

## **2 Cor. 7:1 in the Context of African Purification Rites**

**A paper presented by J. Ayodeji Adewuya**

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### **Abstract**

In 2 Cor. 7:1 Paul exhorts the Corinthians to cleanse themselves from all the filthiness of the flesh and spirit, an injunction that is predicated on the holiness of God, and the nature of the people of God. This paper suggests that the understanding of the exhortation would be enhanced if examined against the backdrop of purification rites that are prevalent among various traditional Africans.

### **Introduction**

In summing up his discussion on the interface between the 'scholar' and the 'ordinary reader' in the process of interpretation, Lategan rightly concludes that "in order to validate its claim to universal validity, the biblical text is dependent on the appropriation of readers with different orientations in different contexts."<sup>1</sup> This paper attempts to show how the reading of 2 Cor. 7:1 from an African cultural context not only enhances the understanding of the text but also compliments its scholarly interpretation. It is an example of what Ukpong describes as 'inculturation biblical hermeneutic,' an approach by which interpreters consciously and

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard C. Lategan, "Scholar and Ordinary Reader: More Than A Simple Interface" in *Reading with African Overtures*, *Semeia* 73 (1997), 254.

explicitly seek to interpret the biblical text from socio-cultural perspectives of different people.<sup>2</sup> It is a method that includes giving due consideration to the religious and secular culture as well as the social and historical experiences of the readers. 'Ordinary' African readers of the Bible do not dwell on a passage as somebody else's text to be read and analyzed; rather, they see the text as intended to provide them with a framework to look at their own lives. As such, they immediately appropriate a particular text and situate themselves inside of it, trying to understand what it expects of them. Thus, discussing a text really means discussing the life of the people without making any great distinction between method and content. Reality and the biblical text merge, each shedding light on the other and competing for attention. Hence, as Pobee states, "culture then is a hermeneutic for reading Scripture."<sup>3</sup> Specifically, then, one must ask how the experience of an African could facilitate the understanding of 2 Cor. 7:1. Now he calls them both as individuals and as a community to make their holiness complete by cleansing themselves from every type of pollution because of the fear of God. There are three important elements of Paul's exhortation that are important for the discussion here. These are the motif of cleansing, the idea of pollution, and the fear of God.

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### **Holiness: Cleansing from Pollution**

In 2 Cor. 7:1, Paul, as a summary exhortation of the preceding verses (6:14-18), enjoins the Corinthians 'καθαρίσωμεν ἑαυτούς'. Paul, including himself, summons the Corinthian church to stop unacceptable relationships with iniquity, the powers of darkness, Belial, unbelievers, and idols. Paul's exhortation to holiness and a call for separation in 2 Cor. 6:14 is now

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<sup>2</sup> This is a term that is coined by Justin S. Ukpong, "The Parable of the Shrewd manager (Luke 16:1-13): An Essay in Inculturation Biblical Hermeneutic" in *Reading with African Overtures*. Semeia 73 (1996), 190.

<sup>3</sup> John S. Pobee, "Bible Study in Africa: A Passover of Language" in *Reading with African Overtures*, Semeia 73 (1997), 166.

formulated in terms of cleansing from defilement of both flesh and spirit, a circumlocution of the total person.

Paul's call to cleansing will no doubt ring a bell for a traditional African as he/she is not only familiar with purification rites but understands the underlying reasons for such acts. There are various kinds of purification rites in Africa that are tied to various events and for various reasons.<sup>4</sup> Not all purification rites are done for religious purposes. Nevertheless there are religious purification rites that are specifically concerned with each society's relationship with the deity. In such cases there are basically three major grounds for purification namely, taboos, the holiness of God, and relationship with the deity (God.) Among Africans, as Awolalu notes, "purification is a positive approach to the cleaning and removal of sin and pollution. It involves an outward act which is consequently believed to have a spiritual inner cleansing. The cleansing may be of the body, or of a thing or of a territory or community."<sup>5</sup> If one is aware or is made aware by a diviner that he or she has committed an offence which has resulted in the disruption of his/her peace, he or she will have to undergo a ritual cleansing. This may include ritual shaving of the hair followed by ritual bathing in a flowing stream. The "washing off" of stains is undertaken by the sinner under the guidance of a priest-on an appointed date, time and place. The sinner provides what the priest directs him/her to bring for the "washing." The whole event is symbolic and dramatic. Sin is here portrayed as a stain and a filthy rag which can be washed off and cast off respectively. The disappearance of sin brings new life just as the rejuvenated person takes on a clean white cloth and casts off the old one.

The significance of purification among many African societies is evident in the words that are used. Among the Zulus purification is called either as *ukuhlambulula* or *ukusefa* both of

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<sup>4</sup> See Benjamin C. Ray, *African traditional Religions: Symbol, Ritual and Community* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1976), 90-100.

<sup>5</sup> J. Omosade Awolalu, "Sin and its removal in African Traditional Religion, *JAAR* 44/2 (1976), 284.

which mean ‘to make thin’, ‘to make a person free, loose, unbound’ and derive from the word *ukuhlamba* which means ‘to wash.’<sup>6</sup> In Zulu traditional life purification rites are understood as the process through which a person is made ‘free and refined of dross and imperfection . . .’<sup>7</sup>, From the practice of ritual, in the figure of impurity, a concept of guilt develops and, as such, purification becomes atonement. It is also evident that in the sphere of purification, ritual and ethical reflection often merge without a break. The common Swahili word for cleansing is *utakaso*, a word that is translated as cleansing or sanctification. It is used both for moral and ritual cleansing. For example, it is used for rituals such as cleansing of evil spirits and the removal of a curse. It applies to the cleansing of the widow/widower after the death of the spouse. In short, the word refers to the total removal of evil. It is used in contrast to *kusafisha* which, although is also translated as cleaning or washing, is applied when referring to the cleaning of a house, washing of clothes, etc. The wide range of meaning of *utakaso* fits well with the multi-faceted nature of holiness that is articulated by Paul in 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1. In addition to the foregoing, for traditional Africans, purification is a social process. To belong to a group requires one to conform to its standard of purity—the outsider, the uninitiated, and the rebel are considered unclean. Therefore, the emotionally charged activities that accompany purification or cleansing constitute a ritual demonstration.

What has just been said is helpful in understanding the exhortation in 2 Cor. 7:1. Paul uses the word *καθαρίζειν*, a word that rarely occurs in the Pauline corpus, and which is frequently used to translate *ἁγιάζειν*. It is used in the Priestly materials with reference to making persons, things or places ceremonially fit for participation or use within the cultus (cf. Numbers 9:13; 18:11, 13; Leviticus 12:8; 13:13, 17, 37; 11:36f; 4:12; 6:11). In Psalm 51 (50): 2, 7, 10, (LXX), for

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<sup>6</sup> Bengt G. M. Sundlker, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, 1961), 210

<sup>7</sup> Bryant, *Zulu-English Dictionary*, 239.

example, the adjective and verb are both used in the prayer for ethical purity in the entire person. In its general usage the word group denotes physical, religious, and moral cleanness or purity in such senses as clean, free from stains or shame, and free from adulteration.

Purification in the Old Testament usually has to do not simply with dedication to holy use but with removal of ceremonial uncleanness (or ritual impurity), which occurred in several ways. Isaiah 52:11, a passage to which Paul alludes in 2 Cor. 6:17, mentions purification in anticipation of the return from the Exile. This need for purification, along with the usual purification for holy service, was probably in mind as the priests and Levites purified themselves (Ezra 6:20) and then the people and the rebuilt city gates (Neh. 12:30) after the Exile (cf. 12:45; 13:22). Thus, the notion of separation to a dimension beyond the external is implicit in the idea of purification.

■ When Paul demands cleansing of σαρκός καὶ πνεύματος, he is referring both to the physical body<sup>8</sup> and to the “seat of emotion and will.”<sup>9</sup> Every aspect of the believer’s life is to be rendered free from any pollutant or contaminant that would disrupt his/her relationship with God. Furthermore, “making holiness perfect,” as Paul exhorts, is not a second process which is done along side of making oneself personally clean, but is something that results from making oneself personally clean. When believers have cleansed themselves from every defilement, they will thereby have made holiness perfect.

### **μολυσμός and the African Concept of Taboos/Pollution**

■ An important word in 2 Co. 7:1 that is germane to the purpose of this paper is μολυσμός.

Paul’s choice of the word μολυσμός (NT *hapax legomenon*) is striking. In its simple sense, it

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, I, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951), 200, who calls attention to 2 Cor. 4:10f.; Gal. 6:17; 4:13; 2 Cor. 12:7; 1 Cor. 6:16 as illustrations of Paul’s occasional interchangeable and neutral use of σωμα and σάρξ, under the influence of the LXX’s rendering of *bâsâr* by either term with no difference in meaning.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Burton, “Galatians,” ICC, 486ff.

means pollution. What is pollution in African traditional life and how does its understanding enhance Paul's argument in 2 Cor. 7:1? These are the questions to which we shall now turn. When an 'ordinary' African reader comes in contact with pollution or contamination in this verse, the concepts of sins and taboos readily come to mind. They are very important concepts among traditional Africans. This is because in relation to human behaviours and attitudes, they constitute on the one hand what could be referred to as moral demands and on the other, what results in the default of such demands. Westermann rightly notes that "the many taboos which a man has to observe are not to be regarded as things mechanical which do not touch the heart, but that the avoidance is a sacred law respected by the community. In breaking it, you offend the divine power." Africans tenaciously hold the belief that moral values are based upon the recognition of the divine will and that sin in the community must be expelled if perfect peace is to be enjoyed. Also, Awolalu is correct in his pointed observation that,

▣ Society, as conceived by Africans, is a creation of God and it is a moral society. In African communities, there are sanctions recognized as the approved standard of social and religious conduct on the part of the individuals in the society and of the community as a whole. A breach of, or failure to adhere to the sanction is sin, and this incurs the displeasure of Deity and His functionaries. Sin, is, therefore, doing that which is contrary to the will and directions of Deity. It includes any immoral behaviour ritual mistakes, any offences against God or man, breach of covenant, breaking of taboos and doing anything regarded as abomination and polluting. We cannot speak of sin in isolation. It has got to be related to God and to man.

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▣ There is an awareness that the behaviour of the individual determines what happens to all. As such, one may say that sin is not a private matter. It may bring honour and prestige, at the same time it may bring shame, ignominy and even destruction.

▣ Taboos generally have to do with forbidden conducts. They are recognized as actions that go against the good and well-being of other individuals, the community, and even against the gods. Thus, if there is going to be harmonious person-to-person, person-to-community and divine-person relationships, these actions must be forbidden. Among the Yoruba, it is referred to as “*eewo*” (things forbidden). On the whole, in African religion, taboo embraces everything that could be considered as sin.<sup>10</sup> Invariably, there are many forms of taboos in consonance with the multi-facet activities of African society. It must also be indicated that taboos differ from one society to another in Africa. In fact, what is a taboo in one African community may be permitted in another one. What is important, however, is that taboos are to be kept with all sincerity. To break a taboo is to bring disorder not only on oneself but the whole community, which may entail severe penalties. Taboos are also important to the African in the sense that they inculcate spiritual and moral values which are the hallmarks of African religion. Their observance goes a long way in promoting the needed sense of mutual responsibility and communality on which the African culture and religion are solidly built. Thus, in Yoruba beliefs, *eewo* are essentially religious rules associated with spiritual beings.

▣ The breach of prohibitions is an abomination. Generally, abominations are serious offences which are believed to threaten the cosmic and social order. They threaten the natural order. A case in point is incest. Incest is a taboo in Africa. Among the Nuer, for example, *rual* (incest) is regarded as the greatest sin. It is believed that if two people involved in incest “are

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<sup>10</sup> D. B. Jacob, *A Text Book on African Traditional Religion* (Ibadan: Aromolaran Press, 1977), 240.

very closely related, death may follow possibly within a few days. . . .<sup>11</sup> Among the Yoruba, if a person commits incest, those involved in the immoral act are exposed to ridicule and are required to offer propitiatory sacrifice to assuage the anger of the ancestral spirits. The breach of “*eewo*” generally incurs for the offender a state of pollution and the threat of supernatural sanctions. The state of pollution and the threat of supernatural sanctions can only be removed by the purification rites.

▣ The discussion about holiness in African traditional life is cognizant of the concept of ritual dirt and ensuing purification. We will look at the Yoruba of South-Western Nigeria as an example. For the Yoruba, *ìrírà* is essentially a religious phenomenon, while Mary Douglas’s explanation of “dirt” leads one to believe that is merely a socio-cultural phenomenon. If one were to tell the Yoruba that a certain writer says that *ìrírà* (pollution or abomination) is “dirt”, and the “reflection on dirt involves reflection on the relation of order to disorder, being and non-being, form to formlessness, life to death,” they would probably say that he or she must be speaking metaphorically. Ironically, Mary Douglas’s explanation of “dirt” is closer to dirt than to the Yoruba understanding of *ìrírà*.

▣ The idea of pollution, she explains, is best understood in terms of the English word “dirt,” defined as “matter out of place.” Dirt implies a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. Primitive world-views are holistic, man-centred and personal. Hence, pollution avoidance is a process of tidying up, ensuring that the order in the external physical events conforms to the structure of ideas about the universe. In this sense, writes Mary Douglas,

▣ If we keep the bathroom cleaning materials away from the kitchen cleaning materials, and send the men to the downstairs lavatories and women upstairs, we are essentially

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<sup>11</sup>E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer Religion* (London: Oxford Press, 1956), 18.

doing the same thing as the Bushmen wife when she arrives at a new camp. . . . Both we and the Bushmen justify our pollution avoidance by fear of danger. They fear if a man sits on the female side (of the room) his male virility will be weakened. We fear pathogenicity transmitted through micro-organisms.

▣ Mary Douglas' work is significant. However, her denial of the religious dimension of pollution and purification in the so-called primitive societies is unfortunate. As for pollution in primitive culture, she argues that, "the anthropologist does not believe that the often lethal punishments for incest and adultery are externally imposed on them by their severe god in the interest of maintaining social structure." It is important that when studying beliefs about pollution and purification in African societies, one should be less concerned with what he or she believes and focus on what the societies themselves believe. The fact is that a "Bushman" woman as defined by Mary Douglas certainly knows the difference between the dirt she throws away behind her house, and the pollution she feels as a result of breaking a taboo. Dirt in one context is a mere material substance, while the same object in another context is a spiritual reality. It is therefore apt to suggest that mythico-symbolic patterns of thought are not restricted to any particular human cultures—they exist in all cultures but in varying degrees. The significance of "dirt" must therefore be sought primarily in its meaning as a mythico-symbolic pattern of expression, rather than in the type of society in which it occurs.

Based on the foregoing, I would want to suggest, in agreement with Kristensen, that pollution in Yoruba religion is both spiritual and material in nature. Therefore, "dirt" is both "like and unlike" ordinary dirt. It is better described as "ritual dirt," or "religious dirt," which means far more than mere filth. The Yoruba idea about "ritual dirt" sees it as an essentially religious phenomenon even though their world-view shares much of the characteristics of

“primitive world-views” as described by Mary Douglas. In the same vein, speaking of the Igbo tribe of Nigeria, Metuh argues that ritual dirt is essentially a religious phenomenon and that it is to “be sought primarily in its meaning as a mythico-symbolic pattern of expression, rather than in the type of society in which it occurs.” Furthermore, drawing his insight from the Igbo religious worldview, he explains that “Igbo ideas about ‘Ritual Dirt’ and purification see them essentially as a religious phenomenon. Their ideas about pollution and prohibitions have wide ranging psychological and sociocultural functions but they are not to be reduced to a mere psychosociological or cultural phenomenon.”<sup>12</sup> Such an understanding of pollution necessarily leads to the conclusion that various purification rites that are done among the Yoruba and Igbo are essentially religious in nature. They serve the purpose of promoting access to the gods in order to perform acceptable worship.

One may ask how the preceding discussion advances the purpose of this paper. It does so by looking at Paul’s word for pollution or defilement in 2 Cor. 7:1. Paul’s choice of the word *μολυσμός* (NT *hapax legomenon*) is striking. It signifies the full range of cleansing which he evidently has in mind. In 1 Esdr 8:80, it is used to denote the pollution created by the inhabitants of the land with their idolatry. In 2 Macc 5:27, Judas Maccabee retreats to the desert to escape the idolatry and pollution of the temple imposed by Antiochus Epiphanes. It denotes both cultic and ethical defilement in both contexts (See also Isa. 65:4). The word also appears in a judgment oracle against the false prophets for the defilement they have brought to Jerusalem that was worse than that of Sodom and Gomorrah (Jer 23:15 [LXX]). The close association of *μολυσμός* with idolatry suggests that Paul might be thinking especially of defilement that comes from dining in the local temples, membership in the pagan cults, ritual prostitution, active engagement in pagan worship and the like. This brings the argument in the paragraph back full

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<sup>12</sup> Emefie, Ikenga, Metuh, *African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes: The Problem of Interpretation* (Bodija: Pastoral Institute, 1985), 74.

circle to Paul's opening injunction to stop entering into unequal partnerships with unbelievers (6:14).

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### **The Fear of God**

What is the motivation for holiness? Paul suggests ἐκ τῆς φόβου τοῦ θεοῦ. The NIV translation of ἐκ τῆς φόβου τοῦ θεοῦ as "out of reverence for God" is on target. This sense is present in Wisdom literature.<sup>13</sup> It strengthens the argument that holiness is predicated on relationship with God. Believers, in 2 Cor. 7:1, are made holy by the cleansing of every defilement, while living a life of reverence for God, i.e. submission to his Lordship. This brings us to a brief examination at the African traditional view of God and its importance for understanding the need for holiness and ritual purification.

There is an unspoken awareness of the sinless perfection of God that pervades traditional Africa. First, such awareness is evident in the various names that are used for God in different parts of Africa. The Yoruba people speak of God as *Oba pipe ti ko labawon*, that is, "the perfect King who is without blemish," or *Oba mimo*, that is "the holy God." Second, the awareness of God's holiness is demonstrated by the strict rules which must be followed during rituals having to do with God. To get into and maintain relationship with God, a person must necessarily enter into a covenant with the divinity.<sup>14</sup> Such a covenant is usually based on a number of demands and sanctions. This is accompanied by strong belief that fulfilling or not fulfilling the demand of covenant relationship produces consequences that affect not only the individual but the whole community. On the whole, it may be said that as far as African religion is concerned, morality arose because of one's consciousness of belonging to the Divine Being. Consequently, moral values are seen as the offspring of religion. If it is agreed that

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<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Psa. 2:11; 5:7; Pro. 1:7, 29; 8:13.

<sup>14</sup> Bolaji Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 145.

morality embodies the will of God, then it is what religion (which is the practical demonstration of God's relationship with humankind) approves as being moral that society must also approve, and what religion condemns must also stand condemned by the society. In other words as Adewale points out, "the ethics of Yoruba (indeed all Africans) from one to another is religious." It is thus clear that, above all things, the basis of holiness is one's relationship with God. As noted by J. Estlin Carpenter, "the historical beginning of all morality is to be found in religion; or that in the earliest period of human history, religion and morality were necessary correlates of each other."<sup>15</sup> So also Robertson Smith, who cautiously affirms that "in ancient society all morality, as morality was then understood, was consecrated and enforced by religious motives and sanctions."<sup>16</sup> Africa is not an exception. As rightly noted and stated by Parrinder,

▣ . . . the morality of East Africa is entwined with religion, for the people undoubtedly have a sense of sin. Their life is not overshadowed with a constant feeling of sinfulness, however; the African's happy disposition is well known. If a man breaks a taboo, he expects the supernatural penalty to follow, and his friends will desert him, or even punish him further . . . If lightning strikes a man or a house, he is judged at once to be an evil doer, without question, for he must have offended the gods. . . .<sup>17</sup>

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▣ Speaking of the ethnic groups of the lower Niger, A. G. Leonard, concludes that religion is intermingled with the whole social system of the people. He writes,

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<sup>15</sup> J. Estlin Carpenter, *Comparative Religion* (London: William Norgate, n.d.), 196.

<sup>16</sup> W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites* (London: A & C Black, 1914), 267.

<sup>17</sup> E. G. Parrinder, *West African Religion* (London: Epworth Press, 1949), 199. It is to be noted that in subsequent editions of the same book, Parrinder, for reasons best known to him expunged this statement.

“The religion of these natives,” he declared, “is their existence, and their existence is their religion. It supplies the principle on which their law is dispensed and morality adjudicated. The entire organization of their common life is so interwoven with it that they cannot get away from it. Like the Hindus, they eat religiously, drink religiously, and sin religiously.”<sup>18</sup>

The point here is clear. For Africans, morality is not independent of religion.<sup>19</sup> The African view of the holiness of God and its implications just described are in line with Paul’s use of ἁγιωσύνη in relation to God. Paul uses ἁγιωσύνη to express that essential character of God as apartness from all evil, and his just dealings in his relationship with humanity, the likeness of which character the believer may possess in greater or lesser degrees in proportion to his conformity to the will of God for himself. As a result of their cleansing themselves in body and spirit it will become increasingly possible to describe believers by the term ἁγιωσύνη--“holiness.” When Paul urges the Corinthians to bring holiness to completion, he is not suggesting the possibility of holiness as ethical purity which is somehow not wholly pure. To the contrary, he is exhorting the believers to pursue an ethical purity which is limited, but not tainted; an ethical purity which reflects only a portion of the holiness of God and must come to reflect ever more of God’s holiness. Holiness may expand--indeed it must--as the believer comes

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<sup>18</sup> A. G. Leonard, *The Lower Niger and Its Tribes* (London: Macmillan, 1906), 429.

<sup>19</sup> Contra. A.B. Ellis, *The Tshi-Speaking Peoples of the Gold Coast of West Africa* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1847), *passim*. In his discussion about the sense of sin and morality among the Twi-speaking people of the Gold Coast (now Ghana) he wrongly asserted that “religion is not in any way allied with moral ideals” and that the two only come together “when man attains a higher degree of civilization”. He claimed that “among the people of the Gold Coast sin is limited to insults offered to the gods, and neglect of the gods. Murder, theft, and all offences against the person or against property, are matters in which the gods have no immediate concern and in which they have no interest. The most atrocious crimes, committed as between man and man, the gods can view with equanimity”. Ellis’ view is not a true representation of the sense of sin among these people. See also Carl F. H. Henry, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1985) 131, who argues strongly for a morality of good and evil that is intrinsically independent of God.

to be more in the likeness of Christ through a greater awareness of what constitutes defilement of flesh and spirit and subsequently cleanses himself of that defilement. One may rightly conclude with Porter that ὁ γιωσύνη as used in 2 Cor. 7:1 is not “merely a static condition, a holiness obtained by observance of cultic practices . . . the context is not one of resting content with an unholy life . . . but one of acting out one’s status in Christ.”<sup>20</sup> Africans uphold the strong belief that God and the divinities have set the standard of holiness. This definitely implies that a person’s moral actions stem from religion and cannot be separated from it. One cannot but concur with Egudu that ‘since good attitude or behavior towards fellow men is one of the very necessary conditions for religion, it has to follow naturally and logically too that there cannot be any morally good attitude or act which does not to that extent share in the nature of religion.’<sup>21</sup>

### ▣Summary

▣As I pointed out at the beginning of this paper, the validation of the biblical text’s claim to universal validity demands its appropriation by readers with different orientations in different contexts. This endeavor requires fresh ways of expressing the universal validity of the biblical text and its message while at the same time giving due recognition to other religious ethos as a positive expression of the common religious thought, which in this case is the subject of holiness. As Carman succinctly states,

The human universal religion is by a circuitous route derived from early and later Christian confidence in the universal comprehensibility of the Christian message and the universal applicability of Christian piety. The divine Word can be expressed in differing human words because that divine Word is somehow behind every human being capable

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<sup>20</sup> For more details see S. E. Porter, “Holiness, Sanctification,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Gerhard Hawthorne, et.al., eds. (Downers Grove: Illinois, 1993), 400.

<sup>21</sup> E .G. Parrinder, *West African Religion* (London: Epworth Press, 1949), 199

of uttering words.<sup>22</sup>

In reflecting on the concept of holiness in Africa as presented above, African purification rites and symbols provide a great potential to the explication of 2 Cor. 7:1 and an opportunity of communicating the subject of holiness in an African setting. Second, in African religion, holiness is the nature of God, derives from him, is demanded by him, and is based on a covenant relationship with him. As such the purification rites are required in order to remain in closeness with God. This is the idea in 2 Cor. 7:1. Cleansing, in this passage has to do with a proper use of the body as it is regarded as a temple, a dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit and through which God is to be glorified (Cf. 1 Cor. 6:15-20). There is to be no phase of the Corinthians' lives which is to be ignored in the Corinthians' efforts to make themselves clean. This is the essence of purification among traditional Africans. Maintaining a covenant relationship with the deity requires the total removal of pollution.

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<sup>22</sup> J. B. Caraman, "Religions as a Problem for Christian Theology" in D. C. Dawe and J. B. Carman, eds., *Christian Faith in a Religiously Plural World*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1978), 96.