

## Africa and GOD-The way forward to a new renaissance

An opinion by Stephen Ekokobe Awung

It is disheartening to hear Africans especially some intellectuals expressing the view that only God can liberate the continent from the political disaster, economic misery and social chaos that the continent is facing and has been facing from time immemorial. There is no doubt about the fact that Africa is the most underdeveloped continent on earth. The continent has passed through slavery, colonisation, and now the post independence epoch but the socio-economic and political situation is in a total mess. I believe in God but also strongly believe that manner will never fall from heaven again. Africans need to take their destinies in their own hands and fight for prosperity for their own interest, of course with genuine assistance from the international community.

The fallacy that only spiritual intervention can remove Africa from limbo is a lame consolation to people who have such view. Why is Africa in a catastrophic state and what can be done to alter the situation? We all know the complicated consequences of human trade (slavery), colonisation and influence of foreign religions (Christainity, Islam) on African societies but it will be unfair to attribute all of African problems to the above mentioned factors as some critics have done although I must acknowledge the fact that some of African problems stain from her contact with foreign intervention both in the past and today.

Religion has played a pivotal role in African societies before the coming of the European and is still playing a role that can not be underestimated. It does not only provide hope to hopeless people but serves to an extent as a bulwark against social ills like corruption, infidelity, robbery, human right abuses just to name but these. However, it will be naïve for some Africans to think that religion alone can solve all of their problems.

The major issues that make Africa an object of international pity and mockery abroad are; ineffective and disfunctioning governments, economic disaster, social anarchy and a weak civil society. It is a common practice for Africans to blame their leaders for almost all of their problems but I will remind them all that these leaders are products of their societies. Why is it that leaders take power and leave offices but the situation does not change? I believe it is because the average Africans think, behave and act like their leaders. Corruption is like a culture in most African societies. Most Africans execute corrupt practices like a way of life; they do it so freely and openly as if it is something normal. Of course, it is unfortunately normal to give and take bribes, favour relatives and friends in the awards of contracts and political appointments, siphon public funds, and abuse of power both in the public and private sectors in most African communities.

The African leaders are a major contributors to the hopelessness in Africa as a whole but the Africans themselves, what is usually referred to as the man on the street is also an important actor in the malaise facing the continent. The canker worm in most African societies cut across social class, political leaning, sex, occupation, religion and tribes.

The beginnings to an end of Africa's problem are physical and social responsibilities, the respect of law and order, accountability, and patriotism. If Africans love their continent or countries, they will be obliged to work hard in order to make life better for everyone. This means a fight against corruption, civil responsibility, duty conscious etc. The vices discussed here are global issues but the rate of prevalence in Africa is deplorable, coupled with the physical and mental hardship most of the people are experiencing.

Africa is a jungle. The fittest survive but should we allow this to continue? Even the clergy men are sometimes catalyst to destruction. Some have encouraged their followers to commit greivous sins like murder in the name of God and even bless well known robbers (both pen and traditional robbers) who offer them presents. After all, they also need to survive. Godfrey Chaucer wrote "If Gold can rust, what will iron do?" If the people who are ordained to uphold and teach morality are ill moral, what do you expect from their pupils? Would you still fold your hands and expect God to punish them on the judgement day? Or keep quiet if they steal your wife or wealth and expect divine intervention. If most administators are corrupt, how can they successfully combat corruption?

My honest believe is that Africa's problems need more than spiritual intervention. The irony is that Africans worship God more than any other people on earth but their situations remain miserable. Africans must realise that there are desperate people in today's world and must take their destinies in their own hands and start to rebuild their countries rather than giving excuses and blames ,waiting for international aid or fleeing their mother land for greener pasture elsewhere.