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RELIGION IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST DRUG
ABUSE AND ALCOHOLISM

"... it is great and brave to be yourself, it is cowardly and dishonest to be a drug personality, to be a fake personality ..."

by A. A. David,

The use of chemical substances of natural origin and more recently synthetic analogues for various purposes is as old as man himself. At first, it was in response to the instinctive human attributes of curiosity and exploration. Our great grand fathers fully satisfied this burning desire to explore and experiment. They tasted and imbibed where possible anything strange and beyond their sphere of daily experience — leaves of plants, roots, rodents, insects and funny enough they could not quite resist the urge to experiment with their fellow humans in far away communities. This made cannibals out of them but more was to come. As man experimented with nature around him, he came to discover that there, in the green of herbs, shrubs and all kinds of vegetation lay the powers of good and evil — relief of pain and insomnia in the ripe seeds of the poppy plant, soothing of a weary mind in the intoxicating power of alcohol, and death dealing poison to enemies in the leaves of belladonna. Man came to realise that by ingesting certain leaves, he could change his state of mind, enhance his appreciation of the beauty of nature and even stupefy his awareness of unpleasant situations.

Much later as man assumed a gregarious form of existence, he used extracts from these plants for diagnosis, prophylaxis and treatment of disease but he did not forget the ability of these substances to affect behavioral and psychological functions of the body. And so time and gain, he resorted to their use for the purpose of elevating his mood, activating his mind to greater levels of consciousness and insulting himself from the complexities and troubles of life. Little did he know that by so doing, he was unleashing on the human race a problem that would leave its marks on civilization for many centuries to come — the problem of misuse of life-saving chemicals. The most offending manifestations of this problem being drug abuse and alcoholism.

ETIOLOGY

The problem is an age-old one. "And Noah started off as a farmer and proceeded to plant a vineyard. And he began drinking of the wine and became intoxicated"¹. So the Christian Holy Bible began the brief gist of its first recorded case of drug abuse some 4,400 years ago. Excavated clay tablets reveal that as far back as 4,000 BC opium was known to the Sumerians of Babylon as "the plant of joy". From those early beginnings, the problem spread so that today drug abuse and alcoholism have been described as "a worldwide

epidemic". So global is this problem that of the developing countries hitherto known for their conservative attitude and reluctance to explore the unknown, the magazine "Your Health" says "....the problem of drug addiction or drug dependence in West Africa is becoming alarming especially in Nigeria"².

DRUG ABUSE

What is drug abuse anyway? Drug abuse can be defined as "any misuse of drugs for non-medical purposes with the connotation that serious harm is involved for the individual and society"³. The use of the drug is therefore neither pharmacologically nor physiologically necessary and where the drug is socially acceptable and medically prescribed, it is used in quantity that exceeds what is generally acceptable socially and in clinical practice. Drug abuse can be intentional or unintentional. Thus the frustrated young man who takes a regular shot of wrapped dried leaves of the *Canabis indica* plant and the concerned nursing mother who rushes to the patient medicine store to purchase three tablets of panadol (500 mg paracetamol) and 2 tablets of capol (500 mg paracetamol) to ease the high temperature of her little kid are equally guilty of drug abuse.

All forms and manner of drug abuse are potentially dangerous but especially so when the drug has the propensity to evoke dependence physically or psychologically and consequently lead to addiction. In this case, the problem transcends the personal level, affects close and distant associates and becomes a social problem needing a cooperation of medical and moral agencies if it is to be successfully tackled. My discussion will therefore focus on these classes of drugs.

The major drugs in this category include:

- (1) Hallucinogens e.g. LSD and marihuana
- (2) Stimulants or PEP pills e.g. amphetamines
- (3) Narcotics or pain killers e.g. codeine and morphine
- (4) Sedatives e.g. barbiturates, tranquilizers and alcohol

In the Nigerian scene, the drug situation is not very well defined because of lack of reliable statistical data. Generally however the most commonly abused drugs in Nigeria are stimulants, sedatives and hallucinogens examples of which are Methaqualone (Mandrax), Indian hemp (Marijuana), Butobarbitone (Soneryl) and one could add the recent boom in abuse of analgesics and antibiotics.

ALCOHOLISM

Alcoholism has been defined as "a disease in which the drinking of alcohol or alcoholic beverages becomes a compulsion . . ."⁴. This source also reveals that dipsomania, a form of alcoholism, has its root in a Greek word meaning thirst madness.

LIMITATIONS OF AVAILABLE FORMS OF TREATMENT

These definitions reveal that drug abuse and alcoholism are more of medical than social problems and so one would expect to see in recorded works of struggle against drug abuse and alcoholism a prominence of efforts by medical science to eradicate these evils. But such is not exactly the case. The alcoholic was regarded as a social deviant and approach to treatment of problem was mainly punitive. Quite recently however medical science became interested in these problems and began exploring medical approaches to treatment of Drug abuse and alcoholism. In 1948, Antobuse (disulfuran) a drug that induces sickness in form of vomiting, heavy breathing and dizziness whenever alcohol is ingested was introduced. This has been augmented with citrated calcium cyanamide that has a milder effect. The treatment has been successful in discouraging alcoholic tendencies. As further experiments were conducted, the problem of drug abuse, dependence and addiction came to be explained in terms of cells, biochemistry and pharmacology. It became clear that when any foreign body especially those capable of eliciting unusual response enter the system, the body is subjected to challenge and stress. There is a corresponding biochemical physiological and psychological readjustment to this stress. The response of the cells of the body become so altered that presence of the foreign body becomes necessary for normal functioning of the cells. The individual therefore becomes physiologically dependent and cannot do without the chemical.

In view of the progress of medical science in elucidating and attempting to treat drug abuse and alcoholism, many people have begun to imagine that medicine has all the answers and solution to the problem. They argue that given the time and cooperation, medical science will eventually eliminate these ills. But that is a very misguided opinion; writing on alcoholism, the World Book Encyclopedia says "Doctors do not know the reason why alcoholics drink . . . treatment is complex . . . few drugs have any real value except to act as a support or to relieve the physical symptoms"⁵. It can therefore be appreciated why it became necessary for the cooperation of medical and social institution in the cure of these endemic problems. The punitive approach of the past and the medical alternative were therefore augmented with detoxification facilities to ease withdrawal symptoms, micro societies comprising former addicts to give practical advice and support to those still plagued by these problems, supposedly default-proof legislative measures to restrict circulation and accessibility to dangerous drug etc. etc. The results have been very encouraging but not totally satisfactory. Says the world book encyclopedia "No completely satisfactory method of treating drug addiction has been developed in spite of effective enforcement of narcotic law . . . many authorities feel that prison sentence (and other known forms of treatment) . . . are not a complete answer to the problem of drug addiction"⁶.

THE ROLE OF RELIGION

Faced with a problem so perennial and so resistant to available medical and social forms of treatment as drug abuse and alcoholism, does mankind resort to a state of passive accep-

tance or rely solely on trial and error for solution? The answer is a definite 'No'. It has been known that when man in his search for solution to his problem comes to a dead end, a point that defies all his physical, material and intellectual resources, he more often than not, turns to religion.

Turning to the realm of religion for possible solution to the drug abuse and alcoholism problem, may seem amusing to some but plausibility of such an effort can be appreciated when one examines critically the factors and root causes of the problems in question. True, genetic factors are involved but to a very limited extent. Research reveals that the environment and the kind of experience to which an individual is exposed plays a more significant part. Some of the reasons advanced to explain the problem of drug abuse and alcoholism are the following: a sense of unimportance, sense of worthlessness, pressure to succeed in academic work, influence of peer group, unhappy or poor background culminating in defective personality. ". . . a sense of alienation from traditional and social norms . . . desire to be accepted by others, to express independence . . . to foster a sense of ease . . . experience a sense of belonging . . . unstable home background"⁷. Even when the individual is not previously exposed to poverty and low standards of living the problem can still arise as shown in this brief profile of a drug addict. He "is usually well-fed, well clothed and well regarded but sees that poverty and prejudice do exist in some places, sees nations at war . . . sees adults setting one standard for youth and another for themselves. To him trying to right wrongs is a waste of time. He believes that the society is incurably sick and he wants to be no part of it . . ."⁸.

Drug abuse and alcoholism when viewed from the point of view of the root cause is more of a social than medical problem. Any contrary view would inadvertently lead to treating only the symptoms not the fundamental causes of these social problems. And since religion has always been a powerful force for social change it would only be reasonable to ask "what has religion got to offer in the struggle against drug abuse and alcoholism?"

The realm of religion is wide indeed. It transcends the domain of the all too familiar great religions of the world — christianity, judaism and Islam. There are Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism that originated in India, Confucianism, Taoism and Shintoism that had their roots in China and Japan and of course our African traditional religion which is indigenous. It is therefore almost impossible to discuss on a general basis the role of religion as a whole in this short essay. I shall therefore restrict my discussion to the Nigerian context and evaluate the role of christianity, islam and African traditional religion in the struggle against drug abuse and alcoholism.

To do this evaluation properly, I shall address myself to and find answer to the following basic question:— How effective are christianity, islam and African traditional religion as moral agencies with particular reference to efforts aimed at eradicating drug abuse and alcoholism? What are religions means and agencies in this struggle? How practical and scientific is this approach?

History and unbiased analysis reveal that in the past the role of religion in the scuffle against drug abuse and alcoholism has not been positive and beneficial. In an interview with *playboy* magazine, Timothy Leary argued that all religion are attempts to discover the inner potential and that "the aim of eastern religion is basically to get high, that is to expand your consciousness and find fantasy and revelation within." "He pointed out that the drug experience is one of "awe and revelation, a confrontation with new force of wisdom and energy . . . a systematic expansion of consciousness . . ."9 He concluded that what many try to get by organized religion, the psychedelics attain by drugs. Thus we see in the portraying of religion as an ecstatic emotion-filled encounter with the devine being as is the case with most spiritualistic and vision-seeing christian and non christian religions an inducement to drug taking and aggravation of the drug abuse and alcoholism problem. More seriously, Brian Wells alleges in his book that religion has been the nucleus of the Drug abuse and alcoholism problem saying "Peyote has been used as Eucharistic sacrament . . . The history of psychedelics abound with examples of religious cults derived from use of one drug or another. Even cannabis has a long and distinguished history in that respect and has been used . . . even to the extent of being the centre of an established religion¹⁰. The magazine "Your Health" mentions specific examples like the use of ". . . Indian hemp in Jamaica, peyote - a hallucinogenic drug - by some Indians in North America . . ."11 No wonder many people find it difficult to resist the temptation to agree with Karl Marx even in the literal sense that "religion is the opium of the people."

Apart from this negative and unfavorable revelation from the archives of the remote past and a few examples today, there is abundant evidence to show that all through the generations religion has always been a powerful force for moral transformation and in the recent past one can say that the role of religion especially at it relates to the scuffle against drug abuse and alcoholism has been both far-reaching and commendable. This is not surprising in view of the fact that adherents to various religious faiths have been known to stick to their tenet with a tenacity that defies imagination. Our forefathers sacrificed their offsprings in the name of African traditional religion. Adherents to the Islamic and Christian faith gave up their lives in jihads and crusades. Commenting on this, the Encyclopedia Britanica says "The most obvious example is the success of religious movements such as Buddhism, Islam and numerous christian sects in conforming their followers as total abstainers. The Methodist and Baptist denominations, the Quakers, the Mormons, the Christian scientists, the seven day adventists and the Jehovah's Witnesses are examples . . ."12. The christian Holy Bible indicates in 1 Cor. 6:9 - 11 that some of those who became christians were formerly at the lowest rung of the ladder of moral excellence - homosexuals, thieves, drunkards murders etc. The role of religion in the scuffle against drug abuse and alcoholism however cannot be properly evaluated and appreciated without taking a closer look at the contribution of each of the predominant religions practiced in Nigeria.

THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

African traditional religion has contributed its quota to the scuffle, not by a direct conscious effort but by the fact that the system made good fathers out of our ancestors. Care and concern was expressed for each member of the family. The family unit was united and strong. This atmosphere in itself was conducive to forstalling the tendency of individuals to lean towards perpetrating the social evils under discussion. The youth in the traditional African Society also found fulfilment in reaching out for the many enviable qualities that were essential to making a man out of himself, and so did not have to resort to different forms of chemicals in an attempt to assuage his adventurous spirit. The contribution of African traditional religion would have been even more immense and appreciable if our forefathers conception of social evil was not the narrow, restricted one it has been. The book "Religion and transformation of Society" by Wilson acknowledges that while there is a direct relationship between religion and morality in the typical African society ". . . range of moral obligation was very narrow. . ." The basis for morality was "fulfilment of obligation to Kinsmen, living and dead and to neighbours . . ." Immoral behaviour included "anger, quarreling, disrespect for seniors, neglect of traditional rituals, greed . . ."13 it can thus be clearly seen that the emphasis on the need to refrain from personal harm as a moral obligation was lacking. The individual could therefore perpetrate the very ills under discussion and still enjoy a good standing in the society provided he fulfils the above-mentioned moral obligations. African traditional religion therefore seems to have little to offer in this scuffle in terms of deliberate, positive efforts,

ISLAM

Islam is the religion that very comfortably dominates the Northern part of Nigeria. Islam has perhaps made the most significant contribution to this scuffle. It has succeeded in totally suppressing abuse of alcohol especially in Islamic states and even in non Islamic states attempts have been made to influence the legislature to litigate laws prohibiting the public sales of alcoholic beverages. A case in point in the recent efforts by some Northern States of Nigeria. That Islam should put in such efforts is quite understandable in view of the forceful and outright manner in which the Koran condemns alcoholism. Says the koran in Sura 2:200; 5:91,92:

"... In (wine) there is great sin . . . O ye who believe, Wine . . . are only an abomination of satans handwork. So shun each one of them that you may prosper . . . Satan desires only to create enmity and hatred among you by means of wine . . ."14

The World health organization chronicle acknowledges the unique success of Islam in combating alcohol abuse saying "In historical perspective, the brewing of alcohol . . . was generally popular among pre Islamic communities . . . However at the very beginning of Islamic era, the drinking of wine was clearly identified as disruptive social evil . . . After 14 centuries, the successful Islamic model of alcohol abstention and prohibition still stands out as exceptional, indeed almost unique, in human history . . ."15 But Marks et al reveal

in "The Medical garden" that this success in alcohol abstinence did not solve but in fact aggravated the spread of drug abuse. "Worldwide spread of opium must be laid at the wondering feet of the prophet Mohammed . . . The Koran . . . forbade drinking of wine. In obedience the moslems destroyed the vineyards however they went. But the Koran said nothing of hard drugs such as opium and hashish. Both were adopted as a substitute for alcohol . . ."16 The problem is that prophet Mohammed is dead and gone. The gaping question requiring an answer is "who has the authority, the universal acceptability, the credibility to tell the moslems that abstaining from alcohol should include all forms of Drug abuse?" Nobody that I know. And so what will have been a bulwark in the scuffle of religion against drug abuse and alcoholism has in fact proved to be a major obstacle. What an unfortunate paradox.

However, there is some ray of hope that in the future Islam could play a more significant role in the eradication of these ills. In the English translation of the Koran by Yusuf Ali, the word 'wine' is translated "intoxicants" in Sura 5:91,92. One can be quite sure that when such translations finally become universally acceptable, the problem of drug abuse and alcoholism will have been totally eradicated at least in Islamic states.

CHRISTIANITY

Unlike Islam, Christianity has somehow resolved the cries of leadership and direction that should have ensued after the death of Jesus Christ, having built a long and generally acceptable line of spiritual descents from Jesus Christ. First the apostles, then the saints and even today the head of the Catholic church is considered an infallible authority on many matters of morality. So one would expect a definite and positive achievement in the scuffle against drug abuse and alcoholism. This is especially so in view of the fact that the past record of Christianity in this respect has been very encouraging. Primitive christianity had applied all the spiritual and social techniques for compliance. It created in the individual a sense of accountability to the supreme being, instilled in him a love, personal relationship and a desire to obey the Supreme being. The individual was intergrated into a close knitted brotherhood that knew no racial or geographical boundary. The bible itself calls its message one of hope – the individual was given a reason to live, a hope for the future that always gave him the impression that economic and social evil were temporary. And when an erring christian was hardened and unwilling to change, he was ostracized and excuminated. The resulting shame and feeling of failure gave him an additional incentive to want to change (1 Cor. 5:9,13).

In a similar manner the advent of Christianity into this continent was marked by a scuffle against all that was primitive, retrogressive and inimical to their converts. The Catholic, Methodist and Protestant missionaries built churches to impart moral education to the people; schools to elevate their level of intellectual comprehension, hospitals and mental homes to take care of the physically and psychologically sick; they also provided the basic conveniences of life in an attempt to alleviate the social problems that have been known to pre-

cipitate indulgence in the social evils under discussion. A good example of the role of the church in this respect is the Salvation Army founded in 1864. They ". . . deliberately sought out the sick and dirty social rejects . . . nursed the drunks, fed them and cared for them as initial steps to converting them to the christian faith. . . .17

That was about a century or more when christianity was just making inroads into the African continent. What about today in this 20th century? What has christianity got to offer in this scuffle? Only a few christian denominations have shown any serious sign of having a scuffle against drug abuse and alcoholism. For the majority what we see is a cold passive acceptance or an occasional condemnatory sermon. Alhaji F. M. Quaraishy – a popular religious commentator – acknowledges this fact in the 'Nigerian Sunday Observer' saying "It is true that some muslims and christian leaders have on some occasion preached against these evils, but that is not sufficient . . ." He called for something effective to be done to check these evils. He suggested that religious leaders should devise ways and means to put an effective check on all these practices by "writing in the newspapers, making speeches in mosque and churches . . . educating the public. . ."18 Talking of alcoholism in the world scene, the Encyclopedia Britannica indicates that there is a decline in number of abstainers in recent times which reflect the changing character of religious adherence"19. In Nigeria there is also evidence of a 'changing character of religious adherence' to the detriment of the society. A look at the newspapers shows that the churches of christendom are but empty shadows of the progressive, exemplary and positive force for moral transformation they used to be in the past. Jenudo Oke says in the Sunday Chronicle that while in the past the churches were involved in positive actions that led to societal upliftment, they now insist on "increased levies . . . bazars, special offerings, etc."20 "Churches have ceased to be what they were originally intended to be . . . perpetrating havoc in the country through their so called vision and prophecy. . ." laments Sunday Churchill in the Sunday Chronicle21 in an article entitled – Ethical revolution – Any hope for the Nigerian Society? Arene Egbue says in the Sunday Satellite that "Our churches which are supposed to be our moral and religious restitutes have equally lost their holiness"22 Felix C. Jitubu echoes the fear of those he described as prophets of doom in the Punch ". . . that religion is becoming a mere facade. . ."23 But these fears and frank observations certainly are not pessimistic projections or predictions of biased individuals. To me they are a true reflection of what is obtaining in our churches today. The churches are failing to supply the spiritual needs of individuals. Practical, well prepared, helpful and up-to-date sermons have been replaced by emotion – filled or stereotype babbings that leaves the church-goer so exhausted that he has little or no time to successfully grapple with the harsh realities of problems like Drug abuse and alcoholism.

My contention, however; is not that all christian denominations have been or are lacadiscal in the scuffle against drug abuse and alcoholism. The efforts of the catholic and protestant missionaries and the Salvation army in this direction

actually formed the foundation on which the very few christian denominations that are concerned about the problem of Drug abuse and alcoholism have built. In my opinion, the most outstanding of these few christian denominationa in this scuffle is the Jehovah's Witnesses. They have been criticised for various reasons – literal and rigid views on biblical doctrines that has made their negative stand on the life-saving act of blood transfusion and their strict neutrality in politics a major issue in many countries. It is not the purpose of this essay to touch on the judgemental aspects of their idiosyncratic, radical and often offensive stance in the political and medical world. Granted they have their pros and cons but their efforts in struggle against drug abuse and alcoholism is unique and deserves our commendation. Their success may be due to the fact that they make use of the most powerful tool for public enlightenment today – the printed pages. They are the publishers of the most circulated religious magazines on earth today – The Watchtower (9,300,000 per issue) and the Awake (8,200,000 per issue). I was also made to understand that they not only call on people in their homes but also conduct bible studies with them on personal basis regularly and patiently showing the individual how to apply bible principles that would prove invaluable in helping him solve his problems. More than their means, their approach is even more commendable. It is a suitable blend of religious scientific and practical solution to the problem of drug abuse and alcoholism.

Despite the problem of inaccessibility to past issues of these magazines, one sees in the past decade a constant and persistent attempt to not only warn parents and children against the growing danger of drug abuse but also provide practical bible-based solutions for those already gripped by these evils.

As early as 1974, they came out with two articles entitled "Parents, speak to your children about drugs"²⁴ and alcoholism – "The cause and the cure"²⁵. In these articles, the danger of the 'drug peril' was emphasized. Compelling bible-based reasons for abstinence were given and a workable approach to breaking the communication gap between parents and children so as to facilitate frank and 'serious' discussion on the subject of drug abuse at an early age was furnished. As a possible cure to alcoholism, they suggested "companionship and fellowship with those who have a 'healthful outlook on life.' They contended that basically, compulsive drinkers do so to supply an emotional need and confidently informed their readers that the bible could provide "a solid basis for confidence as to happy solutions to life's problems". They assured the enslaved alcoholic that though his problem might appear insurmountable, many who have availed themselves of bible-based advice from their magazines have been able to break loose from those problems even helping others to do the same.

More recently, the following articles have appeared in their magazines:

- (1) Drug, how dangerous are they?
Awake July 22 1980 pg. 3–14 Vol. 61 No. 4.
- (2) The new drug addicts, anybody you know?
Awake Vol. 62 No. 4 May 8 1982 pg. 3–14.

- (3) Alcohol problems and how to overcome them
Awake March 8 1980 Vol. 61 No. 5 pg. 3–15.

In these and other articles, they have repeatedly stressed the fact that harm as a result of drug abuse has more far-reaching effect than at the personal level – employers, marriage mates and even kids yet unborn are affected. They have argued that if the most important single fact for identifying true christianity is Love for oneself and neighbours, anybody who gets involved in injustice and lack of neighbourly love by way of illegal drug taken and alcoholism cannot truly be called a christian. They have pointed out that though accurate knowledge of the bible does not change individuals overnight, it can help to reduce problems by aiding individuals to make wise decisions in life; help one understand why evil conditions exist and why calamities occur. That the bible's knowledge when faithfully applied, can help the individuals "develope the motivation to change his life pattern so as to be acceptable to God".

Perhaps an overview of their approach to the problem of drug abuse and alcoholism can be got from this extract from "Awake" July 8, 1982 pg. 3–13 under the subheading, "what kind of help is needed" "Physically: The alcoholic must be safely withdrawn from alcohol (detoxified). This may require hospitalization . . . Mentally: He should learn the facts about alcoholism becoming aware of and accepting the logical reason to abstain . . . Socially: he must learn to live comfortably with himself and others. Emotionally: He must learn to cope with anxiety and other negative feelings . . . Spiritually: Since he is given to hopelessness and fear, he needs help that will inspire hope, confidence and trust. . . While there are various forms of treatment (rehabilitation centres, group therapy sessions etc.) one thing stands out as a must – having someone knowledgeable and sympathetic to talk to perhaps someone who have been there and back. This can inspire hope for it lets the alcoholic know that he too can recover . . . However once he leaves such treatment, the recovering alcoholic may find himself face to face with the realities that used to drive him to drink. There may be lingering negative feelings about himself, family problems or a shaky job situation. . . (Help is available) that can give the recovering alcoholic strength beyond what is normal in his daily struggle to cope . . . Faith is Jehovah*, the power of prayer and help given by . . . christian brothers . . . study of God's word can help recovering alcoholic to change his way of thinking . . . Bible principles show him how to improve family life . . . how to avoid thoughts and actions that create undue anxiety and worry . . . Eph. 5:22–23, Prov. 10:4, 13:4; Mat. 6:25–34. As he builds a trusting relationship with Jehovah God, he learns to commit his cares and burdens confidently to Jehovah in prayer. With the aid of loving christian friends he learn to communicate clearly his feelings and needs and comes to realise that he can get close to others without fear. Such relationships inspire the secure feeling and sense of self worth so much needed by the recovering alcoholic" and I may add . . . the recovering drug addicts.

This long extract clearly conveys to us the means, methods and process by which the problem of drug abuse and alcoholism is combated by the Jehovah's Witnesses. First making the

individual aware of his moral obligations to man the supreme being, then giving him logical reasons and motivation for wanting to change. Informing him of the available forms of medical treatment and finally taking steps to 'immunize' him from the unpleasant situations thought, mental attitude and outlook on life that drove the individual into these bad habits by building his confidence in the ability of the supreme being to care for him, right the wrongs in the society and give him a reason to live normal healthy drug and alcohol-free life.

In the December 8, 1982 issue of the 'Awake' in an article entitled "Living with alcoholism" attention was directed to those in the immediate surrounding of the alcoholic. A practical list of do's and don'ts was drawn up to help those in the immediate environment of the alcoholic maintain their emotional balance and to learn the best approach to helping him solve his problem. The firm grip this group has its members and their ever growing numbers is perhaps a reflection of the practicability and success in their approach to solving social problems such as is the subject matter of this essay.

All through my discussion I have substituted the word 'scuffle' for 'struggle'. This is neither a typographical nor grammatical error. It is deliberately chosen to appropriately describe the state and effort of religion in the bid to eradicate drug abuse and alcoholism. For while struggle is defined as making "... strenuous, laboured ... efforts against difficult or forceful opposition ... or constraining circumstances an earnest striving ... or exertion ..."²⁶ a scuffle is simply a confused fight that is not as sustained as in the case of a struggle. Generally speaking, in the fight of religion against drug abuse and alcoholism, there is either lack of any efforts or where such is present, the efforts are neither organised, sustained nor are they directed at the root of the problems in question. There is the need to direct efforts at transforming the minds of frustrated individuals who see the system as corrupt and hopeless. Serious and deliberate attempts should be made to excise the malignant tumor of self doubt, insecurity and fear of the future from the minds of individuals and most importantly workable remedies should be given to those already gripped and crippled by drug abuse and alcoholism. Religion is very well suited for this job, but unfortunately have not fully exploited its power over the minds of men in this struggle against drug abuse and alcoholism.

CONCLUSION

Where do we stand in this struggle against drug abuse and alcoholism? Until our African traditional religion recognises the fact that social evil involves more than harm to others and that crime and aggression are mere manifestations of chronic harm on a personal level, until Islam evolves a system whereby a reliable dynamic universally acceptable and up-to-date tenet is made available to its adherents, until christianity realises that moral change involves much more than building of schools, hospitals and churches, that transformation of lives involves more than an occasional sermon or emotionally charged declaration from the pulpit and crusade grounds, until the churches of christianity revert to the means and methods of primitive christianity — excommunicating and ostracizing the individual with low will power ...

Indeed until Christianity, Islam and African traditional religion realise that there should be strenuous laboured earnest exertion in the struggle against drug abuse and alcoholism, we may have to rely on the progress of medical science, efforts of doctors and pharmacists or we may just have to take our chance in the fight against drug abuse and alcoholism and hope that luck would be on our side.

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