



CHAPTER ONE

African Identity, Personhood and Missional Innovation

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Abstract

This chapter highlights African identity and personhood as they inform an African approach to missional development praxis. This involves a dialogical model of missional development that responds to the historically dominant Western mode of mission as entailing domination, rationalism and secularism. This approach is not unidirectional and domineering but rather embodies African dialogical and conversational values. It emphasises the use of local initiatives, resources and participation as its greatest assets. It is rooted in the spiritual aspect of personhood, which is affirmed as part of the identity of persons, and which, consequently, is invaluable for the development of persons and the community. Unlike in the West, the African worldview does not dichotomise the spiritual and material or the body and soul. Instead of imposing itself in different contexts, this model utilises the African worldview to incorporate difference in order to foster mutual enrichment and holistic development.

Introduction

Recent trends in missiology and mission activities indicate that Africa has seen the fastest growth rates in the number of people who ascribe to one or other form of religion. Statistics indicate that Christianity is growing rapidly while, at the same time, secularism is increasing in Europe.

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Europe was once viewed as the home of Christianity, and most of its population were Christian in one form or another, yet this is arguably no longer the case. An investigation into mission studies and identity in regions where Christianity is experiencing growth can contribute new and innovative insights to mission and to critically engaging with mission studies.

This chapter seeks to contribute to innovation in mission studies and, in particular, missionary models and paradigms.

The distinctiveness of European and African identities is well demonstrated in the perceptions of prominent and influential historical figures. In the 18th century, Linnaeus attested that God had placed all humans in a hierarchy that favoured those from the northern hemisphere, with Americans and Europeans at the top of the ladder. Americans are described as “tenacious, contented, free and ruled by custom”, Europeans are “lively, inventive and ruled by rites ... Asiaticus are stern, haughty, stingy and ruled by opinion ... Africanus are cunning, slow, negligent and ruled by caprice” (Anthony 2019:4).

It is no surprise then that Europe was generally referred to as civilised and Africa as uncivilised. Europe was regarded as innovative, inventive, and as the cradle of humanity, while Africa was a place riddled with savagery, superstition and backwardness. These perceptions spilled over into the spheres of politics, economics, science and technology, and, in particular, religion. Religion, and more specifically, Christianity, has a close connection with identities in Europe and Africa.

The spread of Christianity has deep historical roots along Europe’s colonial and imperial routes to Africa. Encounters between Europeans and Africans have not always been mutually beneficial, and the consequences of colony and empire have meant long-term damage to the culture, language, habits, livelihoods, and religious practices and beliefs of Africans.

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The question under investigation concerns the resurgence of African identity and African approaches to mission and mission studies. The notions of 'personhood as African anthropology' and 'personhood as a theological concept' are correlated, first, to bring into focus the growing awareness of people's identity as Africans, and second, to develop a model of mission that sets aside antagonistic European missiological approaches to Africa in favour of a dialogical approach that confronts recent humanitarian problems. Such an approach takes as its starting point the African context and dominant African notions of identity. A dialogical approach moves beyond the limited and narrow view of identity that has been dominated by a single and universally applied norm. Reason as a universal norm for what it means to be human neglects the diversity, contextuality, creativity and fluidity of identity.

Mission studies and activities must take seriously the evolving nature of humans and how this becoming transforms the manner in which people interact. The environment, socio-political structures and factors, the notion of the Other, spaces of movement and the diversification of religious rites and rituals have an impact on mission approaches to various peoples who have dissimilar confession and belief systems.

European Mission and African Identity

The late David Bosch, in his comprehensive book on the theology of mission, *Transforming mission: Paradigm shifts in theology of mission* – which has become a classic resource within African and South African mission studies – lists seven challenges to the church as regards mission. These seven challenges are as follows: (i) The West has lost its millennium-long domination of Christianity and there are efforts by certain societies to untangle themselves from the West's approach to Christianity; (ii) unjust structures, unfair policies and oppressive laws that perpetuate suffering, such as racism, sexism, domination, exclusion and isolation, are being challenged as never before in human history; (iii) the West's

notions of progress and development are being questioned in light of the results of Enlightenment era of universalism, positivism, rationalism, individualism and secularism; (iv) the Western worldview is regarded with scepticism in light of the depletion of the natural resources and environmental exploitation; (v) advances in science and technology contribute to the threat of human extinction. Nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, and the machinery of mass destruction result in constant mistrust and suspicion among nations; (vi) European theology is being challenged as a dominant force because of its ignorance of other cultures of the world; and finally, (vii) the religious landscape has shifted from Christianity being the dominant religion to one of religious diversity (1991:188–189).

The shift from Europe to Africa is the result of the complexity and contestation of ideas of normativity, essentialism, and universalism. The list of challenges identified by Bosch is by no means exhaustive but constitutes a clear indication of the overwhelming significance of contextual problems and situations for mission. It is for this reason that African worldviews, African identity, and African missiological approaches need to be liberated from Western theologies and dependent missionary activities. Mission is not limited to a Western worldview and to the Western theologies that have been applied to African personhood and African Christianity.

African mission does not reject Western theologies and Western mission as irrelevant. Western theologies and Western mission have been instrumental in formulations of core faith and belief creeds, statements, and practices. Western mission practices have played a prominent role in the spread of Christianity around the globe and remain fundamental to interpreting faith and religion in order to achieve holistic mission activities and transformations.

In a symbolic description of the importance of the Western approach to theology, Bosch recognises the value of the past for any present comprehensive mission response to current problems and challenges: “We reflect on the past not just for the past’s own sake; rather, we look upon it as a

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compass – and who would use a compass only to ascertain from where he or she has come?” (1991:189)

The dominance of Western approaches to mission and the consequences of colonialism and imperialism are not regarded as products of ‘memory loss’; rather, they are remembered precisely as attempts to confront the challenges of the time. An African approach to mission and mission studies challenges these Western approaches through a correlation of African notions of identity and African mission.

A dialogical approach to mission is self-critical. Self-criticism paves the way for interaction and genuine critique. African anthropology is not monolithic, but dynamic, creative, diverse and fluid. The many cultures, languages, rituals, rites, symbols, habits and lifestyles within South Africa alone are characteristic of the many notions of, and diverse perspectives on, what it means to be human within the African worldview. In the same way, the African worldview is not inferior to European worldviews; the African worldview co-exists with other worldviews, and African anthropology is unique and comparable to European anthropology.

European mission to Africa has by and large taken the form of there being giver and receiver, developed and underdeveloped, civilised and uncivilised, Christian and heathen. Following the two world wars, development in the form of technological progress and modernisation was the only way towards restoration, growth, and advancement. Bosch (1991:433) rightly propounds that

in missionary circles it was recognized that neither the traditional charity model nor the model of ‘comprehensive approach’ (which was initiated in the 1920s and concentrated, in particular, on education, health ministries, and agricultural training) was adequate. A more fundamental strategy was needed. The concept which gave expression to the contemporary challenge was development Hurriedly, Western churches and mission agencies got onto the bandwagon as well.

Development has a historical link to Christianity and to economic and political policies. The term development has been strongly associated with the European crisis of the early and mid-20th century. Development was a means of escaping the devastation caused by wars and economic and social depressions and took on the cloak of modernisation. One of the major flaws of the modernisation project was the secularisation of society. Development was in a barbed-wire position, that is, it was static or one-way. Through modernisation, some countries were able to increase economic activity, build a human-rights framework that would curb the transgression of human rights and expand democratic rule that would give populations self-determination and protect religious freedom. Modernisation, however, also runs counter to tradition, hierarchical religious orders, non-material means, and ultimately, religious practices and beliefs. This shift led to secularisation and a decline of religious practices, rituals, religious authority, and membership.

Despite the obvious signs that the use of development by European governments and social relief agencies in relation to the developing world was riddled with inconsistencies, the European missions were strangled by the development model of the West. A brief historical overview of the ecumenical movement and the development debate illustrates the barbed-wire or static effect on the church.

Sakupapa considers the ecumenical movement and the development debate in terms of five significant circumstances. First, in 1966, the ecumenical gathering was still plagued by the devastation of the two world wars and the subsequent modern project towards progress. Various conceptualisations led to different perspectives on the church's mission. Development as a project-oriented activity involving charity and systemic political and social transformation dominated the debates (2018:3-4). Klaasen (2015:327) asserts that the reason for these foci was the financial crisis prior to the conference and the widening gap between the rich (mainly Western) countries and poor (mainly developing) countries.

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A more significant reason is that, for the first time, the Third World had a large contingent present.

Second, in 1968, the Uppsala assembly continued to emphasise development as entailing changes in international economic policies and structures. The trajectories of the debate about mission were a continuation of the resolutions of the 1966 Geneva conference, with the rich and, by implication, the West, providing economic aid to the poor developing countries (Klaasen 2015:327). Bosch raises a critical (and what may have been an obvious) point: The whole development debate has been critiqued and challenged (1991:234). Changes in the development debate would only be taken seriously following Uppsala 1968 (Sakupapa 2018:5).

Dickinson (1991:270–271) lists seven limitations of economic development as the best possible mission activity by the church, namely:

1. Economic development is too narrow and neglects the social, cultural and religious aspects of social transformation,
2. The absence of actual development of the poor rather than abstract economic policies and principles,
3. The lack of evidence of the development of poor nations; rather, the gap between the poor and rich nations was widening,
4. Gross national product has proven to be a justification for middle- and upper-class economic progress and does not indicate the extent of the poverty that large parts of nations are experiencing, despite growth within the developing nations. Modernisation theory has caused more losses for the poor nations: “Some of the serious consequences of the modernization theory include dependency, loss of fundamental societal structures, loss of creativity and imagination, depleting of both renewable and non-renewable natural resources and dehumanising through the false dichotomy of the private and public person,”

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5. Many theologians viewed the new emphasis on development as a justification for the maintenance of the status quo,
6. Production has caused antagonistic relations between humans and nature, amongst humans, and between living and non-living beings. This raised serious questions about the identity of persons and what it means to be human, and
7. Finally, the kind of development that the two assemblies adopted did not filter development down to the poor; rather, resources and agency remained in the spotlight.

Third, in 1969 in Cartigny, the Committee on Society, Development and Peace, a joint venture between the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Pontifical Commission of Justice and Peace, pointed out the limitations of the previous notions of development which had been employed at the earlier ecumenical gatherings. Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Roman Catholic priest, successfully argued for the replacement of development by liberation (Sakupapa 2018; Klaasen 2015:330). This was a significant shift from the church's dominant Western approach to mission to a Third World perspective. Instead of the narrow focus on economics and technology, people-centredness, the agency of the poor and contextuality became the hermeneutical lens for ideas about growth.

According to Bosch, the liberation-rather-than-development approach was taking root in ecclesiastical conceptions. Development and underdevelopment were not the context in which theology and mission operated, but rather reflected the widening gap between the rich and poor, capitalism and socialism, domination and dependence, oppressors and oppressed. The solution for poor nations was not the export of technologies but the uprooting of the core causes of injustice which the West was reluctant to address. There is a clear shift to human capital, human dignity, and self-determination. "Development implied evolutionary continuity with the past, liberation implied a lean break, a new beginning" (1991:434–435).

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The fourth and fifth gatherings, in Montreux in 1970 and Nairobi in 1975, respectively, were characterised by a new notion of development. Nations outside the West significantly influenced the notions of development under discussion at the Montreux gathering. The Indian economist, Samuel Parmar, was influential in establishing a shift towards three-pronged development that comprised economic growth, self-reliance, and social justice. There was a complete shift from a certain type of economics as the end to be achieved, in terms of which humans were a means of production, to a focus on the human person, and in particular, the poor. This transformation was coupled with a shift in ideas about the means of achieving development. Responsibility for development was seen to lie with the poor and marginalised, as agents of their own growth and freedom, and not be a matter of dependence on the West and the rich. Structures that are characterised by domination, marginalisation, and oppression were condemned as non-developmental. Parmar, who served as the assistant director of the Ecumenical Institute of the WCC, summarised this new shift, stating that

development is a means to human welfare; it is not an end in itself. Man (and woman) is more important than social processes. But if efforts for development are to bear fruit these processes must be allowed shape the values and structures of society Eradication of poverty and economic stagnation necessitates structural changes (1967:353).

It is quite fitting, and is no surprise, that Nairobi 1975 became the new face of development. This assembly used the approach developed by Churches' Participation in Development (CCPD), that of 'action-reflection', to replace the principle of economic growth with that of social justice. The economically deprived, the poor and impoverished, replaced unjust economic systems as the means for development. Sakupapa (2018:4) notes the shift in emphasis to the centrality of the poor:

The CCPD developed an action-reflection programme that focused on the theme: 'The Church and the Poor' following

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resolutions of the WCC Nairobi Assembly (1975). This study programme led to a trilogy published between 1977 and 1979. The CCPD developed the theological concept of the 'church of the poor' out of this study. In a joint statement issued by the CCPD and the WCC Commission on Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service (CICARWS) in 1974, the identification of the Church with the poor is almost raised to the rank of an additional *nota ecclesiae* (see CCPD/CICARWS 1975).

Participation replaced the emphasis on economics with ethical and political factors. It is not only economic policies, modern structures or production that bear on development but also moral and ethical considerations of the manner in which production occurs and who benefits from it. It also concerns power relations between nations and how such power is used to benefit the world's poor and vulnerable populations.

The shift from economic and technological advancement is also reflected in the re-emergence of diakonia. Diakonia became the focus of social responsibility within the ecumenical movement in the 1980s and reached new heights at the 2013 Busan gathering in South Korea. Sakupapa (2018:5) claims that,

between the mid-1980s [and] the early 1990s, the WCC linked diakonia intimately with koinonia ... More recently, an understanding of diakonia as an integral dimension of the ecumenical movement [has developed] ... Such a perspective sees diakonia as part of the nature and mission of the church within the framework of the pilgrimage of justice and peace.

In a concise but insightful overview of diakonia within the ecumenical movement, Nordstokke affirms the continuity of development and diakonia. Since the inception of the WCC, diakonia has been part of the mission of the church, with two paradigms being prevalent. The one has had to do with charity work, mainly in Africa and Asia, and the other with political and social structures. South Africa has been a recipient of both

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forms of diakonia work. The Programme to Combat Racism, which was a result of the 1968 Uppsala Assembly, was the most notable political strand of diakonia (2014:58).

This brief sketch of diakonia does not negate the contested nature of development (Conradie, 2016) within the context of mission and mission studies. The concept of development has been criticised for its limited scope, and, in light of secularisation, diakonia has not been spared similar critical views. This chapter takes cognisance of the limitations of these concepts; however, the terms are used here as mutually enriching and relevant to the mission of the church in relation to the political, spiritual, and social deprivation of the poor nations of the world.

As Nordstokke (2009:76) notes, the “relation between diakonia and development is an important topic to which much attention is given. One important question is how development is understood and, consequently, what role faith-based approaches can have in working for development”. These two questions encapsulate the contribution that this chapter intends to make to broader knowledge of mission. It is not my intention to provide reasons for the superiority of, or preference for, one term over the other. Instead, the intention is to contribute to the innovative ways in which the church and her mission have enhanced the growth of poorer nations such as South Africa. “Diakonia as development work” is a helpful phrase for summarising the mission of the church: as one of diakonia with an emphasis on social responsibility. Using the two concepts in this manner also clearly differentiates the development work of the church from that of secular initiatives. “Diakonia as development work” comprises the following elements:

- It is connected to churches, both at the grassroots level and at national and international levels,
- It is based on the Christian faith and worldview,
- It strengthens faith, understanding and meaning,
- It relates religion to value systems, and

- It is biased towards identity that is entangled with agency (Nordstokke 2009:79–81).

Identity and the Missionary Model

Christian identity has been widely accepted for centuries as the formulation and interpretation of the doctrine of the imago Dei (Horan 2019:11). In what follows, this doctrine is juxtaposed with African notions of personhood in order to assess an African perspective of development.

The late John de Gruchy provided a minor yet profound addition to the widely accepted doctrine of the imago Dei. De Gruchy (2003:24) asserts that

it is important to recognise that in both creation accounts from which the affirmation of identity is traditionally drawn, the truth of being made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) or being filled with God's own breath is immediately coupled with the theme of vocation, the calling to be responsible actors in the world newly created by God (Genesis 1:28; 2:15).

A contextual reading of ancient Near Eastern society as against a critical interpretation of the account of creation in Genesis unravels the idea of the domination and uniqueness of humanity. Middleton's account of the Genesis creation narrative includes a broad notion of image. One of the meanings of Hebrew word *tselem*, for image, is idol, and there the body is a substantial part of the image. A second observation by Middleton is more significant. The word 'likeness' or *demut*, as used in Genesis 5:3, refers to the comparison of two objects. Middleton then concludes that hierarchy and division according to status and class in ancient Near Eastern society was legitimised by the use of the imago Dei (1994:20).

Genesis 1, and the imago Dei in particular, is a call against such oppression and division and for the legitimization of the rule of God, which all humanity shares by virtue of

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having been created in the image of God. It is a reaction against the separation of human individuals from one another and involves a return to the creation in God's image in terms of a reciprocal, interdependent relationship that is legitimated not by oppression and domination but by empowering and liberating one another (Klaasen 2021:194).

This theological approach to identity challenges the classical formulation of the doctrine of humanity. Whereas the traditional use of the doctrine of the *imago Dei*, as taken from the timeline of creation, gives an absolute, unique position to humans, De Gruchy adds the 'doing' or stewardship by humans to the being or substance. Middleton challenges the unique role of humans, that of domination and separation. He claims that the *imago Dei* works precisely to break down the domination and separation of humans from other creatures. These critiques not only raise questions about the centuries-old interpretation of the doctrine of the *imago Dei* but also incorporate action and doing into Christian anthropology.

Desmond Tutu's perspective of personhood, which is rooted in the African philosophy of ubuntu, finds synergy with the views of both De Gruchy and Middleton. For Tutu, what it means to be a person is entangled with one's spirituality and active agency. Tutu does not adhere to the ideas of the radical community of renowned African scholars such as John Mbiti. Within the latter's notion of community, the individual is merely a means to community. Radical community results in dependency and in a loss of the ethic of responsibility. For Tutu, persons are interdependent within the community, and that results in their responsibility towards one another for their mutual growth and enrichment. Tutu (2004:28-29) claims:

We are stewards of all of this The dominion we were given in Genesis 1:26 was so that we should rule as God's viceroys, doing it as God would – caring, gently, not harshly and exploitatively, with a deep reverence, for all is ultimately holy ground and we should figuratively take off

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our shoes for it all has the potential to be 'theophanic' – to reveal the divine.

African identity is not monolithic. Personhood, being a person, is a common reference for what it means to be human in the African context. Different and diverse notions of personhood are used across the African theological and geographical spectrum. In another study (Klaasen 2017), I outlined three different conceptualisations of African personhood. One of these, presented by Ifeanyi Menkiti, is closely related to the radical communitarian view of John Mbiti. According to this view, a person is inextricably bound by community and exists for the sake of the community. Kwame Gyekye opts for a moderate community that recognises that individuals have inherent qualities, such as reason, which allow them to shift through developmental stages. Tutu advocates a notion of personhood that is rooted in spirituality and that connects individuals to one another in an interdependent manner (Klaasen 2017:38).

Despite the diverse notions of personhood within the African worldview and in African scholarship, there are common threads that run throughout. First, the community plays a major role in the identity of persons. The community forms a part of who the person describes themselves to be in terms of their identity. Unlike the autonomous individuality that is present in the Western notion of identity, within African personhood the individual is not absolutely autonomous – one's growth is influenced by one's past and traditions. This relationality is further extended to the world around the person, whether this be the spiritual or the material world. In other words, all reality is relational. Second, identity is made up of our biology, our spirituality, and our ethics. Who we are is not restricted to one norm, whether this be reason, the body or our abilities. African identity is about both the being, the material that includes the body, tradition and family, and the doing, which, in theological terms, is described as calling or vocation. Calling or vocation refers to the tasks or purpose that a person sets out to perform or achieve. This implies that one

is never a passive bystander but is always intended to be active in the growth and wholeness of oneself and others. Third, and closely related to the above, the individual has a responsibility to grow, and this responsibility is aligned with the mission of God. Responsibility negates the dependency on modernisation theory and liberal theories that foster development. Fourth, identity, within the African worldview includes the spiritual aspect of the person. African identity does not dichotomise the body and soul; in terms of identity, soul and body constitute one entity.

An African Dialogical Model of Missional Development

The model of mission being developed here attempts to be innovative, contextually aware, authentic and inclusive. It is an African dialogical model of missional development operating from the perspective of African personhood, and it is in dialogue with other innovations to undertake development work as mission. A model is a certain process or activity with identifiable aspects that govern the structure of an entity. The specificities of an African model relate to African characteristics such as the interwovenness of being and doing, the creative tension of body and soul, the link between responsibility and the ability to respond, the connectedness of spirituality and matter, and the situatedness of the individual within the community. It is the constant interaction between these entities, perceived to be autonomous within the Western framework, that makes African perspectives of mission contextual, interactionist, creative, eschatological, and vocational.

‘Dialogical’ refers to the two-way interaction between different parts of the same unit. It is based on dialogue that assumes two or more partners. It is not a one-way communication of instructions and directions but rather involves two-way conversations with mutual and common goals. The dialogue originates within and takes place between two parts of the same unit. This kind of dialogue is referred

to as 'intra-dialogue'. Activity between the individual and community is one form of such dialogue. In the same way, it also occurs with external partners, and this can be referred to as 'inter-dialogue'. The dialogue between an African mission perspective and a Western perspective is an example of inter-dialogue.

The way development is used in this model is also very specific. Conradie states that the concept of 'development' has its roots in the French *développement*, which refers to the unfolding of property in order for potential growth, extension, multiplication and increase to emerge. Despite the complexity that the concept entails, the use of a prefix such as human, psychological, business, rural, urban, spiritual, economic, social, and community has led to this being a multidisciplinary phenomenon (2016:1).

Missional development assumes a continuity of consultations on ecumenical mission and evangelism, such as those discussed above. The use of development in this suggested model positions it within the mission of the church and the mission of God. This firmly places the scope of development beyond economic or human development. Missional development assumes that part of the creation of humanity conforms to the use of God's creation for prophetic challenges that take the form of justice, liberation, salvation and freedom. This kind of development, which is holistic, includes both matter and soul, visible and invisible, persons and non-persons.

Markers of an African Dialogical Model of Missional Development

Many Western development agencies and educational institutions employ development models that seek to use the assets of the poorer nations for sustainable development. Assets-based action and 'Use your Talents' are two models that are growing within the developing world. Notwithstanding the positive results that these kinds of development and diakonia have shown, the human capital, material resources and

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initiatives largely originate in the West and have a Western agenda. An African model uses the resources, human power, contextual circumstances, lived experiences and local needs and skills of African peoples as points of departure. The social assessment of the model is determined by the local people, and local structures and procedures determine the direction of the vision and the mission.

In this scenario, responsibility lies with local people to use their agency to enable the growth of individuals. Responsibility is both about exercising agency and creating a space for the tasks to be accomplished. The space for development is coupled with the fulfilling of the calling of the persons involved. In this sense, responsibility is a communal effort, and different persons and structures play diverse roles in the process of growth. Myers (1999:76) contends that

when the poor accept their marred identity and their distorted sense of vocation as normative and immutable, their poverty is complete. It is also permanent unless this issue is addressed and they are helped to recover their identity as children of God, made in God's image, and their true vocation as productive stewards in the world God made for them.

Within this space of responsibility, "development is not about the professional against the unskilled, but everyone is viewed on the basis of her capacity", whether this refers to technical skills, human capital, soft skills, practical skills or informal knowledge (Klaasen, 2017:41); when these capabilities are placed within the divine order of creation, they are all holy and equal.

African identity is not static, with one norm; it is dynamic and recognisable by the rituals that mark the stages of a person's life. In the same way that the orthodox theological understanding of "to be created in the likeness" of God means to move towards greater personhood, African identity is constituted by the various stages of a person's life. These

stages are initiated by rituals and symbols which represent growth, maturity, change, responsibility, and dignity.

Such rituals and symbols are tools that open the passage into the community and the powers and structures that govern the organising of the community as a properly functioning unit. These cultural and social practices need to be respected as potential tools and capital to transform impoverished contexts into viable and creative possibilities for development. Ngong claims that the spread of Christianity in Africa is not a result of a non-scientific approach to certain contemporary and material issues; rather, it is a matter of the role that religion plays in forming the wholeness of the person. It is this that makes religion meaningful and relevant in the post-globalisation and postmodern age. The kind of Christianity that accompanied colonisers is expressed, experienced, and expounded through the lens of local rituals, habits, symbols, structures, and practices (Ngong, 2017:25).

African identity does not place spirit and matter or science in a hierarchical order for healing to occur. When the contributions of a scientific worldview are rejected merely on the basis of the scientific evidence and not on the basis of their falsehood, then what transpires is merely a power struggle between one dominant worldview and another. Replacing a Western scientific worldview with an African spiritualised one is as harmful as oppressive Western imperialist, colonising Christianity. Ngong (2017:31) rightly affirms that

to simply draw attention to the fact of the expansion of Christianity in Africa without equally stressing the helpful role that faith plays in societal and individual lives – as those who simply baptize the African supernaturalistic worldview tend to do – does not seem to be in line with the African view of religion as critical to the quest for human well-being.

African identity includes the dialogical movement of the spiritual, psychosocial, and biomedical as part of a continuous

whole. Both hierarchy and dichotomisation need refuting. Healing can be both spiritual and scientific.

Conclusion

Christian mission has re-emerged as an important phenomenon amidst growing secularisation in a postmodern age. The growth of the scale of the spiritual, social and political influence of the African continent has drawn heightened attention from beyond Africa.

With the re-emergence of Christianity as a religious and socio-political influence, the question of classical, and mainly Western, Christian mission to Africa and other developing continents is coming under renewed scrutiny. The shortcomings of economic development models, such as modernisation theory, and diakonal initiatives, such as asset-based action and 'Use Your Talents', mean that they are not sustainable as these approaches do not use the local community as the lens through which to implement development.

An African dialogical model for missional development takes African identity and the African worldview as its lens for mission. This approach is not monological and domineering but dialogical and conversational. The approach uses the initiatives, human capital, methods of production, local innovation, and the context and customs of the local community as its greatest assets.

The spiritual aspect of personhood is affirmed as part of the identity of persons and, consequently, is invaluable in the development of both persons and community. Unlike that of the West, the African worldview does not dichotomise the spiritual and material or the body and soul.

The African dialogical model for missional development is not wholly relative; rather, its dialogical nature opens opportunities for interaction, conversation, fluidity and, ultimately, growth. Instead of dominating a variety of contexts, this model uses the African worldview to invite

difference to be table for the sake of mutual enrichment and holistic development.

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