
Globalization and African Spirituality: An Unrealistic and unrealizable day-dream

Udobata R Onunwa

Introduction

The term *globalization* is yet to have a generally accepted definition in its use and meaning. It is still a vague concept which has not been fully unpacked by those who coined it. (Onunwa, 2005:15) On its face-value, many people may be deceived to believe that it means unifying or harmonizing standard of living or bringing the entire world system of trade into a uniform and common standard of market liberation of sales and purchase where both the producers and consumers enjoy equal opportunities and rights. It is primarily an economic term which has a political dimension where the rich countries of the West are seeking opportunities to consolidate their gains and loot.

Regional groupings have been emerging: unions of many incompatible and erstwhile unfriendly neighbours have been going on since the collapse of the erstwhile Persian, Greek, Roman, and British Empires.

Soon after the World War II, many powerful nations thought it would be beneficial and reasonable to form global associations that would check the excesses of some ambitious powerful nations acting alone or in concert from attacking others. (Adeniji, 2005:239) Such alignments led to the formation of the United Nations Organisation, North Atlantic Treaty Organisations and similar smaller regional groupings to support one another from being attacked by any emerging stronger powers. Some old empires and loose federations have been dissolving and disintegrating while new alignments are being formed. The old British Empire where the *Sun never sets* has broken down and now replaced by an amorphous Commonwealth of Nations made up of former British colonies. Of late some countries in Africa and Asia that were not colonized by Britain have been admitted into the association. Some new ones are still seeking membership. The old Soviet Union disintegrated in 1989 and since then many new independent nations have emerged in Eastern Europe. The old map of Europe has greatly changed. Yet the new European Union does not include many of the East European nations and the Constitution is yet to be ratified, although common currency is now in use. Many such unions which have developed since the end of the Second World War, have primarily tried to hold the world from being broken to pieces through another global war of destruction. Cold war has nonetheless not fully ended since suspicion of possession and use of nuclear weapons has been going on among many nations. So the United Nations has tried to some extent to maintain an uneasy peace, held incompatible foes at check. The political benefits of such unions have been overwhelming. The economic benefits also go to the Big Powers and the rich nations of the West and of late Asian powerful manufacturing nations like China and Japan. For instance the Group of Eight highly industrialized Countries, G-

8, or G-20, etc have tried to keep the world economy stable for their own good in spite of the hypocritical noise about the conditions of the poorer nations of the world.

In Africa, such unions have been existing since the early 1960s. The Organisation of African Unity, (OAU) now African Union (A.U.), Economic Community of West African States, (ECOWAS), East Africa Union, etc have been making their own impacts by trying to give Africa a voice in the United Nations. The African Peace Keeping Force has been known for the past forty years or so as strong arm of the United Nations for Peace Keeping in war-torn nations. Yet ethnic groups and politics of sectionalism plague African nations till today. Many potential and capable leaders are rejected by people from other ethnic or tribal units in their own native countries. Civil Wars are still raging in many parts of Africa. We talk of *Global Village* at a time when racism, skin differentiation are still plaguing many nations of the world.

i. New Term Same Old Principles

We still do not know who coined the term- *Globalization*- More recently, we hear of such terms like ‘*global village, trade liberalization, world economy, World Bank, world market, World Trade Organisation, International Monetary Fund, Paris Club, multinational communities*, and the likes. It is still owned and sponsored by the ‘capitalist nations of the West who oppress the poorer nations of the world. These are primarily set up to make the entire universe enjoy spirit of comradeship, co-existence of cultures and peoples and global peace. To the present writer, these terms and the likes are vague since they do not go far enough to break the walls of racism, discrimination and intolerance in many parts of the world. The new term- *Globalization*- seems to be the same both in application and aim of what Karl Marx and Engel described in the early 19th Century in their Communist Manifesto *where the bourgeoisie tries to compel all nations on pain of extinction to adopt the bourgeois mode of production, compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e. to become bourgeois themselves. In one world it creates a world after its image.* (Marx and Engel, 1992: 6-7)

Pre-colonial and post-colonial Africa was described by Europeans as *Dark continent*. This was later changed to ‘*Third World* and currently, it is ‘*Developing Nation*’. The more educated and diplomatic Europeans decided to drop some pejorative terms in order accommodate the Blacks whom they still look down upon as ‘*uncivilized, primitive, and racially inferior*’ (Onunwa, 2005: 18-19) It is still surprising to ask who set up the *Examining Body* that classified the world into *First, Second and Third Worlds*. Who are members of the *First and Second Worlds*? If history is anything to go by, Africa is a part of the Cradle of Civilization and *ipso facto* the original humanity to be termed *First*

World. The Egyptian Pyramid and the Hieroglyphics are older than the Sky Scrappers in the USA and any form of ancient European scripts of alphabets (Umeh, 2005: xii-xiv)

The term Globalization is both vague and unrealistic term in economic, political and religious spheres of life. Who is trying to bring people together? Many Black people who migrate to Europe, Far East or America find life very difficult to adapt or to be accepted into the main stream of Asian or White communities. Of late, some Africans who won the American Lottery to migrate and become American Citizens are yet to get jobs that match their academic and professional training. Britain in her usual diplomatic way terms such migrants who should be given visas to live in UK call them '*foreigners with special skill. Yet when some of them arrive, they are under-employed!* You cannot imagine a man from Africa with a PhD degree from a top African university working as a taxi driver, cleaner in a super market or as a Security man! There are many unemployed PhD holders in many parts of Europe. The best some of the Black migrant workers do is cleaning or Social Welfare job of looking after old people in their homes. Yet we want to liberalize trade and move world economy round. Those who managed to get genuine entry papers often stay without jobs commensurate to their qualifications primarily because their skin is different from the rest of the world. The apartheid and racist discrimination in many parts of the Western world is such that makes one feel that there is nothing like *globalization* in terms of one *human race* in human society where any one can feel accepted in any part of the globe. A Black person in the United States is still looked down upon by the white immigrants whose grandparents came over from Germany, France or any other European countries three or four hundred year later. Some descendants of Black Slaves in the United States of America are not fully integrated into the main stream of American society in some states in the United States of America where they claim as their own country while their white neighbours whose ancestors migrated about two hundred year ago are the full American citizens of today! Yet we talk of *Global Village!*

The *world market* is a *lopsided phenomenon* designed by the rich to exploit the poor. Trade liberalization and all such economic terms are mere gimmicks to deceive the world. It is the same old capitalism that exploits the poor. I think Castells was right when he compared the current Internet Revolution as a brand of modern capitalism that is old and fundamentally new tool in the hands of a few rich to exploit the majority poor. (Castells, 1998: 6ff) The African producers of the raw materials which are of low value cannot compete with the European manufacturers who sell their finished products to the consumers in Africa at very exorbitant prices. The capitalists in America or Europe fix the prices of goods- both raw and manufactured. They fix the rate of currency exchange. Although Africans toil to produce the raw materials, do the physical labour in the factory, they do not fix the prices of their products and the rate of exchange. Since they depend on the finished products of the European Business men, they cannot compete with the manufacturers and exporters of the finished products.

The liberalization of trade or market liberalization is therefore a farce. It is just hypocritical to state that a village woman in Tanzania who picks the coffee seeds can share the same standard of trade benefits with a British manufacturer who produces the coffee and exports it to Africa. In the same market, raw materials do not sell at commensurate prices with the manufactured goods.

What do we want to achieve in *globalization- Levelling Up or Levelling Down*-thus making the Middle –Class Britons come down to share the standard of living of rural Africans or make poor village Africans rise to a standard of life of *poor people* in the UK or Europe who live on state benefits or income support? Who comes up or who goes down? Can we achieve similar standard of living without one losing out in order to accommodate the other person's gain?

The level of education, medical treatment, urban development and infrastructure cannot be harmonized to be similar to what obtains in different parts of the world. Many Africans still pick their food from the dust bins in many urban cities. The Nigerian case is a pathetic one. A country which is the sixth largest producer of oil in the world is still suffering from poor medical facility, poor standard of education, low GDP, low life span for men and women, high infant mortality rate, poor infrastructural development, poor housing, daily black out, poor supply of electricity, regular fuel scarcity and undeveloped road net work. Over 90% of the Nigerian population live below \$2 a day and recent world ranking placed Nigeria as the second that has the poorest standard of living in the world. Yet we talk of *Global development*, global success and standard. It is still a contradiction in terms when one compares the life of a village African peasant farmer and a poor UK unemployed single mother who lives on income support from the State. In globalizing, we must think of how to eradicate poverty, enhance living standard and build up the life expectancy of people in the so-called *Third World* who live below poverty line.

ii. African Spirituality

The traditional African is primarily a religious being and one who has absolute faith in the Supreme God whom he identified with a special name in his own local village and clan. There is no *Pan-African* name for the God who created the universe but the understanding of his ontological existence and functions is basic and common. No one doubts or queries the existence of the Supreme Deity in African society even when modern western education has created some apathy in the minds of many Western trained Africans. The African world view is *microcosmic* and not *macrocosmic*. His world circulates around his little village or clan. For a typical African to think of the *macro-world* as part of his cosmos is still difficult to explain. (Onunwa, 1990: 25) This made the religion of a typical African a private local faith and spirituality. That is why the traditional African religionist does not go about evangelising people or converting people into his own religion. Everyone is born into the faith (Onunwa, 1990: 56)

Although Africans have a very high sense of Spiritual insight, many early European explorers, merchants and missionaries described them and their religion as *primitive, fetish, idolatry, pagan* and often as people without the knowledge of the true God. (Idowu, 1976: 30ff) Consequently, the European mission to Africa was to destroy the faith of the people in order to plant a new and modern as well as proper faith in the God of the Christians or Muslims, None of the Missionary faiths ever respected the traditional faith of the native Africans who out of their generosity welcomed and accepted the *foreign invaders*. African gods were objects of iconoclastic intolerance. Destruction of sacred objects and groves became a feature of the civilizing missions of '*imported faiths*' in Africa. The true African faith in the Lord of the Universe was regarded as nothing but satanic. It is this faith that one can not believe that could be fully accepted or respected by those who profess other religious faiths in the world. And if globalization which advocates equal and mutual respect for both producers and consumers will respect the poor farmer in an African village who produces cotton and the great industrialists in Korea who manufactures top fashion dresses for big UK Supermarkets, it is incumbent on all to respect the local votary of African deity in a village in Africa.

The zeal with which Africans worshipped God prior to the advent of Christianity and Islam, was invariably transferred to their new found faith. Although many at some points in time reverted to the old-time tested faith of their forebears, those who continued in the new faiths became so zealous that they turned out to be missionaries of outstanding zeal who planted Christianity or Islam in different parts of Africa. Today, while Christianity is in great decline in Europe, Africa is waxing stronger and stronger in the faith that they borrowed from the European missionaries. There is a demographic change in the growth and development of Christianity today in Africa and in Europe (ACNS 724: 2010). Many Africans who live in Europe today are shocked to find that the great grand children of the early missionaries who brought Christianity to Africa are either agnostics or people of no faith at all. The Druids and other pagan traditional faiths of pre-Christian England are waxing strong in their revival of paganism in the UK. So it is in many parts of Europe. It is still a shame that many educated people in Europe cannot read the Bible and the Church is in decline as many young people have deserted it for a more permissive life-style. Worse still a few young people who are looking for meaning in life are converting to Islam but not to the vibrant Pentecostal Christianity which Africans and other blacks are spearheading all over the world. The traditional or historic churches in Europe are now trying to turn liberal in order to accommodate their loose life style of postmodernism.

A good number of people of African extraction including the Blacks from the Caribbean have turned to be '*missionaries*' in the UK and many other parts of Europe. This may be called '*Mission in Reverse*'.

Unfortunately, many White people do not seem to join the churches which the Blacks are establishing in Europe and America. Many of the whites do not enjoy the '*Pentecostal or Evangelical type of African Spirituality and Christianity*'

primarily because they see it as *African*. When the White missionaries came to Africa, converts who joined their Churches did not reject them on basis of colour or language. But today, many Black-led Churches in UK or Europe scarcely have genuine converts from the *White communities*. This is where the *global issue* of relationship that White capitalists are advocating can be seen only in terms of *economic and political spheres of life for the benefits of the Whites*. If *globalization* means anything in its entire ramification, it must include the Spiritual dimensions of life which Africans hold very dear and consider central to human existence. (Ihonvbere, 2002: 10ff) Is globalization any thing to go by as far of *Spirituality* is concerned or is it something to do with *African Oil and Raw materials*? How can African led-Churches and spiritual guidelines be accepted in the World as genuine and authentic ways of serving the Almighty God? When would an African be elected by the *World Religious Groups*- e.g. Christianity- to serve as the Pope in the Roman Church or Archbishop of Canterbury in the Anglican Communion? The best the World Church can see in Africans is nothing short of those who should follow and not those who could lead. Nigerian Christians alone are more in number than all the Christians in the whole continent of Europe and the British Isles. Yet no African has occupied the seat of Papacy in Rome. Hitherto, African Christians look up to Rome and Canterbury as the seat of the God they worship.

The recently concluded Conference of All Anglican Bishops in Africa held in Entebbe Uganda, from 23rd to 29th August 2010 (ACNS 724: 2010) had to invite the Archbishop of Canterbury to deliver the opening sermon, probably as a way to seek credibility or validity and approval by the World Anglican Communion. Besides that, it would be looked upon as a *schismatic heretical group* trying to break the World Anglican Communion. Why should African Spirituality continue to look for validity and credibility through Canterbury or Rome? Any theological formulation that is original to the indigenous African Christianity is looked upon with disdain and needs a Roman or British theological approval. Thus African spirituality is a puppet of the British and European spirituality which still upholds some detestable elements from the *pagan religious rites of ancient Rome and Greece*. There are many extra-biblical theological articles of faith and liturgy as well as doctrine in both Roman and Anglican Churches which trace their origin to the pagan traditions of Ancient Rome and Greece. Why is it that no original and indigenous element of faith from the Traditional African Spirituality has a place in Christianity and Islam? Yet both religions claim to be universal when the language, religious philosophy, doctrines and liturgy are built on principles that are foreign to the African ways of thought and life.

The Bishop of Egypt, Dr Mouneer Anis (ACNS 724, 2010) told the gathering of all African Bishops meeting in Entebbe Uganda that although *Africa groans under the weight of conflicts, epidemics and poverty*, the African Church was growing in an extra-ordinary way. It was predicted to become a continent of 673 million Christians in 2025. The centre of the Christian world was shifting and so

was the global role of the Church in Africa and that... we can shape the Christian mind in the whole world.... we can take the Gospel not just to Africa but to the rest of the world. (ACNS 724:2010)

Bishop Cyril Okorochoa who had been the World- wide Anglican Evangelical Officer in the Decade of Evangelism 1990- 1998 was firmly positive when he stated that *the Mission of the Church will in the 21st Century be mainly South-North Movement. The missionaries of the 21st century will be mostly people of the Two-Third worlds. They will come from nations generally regarded as poor and corrupt, socially and politically unstable and therefore unlikely to be admitted into the Security Council. The new missionaries are not likely to have organized source of funding or sophisticated operational organizations. They are such that the only thing they have to offer is the power of the Spirit of the Saviour and God whose Gospel they believe to have captured them.* (Okorochoa 2010: 18ff). There is no doubt that Bishop Okorochoa was thinking of people from Africa and other Third World Nations but the problem is whether they would be accepted by whites in other continents because if they could not afford to fund the Mission of the 21st Century, it is likely that the same principles of the past – *he who pays the piper calls the tune-* might continue to prevail. The Western European and North American liberal Christians who have tried to truncate the traditional teachings of the Bible will fund a Mission that will support their permissive life-style. They may not accept the global vision of the African model of the unadulterated Gospel. They would not accept the truth of the Gospel being preached by the Africans who do not have the material resources to fund the Mission in which African spirituality *seems to guide the bearers of the Good News.*

But all the same, Bishop Okorochoa was optimistic that the African experience and understanding of society and church reminds us of *the need to develop both the family and the global attitudes towards being a Church and God's channel for his saving movement in the world.* As a family, we are *One* and what belongs to one member- both problems and blessings- belongs to all. (Okorochoa, 2010:22-23) In other words, he stated that Christian Missionary Movement in *the 21st Century will not be a North to South Movement advancing under the protégé of some colonial powers as was in the 19th century or a haphazard scramble from every where to everywhere as in the closing decades of the 20th century.* (Okorochoa, 2010: 22) It will be a *proactive movement of the Holy Spirit... from South to North from where the Church is growing to where it is in decline* (Okorochoa, 2010:23)

It is in this spirit of *African Spirituality* leading the World Church of Bishop Okorochoa's dream that the All African Bishops Conference invited the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams who in his Sermon at the Opening Service of the Conference described the gathering as *deeply significant, ... and that this is going to be the African century of the Christian Church in terms of energy and growth and vision. God raises up different*

countries and cultures in different seasons to bear witness to his purpose in a specially marked way and it may be that this is indeed his will for Africa in the years ahead. (ACNS 724). Invariably, Archbishop Williams did not mince words to caution that if the Churches in Africa are indeed going to be for this time *a city set on a hill, how very important it will be for the health and growth of all God's churches throughout the world that this witness continues at its best and highest.* (ACNS 724, 2010)

One significant question many African theologians and nationalists have not been able to answer is the *sort of Spirituality the African mission propagators going to share with the World Church?* Often the Christian gospel which the Africans propagate does not fully embrace what *African Spiritual needs and expressions* embody and imply. More often than not, an African Christian preacher does not in any way express the *African Spirituality*, a form that is *indigenous, traditional, functional and meaningful* to the uneducated African. He struggles to project Christian Spirituality in African native way. The language is often not African, the theology often 'westernized' and Christian and does not answer any problems Africans in need and difficulty are asking. The existential problems of suffering, demonic attack, poverty, fear of charms and magic, endemic tribal and ethnic rivalry, micro-cosmic views of who is my neighbour, etc do not seem to be addressed by many an African Christian Gospel preacher. It is the New Pentecostal religious movement going on in many parts of Africa that is emphasizing *deliverance, exorcism, liberation, family and ancestral cult problems, witchcraft possession*, etc. Most of these subtle theological concepts do not feature prominently in the brand of Christianity which foreign Mission preachers propagated in Africa. Many who worship in the historic Christian Churches in Africa do not think along that line. Many Africans who feel more secure and spiritually assisted by the teachings and methods of worship of the Pentecostal Churches seem to be attracted now to the noisy and chaotic mode of worship of the Pentecostal churches. Invariably, many traditional and older religious denominations in Africa seem to be copying the modes of worship of the Pentecostals in order to retain their members from drifting away from them. The spirituality the African Christian Church is talking about may be the teaching and understanding of one denominational group or any of the various *Pentecostal groups* that mushroomed all over the continent. This is where we ask 'what sort or which type of African Spirituality do we want the world to absorb and use as a model for solution to the numerous problems that plague the human race especially in contemporary times. When the politician or economist is talking of globalization in his own terms, he might be looking for solution for his global political and economic problem. If the African preacher who wants to preach the gospel of salvation is met, what sort of *Spirituality* is he going to propagate- *Indigenous African Spirituality* or that of the *Christian Church* which many Africans are now propagating? It must be stated here that *African Christian Spirituality* is quite different from Traditional African Spirituality! (Onunwa, 2005:12)

*African Traditional Spirituality is indeed a local microcosmic spiritual perception of the world which is unlike the capitalistic global businessmen who want to add more territories to their loot. Many Western businessmen are by and large capitalists who want to enlarge their economic gains by trying to lure poor and 'Third world countries' with newly coined concepts like Trade Liberalisation and the likes. An African traditional religionist cannot try to 'colonize' any one spiritually because one such attempt in history did not make headway. It is to that effort by late Chief K.O.K. Onyioha that we now turn to assess why it sounded both *artificial and unrealistic daydream* to make African traditional religion or spirituality a *global faith* for all human race.*

iii. Godianism: An African Indigenous Faith For The Whole Human Race

Godianism is a philosophy of God-worship discovered by an African religious leader in the 19th Century. Chief K.O.K. Onyioha who founded Godianism carried out a world-wide mission of spreading the philosophy of Godianism as a Modern Religion to the Modern Man where the chief object of worship is *Theocentric* not *Anthropocentric*. (Onunwa, 1989:20) While Islam tries to worship God through the man Mohammed, Christianity goes to God through Jesus Christ. Godianism goes directly to God without any *human medium*. Chief Onyioha travelled all the continents of the world to establish the faith of Godianism. He was a *Missionary Par Excellence* in modern times. Yet to his greatest dismay, it is only the Blacks in the USA who embraced the faith of the New Religious Movement which helped them in their struggle against racism and segregation. They saw in *God of Godianism* a Universal and Impartial God who supported the oppressed and down-trodden people at the margins of society.

The Chief in an interview once stated that he established the Godian Faith as a way to seek the rights of the oppressed Blacks in the world. (Onunwa, 1990:123) He explained that the Whites monopolized the faith of Humanity and made God a White Deity. In Christianity, the Pope who is a white man is the Head of the Religion. An Arab, who is also *white*, is the head Islam. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism etc which are regarded as World Religions are headed by men who are not black. So in the Council of World Religions, the Whites are at the helm of affairs. The Black man has no place at all in the Council of Religious Leaders. In effect, he founded *Godianism* and made the Black man to head it so that at least one Black man would be seen as the *Head of a World Religious Movement*. Unfortunately, most of the adherents of Godianism are Blacks not whites, and worse still, African Traditional Religion or Godianism which is its modern version, is not accorded that status in the world. This goes to create the impression that any global movement headed by a Black man might not be accepted by the Whites. That casts aspersion on the so-called *global village* concept of the modern times. The number of whites who would accept the faith headed by a Black man is still a very difficult issue to think about. Besides the genuine efforts of the leaders of Godianism to make it a world-wide *religion of traditionalism* for modern man, it is difficult to see it as

fundamentally, the traditional faith the local African man professes. The cosmology that is *inherently microcosmic* cannot turn *macrocosmic* overnight.

The problem of acceptability by racist whites is a case yet to be discussed in any forum. Meanwhile, African traditional religion cannot go *global!* Those who practise it in Europe, South America, North America and any other place are either Blacks or descendants of Black slaves.

Conclusion

The present writer is not a pessimist but a practical analyst who views issues of faith and practice from the functional existential experience. As a practising *mission partner* and *gospel bearer* in foreign lands, he has experienced a sort of neglect and rejection which people from some parts of the world give to Africans. In this essay, we have been able to discuss the irrational and untenable realization of the term *globalization* in world economic trade and politics. Secondly, since it is a purely economic and political term, it is difficult to apply it to spiritual spheres of life. It is not easy to transpose the term more so in a context where the spiritual life is localized, *inherently microcosmic*, conservative and practical.

It is not possible for traditional *African Spirituality* to be made world-wide faith for all humans to adhere to or to adopt as a way of life. It is good for the *African practitioners of the faith* and those Africans who claim to be Christians but in times of great stress and difficulty patronize it in secret. I believe that Bishop Okorocho and those African zealous Christian missionary evangelists who are sincerely propagating the Christian gospel to every one in the world would realise that what they are really sharing with other non-Africans is not *African Spirituality* but *Christian Spirituality* expressed in African way. There is a difference between *African Spirituality* and *African Christian Spirituality* and the present writer has clearly differentiated this else where. It is not the primary concern of this paper to repeat it here (Onunwa, 1992: 23ff). We hope that many parts of the world would accept Christianity as their faith and way of life but not necessarily the original and unadulterated traditional and authentic *African spirituality*. It must be emphasized that African missionaries are not yet *selling* African traditional faith in the *global market of religion* but selling African model of Christianity. To say the least, many people in Europe and America see the *African Pentecostal spirituality* as a model of American Pentecostalism which degenerated into *Prosperity Gospel* when many prominent *Tele-evangelists* from *America commercialized* the Christian Faith and became millionaires. Seen against this background as African product, the *Spirituality* we are talking about would fall into the same place with other African raw materials and products like cocoa, crude oil, coffee, cotton, iron, diamond, etc which are not highly priced in the *World Market*. Yet the finished and manufactured goods are sold exorbitantly to *Third World Consumers*. Invariably, *African Spirituality* would not be sold or valued by Western consumers of faith at very high price. In other words, just as Third World

products are still undervalued by the rich world economies that want *free market zone and liberalization of trade*, the Spirituality from Africa would probably fall into the same category.

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