



Karl Marx was a very religious man. Why do I say so? When he was alive and bubbling with very solid ideas, he hated cheating. He hated poverty. He hated exploitation of labour by capital. He hated stealing and hated illegally acquired property. He hated accumulation, greed, selfishness, and the processes of individuation. He advocated collective ownership as different from private ownership. His love for man and society was incomparable. His polemics with bourgeois academics was arresting and persuading. He was one of the most telling intellectual philosopher of all times in virtually all Nigerian universities and in poor countries of the third world. Radical thoughts built around Marxism, was always refreshing, inviting and liberating in any continent suffused with the contradictions of capitalism: perverse poverty, wide spread indigence, bourgeois programmed backwardness pari passu the abundance of wealth in few hands. Karl Marx hated with ceaseless passion capitalist created millionaires and billionaires anywhere in the world.

In fact, if capitalism was a human being, Karl Marx was ready, during his times on mother earth to seize it, squeeze its head and have it smashed against a wall. When a French philosopher and friend, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, wanted to 'rationalise' poverty with his book, the PHILOSOPHY OF POVERTY, Karl Marx countered it with another, titled, THE POVERTY OF PHILOSOPHY. When another German philosopher, Max Weber, cleverly posited that it is the consciousness of man that determines life or social reality, Karl Marx countered that it is not, that rather, it is the concrete observable social reality that determines man's consciousness. In other words, whatever thought we incubate in our thick head does not come out of the blues, they emanate from the experiences we go through in our social world. "It is the social that explains the social", writes the French sociologist, Emile Durkheim. It is the social that explains the random thoughts and postulations in our head. That is why when a child is born, it is just an ordinary tabula rasa: an empty mind, a mind with no scintilla of experience whatsoever.

It is the society and its environment which, with time, pollutes that tabula rasa, that innocent mind. That is why Jesus Christ preached that unless a man is as innocent as a child, he will not enter the kingdom of God. As a Christian, you must reflect on your life and strive to be upright, loving and kind, don't steal and don't cheat. Let your word always be your bond. It is therefore the society that teaches a child that



this person is a witch, an Igbo, a Yoruba, a Moslem, a Christian, a Northerner, a Southerner and an ethnic minority. Society implants all manner of vices into a child's head. The child becomes inebriated with the buzzing positive and negative sounds of a society and its daily activities. It begins to gradually dawn on the child to try and understand the daily intricate meanings attached to social relationships among homo sapiens. Over the years as an adult, these bombardments evolve and become a question of choice. Karl Marx was so intellectually versatile that there is no area in the academia where his input is not felt.

His ghost still haunts people in the Ivory towers, and even some governments. He is found in Literature, Economics, Political science, History, Sociology, Arts, philosophy, Law, military warfare and Religious studies - virtually as an established critique or a critical critique. He was well versed in thoughts and his critical intellectual dept is unmatched. Marx and Engels, intellectually, were like the inseparable Siamese twins. Their brains were as large as were their thoughts. Their critical mind sets were unique. They were unshakeable, courageous and fearless. They spoke and wrote extensive and easily convincing social literatures whose contents evolved on real, concrete, and bitter truth about capitalist power, authority, class, alienation, poverty, and the legitimacy of bourgeois power and its arrogant abuse by a well positioned social class. His theory of Dialectical Materialism: "Material conception of history" or historical materialism and the ability to weave it to dislodge the paucity and logic in most bourgeois arguments was a handy veritable anchor which students in third world studies have used to good end in dissecting third world failing economies. His book, CAPITAL, was a compendium on the contradictions inherent in most capitalist systems and an indictment on the criminal exploitation of labour by capital. His Communist Manifesto was a supposed suggestive way forward for societies and mankind. In his life time, Marx and Engels theoretically 'killed' capitalism while Vladimir Lenin helped to practically 'bury' it as shown in the Russian revolution of 1917.

This socialist ideals, principles and governments spread as far as to the now moribund Eastern Europe. Capitalism, which was almost at the point of being negated, was however 'resurrected' and given what looks like a 'face lift' and a pyrrhic victory by Mikhail Gorbachev, the apostle of bourgeois policies of glasnost {openness} and perestroika {restructuring}. Marx and co., made a thorough mince



meat of the capitalist system and called on the working class and other oppressed groups in any clime that where ever they see and experience the exploitation of man by man, they should struggle to overthrow such through a revolutionary process. He proffered the Socialist and Communist alternatives which must be led by a revolutionary working class believing that these systems, if properly managed, will allow everyone in a given society to enjoy the fullness of life that is devoid of cheating, class privilege, ruthless advantage and exploitation; the fall out of which are often, wide spread poverty, diseases and misery, evil and wickedness, crimes, war and alienation. Today, virtually all third world countries are still trying to come to terms with these social vices and problems which had for decades hinged on capitalist contradictions. This is why I insist Karl Marx is a very religious man. His religion is not Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Animism and traditional religions, Taoism, and Confucianism. His religion is MAN and its practice is HUMANISM.

He loved man and believed so much in the ability of MAN to make, remake, shape and reshape his environment for the benefit of all. "If man is shaped by his surroundings", he once wrote, then "his surroundings must be made human". Most European countries are guided in their daily governance by this quote. But the same Karl Marx hates other religions to boot. He sees them as opium on the masses. Students, scholars and social commentators admired and embraced his well articulated generic view on society and its material historical trend and stages of negation. However, when it comes to his view on religion, they become backbencher admirers and followers. They back out. They call him names: he is an Atheist, an agnostic, a free thinker, the devil's incarnate and an evil man. It is a paradox in life for a man to be evidentially, so good and yet is seen as evil because of his unbelief.

For this reason, Marx other intellectual contributions are 'buried' by believers because of his strongly worded ideological diatribe on religion. But what is his view on religion. Hear, I reproduce verbatim what seems like a summary of Karl Marx thesis on religion culled from the book titled: ON RELIGION {2008}, by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Dover publishers, New York. Hear him: "Man makes religion, religion does not make man. In other words, religion is the self- consciousness and self feeling of a man who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself again. But man is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the



world of man, the state, society. This state, this society, produce religion, a reversed world-consciousness, because they are a reversed world. Religion is the general theory of that world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in a popular form, its spiritualistic point d'honneur, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn completion, its universal ground for consolation and justification. It is the fantastic realization of the human essence because the human essence has no true reality. The struggle against religion is therefore mediately the fight against the other world, of which religion is the spiritual aroma." He continued and I like this: "Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people." Continuing, he wrote: "The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is required for their real happiness. The demand to give up a condition which needs illusions.

The criticism of religion is therefore in embryo the criticism of the vale of woe, the halo of which is religion." But why did Karl Marx make such a heavy deposition and bombshell? Simple answer: religion dampens and weakens the critical mind set of the oppressed people; destroys their revolutionary quest, zeal, and consciousness and, weakens their strength and ability to revolt against any unjust social order. Religion is, what Professor Omafume Onoge calls, "a disarming and a de-revolutionising institution". But has this thesis, among others, as elaborately correct as it may have sounded and appeared, silenced and checked the spread of religion and belief systems in the world? The answer is as obvious as it's emphatic. In fact, religion is waxing stronger, especially in poor and underdeveloped economies. The more poverty spreads the firmer religion keeps its hold on the masses. Again, Nigeria, Haiti, and most third world countries - where diseases, hunger, perverse poverty, misery, unemployment, crime, high level political corruptions, complete lack of social security and the rigging of elections - are countries where religion has actively acted as a complete opium on the masses. The high level of corruption in high places does not match with the upsurge and spread of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria.

Apart from the politicians, the second-tier level of corruption in Nigeria, up to this very date, is the Civil Service. Late General Muritala Muhammed wanted to deal with



it but chose a wrong approach. The Nigerian civil service comprised workers who are the base follower ship of all the religious denomination. So both the top and bottom are rotten and need to be swept aside. Unfortunately, the oppressed base followers, who are supposed to be the motor force of qualitative change, are not only corrupt but have been sedated by an overdose of religious sermons. However, any religious practitioner who knows his right and can fight for it - can mobilise and organise the masses, can evolve into a revolutionary fighter, identifies with the plight of the generality of the poor and the working class, is ready to die for them, helps to improve on their material conditions or to topple an unjust, wicked, cruel, and class discriminatory society - is not by my own understanding of Marx thesis, suffering from reversed consciousness. It is those who have taken, as their destiny, their poor state of poverty and misery in whatever diverse ways it is visited on them and who are wont not to lift a finger to liberate themselves and help change the status quo, that are suffering from Karl Marx apt submission. Chief Gani Fawehinmi, one of the most complete universal man and consistent social crusader, is a Moslem; Prof. Pat Utomi, a crusader for good governance and a conservative humanist, is a Christian; Dr. Edwin Madunagu, is a Christian {deduced, based on my reading and understanding of most of his articles}; Balarabe Musa is a Moslem crusader for social justice and a left wing thinker; Prof. Attahiru Jega is a Moslem; Reverend Mathew Kukah and Cardinal Olugbunmi Okojie are Christians; late Chief Awolowo, advocate of democratic socialism for Nigeria and late Dr. Bala Mohammed were Christian and Moslem respectively. Etc, etc. Col. Muammar Gaddafi used the spirit of Islam and fear of Allah to transform Libya.

Jerry Rawlings undertook similar transformation in Ghana. That Obama visited Ghana first was due sufficiently to the foundation Rawlings had laid. To these people and loads of others not named, religion is not and has not acted as opium on their mentality. What is the point? The point is that Karl Marx thesis on religion holds water in most decadent countries where the base followership in any religion has refused to get actively involved in objective moves to change a system for the good of all. For "religious distress is an expression of real distress". There are Christians to date fighting pitch battles and guerrilla warfare with their oppressors in most Latin American countries. These fighters operate with the guided wise proverb, which clearly states that, a child that says its mother will not sleep, that child too will not. Thus writes Prof. Wole Soyinka in THE MAN DIED: "In any people that



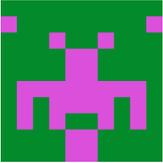
## Reflection On Karl Marx Thesis On Religion

submit willingly to the daily humiliation of fear, the man dies". Nigerians can only conquer that which they fear by confronting it. I rest my case.

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