

Global African Spirituality Social Capital and Self-reliance in Africa

edited by

**Tunde Babawale
and Akin Alao**



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m a l t h o u s e 

Malthouse Press Limited

Lagos, Benin, Ibadan, Jos, Port-Harcourt, Zaria

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Surulere, Lagos Mainland, Lagos State
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© CBAAC 2008
First Published 2008
ISBN 978 978 023 253 2

Distributors:
African Books Collective, Oxford, United Kingdom
Email: abc@africanbookscollective.com
Website: <http://www.africanbookscollective.com>

Acknowledgements

We appreciate with gratitude the invaluable contributions of those who made possible and successful the international conference on Global African Spirituality, Social Capital and Self Reliance in Africa which held at Casa del Papa, Ouidah, the Republic of Benin in November 2007. Essays in this volume were first presented and discussed by scholars and practitioners of African culture at the Ouidah conference. We appreciate with thanks the contributions of our participants, colleagues and friends for making the conference a huge success that it turned out to be and for permission freely given to publish their research findings in a book form. The Pan African Strategic and Policy Research Group provided institutional support for which we cannot thank General Ishola Williams and his network sufficiently. Our publishers, Malthouse Press Limited deserve special mention and commendation for doing a great job within the shortest possible time. Only a press of immense stature, commitment and devotion could achieve that feat.

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Akin Alao

context in which it is used. This chapter analyzes some of these contexts in an attempt to evaluate the efficacy of the Yoruba spiritual heritage as a social capital in the Americas. **Obolodunma** re-examined the literature on Esu and contends that Esu is many things that are in opposition: the first and the last; the first that is the last; the sacred that is the profane, the beautiful that is the ugly; the good that is the bad; the homeless that is at home. The visual and spatial narrations of Esu in these complex ways are explored in this chapter as suggesting the impossibility of arriving at a definite meaning of Esu's identity and as interrogating membership of community. He draws attention to the implications of the Esu exile for the politics of community in a changing African world.

Amuni reminds us that Arabia and indeed Middle East has had its own fair share of Africans in the Diaspora. The status of Africans as slaves, serfs, domestic hands and mercenary soldiers is well known. It is however noteworthy that Africans from Ethiopia were once rulers and conquerors of Arabia. Africans later emerged as seminal scholars, celebrated poets and important personalities in the Arab milieu. The African-Arab Poets have always had the task of reacting to racist and satirical taunts on their "black skin". Most of these poets' reactions were apologetic, but Al-hayqutan's (an African poet) repartee to Jarir's (an Arab poet) insulting remark on his blackness was a brilliant exemption. An analytical study of the poem is the focus of this present paper. Apart from the linguistic and rhetorical artifices of the poem, it is packed with historical references that reflect the supremacy of the black race, particularly against the Arabs. **Faleye's** chapter traces the historical motifs behind the nomenclature and the art of *Onidiri* and *Onsèsòó* as a profession and the creativity imbued in the trends of the Yorùbá female indigenous hair-styles. This is with a view to finding out the need to protecting the African culture and art and justifying the widespread acceptance of the Black and African Culture, as a source of self-reliance antidote to achieving sustainable development.

The chapter written by **Yetunde Akorede** explores the reflection and portrayal of spirituality in African literature and highlights the causes, effects and outcome of characters' trauma and their desire to seek explanations and solutions from *dibias*, *babalawos* and diviners. With special reference to Sigmund Freud's theory of the mind, the chapter examines the reflection of characters' disposition in selected literary works written by Africans to highlight characters' spiritualizing of specific experiences in their lives and the implication of this on characters' well-being. The last chapter written by **James Tssaior** argues that alternative hermeneutic paradigms help in constructing and crystallizing the spiritual dimensions of African folk narratives as a corpus of indigenous forms of knowledge and culture and as counter-narratives to the Western Master text and its totalitarian assumptions.

This book represents for us yet another opportunity to re-interrogate the tangible and intangible causes of Africa's underdevelopment and the role played by imposed cultural ideologies to frustrate the emergence of a truly African pattern of development anchored on the appropriation of the twin concepts of global African spirituality and social capital. It is expected that Africans on the continent and in the diaspora will find useful insights in the book in their individual and collective attempts at rediscovering their African personality and identity.

Contents

Acknowledgements

Preface

Contributors

Editorial Committee

Introduction

Section I – Theoretical and conceptual perspectives

1. Spirituality: conceptual and ontological interrogation - *Al Chukwuma Okoli*.....1
2. The spiritual foundations of underdevelopment in Africa and the imperative of cultural revitalisation- *Sola Olaniyan*.....7
3. From anthropocentric sinfulness to biocentric gracefulness: mission to creation - *Rev. Taiye Shola Adeola*.....21
4. Language use and culture - *Augustine Agwuele*.....33

Section II – Historical and contemporary context

5. Historical and contemporary context of African spirituality, social capital and self-reliance - *Benjamin Olatunji Oloruntimehin*.....43
6. Spirituality, social capital and the quest for African emancipation — *Grace Wamue*.....59
7. Developing educational strategies for students and youth of African descent living in white countries - *Oscar Brathwaite*.....77
8. The case for self-reliance: an example of African religion as practised in the Diaspora - *Esuseeke I. Ololade and Stephen R. Harper*.....93
9. The restorative and spiritual dimensions of theatrical performances: the Trinidad experience- *Dani Lyndersay*.....99
10. The sacred red stones of Benin kingdom - *Esther Esosa Esuunitor*.....107

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Chapter 3

From anthropocentric sinfulness to biocentric gracefulness: mission to creation

- Rev Taiye Shola Adeola*

Introduction

Western Christianity has taught human race to see itself as the most important of creation. Human beings have therefore seen itself and lived as the basis, the centre and the height of God's creation. This is mainly rooted in a mis-reading of the creation story in which human being is believed to have been given absolute authority to dominate and subdue the earth (Gen. 1:21 following)

We now live in a human centred world in which human's insatiable desires have made them to see all other part of creation as "something" meant for the satisfaction of its ever widening desires. This has led to continuous mutilation of creation by humanity and it is a sin against nature. The damage to creation as a result of the human centeredness is herein referred to as "Anthropocentric Sinfulness"

The indigenous African believe that nature is sacred rooted in their perception of the world as a place inhabited not only by the humans but also by the spirit beings has a great influence on their handling of creation and as such they conceive a life centred world. This is herein referred to as "Bio-centric Gracefulness"

This chapter advocates a shift from anthropocentric sinfulness to a bio-centric gracefulness emphasizing the need for humanity to recognize the interdependence and interrelatedness of the whole creation.

From an African perspective, this chapter suggests a reclaim of Yoruba Spirituality and believe about creation before the advent of Christianity as a basis for the shift from a "human centred" world to a "life centred" world.

This chapter also discusses the implications of Anthropocentric ism to missions and what the consequence of a shift will be. It concludes with

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suggestions of what must be done and a theological reflection on creation.

We live in a human-centred world and human's insatiable desires have made them to commit sin against nature. Human race has always seen itself and lived as the centre of God's creation. This is rooted mainly in a mis-reading of the creation story in which Human being is believed to have been given absolute authority to dominate and subdue the earth. (Gen. 1: 26f).

This is what Chung Hyun Kyung calls "Anthropocentric Sinfulness". She used the phrase in one of her statements about the task of ecologists and this caught my attention. She says, "Ecologists enable us to see our anthropocentric sinfulness in relation to other living beings."¹

Hence, the world is human centred and the human domination is beginning to harm the world in which they live. One of the major tasks of the moment is therefore how the ecological crisis caused by human domination of the world will be stemmed in such a way that the world will not be reduced to a place that is no longer habitable after some time.

This chapter therefore focuses on the problem of anthropocentric sinfulness by suggesting a Shift from an African perspective within the context of Yoruba indigenous spirituality. It gives a glimpse of Yoruba tradition about creation, the human centred world, the life-centred world, what must be done, and implication to missions. The chapter concludes with a theological and pastoral reflection.

The human-centred world resulting in using every other part of creation to sustain human and human alone without care for their integrity, value and sustenance is a sin against them and man needs to repent from this sin. "The wages of sin is death", says the Holy Scripture in Romans 6: 23a. Human beings' anthropocentric sinfulness is leading to the death of creation and will continue to kill it unless humans repent and shift to a bio-centric view of the world.

Theoretical framework and hypotheses

The assumption of this writer is that the way humans dominate and control the world is harmful to the whole creation. To achieve immediate gains, profit and pleasure, the future generation and existence is being sacrificed. Anthropocentrism will erode the earth of its best because it places man at the centre of the universe whose longings and desires often borne out of greed and selfishness must be satisfied.

In satisfying human greed the earth is persistently mutilated and erosion of its best resources is being engaged in. According to Chung Hyun Kyung "*The earth is in danger. It is being destroyed with alarming speed. If this process is not stopped, the next generation of living beings will have no liveable earth to inherit*."²

The thesis of this chapter is that a reclaim of the Yoruba spirituality about creation

and a shift from anthropocentrism to this spirituality will lead to the preservation of creation.

Definition of some terms

It is important to give insight into how some terms are used in this chapter. I have adopted some of them to suit the focus of this chapter.

Sin is used in this chapter as wrongdoing exhibited in the various forms of human cruelty to other parts of the creation.

Anthropocentric sinfulness is the error of human's perpetual consideration of all other parts of creation as "something" meant for the satisfaction of ever-widening human desires. It is the sin of human centeredness, selfishness, and greed of non-recognition of the whole of creation's interdependence and inter-relatedness. It is man's sin against other living creatures. Anthropocentrism is the consideration of human beings as the most important and central factor in the universe.

Ecology is the study of relationships among organisms and between them and their environment.³ Ecologists enable us to see our anthropocentric sinfulness in relation to other living beings. They call us to a new pattern of relations with all beings in the cosmos based on mutuality, interdependence and life-giving values.⁴

Bio-centrism considers every part of creation as important and not only human beings at the centre and apex. It is a life-centred world. It considers the interdependence and inter-relatedness of all of creation emphasizing a balanced world. It is a relational centeredness that makes one think that it exists for the other to enhance it and not to exploit it.

A glimpse of Yoruba tradition about creation

The African culture within which I grew up has spirituality that regards the whole of creation as interrelated. Emiola Nihinlola observed that some of the social values of the traditional African society are relationships, selflessness, hospitality and a spirit of inclusiveness.⁵ My Yoruba tradition in Nigeria, west of Africa had a spiritual relationship with the earth. This is rooted in the Yoruba believe about the creation story part of which is the fact that the present earth was occupied by divinities and they still are very much present in it. According to Bolaji Idowu, There have been scattered suggestions, that the divinities were the original occupants of the earth at its foundation and that it was from these that its present inhabitants derived.⁶ As a result of this belief the earth, trees, the animal world and other parts of creation are treated as sacred. It is believed that any form of brutality to any of these will invoke the wrath of the spirit

³ David L. Gosling, *Religion and Ecology in India and Southeast Asia* London: Routledge, 2001. P.4

⁴ Chung Kyung

⁵ Nihinlola Emiola, *The impact of globalization on African culture: A Theological response in Ogbomoso Journal of Theology*, No 10, December, 2003, Pp 57-67

⁶ Idowu E. Bolaji, *Olodumare God in Yoruba Believe*, Ibadan: Longman, 1996 P. 17

¹ Chung Hyun Kyung, "Ecology, Feminism and African and Asian spirituality: "Towards a spirituality of EcoFeminism" David G. Hallman, Ed., *Ecotheology: voices from South Africa* (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 175.

Chung Hyun Kyung, 175

behind them and ultimately that of the supreme being - *Olodumare*. The Yoruba think of him as one who possesses superlative greatness and fullness of all excellent attributes. By calling him *Olodumare*, the Yoruba acknowledge him to be unique in heaven and on earth, supreme over all.⁷

Awolalu and Dopamu in their discourse of the nature of divinities in West African traditional religion give insight into the reason for this. According to them:

Some divinities are no more than personification of natural forces and phenomena. Under this last Category can be numbered the myriad spirits which populate the world Of the West African peoples. Such spirits are associated with hills, mountains, rivers, rocks, caves, trees, brooks, lakes, or thick Forests. Whatever people consider to be the home Of a spirit is usually set apart as a sacred place, and there, people offer worship to the particular spirit.⁸

No tree is therefore cut without the necessary ritual, No fishing expedition is done without homage to the sea goddess called various names among the Yoruba like “*Osun*”, “*Oya*”, and “*Olokun*” among the Edo. Failure to do so may result in a fruitless effort or even in calamity. “*Osun*” among the Yoruba is regarded as the goddess of fertility of land, animals and human beings. She is worshiped at various times and seasons by various groups for various reasons.

The goddess *Osun* is noted for her benevolence. She is called the mother of children. Barren women usually approach her through her priests and priestesses. Such women are given water from *Osun* shrine to drink. It is believed that such women will come back the following year to thank *Osun*.⁹ When women in need of children approach her, they come with gifts of white chickens and other materials with dancing and singing dressed in white attires as a symbol of “*Osun*’s” purity. Their request can be made in words or through songs, an example is:

*Jowo bami se o yeye osun
Dakun gbo terni yeye osun
Iwo lo l’oyun l’otun l’omo
Iwo lo le se iwo lape
Iwo lo l’ekun abiamo
Dakun, wa gbohun abiamo
Dakun gbo temi yeye osun*

*Please do it for me, mother osun
Please hear me, mother osun
Pregnancy and Children are with you
We call upon you who can do it
Please hear our voice good mother
Please hear our voice good mother
Please hear me, mother osun*¹⁰

⁷ Ibid., p. 35

⁸ Awolalu J. Omosade and Dopamu P. Adelumo. *West African Traditional Religion*, Ibadan: Onibonjo Press, 1979 Pp.72 -115.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ *Osun* means ‘spring’ or ‘source’. *Osun* is the source of fertility of all sorts. The above song was used in a play by Femi Osofisan *Esu and the vagabond Minsrels* in which the writer of this paper took part in its stage performance in 1986 at the dramatic arts department of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

The fishermen also pour libation to ask for permission to fish and also pray for “*Olokun*’s” blessings otherwise she can hold all the fishes back and no catch will be made. Other Examples among the Yoruba is the Oke-Ibadan (Ibadan Hill) set apart for the spirit of the hill which the people believe had offered them help in the war days and continues to pour his blessings on the people of Ibadan. There are priests dedicated to this spirit and there is usually an annual festival in his honour. The same thing operates among the Egba of Abeokuta, where the Olumo Rock is dedicated to the spirit of the rock believed to have offered them assistance in war days.¹¹

Certain animals are believed to be dedicated to some gods and are therefore regarded as sacred animals. “*Olokun*” is believed to appreciate white chickens. Dogs are associated with “*Ogun*”- the god of iron. The palm wine is also the drink of “*Ogun*”; he is therefore interested in what happens to the palm trees. The earth is placated with sacrifices from time to time so that it will yield its increase and bring blessings to humankind.

In some parts of Africa certain animals are regarded as sacred and must not be killed or eaten. Rather, they are worshiped.

This was the Yoruba perspective on creation before the British colonialism and its attendant effects. The Yoruba like other Africans believe that the earth created by God is not only physical but spiritual, although the spirit world cannot be seen, it is experienced and related to through intermediaries and the symbolic representations of God who is believed to be present everywhere and still involved in the running and maintenance of the world.

However, Christianity and the western civilization that came with it have overturned all of this creation-centred spirituality. The colonial masters have taught the people through Christianity and western education that the human being is all in all and must destroy other parts of God’s creation to survive. Therefore human race has become cruel to the animal kingdom; they cut down trees at will for selfish greed thereby robbing the earth of its forests; they extract mineral resources for financial gains with attending environmental dangers; and use destructive chemicals on the seas destroying the lives that live therein. The modern Nigerian Christians greatly influenced by factors of urbanization, globalization, and industrialization have lost their creation centred spirituality and this is dangerous.

Mbiti describes the results of the shift this way:

This sudden detachment from the land to which Africans are mystically bound, and the thrust into situations where corporate existence has no meaning, have produced dehumanized individuals in the mines, industry and cities. The change means that individuals are severed; cut off, pulled out and separated from corporate morality, customs and traditional identity.¹²

The problem that this chapter seeks to address is, how can the Yoruba creation-centred or bio-centric spirituality be reclaimed in the midst of prevailing ecological crisis and used as a model for overcoming the harm caused to creation by anthropocentrism such that a

¹¹ Awolalu and Dopamu, p. 73

¹² Mbiti John S., *African Religion and Philosophy*, Ibadan Heinemann 1969. P 219

sustainable and habitable world is not lost.

Human-centred world

The origin of the human-centred world is the western Christianity. A traditional, Patriarchal interpretation of Christianity places human beings at the centre of creation. Human domination is rooted in the first account of creation found in Genesis. 1: 26f, which western Christianity has interpreted to mean that human beings are to *rule, dominate* and *subdue* the whole of creation.

Rajotte and Breuilly puts it this way:

It is Western Christianity that has taught us to see ourselves as the Centre of things with the right, even the duty to conquer, subdue and have dominion over nature. Early scientific thought reinforced this view of our selves, by Seeing the earth as the centre of the universe, with the planets, the stars and the start all circling round it.¹³

Ruth Page however, submits and I agree with her that “Dominion” does not imply “Domination”, according to her,

“God has dominion and power over the earth and human beings were created to represent that power on earth. The words used for this dominion and power are certainly fierce, with the sense of trampling or stamping on the rest of creation...The strong words used in Genesis. 1 Seem at first sight to conf this, but only if they are taken out of context. For if we look at the whole story, humanity is the representative of God Who has just brought about a pleasant, orderly world in which creatures can flourish and multiply.¹⁴

Domination is not the same as having dominion. To have “dominion” in the scripture meant to take care, to have responsibility. Human dominion is to be exercised with a sense of responsibility as stewards and not as exploiter who mutilate the creation.

Domination leads to the subversion and extinction of the other components of creation Such as animals, plants, etc. Men and women need to consider the other parts of creation not just as “something” to be used and discarded when no longer found to be of benefit.

The second account of creation in Genesis 2: 4f give a clearer picture of human Responsibility to creation. V. 15 says “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” (NIV). Some other translations used the term to “Till it and Keep it”. Exploitation is not inferred from this verse, rather it gives the responsibility of one that has dominion to keep or take care of the garden. The human

¹³ Freda Rajotte with Elizabeth Breuilly, *What is this Crisis: The illness and its symptoms*, Elizabeth Breuilly and Martin Palmer (Eds) *Christianity and Ecology* New York: Cassel, 1992, P.7

¹⁴ Ruth Page, *The Bible and the Natural World*, Elizabeth Breuilly and Martin Eds. P.25

person, created in the image of God, is in a distinctive relation to the rest of creation, of which she or he however remains part; the dominion that human persons are to have over all other living beings and over the earth itself is one of responsibility, of making fruitful, of caring for with holiness and righteousness. In other words, this dominion is a sacred trust; while individually responsible for his or her acts, the human person exists in relation to others and cannot seek his or her own good alone, but rather to for the whole of creation not for the purpose of using it only for its own benefit but as stewards accountable to God the creator.

Life-centred world

The African perception of the world as a place that is inhabited not only by the humans but also by the spirit beings has greatly influenced the way that the whole of creation is handled. Nature is sacred and the indigenous people that have not been influenced by the western Christian cultures treat it as such.¹⁵ It has been suggested that one reason that forests have been cut down so freely, mines and wells exhausted, and dangerous chemicals released into the atmosphere is because the Bible does not describe God as living within creation, so that nature is not seen as sacred.¹⁶

The sacred view of nature by the Africans makes them to have a relationship that is bio-centric and not anthropocentric and this had its impact on them as much as it has on nature. According to traditional African worldview, one remains healthy in a holistic sense only by living in harmony with the whole creation. Abundant healing is achieved only when effective healing involves reconciliation with the entire cosmos.¹⁷ This spirituality gives full value to creation as a dynamic and highly integrated Web of Life. It exudes life-giving values; sacredness of the land, reverence for all creatures, judicious use of earth's resources, and compassion for the weak, oppressed and marginalized. These cosmic value, rituals, and practices are often considered “superstitious”, but they capture a cosmic interwoven-ness that can become a healing and transforming experience for all of us.¹⁸ In his article about the aboriginal perspective of creation, native Canadian theologian Stan McKay states that “Indigenous spirituality around the world is centred on the notion of relationship to the whole creation. We call the earth our mother and the animals are our brothers and sisters. Those parts of creation which biologists describe as inanimate we call our relatives.

McKay states further that this naming of creation into our family is an imagery of substance, but it is more than that, because it describes a relationship of love and faithfulness between human persons and the creation. This unity as creatures in the creation cannot be expressed exclusively, since it is related to the interdependence and

¹⁵ Majorie Keenan Rshmi, *Care For Creation: Human Activity and The Environment*, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2000. P.15.

¹⁶ Ibid. Ruth Page, *The influence of the Bible on Christian Belief about the Natural World*. P.40.

¹⁷ Andrew A. Kyomo, *The Environmental Crisis as a Pastoral Challenge in Africa*, J.N.K. Mugambi and Mika Vahakangas (Eds), *Christian Theology and Environmental Responsibility*, Nairobi: Action Publishers, 2001. P.58.

¹⁸ Ibid. Chung Kyung. P 177

connectedness of all life.¹⁹ This is quite similar to the African's view of creation.

These two religious views have their implications on the environment. While the western concept of domination leads to devaluation of creation, the African Life-centred view of the world enhances its sustainability. The western concept of domination has no respect for creation for what it is but destroys it for selfish gains while the African Life-centred concept cherish God's creation as a mark of spirituality and considers its devaluation as an offence against the spirits that lives within it. One of the basic characteristics of African culture is its holistic integrating nature.²⁰ Chung Kyung observes that "a hierarchical system of domination in which men with power rule all other beings in the cosmos drawing on the ideological support of sexism, racism, cultural imperialism, and androcentrism...has promoted war, injustice and ecological disaster in world history."²¹ The human domination of all other beings has also led to a domination of itself evident in the colonization and the exploitation of the land of the Africans and Asians by the western world. The domination is also exhibited in the hierarchical structures that treat man as a superior being relegating the woman to an inferior status.

The task before the ecological movements and the challenge to churches is to ensure a shift from the human-centred world to a life-centred world in such a way that there will be balance and sustainability ensured. To achieve this, a process of education will have to be embarked upon to infuse a spirituality of the sacredness of the cosmos into everyone. The African spirituality which has been eroded by the western Christian civilization needs to be reawakened and be taught if the world will not be extinguished by human centeredness.

The inter-relatedness of creation and the gracefulness of Yoruba traditions (need to be ecologically minded) should be practised at local parish levels. Ecology groups can be formed to enhance this. Churches can embark on tree planting, gardening, dairy farming, and be at the forefront of the vanguard for peace in the world. The efforts of the ecological movements such as the Eco-feminists and Eco-theologians like Chung Kyung, Stan McKay, and others needs to be complemented by churches at the grassroots levels to spread the gospel of the sacredness of the cosmos. The Agbekoya - a Yoruba farmer's movement - in the western part of Nigeria that fought in the 1960s against the oppression of farmers and devaluation of their land is a good example. Another example is the Chipko movement in the Utharkhand region of the Himalayas. This movement according to Aruna Gnanadason is a largely tribal women-centred struggle, in which local people clung to trees in order to protect them from the saw of the contractor's men. They had also struggled against mining operation in the mountain region.²² The defence of creation and its preservation should be a common concern for everyone; to do otherwise is to risk the erosion of a liveable world for generations yet unborn. The earth must be kept for them, for that is part of our dominion - "till it and Keep it" the scripture says in Genesis 2: 15. "Till" and "Keep" are words of active participation and protection.

Implications for mission

The western Christian tradition and the gospel of domination that it preached to the Africans, rather than having a positive missionary impact on the people had a negative one. The domination of the people to whom missionary efforts were directed and their exploitation by the missionaries left an impression in the minds of the people of a God not to be trusted because his missionaries are agents of plundering and erosion of communal values attached to creation. Trees in the forests were felled at will, the seas were polluted, mining activities were done exploitatively and the memory still lingers on because the same attitude still prevails even in the missionary efforts of the moment.

What must be done

A shift from human centeredness to a life-centred view of creation will bring about a consciousness of relational living and interdependence. A generation of people with a life-centred view of creation will stop the sin of violation *and* destruction of other parts of creation. In doing so the value and importance of all will be affirmed, the good of all will be sought and the preservation of all is ensured. This would then mean we shall be doing missions in its fullness. "When we look at the unity of creation we see that people and land, the physical and the spiritual, cannot be separated. Together we compose one world."²³ Our mission efforts must therefore include a ministry to the whole of creation - human and non-human, animate and inanimate. It is a contradiction to preach the gospel of God's love for the world excluding the animals, the trees in the forest, the ocean lives and all other things that are found in the world. It is also contradictory for the multinational companies to claim to want to improve the lot of the developing nations by destroying their land and environment with which they have great spiritual attachments. If the earth is protected mission is being done, mission to creation, mission to the environment, a mission of inter-relatedness, as stewards who will be accountable to God the creator and not to profit-making corporations. Our mission of domination must give way to a mission of responsible dominion. A mission of destruction must give way to mission of reconstruction and renewal.

Summary and conclusion

From the foregoing discussion I have tried to show that the human-centred world has lead to the destruction of the creation rather than its preservation and this I have called anthropocentric sinfulness - The sin of the human against the non-human. This sin is rooted in the western Christian tradition that taught the theology of domination rather than having responsible dominion. This sin has brought with it death, exploitation and devaluation. In contrast, the Yoruba bio-centric spirituality which views the world and all in it as a sacred abode of the gods emphasize common well being of all and strives at the preservation of creation. This African life-centred world view and practice has

¹⁹ Stan McKay, *An Aboriginal Perspective on the Integrity of Creation* David G. Hallman Ed. *Ecology: voices from South and North*, New York: Orbit Books, 1994. P.175

²⁰ Kalilombe A. Patrick- *Spirituality in the African Perspective: Paths of African Theology*, p. 115

²¹ Ibid. Chung Kyung, 175 - 176

²² Aruna Gnanadason, *Women, Economy and Ecology Ecology: Voices From the South and North*

²³ Ibid. Freda Rajotte with Elizabeth Breuilly *Treatment for the Earth's Sickness - The Church's role*, P.102

brought with it grace, togetherness, and sustainability. This I have called bio-centric gracefulness.

A reclaiming of Yoruba African tradition/spirituality needs to be done by the contemporary Nigerian Christian. This will contribute greatly to the preservation of creation and well being of women and men. A rightful exercise of God-given dominion must inform our doing missions. "There is much to be done, and the Christian church has a large part to play in the struggle; to save the earth from environmental destruction. First of all, the Church has to change itself, and show the world how to change in several different areas: in repentance of what has been wrong; in preaching a vision of what could and should be; in living hope and power to the hopeless; in praise and celebration of the creator and sustainer of the earth; and in practical action."²⁴

Theological and pastoral reflections

Repentance from anthropocentric sinfulness and the shift to bio-centric gracefulness will require a change of attitude, a reassessment of our theology, and a redirection of our mission efforts hereby embarking on true mission, holistic that includes the whole of creation. This will include everything therein without excluding any part. The theology of domination will be replaced with a theology of responsible stewardship; exploitation will give way to preservation, human centred- world to life-centred world. There is so much grace in biocentrism and so much death in anthropocentrism. Our mission should not be a mission of death and destruction but of grace and life, not of chaos and disorder but of peace and harmony, not of exploitation but of preservation of every part of creation, of a sacred view and sacred treatment of God's creation.

The African spirituality in relation to the world needs to be reawakened as we embark on mission to creation because it is a "we" world and not "I". The role of the church at the congregational level and that of the grassroots is also very important in bringing about the desired change. As a pastor, care for creation will be included in my sermons and infused into the liturgy. The youths in my congregation will be mobilized to embark on ecological projects such as planting trees and shrubs to replace the trees that were cut down for buildings. As a songwriter, I will compose songs and hymns about the environment especially for children and teenagers to make them conscious of their responsibilities towards the whole of God's creation. My pastor colleagues will not be left out. A process of educating the whole community about responsible living in relation to creation will begin with them. The gifts and contributions of women, who feel closest to mother earth will be recognized and tapped. It is a task for all, for we all must take up the challenge of preserving our world and sustaining it for the generations after us.

Finally I close with a sharing of my earth credo.²⁵

Oh the beauty of the earth

Oh the beauty of the earth

Of love, of joy, of grace and glory
 Of Splendor, of bliss, of great designs
 Oh the beauty of the earth
 The sky displays the spread of life
 The height of wonder and wisdom it shows
 Oh the beauty of the earth
 The trees and woods are made to sing
 The voice of birds is heard in songs
 Of praise to God the great and glorious
 Above the skies their voices ring
 They swing their wings within the winds
 Above the seas within the woods
 Oh the beauty of the earth
 The flow of streams the ray of sun
 The shining stars the radiant moon
 The strong the weak the great and small
 The tall the short the fat and slim
 Mountains and valleys, Height and depths
 Oceans and deserts night and day
 Oh the beauty of the earth
 Reveals that God is Lord of all
 And man was made to care for earth
 To care for it and not to kill
 To live in it and not destroy
 Oh the, beauty of the earth
 Is not for man to use and waste
 And not for women to just exploit
 It is for human to keep and care
 Preserve, maintain and made to bloom
 Oh the beauty of the earth
 I make my pledge for it to glow
 In thanks to him who made it all
 Oh the beauty the beauty of the earth

Suggestions for further reading

Awolalu Omosade J. and Dopamu Adelamo P., *West African Traditional Religion*

²⁴ Ibid., 98

²⁵ Originally written for module B "Creation and Environment: Implication to Missions" at the 52nd Graduate School of the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, Switzerland. May 1. 2002

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Chapter 4

Language use and culture: implication for self-reliance

Augustine Agwuele¹

Introduction

Until Africans are able to look within and fashion for themselves appropriate responses to their own social, economic and political challenges, they will remain dependent and enslaved. To the extent that African scholars are dependent on western patronage for their scholarly productions, and to the West for ideas, then they will, of necessity be constrained to merely applying these borrowed concepts to data from Africa, such that they are not speaking 'Africa' nor are they in conversation with Africa, rather, someone else is speaking through them. Acquiring terms that are meaningful in their natural settings and applying them to issues in a setting with different socio-cultural focus only produces alienated minds that can only conceive meaningless solutions. This chapter examines the uncritical acceptance of culturally constructed values and norms by African scholars. Departing from a simple experiment surrounding the notion of identity, the chapter argues that linguistic imperialism is the harbinger of economical, cultural and political domination of sub-Saharan Africa by the West. It exemplifies how the imposition of a different worldview, via language, in the discourse of African cultural and social issues, is similar to using a foreign currency in another country.

Unlike the transfer of manufactured electrical and mechanical devises, there is no history of a successful transfer of development or blue-print for development from one society to the other. Similarly, the transfer of social, economic and political emancipation (assuming such were possible) from one nation to the other remains unattested. While inspirations and ideas could have various sources, their actualization for the development and enhancement of life has always evolved from and within the socio-cultural specificity of a society. All colonized countries, that have become industrialized and now possess advanced technology, wrestled these achievements from within. In most cases, these countries restructured their educational and social institutions mindful of their culture, customs and history, so that modernization did not become the destruction of the existing

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