



Social Status Retention in the Beyond: the Phobia of Man

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Abstract

Religions include the participation of a community of people who have a common spiritual belief system. It is possible to connect one's own spiritual views with those of others via different religious activities. As a result of social interaction, personal ideas may be shaped and deepened. Both religious ideas and human transpersonal experiences may convey the core of human existence. Religious ideas about life after death may affect how individuals conduct their lives in the here and now. This paper argues that human beings have the inborn drive for statuses. All religions of the world placed serious priority on them, so much: in the ranking of adherents and in the hereafter. Other social institutions see the necessity in statuses placements to enhance productivity, efficiency, proficiency, and profitability. Man in his imagination and realization of this, concludes that the right place to acquire the status is here on earth as the springboard to that of the beyond. He gets it first and this will be maintained in the beyond. By the beyond here we mean abodes after the earthly life. Christianity calls them paradise and hell, likewise Islam and Buddhism describe it as Nirvana. African Traditional Religion mentioned it as the home of the ancestors and the dead. Hinduism has its own as the several reincarnations where the individual soul strives to unite with the supreme Reality also called Brahman. This paper investigates Social Status in the Beyond.

Introduction

In this work, the focus is to see how man is driven by the acquisition of status hopelessly. We will see that some get statuses with pride and also used them consciously, to the Beyond. This drive cut across all religions of the world. What pushes the man into statuses heaps on the great shoulders of phobia. This phenomenon as we will see is possessive of man's character. It has some advantages and disadvantages on man's survival here on earth and in the beyond. It has formed the basis of man for his survival in all ramifications. Here we present 'status' as what any human can die for. Status in this sense means the spiritual, social, legal, or professional position of somebody. According to Udoh (2005) "Dress the way you like to be addressed; because you cannot be addressed well than that way you dress" (p. 1). Titles are enclosed in this statement. Many men take special interest in social statuses with many reasons to support their points of pride. Adelola (1987) opines that Social status is a position in a social attached to it what is generally referred to a 'social role', i.e. the behaviour attached to the position, is called a 'role', in the university, the statuses include students, professor, Registrar, vice-chancellor, etc. all the positions have attached to their responsibilities which are otherwise called 'roles'.

Every social institution has statuses ascribed to it. The higher the office, the higher the prestige and preferences. These titling or titles are found in social groupings such as in traditional institutions, political jobs, wealth acquisitions, medicines, legal institutions, etc. The desire to get to the top of the status drives a man crazy. Human beings live and depend in' the environment of social stratification. According to Hughes (1990) Social stratification, the term

sociologists apply to the ranking or grading of individuals and groups into hierarchical layers, represents structured inequality in the allocation of reward' Privileges and resources. Some individuals by virtue of their roles or group membership are advantaged, while others are disadvantaged

Social stratification is found in the family. We can also see this in cultural structure, Race and ethnicity, Gender inequality, and in political and economic power.

Man is a religious being and as a dual, creature desire to retain his status both here and in the hereafter (Naseri & Ekpene 2011; Udok et al., 2020; Akpanika & Eyo 2020). All the religions of the world made provision for this phenomenon. Not even the occults would disregard statuses retention in their various teachings. The social groups of the economic and political institutions are not left behind. Most times salvation of the soul, spirit, body, life, family, etc, could lead many into the desire for status. Therefore, when we talk about status retention in the beyond, we mean man returning to his creator with whatever name he gets here on earth. Salvation here, Uka (1999) opines that The word salvation means deliverance or rescue. To be saved means to be delivered or rescued from something. To be saved from the fire means to be rescued from the fire so that you do not get burnt.

At the time Paul was writing the question of salvation was a crucial issue that bothered many people. It was a desperate world where people were seeking peace, not the type offered through Caesar's proclamation, but the type offered by God. It was a time where people were more universally seeking salvation and for peace with God.

We now will highlight where each of the religions demonstrates statuses and how this is encouraged. We start with Christianity

Christianity

Today's believers are unified in their conviction that Jesus Christ and his followers taught that there is an afterlife based on the biblical claims (Emeng 2012; Emeng 2014a; Emeng 2014b). Christians believe that after death, people will be brought before God and judged. According to Smith (1991), "Following death, human life is fully translated into the supernatural domain" (p. 355). Religious fundamentalists and conservatives believe that the Holy Bible is to be taken literally and that there is a particular heaven and hell, and that only Christians are permitted to enter heaven. All others are doomed to eternal damnation in hell. Another school of thought interprets Biblical text metaphorically, taking into account the language and culture of the period when the Bible was written (Emeng 2007; Emeng 2009; Akpanika 2020a; Odey 2019; Udok 2020; Osim & Eteng 2021). While heaven and hell are both regarded as a "state of being," such as bliss or serenity, they are not considered to be physical locations. It makes no difference whether the Christian's afterlife beliefs are interpreted conservatively or freely; the Christian thinks that he or she dies only once and that, after death, the spirit is judged before continuing to live in an afterlife for all eternity. It is said in the Bible that "it is destined for mankind to die once, and then comes judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Near-death experiences seem to be a common occurrence in the paranormal world among Christians. When Bechtel et al., (1992) polled the clergy, they discovered that 98 percent of those questioned were acquainted with near-death occurrences and that almost half of those surveyed had counseled parishioners who have had traumatic near-death experiences. Christians, like adherents of other religious traditions who have had near-death experiences, have also reported meetings with religious entities such as Jesus, Mary, or angels. Most out-of-body experiences are similar, including encountering recognized spiritual beings, moving toward a brilliant light, and feeling as though they are in the presence of the energy of "unconditional love" as the experiencer evaluates his or her own life.

In Christianity, we are made to understand that the beyond is composed of Heaven (Paradise) and Hell, the place of everlasting torment (Emeng 2015; Naseri 2017a; Naseri 2017b; Osim 2021). We were also made to know that one maintained his status wherever one finds himself. For example, in the parable, Jesus gave an illustration about Lazarus and the rich man. Good news Bible chapter 16:22-24 states that;

The poor man died and was carried by the angels to sit beside Abraham at the feast in Heaven. The rich man died and was buried and in Hades, where he was in great pain, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus at his side. So he called out, 'Father Abraham! Take pity on me, and send Lazarus to dip his finger in some water and cool my tongue because I am in great pain in this fire! (16:22-24).

The rich man was not addressed differently not even Lazarus.

Hinduism

This is the religion of India and the third-largest in the world. Rivière (2009) states that “Hindus see life as a self-repeating cycle in which human history is of little important” (p. 95). It is the religion of the caste system. Buddhists believe that after death, they will be reborn into a new existence in another world. Death is not dreaded, but rather acknowledged as an unavoidable fact of life. The acts of the believer in this life will define his or her degree of rebirth in the next. A person's activities generate a force known as karma, which is defined as the consequences of those acts. Compassionate acts in this life result in good karma, which in turn leads to a more elevated state of being in the next life. The path to Nirvana is paved by the achievement of a comprehensive knowledge of the nature of reality. Another level of human consciousness must be found via personal encounters with other dimensions of human awareness. Several heavens, each with its own hierarchical structure, as well as eight hot and frigid hells, are described in Buddhist cosmological literature. The individual spirit lives in one of these worlds, which is determined by the karma accrued in the previous life, until he or she is reincarnated into a new existence. This cycle continues until the attainment of nirvana, or complete enlightenment. Death, according to some Buddhists, is nothing more than a dream at the end of time.

Death, according to the Hindu faith, occurs as a pause in the ongoing events of life and results in a transformation of the physical body in which the soul dwells. Hindus believe that the hereafter is a passage of time in either heaven or hell, depending on how much karma has been accrued throughout one's lifetime. The evaluation of one's life is based on the karma that the person has accrued throughout the course of his or her previous incarnations. In this life, the established karma and the individual's final thoughts in this life decide whether or not the spirit will reincarnate in the future life via the transmigration of the soul. The pursuit of everlasting pleasure and immortality by a person leads in the reincarnation of the soul in a variety of bodies until the spirit realizes that happiness and immortality are not obtained via the fulfillment of wants, but rather when all desires and needs have been fulfilled. The status one has on earth goes beyond here and manifests in several reincarnations. Hinduism explains better on status in its caste system and the frustrating cycle of existence - Samsara, According to Emeng G. I. (2014); Knowledge acquired by a man in his prior birth, wealth given away and charity in his prior existence, and work done by him in a previous incarnation,, go ahead of his soul to sojourn. He further states Certain duties are required of all people. Such as ahimsa and abstinence from alcohol, meat, but the specific dharma of each individual depends on the person's caste and stage in life

According to some Hindus, the various religious faiths are “different paths to reach the same goal - union with God as ultimate Reality” (Johnson & McGee, 1991). Chinese Buddhists have

reported experiencing near-death experiences, according to reports. Becker has proposed that near-death experiences may have had a role in the formation of Pure Land Buddhism in China, and that this may have been the case. According to a Hindu account of a near-death experience, the person who had the encounter rode into paradise on the back of a cow.

According to Mauro (1992), “East Indians [Hindus] sometimes see heaven as a giant bureaucracy and frequently report being sent back because of clerical errors,” whereas Japanese experiencers report seeing symbolic images, such as “long, dark rivers and beautiful flowers”. Buddhism has claimed seeing the person of Buddha during their near-death experiences, whereas Hinduism has reported seeing Krishna during their near-death experiences. In Buddhist and Hindu accounts of near-death experiences, the distinction is mostly connected with the afterlife location and the personages that the experiencer claims to have encountered.

Even though Buddhist and Hindu near-death experiencers may give different interpretations to the specifics of their experiences in different cultures and religions, the experiences are consistent with other stages of the process, traits, constellations, and group types reported by near-death experiencers in other cultures and religions. According to certain followers of the Buddhist and Hindu faiths, near-death experiences provide afterlife visions that are comparable to those attributed to various Eastern religious experiences connected with death and the afterlife, such as reincarnation and rebirth. Becker (1984) comments “that ancient Japanese Buddhist meditative and deathbed visions closely parallel modern American near-death and deathbed visions” (p. 51). In his book *The Bardo* (1973), Evans-Wentz defines the Bardo as consisting of three phases of the transitional "disembodied state" that occurs after death. The departed experience glimpses of the "Blinding Clear Light of Pure Reality" during the initial stage of their journey. The deceased come face to face with a series of "deities" in the second stage. In the third stage, the deceased is judged by the "Dharma Raja, King and Judge of the Dead," who determines their fate based on their previous actions. Comparable in substance to other claimed near-death experiences from various faiths and civilizations, these phases are similar in structure and duration. Similarities between the two types of experiences include progression through levels - such as going through a tunnel - seeing only pure light, seeing incorporeal creatures, having the ability to project oneself into another's body, and making a judgment about one's existence.

Islam

The name Islam is significant to a Muslim. It means “submission”, “surrender” or “commitment” to Allah. The religion like others believed in the status of the beyond and spelled out how to attain paradise in its eschatology Emeng (2014) opines that It teaches about paradise and pre-requisite for the bliss which they called Heaven. In the case of the Holy war, one who fought and died in the battle has the express journey to the kingdom.

Death, according to the Islamic religion, is defined as the end of biological life and the resting of the spirit in the grave until the Day of Judgment arrives. Some Muslims believe that the "good souls" receive visions of God, while the "evil souls" get images of hell, which they think will await them. Muslims believe that the spirit remains in a condition of "dreamless slumber" from the moment of death until the day of judgment, with the exception of potential glimpses of eternal life throughout this period. In order for one to believe in a hereafter, one must first believe in the oneness of God and then believe in a day of resurrection and judgment for all people, regardless of religious affiliation. Depending on its actions throughout life, the spirit will be judged and will either be permitted to enter Paradise and live with God, or it will be cast into the fire for a period of purification, or it will be sentenced to eternal torment in the Fire.

Non-Muslims, according to the majority of Muslims, may only enter Paradise after undergoing a time of purification. People who identify as Muslims have reported experiencing near-death experiences. Near-death experiencers from the Muslim faith have reported seeing and contacting identifiable ghosts. This is consistent with the Islamic belief that the souls of the devout, in heaven, greet the "incoming souls," as well as with previous accounts of visions of people awaiting the recently dead, according to the New York Times. Muslim near-death experiences include the identification of the Being of Light with the Arabic word Allah, while in other faiths, the light may be associated with the word God. A potential peek into life after death is seen by some Muslims as a possible glimpse into life beyond death owing to similarities between the near-death experience and religious visions of Muhammad, as well as their expectations of life after death. According to Islamic tradition, Muhammad's "Night Journey" was an experience in which he passed through the regions of the afterlife, where he saw souls who had died, had visions of paradise and hell, and spoke with Allah, among other things.

The Imperative of the Beyond

In the hereafter, it is seen as a social category; this is a class to which Hughes (1990) alludes, "Class is viewed as a social category, one in which people group themselves with other individuals they perceive as sharing certain attributes in common" (p. 185). The attributes here could be statuses and other things. Also, the beyond does not harbour paradoxes in our interests and ways. Emeng (2014) opines that All religions have contradictions in their tenets. This brings about different doctrines and philosophies. Sometimes breakaway in a particular religion and in most religions is as a result of this paradox.

There are no paradoxes in the hereafter on either side. But status follows each to wherever. Emeng (2014) in "Death before Adam", states that; When man realizes in his thought the existence of God or his transcendence, that marks the start of the immortality in him and the judgment of his soul's destiny, whether in "Heaven or Hell: The idea of the immortality of the soul started with Adam when he ran out of God physically. Cain and Abel were not left out, that was why they offered sacrifices where the first human worship started.

According to Mbiti (1981), In Nigeria, some people believe that the death appears before God to receive their judgment depending on what they have done with their lives. They are then sent to a good place where they remain with their relatives who departed before them.

Another reason necessary for human beings desiring the beyond is regeneration. San Hastings (2004) says "Regeneration- An act of being formed again; spiritual renewal; a radical change for the better". Also, there will be no more religious fanaticism there. According to Iwe (1991), "Religious fanaticism is coterminous with religious extremism and may be descriptively defined as; "An irrational attitude to religion which leads the religionist to the practice of religion beyond the bounds of reason and therefore, without moderation"

Amaefule (2016) describing hope as a necessary tool of human survival states; "that we don't do hopelessness, does not depend on us that we hope against hope and is a gift from Him". It is therefore clear that there will be no hopelessness as those who gain the beyond especially with the creator will not attain the state of hopelessness again. On everlasting peace, Isaiah adds that; "Then you would become just like a river" (48:18). Anyanwu maintains that "It is a general belief of the most Igbo societies that, the celebration of the second burial sends the deceased home and in peace". Iwe (1991) in Socio-Ethical Issues eludes that, The vital importance of peace lies in the fact that it is under a genuine atmosphere of peace that human values can be realised with security, peace in effect is an atmosphere of "Order that would

permit the citizens to carry out their tasks, fulfill their duties and claim and enjoy their rights without inhibitions or molestation

On Earth, no man has got perfect peace, so man desires everlasting peace (Naseri 2021). We find ourselves on Earth labouring under emotional loads of so many troubles; therefore, the beyond is preferable, man wishes to become a citizen of the beyond where his rights and privileges will not be tampered with by an authority or individual. "There, everyone has divine citizenship unconditionally unlike what is obtained on Earth" (Magnette 2005).

Furthermore, the various ranks people want to attain like in the Army, Navy, Air force, etc. spur them to wish to maintain them in the hereafter. Nobody is denied his rank at the burial, they go with them to the beyond. Since even the Bible and other religions retained titles in the hereafter, theirs would not be strip off either.

Why the Phobia of the Beyond?

According to Kennedy (1965), phobia is an extreme or abnormal fear of something. Men are afraid or fear aspect of their pious practices and spiritual works of mercy. Humans have the phobia of separation from the creator at the judgment. Singer-Towns (2008) quoted the book of Matthew that says; When the Son of Man comes as King and all the angels with him, he will sit on his royal throne, and the people of all nations will be gathered before him. Then he will divide them into two groups, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the righteous people all on his right and the others on his left.

The fear of separation from the creator drives many religions and occults. No man that hasn't the phobia even the claimed atheists who out of frustrations deny the existence of God but can't deny the existence of death. We also have the phobia of separation from counterparts and love ones. This means the desire to be in the midst of co-titled colleagues and co-believers of some faith. Ordukwu (2002) said when Bishop Shanahan, a missionary was trying to convert a local chief to Christianity a religion of a different hope and eschatology, disdain the idea due to the love he has for his people; the local chief replied that; ... If I go to heaven and my colleagues and brothers go off to somewhere else, I'd be up there in heaven all by myself...While my brother chiefs would be down in the other place you speak of. . . . No, I'd rather be with my own people (Faustina, 2005).

Here the posed the fear of going to a different place in the hereafter. Furthermore, the fear of punishment from God or gods after death drives many to the thoughts of the beyond. Omeregbe (2000) asserts that "The question of the immortality of the soul to religion. It is assumed by most religions that human life continues after death" (p. XV). Not even the angels who sinned were spared from the punishment of God, why will man be spared. Watch Tower confirmed this and states;

The wicked angels, however, returned to the spirit realm: they did not die. But they were punished. They were not allowed back into God's family of righteous angels. Furthermore, Jehovah no longer allowed them to put on human bodies. And eventually, they will die in the great judgment - 2 Peter 2:4; Judges (Douglass, 2014).

Despite the above, it is believed that everybody has liberty while on earth. Iwe (1991) alludes that "Every person shall be entitled to his personal liberty and no one shall be deprived of such liberty..." (p. 266). This implies that everyone will have freedom/ dignity and a place to feel at home. Thus, the fear of physical death will no longer exist. Omeregbe (2000) quoting Plato states:

For example, light is followed by darkness while darkness is in turn followed by light. Strength is followed by weakness and vice versa. The state of being asleep is followed by the state of

being awakened and vice versa. Now, if life and death are contraries like light and darkness, and since life is followed by death, it is only to be expected that death in turn will be followed by life. This shows that there is life after death.

More so, there will be no pains there as we have it here on earth in the absence of adequate medications, such that we have shock, denial, anger, depression, etc., and sometimes suicide (Tada, 1992).

Conclusion

Morally many tend to be focused on character molding. They watch carefully how they live with their neighbours daily to avoid any reference that will incriminate them. Those who are lawless also know and are aware of their fate beyond the thereafter. The rich man was not innocent but built his faith in material acquisition and earthly pleasure. He didn't know there could be the need for pleasure in the beyond. Religious men fear the unknown and give themselves to their various faiths. They devote themselves and worship without any questions on what they believe. More so, their religion cannot falter but is infallible. Furthermore, the divine can't lie and the promise of bliss is imminent. They try not to flaunt any rule or law to remain chaste as to attain a favourable and comfortable place in the hereafter. All religions never compromise in their teachings of a perfect abode after death though the descriptions vary according to the tenets. This phobia can never end.

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