

Part 1

Theme

RETHINKING RELIGIOSITY IN AFRICA WITHIN A NORMATIVE AND EXPLANATORY FRAMEWORK OF THE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

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Religiosity is an observable phenomenon associated with Africans. At places of worship, social ceremonies and other public spaces, Africans would express freely a variety of forms of religious beliefs and practices. For instance, in a Church and Mosque, Africans would manifest various forms of vivid gestures of religiosity. Even at social ceremonies, there would be religious expressions with explicit details of an individuals' faith. Why is this so? Truly, the religious outlook of Africans permeates their existence; thus, their experiencing, thinking, knowing and knowledge are filtered through the prism of their faith-beliefs. For this reason, their religiosity is palpable. The concern, sometimes, is whether these forms of religiosity are authentic. To ask whether they are authentic implies whether there are necessary and sufficient conditions for Africans to know and have the knowledge of what form or expression of religiosity is of true belief and is justified as authentic. In addition to this point, what are the sources of religiosity? What is its structure? What is its limit? How are we to understand religiosity? In the course of this article, these questions would be borne in mind to give reasons for religiosity and the required standard for any acceptance of religiosity as authentic.

A review of the strong principles and characteristics of religions in Africa as outlined by John Mbiti is this article's point of departure on the phenomena of religiosity among Africans. This is to find out the sources of religiosity, its structure, and its limit. This is important because the necessary and sufficient conditions for whatever form or expression of religiosity lie in the general manifestations of African religiosity.

General Manifestations of African Religiosity

John Mbiti avers that religion is integrated into the life of the African people. That is, wherever they are, Africans have their religiosity, their religion.¹ The emphasis that is given to this view as regards the African attitude to religion is that "African religiosity has a lot to say about God." Continuing, Mbiti writes, "In an ongoing research since 1960, I have not found a single African people without a word or name for God."² A closer study of Mbiti's article would impress on one's mind certain principles that would necessitate the kind of religiosity among Africans. That is, if one examines the African mind, it would be obvious that there are principles that have shaped the African thinking and feeling about religion. In a nutshell, these principles actually determine the religiosity in the African mind. I will highlight them as follows with the perspective with which Mbiti discusses and examines them.

(a) "African religiosity acknowledges the reality of God but does not define God. If anything, it confesses that God is unknowable."³ For Mbiti, God is affirmed among Africans as invisible, as the eternal creator and the Supreme Individual who sustains all things. For this reason, Africans would never assert knowledge of God in any would-be physical form. This is the reason one would not find in Africa physical images or representations of God, the creator. This in any case signifies, as Mbiti's argument might imply, the overall picture of the greatness of God who is above gender classification of neither male nor female. Thus "African religiosity is very sensitive to and about the spiritual dimension."⁴

(b) Africans believe strongly that there is mystical power in the

1. John Mbiti, "General Manifestations of African Religiosity: An Exploratory paper at the First Meeting of the Standing Committee on the Contributions of Africa to the Religious Heritage of the World," <http://www.afrkworld.net/afrel/mbiti.htm> (accessed 11.10.2013).

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

spiritual realm, and according to Mbiti, it is believed that this mystical power permeates the universe. Thus it is also believed that people can use this power in medical practise, in divination, exorcism, protecting persons and property, and in predicting where to find lost articles and foretelling the outcome of an undertaking.⁵ With such kind of strong beliefs in mystical power, little wonder Mbiti also says that real and imaginary application of magic and witchcraft is talked about convincingly in all African societies, both in rural and urban areas.⁶ The result is fear, suspicion and tensions where Africans live. Notwithstanding, mystical power has a positive effect in the life of an African. For Mbiti, it regulates "ethical relations in the community and in supplying answers to questions about the causes of good luck and misfortunes."⁷ For Africans, mystical power is created by God because there is only one God whether the African is from the East, West, North or South of Africa. Mbiti holds that "people address their prayer to God in the singular," that is, they would speak of God in personal terms such as Father, Friend, Giver of Children, etc.⁸

© Mbiti says "spirituality is a great value of African religiosity."⁹ Notable expressions of African spirituality, according to Mbiti, include the immortality of the human spirit after death, that is, the spirit continues in the next life and the living relates to them especially to those of family members that are still remembered by name. This is a strong element of belief in African religiosity, not only for Mbiti. It is also for me because members of my family and relatives of my late father still relate to him by name. Mbiti also says that African spirituality also includes the "outpourings" of the African's soul and spirit in the direction of the divine, of the spiritual realm and its values. It is Mbiti's belief that the spirituality of the African comes out especially through

5. See *Ibid.*

6. See *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*

prayer, invocations, rituals, offerings and sacrifices. In fact, Mbiti claims "praise, thanksgiving and honour to God are other strong elements of spirituality in African religiosity."¹⁰ For this reason, the spiritual realm, which is invisible, is interlocked with the visible world humans live in. Thus there is a link between the two worlds, as Mbiti acknowledges. Thus God and the spiritual beings created by God have the "ontological space" of the reality of the visible and invisible. As a result of such mentality, Mbiti holds that African religiosity cherishes blessings because 'it is assumed and believed that God actualizes the contents or intentions of the blessings.' Moreover, "blessings give confidence, joy, peace and a feeling of family relationship with God as their parent."¹¹ It is the reason older ones bless younger ones.

(d) With all these characteristics and principles of African religiosity, what are its sources? Predominantly, Mbiti writes that African religiosity is found in oral sources which include stories, myths, proverbs, prayers, ritual incantations and songs. Names of people and places, and important or famous religious persons are mentioned. Mbiti also includes other sources as art, language, ceremonies and rituals, religious objects and places such as shrines, altars, ceremonial symbols and magical objects and practices. The African can meditate on these sources as experiences, but they are not written texts to be read. Thus African religiosity, according to Mbiti, is lived. One can readily interpret why Mbiti says Africans also depict God in ethical terms of what is right or wrong, good or evil, in the moral life of the community, the society and humankind. Most often, Africans would strive to express the ethics and morals of their religiosity in the form of values, laws, customs, traditions and taboos. For this reason, Africans believe "God sees and knows everything; and in the case of wrongdoing, the justice of God is unfailing."¹²

A careful reflection on Mbiti's "General Manifestations of African

Religiosity" *ipso facto* brings up in my opinion the kind of religious experiences, attitudes and religiosity that the generality of Africans cannot shy away from. Even the deep-rooted mentality and attitude to religion would constitute the fabric of the religious narrative of most Africans. No wonder then that there are strong winds of religiosity blowing across the African continent and in many parts of the world where there are large populations of African émigrés or of African descent. Given the nature of Mbiti's "General Manifestations of African Religiosity," surely it is important to examine religiosity among Africans.

The Phenomena of Religiosity as Facts of Everyday Life in Africa

The religiosity in Africa is both a force for good and evil. On the one hand, religiosity has been embraced as both a source of joy, hope and encouragement to adherents of various religions. On the other, it is a source of suspicion, fear, and tension for both the adherents of various religions and Africans who are gradually seduced by secularism, even though in their mentality they still manifest a form of religiosity.

The phenomena of religiosity are facts of everyday life in the continent of Africa. Despite the often-mentioned challenge of increasing secularisation and materialism, Africa is burgeoning of religiosity with the mushrooming of New Religious Movements – a nomenclature that Nathaniel Ndiokwere believes is able to accommodate all groups, including those which can really be referred to as Churches, and those that have no recognisable organisational structures.¹³ There are Independent African Churches (e.g. African United Church, Celestial Church of Christ), Independent Fundamentalist Churches (e.g. Church of Christ Healing Mission) alongside with adherents of African Traditional Religion and Islam. The manifestation of religiosity in these Churches coupled with the religiosity displayed by Muslims have not diminished the influence and religious popularity of the 'long-established churches' such as the Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran,

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

13. See Nathaniel I. Ndiokwere, *The African Church, Today and Tomorrow: Prospects and Challenges*, vol 1 (Onitsha: Effective Key Publishers Ltd, 1994), 34.

Methodist, Presbyterian Churches, and of course one can include at a lower level, Qua Iboe, Salvation Army, the Baptist and the Seventh Day Adventist, etc. It would be true to hold that the undertone to the religiosity of all these various religious groups and movements lies in offering their adherents answers to problems of mystique meaning, spiritual illumination to fundamental questions of their beliefs, and a sense of self-realisation and fulfilment in their communion with the supernatural world.

Religiosity can easily be recognised in the New Religious Movements which Ndiokwere articulately designates for all Independent Religious Groups found today in the various parts of the African continent.¹⁴ However it is not an uncommon phenomenon in long-established Churches and in Islam. It is true to say that "in Africa, there is the tendency to run to God for succour in times of need and insecurity."¹⁵ Ndiokwere interprets this to mean the search by Africans for answers and protection in religion against witchcraft, failure, suffering, sickness and death.¹⁶ Most Africans would flock to places of religious worship, especially to ministers of religion they think have special powers because they believe evil spirits and the devil are generally responsible for most real and worrisome anxieties and existential problems. In such situations, some, if not most, Africans would be willing, when desperate in their disposition, to accept whatever formulas, rituals, prophetic utterances, incantations and invocations, interpretation of dreams, wonder-working, magical manifestations, mass healing crusades, miracle witnessing rallies, and superstitious beliefs that might be imposed on them. They would graciously carry home litres of Holy Water, rub on themselves assorted types of blessed oils, burn in their homes and surroundings whatever sort of ashes and candles prescribed to them by a minister of religion, and make whatever material and spiritual sacrifices required for going contrary to the laws of God, etc. Often all these characterise the religiosity of those seeking for help, those proclaimed ministers of religion recognised and duly honoured in the communities, and those self-proclaimed prophets

and religious leaders who would boldly found and run churches with very attractive and impressive congregation.

There are also the deliberate and unprovoked episodes of religiosity in the 'holiness-of-life behaviour' by fervent members of various religious groups in Africa. As Ndiokwere observes, absolute resignation to God's will is demanded among these Africans.¹⁷ For instance, it is a well-known fact how Muslims in every part of the world are committed to the pronunciation of the *Shahadah* (or Confessions) and *Salah* (the five daily prayers). For this reason, Ndiokwere notes that on Friday, life grinds to a halt in the factories, in market places and in public squares.¹⁸ In African countries where there is a large following and strong Islamic root because of its genuine religious values, there is a current spread of fundamentalism and revivalism, especially the unfulfilled policy of establishing God's kingdom on earth. Most Muslims carry out their pious obligations without regard and sensitivity to fellow citizens. There are cases in Nigeria where Muslims who gather for prayer often do so blocking the flow of traffic. Commuters would have to wait for them to finish, and then wait for them to leave before motorists begin moving. This strong sense of fundamentalism and revivalism is also manifested by Nigerian Evangelical/Pentecostal Christians. When these denominations of Christians hold their National or Regional Conventions, it is sometimes a situation of 'road closed' or a lack of sensitivity to the fact that other Nigerians resident around the area are disturbed because of the use of mega speakers. Furthermore, the small gathering of Evangelical-inclined Christian communities, including charismatic-inclined Christians of 'long-established churches' also manifest insensitivity to neighbours when they gather for prayer sessions at night. All these cause me to wonder what the African sense of neighbourly love is in the context of religiosity. The episodes of religiosity by some Christian and Muslim leaders in Nigeria include the building of mosques and Churches (Chapels) in public squares, airports, on government grounds and office premises. Also, there are African Christians whose religious experiences of strong physical and spiritual regeneration have motivated them to feel personally committed to

14. See *Ibid.*, 10.

15. *Ibid.*

16. See *Ibid.*

17. See *Ibid.*, 11.

18. See *Ibid.*, 100.

preaching and conversion of people to the religious faith they hold dearly. At other times, one may encounter Africans who have drawn profound emotional satisfaction from inspirations, visions and dreams that have brought about a turnaround in their life that they would abandon their work and trade in order to bring whatever divine message (including end-time messages) to infidels.

On this note, the intensity of religiosity in Africa has, undoubtedly, come about as a result of what Ndiokwere would describe as the dynamism of the evangelistic responsibilities of the Evangelicals / Pentecostals.¹⁹ According to Ndiokwere, the Evangelicals stress the holiness of life ethic, the mandate to mission as well as the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, while the Pentecostals emphasize preaching and conversion.²⁰ Whether this is strictly true or not, these groups have aggressively applied and proclaimed the use of charismatic gifts to encourage fellow members and new members in their fold. They produce souvenirs and religious articles with various inscriptions, T-Shirts and bandanas, hymns and songs from popular biblical texts. Occasionally, religious texts with a fiery gospel way of thinking and apocalyptic undertones are sold or given free to stop evil deed and signal a return to God. Today, members and groups within the long-established churches have embraced these practices of the Evangelicals / Pentecostals because the religiosity ignited by them seems to be successful. In fact, the need to be relevant in this regard, just as the Evangelicals / Pentecostals, has put pressure on the Pastors of long-established churches to seek to curb the growing influence of the former by making themselves and their fellow Christians overtly religious. For instance, in some Catholic Churches, the priests have Catholic prayer / deliverance ministries, healing centres, healing Mass (sometimes with all-night vigils) where they encourage increased length of time for praises, preaching / exhortation, prayer, testimonies and anointing, and at other times, perhaps unknown to the priests, there is an overemphasis on Sacraments instead of the Sacraments simply because the priests would want to ease the protracted anxiety of some Christians who are haunted by superstitious beliefs.

19. See *Ibid.*, 21.

20. See *Ibid.*

The persistence of religious belief in various contexts will certainly continue for succeeding generations on account of belief in God or particular beliefs about God. Thus religiosity is a secure and enduring characteristic of religious experience. Be that as it may, should Africans permit or accept virtually any form of religiosity? Africans have perceptual faculties designed by God with the framework for the purpose of considering manifestations of religiosity that have direct cognitive access or are authentic.

Towards Intensifying a Normative and Explanatory Framework of the Theory of Knowing and Knowledge as regards Religiosity amongst Africans

Now there is a standard to what should be acceptable in every society just like there are norms for good behaviour. Norms serve as framework to set a standard for what should pass as reasonable for collective human good. Religiosity amongst Africans needs to be subjected to the scrutiny of reason. It is not as if the required standard for checkmating religiosity is absent amongst Africans. Rather most Africans shy away from asking themselves frank and honest evaluative questions in matters of religion or religiosity perhaps out of fear for derogatory name-calling. It is high time Africans intensified the evaluative measures already within their reach. These measures, by no means exhaustive, would serve as a standard for critically assessing and explaining the kind of religiosity that we Africans claim to know or speak of as knowledge. The following is my contribution towards attaining such measures.

Reconsidering African Thinking as Bedrock for its Religiosity

Undoubtedly, in African proverbs, riddles and sayings lay deep expression of African thought and ideas.²¹ It is also a general thinking among Africans that religious phenomena have made Africans who they are wherever they are. In fact, it would not be an overemphasis to hold that "religious experience is the gate way to the African heart and mind."²² This is a sensible view given that behind every form of religiosity among Africans there is a form of thinking.²³ Religious experience as the gateway to the African

21. See Maurice M Makumba: *An Introduction to African Philosophy: Past and Present* (Nairobi: Paulines Publication Africa, 2007), 167.

22. *Ibid.*, 166.

heart and mind is a highlight of the fact that there is a close connection, as M. Makumba notes, between beliefs and thought in the African mind. This connection was outlined earlier under “General Manifestations of African Religiosity”. Furthermore, according to Makumba:

if one wants to learn about the people's (Africans') thinking about creation, their anthropology, philosophy of nature, cosmology, and reality in general or even about God, then there is need to go to their stories, myths, and other such modes of communication.²⁴

In my estimation, this view has not answered a lot of questions. Makumba's explanation is similar to the one I have known for a long time about the deep-rooted African beliefs, spirituality and manifestations of religiosity. When I got hold of of Makumba's *An Introduction to African Philosophy: Past and Present* (2007) I looked forward to reading more incisive examination of the manifestations of African Religiosity in the light of contemporary African philosophical thinking.

Going by the title of Makumba's book, my expectation was that African thinking and views about the world and its origin, about being, life, human origin and death, and about human behaviour articulated in the stories, legends, proverb and beliefs, though praiseworthy,²⁵ should not just be explained to converge in the religious interpretation of reality with God at its centre. Quite significantly, Makumba revisited the debate on whether African Traditional Religions can be compared with western scientific thought, and whether the African approach to reality is just pre-logical—that is not as logical as European logical approach to reality. The argument is between logical and pre-logical mentality. For Makumba, the latter is characteristic of African thinking, while the former is European.²⁶ Indeed this was an opportunity for Makumba to decisively spell out the reflective and critical nature of the African cognitive experience in order to demonstrate that

African cognitive experience is not devoid of reflection. Unfortunately, Makumba only remarked in a footnote that some writers have contested the view that African thought is non-reflective.²⁷ At this period in the history of thought, very few scholars would think African thinking is uncritical or unreflective. In fact, African thought and religious beliefs have shown remarkable adaptability to the “newness and dynamism of human development.”²⁸

However, the critical questions are: how deep is the African thinking as bedrock for its religiosity? How reflective is African thought process as manifested in religiosity? Today a lot of African thinkers and educated men and women argue quite astutely and demonstrate sufficient depth of reflection, but on matters of religiosity, something appears amiss. So how can African thinking in relation to their religiosity and beliefs and customs be subjected to the normative and explanatory framework of the theory of knowledge? How should an African religious mentality be like in the twenty-first century?

Proposed Mentality for African Religious Life in the 21st Century

Undoubtedly, religion has an essential role in the entire life of most African peoples. There is hardly a sharp separation between the sacred and the secular in the ordinary day-to-day living of a typical African. This does not by any means imply that Africans easily live an ethically-conscious life because of their religious outlook on life. I suggest that their religiosity is a coping mechanism for a future reality beyond their ontology. Thus whatever affects the religious outlook of most Africans would affect their religious beliefs and practices. Little wonder Mbiti thinks Africans have their own ontology, only that it is a religious ontology.²⁹ On his part, Makumba writes that “it is undeniable that religious beliefs and practices in Africa have undergone a remarkable change especially after the second half of the last century.”³⁰ He does not, however, mention the factors responsible for these changes. Nevertheless, they are not unconnected with the

23. See John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (London: Heinemann, 1989), 1.

24. Makumba, *An Introduction to African Philosophy*, 170.

25. *Ibid.*, 170.

27. See *Ibid.*, 172, footnote 438.

28. *Ibid.*, 174.

29. See Kwesi Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana, 1996), 82.

30. See Makumba, *An Introduction to African Philosophy*, 176.

record success of science and technology in the education of Africans. For this reason, I agree with Makumba that traditional African religiosity is on the decline³¹ or perhaps done covertly.

Yet, African religiosity, particularly in the faith-expressions of Christianity and Islam, is an obvious phenomenon. Thus religiosity in the variety of its manifestations is rife; and this in itself, when authentically manifested, is not a problem but a fruitfulness of faith-expression. This is the kind of religiosity that Africans should respect, sustain and promote among themselves. Anything inauthentic, a mere show of excessive religiosity, is a phenomenon to be questioned. In view of the foregoing, I think of the questions proposed for reflection by Didier Kaphagawani and Jeanette Malherbe in their article "Epistemology and the Tradition in Africa"³²: "To what degree should supernatural entities like ghosts, witches and spirits be present in contemporary African thinking? Are beliefs in such things compatible with modernization? Is the wholesale review of traditional thinking compatible with maintaining our African identity?"³³ To facilitate a fruitful examination of these matters, I propose two ways of reflection.

1. Africans wherever they are should intensify their concern and desire for deeply thought-out principles of truth to determine the aim and purpose of religiosity. Africans should begin to demonstrate keen observation and honest investigation of the kind of religiosity manifested in their homes, at places of worship and other public spaces. To ignore this call for a critical approach to religiosity would continue to do harm to Africans who stumble through the phenomena of all kinds of religiosity without the exigencies of the truth. It has been argued that Africans have a religious framework for knowing and knowledge, as opposed to a scientific one.³⁴ Nevertheless, there is a great responsibility to bring Africans closer to the consciousness of a standard of

31. See *Ibid.*, 177.

32. Didier N. Kaphagawani and Jeanette G. Malherbe, "Epistemology and the Tradition in Africa," in *The African Philosophy Reader*, eds. P.H. Coetzee and A.P. Roux (London: Routledge, 2004), 259-320.

33. *Ibid.*, 267.

34. See Moses Oke, "From an African Ontology to an African Epistemology: A Critique of J.S. Mbiti on the Time Conception of Africans," *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy/Revue Africaine de Philosophie* 18, nos 1-2 (2005): 25-36, at 33.

knowing and justifying an authentic religiosity based on Africans' capacity to inquire into the truth. On this note, it suffices to say that Africans need to improve in their practice of correct and critical thinking, or simply put, enhance remarkably the cultivation of REASON.

Consequently, it is philosophically (and theologically) right to assert that humans are endowed with 'reason'. Even though reason is fallible, since humans realise that they make mistakes and learn from them, it is still a human tool for discovering truth or grasping reality³⁵. Ordinarily, reason is the ability to think, understand and draw conclusions. In its beauty as an endowment, I acknowledge Makumba's description of reason as the human natural capacity which "by its very nature urges the human person on into the realm of the spiritual and the transcendent because such is the nature of humanity in general, and African humanity in particular."³⁶ Thus the reasonableness of belief in God or particular beliefs about God is an issue that cannot be delayed any further. There might be cases when a particular believer, a Christian or Muslim, would think his/her expression of religiosity is rational, and who but God should question it. Is such a person right to think so? Well, to maintain such a position is to think that belief in God requires no standard to be an acceptable belief.

In the context of religiosity, when there is no acceptable standard to ascertain when a particular form of religiosity or expression of religiosity is authentic or inauthentic, then it is inconsequential to have a basis for accepting authentic religiosity and avoiding inauthentic religiosity. How this is to be attained by Africans depends on the rational stance of African themselves. On this note, K. Clark's discussion on rational stance in religious epistemology is helpful.³⁷ Adopting and modifying it in the context of this article, Africans ought to seek, as best as they can, reasons to trust and accept with their cognitive faculties immediately produced religiosity of fundamental human concern.³⁸ In other words, Africans' framework for knowing must entail the task of "critical awareness of whatever is good in the

35. See Kelly James Clark, "Religious Epistemology," *Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* www.iep.utm.edu/relig-ep/ (accessed 13.10.2013).

36. Makumba, *An Introduction to African Philosophy*, 197.

37. See Clark, "Religious Epistemology."

38. See *Ibid.*

tradition in order to construct a sound intellectual identity for our society, one that meets the particular demand of our unique cultural context.”³⁹ This would contribute towards lending credence to whatever kind of religiosity that is perceived. In addition to this view, Africans ought not to close themselves off to the possibility of correcting their false beliefs. Given the likelihood that Africans could be wrong in their views on matters of religiosity, they ought to be open to whatever evidence that reinforces sincere truth-seeking.⁴⁰ While Africans should not simply dismiss the beauty of religion with its accompanying religiosity, they should, out of necessity, be wary of Africans with excessive enthusiasm for religion because of their reluctance to subject to rational assessment customary magico-religious beliefs. Besides this, such Africans would not be enthusiastic to analyse and evaluate a religious phenomenon or claims of knowledge of God in any context. Finally, most Africans with excessive enthusiasm for religion would not be attuned to the logic of neighbourly love.

2. Flowing from the point above on the need to be critical of excessive religiosity, it is imperative that Africans think critically of the role of religion in their lives and thought. As elucidated in the earlier section, religion is integrated into the life of the African people. Notwithstanding, Santiago Sia acknowledges that “despite the variety of understandings and connotations, religion seems to be so intimately related to human life and thought that it would appear to be superfluous to discuss the topic of the function of religion in human life and thought.”⁴¹ What is appreciable in Sia's contribution is the specific philosophical conception of religion understood as arising from human experience but grounded in rational reflection.⁴² It is Whitehead's view, according to Sia, that religion emerges from ritual, emotion, belief, and rationalisation. Thus there is in Whitehead's vision of religion, an endeavour for a theoretical account of meanings and concepts of immediate religious experiences such that it will inspire a worshipful attitude of God. For this reason, Sia writes that Whitehead tells us that “progress in religious truth...is mainly a

39. Kaphagawani and Malherbe, “Epistemology and the Tradition in Africa,” 262.

40. See Clark, “Religious Epistemology.”

41. Santiago Sia, *Religion, Reason and God* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004), 126.

42. *Ibid.*

progress in the framing of concepts, in discarding artificial abstractions or partial metaphors, and in evolving notions which strike more deeply into the root of reality.”⁴³ Such a vision of religion should impress on Africans a purposeful consciousness in matters of religiosity.

While I acknowledge that Sia's synthetic discussion of Whitehead's vision of religion would encourage Africans towards a reflective openness to religious beliefs, practices and customs, there is nothing in it, in my estimation, that offers insights which can assist Africans in determining the form of religious manifestation or expression to be classified as authentic religiosity. Besides, are there special religious manifestations or expressions that would in themselves be authentic religiosity? How does the conception of religiosity in this article relate to the various religions among Africans? There are no easy and quick answers. At the moment, it is sufficient to say that the longing of the African spirit for a Transcendent Being or Divine Reality should integrate an African's personal measure of emotions, intuitions and rational thinking because even those who regard themselves as sincere believers or practitioners of religion, as Sia observes, would regard certain manifestations, expressions, or practices alleged 'religious' as questionable or even objectionable.⁴⁴

Conclusion

This article started by summarising the point from Mbiti's perspective that religious beliefs and practices played and are still playing crucial roles in the development African life and thought. Explicit in Mbiti's view is the fact that religion is so much integrated in the African way of living and thinking that sacred teachings and narratives, rituals and ethics, symbols and art all express proper knowledge and feelings of religion among Africans. Closely related to this experience of religion among Africans by Mbiti is the phenomenon of religiosity considered to have penetrated into the hearts and minds of Africans. Thus the variety

43. *Ibid.* 132. See also Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), 131.

44. Sia, *Religion, Reason and God*, 125.

of testimony to the richness of religious sense within the religious experiences among Africans is fascinating and flourishing. For this reason, on one hand, it is often absurd to be prejudiced against this profound impact. On the other hand, religious Africans often find it hard to be objective and dispassionate in their evaluation and knowledge of religiosity as either authentic or inauthentic. This article, in the final section, proffers for Africans a required framework for a rational reflection on the phenomena of religiosity amongst themselves hoping that there will be an emergence of an African religious consciousness that is stripped of various simplistic acceptances of many kinds of religiosity.