

253.5
NBTS
M.Th
Ad-31

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF
YORUBA SUPERSTITIONS AND
THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR
PASTORAL CARE AND
COUNSELLING

A THESIS PRESENTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE
NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
OGBOMOSO, NIGERIA

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Theology

by

John Adebayo Adedeji

June, 1997

J.C. POOL LIBRARY
BAPTIST SEMINARY
OGBOMOSO, NIGERIA

ABSTRACT

This work has been developed on the understanding that the Yorubas, like other African people, are superstitious. Superstition manifests itself in all areas of their socio-psychodynamic life. Following this submission is the understanding that fear and guilt seem to usually accompany a superstition. An example is when a taboo is broken. The question is, are fear and guilt invariably related to superstition? Similarly, since the Yorubas have continued to be superstitious, are there any didactic values in superstition? This work is set to address the stated problems.

In an attempt to address the problems raised, chapter one of the paper introduces the topic and how to go about it. It contains the background to the study based on the researcher's accumulated background experiences which include his hospital based clinical experiences. Some superstitions are cited as illustrations of the concerns of the paper. The chapter also contains the statement of the problems, such as to find out whether fear and guilt are related to superstition or not. If found related to superstition, what are the implications of the relationship for pastoral care and counselling

ministry? The purpose and significance of the study and research questions are also contained in the chapter. The same chapter has the definitions of superstition and pastoral care and counselling. It also has the delimitation as guidelines for the scope of the study.

Chapter two is a review of related literature. The concept of myth, folklore, beliefs in divinities, ancestors, mysterious powers and the concept of taboo as ramifications of superstition are discussed. The didactic factors of superstition are discussed as well. Along with this is a brief discussion of the history of superstition. Chapter three contains a critical evaluation of Yoruba superstitions. Yoruba superstitions are classified and some are listed. Also the chapter discusses the origin of some superstitions. The chapter is somehow closely related to chapter two.

Chapter four is a work on the field study. It restates the research questions, analyses them and reports the findings. Some statistical tables are drawn to explain the findings.

The last chapter contains various implications emanating from superstitious beliefs and their link with fear, guilt, and didactic elements. Following this, some appropriate pastoral care and counselling methods are proffered for wholistic healing. The conclusion is a brief overview of the subject. The researcher's recommendations are also contained in this chapter.

- c. Teach the Bible very well;
- d. Encourage the person(s) to see beyond the fragments;
- e. Organize group counselling.⁵⁶

3. Rev. Simon Kolawole says he would: (a) Teach the Word of God and (b) Counsel the person(s).⁵⁷

E. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has vividly brought to the fore, the fact that within the Yoruba context, at least, superstition is related to fear and guilt. It has also been discovered that some elements of teachings are inherent in superstition. This implies that despite the emotional problems of fear and guilt in superstitious beliefs, their didactic values cannot be ignored. Doing so will be equal to throwing away the baby with the bath water. Superstitious beliefs therefore, pose some challenges to churches and pastoral care and counselling ministries among the Yorubas. In view of these challenges, the writer hereby recommends the following for pastoral counsellors working in Yoruba and similar cultural contexts:

1. Recognize the worldview of the counsellee. The presenting problem of the counsellee is likely to be coloured by his/her worldview. A good counsellor in

⁵⁶Interview with Rev. Dr. S. A. Ishola, Ogbomoso: Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, 18 October 1996.

⁵⁷Interview with Rev. Simon Kolawole, Ogbomoso: Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, 10 February 1997.

the African context should therefore recognize the world-view of the counselee. For emphasis, many Africans attach much importance to the belief in witchcraft and regard it as a fact in their sickness. A counsellor should lead the counsellee from the known to the unknown.

2. Reinforce healthy or positive behaviour. The possibility of eradicating superstitious belief lies much on the counsellor. He is to be able to detect the behaviour and feelings of the counsellee, whether they are verbal or non-verbal. He is to reinforce a character trait that is to be encouraged. This could be by praising, affirming, or a pat on the back.⁵⁸

3. Have teaching programmes for children. Superstitious belief is usually passed from the elders or parents to the children. Some of these beliefs are found in myths, folklore and riddles. A Bible-based teaching for children in the church setting will help children detect truth from falsehood.

4. Expose the adults to scientific discovery. This may counter superstitious beliefs. Often times the Yorubas for example believe that sickness is due to the wrath of an ancestor. Scientific discoveries have however shown that poor sanitation, poor feeding, lack of exercise, and rest among other things, can cause sickness. Adults should watch television programmes on scientific discoveries.

⁵⁸Rickey L. George and E. Richard Duston, "The Minister As a Behavioral Counselor," Pastoral Psychology, Vol. 21, No. 209, December 1990, pp. 15-16.

