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**Religion and Its Impact upon the Realization of
Human Actual and Potential Capacities**

By

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Key Terms

Aberration: deviation; a departure from what is normal or desirable.

Cronus: father of Zeus in Greek mythology, a Titan who ruled the world until his son Zeus dethroned him. Roman equivalent Saturn.

Crutch: something that sustains or supports some body or something without which he/she is liable to collapse, fail or falter.

Diktat: doctrinal statement: a statement or order that cannot be opposed.

Hunch: feeling: an intuitive feeling about something.

Man: includes both male and female human beings.

Sedative: a drug or other agent that includes sedation. Sigh to express an emotion through a deep audible breath in relief.

Tophet: a place where children were roasted when human sacrifice was mandatory.

Transcendent: beyond the limit of experience, existing beyond the material universe.

Transient: not permanently settled in a place, staying in a place, staying in a place for only a short period of time.

ACRONYMS

FDRE = Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

N.D = No date is indicated on the source

Background of the Study

In the history of human society, no one knows with accuracy about how the first religious system was started. However, there were some assumptions which claim that religion was started in reaction to human fear and anxiety. It was projected by humans to insure the feeling of security and control over nature. This was because, nature was challenging and too tough for men and there was little control over it. Humans were extremely suffering from the strong power of nature. People had lost their life due to Earth quake; volcano, and thunder. Fierce animals like lion, hyena and Tiger snatched their life. At a time, human's life was shrouded in haze from different corners. Hence, the question of people's need of survival and security demands them to conceive imaginary superman (God) which assumed to be almighty and powerful in avoiding insecurity and preserving human life. (B.A. Robinson, 2002).

Later on, the development of human's mental ability led to the promotion of knowledge and personal morality. People began to understand that men's life was transient. They tried to understand that as they would die sometime in the future. Hence, the secret of life and death became vivid in the minds of early man. People began to develop question about their environment and about themselves. Some of the questions were: What controlled the seasonal cycle of nature? What causes the apparent movement of the sun and the replacement of day and night? When those questions became very difficult and beyond the capacity of man, God is invented as a special remedy to answer human basic problems. Moreover, men were unable to answer those many questions, like; who caused floods, earth quake, and volcano and rain storms? What happens to persons after they die? Thus, because of human's keen interest in responding to the mysteries of nature, the first religious system and moral truths had begun to develop by the primitive men (B.A. Robinson, 2002).

According to Thomas A. Baillieul, 2011, the first religious ceremony had started as early as 35,000 years ago. The basic reason or stimulus behind this religious ceremony was inspired by man's quest about the secret of life and death. The different crisis in life because of social and natural disasters and humans dependence on nature for physical sustenance was another factor for the emergence of religion. Hence, in all cultures, human beings make a practice of interacting with spiritual powers. Those powers may be in the form of gods, spirits, ancestors or

any kind of sacred reality. For instance, men had worshiped certain natural objects like trees, mountains and rivers. This spiritual power was understood as an all-embracing reality and approached through its manifestation in special symbols. Thus, religion was used to designate this complex and diverse realm of human experience.

Ever since the time of departure from the world of animals, human has demonstrated anything he has considered superior or difficult to understand in his faith and worship. Therefore, in the ancient times, human low level of consciousness in understanding the mystery of nature forced him to surrender. This was because; the force of nature was beyond his power to control. Through religion, men started to appease and get favors from the Supreme Being they feared which is known as God. This resulted in the emergence of religion and performing rituals. [Emile Durkheim (N.D)]

Problem Statement

This research is designed to make a critical analysis on the origin, cause and impact of religion upon the realization of human potential in general since early times to the modern days. It attempts to provide a way to human self awareness and self realization through critical evaluation of the cons and pros of religion. The study also serves as a special grease to lubricate the conservative or dogmatic doctrine of different religions by advocating rational, tolerant and secular approach among readers and secular adherents.

According to Freud, God is nothing more than ideal projection of human's mind. Thus, analogously to the view of Freud, this thesis has the attributes of Copernican revolution. By doing so, the thesis claims that God does not create man in his image, rather it is man who creates God in his own image when the forces and laws of nature become beyond his power to control. Due to this reason, religion becomes a strong sanction imposed upon human psychological and physical desires by transcending it somewhere else. Thus, there is always a gap between religion and human interest. This thesis explains those conflicting interests and recommends certain solutions for the problem.

The thesis tries to also explore human alienation caused by religion which arrests the development and potential capacities of human consciousness. The study clearly depicts the self alienation resulted from religion that separates human from himself, from others and from nature. Moreover, the research tries to expose some dangerous practices of self sacrifice and unnatural restrictions of religion on human capacities. It tries to argue that religion is an invented world consciousness by human. Thus, the thesis declares that religion is an earthly subjugation that could have spiritual power to devastate men's freedom and their will to power.

Finally, the thesis advances the idea that there is no responsible supernatural being rather than man on this earth. Thus, it encourages initiates the readers to obey their moral responsibility than any external authority. This is because, one's obedience to self moral responsibility is the source of freedom, creativity and pursuit of wisdom, whereas, obedience to external authority is the source of fear, anxiety and a surrender to the unknown imaginary being.

Methods and Organization of the Study

This study relies significantly on secondary sources based on qualitative research. Information is gathered from different books, websites, Bible, Quran and different scriptures of religion. The research focuses analytically on the impact of human belief or religion up on the realization of human potential capacities. My practical life exposure and immediate experiences are also incorporated in the discussion part so as to consolidate the cited works of Philosophers.

The study is organized in to four chapters. Chapter one deals with the nature and origin of religion. Under this unit, different theories of religion and the different causes for belief will be discussed critically. Chapter two is about the impact of religion and the question of God's existence. The unit includes the advantages of religion up on humanity in particular and the disadvantages of religion up on human potential capacity in general. Chapter three is about religion and ideology. Religion as the instrument of the existing class will be analyzed here. The last Chapter is about critical and concluding discourse.

CHAPTER ONE: THE NATURE AND ORIGIN OF RELIGION

1.1. The Origin of Religion

First, the essence of religion was not originated in search of God, but it was emanated from men's search of solutions for their immediate problems. God invented when humans were unable to respond or unable to give solutions for their anxiety and fear. This was the interest of creating a super man who could have ultimate power to respond their problem. As a result an illusory being, God is invented. Thus, the purpose of religion was to provide followers with the feeling of security while living in a dangerous environment in which a person could be killed, injured, and displaced at any time because of natural accidents and human hatred and intolerance. In relation to this, the former bishop of the Episcopal church of USA, John Shelby Spong said:

Religion is primarily a search for security and not a search for truth. Religion is what we so often use to bank the first of our anxiety. That is why religion tends

toward becoming excessive, neurotic, controlling and even evil. That is why a religious government is always a cruel government. People need to understand that questioning and doubting are healthy human activities to be encouraged not to be feared. Certainty is a vice not a virtue. Insecurity is something to be grasped and treasured. (John Shelby Spong, 2012).

According to spong, religion is conceived by the early humans to eliminate or mitigate those natural and social insecurities. This was because; humans were suffered from different natural calamities. This condition made humans to lose their potency of defending the threats of natural incidents. Therefore, by creating religion, they became dependent and submitted themselves to the ideal God, which they believed Him as a guardian and defender against all forms of evils. Religion is the anti-philosophy of man, because Philosophy is the source of question and response that encourages different human activities and inspires men in finding solution to the problem rather than depending on some ideal being. However, religion depends on some illusory being to find solutions for the problem. It is shrouded with the actual life phobia and inspired hopeful life in the transcendental world rather than on the real world. Therefore, unlike philosophy, religion contradicts humans self actualization.

1.2. Theories about the Origin of Religion

There are some theories about the origin of religion. Those are: the subjective theory, the evolution theory and the theory of original monotheism (Patrick Zukeran, (2004).

1.2.1. The Subjective Theory

Religion developed out of man's desire and intention to explain about the mystery of life and death. It is psychological; because naturally humans have a psychological desire for the existence of transcendent being that can give hope to live eternal life in the transcendent world. This is because; by nature man does not want to perish. Thus, according to subjective theory, the concept of religion is not necessarily connected to the social interaction; rather it is inherited in our consciousness. Hence, this theory believes that religion exists in our

consciousness independently of the social interaction. Across the globe there can be different experiences of culture, however the awareness and the desire for religion is human nature. (Patrick Zukeran, (2004).

1.2.2. Darwinian Theory of Religion

According to this theory, religion is as old as man. It is the result of the evolutionary process of human culture. The primitive man belief in the existence of some spiritual force, but this was existed in the form of innate feeling. This spiritual force was believed to be impersonal and exists in all creation which believers called it “Mana.” The name Mana is given to the spiritual force by the inhabitants of Melanesia. It is believed that Mana is believed to be concentrated more in some areas and objects, like on magnificent trees, unique rocks and certain animals. (Zukeran, 2004). That is why people here in Ethiopia are still worshiping some natural objects, like trees which they call it “Adbar”. People slaughter or sacrifice different animals, like hen and sheep near the tree. They put different food items near the tree, “adbar” and around rivers. This is because, people think that those natural objects have spirits and they believe that the spirits eat the offered sacrifices. In those community, ‘Adbar’ is recognized as a female, protective spirit that protects a certain neighborhood, its inhabitants and their land, animals and children from all sorts of natural disasters.

1.2.3. The Theory of Animism

According to this theory, the spirit and the material world are inseparable. Believers argue that the soul or the spirit exists, not only in humans, but also in all animate and inanimate beings. It exists in some animals, plants, rocks, geographic features such as mountains or rivers, or other entities of the natural environment, including thunder, wind, and shadows. Animism categorizes the soul to abstract concepts and explains this abstract concept using different words or names. At the stage of animism, the force of belief is visualized as personal spirit. It teaches that a spiritual force exists behind every event. According to this theory, there are two categories of spirits: Natural spirits and ancestor spirits. Natural spirits have a human form and found in all natural objects such as plants, rocks, trees, lakes, etc... (JD Crowley, 2010). Though it is very difficult to describe it in English, the Amharic name for those ancestor spirits or words can be; ውቃቢ፣ ቀልብ፣ አውሊያ፣ ቆሌ፣ ዛር etc... Here in Ethiopia, some members of

the community consider themselves as animists. For instance, those people who have “ውቃቢ or አውሊያ” spirit are known as “ቃሊቻ or ጠንቋይ” (wizard).

1.3. The Meaning of Religion and God

According to Ayn Rand (1964), religion is a blind belief that contravenes reality and the conclusions of reasons. Its essence is not reason, but whim. However, it is the earliest form of philosophy in which human had tried to explain the universe. The purpose of defining the universe was to give meaning and hope for human’s life and to develop codes of moral value that can govern human conduct. Thus, at a time, it has attempted to give illusory answer for human questions. Such religious sentiment has begun to develop since men have departed from the world of animals through developing consciousness. This was happened before men’s mind developed enough to engage in philosophy. Though religion contributes more to the development of human morality before science has been matured, but it was based on malicious base. It tries to make people accept it through horrific conditions.

God is a mystery beyond the power of human conception. In Christianity and other monotheistic religions; God is the supreme being, the creator and ruler of the universe and source of all moral authority. However, in certain other religions; God is a superhuman being or spirit worshipped as having power over nature or human fortunes (Oxford University press, 2015). Hence, when things dominate his power and in compensation to his knowledge and power limitations, man began to conceive of a being superman whose knowledge is infinite and an endless beyond the knowledge of man. God is personified as almighty, the source and the creator of everything. This men’s attachment to God seems an inclination to be bestowed with God’s power.

In modern philosophical thought, the definition of God is a center of debate. George Huttar (2015) argued that the existence of God is metaphysical question. In relation to this, he said:

To say that ‘God exists’ is to make a metaphysical utterance which cannot be either true or false. No sentence which purports to describe the nature of a transcendent God can possess any literal significance.

Therefore, how could we reach to the consensus on the definition of God? It is not easy to reach to the conclusion. This is because; there have been numerous definition and historical concepts of God since the earliest time to the current days. For instance, let us see the various connotations forwarded by believers. Some gods are assumed as all-powerful, all-knowing and all-good, while others are not. Some gods are objects of reverence, while others are not. Some gods communicate with man, while others do not (George Huttar, N.D).

For instance, in describing God as the source of everything, “Mary’s song” (“ቅዱሴ ማርያም” 1958) from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Liturgy says the following:

*አብ ፀሐይ ነው ፤ ወለድ ፀሀይ ነው፤ መንፈስቅዱስም ፀሐይ ነው
አብ እሳት ነው ፤ ወለድ እሳት ነው፤ መንፈስቅዱስም እሳት ነው
አብ ጉንደ ወይን ነው ፤ ወለድ ጉንደ ወይን ነው፤ መንፈስቅዱስም ጉንደ ወይን ነው፤ ዓለም ሁሉ የሚጣፍጥበት
የህይወት ወይን ነው፡፡*

The equivalent English translation follows:

*The Father is the Sun, the Son is the Sun and the Holy Spirit is the Sun;
The Father is the fire, the Son is the fire and the Holy Spirit is the fire; and
The Father is the vine, the Son is the vine and the Holy Spirit is the vine: but it is one
vine of life from which all the world is tasted (Ethiopian Orthodox Church, 1959).*

The above Mary’s songs imply that God reveals himself in everything. However, such variation in the definitions of God makes difficult to give a clear description of a God in all religious doctrines. The confusion that surrounds the idea of God emanates from the fact that the word God is among the most abused terms. This is because, some try to define God as a supernatural and transcendent being beyond this universe. However, if we define God as Almighty and superior to all creatures, all superior capacity should be called as a God. Thus, if we call these beings gods, any creature which is superior to another creature becomes a god. If so, the civilized people would be god with respect to low civilized people. A Lion would be a god with respect to other animals. Scientists would be a god with respect to ordinary people. Thus, there is no uniform definition of God since the beginning of religion. [O’Hare, (N.D)]

Sigmund Freud (1927) defines religion as an illusion that provides pseudo defense against the superior force of nature. He generalizes that all religious beliefs are illusions. This is because,

there is no formal agreement or definitions that can properly fits reason. The definition depends on the view and illusory idea of individual or community. That is why we observe the explosion and multiplication of religious doctrines which are inconceivable among different believers and produce conflict of interest across the globe. Concerning the relation between religion and civilization, Freud said, civilized people (educated people) have little to fear the force of nature and religion. This is because; their freedom and secular motives for morality replaced their religiousness. However, metaphorically, he appreciated the role of religious sanction on uneducated people not to commit crime or murder. He asserts that dogma in religious belief contributes to cover human weakness. Freud hopes that in the future, sciences and reason will replace faith in God.

1.4. Ancient Foundation of Religion

1.4.1. Theism

Etiologically, the word theism comes from Greek term theos which means “god”. It is a belief in one God. Theism claims that everything is created and ruled by God. God is the governor of humans and the entire world. Some say He is the lord of the universe. He is assumed as personal in nature so that He has to be worshiped, because He is the guardian of man, morally perfect and infinitely powerful. Theism is a belief in God, however in its philosophical and theological usage theism is monotheism, a belief in one God (James Sire, 2011).

1.4.2. Polytheism

Polytheism is a system of belief in which many gods or goddesses are worshiped. Those multiple gods are assumed as the representation of all forces of nature. It is originated with Hinduism about 2500 B .C. It also included the ancient cultures of Assyria, Babylonian, Egypt, Greece and Rome. In the ancient polytheistic belief system, Gods are believed to be the creator of everything. God is viewed as being in control of all natural events such as wind, Sun, rain fall, harvest and fertility. Polytheists believe that offering scarifies is a special means to appease gods. For instance, the Canaanites sacrificed to their male god ‘Baal’ and to his female counter part “Ashtoreth.” They believed that Baal controlled the rain and the harvest, while Ashtoreth controlled fertility and reproduction. [Ramdas Lamb, (2015)]

1.4.3. Pantheism

Pantheism is a metaphysical belief that views God is everything and everything is God. Adherents of this belief proclaim that all creatures are the self expression of God. Pantheism preaches that all forms of reality strictly portray the mode of existence of God. Thus, it is the belief that God and the material world are one and the same and that God is present in everything. Nature is a part of god and mankind is not different than any other animal. Thus, it promotes that man must live in harmony with nature. In Western thought, the Dutch philosopher, Baruch Spinoza is the greatest exponent of pantheism. He strictly criticizes the orthodox view that alienates God from this world and situates Him somewhere beyond reality or external to the real world. His doctrine provided special solutions to the mind-body problem by arguing that mind and body are in constant interaction [Aldous Huxley, (N.D)].

1.4.4. Monotheism

Monotheism is a system of belief in which the entire universe is governed by one God. Probably, monotheism as a system of belief emerged in reconciling the then existing conflict or controversy on religious theory of polytheism. It is believed that Abraham, Judeo- Christian founder had established the belief system in about 2000 B.C. According to Monotheistic religion, God is a supreme being that believed to be all powerful, all knowing and the creator of the universe. From this definition, we can understand that God is the conception of superman conceived by men when natural forces were tremendously greater than the power of them. Hence, it seems that the concept of God developed out of human weakness in the face of the challenges that nature imposed on him. So, the essence of religion is derived from men's need to fill their gap or it is an immediate call for help in overcoming the problem of nature (Murat Iyigun, 2007))

1.4.5. Atheism

Atheism is the anti-thesis of theism and the rejection of belief in any gods. Etiologically the term atheism comes from two Greek words. That is 'a' which means without and 'theism' which means God. Thus, when they are conjoined as atheism they give the meaning without God. So that it is a doctrine that does not accept the existence of God. (David Mills, N.D)

Atheist philosophers, like Feuerbach and Freud said that all religious belief and gods are human creation. The basic reason why men formulated and worshiped God is to satisfy their psychological and emotional desires. According to their view, the conception of God is miscalculated substitution of human potency to the imaginary being, God. It is the abdication and negation of human reason, Justice, liberty, and human perfection. This is because; religion preaches that perfection is not here on the earth, but it is somewhere in the invisible world. Thus, according to some atheists, God has to be killed by man, because He is a hidden enemy of all human endeavors by devastating man's entire capacity and by transforming the actual life the illusory life. [George H. Smith, (N.D)].

In modern sense, the essence of atheism is not the denial of God, but it is the lack of belief in God. This is because; atheists do not have interest to deny God if there is a concrete evidence for His existence. Thus, the mission of atheism is not primarily to deny God, but it is to oppose the ungrounded and absurdities of the definition of God that encounters reasons. So the purpose of atheism is to search for the truth (American atheists, 2015).

Atheism is the source of peace and tolerance. It is the invisible bullet to kill the emotional ego of religious terrorists and fundamentalists who advocate the interest of a certain group or ideology. This is because; atheists are not required to hate any one. There is no doctrine that promotes the ideology or the religion of a certain group. For atheists, reason is the governor of everything. Moral judgment has to be justified on rational moral grounds rather than by fear of religious authority or God [Laurence R. Iannaccone (N.D)].

Some atheists maintain that the existence of evil proves the non existence of God. Because, those different evils, like the suffering of innocent children without any reason, the suffering and death of people from different natural and social catastrophe make the existence of God improbable. God, which believers call the almighty should not give a deaf ear to those unjust, evil and unfair acts. Evil should not exist in the world by the all good creator. Contrary to the above argument, theists commonly defend the existence of evil by claiming that God desires that human beings remain to choose between good and evil. Theists believe that the purpose of evil is to build human character. However, this justification is not convincing for the fact that the innocent children who can't identify between good and evil, suffer because of genetic diseases or abuse from adults. Therefore, argument that God allows pain and suffering to

build human character fails to explain about why there is suffering. More importantly, it is illogical to say that God, who is omnipotent creates evil in the world for the purpose of building human character. Hence a better explanation for the presence of evil in the world proves that God doesn't exist. (Peter Van Inwagen, 2003)

The persuasive argument or a special evidence for the non-existence of God is marked in the difference between the developed and less developed world. Those developed nations, who have highly developed technology and science to influence and control nature are likely less religious than those nations who are under developed and dependent upon nature for their needs. In short, the more people get control over nature, the less they become religious and the less the people control over nature and the more they become religious. For instance, across our planet, most of the top academicians are atheists. This implies that Atheists are more likely to climb to the top of Academia. For instance, 97% of the U.S National academy of science members and Noble laureate recipients are atheists. To the seminal social thinkers of the nineteenth century, religion would fade in importance and cease to be significant with the development of science and human's self-actualization. (Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, N.D). In order to justify the scholar's argument, here is concrete evidence that depicts the percentage of atheists in industrialized nations as compared to the les developed nations.

Table1. Atheist Statistics from the Highest Scoring Countries

Percentages for non-believers in God

Sweden	46-85%
Denmark	43-80%
Norway	31-72%
Japan	64-65%
Czech Republic	54-61%
Finland	28-60%
France	43-54%
South Korea	30-52%
Germany	41-49%
Netherlands	39-44%
Britain	39-44%
Belgium	42-43%
Canada	19-30%
Switzerland	17-27%
Austria	18-26%
Australia	24-25%
United States!	3-9%

Source: Atheist Scholar, 2012 “Atheist Demographics” [<http://atheistscholar.orgatheistPsychlogier s/AtheistDemographics.aspx>]

Atheists Statistics in Less Developed Countries

No	Country	Religious persons (%)	Atheists (%)
1	Ghana	96	0
2	Nigeria	93	1
3	Armenia	92	2
4	Fiji	92	1
5	Macedonia	90	1
6	Romania	89	1
7	Iraq	88	0
8	Keya	88	2
9	Peru	86	3
10	Brazil	85	1

Source: WIN-Gallup International GLOBAL INDEX OF RELIGIOSITY AND ATHEISM-2012 [<http://www.Wingia.com/web/files/news/14/file/14.pdf>]

As it can be observed from the above two tables, atheists are heavily concentrated in economically developed countries of Europe. However, the incidence of atheism in most less developed countries is below two percent. Atheism is peculiarly a modern phenomenon. Now the question is why do modern conditions produce atheism? According to Anthropologists, the reason why people in economically developed countries turn to atheism are because of scientific prediction and control of nature. This is because, religion as an authorized entity and as a means of controlling uncertainty in life is replaced by different innovations and scientific discoveries. This is already depicted in the above data showing that the more educated countries have higher levels of atheists, whereas less educated countries have small number of atheists. This is because; there are strong correlations between atheism and intelligence.

Therefore, the rapid influence and control of man over nature challenges the belief in God, which is assumed to be all creator, all-knowing and almighty (Nigel Barber, 2012).

Why is the percentage of atheists so low in some less developed and in developing countries? According to Hemant Mehta, 2012, there are two reasons:

The first reason is that people who are living in those countries are less educated than the western world and the degree of controlling over nature is low. For instance, some of the countries, people live under the mercy of nature. They depend on rain to grow crops for their means of subsistence. They simply accept what nature provides them. Hence, since the power of nature is by far greater than the influence of people over nature, the only option of the people is to surrender to belief. The second reason is that the idea of secularism and liberalism is at its infant stage or non-existing in some of the described nations. Therefore, people there kill anyone who admits atheism. The second reason is that some countries, like Afghanistan, Iran, Maldives, Mauritania, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Sudan are against human right. In those nations, atheists can be imprisoned for their beliefs or they can be executed for being an atheist.

1.5. Karl Marx about Religion

In his critical evaluation to religion, Marx did a Copernican revolution by saying that it is not God that makes man, but it is man who makes God in his image. To him, religion is the self-consciousness and self feeling of man (Karl Marx, 1843). In order to argue that man created God in his image, let us take some evidences from some Christian churches. All pictures placed in the churches portray the white skin people. For instance, the picture of Jesus Christ, St. Marry, including all Angels and Saints are from the white race. Thus, no black picture is found across all Christian Churches. This implies that the God which Christians called the God of all humans is fraud, because, he is not the god of the black people. According to Bible, black races are the cursed people while white races are the blessed one. Hence, it seems that the essence of racial discrimination began with God. [Genesis 9:20-27]

In relation to the negative impact of religion upon man, Marx said, “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of heartless world and the soul of soulless world. It is the opium of

the mass.” (Karl Marx, 1843) When Marx says, religion is the opium of the people it is to explain its sedative and narcotic nature. Its narcotic effect makes dull and convinces the believers that the earthly life is useless and perishable. Therefore, by inculcating the Earthly unhappiness, it tries to promise happiness in the transcendental world. Hence, by virtue of this, religion can make people to stay, in their consciousness, but in an illusory way and not in a real way. The medicine it offers cannot practically cure the disease from which society and man are suffering. It can only help to tolerate or to alleviate human pain through developing an illusory physician, who could have an ability to prescribe pseudo medicine [Shagor, (N.D)].

To Marx, religion is an enemy of human perfection and the happiness of man on Earth. This is because; men who are hoping the illusory world become hopeless in the real world. Because, believers assume that perfection and happiness is not here in the intelligible world, but situated somewhere beyond the physical world. When he explained alienation in relation to production, he said, workers are alienated from the product of their labor power. He called this production alienation. Similarly, he explained religion as “humans self alienation.” For him, alienation is defined as constraining process on human consciousness, arresting the development and ultimate potential of man. In relation to self alienation, when Marx said, that religion is the sigh of the oppressed people and the heart of heartless world, it is to mean that man, instead of opposing religion makes it his heart and his soul; because, his real heart and soul are alienated or taken away religion,

It is the sigh of the oppressed, because there is no other room that gives him relief from different pains, like absence of justice, fairness, freedom and equality. Thus, sigh in this sense is explained as the illusory happiness, where there is equality, freedom, justice and fairness in the afterlife. In this sense, religion makes man tolerant by promising the illusory compensation of heaven. Therefore Marx said, the purpose of religion is to create illusory fantasies for the poor. Economic reality prevents them from finding true happiness in this world. So, religion tells them that this is fine because, they will find true happiness in the next life. People are in distress and religion provides solace (comfort), just as people who are physically injured receive relief from opiate based drugs. This opiate is used to calm or cool down the jangled nerves of the distressing self alienation. This feeling leads the religious man

to lose his value and to be dehumanized by engaging ascetic life. That is why Marx said, religion is the opium of the mass.

1.6. Why People Surrender to Religion?

1.6.1. The Helplessness and Weakness of Humans and the Creation of God.

Not only humans, but also all living things are helpless creatures. Directly or indirectly, living creatures need the help of others. For instance, dogs need to be helped by their adopters or owners. The secret behind dogs' instinct love and innocence to their owner is emanated from their natural need (the need for food). Plants have natural desire to be assisted by nature; because, they cannot grow unless nature provides them with proper sunlight and rain. Hence, helplessness is not only the nature of human beings, but also the attribute of all living creatures to survive. So, the question of survival or the desire for eternity demands men to conceive of a powerful being, God.

In the realm of all living organisms, the question of life is the question of power. For instance, in taking the prohibited Eden Apple, the first man, Adam was not inspired to eat the fruit, but he was inspired by the question of power. [Genesis 3; 1-24]. The question of power is not only the attribute of humans, but also the attribute of all living creature. This is clearly defined in the great works of Charles Darwin, which is known as survival of the fittest. Thus, organisms to survive need energy or power; otherwise, they will be perished out. So, the reason why humans believe in God is to be bestowed power from Him so as not to be perished both psychologically and physically. Believers have convinced that God is the almighty power. For instance, most believers say; I can walk in the dark; I can pass the hardship; I can be rich; and I can defeat my enemies, because my lord can bestow power upon me. However, the negative impact of such concept is that when men seek power from external entity (God), their inherent power or internal power becomes impotent because of dependency syndrome upon God.

What made people to believe in God? People believe in God not because of the fact that they see God, or God revealed himself to the believers. However, the miraculous attribute of nature ordered believers to surrender to religion. Every existence seems to be goal oriented. Thus, the incredible nature of existence demands every conscious man to think or believe as if there

is a hidden power that governs different forms and existence of phenomena. Let's consider for instance, some forms of existence. The large hump of camel to store more water, large foot to walk in sandy desert, big eyelash to protect eyes from dust and long neck to snatch leaves from the high trees helped it to adapt to desert climate. The long root of xerophytes plants to take more water and their needle like leaves to control excessive evaporation helped them to survive desert climate. Broad leaved of hygrophytes plants to evaporate more water and their short root to take little water helped them to adopt the waterish high land climate Therefore, this miraculous existence of nature seems pre designed or pre oriented and governed by some hidden supernatural power. This made man to surrender to religion for it is beyond the power and knowledge of him (John Hedley Brooke, N.D).

The other reason for man to surrender to religion is that human beings have interest to enjoy happiness by avoiding pain. In the realm of human life, the hidden concept of belief is man's keen interest to enjoy happiness both in earthly and heavenly life by avoiding pain. Therefore, men conceived religion not to satisfy or appease the invisible God, but to satisfy their selfish ends. In relation to this, Einstein (1930) said: "Everything that human race has done and thought is concerned with the satisfaction of deeply felt needs and the assuagement of pain." As Einstein stated, since humans have put themselves apart from the world of animals, they have two keen interests. Those are satisfying both their physical and spiritual needs by avoiding pains. However, in all historical periods nature has made men dependent and powerless to fully satisfy those felt needs and avoid pains. Hence, the feeling of man's powerlessness and the question of seeking happiness demands man to project the almighty or ideal superman (God.) Hence, the conception of religion or the idea of God arose from satisfying the selfish ends of man.

What are those feelings and needs that obliged men to develop religious thought and belief? According to Einstein, (1930), in the life of primitive men, fear was the basic cause for the emergence of religion. Thus, fear of hunger, wild beasts, sickness and death forced men to conceive the idea of God. At a time, since nature was powerful (not humanized and utilized by men), the primitive men and their children's life were snatched by fierce animals; erosion, volcano, thunder storm, and rivers snatched their life. Hence, in the face of nature or in challenging nature, the primitive men were too powerless. Understanding of the causal

connections between phenomena was poorly developed. Therefore, in seeking power, humans created illusory being or a powerful ally to defend against the force of nature. Therefore, this handed from generation to generation and became a foundation for the modern day religion. Following men's belief Priests which set themselves as a mediator between the people and the being, they fear (God) are created and priests became powerful spiritual fathers and determinant of the life of their follower.

In analogous to God, people began to worship and offer sacrifice to the different natural objects. They began to believe on the spiritual power of the natural objects; like the tree, the sun, mountain, river etc... People assumed that by offering scarifies to those natural objects life would be blessed (Ochuko Tonukari N.D). Similar to this culture, natural objects in analogous to God still is practical in my birth place Arsi zone. When I was child, I experienced the practice of offering scarifies to those natural objects by my family.

They used to slaughter black ship; bake bread and hold coffee ceremony in every year at the first day of Ginbot [May] in the shade of a big tree which they called "Adbar." We also celebrate "Borenticha" in any one of the days of Ginbot [May]. Special ritual ceremony is held in "Beret." In Amharic, beret is the place where animals are kept at night. Before family members and neighbors are invited to eat the prepared food, a person is ordered to collect from different items of the food and then put the food near the tree or beret. The reason why they put the food near those natural objects is that it is believed that the spiritual being eats the food. People thought if they don't offer sacrifice, the sprit infest with catastrophic diseases that kill children and cattle. In short, it was believed that both people's wealth and life would be destroyed, if they failed to offer scarifies.

1.6.2. Hell and Heaven

The secret of both Hell and Heaven are metaphysical utterance that no one is sure about its existence. However, according to Christian religion heaven is the transcendent dwelling-place of God. Most of the Christian believe that heaven is the reward place for those holy men, who engaged in right acts and worshiped God. However, hell is a place of punishment for sinners. In relation to this, Matthew 6:19-20 and Matthew 10:28 said the following:

“Do not store up for you treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. (Matthew 6:19-20)

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. ((Matthew 10:28)

As Mathew stated above, people should not bother about earthly life for it is tentative and perishable. It encourages that people have to use their effort in maximizing the transcendent life. The message discourages human actual potential in changing and transforming the earthly life. This is because; those words convey desperation and pessimistic conditions about the real life. Thus, such preaching has the power of making people deny the actual life by expecting the unknown life. Religion creates real life phobia and initiates people to live the ascetic life. Due to this reason, religion seems the anti-philosophy of life.

In the history of religion, humans have two basic reasons to worship God. Those are the fear of hell and the desire for heaven. Most religions claim that God has ordered people to take appropriate action in order to attain heaven after they die. Hence, we can deduct that the two milestones that caused people to surrender to religion are, heaven and hell (Fear and desire). This is because; humans are the most fearful animals. Beyond fear of hell, they also fear many things. For instance, they fear death, old age, disease, poverty, natural catastrophes etc... However, among all fears, fear of death is the most inescapable and frightening event that ends life. Therefore, since man is conscious and has awareness about his death; surrendering himself to religion becomes ideal remedy to escape from such anxiety by joining heaven through avoiding hell.

Austin Cline said that theists believe that death is not the end of life. There are two alternative destinations (places), the place of eternal punishment (Hell) and the place of eternal happiness (heaven). Hence, it is because of these two factors that people believe in God. This means people's strong wishes to avoid pain and to enjoy happiness assured the existence of God. I think, those two projected ideal places, hell and heaven are the milestone behind religion. The

story of those two places is properly coined by Priests to persuade the people. The argument is powerful, and persuasive, because the entire description relies on human weakness and knowledge gap.

1.6.3. Human Desire for Guidance and Love

According to Einstein (1930), men have Psychological desire to be helped, guided, and loved and to be supported by some powerful being. This demands men to engage in the social or moral conception of God. Thus, believers thought that such ideal conception of God is the God of providence, who protects, disposes, rewards and punishes people. According to their view, God loves and cherishes the life of human race. So that God is the comforter during any sorrow condition or hard times. He preserves the souls of the dead. Thus, because of those several reasons, God is the indirect reflection of human weakness.

Therefore as Einstein stated, the idea of God is emanated from human weakness. This is because, man is helpless in the face of threats; his desire to live eternal life, the need to be protected and his keen interest to escape from pain demands him to conceive of the almighty and powerful God (heavenly Father), one who can get rid of all humans problems and pain. Due to this reason, certain social and natural limitations and the mortality of men gave birth to the projection of ideal God in humans mind. Therefore, God is the ideal remedy or solution for human metaphysical problems that cannot be solved by man's capacity.

In describing the authorized influence of religion upon man and in analyzing the human weakness in relation to authority, Einstein (N.D) said, "Blind respect for authority, is the greatest enemy of truth." Therefore, according to him, man is the conscious and the mere authorized animal. Naturally, he has freedom and license to interpret and influence this world. Thus, there is no authorized being greater than him. For this reason, the current human perfection and the highest peak of civilization is one witness for human's authority over nature. Hence, we should be questioned and no authority should be blindly obeyed and men should not strive to find external illusory authority. This is because; there is no ruler out there wiser than his better judgment. Our better judgment is not out there to rule us or it has no outer form.

All religions reflect that human lives are controlled by external powers. Engels put it this way; “All religion is nothing, but it is the fantastic reflection in men’s minds of those external forces which control their daily life, a reflection which the terrestrial forces assume the form of super natural forces” (Frederick Engels, 1877). By doing so, he compared the primitive religion and the modern religion as follows: in the primitive society, humans were controlled by the power and different forces of nature. This was because; their influence upon nature was low and inconsiderable. People live under the mercy of nature. So here, nature was the invisible authority of men. However, in the modern world, it is the force of the social system that exercises and controls this external dominance. Thus, as Engels stated, religion is an external force imposed upon men by suppressing their freedom. It also served as the ideological weapon of the dominating class

1.6.4. Natural Disaster as the Cause of Human Surrender to Religion

According to Jeanet Sinding Bentzen (N.D), the research conducted across 800 regions of the World, people who live in the regions that are more frequently attacked by natural disaster are more religious than those who live in the regions that are less prone to natural disaster. This is because; religious people could develop the ability to cope up and tolerate with adverse life events by seeking comfort in their religion or searching for a reason for the event. For instance, people consider disaster as the deliberate act of God as a punishment to man. So that religious people do not have interest to move out of disaster areas. Thus, the research has found out that the generation who descends from natural disaster areas is more religious than their counterparts with people from calmer areas.

1.7. Other Pressures that forced People to Religious Belief

i. Social pressure (Indoctrination)

The bench mark for individuals to adopt religion is the inheritance of identity from their parents and local culture. Our religion is primarily the result of where we are raised. People are obliged to embrace a religion in their early child hood, before they acquire the skill of critical thinking. In their early age children are preached by their family, peer group, community, priests and even by politicians. Therefore, the room to develop their own reason

and choice, to realize their own freedom of belief is very narrow. In the early childhood, you don't have any right to choose which type of religion you ought to worship. Thus, it is the social being that determines the type of religion to be worshiped. Therefore, the religious incidence in the area where you live is the deterring factor for you. This is to mean that if the community and family from which you are born a Christian forced you to pick Christian as your religion. Similarly, if you are from Muslim family, you are required to be Muslim. Thus, the proper religion for any person is roughly the religion of his family. If he/she debates from family religion, he/she would be challenged and stigmatized. So, religion is not the choice or the freedom of individual, rather it is imposition by the community. Therefore, we can say that religion is the ideology of a group which is imposed upon individual by means of influence. This is because, if people become atheist or don't believe in God, they will be outcasted and even considered as evil, immoral and a threat to social stability. Therefore, the social being is the big prison by determining individual's freedom of thought (Waxen Crabtree, 2013).

ii. Fear of Death

In the realm of human life, the very horrible and terrifying condition is the alienation of soul from the body (death). Whatever human development is reached and no matter whether the highest peak of civilization is attained, death is inevitable. Science can't be able to give complete answer for the following questions and those questions remained metaphysical and not answerable in the history of mankind. Those questions are: what would happen after we die? Is it to go to hell or to heaven? Is death ends the survival of the soul? Is the purpose of life is simply to live and then to decompose or to be changed in to different entity? Who created this miraculous Universe? Thus, such and other metaphysical questions order man to believe in God. Since humans are unable to answer those difficult questions, they need some powerful entity or super human for the answers. Under such conditions, religion becomes life insurance and the best remedy to escape from fear of death in the presumption that there will be life after death. In such circumstances religion becomes the relief for the people (Austin Cline, N.D). Therefore, the basic reason behind many religious beliefs is the fear of death which is necessarily tied to the human body. This is because; it is the body that dies, corruptible, recipient of disease and subject to decay. The physical corpse rots away, where

as the soul according to many belief systems is set free and lives forever. Moreover, the body is full of pain and misery. So, this makes man to be a slave of religion.

According to Becker Ernest (1973), death and the fear of it hunts humans more than any animals. So, it is the basics of human activity in the course of finding solutions to avoid the problem. Men had tried different mechanisms to avoid the fatality of death. First, by discovering different medicines through the innovation of science and technology that promotes safe life and reduce death rate. Second, by denying the idea of death as a final destiny for man through engaging in spiritual or religious activities. Thus, the secret belief in religion is the existence of death. Men conceived religion to deny death, because religion preaches that death is not the final destiny to man. Man has a special place to enjoy life after death, which many religions call it eternal life.

Our social interaction with each other completes our existence and gives meaning for our life. However, death separates us from everything that gives our life meaning and value. It is the loss of everything that we possess. Among others, the loss of a loved one to death is the most emotionally pain full experience of man. For instance, to loss one's mother, father, children, wife and husband is the most horrific event in the life of men. Fear is one of the most commonly expressed responses to death. Therefore, fear of the body's alienation and fear of the unknown make man to depend on religion (God). Therefore, as long as fear of death exists, man can't completely separate from religion. This is because, religion assures to man his eternal existence in the life after death. So, this illusory response of religion to men reduces his fear and the emotional pain. Thus, human limitations or weakness created favorable ground for the existence of religion in the realm of social being. (Hinton 1967)

Aristotle (1941) said, "Plainly the things we fear are terrible things and this terrible things referred to death." As Aristotle pointed it out, the conception of religion goes hand in hand with human's keen interest to overcome the problem of death. Hence, religion is an everlasting effort of man to overcome the fear of death through the opposing tactics of belief and control through prayers and offering sacrifice.

So long as religion emanates from fear, this fear makes believers to be ignorant and cruel. This is because; fear is the parent of cruelty. In the realm of religion, fear is partly the terror of the

unknown and the wish to feel that we have a kind of powerful ideal father who stands against all our troubles and disputes. In his diagnosis of religion, Russell described it as follows: The first is that religious belief is a symptom of fear which people understand that as human lives are precarious and vulnerable. Thus, the conception of religion or God as a powerful deity, gives comfort and an illusion of safety. The second is that fear as a symptom of religion with its particular doctrine, whose essence is sanction and punishment both in the life and after life has caused believers to be ignorant and unreasonable because of fear of uncertainty (Bertrand Russell, N.D)

Death is inescapable fact that can conquer and snatch our lives. Across the globe, in every second, someone dies somewhere. It is an inevitable fact for all living creatures, however no one knows the exact day when he dies. In the philosophy of life, one cannot be informed about his death, but he can be informed about his birth date. According to Hebrews 9:27, "It is appointed for man once to die, and after this comes judgment". Hence, in the course of an everlasting struggle with death, men are forced to surrender to religion and this makes religion to be the issue of man.

iii. Hope (Wishful thinking)

According to Sigmund Freud (2008), God is nothing, but the ideal projection of men's mind in the course of fulfilling their wishes. Thus, the idea of God came in human mind from men's passion to fulfill their interests. Humans have different wishes or desires. For instance, the desire to live eternal life and the desire to escape from all pains motivated people to believe in God. In general, the purpose of God for man is to fulfill the different psychological and physical needs. Some of those needs might be; the desire to live safe life; the desire to be rich; the desire to be healthy and the desire to be protected from different natural disasters such as drought, earthquake, wild beasts and different diseases. Freud developed the idea that God is illusion and the projection of the unconscious mind. For him, religion is wish-fulfillment. Freud adds the explanation that the adoption of religion is a reversion to childish patterns of thought in response to feelings of helplessness and guilt. We feel a need for security and forgiveness, and so invent a source of security and forgiveness. Religion is thus seen as a childish delusion and atheism as a grown-up realism (Alister McGrath, 1992)

According to Shaun Nichols (2004), the origin of religion is emanated from our deepest wishes or desire to escape from death, the desire for justice, the desire for eternal life and the desire for the image of father figure. This demands man to surrender to religion. Therefore, man tries to bank a lot of ideas about religion to make his helplessness tolerable. Thus, according to him, religion meets believers wishes and satisfies their desires in different ways.

CHAPTE TWO: THE IMPACT OF RELIGION AND THE QUESTION OF GOD’S EXISTENCE

2.1. What is Religion to Humans? Is it burden or crutch?

The search for power in compensation to human’s weakness or limitation forced men to create imaginative God. The organized religion and forming religious association is a crutch for the weak minded people those who need physical strength and crutch. It is an imaginary support in life. In relation to this, Ted Turner said, “Christianity is a religion for losers.” It is true that many people stretch their hand towards their God and pray at the time of difficulty. By doing this, believers try to get relief and convince their mind that God is with them and could have the power to perish every evil they face (Lars Wilhelmsson N.D).

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) argued that the truth of religion could not be denied, because it provides comfort and consolation for many people. Through religion, people persuade their mind that pain or failure in the physical world reveals success and happiness in the second world. Believers give the name God to some abstract entity which they have mentally created for themselves. Thus, to Freud, the ground or the motivation behind the creation of such imaginary being is because of two reasons. The first reason is that people of faith create a God because; they have strong wishes and hopes within them that act as comfort against the harshness of life. Second, the idea of God comes from the need for an idyllic father figure in exchange or in compensation to the Earthy imperfect, fallible and mortal fathers. To Freud, beliefs are illusions in the fulfillments of the strong and the most urgent wishes of mankind. God is a psychological projection that served to shield humans from different social and natural challenges. In searching for help or crutch, the ideal man Jesus himself said the following at the time of His death. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are

you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?" (Psalm 22: 1) This implies that leave alone humans, Jesus Himself was upon a call for help.

2.2. Religion as the Ascetic ideal, self denial

Ascetic life or self denial is a special remedy to overcome anxieties about death by ignoring the welfare of the body. Practitioners allow their body to sufferer as a path of freeing the spirit from the flesh. So, monastic life is the desire to be free from death and join eternal life, because, ascetic life practitioners concluded that body is corruptible and perishable. Thus, ascetic life is the struggle to alienate spirit from the body or to purify human soul from the body which is corpse, decay and rot. Hence, ascetic life is a means of escaping, from death. The act of self sacrifice or self denial is the subversion (over throw) of deaths power. This turns victory by death in to victory over death (Michael Lacewing (N.D).

For Nietzsche, One of the drawbacks of religion is that it commands the believers to sacrifice or to surrender their freedom, pride, and the will to power, rationality, self reliance and self confidence. So, ascetic life is the act of self-sacrifice or the act of self-denial. In relation to ideology, he said, religion is the morality of the slaves who live by hoping for justice and equality in the life after death. Some religion preaches that man opposes God by making sin on earth. So, goodness is imported from transcendent world. In the actual world, human bodies and their instinctual desires are considered as sinful and something to feel guilt about. Hence, religion needs a sacrifice of our physical desires and wills to God, because we are sinful and guilty in our nature (Michael Lacewing, (N.D))

According to Christian philosophy, Jesus Christ is the human ideal. According to Christian mythology, He died on the cross not for his own sins, but for the sins of people. It is in the memory and name of this symbol that believers are committed to sacrifice them. It is also practical that people are crucifying and dying on the cross even today in some parts of the world. For instance, in Philippines, Many Christians nailed to cross on Good Friday for re-enactment of Jesus' death in every year (Paula I. Nielson (2010).

Figure 1: the practice of ascetic life in the Philippines



Source: Rob Cooper (2012). “Christians NAILED to crosses in gruesome Good Friday re-enactment of Jesus’ death in the Philippines” [<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2126024/Christians-NAILED-crosses-gruesome-Good-Friday-enactment-Jesus-death-Philippines.html>]

Figure 2: Philippines Christians nailed to the cross



Source: Rob Cooper (2012). “Christians NAILED to crosses in gruesome Good Friday re-enactment of Jesus’ death in the Philippines” [<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2126024/Christians-NAILED-crosses-gruesome-Good-Friday-enactment-Jesus-death-Philippines.html>]

Ascetic life rejects bodily desires and experience and praise a life of the spirit. Therefore, it complicates men's wills and desires. This is because, there is what we naturally want, but it opposed to these natural desires by transcending it somewhere. Hence, the ascetic ideals forces people to become better and developed spiritually. Therefore, it transforms the energy of human's actual desire or potential in to spiritual desires and this make people to develop constant sense of guilt and failures which ultimately impedes them from actualizing their potential (Michael Lacewing, (N.D))

Such ascetic ideals are very common in Orthodox Christianity. The ascetic or monastic life which is written on 1John 2: 15-17 clearly reflects the ascetic ideals of Nietzsche. The scripture depicts the following powerful words in order to persuade believers to join the ascetic life. Let me quote the original words written in Geez. “ዓለሙኒ ሃላፊ ንብረቱን ሀላፊ ወፍትወቱኒ ሀላፊ እስመ ኩሉ ሀላፊ ውዕቱ” The equivalent Amharic meaning to the Geez concept is translated as follows: ዓለምም ጥበብም እውቀትም ንብረትም ፍትወተ ስጋም /የግብረ ስጋ ግንኙነትም/ ሁሉም በዚህ አለም ያለው ሀላፊና ጠፊ ስለሆነ ስለዚህ ከንቱ አለም አትጨነቅ ዘላለማዊ ስለሆነው አለም ሳይፈጠር ስለተዘጋጀው ሰማያዊ መንግስት አንጅ

The above described concept both in Geez and Amharic is the best example of the ascetic ideals of the Orthodox Church. I tried to paraphrase it as follows: Everything here in the actual world; happiness, wealth, knowledge and sexual excitement which people experience in this world are all tentative and perishable. Hence, humans should not be bothered about this pseudo, fragile and fallible world; rather they should strive to live transcendental and eternal life by denying the actual world. However, when we analyze those connotations critically, they contravene human nature and forces men to dehumanize themselves. It calls upon human being to act against his value and purpose. Because, the purpose of man is not to deny reality, but to interpret, change and transform it into a better world to live in. So, religion makes this super animal, man to become passive, disappointed and impotent in this world by promising an illusory life to be experienced somewhere in the unknown world.

Thus, because of ascetic ideals, humans snatched their freedom and their will to power. When we see this self denial in the realm of reality, it is against the value of man (against productive thinking and productive work). Such ascetic ideals ultimately dehumanize man and breeds poverty and enslavement. As Austin Cline said, religion is one of the most disturbing and distracting aspect behind human freedom and responsibility. When people

surrender and make themselves depend upon religion, they transfer the responsibility they have to face care of themselves to God. Thus, because of lack of exercising freedom and discharging responsibility, many people become impotent and impaired from actualizing their own capacity. Some religion make believers avoid taking personal responsibility for what is going on. For instance, they don't have to be responsible for insuring that justice is done, because God will provide that. They don't have to be responsible for solving environmental problem because God will do that. They don't have to be responsible to develop strong moral rules because morality is from God. By doing so, believers deny their own freedom, because freedom means responsibility and responsibility means that if we fail, no one will rescue us. Therefore, religion is the impediment of human power. It makes people to surrender their power to God. So, one of the demerit of religion is that it alienates man from his power by persuading that freedom and power is emanating from God.

According to Marx, religious alienation is separation of man from his nature and it is an act of opposing humanization. To this effect, he Said, "Man projects his own perfection in to the supernatural and calls the sum of these qualities 'God'. This process actually, alienates man from himself." Hence, in search of perfect being which is illusory being, humans lost their power, and perfection in the actual life. When they surrender to religion, they entirely over throw their power and responsibility to God, because they consider Him as almighty. This led people to be weak by transcending their dignity and power. (Karl Max, N.D)

2.3. Religion and Human Wickedness

Ever since its appearance, religion has tried to dehumanize man by developing fear, frustration, anxiety and wickedness in believers mind. This is because; the essence of religion is fear. So that it is an enemy of human potential that impedes men from self actualization. It forces people to be alienated from the real world.

According to Bible, God reveals himself in different forms to punish and make people frightened and surrender to religion. He reveals himself in the form of wind, storm, earthquake, fire and snow. When people are preached about the revelation of God through those practical and horrible natural catastrophes which are beyond the control of man, they

can prepare themselves to be surrender to religion and conceive of God as super natural agent. Especially, people who are less developed and living under the mercy of nature have no way to escape from believing in God. The superiority of natural incidence impedes them from being atheist. To believers, atheists are the basic enemy of humans and the causative agents of all natural catastrophes that occur because of the denial of God. Believers think that the possibility of all natural catastrophes on earth is because of the presence of those atheists (sinners). God deliberately does this, because he hates the atheists and he makes it so to make them know and frightened the power of God. [Isaiah; 30:27- 30]

Moreover, because of fear of God and ignorance of the people, outstanding scholars and prominent scientists who struggled for freedom and for the will to power were sacrificed and burnt at stake since classical time to the present. This is the sorrow and the memorable guilt of religion in history. For instance, in 399 BC Socrates stood before a jury of 500 of his fellow Athenians accused of refusing to recognize the gods recognized by the state and of corrupting the youth. He was taken to the near-by jail where his death sentence would be carried out. Based on the Athenian law prescribed, Socrates was ordered to drink a cup of poison hemlock and died (The Suicide of Socrates, 399 BC)

Giordano Bruno, who was an Italian philosopher, mathematician, poet and astrologer was accused by the then existing Italian ruler and the Catholic Church. The reason for his accusation was that; he proposed that the stars were the distance suns surrounded by their exoplanets. He said, the universe is infinite and there is no celestial body at its center. He also denied the core catholic doctrine [trinity, divinity of Christ and the virginity of Mary] Thus, his inquisition found him guilty and in 1600; he was burned at stake in Rome (Lawrence MacLachlan, N.D). However, after his death, he became a milestone for the science of astronomy and his venture was considered as a land mark in the history of free thought and the future of the emerging science. Thus, from those painful historical crimes of human belief, we can deduct that religion is a blind faith that imposes sanction upon human perfection

In relation to the influence of religion upon man I have practical experience when I worked as an education expert in a certain region here in Ethiopia. To begin with, there was one farmer who resides in some Kebele of north Shoa administrative zone. The victim was loosely

Christian follower. He worked all time and never celebrated religious holidays and he did not go to the church. Once upon a time, a high storms and snow destroyed the surroundings crops. Then a group of people kicked him and made him leave the village. This was because; it was believed that he was responsible for the natural calamity occurred. Finally, he ordered to migrate to other areas. People thought that the cause behind the natural catastrophe was the sin he omitted by working in Christian holidays. Thus, the residence concludes that the person was accountable for the catastrophe. Due to this reason, religion seems blind faith that penalizes people to live in whim rather than in reason. It Penalizes people to sit idle rather than working. Thus, in the above case, religion becomes the source of ignorance and an enemy of tolerance by rejecting individual difference and the reality of diversity in life. The basic human nature that emanates from human right, the right to work and the right to exercise one's freedom is violated by religion.

2.4. Human Sacrifice

In ancient times, human sacrifice was allowed in different parts of the world. The purpose of the sacrifice was to make men free from death. It is the struggle against death. Usually the ceremony was conducted by priests and the priest who conducted the ceremony proclaimed mastery over death to those who witnessed the sacrifice. Power over death also means power over life. The sacrifice of the other lessens the death of fear of the ego, and it is believed that through the death of others, one can be from the penalty of dyeing (Otto Rank, 1936)

2.4.1. Ancient Middle East: Hebrew Bible

Human sacrifices were common in the ancient life of the Middle East. For instance, according to Bible, (2 kings 3.27) the king of Moab gave his first born son as a sacrifice to God and the son was forced to be burnt with fire as offering sacrifice. In Genesis 22: 1-16, God asks and tests Abraham by asking him to present his son, Isaac as a sacrifice on Mount Mariah. Abraham agrees to this command without arguing. The story ends with an angel stopping Abraham by providing a ram instead. The climax of the story of commanding Abraham not to sacrifice Isaac was the whole point to put an end to child sacrifice. Hence, in the course of historical evolution of scarifies; the binding of Isaac symbolizes the prohibition to worship God by offering human sacrifices. Thus, the religious rituals that started with human sacrifice

was replaced by that of ram and latter the ram sacrifice itself was replaced by the sacrifices of vine and bread which is still practical in some of Christian religions in our days is certain historical stage in the evolution of sacrifice.

Figure 3: human sacrifice



Source: Genesis 22:1-18 [<http://www.sunypress.edu/pdf/61866.pdf>]

The picture portrays that before the tragedy of Isaac, there was practical experiences of child sacrifice in the ancient religious culture of Hebrew (Judges 11:30-40). This was how religion was powerful in producing fear and phobia in the ancient life of human society through ordering people to sacrifice their fellowmen in appeasement to God.

The other horror and tragedy is that, in the book of judges, (Judges 11:30-40) Jephthah made a vow to God, for the war waged between Ammonites and him saying that: If God gives the Ammonites into his hands he will offer as a sacrifice, whatever comes out of the door of his house in order to meet him when he returns in triumph from the ammonites will be the Lord's and he will sacrifice it as a burnt offering. When he returned home, after he defeated the ammonites, he saw his daughter coming out of his door. Thus, based on his promise, or vow to God, he sacrifices his daughter and burnt her as offering sacrifice. Therefore, from those numerous horror and tragedies we can say that because of religion, people sacrificed their fellow men.

2.4.2. Carthaginians Child Sacrifice

According to Lawrence E. Stager, (1984) there was a special agreement among scholars that Carthaginian children were sacrificed by their parents in appeasement to God. The ceremony was conducted by the persons who make a vow to kill the next child if the gods would grant them a favor. They did this if their shipment of goods were to arrive safely in foreign port and if they are able to defeat their enemies in the battle field. In performing the vow they placed their children alive and roasted to death in the arms of heated bronze statue. The child was alive and conscious when he was burned.

Figure 4: child roasting place



A tophet outside Carthage, a special part of a cemetery dedicated to the burial of infants, according to Josephine Quinn. Photograph: Josephine Quinn.

Source: Oxford University Press (2015), “News and events Carthaginians Child sacrifice”.
[<http://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2014-01-23-ancient-carthaginians-really-did-sacrifice-their-children>]

The figure depicts that in the city of Carthage, there was a bronze image of Cronus extending its hands, palms up and sloping toward the ground, so that each of the children when placed there on rolled down and fell into a sort of gaping pit filled with fire. They believed that the sacrifice of child was best loved.

Moreover, in relation to human sacrifice, we can see a mine of evil teachings both in Quran and Bible, which allow people to slaughter other people. For instance, this is clearly described in Quran as follows:

: "It is not for any prophet to have captives until he hath made slaughter in the land. Ye desire the lure of this world and Allah desireth (for you) the Hereafter, and Allah is Mighty, Wise." Quran-8:67

From the words of Quran above, one can understand that Prophet Mohamed was insisting his disciples to kill all the prisoners. He warned that they should not keep any surrendered prisoners alive until He (Prophet) occupied the entire Arabia. Thus, the scripture shows Allah's cruelty towards non-Muslims. It is not surprising to see such inhuman culture of belief in the oldest day. Even today, in some parts of the world people are slaughtering people as a sacrifice for God (Miranda Green, 1998). Such inhuman practices seem descended from the ancient man to the modern man. This is just one of the many verses found in the Quran which encourages Islamic war. This widely known verse orders Muslims to fight non-Muslims simply because they do not believe in the same God that Muslims do:

Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Messenger have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth, out of those who have been given the Book, until they pay the tax in acknowledgment of superiority and they are in a state of subjection. (Qur'an 9:29)

2.4.3. Child vows to God

I have practical experience of child vow to God which was practiced in my locality. However, the story does not have any relation with human sacrifice. The story follows: Around 1980's in my birth place, Arsi zone, Aseko province there was one woman who was unable to bear child for a long time. She vowed many things to God to bear children. However, she couldn't be able to get children. Finally, she vowed to God to give her first child as offer if God responds her question. Later on, as a matter of chance, she gave birth and got many children. Thus, based on her promise to God she gave her first son to Debrelibanos monastery. Still he is serving the monastery as monk there. Hence, it is not incredible to see that people sacrifice their children to appease God since ancient time. This is because, people persuaded themselves that there is nothing more than God that has great power for them. That is why they sacrifice their only and lovely children to appease Him.

What was the reason for the practice of child sacrifices in ancient time? This was because; there was an assumption that children's virginity and innocence made them free of any earthly sin. Thus, offering one's beloved to God was considered a special gift to God. People speculate that all creatures are the gift of Him. Hence, to share to God about what one has was assumed as offering reward to the creator of everything or in the modern sense it is like to pay tax to the government from what one has produced. This concept was practical and embedded in the ancient history of Judaism and Christianity and Islam (Peter T. Leeson, 2014)

2.5. The Negative Impact of Religion

Religion has the power of shrinking one's Psychological and physical desire. This is because, when you become a fundamentalist or extremist, because of your strong belief or commitment to the illusory God, you begin to develop intensive dislike to the actual life. Moreover, you deny not only yourself, but also the actual world. Thus, high dedication to God makes you condemn and discourage your entire psychological and physical needs. For instance, you may impose sanction upon your physical needs by engaging in fasting (Stay for long hours without food) and considering sex as the cause of sin etc... By doing so, religion contradicts human nature and has the power of making people devalue their earthly life in favor of the illusory life. Hence, the negative side of religion is that in seeking or in hoping illusory life, it produces self denial and human impotency (Lacewing, Michael, N.D).

Now, the question is if religion has adverse impacts upon human self-realization, why it remains being one of the dominant factors in the realm of social life? According to Michael Allen and James B. Allen, (N.D) religion has strong power and force throughout men's history. It had great influence on everything from government to the social order and family relationships. For instance, it is the source of unity, security and social order. However, since the concept of unity and security is under the shade of a particular believer or a particular groups and followers, it can evade tolerance and secularism and encourages people to be extremists. It becomes the motive force to develop intolerable personality. We can learn from the history of the crusade and the jihad war that destroyed the life of many innocents. Above all, many of the wars which declared at local and national level are religious oriented.

The source of religion is not reason, rather fear and anxiety. That is why many scholars said religion depletes human potency and impedes humans from actualizing both the natural and human world. Fear exerts frustration and desperation, but reason exerts energy and enthusiasm which result in human perfection by challenging and interpreting nature. Hence, throughout human history, religion snatches human freedom and capacity by inducing fear and frustration. To make the above concept more reliable, let me quote from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church scripture, “ራዕይ ማርያም” which instills fear and frustration in the believers mind. It is a type of warning for those people who work on any one of Christian holydays. It is explained like this: በክርስቲያን በአላት ቀን በማጭድ ያጨደ በአላት ማጭድ ይታጨዳል በዚህ ቀን ያረሰ በአላት ማረሻ ይታረሳል (ራዕይ ማርያም 1961 ዓ.ም.)

The equivalent English version: one who harvests with sickle on the Christian holiday will be cut with a hot sickle. One who ploughs land will be plowed with a hot plow. We can see that “ራዕይ ማርያም” is one of the best devices to spread fear that devastates people’s productive thinking and productive capacity. Above all, such religious principle is against human activity or work which is the ultimate value and the attribute of human beings.

When we come to catholic and protestant religion, as Desmond.Tutu said, Europeans used Bible as the best means to transform African’s attention from their actual land to the Bible (from the worlds of legible to the worlds of illegible). Through preaching Christianity which was the then powerful tool of the colonizers, most of African nations failed under the suzerainty of Europeans. In this case, Christian religion helped the Europeans in creating sphere of influence in Africa by victimizing Africans. In relation to this, Tutu said:

When the missionaries came to Africa, they had the Bible and we, the native had the land. They said, let’s pray, and we dutifully shut our eyes. When we opened our eyes, they now had the land and we had the Bible. (Desmond Tutu (N.D))

Therefore, Christian religion highly served colonizers through dehumanizing Africans. Many of the words in which priests preach their followers have the nature of demonizing or demotivate the real life and put an everlasting inspiration and hope of the transcendental life in the heart of their followers. For instance, let me quote some words from the scripture in Geez from the experience of Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

“ሞቶሙስ ለዓድቃን ህይወቶሙ ውዕቱ” [Psalm 115:15] The equivalent Amharic meaning of the above scripture is; የዓድቃን ህይወታቸው ሞታቸው ነው። ምክንያቱም ይህች ዓለም ኃጢአት የሞላባት ነችና በዓለም መኖር የኃጢአት ሞት፣ ክፉ ሞት ስለሆነ ትክክለኛው ህይወት ከሞት በኋላ ያለው ዘላለማዊው ህይወት ነው የሚለውን ትርጉም ይሰጠናል።

When we paraphrase the Amharic scripture to English, it is translated as follows: The true life of the holy man is not here on the Earth which is sinful, fake and pseudo world, but the real life of a holy man is reserved for the second world or in the ineligible world. Thus, for Saint Men, to live on this world is to live with sin, but to die is to join eternal and happy life. Therefore, from the above scripture, one can grasp how religion is tough and powerful to persuade people so as to make them deny the real world that they know and submit themselves to the world they do not know.

As it has been mentioned by John Shelby Spong, the basic reason why people worship God is to escape from different natural catastrophes and to live safe life. To support the above argument let me quote from Ethiopian orthodox book ‘የዘወትር ፀሎት ሰኔ ጉልጉታ’ ይህችን መፅሐፍ ይዞ የሚፀልይ የጭሰማ ኃይል አይጋርደውም አጋንንት አይቀርቡትም በሌሊትም በቀንም የሚያስደነግጠው ነገር አይኖርም።

በእጅህ መውጋት የሚመሰሉ

በእንቅፋት የሚመሰሉ

በጥርስ በሽታ የሚመሰሉ

በቃር የሚመሰሉ

አፍን በመምረር የሚመሰሉ

በአይን ህመም የሚመሰሉ

በዕሣት ማቃጠል የሚመሰሉ

በጡብ የሚመሰሉ

በጉርፍ የሚመሰሉ

በአውሬ መንከስ የሚመሰሉ ወዘተ

ሁሉም ይህችን መፅሐፍ በገፁህ የያዘና የዘወትር ፀሎት የደረጉ ሁሉ ከላይ የተገለፀው ርኩሳን መናፍስት እንደማይቀርበት በዚህ መፅሐፍ በዘወትር ፀሎት “ሰኔ ጉልጉታ” በገፅ 20 ላይ ተመልክቷል።

This means all believers, who are in a position to pray the “sene golgota” [scripture] everyday, can live secure life. The prayers are free from those different evil spirits which resembled or animated with tooth ache, stomach ache, flood, fire accident and an attack from some fires animals do not approach the prayers. Hence, this impedes men from realizing their effort in defending nature. This is because, such preaching makes men to develop dependency syndrome on God rather than solving the immediate problem they face.

Hence, from the above explanation, we can conclude that people surrender themselves to religion in the assumption that they can live secure life. Therefore, in most cases, the question of survival and secure life necessitates people to believe in God. Religion is a system of belief that weakens men’s defensive power against the forces of nature. This is because, believers think that God substitute their power and can crush all evils. Thus, religion bears for men nothing but submissiveness and impotency.

2.6. Advantages and Disadvantages of Religion

2.6.1. Advantages

Metaphorically, the advantage of religion is that it has the power of providing patience and tolerance during any hard times. It is a special shield in which people hide themselves in it. This is because; it provides illusory answers for the claims of the victims. So that it helps men to continue to live through hoping the second life (Michael Lacewing, N.D)

Some of the advantage and the contribution of religion are as follows:

i. Religion Helps People as a Psychological Crutch.

Historically, man is helpless and hence he needs support during hard times. Thus, during difficult times, like when he challenged both by natural and social catastrophes, religion serves him as a crutch. He worships and stretches his hands to the invisible almighty. Then he begins to conceive the idea that the powerful God can avoid his pain. He persuades himself that he is not alone, but with his God. Because of this reason, man can escape from those

unpleasant conditions by making God his true ally, the only savior and the true guardian.
[Psalm 7: 1-2]

ii. When Men Suffer from Chronic Diseases

When men suffer from different incurable diseases, the only hope could be left with remedy is the benevolence of God. Thus, to preserve his hope, the hapless man creates defender and the hopeful illusory superman that can crush and gives remedy for his problem. This is clearly shown in the Psalm of David as follows:

¹ *LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath.*

² *Have mercy on me, LORD, for I am faint; heal me, LORD, for my bones are in agony.*

³ *My soul is in deep anguish. How long, LORD, how long?*

⁴ *Turn, LORD, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love.*

⁵ *Among the dead no one proclaims your name. Who praises you from the grave?*

⁶ *I am worn out from my groaning. All night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears.*

⁷ *My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they fail because of all my foes.*

⁸ *Away from me, all you who do evil, for the LORD has heard my weeping.*

⁹ *The LORD has heard my cry for mercy; the LORD accepts my prayer. [Psalm 6: 1-9]*

Thus, from the words of Bible, we can understand that religion is a sigh and consolation during hard times, when a person becomes desperate and hopeless because of incurable diseases.

iii. Religion as the Source of Good governance

Human experience has witnessed that rulers cannot be able to govern their subject merely by the use of force. However, the combination of rule by force and rule through religious authority or moral sanction has been one of the most efficient means of assuring the obedience population and good governance (Berkley Center for Religion). God is the invisible ruler with the will of promoting tolerance and social harmony. The virtue of being moral because of

religion reduces the burden of human laws. Men can be responsible and accountable for their moral commitment than to obey social and political laws; because they believe that their actions whether evil or good, are visible to the invisible God. Believers think that God is the just and strongest of all human judges of the earth. Therefore, religious leaders preach people to obey God's law by performing actions. Thus, because of their belief in the judgment of God, people can live peaceful social life, which is free of violence and crime. In this sense, religion contributes more to the development of tolerance and social harmony. In promoting peace and social harmony the scripture says, "For if you forgive men their trespasses. Your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But, if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." [Matthew 6: 14-15]

However, such politeness and peace do not arise from human reason or rationality, rather it emanates from the fear of God. Thus, since there could be no absolute believers, there are possibilities for people to break the rules when in some cases they hesitate in their religion and in the existence of God. Thus, obeying laws because of fear of God lacks rationality for its source is not freedom, but fear and external authority.

Iv. Fair Resource Distribution

Normally, most religious scriptures preach that people have to share what they have for those who do not have. Based on this religious and moral principle, many disabled persons are living on the donation of religious men and churches. Thus, religion played the lion's share in assisting those helpless and hopeless persons like those who are impaired both mentally and physically. Hence, it can be said that the church and Mosque are important charity institutions and the best ally of the government in reducing social burdens. However, the type of assistance is disorganized and uneven that depends on the interest of individuals. This has an adverse effect and produces a number of dependent and morally corrupted persons or converts many people from productive to non-productive activities (multiplication of beggars). Hence, it needs structural adjustment and organization; otherwise, it keeps on being the source of producing dependent and non productive people.

V. Bible's Contribution for the Development of Human Rights and Democracy

The teachings of Bible had contributed more for the development of human rights, good governance, tolerance and democracy. It can be cited as one of the moral foundation for the emergence of moral society across many nations. For instance, Bible teaches that God does not discriminate humans and show favoritism. In relation to this, it states the following golden words of human right.

“Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism” (Acts 10: 34)

“Every person is a unique creation of His, and He loves each one.” (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9).

“Rich and poor have this in common: / The LORD is the Maker of them all.” (Proverbs 22:2).

Thus, the general idea is that Christians should not discriminate based on race, color, gender, economy, cultural background, or social standing. This is clearly also explained in the following scriptures.

“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28.)

“Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.” (Colossians 3:11)

Bible gives strict warnings against taking advantage of the poor and oppression. James 2: 1-4 describes the following:

My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. 3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” 4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? (James 2:1-4)

James 2: 1-4 explains that people are born free and equal this is also justified by Jesus as people should not be discriminated and stigmatized based on their identity and economic status. In this case, such words are the spring board in assuring human freedom, equality and justice. The above words of Bible have a significance role in assuring the golden words of Thomas Jefferson which signifies that men are equal and born free. (Mr. Gary S. Dykes, (2008). The other important word of the Bible which becomes the corner stone behind the development of tolerance and humanity is disclosed here:

But, love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. (Luke 6:35-36)

Throughout history, most religious men have exercised their responsibility in the course of assisting humans. Due to this reason, the majority of hospitals and orphanages and most of the charity organizations in our world were founded by concerned religious men. Moreover, many of the great humanitarian reforms of history, including abolition of slavery and the breaking down of colonialism were inspired by Christian men and women those who strive for justice and who have keen interest to establish cooperation against inhumanity to man. (Elizabeth Ferris, N.D)

2.6.2. Disadvantages

In terms of advantage, religion can give meaning for pain and sufferings and makes people to continue to live hoping that the perverted reward of earthly suffering will be compensated in the life after death. People can enjoy illusory happiness by substituting the real world by the illusory world. However, this illusory happiness degenerates humanity and makes people to hate their life, mutilate their body, and undermine their strength and the will to power. It hinders the development of great men and powerful people. This is because, the strong and great men have been neglected or they sometimes can be considered as evil.

In compensation to this miserable world, believers transcend their will to power to the second world. The denial of the will to power and body life in favor of spiritual life for the transcendent world is a way in which their illusory will and lives succeed in maintaining

themselves. Ascetic ideal is the hidden expression of the will to power in the second world. This can be considered as an advantage for believers. However, this can be done through mortifying and mutilating the body by means of scarifying the earthly life. Believers are the highest artists in making something to apparently beautiful out of human being. They load human life with hopes in the future. This gives relief to believers from earthly sufferings. However, this has been done through self-denial and falsifying the image of real life. The other disadvantage of religion is that in the early times, people sacrificed people to God their strongest instincts. So that all comfort and hope in the real world is gone in appeasement to God (Ronald Russell, 1960).

In the realm of human history, religion has supported evil practices, like cannibalism, suicide, murder slavery. It is responsible for many aberrations in social behavior. It created hatred and war between people belonging to different religions. Religions created an idle class of people. Those idle people are priests whose only aim in life was to preach religion. They lived like parasites in society. In relation to human civilization, religion has most of the times, resisted the spread of modern scientific thought and has regarded various products or scientific research as the tools of devil (Michael Lacewing, N.D)

Bible has served as a tool of discrimination of people by justifying slavery as a normal condition. During slave trade and in colonial era, it was served as a special weapon to dehumanize Africans. It justifies slavery in the book of genesis as follows: In the book of Genesis, Noah condemns Ham and his descendents to perpetual servitude: "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers" (Genesis. 9:25). This episode has been used to justify slavery. It has brought an everlasting conflict between Christian and Islam, between black and white skins. This is because; some believers argue that Blacks are the cursed people that descended from Ham, the cursed one.

CHAPTER THREE: IS RELIGION AN IDEOLOGY?

3.1 Religion as the Ideology of the Dominating Classes

In the history of human society, religion has been serving as the ideological weapon of the ruling classes. It changes its content with the change in socio-economic systems. We have seen such inconsistency in different periods. For instance, the content of Ethiopian Christian Orthodox Church scriptures was different from one society to the other. In reactionary social system, it is used to serve the exploiting class by preaching that people should be obedient to the rulers. In democratic society, it is used to serve the dominant class by preaching about good governance and democracy. Hence, we can say that religion has a reactionary approach in a reactionary society and democratic approach in democratic society. For instance, one can take the content of scripture in Ethiopian feudal society, in the military regime and in FDRE. In Feudal society; the scripture stood in favor of the king and serves as a special ideology to the king. Let me support my view by citing certain evidences from the scripture.

In Feudal society the scripture said, “አይቱ ብሄራ ለጥበብ ለንጉስነ ኃይለሥላሴ ለታዕካሁ ወለሰራዊቱ ለመኪንንቱ ወለመሳፍንቱ.” (ቅዳሴ እግዚዕ 1988 እትም) The equivalent Amharic meaning is: ሀዘባቸውን እንዲገዙ ጥበብም ኃይልም ለኢዮጵያ ንጉስ፣ ለመኪንንቱና ለመሳፍንቱ ከአምላክ ዘንድ ተሰጥቷል። The equivalent English version is; Wisdom and power is delegated to the Ethiopian king, nobility and clergy so as to govern their subject properly.

In Dergue and FDRE regime, since the priests were wise and had keen interest to serve the existing system rather than God, they soon changed their mind and reformed the content of the scripture and made it democratic oriented which goes like: “አይቱ ብሄራ ለጥበብ ለሃገሪትነ ኢትዮጵያ ለታዕካሃ ወለሰራዊታ ለመኪንንታ ወለመሳፍንታ።” When it is translated it means: wisdom and power is given to the Ethiopian leaders, clergy and nobility to administer their people wisely. However, this scripture is still fake, because the reality of military regime and FDRE is against nobility and aristocrats. Thus, Priests practically were and are praying for non-existing nobility and aristocrats. Similar scriptures served and still are serving as the ideological weapon of the dominant class. The original Geez scripture that served as best liturgy of the Church and as the ideology of the king said “ተዘከር እግዚኦ ለንጉስነ ኃይለሰላሴ ወእቀቦ በዕድቅ ወበሰላም አግር ፀሩ ወፀላእቱ ታህተ እግሩ ፍጡነ።” The Amharic version: አቤቱ

ንጉሳችንን ኃ/ስላሴን አስበው የሚጠሉትንና ጠላቶቹን ከእግሩ በታች ፈጥነህ አሰግዛለት This means that: Oh, God think of our king, give power and bless him. Make him defeat his enemies and bring them under his knee. However, with the overthrow of the feudal regime, secularism became the guiding principle of the government, not only for the military regime but also for the FDRE regime; the content is changed as the following; The original geez: “ተዘከራ እግዚአ ለሃገራትን ኢትዮጵያ ወእቀባ በዕድቅ ወበሰላም አግርር ፀራ ወፀላእታ ታህተ እገራሃ ፍጡነ” The Amharic version: አቤቱ ሃገራችንንም ኢትዮጵያን አስባት ፣ የሚጠሉትንና ጠላቶችን ከእግሯ በታች ፈጥነህ አሰግዛለት This means: Oh, God think of our nation, Ethiopia, bless her and make her powerful to defeat her enemies and bring them under her knee. [የሐዋርያት ቅዳሴ ገፅ 51]

Among the many superstructures religion is one of the dominant ideologies of the ruling class. This was true especially in the feudal regime of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian orthodox liturgy describes the following. Surrendering one’s life is necessary when those three things happen.

1. Whenever anyone commands us to give up our religion, in this case, we have to give our neck to the sword and finally sacrificing life.
2. When foreign aggressor violates our autonomy, we have to face our head for bullet and our chest to their arrows.
3. *Finally, surrendering one’s life for the honor and reputation of the King and for national independence is the duty of human society. [The Liturgy of Ethiopian Orthodox Church, 1959]*

Hence, religion has double faces. On one hand, it serves to promote the transcendent life. On the other hand, it preaches about peace, development, good governance, justice and democracy for the actual world. In Ethiopia, we practically experience that the different religious leaders make frequent speech on earthly peace, democracy and good governance more than government politicians both on government holidays and religious holidays. Therefore, religion tries to confuse people by creating dichotomized world, which is the source of dilemma in life. The religious scripture claim that peace, equality, justice and good governance is not here on the earth, rather it is somewhere in heaven. On the other hand, they preach about good governance, equality, justice and democracy on this earth. In view of this, one can say that religion is an ideology that serves the existing class.

In relation to this, K. Marx said, ideology is a system of belief that can divert the real perception of reality in a way that the ruling class can be served. Marx argues that the class that controls economic production also controls the ideas of the society. He divided the socio-economic structure into two: the base that includes all the economic components and the super structure that embraces institutions like state apparatus education, media and the church. Hence, since religion is one element of the superstructure, it is true to say that religion is an ideology of the existing class. [American Journal of Social Issues & Humanities, 2011]

In Marx view, religion is used as an ideological weapon for the ruling class to justify their power and control over the ruled by preaching that they are delegated by God to rule over their subject. They try to convince their people that power is bestowed upon them by God to govern their people. For instance, the last emperors of Ethiopia were assumed as they were descended from Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. Due to this, reason, rulers try to create hierarchy as if they are the descendants of Israel where God revealed himself through those people [Encarta, 2009].

Religion as an ideology has the power of producing weak people. It misleads them and tries to persuade them that their suffering here on earth will be compensated in the life after death. Such type of belief has the power to evade one's true-self, reason and develop false-self or false consciousness. Lenin describes religion as the ideological weapon of the ruling class as follows:

Religion is a spiritual gin, an intoxicant doled out to the masses by the ruling class to continue them and keep them in their place. Lenin argues the ruling class use religion cynically, to manipulate the masses and keep them from attempting to overthrow the ruling class by creating a mystical fog that obscure reality.
[Vladimir Lenin (N.D)]

For many years, religion as an ideology had served the ruling class by legitimatizing the power and the privilege of the dominant class. This was done by making their position appear to be divinely designed by God. For instance, in the 16th c the idea of the divine right of the kings was believed to be as the representative of God on earth. It was assumed that the kings

were bestowed by God's power to rule their subjects. So that obedient to the king was considered as obedient to the God Therefore, the divine right of the king was manifested both in the form of political and religious political legitimacy. This doctrine provokes that a monarch is subject to no earthly authority, but God. Thus, the king was not subjected to the will of the people, but to the will of God. According to the Catholic doctrine, only God can judge an unjust king. The doctrine implies that any attempt to depose the king is considered as contravening the law of God and sacrilegious act (Allegra Geller, 2013).

Religion as an ideology has served to dull the pain of the people. It makes people to accept the earthly sufferings caused by inequality and exploitation. It tries to persuade believers that this earthly suffering is not imposed by the ruling class; rather it is imposed by God. They make believers to think that the Earthly challenge and sufferings are the pre conditions for the eternity of heavenly life. Those who hold luxurious life and happiness on the Earth cannot enter into the heaven. They rather go to hell in compensation to the earthly happiness. This is because; heavenly life and the earthly life have converse relationship. Since God is the God of Justice and equality, He can balance power relation between hell and heaven. This means that heaven is the payment for Earthly sufferings and hell is the payment for earthly happiness (Himel Shagor, N.D).

In Some religions, virtue of suffering, oppression and poverty is considered as a normal condition. In this case, the scripture preaches that the blessed are those who suffer from poverty, hunger, thirst etc. Hence, to persuade the poor and the oppressed that heaven is their destination, Bible clearly state:

Then Jesus said to his disciples verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enters in to the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle, than for a rich man to enter in to the kingdom of God. (Mathew 19:23-24).

Therefore, religion as an ideology produces weak and poor people by preaching that the heaven is only preserved for the poor, who leads miserable life, while the hell is reserved for the rich. It disguises and legitimatizes inequality by suggesting that the world is shaped by God's will and is therefore, not manageable by man. The poor are promised rewards in the life

after death. Thus, because of those reasons, religion creates present hell for the future illusory heaven.

Moreover, religion justifies the social order by saying that everything is for good and God has purpose to do that. All things are bright and beautiful. The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate; God made them high or low and ordered their estate. So that such social relationships seem inevitable and given. (Jonathan Haidt, 2012) Religion discourages people from attempting to make change so that the dominant groups can retain their power. In all historical development, rulers want people to be religious. Because, the less they are religious, the more they ask question and try to find information. The more they are religious, the more they believe that things are the way they are because God made them to be like that. Thus, religion convinces people to accept and endure the suffering and injustice they experience in life, because heaven awaits them.

In contemporary world, because of intellectual advance the idea that the contribution of religion as an ideology to states is inconsiderable because of the virtue of secularism. However, still it is the hidden ideology of the ruling governments to govern their subject particularly in the developed countries. Nonetheless, in the long history of men, religion helped to build the ruling high class. It had acted as a seductive for the people. It makes you feel better; it calms you down so that you stop asking questions and just accept whatever they feed you. It served as means of social organization. In relation to this, Seneca said, "Religion is regarded by common people as true, by the wise as false and by the rulers as useful."

Jehovah Witnesses try to divert the attention of the people by promising illusory paradise on earth. It preaches that supernatural intervention will reveal on earth in order to solve the problem of men. According to the teachings of this religion, super human being will come down from heaven or from some other mythical place and change the world for the better. In this kingdom, all crimes, poverty, war famine, inequality, injustice and all those undesirable things would be banished. So that Jehovah will descend from haven and bring about heaven on Earth. (Ken Guindon 2007). By doing so, Jehovah witnesses tries to calm down people's question and confuse people by promising pie in the sky.

It is true that religion served as the dominant ideology of the states across the planet in the very long history of man by suppressing people's right and freedom. This period is known as Dark Age in history. However, the breakdown of Dark Age first by USA amendment of the constitution of 1787 on an international arena ushered a new era in the realm of world politics. The amended constitution became the milestone of human right, which first guaranteed the separation of church and state and the free exercise of religious belief. The constitution provided a secular state based on toleration and liberty of conscience. This was happened because of the great works of enlightenment that promoted individualism, liberty, freedom and inquiry. However, though the degree of influence of religion is minimized by virtue of secularism, still religion is the hidden agenda behind many states (Robert P. Forbes (2012)).

3.2. Religion and World Wars

Religion has the spiritual power to divert human mind to believe in unrealistic doctrine and make them to embark in destructive behavior. Across this planet, since history, men have done many evil things because of the doctrinal difference in their beliefs. Thus, due to a difference of opinion over religion, men had slaughtered and killed their own innocent fellow men. By doing so, men hunt and kill their own species, but unlike men, the Lion does not eat its species (Hans Küng, N.D). This is how religion becomes the center of war and an everlasting conflict between Nations because of religious doctrinal differences.

Now, let us see the war that fought between Nations because of ideological difference in Religion. It is clearly depicted in the following table.

3.3. Religion against Human Rights

Some judgment which is passed both by Quran and Bible are cruel, horrific and unreasonable.

Let us see how the principles were prescribed based on cruelty:

Quran 5:38: Cut off the hands of thieves, whether they are male or female, as punishment for what they have done-a deterrent from God: God is almighty and wise."

Exodus 22: 24-25: "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."

The judgment or the prescription forwarded both by Quran and Bible for wrong doers is unreasonable that cannot give any lesson for the wrong-doers. Let us see the other prescription of Quran:

And we prescribed for them therein: The life for the life, and the eye for the eye, and the nose for the nose, and the ear for the ear, and the tooth for the tooth, and for wounds retaliation. But whoso forgoeth it (in the way of charity) it shall be expiation for him. Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed such as wrong-doers? Quran 5:45

Both Quran and Bible prescribe eye for the eye, life for the life, nose for the nose ear for the ear and tooth for the tooth. However, such prescription is very much horrific that produces fear and frustration. For instance, if the judges in the current days prescribe an eye for the eye, the world will be filled with blind people. If we prescribe nose for the nose, we will have many people without nose. If we prescribe tooth for the tooth, our world will be filled with many toothless people. If we prescribe life for the life, we will have lifeless world. Thus, the prescriptions, stated by both holy books are incompatible with humanity and human civilization. Thus, it seems that the prescription was coined by the then existing ruling class as an ideology of that day. This is because such inhuman prescription could not be ordered by all knowing and all creators Allah or God. Therefore, from the concept of those Scriptures, one can deduce that both holly Books were written by the existing religious scholars for the then existing society. Later on, an attempt was made to amend the scripture so as to make it compatible with human civilization. In relation to this, let us see the amendment prescribed in the New Testament. "If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also." (Matthew 5:39) Those words of Jesus which is described in Matthew 5: 38-48 are the source for human tolerance in the realm of secular and Global world.

3.4. Women's Right and Scripture

3.3.1. Bible and Women's Right

Bible as an ideological instrument of the existing society serves as the best tool for men to dominate women. Since early times to the current days, religious leaders are attempting to

persuade women as they are inferior to their male partner. This is described in 1 Corinthians 11: 3 like the following: “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.” Therefore, religion is one of the universal opium that has power to make women to accept as if they are inferior to men by creating such hierarchy as depicted in the letter of Paul towards Corinthians’. In the modern society it, is shame to say that women domination is Biblical and the will of God should be obeyed. If it is God’s will to do so, God must be chauvinistic and He must be the God of male. In any case, this unrealistic conception of women’s domination by men is vigorously prescribed both in Old Testament and New Testament. That chauvinistic word of Bible is described as follows:

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also says the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. (1Corinthians 14:34-36)

This implies that women are not allowed to speak in the forum and they are not allowed to acquire knowledge. If they are allowed to possess knowledge, this must be done through the will of their husband. So, from this assertion, we can conclude that Bible was written by the then existing religious scholars who were the keen ideologists and the guardians of the male dominating socio-economic system.

In relation to the wives’ inferiority to their husbands, Ephesians also puts the following words.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. (Ephesians 5:22-24)

Ever since its inception, the Bible accused woman but not the man for the sin which was done in the Garden of Eden. Since she deceived Adam, she is cursed and punished. Her entire fate is to remain silent and subjugated to her husband. She has no authority over man. This is clearly explained in 1Timothy.

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing. (1Timothy 2:11-15)

Therefore, this is the mythical tragedy and the negative impact of Christian religion imposed up on the realization of women's potential and capacity. Bible is silent about the punishment of young man who makes sex before marriage, but it prescribes severe punishment for a young woman who lost her virginity before marriage. It is explained in Leviticus as follows: "And the daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by playing the whore, she profaneth her father: she shall be burnt with fire." (Leviticus 21:9) Hence, it seems that God decides to multiply women's sorrow. Bible teaches that women brought sin and death into this world. So that it is the order of God for them to be the slaves of their husbands. It is explained below:

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply their sorrow and their conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and their desire shall be to their husband, and he shall rule over thee. (Genesis 3:16)

Thus, the Bible, the so called the holy Book in which the perfect words are inscribed and assumed by believers as absolute truth has been serving to suppress women's right more than any ideology.

3.4.2. Bible Justifies Slavery and Suppress Human Rights

Slavery was one of the horrible conditions in human's history where people were considered as a speaking tool. People were sold like simple material and the slaves master has exclusive right to sell or to kill the slave. Surprisingly, the Bible justifies it as it was a normal condition to man and prescribed certain rules in favor of the slave masters. Let me support my view by quoting some words from the Bible, **Exodus 21: 2-11**.

²*If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything.* ³*If he comes alone, he is to go free alone; but if he has a wife when he comes, she is to go with him.* ⁴*If his master gives*

him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to her master, and only the man shall go free.

⁵ *But if the servant declares, 'I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,'* ⁶ *then his master must take him before the judges.^[a] He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life.*

⁷ *If a man sells his daughter as a servant, she is not to go free as male servants do.* ⁸ *If she does not please the master who has selected her for himself, he must let her be redeemed. He has no right to sell her to foreigners, because he has broken faith with her.* ⁹ *If he selects her for his son, he must grant her the rights of a daughter.* ¹⁰ *If he marries another woman, he must not deprive the first one of her food, clothing and marital rights.* ¹¹ *If he does not provide her with these three things, she is to go free, without any payment of money.*

In relation to personal injuries, Bible's prescription is unjust and it was in favor of the slave master. For instance, a master who knocks his slave's tooth or destroys his slave's eye was not accused for crime, instead his master allowed the slave free to go anywhere. The freedom to leave his master's house for the slave was considered as compensation. This is clearly described in Exodus 21:26-27.

An owner who hits a male or female slave in the eye and destroys it must let the slave go free to compensate for the eye. And an owner who knocks out the tooth of a male or female slave must let the slave go free to compensate for the tooth. [Exodus 21:26-27]

However, had the act been done by the common people, who are not master, the compensation for the crime would have been an eye for the eye or tooth for the tooth.

It legitimizes that slaves are the exclusive property of their masters. For instance, Exodus 21:21 prescribes that if a master beats his slave, he is not accountable for his act, because the slave is the property of his master. Bible, both in its New Testament and Old Testament approves that slavery was a normal condition. However, religious scholars changed the name 'slave' in to 'servant' so as to make the Bible seem less immoral. But, Bible legalizes that slaves are the property of their masters, from which their master could have full right or

authority to beat, sell, purchase and passing them to their children as inheritance. (Exodus 21: 7-11)

In order to define that New Testament is against slavery preachers tried to persuade their believers that as slavery is the history of Old Testament. By doing so, they try to alienate Old Testament from New Testament. However, still New Testament is approved slavery. For instance, (Ephesians 6:5) says: you slaves, as you obey your heavenly father with deep respect, fear and shiver; it is also the law for you to obey your earthly masters with deep respect, fear and shiver.

3.3.3. Quran and Women's Right

In terms of economy, women do not have equal right with their male partner to inherit any property, because it is prescribed by Quran for men to own twice as much as a female. "A male shall inherit twice as much as a female does" (Quran 4:11).

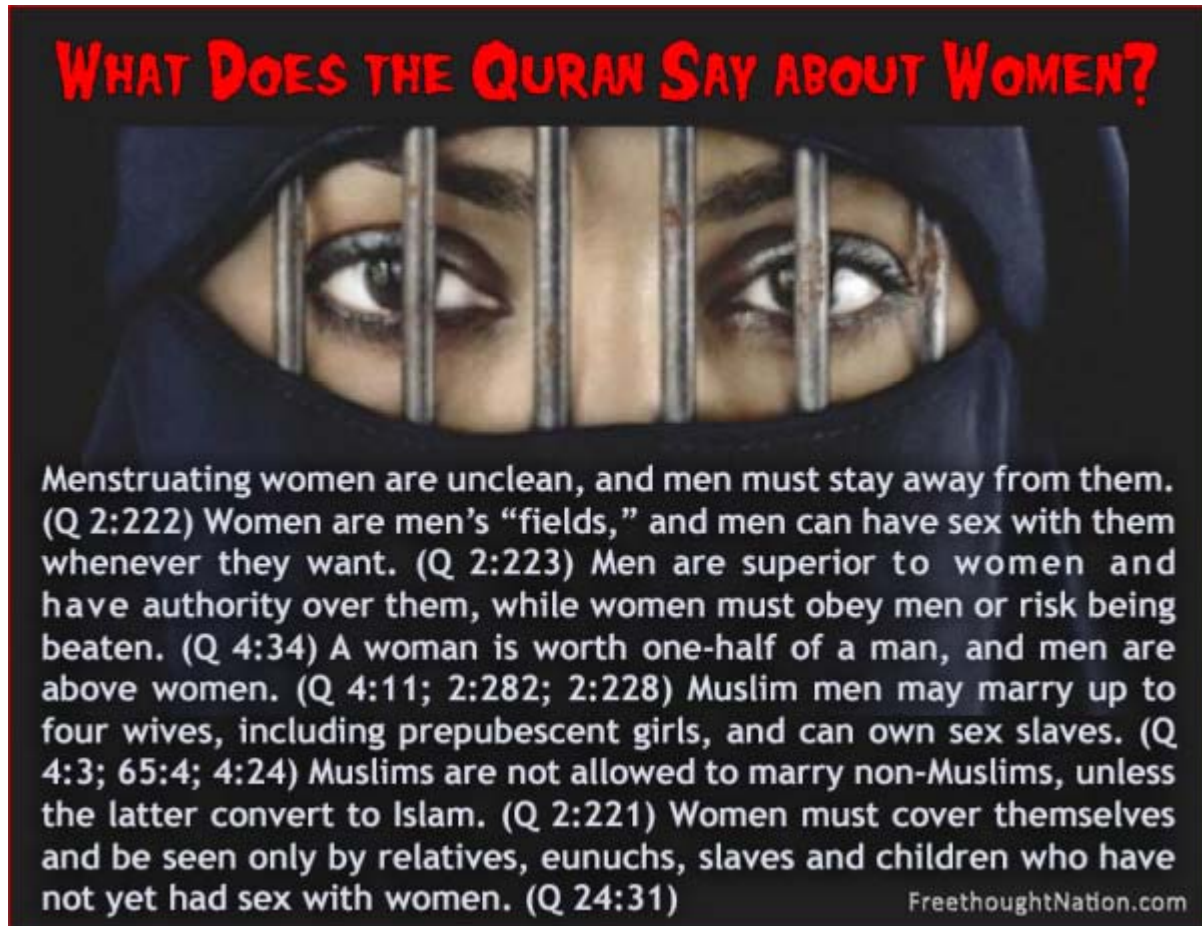
In case of judgment, one woman cannot serve as a witness. There should be two women to act as one man. This is clearly disclosed in Quran as follows: "Call in two male witnesses from among you, but if two men cannot be found, then one man and two women whom you judge fit to act as witness" Quran 2:282).

Islam prohibits believers to marry wife outside their religion. From this perspective, it is against the philosophy of human's love and it is against the Universal principles of unity in diversity. It is against assimilation and civilization of human society. Thus, Quran is not only against women's right, but also against human right. This is because, in our day, the globalized World does not bother about who you are, what your religion, ideology or what sex is, but what matter is how effective and efficient you are. In relation to this, Quran prescribes the following principles:

You shall not wed pagan women, unless they embrace the Faith. A believing slave-girl is better than an idolatress, although she may please you. Nor shall you wed idolaters, unless they embrace the Faith" (Quran 2:22)

Quran as an ideology of the male dominating society imposes a number of sanctions upon the social, economic and political rights of women. The discrimination which embraces both social and natural factors is portrayed below.

Figure 5: Sanction on Muslim Woman



Source:<http://freethoughtnation.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/koranwomen1-e1428175389906.jpg>

CHAPTER FOUR: CRITICAL AND CONCLUDING DISCOURSE

Ever since the rise of men, religion has contributed to the development of morality, social organizations, laws and ethical principles. However, such contribution of religion was made by suppressing human freedom and rationality. People obey both the natural and the social laws not because of aware of their moral responsibility, but because of fear of authority. Unlike theists, atheists do not believe in external authority. They believe in moral responsibility which is the source of human freedom. Atheism develops men's freedom by putting an end to the dependence of men on the unknown external being. I am one of the proponents of atheists, because, I believe that their work advances free thought, human reason and the will to power. Their work emancipated men from the enslavement of religion and marked a new era in the realm of self realization and the supremacy of men upon nature.

I have tried to assess a comprehensive view of the atheistic critiques of religion. My position in this paper is expressed in favor of atheism. However, I have some criticism on some of the works of atheists for their complete denial of the moral and social contribution of religion to the society. I also criticize some atheists, like Feuerbach, Karl Marx, Nietzsche and Lenin for considering religion only as an ideology of the dominating class. This is because; religion is not only an expression of the ideology of class society. Naturally, it emanates from man's psychological desire. Men have keen interest for transcendent life that provides meaning and hope to their actual existence. So, in my view, the attribute of belief or faith is not merely explained in terms of ideology, but also in terms of human psychological and physical states.

Even though the main objective of my work is defending atheism, to some extent I also recognize the positive role that religion plays in life. We do not have to deny the role played by religion in the course of human history. Before the development of science, religion as the earliest form of philosophy gave immediate response to men's fear and anxiety. It served as a crutch particularly when hard time and sorrow conditions were encountered. So that I said, variants of atheists and the adherents of Marxism are suffered from color blindness. This is because; they try to criticize religion merely from the ideological perspective of the dominating class. Although ideologists made religion to serve the narrow interest of the ruling

class, basically the essence of religion is attached to the psychological impact of men in response to the immediate social and natural stimuli.

Religion, as the first form of human consciousness, gave birth to the modern science. But, the problem of religion is that it is based on blind-belief, belief in something that cannot be proved or disproved. It is not open to criticism and questions. For instance, it is forbidden to challenge God. However, unlike religion science is open for criticism and questions. You can prove or disprove its claim. Science relatively satisfies human's physical and psychological desires. However, religion counters change; because it is based on the dogmatic doctrine of the oldest books and scriptures written many thousands of years ago. Nonetheless, science is based on changes, new discoveries and objective reality, whereas, religion believes in myth and miraculous events. For instance, it says that Methuselah has lived for 969 years and the early patriarchs often lived nearly 1,000 years, (Georgia Purdom and David Menton 2010). So, now days, religion becomes incompatible and weak in disclosing the different natural phenomenon. Therefore, it lacks the power to convince the modern man. For instance, it tries to reduce the age of man in terms of thousand years, but using carbon dating, science has proved that men had lived on earth many million years ago.

Religion creates confusion by dichotomizing the world into the world of material and the world of ideal. On one hand, it preaches people to deny reality and to live holy men's life or ascetic ideals. On the other, it discourages earthly life by preaching that it is tentative and perishable one. It also teaches people to make life sweet like salt. This is clearly explained in Matthew 5:13. Saying you are the salt of the earth, so taste like that of salt; otherwise you will be thrown away like a stone. Therefore, Matthew tells us that we are the light of this world. But, these two views are conflicting ideas that create dilemma in life.

As many of the atheists agree, I am also convinced that it is not God that created man, but it is man who created God in his image when nature challenged him. So, God is nothing more than the immediate Psychological response of man for his emotional stimuli. For this we can explain some evidences. First, the existence of evil in the world proves that God does not exist. In order to prove this argument, let us trace back to the Epicurean logical problem of evil. According to this logic, if the premises are true, then the conclusion follows of necessity. This logical problem of evil follows:

Premise1. If an omnipotent, omniscient and Omni benevolent God exists, then evil does not exist. This is because; an Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omni benevolent being could have the power and will to eradicate all evils.

Premise2. There is evil in the world.

Conclusion: therefore, an omnipotent, omniscient and Omni benevolent God does not exist.

[Alfred Weber, 1902]

Second, if man was created by God, we would not have such diversified forms of religion which has inconceivable and contradictory doctrine that led people to war and an everlasting conflict since history.

Third, still I have seen critically that Bible and Quran reflect the stages attained by a given society. In ancient times, both scriptures reflect the nature of the then existing socio-economic system. In this sense, we have seen how the scriptures become rational in a rational society and irrational in irrational society. This tells us that the scriptures are amended many times so as to accommodate them in accordance with the nature of the existing social system.

Fourth, God as the benevolent being does not allow some people to lead luxuries life and others harsh life. Otherwise, He could be against, justice, equality and humanity. The present reality of mankind witness that there are different forms of human actions; which includes injustices, inequalities and inhuman acts being committed against man. This shows that there is no Omni benevolent being in this world.

To me, the myth of the Garden of Eden proves the cruel and irrational behavior of God. I say it because; first the act deprived of Adam from the gift of eternal life and second, it condemned generations to the extension of painful labor and child birth. Thus, the myth of Adam is a kind of philosophy that condemns the unborn child to inherit the sin of remote ancestors. The punishment of Adam and his descendents because of taking the apple fruit from the Garden of Eden (the knowledge tree) is irrational and against the nature of man. This is because; as Aristotle (350 B.C), pointed it out, man by nature desires to know and the desire to know is not only restricted to good things, but also to pertain to bad things also. Thus, Adam's intention of taking the knowledge tree was normal and the first realization of

knowledge and freedom to know about something. Hence, if God wanted to forgive our sin, He would have not orchestrated a sin full environment. If He is believed to be the omnipotent architect of the world, why should there be the idea of evil in His mind in the first place? Why He chooses to design such a tricky test torture and excursion like cruel man? In the modern view of ethics, it is a ridiculous and unreasonable act of punishment. For instance, executing innocent men like Jesus to pay the sin of the guilty is unreasonable. It is like killing the innocent child for the crime done by his father. Thus, leave alone from omniscient God; it is very difficult to accept such ungrounded and inconceivable religious sanction for any rational man.

According to Dawkins (1995) religion is dangerous, because it teaches that faith is virtue. But, for Dawkins, faith is blind, irrational, and unjustified. So, he sees religion as unquestioning acceptance of whatever the scripture says. If a holy book commands followers to do fanatical and terrible things, they need to obey it without any hesitation, because to hesitate means to be disobedient to God. Thus, there is a logical path between faith and horrific acts. Dawkins has characterized religion as the worst and the fertile ground for fanatical violence. For instance, Hebrews 9: 22, said, "In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." Hence, it seems that the scripture provokes murder and human sacrifice.

Therefore, as Dawkins (1995) described above, one of the drawbacks of religion is that it turns people against themselves. On one hand, it preaches that people are born sinners and it claims that our physical desires are the sources of sin and corruption. On the other hand, it preaches that people should have to be and act like angels. However, this has serious consequences, because when one fails to do what God has ordered to do, he begins to feel that he is the source of sin, corrupted and not worthy of being human. Thus, this would be filled him with anger and bitterness.

Atheist philosophers, like Nietzsche, Karl Marx, Feuerbach and Freud had assured a new era in the realm of human consciousness and self reliance, because under the name of God, human potential and wisdom have become sick and corrupted. Therefore, their Criticism on religion and the denial of God is emanated from their passion to prescribe medicine for the corrupted human will and rationality. Hence, I strongly recommend the readers to read and

analyze the great works of those scholars. This is because; without them, the concept of secularism and liberalism would be unthinkable. Even, I myself as an author of this thesis could not get the opportunity to express my free will if they had not written their reaction against religion. In fact, now days, I know that those outstanding philosophers and their proponents are stigmatized, cursed and blamed by many of hedonists, who merely run to satisfy their animal instinct and promote the interest of the few. However, the great works of those atheists like, Nietzsche, Feuerbach, Karl Marx Freud, Rand, etc...remain true and authentic in the heart of rational men.

Since its emergence, religion has taken the Lion's share in dehumanizing, suppressing and penalizing men's psychological and physical desires. It hinders men from realizing their capacities. It makes them transfer their intellectual pursuit and power to the unknown world of God. The two basic illusory domains of religion, heaven and hell are the psychological prison that limits human intellectual and physical desires. In the earliest time, because of belief, people were slaughtered by their fellow men in appeasement to God. In modern days, religion dictates men's freedom, rationality, self-confidence, the will to power and self-realization. Men in their spiritual life leave a lot of significant earthly responsibilities and questions to the will of theological agents. Human's desire to escape from hell and attain eternal life in heaven made many of them to engage in self-denial and ascetic life. This is how humans have created the earthly hell for the sake of future heaven.

Religion is a psychological prison out of which believers cannot escape out of it. This is because; its illusory reason convinces them to accept both miserable and luxurious life equally. If they enjoy luxurious life as a result of their strong effort, their mind persuades them to say that God has done it. On the contrary, if life becomes a threat or challenge to them they say that God has done it deliberately to punish them as a result of their sin.

The challenge that religion imposes also affects man's intellectual endeavor. As an illusory practice, religion challenges men's scientific knowledge and impedes their potential power by penalizing their free will. However, science is the agent of human freedom and the powerful weapon to meaningfully liberate man from the influence of nature. Science promotes the independence of man, whereas religion promotes his dependence upon other things by creating fear of the unknown and the supernatural power in his mind. For instance, people

were weak and submissive in defending the natural catastrophes before science has developed. They believed that natural disasters were inflicted on humans, because Gods will to punish them for any sin that they committed. However, science and intellectual thinking have disproved such ungrounded assertion of religion and assured men's independence from the powerful influence of nature. For example, by curing people from diseases through the scientific innovation and discovery of different medicines, man promoted his freedom and capacity by curing him from different disease causing agents.

Most Christian scriptures provoke that all people are born sinners (Romans 3:23). People have to confess for their sin. If they do not purify themselves, God will force them to go to hell, where they will have to experience eternal suffering. Thus, the initial point of religion is creating fear. In order to avoid hell, religion demands that people prove themselves to God that they are worthy of heaven by following the dogma of religion. Naturally, when people are put in such situation, they find themselves in a continuous state of fear. They are always afraid whether their actions are right or wrong. This is because; when you believe that you are being continuously watched by an all-seeing eye of God, you will have to act in certain ways to please Him. The fear of hell is continuously in people's mind, filling them with worry and anxiety, and this does not allow anyone to live freely. As a result, most religious people engage in self denial and hopeless earthly life.

The other negative impact of religion is that it keeps people in ignorance. When, people have grown up and conditioned to believe what is right and wrong, religion claims that to doubt religion means to go to hell. Because of this reason, people become afraid of seeking true knowledge and stop searching the truth. Their mind ceases to learn and grow as a rational being.

Religion as an ideology had served especially the oppressing class to subjugate and repress the subjugated people. It promotes the idea that obedience to the king is obedience to God. As an ideology, it reflects the existing system. In some sense, it becomes democratic in democratic society and reactionary in the reactionary society. Thus, religion as an ideology and ascetic life are double burdens to humans, because they impede them from actualizing their potential capacities. This is because; the act is against human value that impedes many people from becoming great men in the actual world.

Since man is a superior animal, he should not expect an external being to solve the worldly problems. He shouldn't expect God to do things for him. He has to do it by himself for there is no a superior being more than this man to challenge and transform this material world. The responsibility to know, to interpret and to change this world is the exclusive concern of man. Expecting an external authority is unrealistic and hence it cannot solve earthly problems. This is because; history has shown that it is man who has done the transformation from the primitive stage to the age of the information technology of these days.

Finally, I would like to conclude that since religion contravenes the reality of men by encouraging people to live against their own nature, men have to liberate themselves from fear and the psychological prison of religion. So long as man is the man of this world, he does not need to bother about the ideal and the unknown world. Therefore, to liberate from the enslavement of nature, men should have librated themselves from religion and rely on scientific knowledge which would increase the power and independence of humans in the face of nature. This is because, weak people need religion to get protection from the force of nature; while strong people need civilization, high knowledge and capacity to influence and protect the force of nature.

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Galatians 3:28

Genesis 3:1-24

Genesis 3:16

Genesis 9:25

Genesis 22: 1-16

Genesis 3: 1-24

Genesis 9:20-27

Genesis 22:1-18

Hebrews 9: 22

Hebrews 9: 27

Isaiah; 30:27- 30

James 2:1-4

John 3:16

Judges 11:30-40

Leviticus 21:9

Luke 6:35-36

Mathew 19:23-24

Matthew 5:39

Matthew 5:13

Matthew 6: 14-15

Matthew 10:28

Matthew 6:19-20

Peter 2: 15-17

Proverbs 22:2

Psalms 115:15

Psalms 22: 1

Psalms 6: 1-9

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Quran 2:221

Quran 24:31

Qur'an 9:29

Quran-8:67

- **ሰኔ ገልገታ” ገፅ 20:** በኢትዮጵያ ኦሪቶዶክስ ቤ/ክርስቲያን በ1961 ታተመ፣ ደራሲው አይታወቅም
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