



# Networking Cedara

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**Tuesday, 30 October:** End of the year Penitential Service (4.15 pm Emmanuel Ndlovu CMM presiding)  
**Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> - Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> November:** STUDY BREAK  
**Monday, 12 - Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> November:** Examination Time

### NOTICE

FROM THE LIBRARY STAFF

Dear Students, please RETURN all the books and hand in your library pockets by the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

### ATTITUDES OF EARLY RESEARCHERS TO AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS: FOCUS ON NIGERIA

*Denis Ikenna Ekwerike, MDP*

#### Introduction

Africans always knew and submitted to a metaphysical reality whom they felt is above all else. They developed rites and rituals as communication links with the living dead. Among the ancient Igbo societies of Nigeria, the shrine was responsible for social harmony and cosmological balance. Unfortunately, research into African Traditional Religions (ATR) neither began in Africa nor by Africans but by foreign European explorers whose governments were at the time looting and plundering the human and natural resources of Africa in the name of colonization.

Given this background, it is only common sense that the results of the researches of these early explorers be considered critically as some sort of caution for young Africans, and indeed, anyone who desires an objective knowledge of ATRs. That is exactly what this essay sets out to do.

#### Overview of African Traditional Religion

African Traditional Religions are as old as Africa and Africans

themselves since no one has ever taken responsibility as founder of the religions like in Christianity and Islam. As Omotoye notes, ATR is called differently by different schools of thoughts. While many call it African Traditional Religion, others label it African Indigenous Religion, African systems of thought, Primal Heritage, African Religions, among others. According to Awolalu ATR, which is being practised today in various forms and various shades and intensities by a very large number of Africans, including individuals who claim to be Muslims or Christians, resulted from the sustaining faith held by the forebears of the present Africans.

Four foundational religious beliefs have been identified by Turaki in ATR: (1) the belief in impersonal or mystical powers embedded in natural objects, plants and animals which can be extracted for medicine, magic, charms and amulets by medicine men and women, diviners and seers. (2) the belief in spirit beings which are believed to dwell in certain trees, rocks or mountains, caves, rivers, forests, animals, human beings, the skies, carved or molded objects etc. The spirit world is, in a sense, a battleground of spirits and powers that use their mystical powers to influence the course of human life. It is divided into the spirits of the dead elders (the ancestors) and the non-human spirit beings. (3) Belief in divinities/gods which are many and each has a specific area of influence and control. Some of these divinities were originally mythological figures in some African legends and primordial histories and cosmologies, while some were tribal heroes or heroines. (4) The belief in the Supreme Being who is above the lesser divinities in a hierarchy of beings. The god who is above the lesser gods, is often not intimately involved with the humans' world. Instead, people go through the lesser powers to meet their desires. This leads people to turn to the impersonal powers, the divinities, the gods, the ancestors and the spirit beings for help.

### **Earliest Theorists on African Traditional Religion**

Earliest works describing what and how Africans believe were written from a preconceived biased notion of Africa. This is evident from Awolalu's lamentation that even though religion was the most important influence in the life of most Africans, its essential principles were too often unknown to foreigners who thus made themselves constantly liable to misunderstand the African worldview and beliefs. He recalls that there were foreign writers and theorists who never visited Africa but were first to start telling the story of Africa and religion on the Continent whose unsubstantiated claims, unfortunately, became the foundation upon which later systematic researchers were to build their own works.

### **Early Researchers on African Traditional Religion**

Some scholars, like Olademo, have stated that the first real attempt to study African Traditional Religion and culture was by early European Christian missionaries, colonial soldiers and administrators who worked in Africa. Obviously, Christianity rode on the backs of colonialism into Africa. They were motivated primarily by

curiosity, personal interest and a practical objective of being better equipped to uproot and completely replace Africa's original religious beliefs and practices with their White supremacist religious ideologies. Others like Awolalu add sociologists and anthropologists. Hassan would argue that fantasy and fiction about Africa was an integral element of the perception embedded in the European mind of the middle ages.

For while they have been praised for the bold effort of at least showing to have undertaken some steps into objective and systematic study of ATR, these researchers did not wash off completely that age-long prejudice against Africa and the pervading aura of supremacy against them. They used a foreign theoretical framework into which data was forced. Therefore, it was inevitable that misrepresentations and misinterpretations would occur. It was easy to notice the thread of their original agenda running through the results from their researches. For instance, Adamo observed that to some anthropologists, 'untutored' Africans could not know God as the idea of God is philosophical.

They went ahead to write their findings in terms which Awolalu defined as misleading: primitive, savage, fetishism, juju, heathenism, paganism, animism, idolatry and polytheism. Of course, Omotoye promptly states that the terms have been rejected as uncomplimentary and unacceptable.

## **Conclusion**

Today, many African scholars have done real researches into ATR and research is still ongoing. Perhaps one of the mistakes of European writers is the tendency to think of the whole of African continent as one homogenous geographical area simply because most of its inhabitants are Black. This is clear ignorance and an indication of total disinterest in Africa since many still look at Africa in a pessimistic and discriminatory way.

Africa is a vast continent; the second largest after Asia. The vast land mass and the inability to access most of the communities in the countries in Africa were identified as major challenges to the early researchers. It is unfortunate, however, that despite the exaggerations and distorted findings from the early European researchers, such information still makes rounds not only among foreigners but also among Africans.

## **SPIRITUALITY OF LOVE**

*Kelvin F Banda, OP & Felisberto J Dumbo, SCJ*

The concept of love encompasses many dimensions, such as natural love – love for family and for nature, divine love – love for God; love for friends, etc. This article will not tackle all the details about the spirituality of love. Nevertheless, it will stress that love is not a mere feeling that one person has towards the other. Love is not a mere manifestation of words – love does not expect or seek reward. Love does not

choose colour, beauty or language; love transcends all barriers.

Brummer defines the spirituality of love as ‘not merely a feeling or emotion but also a purposive commitment to adopt a complex pattern of actions and attitudes to the beloved’. According to both Christian and Jewish practice, love of God, love of neighbour, love of self and love of God’s creation and all people are intimately related – because spirituality of love is an art which needs to be learned just as a person needs to learn the art of living. Spirituality of love has the skill to transform the life of a person taking into a new experience of another person or a community of persons and its dynamics. Jeanrond articulates that persons need love to live. In every living person, there is an inner call to a spirituality of love, a vocation to relate to others in love. Humanity longs to love and to be loved.

Spirituality of love should not be confused with manipulative sexual desires. Spirituality of love seeks the good and happiness of the other – Thou –I. Spirituality of love is a connection between persons who wish to be with each other, to know more about the other; to discover each other, to experience their personal potential and limitations, to accept the other even when full understanding is lacking . It is a love that goes beyond the physical (appearance) of a person. Spirituality of love is not a love that can be invoked to punish, to persecute non-believers or heretics and revolutionaries or to exclude such; rather it is a love that brings oneness and harmony among people – either believers or non-believers. As Jeanrond says, spirituality of love is therefore a commandment to work for unity and harmony. Spirituality of love and oneness are linked and related.

Spirituality of love is a way of life. It seeks for a new world order in which persons would live with others in respect, hence respecting God – to discover God’s gifts of creation, part of which is humanity’s reconciliation with each other. The spirituality of love has nothing to do with sexual desires which can lead to lust. It is a spiritual framework that can help persons to reach a higher reasoning. As St Augustine would say, an immutable true love for humanity and for God. The meeting of “loves,” must be an ultimate spirituality in which persons see God (*summum bonum*) as the highest good whom persons desire to love through the otherness.

Spirituality and love are practiced together. This is the unselfish attitude and love towards each other – a connection to a Higher Presence [God], which is within oneself, others, nature or the transcendent. Spirituality of love encompasses comfort of the self, empowerment of the other, growth/transformation and gratitude of persons. The desire for the spirituality of love is only possible when love is ignited in persons by the Holy Spirit. Spirituality of love must infuse all human moral decisions and the search for the good. Ethics and morality need to be fed by the spirituality of love.

Therefore, spirituality of love is different from natural human love, from any feeling of being or falling in love, from a lasting friendship, from any form of romantic

love explored in fiction books or movies; in fact, from any ordinary human endeavour. It is a love that universalises the horizon of love – to love and appreciate everybody as a neighbour. Thus, this article tried briefly to expound the concept of the spirituality of love that encompasses many dimensions. Spirituality of love is not a mere manifestation of words – it is about self-offering that has the competence to transform the life of a person to a new experience of another or a community of persons and its dynamics because it seeks the good and happiness of the other – Thou – I. Spirituality of love goes beyond mere physicality of a person. It is the instrument of unity.

## **WHERE IS THE CHURCH WHEN TRADE UNIONS ARE FIGHTING AGAINST CORRUPT PASTORS?**

*Itumeleng Mafisa OMI*

Things have gotten so bad in modern society that we see worker groups like the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) coming out guns blazing with fury against a protestant pastor who is facing a string of sexual crimes against women. The Eastern Cape pastor made headlines after he was charged for human trafficking and rape. It is our responsibility as the Church to condemn such behavior; we should not be quiet and say the incident did not happen in the Catholic Church when the alleged pastor uses the name of Christ to strike his terror on vulnerable women. Having a strong voice against corrupt clergy shows that the Church is alive and working to keep the body of Christ preserved spotless, for scripture motivates us not to scandalize the Lord's flock.

The story of this pastor also shows us that women in some Christian churches are still being taken advantage of because of a dominantly male leadership in most of these churches. This is what the workers say about pastor Omotoso's case: "COSATU believes that structural violence is too endemic in South Africa to an extent that women and especially young women are unsafe even in places of worship. The federation condemns the abuse of power by some men of the cloth and some others who are in positions of authority. We are shocked at the manner that evidence is being led in the Port Elizabeth High Court," said COSATU in a statement. COSATU said it appreciated the manner in which one of the victims has handled herself under such trying circumstances and thanked her for the example she has set for all survivors to stand up for themselves. This brings me to my next point in the sexual scandal issues. This is not just a clergy problem but it is a power and patriarchy problem through which some men still see women as sexual objects.

One could say that in the Catholic Church, it is a different ball game, with children being targeted by pedophiles, but pedophiles are present in many religious set ups and schools and this leaves us with a problem of how to keep the body of Christ clean from scandal and part of the solution involves speech, condemning the acts and sympathizing with those victims of sexual attacks by clergy. Let us not be afraid of defending women and children even against the most powerful preachers.

# Networking Cedara

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