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**Individual Freedom, Moral Choices,
Consequences and Community Responsibility**

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This article will approach morality and ethics from a modern interrelated anthropological, psychological, social, cultural and religious perspective.² In this approach of biological, DNA, cultural and religious moral human heritage, all human beings are biological

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² See my fuller treatment of the topic in my book; Emmanuel K. Twesigye, *Religion & Ethics for A New Age: An Evolutionist Approach* (New York: UPA, 2001).

beings that are created into social and moral beings by their parents and their respective communities.

I. Introduction

The normal process for the socialization and humanization process of the new born into moral beings occurs through the long term social, moral and religious conditioning or the socialization of the young into moral human beings by the family and the local community will be the main trajectory of the moral theory presented in this work.³ This as compared to ancient Christian moral theories of ethics and sin which focused on Adam and Eve's original sin and the fall of humanity from the supposed original moral perfection. St. Paul, Augustine and John Calvin built their pessimistic theories on the ancient Hebrew theory or biblical presumption of inherited sin and moral inherent human moral imperfections. St. Paul's theology of human nature, the body and sin (cf. Rom. 5-7) is the best example of this Hebrew heritage that influenced both St. Augustine and Calvin.

According to these moral thinkers and their moral theories, these inherited universal human conditions of original sin and moral imperfections limited human freedom to do real good without God's unmerited gifts of free redemptive grace. But, this led to the rational conclusions of predestination. If God gave the person enough grace, the person did good deeds. Otherwise, the person did evil deeds as a result of the original sin of Adam. This is the main essence of the old moral theories of predestination as found in thinkers like Sts. Paul, Augustine and Calvin.

These traditional moral theories are still strongly entrenched in the theological and moral works for traditional Christians, especially

³ This moral and ethical theory and approach assumes that human beings are born moral and religious "tabular rasa." The parents and the community write moral values and teachings of "right" and "wrong" on this inborn clean slate. Conscience is developed that way and therefore, it is relative to family community, culture and class in which one is born. Within this new moral and ethical theory, as well as the modern or scientifically-based understanding of the nature of humanity, conscience is a product of complex moral processes of societal conditioning. It is acquired after birth, and it can change based on learning new information and experiences of life. For instance, most "civilized societies" today condemn wars and capital punishment and reject the ancient Mosaic Law of *Lex talionis* (equal retaliation). See Twesigye, *Religion & Ethics for A New Age*, 134-175.

those who still cherish the works of St. Augustine and John Calvin on original sin, the corrupt human, predestination and eternal hellfire for all sinners.⁴ But in light of Christian acceptance of evolution as God's method for the creation of human beings, rather than all human beings being historical descendents of the biblical Adam and Eve, whose original sin was supposed to be inherited by all human beings as a kind of genetically or sexually transmitted moral and spiritual disease and imperfection, we have to rethink sound ethics and morality that affirm human sin and moral imperfection within the context of evolution.⁵

This is a very difficult task. Without any doubt, at first, it will be resisted by many Christian moral and theological traditionalists. This moral and theological resistance to new ideas and moral theories will remain true for many years to come. This moral and theological process of evolution and transformation is similar to the Church's resistance to the acceptance and adoption of modern theories of science as proposed by Copernicus, Galileo and Charles Darwin.

It is only recently that the Catholic Church apologized for the Inquisition and condemnation of Galileo and his scientific theories. In 1996, Pope John Paul stunned many conservative Christians when he declared that Darwin was right and evolution was God's method for the creation of the cosmos, including the processes that brought intelligent humanity into being.⁶ That declaration nullified many moral and ethical theories that had traditionally taught the human moral imperfection was due consequence to the historical moral

⁴ As a tragic literal understanding of "Original Sin" and subsequently, the inherently morally corrupt and evil world, the biblical literalist lay fundamentalist Catholic founders and leaders of the Marian Movement for *The Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God*, despaired of ever living a holy life in the corrupt world, including the Catholic Church, due to some of its sexually active priests, child-molesting priests and pedophiles. As a result, in 2000 the Marian Movement leaders persuaded and convinced their devout followers to withdraw from the corrupt world. Finally, they convinced them to leave the supposed corrupt world behind and to ascend to heaven through self-sacrificial martyrdoms. The result was the mass deaths and ritual martyrdoms of about 2000 Marian Catholics. See Emmanuel Kalenzi Twesigye, *Religion, Politics and Cults in East Africa: God's Warriors and Mary's Saints* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010).

⁵ See Twesigye, *Religion & Ethics for A New Age*, 84-95, 226-228

⁶ See Twesigye, *Religion & Ethics for A New Age*, 16.

rebellion of Adam and Eve against God. As a result, this article and some of my books represent new efforts to rethink ethics and morality in light of human evolution, while still affirming the universality of human moral imperfection, sin and evil that require divine free grace and intervention to negate them and redeem them from the path of violence and self-destruction, to the path of unconditional love, free forgiveness of offences, nonviolence and peace, as Jesus taught the world (Matt. 5-7).

Matters of personal freedoms, morality, conduct and responsibility are to some individualistic matters in the perspectives of many Westerners including most Americans and Europeans. In general, they tend to regard behavior, habits and actions as matters of free individual human choices and conduct for which the individual must be held accountable. For instance, good conduct and meritorious acts are often rewarded with public praise or promotions, in cases of professional activities. Conversely, harmful acts and criminal conduct are often condemned and punished by the respective communities, according to their established procedures of dealing with crime and punishment.⁷

Any moral theories and ethical positions of extreme individualism would be untenable and are false in as much as human beings do not essentially define themselves in the absence of human communities like families, work places, villages, sports, shopping centers, cities and do not fully live in personal isolation, like some hermits. Accordingly, monastic monks and nuns have traditionally lived in collective convents and monasteries, including the Buddhist monks and nuns, where individual meditations are the main focus and the attainment of personal enlightenment and union with the holy Transcendent as the desired goal and destination of a holy life of meditation. Anybody who failed to observe the established laws and regulations of such a holy community, claiming personal freedom to choose to behave according to personal conscience and ideals, would be admonished to repent and conform or be kicked out of the community.

⁷ See Darrel J. Fasching, *et al.*, *Comparative Religious Ethics: A Normative Approach to Global Ethics* (Second Edition. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 234-260.



Photo 1. Traditional mob justice in Uganda, arbitrated by Ugandan Police

Anybody who has ever played or watched organized team sports like football, soccer, basketball, rugby and games like scrabble, has noticed that established common rules have to be strictly obeyed for the games or sports to take place. The violators of these established rules of the games or sports are either penalized by losing scores or expelled from the sport of game. Referees are hired to ensure that they serve as the impartial arbiters of the games and sports.

In some traditional religio-cultural communities, kings, prophets, priests, chiefs, magistrates and ultimately God, are treated as the referees for the local moral and cultural life and for the moral conduct of the individual members of the respective communities. Likewise, each community treats individual members and public life within the local community and the world as beings analogous to a collective game or dramatic production. In this drama of life, life itself is the play in which the individuals members are the active participant players, following established rules of the game of life as defined by the complex local cultural, religious and legal rules, and particularly, the essential standards of moral, religious, cultural, socioeconomic, political and professional conduct.

Individuals are members of their respective communities, organizations and professional groups. They are considered good, virtuous and morally responsible if they live well based on the moral

guidelines, regulations or laws and expectations of the common good that have been carefully formulated by the learned elders or authorities and established by conventions of the respective communities and organizations. No community or organization can function well and endure unless it has formulated good constitutions, binding bylaws, regulations, and rules of conduct for all its members. Without this essential convention, the community would be that which Thomas Hobbes graphically described negatively in which human life was brutish, short and miserable.⁸

The constitutions, and laws or rules have to also spell out the procedures for the due process to discipline or expel disruptive and noncompliant members of the community. The traditional societies conducted this process through the establishment of cultures, religions, schools to instruct, socialize and condition the young into learning and habitual internalization of the codes of moral and social conduct within the local or broader community.

A local moral theory coexists with a universal ethical theory or system that transcends all local moralities and both evaluates and judges them to be good if they promote life, justice, well being and peace, and conversely to be judged and condemned as evil if they promote the opposite which are universally viewed as negative and harmful practices or evils. The local cultural and religious moralities are transcended by the universal principles and systems of ethics because humanity is a shared universal phenomenon that evolved into such a wonderful mystery, or according to most major religions, was created unique, by a universal Creator God.

The Book of Genesis (1-2) affirms that humanity was created in God's image to become God's custodian or steward of God's creation. Therefore, according to the Judeo-Christian traditions, all human beings are by essential nature created as God's finite moral agents in the world. They are endowed with reason, intelligence,

⁸ See: Hobbes' moral and political philosophy, especially *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic* (also under the titles *Human Nature* and *De Corpore Politico*) published in 1650, *De Cive* (1642), as published in English as *Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society* in 1651, and the *Leviathan* published in 1651. He wrote other works on the duties of governments and citizens. In absolutism, the state controls almost all the aspects of its citizens. There is either no individual freedom or very limited freedom.

mind, spirit, and they to a finite degree, akin with God in knowledge, moral consciousness, moral judgments, creativity and humane conduct in the world to enhance God's good creation.

According moral thinkers and ethicists like Thomas Aquinas,⁹ Immanuel Kant, Karl Rahner, Paul Tillich and Emmanuel Twesigye, all normal human beings are by *a priori* essential human nature through the universal endowments of God in creation, and now through both the natural law and acquired cultures intrinsically interconnected with others and the environment, on which they depend for their lives. Human beings are both explicitly and implicitly interconnected through a shared and inherited general common humanity (DNA) that binds all normal and moral human beings together into the local more homogeneous community and the correlative global diverse human community. As a result, Dr. Martin Luther King both insightfully and prophetically declared to the world that “injustice anywhere, is a threat to justice everywhere.”¹⁰

As such, as “civilized and just nations” we could not continue to claim to be moral people, without guilt, if we could afford to keep silent and neutral, when the angry “Hutu” people armed themselves with machetes and massacred their traditionally politically oppressive “Tutsi” overloads, in 1994. The Western nations did not stay neutral when Adolf Hitler committed horrendous acts of genocide against the German and Polish Jews. Acts which cause harm, injustice, violence and premature deaths have got to be condemned as evil and stopped by individual and collective moral effort both in the local and international communities.¹¹

This effective collective moral effort in the promotion of local and global peace is a universal human moral imperative that transcends all local boundaries of individualism, tribalism, nationalism, language, religious affiliation, geopolitics, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status and socio-economic class. This

⁹ See: *Summa Theologica* and *Contra Gentiles*. St. Thomas was eclectic in his approach to ethics (moral theology) and systematic theology. As a result, he can be read within a modern scientific context, unlike St. Augustine who was deeply rooted in the dualism and pessimism of human nature based on Neo-Platonism. See St. Augustine's *Confessions* and *Concerning Human Nature*.

¹⁰ Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from Birmingham Jail, April 16, 1963.

¹¹ See Darrel J. Fasching, *et al.*, *Comparative Religious Ethics*, 41- 50.

is what Jesus as the Christ (Messiah) of God preached as the “Good News” (*Evangelion/Gospel*) of dawning of God’s Kingdom on Earth (Mk.1:1-15).

II. Effective Secular Mass Movements against Wars and Injustice

In the past, religion, morality and ethics were closely intertwined and inseparable. Religious ethics led to evils of religious wars, such as the crusades and religious intolerance and persecution, such as the Inquisition and condemnations of intellectuals and scientists like Galileo. In Northern Ireland and the Middle East, religious ethics, morality and prejudice have promoted violence and wars. The universal values and ideals of freedom, socioeconomic justice, democracy and peace cannot function well in intolerant religious nations like the Middle East

The two examples, cited above, dramatically indicate the dilemma of the nature of “moral relativism” and cultural “particularism” as opposed to the higher level moral principle of universal ethics, such as that of Martin Luther King. The moral principle of justice for all is not a local moral ideal alone. It is a universal ethical principle that all moral, free and fully civilized human beings should seek to attain locally in the local community, and internationally within the global community. This is also the main essence and mission of the sensational Kony 2012 video (*The Invisible Children*).

Jason Russell and Ben Beesey the designers and creators of the video believed that Joseph Kony, the founder of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) was an evil person to be stopped. His military atrocities, terrorism and evil deeds had led to President Yoweri Museveni’s Government of Uganda, to move about 1.5-1.8 million people of Northern Uganda from vulnerable rural villages and relocate them into massive internal refugee camps.

The leaders of the Ugandan government seemed to be victimizing the rural people of Northern Uganda, but their moral justification, political, military and ethical reasoning, was that putting people in the camps which were militarily defensible was a lesser evil than letting them stay in the undefended rural villages. This was further morally justified on the grounds that Kony’s troops were both undisciplined and mass murders. They terrorized the people of Northern Uganda through acts of rape, mutilation, torture and painful brutal killings of

their defenseless victims. They abducted school pupils from school classrooms and dormitories and coerced them to become sex slaves in the cases of girls and child soldiers and mercenaries, in the cases of the boys.



Photo 2. Field Marshall Joseph Kony, the LRA Chief Commander, Prophet and Messiah

The Ugandan nation and the international community were appalled and condemned Kony and his LRA for these abuses of human rights. In 2005, the International Criminal Court (ICC) indicated Joseph Kony and his leading LRA generals for crimes against humanity, rapes, kidnapping, maiming, torture, mass murders of innocent civilians in Northern Uganda and the surrounding territories of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This one example of where local moral communities, nations and the International Community can overcome local moral and cultural relativism, ethnic and national tendencies for autonomy and seek international help to resolve a local or national moral, cultural, political and military conflict and threat to local, and national security, socioeconomic well-being and peace.

Obviously, these three principles are to be considered as essential components of universal systems of ethics which override individual freedoms, personal morality, values, choices and patterns of conduct, which violate these universal moral imperatives. In these cases, the

community and national ideals of well-being, human respect, justice and peace serve the main guides and goals for a sound moral action, as well as any acceptable forms of personal and social morality. Hitler's wars, programs of genocide of Jews and other minorities, as well as the Rwanda and Darfur forms of genocide can be clearly seen to be evil, even, when they were cherished as moral ideals by their local perpetrators.

These evils which have sometimes caused unnecessary physical, social and medical harm to the victims. As such, whatever causes harm can be condemned as an evil to be avoided. The society has a moral obligation to prevent harm to its members and to the neighbor. The Catholic Church and American Southern Baptists provide good moral examples for teaching their church members to avoid evil and sin by killing the unborn babies through legal procedures called "abortions." These religious groups also condemn killing of the terminally sick or severely handicapped through the process called "euthanasia."

III. Judeo-Christian Traditions:

Moral Dilemmas of Retributive Justice

The Hebrew stories of God's original creation of an apparently perfect world in which there was harmony between human beings and the rest of creation has dominated some biblical literalists in affirming that God's original creation was perfect and there was no pain, suffering and death until the original human beings (Adam and Eve) rebelled against God's moral laws and sinned. God's moral laws are historically affirmed to be literal and historical in that Adam and Eve ate from a forbidden tree of life and knowledge which God had temptingly planted in the middle of the garden.

However, the original temptation to be wise or to live forever is still present with us. For instance, as a professor, I am still engaged in research and study to know more about life, nature, humanity and maybe find the secrets to make life better and for people to live longer, more meaningful, fulfilling, and happier lives. I do not feel that I am sinning against God's original moral law. Maybe, that is how Adam and Eve felt and we should not condemn them for wanting to make us more knowledgeable and wiser like God. The first account of creation avoids this moral question of the "original sin" or "fall" of humanity from perfection by affirming that right from the beginning

God created human beings both male and female in “his own image” (*Imago Dei*).

As such, all human beings are created as moral agents to represent God in creation and the cosmic historical processes. Accordingly, as God’s custodians or stewards of creation, all normal human beings are God’s essential creative finite minds and moral agents in the cosmos. They are born or created with an inherent natural moral imperative to become altruistic and do unconditional acts of generosity, justice, unconditional love, unmerited forgiveness, peace-making, mediation of reconciliation and resolution of conflicts to effect individual, collective and process of restoration to wholeness and effective healing. This is the essence of the Christian doctrine of the divine incarnation and the ministry of Jesus the Christ, which mainline Christianity still tries to embody, mediate and proclaim to the world that is deeply rooted in the violent traditions of Moses and his antiquated violent law of retribution as justice.

Western civilizations, values, laws and systems of governance and ethics are deeply rooted in God’s revelations, especially through the prophets. This is principally through Moses, who revealed to the world, God’s Ten’s Commandments and the retributive law of “Lex talionis” (equal retaliation of tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye).¹²

This retributive law that governed Judaism for many centuries has continued to govern some cultures, such as Muslim nations and movements like *Al Qaeda*, which seek to impose *Shari’a* as God’s universal definitive divine Moral Law on the people under their jurisdiction, as God’s infallible revelation and Moral Law. Islamic

¹² For instances, see: Exodus 19-25; Lev. 18-22. The Mosaic Law has both implicitly and explicitly dominated the Western moral theories and ethics. Much of the American legal controversies such as laws on abortion and same sex marriages are clearly rooted in the Mosaic moral codes and ancient Hebrew cultures as written down in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). As a result, the Eastern religious and cultural traditions, such as those of the Hindus and Chinese are not concerned with these Mosaic moral codes and cultural values. They have their own normative moral traditions, codes and values to regulate and govern their personal and collective lives in the social and moral communities to which they were born into and socialized as responsible members or citizens as moral agents.

cultures and laws are inherently similar to the ancient Hebrew traditions and Mosaic laws as practiced in the 5th century Palestine and the surrounding territories, which Muhammad traded with before he became called by God (Allah) to serve as his Prophet of monotheism, and moral teacher of Mosaic-like ethnic values and systems of ethics, to his polytheistic and feuding clan based Arab people, in Saudi Arabia.

According to the Mosaic Law, premeditated murderers were put to death as justice and other moral offenders and public violators of the Ten Commandments, such as blasphemers, adulterers and thieves were sometimes arrested by the local authorities, tried and if found guilty, were sentenced to heavy fines, ritual purification or atonement sacrifices, and were sentenced to other forms of retributive forms of punishment. These included public death sentences by stoning. The public stoned to death supposed moral offenders, such as blasphemers, rapists, adulterers, cultural, social or religious sexual deviants, including homosexuals and racial or ethnic integrationists, who were accused of breaking cultural norms and established traditions on sexual morals and cultural purity that were reflected in local cultural and moral guidelines that regulated the associations of ethnic and racial outsiders (gentiles).

The Mosaic Ten Commandments and Moral Laws concerning ritual ethnic and sexual purity, ritual cleanliness, normative guidelines for food preparations, conduct of both personal and social life, including matters of private sexuality and public associations or interactions of different groups of people were carefully taught to the young and members of the community, as part of divine mandate, mediation of the God's Covenant and prerequisite knowledge, acceptance and its diligent practice as the practical embrace and incorporation into God's Covenant and God's chosen (elect) holy Nation of Israel.

The divine Hebrew Covenant and God's holy Nation were inseparably intertwined to constitute the Jewish identity at the time of Jesus' birth and later, ministry in Palestine. As a result, the "sinners" and social or "religious outcasts" that Jesus associated with were the people who were considered to be morally and culturally lax at observing the cultural and religious rituals of the minutia of the Mosaic Law.

Jesus ran into trouble with the religious traditionalists, fundamentalists and biblical literalists, especially the Pharisees for associating with people who were considered ritually impure people, including women, outcasts, lepers, tax-collectors, prostitutes and foreigners (Samaritans and Romans). He also broke the ritual laws of ceremonial washing before meals and drinking from water containers from a Samaritan woman.

By the time of Jesus' ministry, the Mosaic Law was regarded as God given cultural and religious Moral Law to God's holy people and their holy nation as if it were God's Kingdom on earth. The ministry of John the Baptist was to warn sinners to repent. He called them to obey God's invitation, and be cleansed from sins through the ritual washing or baptism in the River Jordan. Prophet John strongly believed and preached that God was going to send his special agent who would finally transform the imperfect God's people into a perfect "Kingdom of God" in the world (cf. Mk. 1:1-15; John 1: 1-18).

According to the traditional teachings of mainline Christianity, this is the historical Hebrew cultural, religious and ritual context into which God sent Jesus as his Christ and through his ministry revealed God's undeserved grace and unconditional love (Agape) and taught God's new, higher, redemptive and rehabilitative moral Law. The Christian tradition affirms that at God's own right time (Kairos), God sent Jesus as the Christ, into the world as his ultimate agent of God's revelation in human history and its normative moral values and universal ethical imperatives of unconditional love for the neighbor, free forgiveness of offences, nonviolence and ultimately, non-retaliation in face of aggression.

IV. Nations of Laws and Peaceful Mediation of Conflicts

Western Christian orientated nations have adopted some of the moral ideals from the teachings of Jesus. As a result, many Western nations have rejected retributive systems of justice as primitive violent systems that promote a vicious cycle of violence and counter-violence, as we see in the Middle East. In contrast, they have renounced war as a means to resolve conflict. They have also abolished practices of collective punishment, torture of prisoners and capital punishment. Affirmative Action laws in the United States of America abolished institutional practices of discrimination against

women and racial minorities in the hiring processes, retention and promotion in the public work arena.



Photo 3. Presidents Nelson Mandela and Bill Clinton (Google images)

During the repressive era of apartheid, in South Africa, 1948-1990, the West had moral dilemmas to confront and resolve locally before they could effectively publically and collectively agree to intervene in South African affairs. Western leaders like Jimmy Carter, Regan, Margaret Thatcher, and Bill Clinton had to resolve their own moral and political issues at home in order to effectively confront and constructively resolve the serious issues of injustice, racism, White-supremacy, discrimination, land appropriation by the ruling White minority group at the expense of disenfranchised Blacks, socioeconomic and political problems.

Through destructive and non-productive wars like World War I, the Korean and Viet Nam wars, and over time, the Western leaders had learned that military intervention and invasion of South Africa to depose the White-supremacist dictators and install Nelson Mandela as a Black President of South Africa, in the same way in which president Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, in 1979 sent his troops to invade Uganda and depose President Idi Amin and reinstall President Obote, as a legitimate head of the country, would not work out best. In the case of South Africa, the Western nations decided to go the United Nations to request a resolution imposing an economic embargo on South Africa. It worked. President Botha was finally forced by the external economic and political pressure. He released Mandela from prison after 27 years, on February 11, 1990 and allowed multiparty elections to take place in 1994, in which Mandela emerged as winner and the first African President of South Africa 1994-1999.

However, the European and American wars to remove and kill President Saddam, in Iraq and President Gaddafi, in Libya clearly indicate that when individuals, like Bin Laden, Saddam or Gaddafi use their respective positions and wealth to sponsor gross local and internal forms of destructive violence, the international powers and peace-loving people have to unite to depose them and neutralize their power and capabilities to do further harm to innocent people or their property.

International laws have been formulated by the United Nations and the International Criminal Court has been instituted and empowered to order the arrest and conduct trials of international criminals and political leaders who commit gross human rights abuses against their civilian populations. Ben Keeseey and Jason Russell's media sensational movie called *Stop Kony 2012* is a good illustration of this collective, global human response to evils in the community, which are caused by poorly socialized or ignorant individual evil people, or groups of social misfits sociopathic criminals. It illustrated the effective power of moral, legal, political and military global process and effort to denounce evil and its promoters and to mobilize the peace-makers to stop such kinds of evils of violence, wars, rapes, child abuses and terrorism of innocent and helpless citizens.

The main function of the state is to protect the citizens from both internal and external harm. Where there is a failed state such as Somalia, the international community has the moral obligation to protect the local people from internal and external aggression or other evils. In the case of Somalia, the Al-Shabab wing of Al Qaeda had to be stopped and the pirates had to be arrested, since they terrorized sailors and caused enormous losses for the owners and investors in the shipping industry owners. Life in Somalia has been disrupted leading to thousands of refugees fleeing to Yemen, Kenya, Uganda, the USA and other countries for refuge.

The breakdown in local families, cultures, laws and totalitarian states are major sources of individual and collective evils. Especially in Somalia, Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Nigeria, Ivory Cost, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo are examples, where individuals and the local communities have been affected by individual and group decisions that have caused violence and hardships to both the local and the international communities. As

such effective moral rehabilitation has to take into account individuals, their families and local communities to whom life at its fundamental level is most meaningfully lived and experienced. The local laws and those of the international community have to protect individual human life and sanctity at the local level of the individual and the family. In Africa, Professor John Mbiti summarized basic level of human nature as an inherently integrated social reality, is in the imperative and universal principle that: “I am because we are. We are and therefore, I am.”¹³

Therefore, since the community gives birth, religion, language, moral values, identity and humanity to all its individual members of its community, the community also has a right to discipline its errant members. Some communities like the Amish, take serious steps to protect the community from unrepentant immoral, errant and violent members by ritual shaming, and shunning or ostracism and banishment from the community. This is similar to God’s grace and mercy expressed to Cain, who had killed his own brother.

According to the book of Genesis stories of creation and the fall, God banished him from the local community as punishment for his crime. God put a mark on him to warn and prevent other people from killing him. Likewise, St. Paul advises the Christians to admonish evil-doers among them. If the evil-doers repented and reformed their ways, they were to be forgiven and rehabilitated and reintegrated into God’s community. If they refused, they were to be ostracized.

Consequently, some Christian communities and Churches also admonish notorious evildoers to repent, and when they refuse, they are excommunicated from the Church. Recently, some Anglican bishops have been excommunicating priests who engage in

¹³ See John S. Mbiti, *African Philosophy and Religion* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 108-109. At least, for the traditional Africans, the explicit understanding was that human life was intrinsically social and that no human being was an island or isolated from the human community that “created him” or her. In this respect, God is represented by the community, and also both resides and works through the community. The community’s moral and social judgments and pronouncements against the individual and due punishment are to be considered being coextensive with those of God. This is similar to the Catholic view and understanding of God and God’s activities in the world through the Church and as God works through both its ordained and lay ministers (laity). See Karl Rahner, *Church and Sacraments* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963; London: Oates and Burns, 1974).

homosexuality or publicly support it. For instance, Bishop Senyonjo was suspended from exercise of ministry in 2002 and finally excommunicated in 2006, by the Anglican bishops of Uganda for supporting gay and lesbian rights and organizations in Uganda.

In the USA, the Episcopal Church has also defrocked many priests, who refused to accept the new policies and religious teachings that promoted the tolerance and acceptance of homosexuality as God's will that is rooted in natural law, which determines sexual orientation. On the other hand, based on their moral consciences, some Episcopal priests decided to join the Roman Catholic Church and others chose to secede from the Episcopal Church. In 2008, they effectively reorganized themselves into a new Anglican province and created the Anglican Church of North America. They also chose, elected and with the help, approval and participation of some African conservative Archbishops and bishops, and in 2009 consecrated Bishop Robert Duncan, the dissent Episcopal Bishop of Pittsburg Diocese, as its first Anglican Archbishop. These Anglicans were defending the 1998 Lambeth Conference resolution on homosexuality as a moral evil that is inherently both unnatural and in contradiction to Holy Scriptures.¹⁴

The new Anglican Province has formulated new ecclesiastical laws and canons which effectively prohibits the ordination of homosexuals, and the ordination of women as priests and bishops.

¹⁴ See Twesigye, *Religion & Ethics for A New Age*, 645-646. The majority of the bishops who voted against homosexuality were from Africa, Asia and Latin America. Most of the North American and European bishops opposed the resolution. As a result, Bishop Gene Robinson, a non-celibate priest was consecrated as the new Episcopal Bishop of Hampshire in 2003. This consecration of a gay bishop resulted in schisms in the Episcopal and Anglican churches and communion. The recent resignations of the Archbishop Luke Orombi of the Anglican Province of Uganda and Rowan Williams, the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury (2012), may help to heal the divisions if their successors are willing to reach a compromise on these moral and theological controversies of homosexuality within both the ordained and lay members of the Anglican Church and its Global Communion. The conservative Anglicans, especially the African bishops strongly affirm that they cannot compromise with manifestations of public expressions of sexual sins of homosexuality, and ecclesiastically associate with public sinners on matters of homosexuality, since they regard homosexuality as an abomination to God.

The Anglican Church preaches that the Episcopal Church has become corrupted by western secular cultures of homosexuality, and in order to appease the homosexuals in the US Government and the Episcopal Church, the Episcopal bishops have tragically abdicated their moral and ethical duty to admonish them to repent and stop their supposed evil sexual practices. The Anglican Church preaches that same sex marriages are evils that lead to hell-fire. They promote sexual abstinence for those born with a sexual orientation to the same sex. Their moral reason for being is to call people to live holy and morally pure lives, or heterosexuality within the marriage bond as God's holy ordinance in creation (Gen 1-2), and to abandon the new culturally, politically or publicly based moral teachings which are not based on sound understanding of Holy Scriptures.

Conclusion

Since all human beings as cultural, moral, linguistic and religious creatures of their own respective and diverse cultural and moral communities, all human beings are also to some extent moral creatures and creations of their own diverse cultures and religions. Therefore, unless they either consciously convert or rebel against their given local cultural, moral, historical, social and religious conditioning, they will become the moral and cultural beings, which they were socialized or conditioned to become.

As a result, there may be inherent moral differences and conflicts within the different moral communities. These can be mitigated and mediated based on systems of rational ethics which offer critical analysis and objective evaluation of judgments of local moral values in light of reason and universal principles of justice, unconditional love or altruism and doing no harm to people, other creatures and the environment on which all life depends for coming into being, self-expression, fulfillment and well-being.

Laws, religions and practices that promote justice, peace and well-being for individuals and people, within their contexts of life within the family, local community and nation, in respect for other people, fellow creatures and the environment as God's creatures and creation, must be held as the ideal local and universal criteria for sound moral judgments and sound ethics. Moral and cultural deviance should be mediated based on reason, love and forgiveness in quest for moral and social rehabilitation of the criminal. If the criminal and the

deviant is dangerous, due process to send the dangerous person to prison and long term reformatory processes, including treatment for the mentally ill criminals may be warranted. Torture of criminals and prisoners should not be practiced by civilized people and nations.

Ultimately, the ancient or primitive retributive punishments, and violent legal practices, such as those found in the Mosaic Law, and Shari'a do not work to reform criminals. They are inherently retributive to cause fear in both the community and the criminals. Unless the criminals are put to death, torture of the criminals as mandated by Lex talionis, or laws of retribution, including corporal punishment, food or sleep deprivation or housing prisoners in squalor, only harden the criminals and embitter the prisoners against their communities and may learn to view them negatively as evil enemies, whom they should see to inflict indiscriminate retaliation as just revenge for their own misfortunes and torture in prison. This one example where violence and counter-violence, never lead to peace, since only peace begets peace, while violence breeds vicarious cycles of endless counter-violence, like those in the Middle East.

The Roman Emperors finally learned that the official policies of the imperial persecution of Christianity had failed to stamp it out, and had instead attracted more people to join the new morally radical religious movement which proclaimed justice, equality and love all people regardless of their socioeconomic status and gender. In an empire where the majority of the people were economically disadvantaged, low class, poor peasants or slaves, this new religion with its radical new ethic of inclusiveness, equality, justice and peace for all appealed to many people. It gave them hope for redemption from a state of meaninglessness and low self-esteem.

The Roman cross on which the Messiah Jesus had been crucified, and which was the symbol of Roman torture and degrading death, became adopted as the Christian symbol. They transformed the crucifixion and death of Jesus on the cross as a courageous public act of self-sacrificial martyrdom. For the Roman converts, Jesus was a hero and to the Jewish converts, Jesus was a Messiah, prophet and God's sacrificial lamb whose atonement took away the sins of the world.



Photo 4. The Tortured and Crucified Christ (Google images)

Ultimately, it was the Roman brutality and the crucifixion of Jesus the Christ, as dramatically portrayed by Mel Gibson's *The Passion*, which effectively transformed the Rabbi Jesus into a religious and political martyr, who became worshipped as the risen Lord by his followers. Later, the Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and legalized it as the new state religion. The Roman Emperors were conquered by the cross of Christ, which they had used as an instrument of torture, degradation and death. The Book of Job and the cross of Christ clearly indicate that human suffering is not always due to personal sin. It can be due to the sins of other people in the community or a result of a seemingly defective process of natural law, as in some cases of hereditary diseases or natural disasters. Some ancient cultures and religious traditions attributed these misfortunes to God's punishment, witchcraft and possessions by the demonic forces of evil spirits or the Devil.

In its Christian reversal of evil, Christ as the Messiah and Redeemer of creation has brought new possibilities for restoration to wholeness, and new being or new creation (2 Cor. 5:16-21). Likewise, the brutal cross of the torture and death of Christ became a new powerful, self-sacrificial and atonement redemptive symbol of death to evil and sin that, if left unchecked, lead to oppression of God's people and caused premature deaths. Therefore, as we seek to punish evil and crime both within our communities and the world, we

should always remember that mercy, restorative justice, atonement, healing and peace for all are the noble intentions, goals and processes of punishment and redemption or rehabilitation of the offender.¹⁵



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¹⁵ This is one of the main criticisms that the bishops and other religious leaders in Northern Uganda voiced against Jason Russell's video project called *Kony 2012*. The bishops noted that the video makers seemed to suggest that a military solution was desired to end the Kony problem in Uganda. Kony was defeated in Uganda in 2005 and since 2006, the Government of Uganda and the religious leaders have sought to implement the rehabilitations of more than 1.5 million people who were displaced and internally displaced due to the Kony war and LRA terrorism. The rehabilitation efforts were the ones that should have been stressed in the video as reasons for fund-raising rather than supporting war efforts, arrest and punitive measures against Kony and the LRA.

In African thinking and moral theory, even offenders need God's redemptive grace, mercy, forgiveness and rehabilitation by the offended communities. That is how President Idi Amin was treated in 1979 and now, it is Kony's turn. This is where Amnesty and Luo traditional reconciliation processes and rituals of "*Mato put*" (sacrificial atonement) took on the familiar concept and symbol of the death of Christ on the cross as both God's sacrifice and atonement for all human sins, regardless of how heinous they were. Within this African as well as Christian understanding, retributive justice, such as that of the Mosaic Law (*Lex talionis*) are rejected and condemned as a source of vicious cycles of violence and counter-violence within the community and the world, as the evidence of wars and instability in the Middle East and Somalia tragically clearly illustrate as a warning to local communities and world leaders. For all obedient Christians, see Christ's definitive imperatives of agape, nonviolence and peace that both reject and negate the ancient Mosaic moral teachings on violence and revenge: Matt. 5-7. See Twesigye, *Religion & Ethics for A New Age*, 499-600.