



ISSN: 0975-833X

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### THE IMAGE OF GOD IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF KENYA

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#### ARTICLE INFO

##### Article History:

Received 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2012  
Received in revised form  
24<sup>th</sup> May, 2012  
Accepted 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2012  
Published online 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2012

##### Key words:

African peoples,  
Almighty GOD,  
African world view.

#### ABSTRACT

The fundamental message of sacred scripture proclaims that the human person is a creature of GOD and sees in his being in the image of GOD the element that characterizes him, in the image of himself (GOD) he created male and female. The likeness with GOD shows that the essence and existence of man are constitutively related to GOD in the most profound manner this is a relationship that exists in itself, it is therefore not something that comes after more do and is not added from the outside. GOD among the Africans is addressed as creator (or maker), an attribute which is very closely related to that of being father. He is invoked as creator of everything and omniscient to whom offerings and prayers are made. Spiritually a picture of man is seen as a child before GOD and the departed and that he has no strength in the presence of the Almighty GOD. Man is at the very centre of existence, and African peoples see everything else in its relation to this central position of man. GOD is the explanation of their origin and sustenance; it is as if GOD exists for the sake of man. The spirits are ontologically in the mode between GOD and man: they describe or explain the destiny of men after physical life. From an African world view, a person is thought of first of all as a constituent of particular community, for it is the community which defines who he is and who he can become. "The individual is conscious of himself in terms of I am because we are, and since we are, therefore, I am". Thus relatedness is so central in an African concept of a person. From an African world view, a person is thought of first of all as a constituent of particular community, for it is the community which defines who he is and who he can become. "The individual is conscious of himself in terms of I am because we are, and since we are, therefore, I am" Thus relatedness is so central in an African concept of a person.

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## INTRODUCTION

### The image of GOD in the development of Kenya

The fundamental message of sacred scripture proclaims that the human person is a creature of GOD (Ps. 139:14-18), and sees in his being in the image of GOD the element that characterizes him, "GOD created man in his own image", in the image of GOD he created him male and female he created them (Gen. 1:27). GOD places the human creature at the centre of summit of created order. Man or Adam in Hebrew language, is formed from the earth (adamah) and GOD blows into his nostrils the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). Therefore, being in the image of GOD the human individuals possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. Thus man's value is found in GOD (Mondin, 1991:28). He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons for a true freedom and development (Kahiga, 2010:177). The likeness with GOD shows that the essence and existence of man are constitutively related to GOD in the most profound manner this is a relationship that exists in itself, it is therefore not something that comes after more do and is not added from the outside. The whole of man's life is a search of a quest for GOD and this explain our very being which has its

basis on relational existence which according to Grenz manifest our openness to the world (Grenz, 2000:131). This longing relationship with GOD can be ignored or even forgotten or dismissed, but it can never be eliminated. The human being is a personal being created by GOD to be in relationship with him. Man finds life and self-expression only in relationship, and tends naturally to GOD. Community is the centre where we live and express ourselves through service. According to Grenz, the goal of community lies at the heart of GOD's actions in history. And GOD's ultimate intention for creation is the establishment of community (Grenz, 2000:115). The relationship between GOD and man is reflected in the relational and to cut dimension of human nature, man, in fact, is not a solitary being but "a Social being, a unless the relater himself to others he neither live nor develop his potential (Second Vatican II council, *Gaudium et spes*, 12: AAS 58 (1966), 1034. In one's neighbor, whether man or woman, there is a reflection of GOD himself, the definitive goal and fulfillment of every person. Man and woman have the same dignity and are of equal value not only because they are both in their differences, created in the image of GOD, but even more profoundly because the dynamic of reciprocity that gives life to the "we" in the human couple, is an image of GOD (Code of Canon Law, 371). Man and woman are in relationship with others above all as there to whom the lives of others have been entrusted. (Gen 9:5).

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You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Lev 19:18), by which Jesus enjoins the obligation to tend to the needs of one's neighbor (Mt 22:37-40 Mk 12:29-31, Lk 10:27-28). With this specific location to life, man and woman find themselves also in the presence of all other creatures. They can and are obliged to put them at their own service or to enjoy them, but their dominion over the world requires the exercise of responsibility, it is not a freedom of arbitrary or selfish exploitation. All creation in fact has value or is good (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18) in the sight of GOD, who is its author. Man must discover a respect to value.

### **AFRICAN UNDERSTANDING OF MAN IN RELATION TO GOD**

GOD is addressed as creator (or maker), an attribute which is very closely related to that of being father. He is invoked as creator of everything and omniscient to who offerings and prayers are made (Mbiti, 1975:4). Spiritually a picture of man is seen as a child before GOD and the departed and that he has no strength in the presence of the Almighty GOD (Ibid.: 13). And individual with advanced of his or her economic or social security by membership in the family, clan or community. Africans upheld communal unity and co-operation just as GOD and divinities sustained all social institutions.

Africans viewed life, man's way of reaching his destiny and an individual contribution to the welfare of the community also from a religions view point. All aspects of life were looked at from a sacred view point. The creator of the world was anxious to see that everything in it was good. In many cases he was seen as having delegated his authority to the spirit or deities, the human spirits and the living dead (Mugabi and Kirima, 1976: 61). According to African peoples GOD is real. He is spirit and being like wind or air is everywhere, is here and now (Gehman, 1989: 315). African people delivered their services to humanity with such awareness and firm conviction. Mbiti has correctly pointed out that Africans are notoriously religious, and each people have its own religious systems with a set of beliefs and practices. Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it (Mbiti, 1971:1). Man is at the very centre of existence, and African peoples see everything else in its relation to this central position of man. GOD is the explanation of their origin and sustenance; it is as if GOD exists for the sake of man. The spirits are ontologically in the mode between GOD and man: they describe or explain the destiny of men after physical life. (Ibid. 92).

In relation to other things then majority of African peoples place the creation of man towards or at the end of GOD's original work of creation. Man also comes in to the picture as husband and wife, male and female. It is generally acknowledged that GOD is the originator of man, even if the exact methods of creating man may differ according to the myths of different people. (Ibid. 39). In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to other people, including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole. The community cannot therefore make, create or produce the individuals, for the individuals depend on the corporate group. (Ibid. 108). Just as GOD made the first man,

as GOD's man, so now man himself makes the individual who becomes the corporate or the social man. It is a deeply religious transaction. Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privilege and responsibilities towards himself or towards other people. (Ibid.) Prayer composed by a Ghanaian Christian asks for unity within and between the churches. The author sees unity as essentially an African characteristic and division as having been imported from Europe (Shorter, 1975: 127-128).

### **AFRICAN CONCEPT OF A PERSON**

From an African world view, a person is thought of first of all as a constituent of particular community, for it is the community which defines who he is and who he can become. "The individual is conscious of himself in terms of I am because we are, and since we are, therefore, I am" (Mbiti, 1971: 108-109). Thus relatedness is so central in an African concept of a person. Freedom of individuality are always balanced by destiny and community, and this in turn are balanced by natural and supernatural powers, every person is a nexus of interacting elements of the self or of the world which shape and are shaped by his behaviour. Such has been pointed by Ray in his book on African religions (Ray, 1976:132). According to Bujo every human person, every individual, in an African perspective, is as it were one link in a chain of vital forces. A living link both exercising and receiving influence, a link that establishes the bond with previous generations and with the forces that support his own existence. The individual is necessarily the individual adhering to the clan (Bujo, 2003: 113).

From an African point of view a person is described as a process of coming into existence in the reciprocal relatedness of individual and community where the latter includes not only the deceased but also GOD. This means that the individual becomes a person only through active participation in the life of the community (Ibid.: 114). Thus, active participation in the development of the community is intrinsic element humanity. The very image of GOD being expressed in the life of individual. It is not membership in a community as such that constituent the identity: only common action makes the human person a human and keeps in from becoming an unfettered ego (Ibid. 115). One who despises his fellow human being and behaves without consideration for interpersonal relationship and solidarity with the community strips himself of his humanity. Thus, solitariness, unproductive attitude or laziness to promote and work together with others is actually negating our human nature; the image of GOD in which we are created. The wicked or enormous conduct of one single member infringes the personal dignity of all them. Solidarity maker itself known in good things and in bad, but with different consequences: solidarity in good things is required if one is to become a person, where as solidarity in bad things is harmful. Solidarity strengthens the whole community. (Bujo: 115). The underlying ethical concept concerns the existential dynamism that operates only in reciprocity, that is, through the exchange of vital force. According to this model of interaction, there is a continuous flow of life between the entire community members, including the deceased. Indeed even GOD and his entire cosmos are drawn into this flow of life. The life which issues from GOD becomes a task for all

human beings to accomplish: they must ensure that this initial gift of life reaches full maturity, and this is possible only when people act in solidarity. Each one who commits himself to act in solidarity for the contraction of the community allows himself to be brought to completion by this same community, so that he can truly become a person. Thus no one can realize himself as a person all by himself; one becomes a person only in relationship to others. (Bujo 2003: 116).

The person is not defined as an ontological act by means of self-realization, but by means of "relations". This means that the human person in Africa is from very beginning in a network of relationship that constitutes his unalienable dignity. (Bujo, B., 2003: 117). Life in community demands alertness and the maintenance of one's own individuality. The individual has an unalienable dignity and may not be discarded as something worthless even the handicapped individuals has a unique position in the community and become person thanks to some human beings, just as these become persons, thanks to other human beings, just as these becomes persons thanks to one who is handicapped (Ibid., 119). The proverbs and adages that concern the work ethic normally underline the word for the individual to have trust in him before turning to the community or group. (Ibid. 120). One cannot expect everything from the community, for each has his own work to do (Ibid. 121). For black African, it is not the Cartesian *Cogito ergo sum* ("I think, therefore I am") but an existential *cognatus sum, ergo sumus* ("I am related, therefore we are") that is decisive (Ibid. 22).

### **Ways through which the christians manifest the image of GOD in the development of Kenya**

#### **Education**

The image of GOD, the goals of Christian education, is expressed in terms of the values which they wish to see enshrined in the National systems of education. Among these values are the understanding of the world which has been created by GOD, the development of true relations with other persons and the means of communicating with them, the development of talents GOD give to each of us so that we may earn our daily bread and be of service to other and the capacity to make responsible decisions. Christian Missionaries pioneered formal education in Kenya. Such has enhanced and manifested GOD's image of relatedness among the communities. The Christian missionaries, Kenyan converts have continued to make outstanding contributions to primary, secondary, college and university education (Mbiti, 1971: 233). Christians needed and still needs learning institutions to ensure that spiritual development takes place and that the communal spirit and solidarity is developed. They are therefore involved in staff appointments. Their religious leaders normally visit these institutions on a regular basis to ensure that religious instruction is provided. Learning institutions needs spiritual pastoral care programmes, church services, catechism, spiritual guidance and counseling. Chaplains are the church representatives who are normally in charge of services and thus promote togetherness and collaboration of one people of the same dignity and origin. Christians are also involved in curriculum development or syllabus formation used in the learning institutions. The responsibility of the Church is the establishment of Christian

schools to work within the national systems and to foster co-operation among churches and with governments (Mulwa, 2010:250). They also promote, develop and communicate the rich and varied cultures of the nation. It is through such participation that the communities and individual discover the value of each other and their indispensable contribution to the progress of the whole community.

#### **HEALTH SERVICES**

Christians and Muslims have and still contribute in the medical field. They train and supply doctors and nurses to work especially in the hospitals and dispensaries they are running. Its members and all the community members need health care services. Health services normally provide training, seminars and workshops to the community members (Mulwa, 2010: 69). Such health services should be made readily available to the all the members of the community. Through the spirit of promoting and developing the whole humanity's health GOD's image of care and love is manifested.

#### **COMMUNICATION**

The image of GOD is seen in the field of communication where Christian communities have contributed in the publication of books, magazines and journals on various teachings and other profitable information on their faith and even outside their faith. Presently they are giving important educational programmes through the radio and television (Mulwa, 2010:225). With the introduction of internet and mobile phones Christians are using them to communicate their holy scriptures and propagate their faith. At the moment they have their holy scriptures and other doctrinal teachings in the net and are now even able to text daily scriptural readings to their faithful for easy access. It is this way that the community feel united and value the need of working together for the realization of a common goal and destiny.

#### **SOCIAL WELFARE**

On the ground of their religious charitable character both Muslims and Christians do engage in helping the needy in various communities. In many areas they work together in the attempt to promote charitable work. They always work to make known and promote human dignity on the ground that all human beings belong to the community having been created in the same image of GOD. Christians have established institutions that take care of the various needy members of the community, for example, orphanages, home for the aged, special schools for the blind, deaf, and dumb and the HIV/Aids victims. A group of them have established rehabilitation and conference centers for their members.

#### **MORALITY AND ETHICS**

Christians have tried to reinforce good moral and ethical life to their faithful. However, in this area it seems they have been overcome by the secular world. These religions should have been and should be a head in the modern technology. More qualified personnel in the sensitive areas that can endanger and jeopardize faithful moral and ethical living should be trained in these religions. Such personnel should be able to

block non creative information especially in the internet or at least negotiate on some principles with the mega companies concerned. It is true that everybody is free to communicate and sell whatever they produce but the religious community should advocate for that which bring positive growth to the humanity as it is applicable objectively to all. Men and women under normal circumstances desire not to ruin or endanger other fellow human beings. Created in the same image they are always drawn and long to be together and to work together.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Christians becomes involved in environmental issues because it is a social institution, concern for the welfare of its members, who are affected by environmental degradation. Their members are in the society and they are part of the society. Thus, they ought not to be ignored or be left out when it comes to environmental management since Christianity is part of human family. This institution has penetrated right to the grassroots and it cares for people at the most local levels. Thus the Church as a social institution and its adherents in their individual capacity as members of the society, have a social and moral responsibility to be involved in the environmental management. The Christian Church should speak out strongly and boldly against acts and policies that aggravate environmental degradation. It should also respond to environmental degradation by commissioning research to investigate the factors that contribute to environmental pollution and degradation and to applying the results to particular situations (Ludov & Emily Choge, 2009:65). Poverty is one excuse that is often used to justify the destruction of the environment, for example, a person will cut a tree so as to prepare charcoal to sell in order to buy a few essential commodities for immediate consumption. In the long term the cutting down of that tree will create more and lasting poverty in the sense that rainfall will be reduced and desertification may result, with disastrous consequences for the individual's family and for future generations (Nasimiyu & Kirima, 1976: 48).

It would be more useful to find other ways of earning a living, rather than cutting trees to make charcoal for sale. Reforestation can be effected with proper education, planning and encouragement. Such measures will have many long term benefits, including the control of soil erosion, improvement of water catchment, increase crop yields and availability of firewood and improved environment. First and foremost, the individual ought to or be guided to establish a liking and a pride for self. This way each person will try to work towards self-fulfilment which in itself would mean more progress and better results for the community and even wider society. Individuals will ensure that they avoid whatever might lead to poor health or any other personal disadvantages. One way this can be done is through consuming only healthy and balanced foods and drinks. (Nasimiyu & Waruta, 1993: 48).

## CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

Administration is an important sector in the religious organisation. In some groups administration is already decentralized and this should be the right direction for all other groups as it enables the socio-religious services to be

near to the members. However, more is needed to be done in the church administration in order to meet the current challenges being faced by the whole society. The religious groups should have very qualified personnel in all areas such as medical, administrative, legal sector, communication and media sector among others. This should improve the efficiency of their service deliverance and thus improve the evangelical mission which should be centrally geared to the manifestation of GOD's image in the world. In line with the above, the ecumenical spirit among Christians and even Muslims is moving towards a promising future. The formation of National Christian Council of Kenya has assisted in addressing factors affecting Christian faith. Ufungamano initiative which brought Christian from different groups together to address issues on the last constitutional review was encouraging and more such specialized group should be formed to address and represent the religious faith in various secular forums both locally and internationally (Repared, 2009:83).

## CONCLUSION

Christians have contributed positively to the development of Kenya especially in the sector of education, social welfare, health services and communication. However, there is a lot that need to be done in all areas in line with the new technologies and challenges. Christians need to put more effort in training personnel and such would enable them to be kept updated and to move with the world. Thus their message of salvation can be continually interpreted to make sense to the present period of high technological advancement. Christian religion should positively contribute or share their minds on critical issues like cloning, GMO products and unproductive internet and media services. Christian religion should also have legal department/body that are recognized locally and internationally and through which they can present their legal stand on various issues.

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