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A SOCIO-RELIGIOUS EVALUATION OF PREDESTINATION, DESTINY AND FAITH AMONG THE AFRICANS.**Abstract:**

Africans believe that whatever happens to man in life has already been decided by God and is unalterable. The Yoruba believe that man chooses his destiny while coming into the world. Man kneels down to choose his lot before the presence of God and Orunmila (divinity) and God sanctions it. But according to Awolalu and Dopamu, man's destiny is unalterable except by the deities, wicked people, what man does on his own free-will, bad head (lot), and man's character. Philosophers like J. Omoregbe, critics like R. C. Sproul, Universal thinkers like H. Ballou, C. S. Lewis and Calvinists, believe that God has the final authority over man, that man is compelled to certain situations in life, irrespective of faith. Scientists like S. Kosslyn, R. Rosenberg and others submit that, gene affects and plays a major role in shaping man's abilities. Behavioural genetic researchers succinctly observe that heritability of various characteristics occur in specific environments, and gene contributes a certain amount of differences among people in particular environment, and the environments contribute a certain amount of such differences when people have particular genes. J. Edwards, succinctly states that as external force, which can affect a person's actions, compel him and lead him to an action. Some however, do not believe in predestination, destiny or fate. It is on this premise, that this paper seeks to assess: the extent to which predestination is evident, the extent to which faith works, and the extent to which God permits man have his own permissive will, which either works according to God's own planned way of salvation or damnation. This paper also examines: the relevance of faith in the face of fate, and the determinant of man's existence: fate or faith? In order to achieve the objectives of study, this paper therefore adopted the use of historical, descriptive and interpretative methods of research. From various arguments, observations, theories and historical documents, this paper finally concludes that: Christ's atonement is unlimited in its benefits, salvation is by grace save from good works, man's faith is tested at any point in time by God, God carries out His plans differently when dealing with men who have faith and those who do not have, God is the determiner of man's destiny, God has every authority, power and will over his creations, man is therefore compelled (to die) at God's own right time.

Keywords:

Socio-Religious, Predestination, Destiny, Fate, Akunleyan, Akunlegba, Ayanmo, Afowofa, iwa (character),

Introduction

There are many interpretations of the word “destiny”. Among them are the few stated here. The word destiny is here defined as the power believed to control events, which people simply call fate. It is about the future, the spiritual will of a person, which is usually affected by the time, place, and date of birth (environment). Predestination, on the other hand, is the theory or belief that everything that happens has been decided in advance by God and that humans cannot change it.¹ (Crowther: 2009) This invariably implies that whatever has been predestined can neither be altered nor averted.

In the New Testament, evidences abound on the agents of death of Jesus Christ which included Caiaphas (the High Priest), Pontius Pilate (the governor), Judas Iscariot (one of Jesus’ disciples), and Jesus himself. Some scholars argue that the greatest suspect is Jesus himself who could have averted or altered the occurrence by moving out of Jerusalem when he perceived the hostile treatment given to him prior to his crucifixion. He could have averted the bad incidence but rather than backing out, he told Judas specifically to “do that which you want to do quickly.”² (Matthew 26: 53 & 54) Jesus said to his disciples present with him at the time he was betrayed that, “or do you think that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He will provide me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus? Here, Jesus is referring to his predestination. He had been predestined to come in human form, betrayed, and die that kind of death.

Likewise, every human being has been predestined in life for a purpose which is to be fulfilled with or without prayer or faith. In Christianity, a man’s destiny can be put on him right from conception or during gestation period. An example is that of Jacob, Esau, Joseph, and Jeremiah in the Old Testament. God demonstrated his love for Jacob over Esau, and loved Joseph more than his elder brothers (Gen 2). God is quoted as pronouncing, “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”³ (Romans 9:13). He demonstrated this by loving Jacob more than Esau for no specified reason. He confirmed this to Moses when he said, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion...” (Romans 9: 15)

The foregoing suggests predestination before and during conception. The Bible records that, “the elder shall serve the younger (by selling his birthright).” (Gen 25:23). The holy Quran also corroborates the belief in predestination and destiny. It says, “He (Allah) forgives whom He pleases and punishes whom He pleases...”(2:284); “Had He (Allah) willed, He would have guided you all.” (6:149); “No soul can believe except by the will of Allah” (10:99); “By it He (Allah) causes many to stray and many He leads into the right path...(2:26); “God seals up every heart of arrogant and obstinate transgressors” (40:35); God has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a veil, great is the penalty they incur” (2:7). Surah 2:26 however corroborates Surah 13:27 which says, “Truly God leaves to stray whom He wills, but He guides to Himself those who turn to Him in penitence.”

In African Religion, Awolalu and Dopamu stated that human destiny is sealed before the deity and a person afterwards, is born into the world without remembering it. Man’s destiny is believed to be sealed and therefore unalterable. God is the determiner of destiny and so, everything that happens to a person on earth has been predestined by the deity ever

before man comes into the world.⁴ (Awolalu and Dopamu: 2005) According to a popular song quoted by Awolalu and Dopamu,

Akunleyan

Se oun ni adayeba

*Kadara ko le yi pada*⁵ (Awolalu and Dopamu: 2005)

That which is chosen kneeling
It is that which is found on getting to the world
Destiny cannot be altered.

This song however corroborates the Yoruba saying, “*Ayanmo ko gbogun*” (that which is affixed to one cannot be rectified with medicine). All these pronounce man’s predestined future. Since these three common religions believe in predestination, and faith is required of every religion, how then can we merge the three? Is there any meeting point between predestination, faith and religion? This work therefore, highlights the possibility of free-will through faith, in accordance to God’s predestined will towards, “an expected end”, if chosen.

Destiny

Destiny is a force that predetermines the future of a man, which is inevitable. That is why Henry Miller, (a US novelist) says, “everyman has his own destiny: The only imperative is to follow it, to accept it, no matter where it leads him.” This implies that man should accept his fate whether good or bad. Fate is the force or principle believed to predetermine events.⁶ (Encarta Dictionary: 2009) In African Religion, destiny is chosen by man on himself but fate happens to man, taking away man’s choices, and leads him back towards the choice of destiny he already made before he was born. It is a friendly nudge in the right direction, it sometimes hurts when it unkind, and often through its hardship that we discover our inner strength and capabilities to achieve great things.⁷ (Encarta Dictionary: 2009) It can therefore be regarded as man’s personal guardian in so that it nudges man in the right direction of his purpose on earth. However, Freewill which is the ability to decide freely what one wants to do or the power to make one’s own decisions without being previously determined by God or fate,⁸(Crowther: 2009) is ruled out based on these submissions.

Though predestination and destiny, in a sense, sounds confusing, however, the two defer in that, while destiny is where a person is heading for, and most especially affected by the time, place, and date of birth (environment); predestination on the other hand, is what a person is inescapably bound to go through. E. g. a person is destined for destruction, but he/she changes direction through his/her conduct, behavior and attitude.

The Concept of Faith

In Christianity and Islam, faith, which is a strong religious belief, trust or complete confidence in God is applied in order to achieve a good destiny. Likewise in African Religion, a good character (*iwa*) and *ori* can be applied in order to achieve a good destiny. Faith in the words of James Cox is, “the human apprehension of the sacred which is able to recognize its main manifestations.”⁹ (Cox: 1996) In other words, it is allegiance to somebody or something sacred; a devotion to it and a strong belief in the sacred. Faith in the words of

Leonard Brand is, “confidence or belief which is not based on proof; it is that which takes us beyond the partial evidence which we have.”¹⁰ (Brand: 1997) The Bible defines faith as, “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”¹¹ (Hebrews 11:1). The Bible further stresses the work of faith thus;

For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the words of God... By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, ...By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death ... But without faith, it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.¹² (Hebrews 11: 1-6)

Faith here means a strong belief in God, the substance of things hoped for, evidence of things not seen. Lack of faith therefore, makes it is impossible to please, and receive from God. The manifestation of faith is an appearance of the sacred in the faithful. In Christianity and Islam, faith is a prerequisite to healing. The faith of a believer is regarded as the channel for cure. According to Immanuel Kant, to believe in God is an act of faith, rooted in personal experience. Belief therefore, expresses the cognitive meaning of what faith has apprehended. On this premise, D. G. Moses submits that, “faith is the knowing capacity of man directed towards what he has comprehended in relation to the sacred and hence, what he knows to be real”¹³(Cox: 1966)

Free-will

The Holy Bible emphasizes the fact that our freewill meritoriously labour for salvation. In other words, believers are to live a worthy life and believe in God. Therefore, “to work for one’s salvation necessarily implies using one’s freewill which if misused makes the believer stand the chance of forfeiting all spiritual blessings.”¹⁴ (Opwloye: 1888) The believer’s freewill is also entrenched in prayers which could change or alter man’s destiny. The Holy Quran advocates for freewill in Surah 6:70; 9:70; 10:108; 13:11 and 18:29. It admonishes that man is responsible for whatever he does, God does not wrong man but man wrong their own souls which earned them their punishment. Therefore, divine punishment is a consequence of the misuse of man’s power of freewill for man is naturally created virtuous and pure.

In African Traditional Religion, man’s freewill can alter destiny. Other factors which alter man’s destiny are the divinities, if disobeyed, man’s double, counterpart, or guardian (*ori*), and the evil ones of the world. Man’s actions and practices show that destiny can be modified in some ways.¹⁵ Good character they say, is like a divinity; if man worships a divinity well, he will get his protection, and if he behaves well, he will benefit. (*iwa lorisa, bi a ba ti hu u nii fii gbeni*). Therefore in Africa, actions are taken so that a happy destiny is preserved unspoilt and an unhappy one is rectified.¹⁶ (Awolalu and Dopamu: 2005)

Predestination

Pertinent passages in the Bible vividly attest to the fact that predestination is a reality; that is, God had already determined the destiny of man. In other words, every human soul has been predestined from eternity, either to suffer perdition or to attain salvation.¹⁷ (Opeloye: 1988)

Also, the Bible and the Qur'an predicted certain things would happen. The Biblical and Quranic accounts on predestination are sure evidences of a believer's belief in *Ayanmo* (African Religion), *kadara amuwa Olorun* (Islam) and destiny (Christianity). The Bible records in Genesis 4: 15b, "... And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him." This implies Cain has been destined to die naturally, and not through the hands of any man. Also in Genesis 12:2-3, "And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; ..." God predestined Abraham to be great and blessed. In Genesis 16:11, 12, "... Behold, you are with a child, and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Ishmael; because the Lord has heard your affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man and every man's hand against him". God had already predestined Ishmael to be a "wild man", ever before he was born. Again, in Genesis 17: 19, "Sarah your wife shall bear you a son indeed; and you shall call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant and his seed after him." God predestined Isaac to be blessed, and his covenant will be established with him. Genesis 25: 23 records, "Two nations are in your womb, and two manners of people shall be separated from your bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." God had predestined Esau to serve his younger brother, Jacob. This is also affirmed in Romans 9:12 and 13, "The elder shall serve the younger... Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Here, God pronounced his love towards Jacob and his hatred for Esau ever before they were born and without any specified reason.

Furthermore, Genesis 3: 14 states, "Come now therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh, that you may bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt ... And they shall hearken to your voice ... And I am sure that the king of Egypt (Pharaoh) will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand ... but I will harden his heart that he shall not let the people go... And I will harden Pharaoh's heart and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt ... Stretch out your hand over the sea that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and upon their horsemen." God predestined Moses to bring out His people from Egypt and lead them to the Promised Land, and also predestined Pharaoh the king for destruction. Likewise, 2 Samuel 3:18 states, "By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies." God predestined David to be a great, mighty warrior who will deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines. In Job 1: 8 & 12, we are made to understand that God had predestined Job to be steadfast and his life not to be touched by Satan. "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that fears God, and eschewed evil? ... Behold, all that he has is in your power only upon himself put not forth your hand..." (Job 1:8, 12). God here, assured Satan of Job's love and loyalty to Him (God) and also restored him back after the tests he went through. Also, Jeremiah 1: 5 records, "Before I formed you in the belly I knew you; and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you, and I ordained you a prophet to the nations." God here, had predestined Jeremiah to be a prophet unto Him (Lord), and sanctified him ever before he was born. In Matthew 1: 23, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel ..." Jesus' coming had been predestined through the Virgin Mary. In the same vein, John the Baptist had been predestined to work according to God's plan for man's salvation through Christ and, to baptize Jesus in river Jordan in Mark 1: 2 & 3). "I send my messenger before your face, which shall prepare your way before you. The

voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare you the way of the Lord, make His path straight.” Again, in Acts 9: 15 & 16, Saul (Paul the Apostle) had been predestined to preach the gospel of Christ and pass through series of sufferings in his missionary journeys – destined to suffer for the sake of Christ. “Go your way; for he is a chosen vessel to me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.”

Based on this premise, one then ask a pertinent question here, of what essence is faith? Can faith work where an event has been predestined? Quite a number of faithful people in the Bible practice faith. The reliability of faith is vividly expressed in both the Old and the New Twtsament Bible. In the Old Testsmnt Bible, by faith Abraham obeyed God and made his covenant with his seed. He is called the father of faith. God raised him up even from the dead; from where he received him in a figure. (Heb 11:19). Likewise Abel, who by faith offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it, he being dead yet speaks. (Heb 11:4). Enoch also was by faith translated that he should not see death; and was found, because he had translated him: for before his translation he had his testimony that he pleased God (Heb 11:5). In the same vein, Noah by faith, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. (Heb 11:7). Sarah also moved by faith and received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. (Heb 11:11). Isaac in the same vein, moved by faith, blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. (Heb 11:20). Furthermore, by faith, Jacob blessed both the sons of Joseph and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff, when he was dying. (Heb 11:21); Joseph by faith, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones when dying (Heb 11:22). Moses also by faith, was hidden three months after his birth by his parents; refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater than the treasures in Egypt; forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood; passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. Joshua by faith, led his team to blow the trumpet after walking round the city of Jericho for seven days, and the walls of Jericho fell down. (v. 30) while Rehab, the harlot received the spies with peace by faith and did not perish with the city when it was eventually destroyed. (v. 31).

Also among men who demonstrated faith in the Bible are: Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthae, David, Samuel, Caleb, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Daniel, Ninevites, Peter, Nathanael, Stephen, Ethiopian eunuch, Barnabas, and the prophets who through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions and so on and so forth.

Women of Faith in the Bible

Among the women of faith in the Bible are:

The “unintimidated” Deborah, who could not be made afraid, and also, a mother in Israel, walked in faith to deliver Israel from the bondage their idolatry had caused them. She was a

prophetess, a counselor and a judge, she had the ability to discern the mind and purpose of God and declare it to others. She was the only woman in the scriptures elevated to a high administrative position by the choice of God. (Judges 4: 4-5).

Ruth, a woman of courage and faith who yielded to God, walked in faith with God. As she took the remarkable decision to follow her mother-in-law to Bethlehem, without having in mind, any gain. She gained all she need for her life on earth and in eternity. The woman who was bereaved, heartbroken and desolate eventually became a monument of God's amazing grace(Ruth 2:12), the progenitor of the savior through constancy.

Hannah conquered the challenges of life, such as: barrenness, rivalry, jealousy, constant ridicule, insults, malice and pettiness with faith. She met provocation with quietness; responded to unjust criticism with soft speech; met insult with the salt of grace; silenced the adversary with her irreproachable life; conquered anger with a meek and quiet spirit; overcame sorrow with supplication and prayer; removed the mountain of impossibility with unshakeable faith in the Lord.

Esther was an orphan, a helpless who rescued her people from the throes of death through faith. She was simple and natural, free from all feminine vanities, yet became a queen because of the obtained favour of God through her absolute faith in God, while the Samaria Woman, a harlot, subtle of heart and stubborn. She was a wretched sinner who met Christ at the well and through faith, became a passionate soul winner.

Priscilla, through her unwavering faith in the Lord, became an exemplary leader, teacher, Christian wife, companion and a faithful servant; enduring hardness as a soldier of Jesus Christ. Rather than keeping people out of her home, she made it a place with an open door, open hand and open heart while the woman with the issue of blood - the hopeless woman of 12 years, who found hope in Christ Jesus through faith, touched the garment of Jesus Christ by faith and was instantly cured of her ailment.

Where is Faith in the Face of Fate?

John Gray, an evolutionist affirms that "human can no more be masters of their destiny than any other animal."¹⁸ (WatchTower: 2005) Though man is superior to all other creatures, yet, man does not have the power to control his own destiny, just like any other creatures. However, in African Religion, Yoruba to be precise, a person's destiny can be altered by super forces; such as the divinities, a person's *ori* (man's double/counterpart/guardian), the evil ones of the world and a person's character.¹⁹ (Awolalu and Dopamu: 2005) In other words, destiny can be altered, and the future can be controlled. To this extent, man cannot be compelled by any forces. Many people however agree that God has endowed man with the ability to have control over his own future. On this premise, faith presides over fate.

However, Roy Weatherford succinctly observes that, "the majority of the people in the world – and especially the majority of women in history – has no power or control over their own lives for straightforward reasons of human oppression and exploitation."²⁰ (WatchTower: 2005) Here, it is vividly stated that majority of the people believe in fate, and so, directed by it. In other words, man is compelled to accept some conditions in life either favourable or unfavourable to them. Based on this assumption, fate presides over faith.

The Bible emphatically admonishes, "In the world, ye shall see tribulations ... but he that endures unto the end shall be saved." The point here apparently suggests that man will be compelled to unfavourable conditions in life. Or what do we endure in life if not hardships, oppression, persecutions, sufferings, and every other unpleasant things? Endure implies

suffering – to suffer something painful or deal with a very unpleasant situation for a long time with strength and patience.²¹ (Encarta Dictionary: 2009) This perhaps supports that fate presides over faith.

Moreover, to the Africans, there is no confusion of thought in this two-sided conception of destiny.²² (Awolalu and Dopamu: 2005) This is because to them a particular phenomenon may be seen as the result of fate, and at the same time, “*afowofa*” (that which one brings upon oneself); and “*owo aye*” (the hand of the evil ones). The Bible assures that fate is real to human. Examples abound in both the Old and New Testament as earlier discussed in this paper. E.g., Cain, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Jacob and Esau, Pharaoh, Jeremiah, Job, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ and Paul the apostle. However, in the case of Job, he had faith in his fate and waited upon the Lord. Ephesians 2:8 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” Based on these submissions, faith is significant in African Religion, and Christianity, and therefore, supersedes fate.

However, II Corinthians 12: 9 says, “to another faith by the same spirit, to another, gifts of healings by the same spirit.” These two passages (Eph 2:8 and II Cor 12:9) declare faith as a gift from God. These two passages corroborate the assertion of John Dryden, an English poet, playwright and literary critic that, “For those whom God to ruin has designed, He fits for fate, and first destroys their mind.” Saint Augustine also firmly believed that only those elected by God would attain salvation, which spells out fate. Romans 8:30 alluded to this fact when it says, “... moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified, these He also glorified.” At this standpoint, we ask the question, of what essence is faith?

Man’s Existence: Fate or Faith?

Freewill has for long been a subject of considerable debate among philosophers and theologians. The belief that one’s actions in life, rather than God or fate affect what happens to man in life cannot be denied by both philosophers and theologians of today. However, the concept of fate cannot also be over emphasized in the society. The protagonists of predestination doctrine in Christianity and Islam, the Calvinists (Christianity) and Jabarites (Islam) considered predestination as God’s eternal decree, therefore, every man created by God is predestined to death or life. To this extent, salvation is by election, as proposed by Saint Augustine. Freewill is therefore, limited because it is not within the power of anyone to change or alter what had been predestined on him/her. On this premise, Joseph Omoregbe affirms,

... I was born on a certain day, in a certain part of the world, by certain parents and under certain circumstances. I neither choose any of these factors, nor am I free to change any of them. Besides, I am subject to disease, suffering, death, conflict, guilt, failure etc. These are all limiting conditions of human existence. I can only accept them and decide the attitude I shall adopt towards them, but I cannot change or avoid them since they are part of my very existence.²³ (Omoregbe: 2005)

Here, Omoregbe corroborates man's subjectivity to fate. Fate is the last resort to man's existence. In the view of the Jabarites (followers of an Islamic sect – Jabariyyah, founded by Jabam B. Safwan) who claimed to have derived their doctrine from the *Salaf* (the early Muslims), predestination entails the awarder of destiny, God, as responsible for any actions of man because man has no determining power to do any act. In their words,

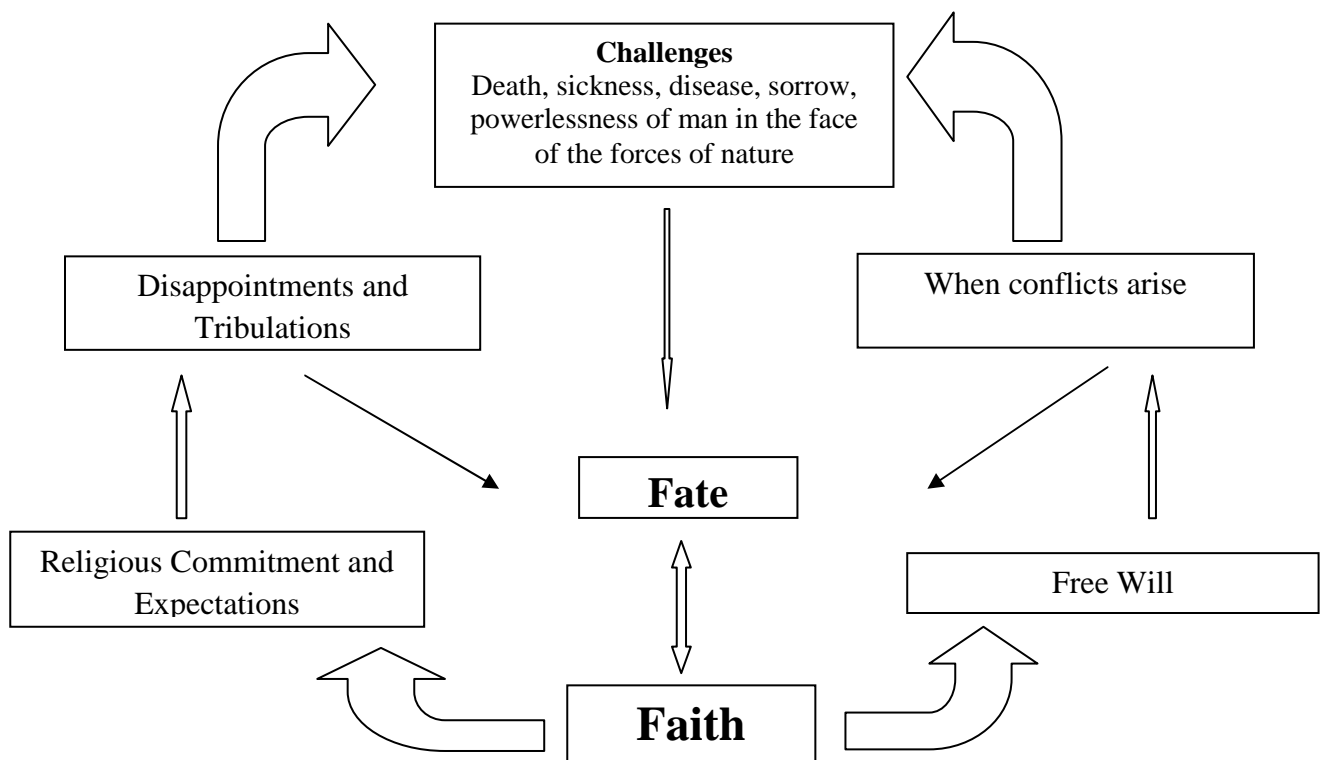
... Man is not responsible for any of his actions which proceed entirely from God; he has no determining power to do any act, nor does he possess the capacity of free volition, he is the subject of absolute divine sovereignty in his actions without ability on his part for will or power of choice; God absolutely creates actions within him just as He produces activity in all inanimate things awards and punishments are subject to absolute divine sovereignty.²⁴ (Ali: 1974)

Here, it is apposite to state categorically that God has the power over all things. To this extent, God has power to stop or prevent someone from committing sins or a particular sin. Therefore, sinfulness on the part of man is not by his strength, but due to the will of God.

However, Sayyid Qutab contends this fact by analyzing that God has granted man freewill and therefore, man is responsible for his actions. Alluded to the fact above is that every individual is free to choose to follow the right part which has been indicated for everyone who wishes to be upright, or not.²⁵ (Opeloye: 19988) In fact, the reliability of faith though not based on any evidence, is that which takes man beyond the partial evidence man has. On this premise, the Roman Catholic theologians coined the doctrine of, 'prevenient grace' to explain freewill, which means God has bestowed on man the grace to will himself into a state of grace.²⁶ (Redmond: 2007) Augustine asserted that, "God did not deprive people of their freewill even when they turned to sin because it was preferable to bring good out of evil than to prevent the evil from coming into existence."²⁷ (Redmond: 2007) It is also expedient at this juncture to state that freewill does not attain success nor being free means obtaining what one has wished. In other words, the gift of freedom does not mean absolute freedom. According to Jean Paul-Satre, freedom is, "human capacity of negating, nihilating and withdrawing from material things and situations. It is the permanent capacity of self-determination, self-orientation and self-detachment."²⁸ (Satre: 1956) This suggests that freedom is bounded by nothing and there is no limitation to man's freedom. To this extent, man is invariably elevated above his environment. On this premise, man has no fixed essence or a given nature; he is a 'self-creating being who makes himself as he pleases and freely creates his own essence. Hence, man cannot be defined as *a priori*."²⁹ (Omoregbe: 2005) However, human freedom suffers from a host of obstacles which are the products of freedom itself. Therefore, freedom, which *ipso facto* to be compelled to make choices, suffers from its own self-imposed restrictions and obstacles.

From the theological standpoint, God created death and life in order to test human conduct (Quran 18:7) which is the measure of faith. (Quran 67:2) Tests of life come in form of misfortunes and calamities which contribute to the spiritual growth of a true believer. Calamities are measures used for testing spiritual quality of patience. (Romans 5:3; 8:35). It is therefore, mandatory that the righteous are subjected to many tragedies and difficulties in their lives (John 16: 33). Sa'ad attested to this fact when he reported that he asked the prophet (SAW) who among mankind had the most trials and he replied, that they are the prophets,

those are in good conduct, and those most like them. In his words, “Man is tested according to the level of his faith. If his faith is firm, his trials increase in severity, and if there is weakness in his faith, he will be tried accordingly.”³⁰ (Muhammad: 2007) This is confirmed in the Holy Quran 2:155 where Allah says, “Be sure we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods, lives and the fruits (of your toil)...” Quran 29: 2-3 also attests to this fact. Man, here is created to undergo tests in life. He should not therefore, despair nor lose hope for the purpose of living is not for pleasure alone. On this premise, faith is therefore, the only solution to man’s existence on earth. (Matt 24:13; Mark 13:13).



The submission here is clear, that the facticity of human existence is man’s finitude. To this extent, man is a limited being; even his freedom is limited. In the course of choosing one action, he makes another action impossible, thus, man closes another door against himself. This is what Joseph Omoregbe regards as, “condemned freedom”³¹ (Omoregbe: 2005). It is apposite to state Jesus’ example here, whereby He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Bible records that, “... in agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as if it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” (Luke 22:44). Jesus prayed saying, “Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass over me; nevertheless, let thy will be done.”

Alluding to the fact above, Jesus submitted to fate here; which corroborates Martin Heidegger’s view that, death reveals man his finitude. Based on this submissions, Hazel Barnes concludes that man is finitude creature and with all the limitations that man has, the realization that one shall die someday makes the problems of life more endurable; thereby, resorting to faith by fate. The diagram above will further illustrate the explanations expressed here.

Free-will or Destiny: Science Confirms

In African Religion, man's destiny/lot is closely related to God and given by God Himself. However, it is also believed that all destiny is good as derived from the Supreme Being. Destiny is the function of *ori* and is described as *ipin-ori* (the *ori*'s portion or lot). It is also believed that one's *ori* can be either bad or good; depending on how man spends his life in relation to his environment and his general conduct in this world. A person who is lucky and prosperous in life is known as *olorire* (one who possesses good *ori*); while on the other hand, the unlucky one is called '*oloriburuku*' (one who possesses a bad *ori*).

Africans believe in predestination that anything that happens to man on earth has been predestined ever before he comes into the world. The Supreme Deity, Olodumare, is believed to be the determiner of destiny. Therefore, man's portion is predestined by Him. This is however, unalterable by man. That is the reason why the Yoruba say, "*ayanmo o gbogun*" (that which is affixed to one cannot be rectified with medicine); which expatiates the fact that the vicissitudes of life, which is man's destiny is unalterable. Alterability of good or bad *ori* according to Awolalu and Dopamu, depends on (a) The divinities (gods): the gods can alter the destiny of criminal who breaches the laws of the land. Violation of divine laws, especially those concerning God-man relationship make the divinities frown and punish such derelictions of responsibilities. (b) A person's double (*ori*): *Ori* or guardian angel can affect one's destiny. It is only when one's *ori* is in good terms with one that it can be well with one.

(c) *Omo Araye* (The evil ones): the evil ones such as witches, wizards and sorcerers can also alter man's destiny out of sheer jealousy, envy, hatred and sadistic pleasure, or as a punishment for a sin committed against such people. (d) *Iwa* (Person's character): *Iwa* can also alter one's destiny in life. It is generally believed in Yorubaland that one's character must agree with a good fortune; i.e. one needs to support a good destiny with a good character, which is benefiting. Man self actions, such as rashness, restlessness and impatience can spoil his destiny. This is referred to as *Afowofa* (that which one brings upon oneself). The questions here are, is it actually possible for man to choose suffering all throughout his life? and why would he do such a thing?

Science on the other hand, has however, proved that there are certain things that can never be altered by man. Scientists postulate that, 'genes' affect man from the instant of conception and are affected by the environment surrounding man. A 'gene' is "a stretch of DNA deoxyribonucleic acid) that produces a specific protein, which in turn forms the building blocks of our bodies (including our brains) or drives the processes that allow us to live."³² (Kosslyn & Rosenberg: 2001) Here, we can bring in Joseph Omoregbe's affirmation of man's subjectivity to fate, i.e. man's birth, by certain parents and under certain conditions are not chosen by man but by God.

According to Stephen Kosslyn and Robin Rosenberg, genes affect obvious traits (physical) and behaviour of man; and mutations (physical changes) produce different behaviours. Therefore, genes play a major role in shaping man's abilities; but are not destiny, and cannot fix man's character but an interaction with the environment. Behavioural genetic researchers succinctly observe that, 'heritability' of various characteristics occur in specific environments. Genes therefore, "contribute a certain amount to differences among people in particular environments, and the environments contribute a certain amount to such

differences when people have particular genes”³³ (Kosslyn & Rosenberg: 2001) This is what is referred to as ‘external force’ or ‘constraint’ by Jonathan Edwards. External force or constraint can affect a person’s actions, compel them and leads them to an action. Other factors include medical conditions. There is therefore a growing tendency not to hold people responsible for an action taken if we can see how their environment and medical conditions affected them. Jonathan Edwards opines that man’s nature leads him into action and the person cannot be held responsible for God is responsible for the history that leads them to be the kind of person they are. This is a corroboration of Joseph Omoregbe’s affirmation. On this premise, we can submit that a person is not free unless there was something intrinsically unpredictable in their decision. When people’s actions don’t reflect their character and motivations, Edwards calls it ‘insanity’ and not ‘freedom.’ Jonathan Edwards’ views also corroborate other views as

a. The Belgic Confession of faith (1561) which states that, “we believe that all the posterity of Adam; being fallen into perdition and ruin by the sin of our first parents, God manifest himself. Merciful and just in that delivers and preserves from his perdition all whom he had elected in Christ Jesus without respect to their works while leaving others.”³⁴ (Encarta Dictionary: 2007)

b. The Westminster Confession of faith (1643) which states that, “by the decree of God for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death... Wherefore, they who are elected... are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified and kept by His power, through faith, unto salvation. Neither is any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.”³⁵ (Encarta Dictionary: 2007)

c. The Calvinistic’s “double predestination”³⁶ (Encarta Dictionary: 2007), which states that God chose who would go to heaven, and who to go to hell; whom to save and whom to damn; and God’s sovereign decision to show mercy to some, and not to others (Romans 9:15).

d. The Reformed Calvinists “*Infralapsarianism*” view of God’s decree which states that, “God, before creation, on His mind, first decreed that the fall would take place; so, God actually chooses whom to condemn because He knows they will have a sinful nature, (the way He foreordains them to be). He therefore, doesn’t need to do anything. This is called “*priteriton*”³⁷ (Raymond: 1998)

e. Arminius’ view which was later depended on by Francis Gomarus at the University of Leiden that, before the fall of man, ever before man’s creation, God had already determined what the eternal destiny of each person was to be. (Rom 9: 12 & 13)

Conclusion

Critics, such as R. C. Sproul, and Christian Universalist thinkers, such as Hosea Ballou, C. S. Lewis, and The Roman Catholic Church argue that an omniscient, omnipotent, and all-loving Creator would not fail to save all of humanity; for God’s part is to save those who repent and believe. Christ’s atonement is unlimited in its benefits, for Christ died for “all”. Calvinists, however, deny all these and hold that, man’s will is in bondage to sin and therefore unable to actualize its freedom; salvation is by grace apart from good works (*sola gratia*); God must rather free man from his enslavement to sin to a greater degree before the ‘regenerated’ heart naturally chooses the good; and justification is given before we are in any position to respond

to God. Calvinists' position here is rather more plausible than that of R.C. Sproul, Hosea Ballou, C. S. Lewis and the Roman Catholic's views mentioned above.

Again, could it be gene, individual's lot, gods, the evil ones, individual's character, man's individual deeds or motivations that is responsible for human destiny? Africans believe that two factors can be responsible which are, individual's lot or '*kadara*' in (Islam); caused by God, or the individual man's deeds. Science also postulates three factors that can be responsible which are, gene, medical conditions and the environment. Actually, I would have supported the influence of evil ones on man's destiny, but for the saying, that nothing happens without the consent of God. I will therefore, rather go for the medical conditions which invariably point to a compulsion from greater and mightier power than man, a power man cannot compete with. Or how do we explain why majority of people on earth would choose a bad destiny for themselves knowing fully well that suffering is pain afflicting? How then can a sane man, in his right and God-made perfect senses, chose pain, affliction and suffering instead of enjoyment, joy and happiness; or death instead of long life?

To this extent, Calvin however, postulates three factors that can be responsible, taking the example of Job in the Christian Holy Book, which are; the Sabeans, which are acting according to satan's desire to test the faith of Job in God, satan whose goal is to show up Job and also put him to the test of faith, and perhaps God. Satan is acting in accordance with God's plan. Moreover, God's 'intention' is to vindicate Job's character and his own justice.³⁸ (Raymond: 1998)

The Bible however does not mince words when it emphatically alluded to this fact when it reports God's promise to man that, "my ways are not your ways, and my thoughts are not your thoughts; my thoughts toward you are thoughts of good and not of evil, to give you an expected end." However, God carries out his plans differently when dealing with men who have faith and those who do not have. Therefore, everyone ends up acting according to his plans and the way God works is incomprehensible. God works with those who have faith through the Holy Spirit and moves them directly in the way he intends. This notwithstanding, the ungodly still do the will of God because God has set up the situation so that they end up doing what he wants.

In line with this submission, it is therefore, conclusively espoused that man is compelled in life to God's damnation or salvation, by cooperatively working in accordance with God's will in order to have the "an expected end" if chosen. The reason is not farfetched, man is inferior, but God is superior; man is imperfect but God is perfect; man is bound to make mistakes but God does not make mistakes; man has no choice or control of destiny, but God has it all; man is dependent, but God is independent; man is incomplete but God is complete; man does not know tomorrow but God knows it all, He is all-knowing therefore, he chooses what is best for man.

God though merciful, is therefore the determiner of man's destiny. Though *ayanmo* is rightly affirmed and confirmed, however, this paper contends with the belief that man chooses a bad destiny by himself. This is because we cannot explain neither why majority of people on earth would chose a bad destiny for themselves knowing fully well that suffering is pain afflicting; nor how a sane man, in his right and God-made perfect senses, would choose pain, affliction and suffering instead of enjoyment, joy and happiness; or death instead of long life. If not, how then do we explain the phenomenon of death? Or is there anyone who

wishes to die willingly save those given to suicide and murder? The British Medical Journal presumes that everybody wants to live as long as possible.

Death among the Yoruba is God's Bailiff (*Ojise Olorun*), it is the act of God, and it comes at the least expected time. It comes not as one wills, but as God wills. Based on this premise, it is undoubtedly espoused that God has every authority, power and will over mankind and man has limited power, authority and will over himself and his life. Man is therefore, compelled to die at God's own right time for God's thoughts are not man's.

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