

SIN AS A COMMUNITY TABOO: AN AFRICAN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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By

Olufemi Timothy Oyekan
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ABSTRACT

This work attempts to examine the problem of sin in Africa, and how the church can address it using the ideology of taboo in African communal life. This researcher is of the opinion that an understanding of sin from the taboo and communal worldview of Africans will help the church deal with the problem of sin, and it will be of benefit the society and the universal church and this can serve as a useful tool in the formulation of the theology of sin for Africa.

The method of library research using theological, historical, descriptive and deductive approach was adopted in this work. Internet sources were also used where necessary. This work is limited by the fact that taboo differ from culture to culture in Africa, even from one divinity to another within the same culture. The limited time for this research and the limitation of space did not permit the examination of taboos from every culture in Africa. The work however, concentrates on the taboos, ideologies and worldview which are reflected in most African communities.

It is obvious from this research that Africans already have a concept of sin before the arrival of Christianity to the continent. They expressed this through the ideology of the community taboos. An appropriate understanding of taboo as a community sin in the African setting and the understanding of the moral standard of God as shown by the concept of sin in the bible will help the African church deal with the problem of sin, hence improving moral life in the African church and society.

5.2 Conclusion

Having known that sin is a universal issue which has affected humanity; this is evident from the scriptures, through Christian history and from the background of Africans. It is obvious that before the arrival of the missionaries from Europe to Africa, Africans already have a concept of God and of right and wrong which has already been expressed through the ideology of the community taboo. Some Africans see the concept of sin taught by Christianity as individual in nature and Western in outlook, this has contributed to the reason why the Christian concept of sin is foreign and not original to some Africans. Africa needs a concept of sin that is culturally relevant and will not overlook the communal nature of Africans to help the church provide a basis from dealing with moral flaws. The principles of African communal life and the taboo which are not contradictory to scriptures can provide a model for the church which is also a community of God's people to deal with the issue of sin using a familiar but scriptural

way which will not make the Christian concept of sin foreign to Africans. The proper understanding of sin from the African worldview will help the church deal with the issue of sin, among those who are professing Christians and even in the society, because a communal effort to deal with the problem of sin in the African church will be a replica of the church in the Acts of Apostles and this can provide a model for the universal church.

5.3 Recommendation

The following are the recommendations that results from this research work;

- 1) The Church in Africa should take advantage of the fact that people already have a concept of sin as epitomized in the concept of the taboo to evangelize and preach salvation and deliverance from the power of sin, since most Africans are aware of right and wrong through the concept of taboo but they lack the power to keep them from the wrong acts. The church in Africa should concentrate efforts in preaching salvation and deliverance from sin instead of dissipating so much energy on the prosperity gospel which only promote greed and contribute more to the problem of sin in the society.
- 2) Just like the way taboo and other cultures are passed down through the process of socialization, the church in Africa should encourage socialization among members this will help them to oversee one another so as to avoid immoral acts. Everyone should see themselves as responsible to pass down God's standard of morality to every generation. The church and parents should take the training of children and youth in godliness seriously.
- 3) Those in position of authority should be given their due respect. Those who are given the opportunity to lead should also watch themselves so that they will not

falter morally. The African community takes this seriously, the church as a community of God's people will need to ensure the moral uprightness of her leaders and in the society.

- 4) The understanding of taboo as a community sin and God's moral standard has taught through the concept of sin in the Bible will help improve the moral in the church in Africa and the society, this will also be a gift to the universal church and the world in general.
- 5) African Christian scholars should work at formulating a theology of sin for Africa, this will be helpful in rightly shaping the African concept of sin along the scriptures and the Christian concept of sin will not be seen as foreign any longer. Efforts have been made in this area, but more need to be done to have it in a systematized form.