionists who have learnt their lesson from continual disconfirmation of prophecy, and who have realized the futility of date-fixing, have tended to reconcile themselves to merely warning that mankind should nevertheless prepare for "the great day."
20. See James S. Coleman, "Social Cleavage and Religious Conflict," *Journal of Social Issues*, xii, 3, 1956, p.52 Emphases in Original. Werner Stark, too, has studied this phenomenon extensively in *The Sociology of Religion Vol. II : Sectarian Religion* (London, 1967)
21. First published in London, 1965.
22. See Peter M. Worsley, *The Trumpet shall Sound, A Study of 'cargo' cults in Melanesia* (London, 1957). See also Vittorio Lanternari, *The Religions of the Oppressed, A Study of Modern Messianic Cults*. (London, 1963); and Max Assimeng, "Religious and Secular Messianism in Africa" *Research Review* (Legon) VI, I, 1969, pp. 1—19. On the specifically European manifestation of this search for salvation, see Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (N. Y., 1961).
23. Anton T. Boisen, "Economic Distress and Religious Experience, a Study of the Holy Rollers," *Psychiatry*, ii, 2, 1939, pp. 192, 194. See also John B. Holt, "Holiness Religion : Cultural Shock and Social Reorganization" *American Sociological Review*, V, 1940, 740—747.
24. An attempt to specify different responses to social change has been made in Max Assimeng, "Status Anxiety and Cultural Revival : pursuit of the good old days," *Ghana Journal of Sociology* (Legon) V, I, 1969, pp. 8—14. The foundation for the modern social anthropological studies of such responses to modernization and culture contact, was amply laid in Ralph

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25. S. N. Eisenstadt, "Some Observations on the Dynamics of Traditions," *Comparative studies in Society and History*, XI, 4, 1969, p. 458. See also the same author's "Transformation of Social, Political and Cultural Orders in Modernization," *American Sociological Review*, xxx, 5, 1965 pp. 659—673.
  26. See, for instance, Edward A. Tiryakian, "Toward the Sociology of Esoteric Culture," *American Journal of Sociology* Lxxviii, 3, 1972, pp. 491—512.
  27. J. W. de Bolt, "Belief Systems and Evolution : A Distinction Between Magic and Religion and its Implications for Socio-Cultural Change" *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, VI, 2, 1969, p. 86. A recent restatement of this position is Peter L. Berger, *A Rumour of Angels, Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural*. (Middlesex, 1970).
  28. Fr. Paul Verghese, "On Prophecy and Technocracy Part 1: Prophecy, Technocracy, and Secularization," *Missionary Research Library Occasional Bulletin* (New York) xviii, 8—9, August—September 1967, p. 6.
  29. Larry Shinner, "Toward a Theology of Secularization" *Journal of Religion* (Chicago) XIV, 4, 1965, p. 246.
  30. This is exemplified by Peter Gwynne's report on "Geneticists and Genesisists" in *New Scientist* (London) Ivii, 832, 1973, pp. 317—318.
  31. J. W. de Bolt, "Comment on D Nolan Kaiser's Paper. 'The Demies of Religion in the West : A Conjectural Hypothesis'" *Journal of Religious Thought*, xxvi, 1969, p. 60. Also, B. R. Wilson, *Religion in a secular society, a sociological comment* (London, 1966)