

Hebrew Etymology of Psychology of Religion

Charles Ogundu Nnaji

Department of Christian Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Abuja

Email: Economos34@yahoo.com, Mobile: +23480 227 65 999

Abstract

The Hebrew etymology of Psychology of Religion is an attempt to understand the meaning, or to offer an appropriate definition of “Psychology of Religion: The Study’s statement of problem points out that, if psychology from its root meaning is the soul or inner-man, does it correspond to the current concept of psychology as mind or behavior. Hence, can psychology of religion be called mind, behavior or soul of religion. Relevant classist texts on Religion and psychology were consulted. The study’s findings and recommendations are that, if the root origins of the words “Psychology” and Religion are to be followed (i.e as addictive behavior), then Psychology of Religion currently conceived as Brainial Production and control of religious behavior could be well suited.

Keywords: *Hebrew, Etymology, Psychology, Religion*

Introduction

The write up attempts to trace the etymological root meanings of the words “psychology” and “religion”, to enable us proffer a corresponding definition of psychology of religion, which can be universally affirmative in its acceptance. Eke (2001, 3297341) presented definitions of Psychology and Religion in their currently applied forms as religious behaviour produced by the human brain; affirmed by Hawkins; (1995: 327,345). The Hebrew etymology of Psychology of Religion traces the root origins of Psychology and Religion to the Hebrew Old Testament “Nepso” and Nepseq, “Cognate (Phoenician “Nephesh; Brown et al 2008:3). Nepso means “Soul”, “innerman, inner-being” or living being (“Nepso” Genesis 2:8), while Religion had often been

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attributed to the Latin “Religere” which means “to bind or attach oneself,” i.e. (to be addicted) to something one cannot do without (Eliade:1999; Vol. 23) Compared to a possible Hebrew Old Testament alternative root, “Religion” is possibly from Old Hebrew Aramaic “Aralim”, which means “Godlessness = “Phalasu” and cognate “Phalasipha” (Job 34:22, i.e hypocrisy: BDB: 2014;814). It is related to “Philisti” cited in Col 2:8-11, that philosophia is Aralim (i.e the uncircumcised or godless). This confirms that Aralim is Philistine, (Please see 1 Samuel 17:26 and 36: Amplified Bible; 1987). The study’s etymological method of investigating the origins of Psychology of Religion, produced this study’s research position that, if psychology does not really mean human mentality from the Hebrew “Nepso” i.e (Soul or spirit) transliterated into Greek as Psuxe” (English “Psyche”) then there could be an issue there. Thus, with Religion rooted in human addictions, then to practises not necessarily spirituality, it could be very difficult, but suitable defining Psychology of Religion as “Processes through which the human brain or psyche produce and control spirituality; including outrageously, that human mentality can produce irrational religious behaviour. (Abnormal Psychology; NET;2019)

Objective

To proffer a suitable definition for psychology of religion is the aim of this study; however, if we are unable to establish or identify the root – original meanings of the words Psychology and Religion, then we might not be able to produce a definition of Psychology of Religion corresponding to the original meanings of the words “Psychology and Religion”. This remains the position of this study, since this author is an etymologist involved in the words correspondence theory of language. (Wittgenstein in Ogundu; 2000) Please note also, Nnaji (2019) Introductory English Christology.

Statement of the study's problem

One problem this study points at, is more psychological than religious. That is, do we pay more attention to the root meaning of Psychology as “inner-being, breath of life, soul or living being (BDB;2014;659), or do we follow its current usage as mentality or behaviour, if we are to arrive at a suitable definition of Psychology of Religion.

Language experts know too well that meanings of many words in languages (five hundred years ago or more) have substantially changed in their derivations and applications; hence, psychology in its roots meaning has much to do with “the soul” (which is a spiritual element), not necessarily “mentality or physicality; while Religion has nothing to do with believe in God. One then wonders the wisdom and reasoning prompting those who called believe in God “Religion”, while they also called Human mentality (or behaviour) Psychology”, rather than “soul”, “living being”, “spirit” or “breath of life” from its root meaning (Brown-Driver; Briggs;2014;659). Also Cunningham (2018) on rudiments in Philosophy of Religion.

Definition of Terms

Hebrew:

Brown-Driver-Briggs (2014;716-720) traced the word “Hebrew” to the old Assyro-Babylonian (Chaldee) “Ebiru” and Ebru” (i.e to pass over, or beyond to the other side). This is related to the Canaanite “Iber and Habiru or Apitru”, which means the region across or beyond on the other side. Obviously, that other side beyond, is the Euphrates River on the land of the Chaldee (i.e lower Mesopotamia or Babylonia, also known as Assyria which was Biblical Abrahams original homeland: Acts 7:1-4). Amplified Bible (1987 : 1628) confirmed by Brown – Driver-Briggs (2014;720) states that, the first people to call Abraham and his descendants “Ibri” were perhaps, Egyptians and Philistines (Gen 11:14-32; Gen 14:13, Exd 2:11, Gen 39:14, Exd 1:15 etc ; BDB; 2014; 720; Amplified Bible; 2014; 20; Also confirmed by Pfeiffer C.F, Vos, H.F and Rea J; 2003; 771-773)

The references noted are in addition to the Elamite Mari, Hittite, Nuzi-Assyrian and Northern Syrian sources etc, not forgetting the equally ancient Semitic Armana letters: (Please see Pfeiffer and Rea et al: 2003: Ibid).

The Hebrew Language

1. The language spoken by the Ibri i.e. (Hebrew now called Israelites and Jews) is also called “Hebrew”. It developed from Canaanite Syriac-(Aramaic), Assyro-Chaldee, and Phoenician alphabets. (see Mansoor; 2005:1-35); also Hawkins (1995:10)

The word “Alphabet” is 100% a Hebrew – word (from “Aleph (A) and Beth (B) since the “Hebri” gave Phoenician Alphabets Hebrew names. They also properly organised and developed the alphabets from their picture-like origins (Pfeiffer and Rea et al; 2003:50) New and Phillips (1953; 47, 147) confirmed Pfeiffer and Rea (2003; 772) that Hebrews gave to Greeks alphabets, then the Greeks gave the alphabets to the Romans. This Hebrew language (also called Old Phoenician Canaanite -Hebrew) was used in writing the Old Testament, while some 5% of the Old Testament were written in Syrian-Aramaic (i.e language of Arami)

2. In receiving alphabets from Hebrew, Greeks transliterated many Hebrew-Aramaic words into rudimentary Classical-Homer’s Greek, while many more Hebrew words were transliterated into Inter-Testamental Hellenist Greek when the Old Testament was translated into Greek in Egypt by seventy Jewish elders c250BC during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus (Paul Maier; 1988;199: on the Antiquities of Josephus)
3. In 399CE (c369years after Christ) Pope Damasus commissioned Father Jerome to translate the Hebrew and Greek Old Testament, and the Greek New Testament into Latin, which was completed in 405CE (Brockman, Pescantini and Njire; 2004; 88-120). In that way, many Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Old and New Testament words were transliterated into the Latin Vulgate (i.e the Latin Bible translation). That was done with significant consonantal

adjustments of transliterated Hebrew and Greek words, which obviously included transliterations of the Hebrew “Nepso” and Nephesh” to the Greek “Psuxe”, then to the Latin, “Psychic,” onwards to the English “Psyche” and Psychology”: The Hebrew-Aramaic “Aral” possibly gave us the Latin “Religere” (i.e addiction or godlessness) this which is an antithesis to what Religion means today (i.e believe in God) Please note Metzger (2001: 77), Waltke et al; (1980) etc). See also, Andy-Phillips and Nnaji (2008)

Etymology:

Robinson and Davidson traced the word “Etymology” to the Greek “Etymon”, which means root origins of words, and their root or original meanings, before their current misapplications, Our abstract, objective and No 3 under Hebrew language, clearly indicate that current definitions of Psychology and Religion, possibly are not their true root meanings: Please note that the Greek “Treko” originally meant “to run”, while the Hebrew “Hali or Healti”, meant “illness” (Brown and Smith; (2008). Brown-Driver-Briggs: (2014:314) recorded as Old Testament word “Haklil”, from Assyrian “Akal or Eklul” to the English “Eclipse”, which means “dull”, “darkness” or Vague. Many more of such Hebrew to English words exist. (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary on DVD/NET; 2019)

Psychology and Religion: Definitions of Psychology and Religion shall be done under the tabular etymological method of study, though the abstract, introduction objective and definition of Hebrew, already presented those definitions to some extent. An important point to note, is that the tabular definitions of Psychology and Religion is not a literature review, but identifications of classist root words and their original meanings which produced the words Psychology and Religion.

Definitions of Psychology and Religion

Psychology:

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Hawkins (1995; 327) and Robinson and Davidson (2007; 1118) agree that Psychology is from the Greek “Psuxe” hence, it has something to do with human mental behaviour, while they were silent on the original meaning of that word “Psyche” which means the soul (from its Hebrew root “Nepso”). What then is the “soul”, and what role does the soul play in that human mental behaviour? Please, let us consider the following Tables on the etymological root origins of the words “Psychology” and by extension, “Religion” (Please see Robinson and Davidson; 2007:1178 on Religion from Latin “Relig and Ligare, which implies”, to bind or attach to;)

Table 1: Etymology of the word “Psychology”

Phoenecia	Assyria	Hebrew	Aramaic	Greek	English	Meaning
Nphsh	-	Nephesh or Nepso = Nepseq		Psuxe	Psyche	Soul, Spirit = Inner-being or Breath of life

Brown-Driver-Briggs (2014;659) Metzger (2001:65-98) Harris L and Waltke et all (1980) Brown and Comfort 1990) Menahem Mansoor: (2002 236-250) Aland and Newman (1983) Bromiley, etal (1985) Brown and Smith (2007;3) Psychology NET (2019)

Table 2: Etymology of the word Religion from Aralim to Phalasu(=Fallacy) or Philisti

Phoenecia	Assyria	Hebrew	Aramaic	Arabic	Greek	Latin	English	Meaning
Arla	-	Aral	Arlah	Arana (Haram)	-	-	Religion	Goddess or Manmade

Alaztour N 1965; Brown-Driver-Briggs: 2014; 790-791- Murcea Eliade (1989:Vol 23) Brown and Comfort: 1990. Harris and Waltke (1980) Mircea

On the illustrated tables 1-3

The presented tables show that Phoenicia and Assyria were of older origins (even Aramaic) These were languages which gave Hebrew its earliest words, which Hebrew passed on to Hellenist – Aramaic Greek (and even to Latin), then to English when father Jerome translated the Hebrew and

Greek Old Testament, and Greek New Testament to Latin from 399CE to 405CE (Ibid ; 2004).

Also, Hebblethwaite on applications of theological words cited by Ogundu (2000).

Table 3: Alternative etymology of Religion

Phoenecia	Assyria	Hebrew	Arabic	Greek	Latin	English	Meaning
(1) Cognate Hebrew, Ari	(1) Ur=Light or sun (2) El= God or god (3) Aria= (lion) or Arya	(1) God the Lion; (BDB, 72) (2) Aron (Deut 10:3(1-10) Ark of the covenant (3) (SeeBDB;75) Gen 46:1 (4) 2 Samuel 24:20-24: Ara (5) Arauna		-	Religere or Relig (To bind- to)	Religion	To bind or to be attached to something one cannot do without. (addiction = Habitual practises)

Harris Laird and Waltke V et al (1980) Hebrew O.T Theological wordbook, Brown- Driver – Briggs (2014), MansoorMenalum (2002;236-250), Strong (1988) Hebrew lexicon, Mircea Eliade (1989) Encyclopaedia of Religion, BromileyGeofrey (1985) Greek New Testament. Alaster M (1965) E.U.P Latin Dictionary etc

Primarily, what is the current definition of the word Psychology

Current definition of Psychology

Hawkins (1995:327) defined Psychology as the study of the mind; Note here that the “Psyche” is currently being called “mind” rather than “soul” which confirms this studies objective, and statement of problem. Thus, what is the relationship of mind to the “soul”? Can we interchange (or alternate) mind and soul? Robinson and Davidson’s: (2007;1117) etymology of called “Psyche” breath of life, mind or spirit (corroborating BDB:2014:659). Mind no doubt is soul or spirit, especially related to the Hebrew “inner being” and deep feelings and attitudes leading to human opinions and behaviour. (a) Thus, psychology is the scientific study of how the human mind produce human behaviour (b) Holding onto this definition, Psychology of Religion teaches how the human mind produce human behaviour, and by extension, how the human mind (or human

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brain) produce religious behaviour, since religiosity is definitely ‘a human behaviour like sexual promiscuity, stinginess and criminality which are all negative human behaviours. Generosity and morality are positive human behaviours. (c) Robinson and Davidson (2007;118) also called psychology a process of mental attitude characteristic of a person’s general behaviour which must be understood in order to properly handle such a person’s behaviour output; hence, (d) while also holding onto that definition, psychology of religion is a process or ability of understanding how religious people’s minds (i.e. spirits or souls) work, particularly, how to influence or manipulate that persons religiosity for positive or negative motives.

That is, religiosity or religious behaviour can be useful positively, especially in morality, or negatively destructive, depending on how such religiosities were understood and handled, not necessarily manipulated. (Nnaji; 2015; on Biochemistry of Religion and introduction to Christian psychology; 2014) Nnaji (2017:1-15) in Hallucinations and Delusions noted Rudolf Otto’s idea of the Holy, and the statement “Mysterium Tremendum en fascinum”, related to religious experiences whereby extra-terrestrial, (parapsychic and parapsychological) issues simply called “meta-physic or metapsychic, also defined as the “numinous”, (or elementals) go beyond human explanations. These confront people to huge levels of petrification’s. This takes us to Psalm 139: 6 and 14, Hebrew O.T “Philiyah Philiyah Daat”, i.e that God is simply inexplicable. Thus, a good look at the word “Psychology” and its metaphysic connotations makes it more related to the “numinous” which we often call religion, or the inexplicable relationship between the spiritual and the physical.

Basic issues in Psychology of Religion

Perhaps Hallucinations, Delusions and the Taphuni” (i.e prophetic ecstasies; (Micha 2:6) and other branches in investigative Psychology of Religion; need attention: Nnaji (2015) on Biochemistry Religion traced human religiosities, hallucinations and delusions to Neurotransmitter actions in the human brain. These which clearly positions Hallucination and delusions as mental health issues in psychology of religion. Thomas Hobbes in Leviathan (1651) wrote that madmen will not allow us

know who is a madman and who is prophet, since prophets and mentally unstable persons often tend to act irrationally: Though, certain theologians have argued that in receiving divine revelations, God does not require human intellect or perception to receive, translate and adequately explain revelations from God. Experts in Psychology have often noted that understanding human actions must start from understanding human mental states, since the human brain (or psyche) remaining the control tower of the human body (Atkinson:1993 on abnormal psychology)

Relationship between Philosophy of Religion and Psychology of Religion

1. While philosophy of religion questions statements such as (a) God exists (b) Existence of Heaven, hell, spirits, ghosts, apparitions, phantoms etc, (c) Also, investigating other metaphysical issues like magic, (pharmakon) witch craft, wizardly, necromancy, parapsychics and parapsychology etc, not forgetting (d) evolutionism and creationism debates (e)and true origins of Holy books; (2) Psychology of Religion on its part, does not question revelations or statements in Holy Books, rather, it investigates the behaviours of prophets and Holymen, in order to identify and understand behavioural prophetic actions and processes enabling possibilities and circumstances (prompting), necessitating or warranting reception of such extra-terrestrial information called revelations in religious circles. Obviously, this is to ascertain if such Divine messages are anything but religious-claims or verifiable Divine contacts and interactions. Simply stated, Philosophy of Religion and Psychology of Religion investigate truths in religious claims: (Alexander et al: 2009)

Research Observations and Recommendations

This study's observation from its tabular an introduction, definitions of terms, may not be a finding, since linguistic and etymologists understand that many Greek, Hebrew, Latin and French words in current English have lost their original meanings. Thus, that psychology from the Hebrew Old Testament "Nepso" truly means "soul or the inner-being" really contrasts its current

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application as “behaviour, mentality or mind”. This also extends to the word “Religion” which originally meant, “to be addicted”, or tied to what one cannot do without, which obviously does not mean believe in God.

Hence, this study observed that proper definitions (or clarifications) should be given to Psychology and Religion for us to identify their relationships, and how well psychology can investigate, study, impact or condition religion positively or negatively. This study thus recommends that more studies be carried out on the relationships and differences between (a) Psychology of Religion, (b) Religious Psychology (c) Abnormal Psychology and (d) etymologies of the forgoing study terms. For us to be able to arrive true suitable definitions for them.

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