

NINE

The Role of Indigenous African Religion in Peacemaking¹

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When my colleagues and I were contemplating producing a co-edited book on the subject relative to the *role of religion in peacemaking*, the initial consideration was in the usual pattern of conception regarding the subject of religion: the notion of religious thought and teaching is exclusively limited to the so called organized religions (e.g., Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, etc.). Since I have had direct experience with African Religion, I dared to suggest to my colleagues that perhaps a chapter on the role of indigenous religion should be considered for the volume. They were generous enough to allow me to work on such a chapter. Once I accepted the assignment, I thought that writing on the broader subject of indigenous religious would be too much and more complex; thus, I decided to limit my efforts to *the role of African Religion in peacemaking*.

As I began writing the chapter on the role of *indigenous African Religion in peacemaking*, many important questions popped up in my mind. Also, I began remembering my early encounter with other religions, specifically, Christianity and Islam. When I was in high school during the 1960s, I was introduced to the feverish campaigns and rivalry between the two popular Semitic religions (Christianity and Islam) for African converts in the region. You see, I grew up in an Oromo home in the Rift Valley in Oromia (Oromia is located in the Ethiopian Empire), where indigenous African religion (*Waqifatchaa*) was still in practice. I vividly remember attending a series of meetings to listen to the debates between some Christian clergy and Muslim clergy, each side arguing that his religion is superior to that

of the other, and that each African in the audience and in the region should accept his religion instead of the religion of the other. The central theme relative to the narrative of the Christian clergy was that if a person accepted Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as a personal savior, he/she would inherit the Kingdom of God. The Muslim clergy's narrative (counter argument) was that God did not have a wife, therefore God did not have children and therefore God did not have a son, and one should believe in *Allah*, for him to be saved from hell. This line of exchange revealed to me, for the first time in my life, the underlying assumption relative to Africans and their culture—the notion that Africans do not have their own religion, therefore someone from outside has to bring his/her religion from outside to save them from going to hell when the end of the world comes. I would learn later on through academic studies, personal readings, and travel, that this had been the central thrust of the external world, which had contributed to sustained inhumane mistreatments—almost universal prejudice: colonization, slavery, etc.—against the African people.

Thus, this chapter is concerned with the role of *indigenous African Religion in peacemaking*. The chapter has six major sections. The first section provides a theoretical frame of reference—a tool for analysis. More specifically, I will discuss some major theoretical concepts within the studies of culture, which situate religion within the realm of culture. Thus, in this work, religion is treated as a component of culture. Also, I will discuss theoretically the relationship between culture and conflict, and conflict resolution. In the second section I will discuss, though briefly, the historical and present day acts of *othering* Africans, which has had a tremendous negative impact on the image of Africans and their cultures globally, and the ways images created about Africans still continue to undermine the standing of Africa and Africans in the contemporary global system. In particular, I will point out how Africans were condemned through critical forces—Semitic religions, Western history, and Western science. I will use the concept of the *othering* to explain the demonization and marginalization of Africans throughout centuries both by the East and West.

In section three, I will focus on the true nature of African religiosity and African Religion. Section four will show how African Religion survived against all odds, both among the Africans on the continent and among those in the *diaspora*, especially in the Americas. Section five will discuss new scholarship on indigenous religions, including African Religion. The final section will present eight elements in African Religion, which contribute to the cause of peacemaking. In the conclusion, I will highlight the implications of the findings in this chapter regarding the subject of religion and peacemaking.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

In this section, I will focus on some basic concepts about religion, the why and the what. Scholars have studied the phenomenon of religion from different theoretical lenses and it is evident that they do not agree on several points regarding the subject of religion.² For the purpose of this work, the most useful theoretical approach will place religion within the realm of the formation and function of culture.³ At the present time there is no precise definition regarding the concept of culture.⁴ For the purpose of this work, I will borrow the definition provided by George Murdock. He stated that

every culture consists of learned or habitual pattern of thought and action current in a particular society, distributing among its members in accordance with the prevailing structure of social statuses, transmitted with relatively modest modifications from each generation to the next.⁵

Here, it is useful to note the significance of culture in human society. Ali Mazrui, a distinguished Kenyan scholar, suggests that culture has seven basic functions: (1) It helps to provide lenses of perception and cognition (how an individual views the world is shaped by his/her cultural paradigms). (2) Culture provides motives for human behavior (culture creates heroes—it motivates individuals and groups to undertake daring actions, even when such actions may threaten their own lives). (3) Culture provides criteria for evaluation (culture teaches a member of a community what is beautiful and what is ugly). (4) Culture provides a basis of identity (it is through culture that a person learns and establishes his/her identity with a particular community). (5) Culture creates a mode of communication (language is an example of this). (6) Culture creates a basis for stratification (the legacy of royal families, the caste system, etc. are all created by cultures). (7) Culture creates a system of production and consumption.⁶

Mary E. Clark has suggested that every culture has three interrelated primary components. The first is *material culture*. This refers to a broad range of products (e.g., foods, furniture, artistic items, etc.). Material culture is based on the ecology within which a particular community finds itself. The second component is *social culture*. This refers to the ways human communities organize themselves (e.g., family groupings, kinship, economic arrangements, political organizations, etc.). The third component is *ideological or sacred culture*.⁷

Since *ideological culture*, commonly referred to as *religion*, is more relevant to the focus of this chapter, more has to be said here about the subject of *culture* and *religion*. Human communities have manifested the desire to worship something above them—something supernatural—throughout history.⁸ There is a desire to establish a link between one's

origin and some type of divine entity, something supernatural.⁹ Karen Armstrong, a British historian and the author of a widely read book, *A History of God*, wrote the following regarding the human desire to create gods to worship them:

Men and women started to worship gods as they became recognizably human; they created religions at the same time they created works of art. This is not simply because they wanted to propitiate powerful forces, these early faiths expressed the wonder and mystery that seem always to have been an essential component of human experience of this beautiful yet terrifying world.¹⁰

Anthropologist, Jack David Eller, provides the following six basic functions of religion, as a cultural force, in society: (1) Religion provides comfort, hope, perhaps love. It provides a sense of control and relief from fear and despair. (2) Religion provides explanations regarding the origin of things and the causes of things. Most religions also create new cultural institutions such as marriage, language, politics. (3) Religion provides a charter for human behavior like rules, norms. (4) Religion functions as the ultimate sanction; it is a source of social control. (5) Religion provides solutions to immediate problems; for example, people pray to their god when they are sick; they pray for rain when there is drought. (6) Religion functions as a source of integration, the glue so to speak, that keeps a society together.¹¹

Before concluding this section, it is useful to address the connections between culture and social conflict. First, conflict is part of human experience—it takes place at all social levels: (a) the interpersonal level, (b) the intergroup level, (c) the organizational level, and (d) the international level.¹² Conflict also takes place in every culture with various levels of intensity, and even in cultures where more violent conflict tends to take place, human beings have demonstrated the desire to contain and manage the conflict.¹³ In most traditional societies conflict resolution is mandatory—the parties in the conflict do not enjoy the luxury of pursuing a particular conflict against the will of the community.¹⁴

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE OTHERING OF AFRICANS

Since there are so many misrepresentations and misconceptions about Africa and its culture, any effort to write about the role of indigenous African Religion in peacemaking will not be a meaningful scholarly endeavor without addressing some of the prevalent notions relative to African Religion. Even more seriously, the gross misrepresentation on the origins of Africans has to be addressed first and foremost. Thus, in this section, I will briefly, discuss the multi-faceted phenomenon of the *othering* of Africans. The concept of *othering* was first developed by a French Philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas,¹⁵ and later became popularized by Ed-

Edward Said in his widely read book, *Orientalism*.¹⁶ Briefly, *othering* refers to a situation where the more powerful group in a particular social universe castigates the weaker group as inferior and subhuman and then constructs a set of myths about the other to justify subjugation and control with the claim that such action is needed to protect the weaker group's interests by the more powerful. More recently, a new generation of scholars, including Michel Foucault and other postmodernists, have argued that knowledge and power play a critical role in achieving a particular agenda in its goal of domination.¹⁷ Indeed, Edward Said successfully used the concept of *othering* to describe the logic and practice of imperialism which had dominated the relationship between the West and the Middle East since the era of enlightenment. In my view, the concept of *othering* is even relevant in describing the negative experience imposed on Africans both by the West and the East.

Thus, in this section I will briefly discuss the *othering* of Africans, both by the East and the West. The form of *othering* Africans presented itself in three major themes—it started in the East, and later on, became more popularized by the West. The first theme pertains to the claim that Africans were the descendants of Ham, the son of Noah, whom, according to the Bible, his father cursed due to the fact that Ham looked to the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers, Shem and Japheth.¹⁸ Based on this text early Hebrews, and later on Christians and Muslims, taught their adherents the myths that Africans were descendants of Ham, and since he was cursed, Africans were appropriately (deservedly) subjected to slavery.¹⁹ Slavery existed in Africa, in some form, like it had existed in other places in human history; however, when the Arabs came to the African continent some nine centuries ago, they made it a market economy. Europeans inherited this practice and expanded upon it, including the importation of millions of Africans across the Atlantic to the Americas. European imperial powers, with their missionary alliances propagated the notion that their adventure in Africa was to bring civilization to the cursed race.

In the United States this practice took a much more severe twist, and included the legalization of racism, leading to the creation of segregated institutions, including church-based organizations, and segregated facilities within the same institution (e.g., the White House). This legacy lasted until the United States Supreme Court's decision, in *Brown vs. Board of Education at Topeka, Kansas* (1954), declared that a segregated educational system was unequal and therefore unconstitutional, and with the passage of the Civil Rights legislation of 1965 by the American Congress, the doctrine of racially based segregation in the United States was essentially demolished.²⁰ Decolonization swept over the African continent beginning in the 1960s. With these dramatic events, it became socially and politically unacceptable to openly discriminate against black

people, though the hidden form of discrimination still exists in some quarters.

The second theme was that Africa had no history until the arrival of European civilization in the nineteenth century.²¹ For example, Hegel, in his lecture relative to philosophy of history, advanced the view that [Africa] "is no historical part of the world: it has no movement or development to exhibit."²² Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper of Oxford University wrote this about [Africa] "This is . . . only the unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque."²³ Professor A. Newton, in his discussion regarding the history of the world to which Europeans had expanded, advanced a view that Africa had no historic past before her colonization by the Europeans.²⁴

With the emergence of African universities in post-colonial Africa and the presence of a new cadre of African scholars this thesis has been challenged.²⁵ The third theme on *othering* the Africans emerged during the nineteenth century. It was the notion that Africans were the last leg of human evolution. This thesis came out of European nineteenth century science, which primarily focused on the physical appearance of groups as a way of categorizing and determining the progress of human civilization. This approach started with the thesis that the Europeans represented a more developed race, and other groups were evaluated from that perspective. For example, a nineteenth century European anthropologist by the name of Carl Vogt, in his book titled *Natural History of Man*, concluded that [the Negro] resembles more the physical features of the ape than those of human beings. He wrote, [the Negro] reminds us "irresistibly of the ape; the short neck, the long, lean lips, the projecting, pendulous belly."²⁶ Of course, this prejudicial assumption has been challenged, particularly following new archeological discoveries indicating that Africa may be the site the first human beings inhabited and that the descendants of the first human race dispersed out of Africa to other parts of the world through population growth and migration.²⁷

DOES AFRICA HAVE RELIGION? IS IT ONE RELIGION OR MULTIPLE RELIGIONS?

In this section I will discuss the nature of African Religion. This is necessary due to the fact that there are so many claims, which have suggested that Africa, the Dark Continent, is an empty space occupied by a people who had no well developed intelligence to create a coherent system of traditions on its own—the people did not have any religion except for some primitive practices. It is on such claims that all three Semitic religions depicted the African belief system as unworthy to consider as a religion. For example, the Jews referred to Africans as gentiles, the Christians referred to Africans as pagans and the Muslims called Africans *kafir*

(infidel, unbeliever). Of course, these negative labels were used in reference to all peoples who were not part of the Semitic belief systems. In the case of the Africans, these labels took much more severe forms of prejudice, mainly because of the erroneous claim that Africans were cursed, as has been discussed earlier in this work.

As scholars recently began reevaluating African history and culture, challenging some of the old myths surrounding the very nature of African humanity, a new focus has emerged relative to the very notion of African religiosity, which has rejected ethnocentric based tradition regarding the conception of religion. Interestingly, among scholars who have argued to rethink the status of African religion in the world of ideas are African theologians. John S. Mbiti, a Kenyan theologian, who authored a highly cited book titled *African Religions and Philosophy*, published in 1969, was one such scholar. He began his book by stating:

Africans are notoriously religious, and each person has its religious system with a set of belief systems and practices. Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible to isolate it. A study of these religious systems is, therefore, ultimately a study of the peoples themselves in all the complexities of both traditional and modern.²⁸

Harry Sawyer, another African clergy, who studied African Religion in West Africa, wrote the following:

One cannot but be impressed by the fact that among all the tribes which have been studied, there is always some reference to God as the center of the supreme Authority which controls the world. God is, of course, ubiquitous and could be invoked to take active interest in men's affairs. That is to say, God is thought of as man's vindicator, the relative who is prepared to expose himself to any risk in order to protect a weaker member of his family. . . . It is therefore generally assumed that God created the world and rules it with his power; that He is a God of Justice.²⁹

Professor Mibiti rejects some of the labels used by outsiders (Western missionaries, scholars, etc.) in reference to African Religion. For example he rejects the claim that the African belief system is based on *ancestral worships* only; he argues that, while ancestral recognition in prayers may be common, the central themes in African religion is more than that.³⁰ He suggests that such activities are more of an effort to have a continued relationship between family members who are dead and the living.³¹ In his view, reducing the African belief system to ancestral worship is a mistake. Another label against African religion is the claim that the African belief system is nothing more than magic. Mibiti also argues that magic and religion are interconnected.³²

What is African Religion then? A definition by J. O. Awolalu may be helpful here:

When we speak of African Traditional Religion we mean the indigenous religion of the Africans. It is the religion that has been handed down from generation to generation by the forebears of the present generation of Africans. It is not a fossil (a thing of the past), but a religion that Africans today have made theirs by living it and practicing it.³³

Julius Mutugi Gathogo provides another definition relative to African Indigenous Religion. He wrote the following regarding this subject:

For our purposes African Religion refers to an indigenous system of belief and practices that are integrated into the culture and worldviews of the African peoples. As in other primal religions, one is born into it as a way of life with its cultural manifestations and religious implications.³⁴

Gathogo further provides the following basic ten functions of African indigenous religion:

1. [It] cultivates the whole person. African religion permeates all departments of life;
2. It provides people with a view of the world;
3. It answers some questions that nothing else can.
4. It provides humanity with moral value by which to live.
5. It provides food from spiritual hunger.
6. It has inspired great ideas.
7. It is a means of communication.
8. It pays attention to the key moments in the life of the individual.
9. It celebrates life.
10. It shows people their limitations.³⁵

IS IT AFRICAN RELIGION OR IS IT AFRICAN RELIGIONS?

One of the major issues surrounding the debates regarding the notion of an African Religion has been whether it should be considered many religions or a religion. The early writers regarding the subject of an African belief system were European travelers, missionaries, colonial observers and academics—all these categories of writers came with ethnocentric views—presented the view that there is so much diversity in the African religious belief system that it could not qualify to be classified as a religion. Even the pioneers of a new approach to the study of African Religion, such as John Mbiti, felt that African belief systems had to be considered religions. Mbiti wrote to this effect the following observation: "We speak of African traditional religions in the plural because there are about a thousand African peoples (tribes), each has its own religious system."³⁶

However, he did argue that while African Religions are expressed in different forms, the underpinning philosophical outlook is the same.³⁷

More recently, however, the scholarship on this aspect of African Religion has shifted toward the thesis that there is indeed one African Religion. Professor Geoffrey Parrinder, a leading expert on comparative religious studies, an ex-missionary to West Africa, is one of the early theorists of religious studies who argued that there are so many common threads in African belief systems that it should be considered African Religion. He provided the following arguments to support his new thesis regarding homogeneity in African belief systems: First, the commonly held view that other *organized* religions (e.g., Christianity, Islam, Hinduism) are homogenous is much less real than apparent—he actually identified the diversity in these religions. Second, the concept of One Supreme Being is more universal among Africans despite ethnic differences.³⁸ Noku-zola Mndende, a South African scholar has argued more forcefully, advocating that African Religion should be considered as one religion, which could stand on its own. In advancing her view relative to this subject, she wrote, "No religion is monolithic but people speak of common features." She added:

We never hear people here talking about Chrisianities, Islams, Hindu-sims etc. We cannot for example, talk about Zulu Religion or Xhosa Religion—African Religion is one. While they are differences in some customs and objects used to perform rituals, the underlying principles remain the same.³⁹

THE SURVIVAL OF AFRICAN RELIGION

Another inevitable question relative to the subject of African Religion is how can one talk about African Religion, when, in reality, the two most popular Semitic religions (Christianity and Islam) have penetrated the African society from corner to corner? Indeed, this is a legitimate question. As a matter of fact, some scholars have argued that these two Semitic religions have been on the continent for so long that there are no more alien religions—they should be considered indigenous African Religions. However, it is the case that when Africans accept the new religions, they do not renounce their indigenous African Religion. The African world-view regarding multiple belief systems in the life of an individual can be explained in this way: to an African, accepting a new religion is just adding a new layer of virtue to his/her already existing rich reservoir of virtues, which he/she had inherited from his/her primary faith. Also, it is a clear case of manifestation for tolerance and accommodation of other world-views in the soul of the same person. Thus, it is conceivable, indeed quite usual, to have in the same family a Christian clergy and a Muslim clergy and other members who adhere to indigenous African Religion, and remarkably the family gets along well—they share the celebration of holidays associated with the Semitic religions as well as the

African festivals. How could this happen? How does indigenous African religion survive in the face of well organized attacks by Christian and Muslim preachers? More recently some scholars have begun to address this phenomenon. Chief Obafemi Awolowo of Nigeria observed, in 1960, the survival of African Religion among Nigerians, who either follow the Christian faith or Islamic faith. To this effect, he wrote the following:

Christian and Moslem beliefs and practices are, with many a Nigerian, nothing but veneers and social facades: at heart and in the privacy of their lives, most Nigerian Christian and Moslems are heathens and animists [sic].⁴⁰

Two decades later Alward Shorter made a more expanded observation regarding the same phenomenon. He wrote:

At baptism, the African Christian repudiates remarkable little of the former non-Christian outlook. He may be obliged to turn back on certain traditional practices, which rightly or wrongly, have been condemned by the Church, but he is not asked to a religious philosophy. Consequently, he returns to the forbidden practices on occasions with remarkable ease. Conversion to Christianity for him is a sheer gain, or an "extra" for which he has opted. It is an "overplay" on his original religious culture. Apart from the superficial condemnations, Christianity has really had little to say about African Traditional Religion in the way of serious judgments of value. Consequently the African Christian operates with two thought systems at once, and both of them are close to each other. Each is superficially modified by the other.⁴¹

Here, I wish to add my own observation regarding the common practices with respect to religion among the Oromo society in the Horn of Africa. The Oromo constitute the single ethnic majority in the entire region. They were sandwiched between the expanding southward Christian kingdom and the aggressively challenging *jihadi* Islamic power led by Imam Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim El Gabzi during the sixteenth century. When both forces became severely weakened as a result of protracted conflicts, the Oromos, as the indigenous majority emerged—neutralized both forces through their philosophy of tolerance and accommodation of cultures. Those who resided in the North, bordering Abyssinians (Amharas and Tigreans), intermarried and accepted Orthodox Christianity, and those who lived in the East, bordering Somalia, also intermarried with Somalis and became Muslims. At the same time, they kept their African culture. Professor Donald Levine of the University of Chicago made the following observations regarding the nature of these three conflictual ethnic groups:

The warfare between the Amhara Kingdom and Somali and Afar tribesmen under Gran was in some respects a clash between similar antagonists. Both were semitized Ethiopians, adherents of a Semitic religion and followers of political leaders who sought legitimacy

through identification with Semitic ancestors. By contrast the expansion of the Oromo represents a novel element in the politics of the Empire—the assertion of a pagan, purely African force.⁴²

They were conquered and colonized by the Abyssinians during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. However, the Oromos retained their culture relatively intact.⁴³ For example, the leaders of the Matcha Tulama Association, the first Pan-Oromo organization, whose membership include Orthodox Christians, Protestant Christians, Muslims, and the adherents to *Waqifachaa*, met at the *Dadhi* River and made a new covenant based on Oromo cultural tradition. That event set the stage for a full-fledged Oromo national movement for liberation of Oromia in the early 1970s.⁴⁴ Currently, the survival of an Oromo belief system manifests itself in a variety of ways. First, *Waqifachaa*, Oromo religion, has emerged as a revitalized social force in the Oromo national movement. Second, among Christian Oromos, typically, there are two wedding ceremonies—one in a church and the second in the homes of the bride and bridegroom, where the wedding ceremonies are performed in accordance with Oromo cultural tradition.

Also, the strength of African Religion is revealed through its survival in the diaspora communities, who are the descendants of slaves, in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. A few examples will illustrate this observation. In the Island of Haiti, *Vodou* religion has survived slavery and the sustained prejudice by the Catholic elite, a successive dictatorship, and has fought its way to the status of national holiday, holding equal status with the Catholic Church.⁴⁵ *Santa Maria* is a significant religious force in countries like Cuba and Colombia. In Brazil, where the largest population of African descent resides, outside the African continent, African Religion is a vibrant cultural force.⁴⁶

HOW DOES AFRICAN RELIGION CONTRIBUTE TO THE CAUSE OF PEACEMAKING?

Thus far in this work, I have discussed the complicated history of African people and its religion. Also, I have illustrated from available literature and personal experience that African Religion has survived against all odds—it has survived colonialism, slavery, and demonization by the preachers of Semitic religions. Also, I have discussed, though briefly, the newly emerging scholarly orientation toward African Religion by scholars of theology and religious studies. In the remaining section of this chapter, I will focus on the peacemaking aspects of African Religion.

African Religion contributes to the cause of peacemaking in various ways. Here I wish to focus on eight critical elements where African Religion influences and shapes the activities of peacemaking. My presentation

on these eight elements is based on reviewed literature for this work and personal experience.

1. *God is the Supreme Being*: As discussed earlier, in the African world view, God is the Supreme Being, the Creator of all things—human beings, animals and nature. According to this concept, it is His will that all creatures have successful lives and coexist in peace. Thus, religious leaders, community members, and elders know that they have a special responsibility to resolve conflicts and maintain peace among His creatures. Indeed, this is a significant religious thought among Africans across the board. The existence of such universally held world-view among an average African society generates positive responses toward the cause and mission of peacemaking. Thus, for an average African, the cause of peacemaking is a paramount mission in life.
2. *Harmony between the Creator and His creatures*: The African Religion subscribes to a holistic approach to life. It advocates harmony among God, the Supreme Being, and all his creatures—harmony among humans, harmony between humans and nature, and harmony between the Divine and his creatures. The underpinning philosophical orientation regarding the urge for harmony stems from the strong belief that conflict generates poison between the Creator and his creatures—humans and nature. Thus, an average African is uncomfortable when there is a conflict either in the family or community; such feeling, based on his/her belief urges him/her to seek peace to end the conflict so that harmony can be restored in the family and community. As a matter of fact, the overarching goal in peacemaking is not to find out who is at fault for the purpose of exacting punishment, although such issues are typically considered, it is to restore the damaged relationships as a result of conflict, so that harmony can be achieved once again.
3. *Tolerance and Co-existence*: In African religion tolerance and co-existence is advocated among community members. This tendency to practice tolerance stems from the fact that Africans believe that every person and nature are the creation of God, and God has some purpose for creating them; therefore, one has to tolerate them and allow them to exist side by side. As a matter of fact, it seems that, in part, this is the reason why many Africans accepted Semitic religions, and those who did not accept them tolerated their relatives, friends, and members of their community who had accepted these new religions. In this sense, African religion embraces the idea that everyone should have a *fair share in life*. This dimension of the African religion directly and indirectly promotes peace and harmony in the society.

4. *God of Justice will punish the wrong doers:* In the African world-view, the Supreme Being is a God of justice. In this concept is contained the notion that there is right and wrong. Wrong acts by a member of a community create conflict, leading to disharmony. God does not like disharmony among his creatures. Also, He is a God of justice; therefore he will punish the wrong doers. This world-view promotes the ultimate form of sanctions against wrong and unjust acts. Thus, every child is socialized to be conscious of this world-view in life; he/she learns to adjust his/her actions and expectations in life according to this principle.
5. *Inter-connectedness:* In the African world-view, a person is a corporate being—a social being. He/she does not exist separate from his/her group. Professor Mbiti successfully captured this significant dimension of African religiosity. He stated:

Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group; whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: 'I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore, I am'. This is a cardinal point in understanding the African view of man.⁴⁷

This critical principle in African religion contributes to the cause of peacemaking in several ways. Two are critical. First, because a person has been socialized in his/her world view that his/her life has no meaning without the welfare of the group, the concerned person will tend not to create conflict, and if a conflict is created, he/she will seek to resolve the conflict as fast as possible. Second, the observers will also ensure that the conflict is resolved because, if not resolved quickly, they fear that the conflict will escalate and affect the interest of the entire group negatively.

6. *Confession and Forgiveness:* In African society, confession and forgiveness are prerequisites for peacemaking. These acts are part of the religious belief system in the African society. They are influenced and shaped by the overarching philosophical thrust in African society, which instructs its members to tell the truth about a given conflict, advocating that the heart is cleansed by telling the whole truth. This is done so that the process of healing can begin. Also, forgiveness is required so that a new relationship can begin. These twin acts will lead to the successful resolution of a given conflict, thus the harmonious relations in the community will be restored.
7. *Religious Rituals and Symbols:* Among the common features found in African indigenous processes of peacemaking is the use of rituals and religious symbols. Rituals are symbolic acts to communicate some important messages in human interactions. In the case of peacemaking, rituals have a religious dimension. They are used to

African festivals. How could this happen? How does indigenous African religion survive in the face of well organized attacks by Christian and Muslim preachers? More recently some scholars have begun to address this phenomenon. Chief Obafemi Awolowo of Nigeria observed, in 1960, the survival of African Religion among Nigerians, who either follow the Christian faith or Islamic faith. To this effect, he wrote the following:

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The warfare between the Amhara Kingdom and Somali and Afar tribesmen under Gran was in some respects a clash between similar antagonists. Both were semitized Ethiopians, adherents of a Semitic religion and followers of political leaders who sought legitimacy

through identification with Semitic ancestors. By contrast the expansion of the Oromo represents a novel element in the politics of the Empire—the assertion of a pagan, purely African force.⁴²

They were conquered and colonized by the Abyssinians during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. However, the Oromos retained their culture relatively intact.⁴³ For example, the leaders of the Matcha Tulama Association, the first Pan-Oromo organization, whose membership include Orthodox Christians, Protestant Christians, Muslims, and the adherents to *Waqifachaa*, met at the *Dadhi* River and made a new covenant based on Oromo cultural tradition. That event set the stage for a full-fledged Oromo national movement for liberation of Oromia in the early 1970s.⁴⁴ Currently, the survival of an Oromo belief system manifests itself in a variety of ways. First, *Waqifachaa*, Oromo religion, has emerged as a revitalized social force in the Oromo national movement. Second, among Christian Oromos, typically, there are two wedding ceremonies—one in a church and the second in the homes of the bride and bridegroom, where the wedding ceremonies are performed in accordance with Oromo cultural tradition.

Also, the strength of African Religion is revealed through its survival in the diaspora communities, who are the descendants of slaves, in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. A few examples will illustrate this observation. In the Island of Haiti, *Vodou* religion has survived slavery and the sustained prejudice by the Catholic elite, a successive dictatorship, and has fought its way to the status of national holiday, holding equal status with the Catholic Church.⁴⁵ *Santa Maria* is a significant religious force in countries like Cuba and Colombia. In Brazil, where the largest population of African descent resides, outside the African continent, African Religion is a vibrant cultural force.⁴⁶

HOW DOES AFRICAN RELIGION CONTRIBUTE TO THE CAUSE OF PEACEMAKING?

Thus far in this work, I have discussed the complicated history of African people and its religion. Also, I have illustrated from available literature and personal experience that African Religion has survived against all odds—it has survived colonialism, slavery, and demonization by the preachers of Semitic religions. Also, I have discussed, though briefly, the newly emerging scholarly orientation toward African Religion by scholars of theology and religious studies. In the remaining section of this chapter, I will focus on the peacemaking aspects of African Religion.

African Religion contributes to the cause of peacemaking in various ways. Here I wish to focus on eight critical elements where African Religion influences and shapes the activities of peacemaking. My presentation

on these eight elements is based on reviewed literature for this work and personal experience.

1. *God is the Supreme Being:* As discussed earlier, in the African world view, God is the Supreme Being, the Creator of all things—human beings, animals and nature. According to this concept, it is His will that all creatures have successful lives and coexist in peace. Thus, religious leaders, community members, and elders know that they have a special responsibility to resolve conflicts and maintain peace among His creatures. Indeed, this is a significant religious thought among Africans across the board. The existence of such universally held world-view among an average African society generates positive responses toward the cause and mission of peacemaking. Thus, for an average African, the cause of peacemaking is a paramount mission in life.
2. *Harmony between the Creator and His creatures:* The African Religion subscribes to a holistic approach to life. It advocates harmony among God, the Supreme Being, and all his creatures—harmony among humans, harmony between humans and nature, and harmony between the Divine and his creatures. The underpinning philosophical orientation regarding the urge for harmony stems from the strong belief that conflict generates poison between the Creator and his creatures—humans and nature. Thus, an average African is uncomfortable when there is a conflict either in the family or community; such feeling, based on his/her belief urges him/her to seek peace to end the conflict so that harmony can be restored in the family and community. As a matter of fact, the overarching goal in peacemaking is not to find out who is at fault for the purpose of exacting punishment, although such issues are typically considered, it is to restore the damaged relationships as a result of conflict, so that harmony can be achieved once again.
3. *Tolerance and Co-existence:* In African religion tolerance and co-existence is advocated among community members. This tendency to practice tolerance stems from the fact that Africans believe that every person and nature are the creation of God, and God has some purpose for creating them; therefore, one has to tolerate them and allow them to exist side by side. As a matter of fact, it seems that, in part, this is the reason why many Africans accepted Semitic religions, and those who did not accept them tolerated their relatives, friends, and members of their community who had accepted these new religions. In this sense, African religion embraces the idea that everyone should have a *fair share in life*. This dimension of the African religion directly and indirectly promotes peace and harmony in the society.

4. *God of Justice will punish the wrong doers:* In the African world-view, the Supreme Being is a God of justice. In this concept is contained the notion that there is right and wrong. Wrong acts by a member of a community create conflict, leading to disharmony. God does not like disharmony among his creatures. Also, He is a God of justice; therefore he will punish the wrong doers. This world-view promotes the ultimate form of sanctions against wrong and unjust acts. Thus, every child is socialized to be conscious of this world-view in life; he/she learns to adjust his/her actions and expectations in life according to this principle.
5. *Inter-connectedness:* In the African world-view, a person is a corporate being—a social being. He/she does not exist separate from his/her group. Professor Mbiti successfully captured this significant dimension of African religiosity. He stated:

Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group; whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: 'I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore, I am'. This is a cardinal point in understanding the African view of man.⁴⁷

This critical principle in African religion contributes to the cause of peacemaking in several ways. Two are critical. First, because a person has been socialized in his/her world view that his/her life has no meaning without the welfare of the group, the concerned person will tend not to create conflict, and if a conflict is created, he/she will seek to resolve the conflict as fast as possible. Second, the observers will also ensure that the conflict is resolved because, if not resolved quickly, they fear that the conflict will escalate and affect the interest of the entire group negatively.

6. *Confession and Forgiveness:* In African society, confession and forgiveness are prerequisites for peacemaking. These acts are part of the religious belief system in the African society. They are influenced and shaped by the overarching philosophical thrust in African society, which instructs its members to tell the truth about a given conflict, advocating that the heart is cleansed by telling the whole truth. This is done so that the process of healing can begin. Also, forgiveness is required so that a new relationship can begin. These twin acts will lead to the successful resolution of a given conflict, thus the harmonious relations in the community will be restored.
7. *Religious Rituals and Symbols:* Among the common features found in African indigenous processes of peacemaking is the use of rituals and religious symbols. Rituals are symbolic acts to communicate some important messages in human interactions. In the case of peacemaking, rituals have a religious dimension. They are used to

remind the actors in the conflicts and the community in which conflict takes place about their connections with the Creator, and the rich heritage which binds them all; it reinforces the importance of interconnectedness. Rituals are also used to sooth the pain and loss of the aggrieved party in the conflict. They are also used to communicate a new covenant that the wrong, which had been committed against their member(s) will not happen again. Finally, rituals are used to communicate a message that the entire community shares the loss, the pain, as a result of the conflict, and also share the hopes and aspirations for a peaceful future.⁴⁸

8. *Prayers, seeking the ultimate endorsement from the Supreme Being:* At the end of a peace process, the elders seek blessings from the Supreme Being. With this purpose in mind, the peace ceremony is organized, full of rich rituals. The most important element of such ceremony is the prayer offered to the Supreme Being. This is demonstrated in an Oromo prayer for peace and reconciliation, which is offered at the end of a peace process.

Let the country be reconciled;
 Let the big, senior, powerful be reconciled;
 Let the little, junior, weak be reconciled;
 Let the cattle be reconciled;
 Let us be reconciled;
 Let us be at peace;
 Like us be thick like yogurt [Give us solidarity in peace].⁴⁹

In African Religion, the members of a particular community also pray for sustainable peace. Below is a prayer offered by Kikuyu elders at public assemblies:

Say the Elder may have wisdom and speak one voice.⁵⁰
 Praise Ngai, Peace with us.
 Say the country may have tranquility, and the people may continue to increase.
 Praise Ngai, Peace be with us.
 Say that the people and the flocks and the herds may prosper and be free from the illness.
 Praise Ngai, Peace be with us.
 Say the fields may bear much fruit, and the land may continue to be fertile.
 Praise Ngai, Peace be with us.⁵¹

In African Religion there is also a prayer of purification—peace for personal internal tranquility. Such a prayer is offered by an individual whose soul has been tormented due to some negative experience in his/her life, and in such a case an individual turns to his creator for purifica-

tion. An Igbo prayer is an example of such communication with his Creator:

Lord, King, Creator!
If I killed any person,
If I took another man's property,
If I bore false witness,
If I dug up another's yam,
If I committed adultery, or
Abducted another's wife,
Ezechhitoke! Take away my
Life today.⁵²

CONCLUSION

The goal of this chapter was to explore the role of indigenous African Religion in peacemaking. I used a set of concepts from the studies of culture to situate religion within the realm of culture. Also, I discussed the connection between culture and conflict, and conflict resolution. The chapter also addressed some of the major misconceptions about Africans—their humanity, their culture, particularly the religious aspect of their culture. By using a comparative approach, I established that, indeed, Africans do have a strong culture, which has been heavily influenced by their moral philosophy. More significantly, I have established that Africans have had a strong religious tradition, which is anchored on the concept of a universal God, the Supreme Being, and the Creator of all things. Finally, I discussed eight specific elements in the African Religion, which contribute to the cause of peacemaking.

Implications: In my view, these findings, as presented in this essay, have implications for theory, practice, and pedagogy. First, if we place the consideration relative to the formation and functions of religion within the realm of human culture, I believe we will be able to overcome the notion, which has been in action during the last several centuries, that there is one superior religion, which needs to spread across the world through all means. Indeed, it is this preoccupation with the idea that one's religion is superior to other beliefs, which has led to gross misconceptions, prejudice about cultures of other peoples and their belief system, bloody wars, conquests, and occupation. Africans do not proselytize their religion beyond their borders, and yet, they have received the brunt of negative treatments specifically, by the promoters of the three Semitic religions.

Second, I believe others can learn from African Religion, which advocates, both at the philosophical level and the practical level, that no one person or a single group, among human community has more access to the Divine so much that such entities are entitled to consider themselves

as the *chosen people*. The relevant point here is that African Religion manifests a great deal of tolerance for the claims of others to have connections with the Supreme Being. African religion puts supreme premium on peace and harmony among God's creatures rather than establishing the superiority of a particular world-view over others. It advocates confession (cleansing one's conscience) and reconciliation as opposed to the pursuit of revenge and exacting punishment for a particular wrong doing by a member or a group. Furthermore, it defers the ultimate judgment regarding an infraction (perceived or real) committed by a community member/members against the laws of the Supreme Being to Him only, as opposed to pursuing and persecuting [by a religious body] the perceived wrong-doer against the will of the Divine.

Third, religious life is part of human experience (part of human needs, if you will); thus, in my view, it is neither useful nor practical to dismiss religion as irrelevant in human affairs. However, in my view, the way we teach a particular religious doctrine can make a difference in reference to promoting peace in a society and, indeed, in the world. As part of human culture, religion is a product of teaching in a formal and informal ways. And also, in my view, the redeeming dimension of human capacity is that people can learn new ways of thinking—this includes in the realm of religion. Through such processes, people are capable of reinterpreting and revising previously held concepts and religious doctrines. They are capable of rejecting the old prejudices informed by a particular set of religious teachings, toward other groups. The best example of such transformation can be illustrated by the recent dramatic and positive event with respect to race relations in the Southern Baptist Denomination in the United States, the largest Protestant denomination in the United States. It will be recalled that slavery flourished in the American South, and after the declaration of emancipation, the American South became the bastion of the Jim Crow doctrine and hateful practices, where African Americans were grossly mistreated because of their racial identity. The Southern Baptist Denomination, also known as The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), supported slavery, segregation, and tolerated the ugly practices of Jim Crow. However, the same denomination elected Rev. Fred Luter, Jr., as its first African American President during its annual convention, which took place in June 2012.⁵³ That denomination has also apologized to African Americans for its support of slavery and racial segregation.⁵⁴ Similar events have taken place regarding race relations in some other Christian denominations. For example, Pope Benedict XVI has apologized to the indigenous communities in Canada for the role the Catholic Church played in the colonial enterprise and the misguided policies relative to the Residential Schools in Canada.⁵⁵ In 2008, The Episcopal Church, during its 75th General Convention, apologized for its participation, and justification of slavery.⁵⁶

Fourth, the discussion in this work also has direct relevance to the contemporary African condition. Africa, after five decades of independence, still faces many violent conflicts. The model of the modern state, which has been inherited from colonial legacy, has created many intractable problems for Africans. Just two such problems will be mentioned here. First, the Westphalia state model, which has been transplanted in Africa, has been found to be alien to African culture.⁵⁷ This model bestowed too much power on the state institution. The modern African elite have engaged in a feverish struggle to capture state power and control it. This crippling power struggle has manifested itself in various forms (e.g., frequent coup d'états, fraudulent elections, human rights abuses—in some cases genocide—nepotism, etc.).⁵⁸ The second major problem has been the fact that the Westphalia model entitles state power holders to ensure state security—there is no provision in this model related to human security. Thus, the African elite obtained weapons in the name of state security, but used them against their political opponents and also against those individuals and groups which demanded simple justice in the respective societies. More recently, a new Cold War—war on terrorism versus war on the infidel—has engulfed the continent (e.g., The Horn of Africa, Nigeria, Somalia, Mali).⁵⁹ This new phenomenon is in contradiction with long-standing African religious thought (as discussed in this chapter). Now, that the West has embraced conflict resolution as a worthy professional pursuit, it is time for the African ruling class to go back to their cultural roots and rediscover the conception of peace, harmony, interconnectedness, forgiveness and reconciliation as enshrined in the African religious philosophy.

Fifth, related to the above stated point, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) has landed in the African continent. As stated above, while such events should be welcomed, I have a concern that the new knowledge of ADR (theory and practice) is not being connected to the African culture and reality. In my view, the dream of revitalizing the culture of peace in Africa in the context of the new social dynamics has to start with school curriculum, which incorporates the values found in African religious philosophy.⁶⁰

NOTES

1. I wish to acknowledge the significant contributions of Marion Kiprop, my Graduate Assistant, in the development of this chapter. She checked out the relevant books from the library and also did the search for some useful information relative to the subject of the paper on the Internet. Also, she read the final draft of the chapter and made useful comments. I thank her for all these valuable contributions.

2. See Geoffrey Parrinder, ed., *World Religions: From Ancient History to the Present* (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1984), 9–21.

3. I benefited from reading Jack D. Eller's treatment of this subject. See the preface to his book, Jack D. Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2007), xii-xv.
4. Kevin Avruch, *Culture and Conflict Resolution* (Washington, D.C.: USIP Press, 1998), 6-21.
5. G. S. Murdoch, *Culture and Society* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1965), 147-148.
6. Ali Mazrui, *Cultural Forces in World Politics* (Oxford: James Curry, 1990), 7, 8.
7. Mary E. Clark, *Ariadne's Thread: The Search for New Modes of Thinking* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 157.
8. Parrinder, *World Religions*, 9.
9. Ibid.
10. Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994), xix.
11. Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion: Culture to the Ultimate*.
12. See Tillet Maquarrie University File.
13. Leslie E. Sponsel and Thomas Gregor, eds., *The Anthropology of Peace and Non-violence* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), xv.
14. Hamdesa Tusio, "Indigenous Processes of Conflict Resolution: Neglected Methods of Peacemaking by the New Field of Conflict Resolution," in *Critical Issues in Peace and Conflict Studies*, eds., Thomas Matyok, Jessica Senehi, and Sean Byrne (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), 245-270; Douglas Fry, *Human Potential for Peace: An Anthropological Challenge to Assumptions About War and Violence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
15. Adriaan T. Peperzak and Emmanuel Levinas, *To the Other: An Introduction of the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* (Purdue: University of Purdue Press, 1993).
16. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).
17. "Other," *Wikipedia*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Other&action=history> (accessed Jul. 4, 2012).
18. See Genesis 9: 18-25 (RSV).
19. David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).
20. Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975).
21. J. D. Fage, ed., *Africa Discovers Her Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).
22. As in David T. Adamo, *Africa and the Africans in the Old Testament* (London: Christian University Press, 1998), 2.
23. Ibid.
24. Fage, *Africa Discovers Her Past*, 1.
25. Geoffrey Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion* (Westport: Greenwood Publishers, 1976), 9-10.
26. As in James L. Cox, *From Primitive to Indigenous* (Burlington: Ashgate Press, 2007), 11.
27. Ali Mazrui, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* (Boston: Little and Brown Company, 1986), 41-61.
28. John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1990), 1.
29. Harry Sawyer, *God, Ancestor or Creator? Aspects of Traditional Belief in Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone* (London: Longman, 1970), 3-5.
30. Mbiti, *African Religion*, 8-9.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. J. Omosade Awolalu, "Sin and Its Removal in the African Traditional Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 44, no. 2 (1976): 275, <http://jstor.org/stable/1462340>.

34. Julius M. Gathogo, "The Reason for Studying African Religion in Post Colonial Africa." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 36, no. 2 (2009): 108.
35. Ibid, 109.
36. Mbiti, *African Religion*, 1.
37. Ibid.
38. Parrinder, *African Traditional*, 10–11.
39. Gathogo, "The Reason for Studying African Religion in Post Colonial Africa," 13.
40. As in Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 7, 8.
41. Ibid, 8.
42. Donald N. Levine, *Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of a Multi-Ethnic Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 78.
43. See Abbas H. Gnamo, "Islam, the Orthodox Church and Oromo Nationalism (Ethiopia)." *Cashiers d'Etudes Africaines* XLII-I, no.165 (2002): 98–120.
44. See Hamdesa Tuso, "Oromo Problem and the United States Foreign Policy" in *Arrested Development in Ethiopia*, eds., Seyoum Hameso and Mohammed Hassen (Trenton: Red Sea Press, 2006), 149–199.
45. Margaret M. Armand, "Healing in the Homeland: Haitian Vodou Tradition" (PhD diss., Nova Southeastern University, 2011), 85–128.
46. Roger Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil: Toward a Sociology of the Interpenetration of Civilizations* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, 2007); Nei Lopes, "African Religions in Brazil, Negotiation, and Resistance: A Look From Within." *Journal of Black Studies* 34, no. 6 (2004): 838–860.
47. Mbiti, *African Religion*, 106.
48. Lisa Schirch, *Ritual and Symbol in Peacebuilding* (Bloomfield, Kumarian Press, 2005).
49. Jon Hinnant, "The Gujis of Ethiopia" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1972).
50. The number 1 in this prayer denotes the lines spoken by an elder, while the number 2 indicates the responses by an assembly. *Ngai* in Kikuyu language means the Creator and the giver of life.
51. Jomo Kenyatta, "Kikuyu Religion, Ancestor-Worship and Sacrificial Practices." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 10, no. 3 (1937).
52. Emefie Ikenga-Metuh, "Content, Context, and Spirituality of Igbo Prayer." *Research in African Literatures* 16, no. 3 (1985): 338.
53. Jena McGregor, "Southern Baptist Convention Elects Fred Luter as First Black President: What this Leadership Moment Means," *The Washington Post*, last modified June 19, 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-leadership/post/southern-baptist-convention-elects-fred-luter-as-first-black-president-what-this-leadership-moment-means/2012/06/19/gJQA3xqXoV_blog.html.
54. Michael Allen, "Southern Baptist Convention Elects First Black President, Fred Luter, Jr., but Opposes Gay Rights," *Opposing Views*, last modified June 20, 2012, <http://www.opposingviews.com/i/religion/christianity/southern-baptist-convention-elects-first-black-president-fred-luter-jr>.
55. "Pope Expresses 'Sorrow' for Abuse at Residential Schools," *CBC News*, last modified April 29, 2009, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2009/04/29/pope-first-nations042909.html>.
56. Conflict, Culture, and Memory Lab, "Episcopal Church Apology for Slavery," *Church Apologies Database*, last modified 2010, <http://ccmlab.uwaterloo.ca/pad/church.html#>.
57. Basil Davidson, a prominent British intellectual, a veteran of African studies, wrote significant books on African liberation movements. (He was also an advocate of the African liberation cause.) In 1992, he wrote a book titled *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State*, in which he concluded, "The post colonial nation-state has become a shackle on progress." According to his insightful analysis, the reason is due to the nature of the alien institution. See his work, Basil Davidson,

The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State (New York: Times Books, 1992).

58. For representative literature on this assessment see Geoffrey Ayittey, *Africa Betrayed* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992); Pierre Englebert, *Africa: Unity, Sovereignty and Sorrow* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2009); Eghosa Osaghae, *Nigeria since Independence: The Crippled Giant* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

59. I have borrowed the concept of the New Cold War from the seminal work of Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War: Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 2.

60. Some clarifications: In this chapter, I have attempted to show that Africans do have a religion and there are elements in their religion that support the cause of peacemaking. However, I need to clarify that, like any other religion, it is a creation of beings, thus, it is imperfect. Africans, like any other group, have not been consistent. However, it is my position that the subject of African Religion has been neglected and more significantly misrepresented for many centuries.

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Peace on Earth

The Role of Religion in Peace and Conflict Studies

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