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# Science

in the perspective of

## African Religion (AFREL), Islam & Christianity



EDITOR IN CHIEF  
S.O. OYEWOLE

EDITORS

\* Ade P. Dopamu    \* I.O. Umejesi    \* P.O. Amanze  
\* V.A. Alabi        \* S.E. Ododo

ALAMU

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## SCIENTISTS: THE HIGH PRIESTS OF A NEW TECHNOLOGICAL CULTURE

A.G. ALAMU

### Introduction

Who we are is determined less by our biological genesis and more by our spiritual epigenesis, less by our creation and more by our re-creation.<sup>1</sup>

The foregoing depicts the interdependence of science and religion despite the on-going debate between them. Thus, this age of technology has ushered in more expressions. It is interesting to note that religious expressions are more befitting in scientific parlance. For instance, scientists have been described as high priests in the religious circle. It is certain that the more scientists learn, the further they get from any belief in God. A handful of scientists are deeply impressed by the obvious evidence pointing to teleological design in the nature around us. While other scientists wonder beyond design; they begin to think about the Designer.

To this end, this paper would explore the attributes of high priests, both religious and scientific. This study will cursorily reconcile the worth of scientist and religious high priests towards a best possible world and a conclusion.

### Attributes of High Priests

The office of high priests came after the law was given at Mt. Sinai through Moses. Thus, the high priests were uniquely chosen and originally confined to the house of Levi. In the Leviticus, it was clear that "The priest, who is the highest among his brothers, or whose head anointing oil has been poured and who has been appointed to wear the garments, must not untidy his hair or tear his clothes"<sup>2</sup>. The high priests

were directly chosen by God. This choice favoured Aaron, his sons and descendants, who uncompromisingly helped in the practical work of the tabernacle and the rest of the Levites who administered the Laws. Expounding on the activities of the Levites, Babs Mala has this to say:

Leviticus is essentially a rule-book...

The laws covered ritual and worship and many aspects of life – but all seem in relation to God. The book takes its name from the fact that it was the Levitical priests... who administered the Laws. But the book is not for the priests alone. God intended all his people to know and keep the Law<sup>3</sup>.

Succinctly therefore, the high priests are select few for a definite purpose; their activities are engulfing and based on their ordination. They must eschew from uncleanness and defilement.

In this law, the high priests are directed always to put their official duties above family ones (Matt: 8:21-22)<sup>4</sup>

- The high priests emerge clearly in dealing with daily life, purity and impurity, this includes purification after birth chapter 12, and various uncleanness, in the body. As a well –organized office, the high priests recognize their position as ‘natural’ priests, but their priesthood is a symbol of the action of right reason which brings to man righteousness and joy through thoughts of absolute truth<sup>5</sup>.

- The high priests do not only sacrifice but also bless, that is, in communicating the fruits of an efficacious sacrifice already made. They only can bless who is in fellowship with God and speak as God’s representative<sup>6</sup>. Philo describes the priestly office as combination of priest and king. This combination of offices which meets in the simplest forms of society is seen to be realized sui generis also when humanity has attained its end? The priestly office “has the power of rational persuasion which offers to the soul food of gladness and joy, and so in some sense answers to the priestly logos”<sup>8</sup>.

The high priests uphold the ethical and moral laws. In Leviticus 18:3, it is stated that “you shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to

which I am bringing you”. Arising from the foregoing, it is apparent that many of these laws are directed against the specific practices of Israel’s neighbours. Not only that, the high priests are holy and righteous because it is God’s nature to be holy. Cleanliness is next to Godliness. He who is not holy is not of God’s because God is holy. God’s holiness itself concerns the underprivileged. Also, the Levites have ecstatic statements which are only known and decoded by them. The Levites also exhibit honesty, fair dealing, impartial justice (11:13-15), and in respect for life and reputation (16-18). The Levitical codes contain instructions, guidelines and rules and teachings of God to His people as regards daily living. The Leviticus also directs the High priests to forbid unnecessary promiscuity, incest among others. In any case, the high priests guide humanity to all the absolute truths of creation and existence. The Leviticus in its understanding and uniqueness simply defies classification. Indeed, the purpose of these instructions and priestly codes is the quest for peace, serenity and continual development in nature. This is the basis for realization of both religion and science. As a matter of fact, the high priests bring messages and reveal the mind of God in some situations which ordinarily human beings cannot explain in the scheme of things.

### The Scientific High Priests Metaphor

Through the ages, science has become involved in giving more insights and gainful knowledge to the very nature of the universe. The endeavours of the scientists are empirical and observable. Albert Einstein admitted that “you will hardly find one among the profounder sort of scientific minds without a religious feeling of his own”<sup>9</sup>. He also buttressed further that religious feelings take the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection.<sup>10</sup> Yet this does not necessarily lead scientists to believe in a creator, a personal God. But Barton opined that

there is no incompatibility between science and religion. Both are seeking the same truth. Science shows that God exists<sup>11</sup>.

Bringing this expression to the fore, it actually speaks of the interplay of science and religion, for "science deals with the measurable, religion deals with the immeasurable"<sup>12</sup>. Having understood the complementary role both science and religion play, it suffices to note that science is even religious. Looking critically at the "religion" of science which talks about the scientific priesthood, it is pertinent to note that scientists' theories often seem to solely rely on premises that require their own type of faith. For example, when it comes to the origin of life, most evolutionists strictly adhere to ideas that require faith in certain doctrines. Thus, facts are mixed with theories.<sup>13</sup>

It is common among the religious scientists to hear religious expressions. Scientists have been referred to as the high priests of a new technological age, and their laboratories as temples or shrines<sup>14</sup>. Of course, such expressions are merely metaphors.

The scientific high priests are also select few who are separately chosen and trained. They also help in the empirical analysis of the universe and some phenomena. The scientific high priests devote most of their lives in the laboratories discovering and inventing new technologies. The scientific priesthood is also an emblem of the action of rationality and empiricism through discoveries. Not only that, the scientific priests are meant to save lives in the course of their job. This is obvious in the medical field where there is "Hippocratic oath" of saving lives by all means. This speaks of dignity of the profession and respect for human lives. As the biblical high priests enter into the "holy of holies", the medical experts enter into "theatre" in order to save lives. Likewise, the ecstatic statements in religious circle which are synonymous with the priesthood have bearings with the "mysterious" writings which are only understood by the medical high priests. As holiness is stressed in the religious circle, cleanliness, neatness and pleasantness are stressed in the scientific arena.

The scientific priesthood upholds the ethics and morality of the profession. There are also scientific instructions, guidelines and rules with regard to daily living. Apart from this, there are taboos associated with scientific profession aimed at enhancing human development and continuity. By extension, the scientific priests can also predict natural phenomenon and reveal human situation and certain classification. In point of fact, this is geared towards peace, environmental development and natural exploration.

## The Worth of Religion and Science

Despite the unholy debate of the incompatibility of science and religion, a handful of scholars have agreed that scientists have not been able to provide answers to the issue of the beginning. Therefore, God is responsible for the creation of the universe. As a matter of fact, John 1:3 attests to this fact that:

All things were made by him:  
and without him was not any thing  
made that was made.

It is taxionatic that God created heavens and the earth, which are based on the scriptures, while the scientists are only working on creation. Science is a source of knowledge that explains all developments and innovations in creation without a vacuum. Since the scriptures depict the creation story, the scientists as high priests work on the manual of creation. "There is nothing here or in the beyond that is not explained therein in matchless clarity and authoritativeness"<sup>15</sup>.

The knowledge of the fundamental questions of the nature of human existence is pertinent to any significant understanding of the universe. However, the scientists recommend an informed and alert mind which is capable perhaps of objective and critical investigation of all it encounters with the view to reaching convincing conclusion.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the frontiers of earthly knowledge are daily soaring to the surprise of today's humanity, when majority of problems confronting humanity have defied scientific solutions. Religions through the high priests, however, proffer a spiritual solution to the need of man. "It recommends the techniques and indicates the path to attain the longed-for-height of total salvation for those yearning to be true human beings"<sup>17</sup>. Where science stops religion begins the quest for insight. Indeed, it has been observed that not all inorganic experimentations answer empirical observation. When we address either objective knowledge or a *posteriori* feeling we temporarily forget the unity that binds them. Science provides the background not only for ethical overlap but also for a fundamental religious revelation.<sup>18</sup> Citing Swimme and Thomas Berry, Ted Peters opines that:

Our new sense of the universe is itself a type of revelatory experience. Presently we are moving beyond any

religious expression so far known to the human into a meta-religious age, that seems to be a comprehensive context for all religions... The natural world itself is the primary economic reality, the primary educator, the primary governance, the primary technologist, the primary healer, the primary presence of the sacred, the primary moral value.<sup>19</sup>

This is the beginning of the romance between science and religion. Human being has a soul which is spiritual. This soul is tied to humanity, as such, it has the essence of existence and development in human form which accounts for spiritual development. This spiritual development, is the essence of creation of which religion has a direct contact. The insight with which knowledge is gained is the aspect of scientific development. Therefore, humanity has both religious and scientific attachment for the realization of man's potentials which he received from paradise. This therefore calls for the revelatory experience which at times goes beyond human understanding and the spiritual comes into play. Here on earth, the potentials imbued with human beings are to be explored to the fullest. Therefore, the essence of life is the primary source which is the prerogative of the supernatural which scientists fail to acknowledge. The natural world is the secondary source where the potentials of life are realized with the various contributions to the immediate environment. This statement strongly declares again and again that religion and science, properly viewed, can enhance and complement each other, "but they are different disciplines which deal in different ways and for different reasons with different spheres of human discovery. To blur that distinction weakens both."<sup>20</sup> God prepared the earth especially with humans in mind. He provided the earth everything that people would need, not just to exist but to enjoy life to the full. Isaiah 45:18.

Science is a systematic method of investigation based on continuous experimentation, observation, and measurement leading to evolving explanations of natural phenomena, explorations which are continuously open to further testing<sup>21</sup>. Unequivocally, creationism which accounts for the supernatural means is not science. Its evidence to statements is based on authority and revelation. This revelation has the most potent of the great influences for good and reality that have thus far entered into human experience; it has promoted the progress of

knowledge which is insight, it has fostered unprejudiced inquiry, and it has served as an invaluable aid and breakthrough in humanity's search for truth in many endeavours<sup>22</sup>. In truth, scientists must admit that science, which is limited to a study of the physical environment, is ill-equipped to answer questions about the existence of God. The religious high priests are however, not to be excepted from this fact, but their beliefs rest in faith. It is based on solid evidence, on reasonable assurance. Paul the apostle posited that God's invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world's creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship. (Romans 1:20). For thousands of years, wise men and women have perceived evidence of God's existence in the natural world<sup>23</sup>. This accounts for the fact that revelation is more powerful and stronger than experience. Thus, there are false religion and false science. Instead both science and religion provide voluminous supplemental information about the physical world, both present and past. The Bible invites us to test its accuracy, consider its historical authenticity, its practicality, the candour of its writers and its integrity. By investigating the accuracy of the Bible, including statements of a scientific nature and, even more convincingly the unerring fulfilment of hundreds of prophecies throughout the ages and into our present day, one can acquire firm faith in it as the word of God. Faith in the Bible is not credulity but a proven confidence in the accuracy of scriptural statements<sup>24</sup>.

In this era of globalization, religious response to the environment is adequately beneficial. As far as religions are global, information technology has played great and inalienable role in bringing services to the door-step of the privileged ones through internet, websites, publishing houses among others. Religion has transnational reach.<sup>25</sup>

Both science and religion, in their noblest forms, involve the search for truth. Science discovers a world of magnificent order, a universe that contains distinctive marks of intelligent design. True religion makes these technological discoveries meaningful by teaching that the mind of the Designer- God lies behind the design manifest in the physical world.<sup>26</sup>

Corroborating this statement Francis Collins, a molecular biologist writes:

When I discover something about the human genome, I experience a sense of awe at the mystery of life, and say to myself, wow, only God knew before it is a profoundly beautiful and moving sensation, which helps me appreciate God and makes science even more rewarding for me.<sup>27</sup>

Through inspiration, an insight is gotten into the physical universe objectively and subjectively. This, science does by describing the natural phenomena at its disposal as well as assisting in answering natural paradoxes. This human thirst for answers makes science explore its environment and find workable and observable answers to rediscover scientific truth in the universe. It is fitting, however, to acknowledge scientific knowledge and achievement, but with the creator.

Scientific knowledge gained through such inquisitiveness, far from disproving the need for a God, has only served to confirm what a fantastically complex, intricate, and awe-inspiring world we live in. Many thinking people find it plausible to conclude that the physical laws and chemical reactions as well as DNA and the amazing diversity of life all point to a creator. There is no irrefutable proof to the contrary.<sup>28</sup>

It is interesting to note that science has interdisciplinary perspectives which have basis, foci, conceptual level and tools for understanding. They all work towards human and spiritual development. By and large, a science of a person is concerned with the interaction of nature with nurture; with understanding the very needs of individuals across the environmental landscape, and with cultural and biological co evolution.<sup>29</sup> "While science seems generally to reduce the world into analyzable parts in order to understand these parts, and ideally to be able to reconstruct them and thus understand the whole, religion seems to minister directly to the whole person"<sup>30</sup>. Favoured by this worthy symbiosis of science and religion, it is acknowledged that science portrays human invention for definite purpose while religion is an appreciation of a Divine Reality, permeating the Universal feeling of spirituality and the role it plays continually for humanity. In the practice of modern science, the discovery of the natural law is no longer seen as a vacuum hence

philosophically, God is understood to have filled the gap for divine purpose through special interference of nature teleological while initially depended on the law of physics. In such a framework, natural laws are no longer anti-God but the very expression of God's supremacy in nature.

### The Symbiosis of Scientific and Religious High Priests

It has been observed by Raimundus Sabundus that two books have been given to human kind by the creator. He says:

Hence there are two books given to us by God, the one being the book of the whole collection of creatures or the book of nature, and the other being the book of sacred scripture.<sup>31</sup>

It is against this background that we often talk of metaphorical parlance of scientific high priests in this context. In point of fact, the scientists explore the book of nature towards the betterment of humanity, while the religious high priests significantly and authoritatively though *a posteriori* use the sacred scripture to analyse the position of God- all wrapped in the toga of the whole collection given by God.

The scientists administer drugs to patients through the help of pharmacists, medical experts among others, while the religious high priests administer sacraments, sacrifices, and offering for the well-being of the people.

Not only that, the medical scientists affirm that "we care but God heals". This is to reconcile the fact that as the high priests of the technological culture, they still appreciate the fact that they are limited but God is unlimited. Put differently, they can only help to save lives, but God heals totally because He has the sole prerogative.

The religious high priests speak of the things unseen and at times mysterious which defy human explanations. In the sense of the technological high priests, they talk of things observable, and render objective interpretation or explanations to them in order to put human life in the right perspective. Moreover, scientific high priests especially the medical experts are prone to taking "Hippocratic oath" of doing everything humanly possible to save lives, while the religious high priests are ordained specially for religious functions in leading men to

righteousness and salvation. This ordination is thus important in these perspectives. As a matter of fact, ordination is for select few which makes their job easy as commissioned by their superiors. The "theatre" of the scientists is equivalent to the "holy of holies" in the religious arena. Also, the "laboratory" of the scientists can be referred to as "shrines" or "temples". These places are sacred and restricted to majority except an important adventure is to be undertaken only by the initiated.

Apart from this, the medical science has or possesses the "law of the cut" or Poiseuilles Law, while Christian Religion has the law of God, of Christ and Moses. Medical Science is conversant with physical, mental illness which Christian Religion for instance diagnoses as spiritual illness<sup>32</sup>. In the same vein, there is the objective report of experiments by sciences and the objective biblical report of God's acts. In the environment of science, there is the instrument text or manual, while in the Christian circle there is the instruction texts or manual especially the book of Leviticus.<sup>33</sup>

In addition, meteorologists in this age have suddenly become prophets who predict the events of the nearby future. Also, they forecast tomorrow's weather. This attitude, information, and practice of the meteorologists does not separate them from priesthood. The much-heralded "eclipse" in some parts of Nigeria is a clear testimony of the scientific prediction. Recently, news was on the round for the partial and total eclipse of the sun on the 29th March, 2006, which ordinarily human beings cannot predict. Be that as it may, the scientists have been able to predict the natural phenomenon based on their scientific insight. In the religious scene, these activities are being revealed either through trance, dreams or visions by God. Of a truth, high priests are privileged to know these, which are usually concealed from men.

In the pavilion of existence, who we are is more determined by our spiritual epigenesis than our biological beginning, but activated more by creative development than creations. In which case, religion and science are complementary in nature. For "Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind".

### Concluding Remarks

As has been observed, this paper has attempted to show scientists metaphorically as the high priests of a new technological culture. The

worth and symbiosis of religion and science have also been examined against certain parameters. Their convenient interplay and coexistence has been explored accordingly.

To this end, it is evident that both science and religion show the existence of God from different perspective. Even, science is religious in the sense that scientists' propositions often rely on premises that require their own type of faith. Thus, scientific priesthood is a means to an end since this is based on the action of rationality and empiricism through discoveries. By extension, scientific instructions with regard to daily living are geared towards enhancing human development, continuity and natural exploration. Therefore, the religious and scientific high priests need each other because they are both working on the book of the sacred scriptures and book of nature respectively. In other words, everything here or in the beyond is elaborately explained in unequivocal clarity and authority in the manual of creation. They both work together to improve human condition and uphold divine providence as complementing scientific investigation.

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