

AFRREV IJAH

An International Journal of Arts and Humanities

Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

Vol. 1 (1), February, 2012:179-195

ISSN: 2225-8590

Contemporary African Relevance of the Genesis Creation Myth

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Abstract

The book of Genesis contains two creation myths which have corollaries in the Igbo creation myth, as in other ethnic groups in Africa. This is particularly in the area of sanctity of life. The first Genesis creation myth

explicitly states that man was created in the image (Hebrew עִלְמִים) of God, and after His likeness, (Genesis 1: 26-27). The second creation myth states that God formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life (that is, a part of Himself) and man became a living being (Genesis 2:7). In Igbo creation myth, the God, Chineke, created man with part of Himself. Here, the God, Igwe, and the Goddess, Ala, (both components of the creator God, Chineke) met and formed human beings, male and female. The significant points of convergence between the Genesis creation myths and the Igbo creation myth are first, that man was formed by the direct action of God (gods) and second, that man contains a component of God (gods). Mankind is not just a physical being that accidentally came into existence. Mankind was formed by God (gods) carrying a part of Himself (themselves). For this reason, life is highly revered in Igboland, as in all parts of Africa. This paper, therefore, examined human life and its sanctity as derivable from creation myths in Genesis and some Igho communities. The comparison is vital for the appreciation of life and its enhancement in Afro-Christian social milieu.

Introduction

The pre-scientific human society interpreted the universe through a set of myths. Whatever their origins were, these myths showed a connection between the visible physical world and the invisible spiritual world, and how the happenings in one of the spheres affected the other. The aim mainly was to show how a balance could be maintained between the two worlds to the ultimate benefit of mankind, implying that a break in this balance affected mankind adversely, and stipulating a set of rituals for the restoration of the balance whenever it was broken. These myths had ordered life in the universe, creating the basis for pursuit of moral life. Science and learning, signifying the onset of modernity, began to devise alternative ways of interpreting the universe by setting in place an array of physical laws that govern the universe. These scientific mechanisms have tended to confront and question the validity of the myths, eroding the very basis for their existence. The result is that the moral order of the world which had been created by and dependent on the myths is destroyed with the scientific violation of the myths.

However, useful as science has been in solving the challenges and meeting the needs that confront mankind, it has all the same not provided answers to all the puzzles that exist in the world. It has therefore not completely

overtaken and replaced the pre-scientific myths that had ordered the moral foundation of life prior to its enquiries. As it stands, it would appear that the modern person is caught up in between the two tenets of the interpreting life, namely, the mythical and the scientific. Properly understood, science and myth are not really opposed to each other but rather champion different perspectives of knowledge which are equally useful to mankind.

This paper attempted to look at the Genesis creation myth and espouse its contemporary African relevance particularly in the area of the sanctity of life using the library research method and textual exegesis. It is our aspiration to show that Africans revere human life and hold it in the highest esteem, and that the basis for this frame of thought and attitude is directly derivable from the idea in the Genesis creation myth that God formed man specially, distinct from all other creatures, to be the epitome of life. This idea also has corollaries in the African society, and for the purpose of our study we have chosen the Igbo society of South East Nigeria for emphasis, while of course noting that other parts of Africa do not differ significantly from this orientation.

Myth: definition

According to Marshall (1988),

The word “myth” is used to refer to stories that are fictional, and hence, it has come to have a pejorative sense. Traditionally it refers to invented stories about the gods in which they behave like human beings with superhuman powers. Closely associated with this sense of the word is its usage to refer specifically to the stories which may accompany and allegedly form the basis of religious rituals (p.449).

Gunkel (1901) has defined myth as “stories of the gods in contradistinction to the legends and sagas in which the actors are men” (p.14). Esposito, Fasching, and Lewis (2006) explain that the word “myth”, comes from the Greek, “mythos”, which means “story”, adding that myth:

is a symbolic story about the origins and destiny of human beings and their world. Myths relate human beings to whatever powers they believe ultimately govern their destiny, and explain to them what the powers expect of

them. Unlike the contemporary English use of “myth” to indicate an untrue story or a misunderstanding based on ignorance, in every religious tradition, myth conveys the eventual truths of life. (p. 7)

Myths, therefore, are stories of past events which have been believed through the years to be true. They form the basis for religious beliefs and practices and there is hardly any religion without a set of myths. They are not subject to verification or proof, and they do not depend on their empirical authenticity for their strength and validity. Myths actually form a vital part of religious history.

Creation myths from the near Eastern background

From available information, the authors of Genesis are not original in their creation myth. Three creation myths from the Near Eastern background have been preserved for us in Akkadian. There is every indication that these accounts predate Genesis and may therefore have significantly influenced the Genesis account. These accounts are the Gilgamesh Epic, the Enuma Elish, and Atrahasis. Kizhakkeyil (2009) dates Gilgamesh Epic at 2100BC and Enuma Elish at 1200 BC, although Boadt (1984) dates Enuma Elish at 1700BC. Blenkinsopp (1992) dates Atrahasis at the same time as the Gilgamesh epic. The documentary hypothesis on Pentateuch to which Genesis belongs, puts the earliest source of the corpus at 950 BC. According to Enuma Elish, the worlds began from the gods of fresh and salt water, Apsu and Tiamat. An excerpt from the text as quoted by Boadt (1984) reads thus:

When on high the heavens have not been named; firm ground below had not been called by name; naught by primordial Apsu, their begetter; (and) Mummu Tiamat, she who bore them all; their waters commingling as a single body. (p. 116).

According to the narrative, the gods were formed by the union of the primeval waters. Then there was fighting and discord among them. Apsu and Tiamat were deeply disappointed with them and decided to kill all of them. The gods discovered the plan, and one of them, Ea killed Apsu. Tiamat, the symbol of chaotic darkness and disorder then declared war against the gods. The gods chose a young warrior god, Marduk to lead them against their mother Tiamat. Marduk succeeded in killing Tiamat, and out of one half of her body he made the earth, and out of the other half he made the heavens.

Marduk then commanded Ea to make human beings from the blood of the defeated gods.

Quite obviously, certain features can be noticed in the Enuma Elish which shows strong semblance to the Genesis creation myth. For instance the reference to darkness and chaos and the waters bear strong resemblance to Genesis 1:2. Also some hint of influence of the Enuma Elish on the Genesis account can be seen in the pattern and order of creation. While the gods formed the creation in the Elish, it is Elohim or Yahweh that creates in the Genesis account. The order of creation in the Enuma Elish seems to be replicated in the first creation narrative of Genesis, commonly called the Priestly account, found in Genesis 1:1-2:4a, an order which shows that everything was brought into being and human beings were created last of all. This order was however reversed in the second Genesis creation account found in Genesis 2:4b to the end of the chapter.

The Gilgamesh Epic is the second myth from the Near Eastern background which is believed to have largely influenced the Genesis myths, mainly the flood of Genesis 6-9, and in part, the creation myths of Genesis 1 and 2. The epic tells how the hero king Gilgamesh was so much greater than his subjects that he subjected them to cruel tyranny. To distract him, a goddess made a companion Enkidu for him nearly as strong as he was. They became friends and embarked on series of exploits, killing the giant Humbaba who guarded the cedar forests of the gods, rejecting the love of the goddess Ishtar and slaying the bull of the god, Anu. The gods decreed that Enkidu must die, and this led Gilgamesh on a frightened search for immortal life.

He went to the ends of the earth where he had heard that the hero of the original flood Utnapishtim had been given immortality by the gods. Utnapishtim told Gilgamesh the story of the flood and how the gods had blessed him for his role in saving humanity. He did that to point out to Gilgamesh that he cannot hope to find personal immortality since the gods have reserved immortality unto themselves. This story has often been associated with the Genesis flood account, but it more effectively relates to the Genesis narrative of the fall of man (chapter three) the consequence of which was that he was banished from the Garden of Eden and driven far away from the tree of (eternal) life. The text reads:

And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his

hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man and he placed at the East of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life. (Genesis 3:22-24).

Ska (1998) explains that the narrative in Genesis chapter three is part of the Yahwist creation narrative that begins in Genesis 2:4b, and that its objective is to show the factors that determined the character of creation, especially as it affects human beings. Both Genesis 3 and the Gilgamesh Epic agree that mankind was denied immortality. While the epic sees this as an original intention of the gods, the Genesis account sees this as an emergency arising as a result of man's fall into sin.

Blenkissopp (1992) discusses another creation myth from the Near Eastern background, which is the Babylonian epic called Atrahasis, which like Gilgamesh epic, is named after the hero of the story. He sums up this epic as follows:

After the beginning of the gods, those of the lower order, the Igigi, go on strike and refuse to continue their onerous service to the high gods. The solution to this problem is found to lie in the creation of humans, initially, seven male and seven female, by Belet-ili, mistress of the gods, assisted by Enki. Their task is to take over cultic work, thus solving the problem that had arisen in the divine sphere. In due course, however, the noise and tumult of humanity on the overcrowded earth led to the decision by the gods to reduce the population by a series of disasters at intervals of 1200 years. When these measures failed in their effect, the decision was taken to destroy the human race by a deluge. Enki however forewarned the sage, Atrahasis, instructing him to build a boat, take on animals and birds and ride out the deluge, which then began and lasted seven days and nights. Atrahasis survived and offered sacrifice on the purified earth, and the mother goddess produced a lapis object to remind her that this must not happen again. (p. 55).

Not only does this epic bear strong semblance to the story of the flood in Genesis 6-9 but also it relates the flood story to the creation myth as does Genesis. Obiorah (2010) observes that in the Atrahasis text and in Genesis 1-11, the creation of the world is a prelude to the deluge. She however draws a cardinal point of distinction between the Genesis account and the myths from the Ancient Near Eastern background. According to her, this major point of difference is that,

the narrative in Genesis 1-2 is divested of mythological orientations ...The narrators of Gen. 1-2 surely were aware of other creation accounts in their neighbouring cultures, and they have sought to reflect on their (Hebrew) own theology of creation. (p. 48).

Although the influence of the Ancient Near Eastern myths on the creation myth of Genesis has been widely acknowledged, yet the theology of Genesis stands out distinctly as we shall see subsequently.

The genesis creation myth

Two creation accounts have been identified in Genesis, the development of which has been put by most authors, (Kizhakkeyil 2009, Obiorah 2010) at the exilic and post exilic periods of ancient Israel. The first account is found in Genesis 1:1-2:4a while the second is found in Genesis 2:4b-25 (Kizhakkeyil (2009) or 2:4b-3:24 (Ska, 1998).

The first account is commonly credited to the Priestly authors of the documentary hypothesis. This account is characterized by creation by divine fiat. Here, the picture is given of God (divine name used is אֱלֹהִים) who creates the world. In contrast, the second account, credited to the Yahwists of the documentary hypothesis, presents an anthropomorphic posture of God. Here God (the divine name used is יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים) is pictured as possessing human attributes, forming the objects by use of hands.

Apart from the difference in divine names used in the two accounts, as well as the impression created of the divine nature, as noted above, one other major difference in the two accounts lies in the order of creation. The items dealt with in the two accounts, essentially the heavens (שָׁמַיִם) and its (or their, depending on how one views the dual termination of the word) constituents, and the earth (אֶרֶץ) and its constituents. However the order in which they appeared in the creation schedule differs substantially. The first

account specifically states that the creation was brought to accomplishment in six days, and that on the seventh day God rested. While the second account does not specifically declare this, it would appear from the ordering of its creation account that an attempt was being made to arrange it in sequence in time.

One marked point of departure of the second account from the first is that while in the first account, mankind was specifically created on the six day, after the elements vital to his sustenance had been put in place, mankind was created first in the second account and then the elements vital for his upkeep were gradually put in place. In fact, the second account tries to create a phenomenal difference in the significance of the word אָדָם used to represent “the man”, by giving that name a gender connotation, implying that the woman (later called חַוָּה) was created later, perhaps as an after thought. It is important to point out at this stage, that while the name אָדָם appears in both creation accounts, implying “the man”, the first account gives a more cogent interpretation of its significance, particularly in verse 27 of chapter one, where it says, “So God created אָדָם in his own image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them”.

The impression here is that the word אָדָם was originally used in a genderless sense to imply “humanity “or” mankind”, “male and female” as the text says. That word was later to acquire the connotation of a proper noun, name of a person in the later part of the Yahwist account, and to be used in contrast to חַוָּה the female counterpart. In the first account, it was to the entire humanity, male and female, that the charge was given (Gen. 1:28) to “be fruitful, multiply, fill earth, subdue it, and have dominion over it.” The fact of the woman being created as an afterthought to satisfy the man could at best be an unfortunate interjection of the male chauvinistic tendencies of the Jewish society.

The first creation narrative (Gen: 1:1f) opens up with the expression;

בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ

Meaning, In beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The verb בְּרָא is used to imply *creatio ex nihilo* (making out of nothing). This is in contradistinction to יָצַר meaning to form with starting materials. Here, Genesis differs from the thought in the myths of the Ancient Near Eastern background which can only picture creation as something that can be made using starting materials. Those thoughts properly examined do not really

qualify for creation myths since they do not have such a notion as implied by the verb **בָּרָא** implying to bring into being out of non-existent materials.

In the first creation account in Genesis, the creator is called **אֱלֹהִים**. Properly examined, this word would appear to be a plural term. This is because it has a common Hebrew masculine plural absolute noun termination, **ִים** (suggesting gods). In this way, a polytheistic impression of the deity may be created. This point is further intensified when one looks at it side by side with the expression in verse 26 of chapter one.

And God said; let us make man in our own image and after our likeness.

This would appear to fall in line with the polytheistic framework of the Ancient Near Eastern myths. However, even this argument is dislodged by the language of the text. For instance although the noun **אֱלֹהִים** has a plural termination but the verb that goes with it **בָּרָא** is third person singular masculine qal perfect tense; implying that the subject is singular.

Even in verse 27, **וַיַּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ** so God made man in his own image, this case prefixed with a *waw* consecutive, **וַ** the verb is still singular, implying a singular subject. Verse 26 of Genesis 1 begins with a dialogue; Let us make man in our own image **וַיִּבְרָא** and after our likeness **בְּצַלְמֵנוּ**. This is the highpoint of the Priestly creation account, and this high point presents to us the esteem to which man is elevated in the scheme of things. Man is not just one of the creatures, but specially and distinctly created in the image **בְּצַלְמוֹ** of God. To the Hebrews, this high point of indication of the dignity of man is responsible both for the reverence of life and for the laws made to safe guard life and protect it against its derogation. For instance, two of the laws in the Decalogue, namely, the sixth, thou shall not kill (**לֹא תִרְצַח**) and the eight, though shall not steal (**לֹא תִגְנוֹב**) are aimed at the preservation of life and its value (Exo.20:3). The expression in the eight law actually refers to the abduction. Joseph in Genesis 40:15 used the verb **גָּנַב** in describing the ordeal of abduction which he faced at the hands of his brothers.

That man was created in the image (**בְּצַלְמוֹ**) of God speaks volumes of the height to which man is placed in the hierarchy of creation. Knudsen (1988) says concerning the use of the word image in that text:

An image represents and symbolizes, but it is more; it is the similitude of something reflecting or mirroring it. Man is created in the image of God; he was made to reflect or mirror the divine nature, but in a creaturely way. (p. 329).

Obiorah (2010) further explores the significance of the making of man in the image of God;

In Israel's surrounding cultures in the Ancient Near East, the person who bears the image of a deity is the king; the king shares in God's authority. When God made humans in his image, he makes them participate in his dominion. (p. 52).

The implication of this is that man is given the highest position of honour among all the creatures. In fact, man has been elevated to share in the attributes and the prerogatives of the Creator himself. Dominion (Hebrew דָּרָךְ meaning to rule) which is an exclusive attribute of God is thus passed on to human beings, being made in the image of God. This would seem to translate human beings out of the realms of creatures, into the realm of the Creator himself. It is for this reason that life is viewed as such a great treasure among the Israelites, and the willful destruction of, or harm to life especially of a member of the covenant family is viewed with such high level of seriousness.

Contemporary African relevance

As stated in the introduction, our illustration of the contemporary African relevance of the Genesis creation myth will be made in the context of the Igbo of South East Nigeria, although studies show that the situation does not differ considerably in other ethnic groups in Africa. It is important to point out that the creation motif is not altogether new to the indigenous Igbo religious thought. According to Afigbo (2006):

Chukwu (the Igbo name for God) combines the concept of creator of deities for all we know and are aware of, including the concept of the solar deity. According to the Igbo people from the Eastern region of Nigeria, *Chineke* is the Creator of the world and everything good in it. This God is also responsible for rain, trees, and other plants. *Chukwu* is a supreme God represented by the sun The Igbo creative God, "*Chineke*" has its source in *Chukwu*.

Linguistically, “Chineke” is formed from the Igbo words, “Chi” and “eke” (Spirit which creates) (p. 32).

Benjamin and Benjamin (1920) give a more vivid elucidation on the Igbo myth of creation. According to them:

The Igbo believe (that) *Chineke*, the Greatest of the Great Being, created the universe and all therein, using parts of Him-her-self. (This means that everything a person can see, touch, taste, smell and hear is *chineke*). The Igbo believe that the God, *igwe* and Goddess *ala* created mankind and the organization of Igbo society. For a long time things worked very well in heaven, however all the Gods and Goddesses lived in one place. However, each was individualistic and therefore very independent. This was the cause of a big problem. Jealousy and greed came into the picture. It seems that each god began to want all of the powers of the other gods. The question was who had more authority? Finally, it got so bad, the affairs of the universe began to suffer and became a threat to *chineke*'s existence, who was about to be destroyed by parts of His-Her own mind. *chineke* began thinking of how to solve the problem and came up with a master plan in the form of Laws of Social Equality and Personal Freedom, based on equal value of each of the Gods and Goddesses. Therefore, to establish a family, a God and Goddess were to pair up and build their own place in heaven surrounding a market place. And the families' relationship was one of contract and trade; with the God, *Ekwensu*, the Trickster, acting as an enforcer in the market place. In other words, heaven was divided into equal parts and each God and Goddess had a domain of their own.

The God, *igwe*, and the Goddess, *ala* had a domain consisting of the earth and the sky. Although they are like husband and wife, they do not live in the same house. *igwe* lives in the sky and *ala* lives on the earth; to the Igbo, the earth and the sky merge to form the Holy Homestead in which mankind was created. *ala* and *igwe* created 8 people, 4 males and 4 females. In the process of creating mankind,

igwe and *ala* used four kinds of materials: sticks from the ofo tree as bones, and clay and chalk for flesh. After they were formed and dried in the sun, *ala* wrapped them in *Umune* leaves from *Umune* tree for nurturing the five senses and sexuality. And as creators, they had the responsibility of educating them as well, especially on the seven cycles of life and rituals related to the rites –of-passage that a person must pass through in life, namely, sex act and birth, babyhood, childhood, adulthood, parenthood, grand parenthood, and great grand parenthood which flows unabridged into ancestorhood (p. 34-35).

A few features stand out prominently in the Igbo creation myth in comparison to the Genesis creation myths. First of all, in the Igbo myths, the God, *Chineke* created all things and secondly, He created them with parts of Himself. In other words, the Gods and Goddesses, as well as all material and spiritual elements in creation are parts or particles of the creator-God *Chineke*. This implies that the humans are a component part of the Creator God. This directly agrees with the two creation myths in Genesis. The first Genesis creation myth explicitly states that man was created in the image (Hebrew אִמְצַל) of God, and after His likeness, (Genesis 1: 26-27).

The second Genesis creation myth states that God formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life (that is, a part of Himself) and man became a living being (Genesis 2: 7).

In the Igbo creation myth, the God, *Igwe*, and the Goddess, *Ala*, (both, components of the creator God, *Chineke*) met and formed human beings, male and female. The reference to the use of materials, clay, stick and leaves, in creating mankind in the Igbo myth, strikes a note of similitude with the second Genesis creation account, which posits the use of dust (Hebrew אֶרֶץ) from the ground (Hebrew אֶרֶץ).

On the whole, the significant points of convergence between the Genesis creation myths and the Igbo creation myth are first, that man was formed by the direct action of God (gods) and second, that man contains, (or is) a component (a part) of God (or gods). Mankind is not just a physical being that accidentally came into existence. Mankind was formed by God (gods) carrying a part of Himself (or themselves). For this reason, in Igboland, as in all parts of Africa, life is very sacred. Life is treated with the highest form of

respect, reverence, honour and dignity. Life is dignified and highly elevated. Life is celebrated. The giving of life at birth is a great celebration among the Igbo of South East Nigeria. Elders are invited to make declarations and incantations in the atmosphere of prayer and worship, to implore the favour of the benevolent spirits to safeguard and beautify the destiny of the newborn baby.

Among the Igbo of South East Nigeria, as in other parts of Nigeria and Africa, the taking of life is treated with the highest level of decorum. The dead are very highly revered, especially because, as we saw from the brief mention of the rites of passage in the Igbo creation myth, the dead automatically join the council of ancestors in an unbroken communion.

Life is revered in Igboland. Threat or injury to, or wanton destruction of life is treated as a violation of the cult of Ala, the Earth goddess. Because the Earth goddess is believed to be responsible for fertility including that of the land in agricultural production, once the cult of Ala is violated, untold calamity is believed to be the result. This calamity could be in form of drought, withholding of the rains in its season, crop-destroying pests, poor harvest, and such other crises. For this reason, any violation of the cult of Ala must be redressed with a set of rituals, performed by the accredited priests of the cult. In the case of the shedding of human blood (especially innocent blood) the ritual cleansing may involve the priests of Nri, the believed ancestral home of the Igbo. It is in this regard that Achebe (1965) writing on the extensive nature of an individual person's crime as it affects offending the Earth goddess, asserts that, "The evil you have done can ruin the whole clan. The Earth goddess whom you have insulted may refuse to give her increase, and we will all perish" (p. 21). Umeagudosu (1990) names the taking of human life as topmost in the hierarchy of taboos that offend the Earth goddess.

The concept of the sacredness of human life as coming directly from God is deeply engraved in the mind of the African, particularly among the Igbo of South East Nigeria. That is why a sick person or one who faced a peculiar threat to life or reduction of its value immediately became a collective responsibility of the community. No one was allowed to suffer undue dehumanization as a result of his poverty or that of his nuclear family. Everyone rallied round to assist anyone facing a crisis, because everyone felt dehumanized at the dehumanization of one life.

Okwueze (1999) examined the pre-Christian fraternal ties of the Igbo society, though he lamented that such ties have been broken by the competitive Machiavellian style of European life which the Euro-Christian missionaries introduced in Igboland. According to him:

The response of an entire neighbourhood to misfortunes of members of her community is strikingly exemplified in a situation where one's misfortune is for instance, that his house is gutted down by fire. In such a situation, on an agreed date, the entire neighbourhood would render their unanimous assistance in rebuilding the house, including provision of materials to be used. (p. 273).

The reason for the level of brotherly commitment on the issues of life, its sustenance and maintenance, is wholly and entirely, religious. Thus, Jordan (1971) says,

The average native (Igbo) was admirably suited by environment and training, for an explanation of life in terms of the spirit; rather than of the flesh. He was no materialist. Indeed, nothing was farther from his mind than a materialist philosophy of existence. It made no appeal to him. (p. 115).

It is in this respect that Onwu (2002) asserts that Igbo religion and philosophy "...define a style of life, and a guide of practical living. Unlike the major world religions, Igbo religion is not codified or formulated into systematic dogmas. It is culturally learned and adopted. It is a tradition" (p. 3).

The point being made here is that the Igbo interpretation of life is purely religious, and as it affects the subject matter under discussion, the Igbo of South East Nigeria show the highest regard for life because of their belief that it comes from God. In these days when the European self-serving philosophy has taken over public life, it is common to see human corpses littered on the streets and highways for days or sometimes weeks. Such a phenomenon would have been unthinkable in the Igbo traditional society, even for one minute, because human life represents the highest value in the whole of existence. The Igbo reverence for human life places the highest dignity on it, and consciously makes every member of the society to strive for the highest good of life. Those who by their lives, utterances and deeds constitute a threat to life are banished into ostracism, for the greater good of the community and the greater promotion and protection of life. Thus the

Igbo reverence of life leads to the promotion of the highest good and well being within the society, providing an atmosphere of uninterrupted peace, or restoration of peace when interrupted. That way the conducive environment is created and sustained for the highest level of development.

Conclusion

People's religious thoughts, by and large translate to the nature of interpersonal relationship that exists, and hence to the pattern and level of development. The Genesis creation myths present mankind as created by God, and in God's image. This implies that mankind is given the highest place in creation, an understanding which has led to the sanctity of life among the Israelites and other adherents of the Jewish faith. The creation myths of the Igbo in South East Nigeria, as in other ethnic groups in Africa also present similar notions of mankind being made by God (gods) and containing a part of God (gods). For this reason, life is highly revered among the Igbo, as among other ethnic groups in Africa. This reverence of life leads to the promotion of the highest good in society and provides a high-quality atmosphere for the highest level of development.

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