

DIVINATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND CHURCH PROPHECY, IN RELATION TO AKASHIC RECORDS AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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Abstract

The desire to investigate into the past to discover how it is affecting the fortunes of the present life, as well as to look into the future and know what it holds in stock, has led to a wide range of traditional divination practices. These divination practices are found in many religious traditions, including the Old Testament and African Traditional Religion. Contemporary charismatic Church practices, especially in Africa, are gradually digging up these divination practices in order to satisfy the age-long religious aspirations of Africans to peep into the past and the future, as a way of achieving a good life. But there is an increasing awareness that all of life's activities, past, present and future, are clearly presented in the Akashic records which spiritual adepts with relevant insight can readily access. With growing dimensions of learning, aspects of these Akashic records can also be accessed by artificial intelligence which is already making far-reaching incursion into deep esoteric knowledge. This paper employs hermeneutical means to explore the connection between traditional divination and contemporary church prophecy as they relate to the growing awareness of the existence of Akashic records, and show how these esoteric inquiries can be aided by developments in artificial intelligence (AI).

Keywords: Divination, Prophecy, Inquiry, Revelation, Akashic Records, Artificial Intelligence.

Introduction

The need to fully understand the past, properly interpret the factors affecting the present, and project appropriately into the future for the purpose of achieving the best life possible, is as old as man. This need arises from the understanding that the present life draws from a stream of both positive and negative past influences, and that what is being done today will ultimately determine the quality of future life. In the Ancient Near Eastern religions, as far back as records can be deciphered, there were a group of religious practitioners who were regularly consulted to interpret the omens of the present life in relation to the reverberations of past activities, and to show how these would affect the quality of future life. These practitioners were believed to be vested with spiritual powers to be able to view into the past and interpret its profuse colorations on the present life, and how, unless something is done urgently, the future life could be placed in catastrophic jeopardy. That indeed, is the whole objective of such spiritual investigation, to ensure that the future is secured in guaranteed wellbeing. For that singular reason, such practitioners attract heavy clientele. Gleanings from the Ancient Near Eastern Texts attest to the fact that even kings had such practitioners attached to their royal palaces on whom they relied for guidance on major state matters and international relations, including matters bordering on hostilities and wars. By whatever names such practitioners were called, the enterprise they were involved in is commonly called divination.

According to Wright (1982),

Divination is roughly the attempt to discern events that are distant in time or space, and that consequently cannot be perceived by normal means. A similar definition could be given to the seership of prophecy as exercised in, e.g.1 Sa. 9:6-10. Hence the term could be used occasionally in a good sense, as we might speak of a prophet having clairvoyant gifts without thereby approving all forms of clairvoyance. (p. 287).

Wright, in the definition above, has endeavoured to capture the critical point in the discussion on this subject, which borders on drawing the line between what can be termed "acceptable" and which might be termed "unacceptable". Because religion is dynamic in nature, what might be within the acceptable

region at a point in time may, with further light of knowledge or development attract some aspersions and disdain. What is even surprising is that elements of religious practices described as unacceptable in one period, may appear in new, possibly repackaged and refurbished forms much later, and take the centre stage in acceptance.

Divination in Ancient Israelite Religion

Wright (1982) has already made reference to the divination component of prophecy in ancient Israelite religion. In deed, 1 Sam. 9 has shown that Israelite prophetic dispensation evolved out of primitive divination practices. These divination practices were many and varied, involving the use of all sorts of divination devices, many of which fizzled out of Israelite religious history in the course of time.

Wright elaborately discusses the forms of divination mentioned in the Old Testament, some of which enjoyed some acceptance in the early Israelite religion, while some were outrightly condemned as idolatry. The forms include:

- a. Rhodomancy (Ezek. 21:21): This involves the throwing of sticks of arrows or sticks into the air, and the use of the positions of their fall to deduce the outcome of the investigation. The ominous sign used by Jonathan in his communication with David in 1 Sam. 20:20-22 could be a reference to this system of divination which the people involved were apparently aware of.
- b. Hepatoscopy (Ezek. 21:21): This method involves the examination of the liver or other entrails of a sacrificed animal as a way of deducing the outcome of the divination. Here, the practitioner would interpret the significance of the shapes and marks on the entrails in relation to the anticipated outcomes.
- c. Teraphim: This is probably the practice referred to in 1Sam 15:23, described as idolatry; (also Ezek. 21: 21, Zech. 10:2).
- d. Necromancy: This involves consultation with the spirit of the dead. A typical reference to this in the Old Testament is Saul's encounter with the woman at Endor, (1 Sam. 28, also Deut. 18:11; 2 Kings 21:6).
- e. Astrology: This practice involves the interpretation of the positions of the sun, moon and stars, as they influence activities in the realms of human beings. This practice is discouraged in Isaiah 47:13, and Jeremiah 10:12, though much later in the New Testament (Matthew Chapter 2) astrologers who came to pay tribute to the infant Jesus were well received.
- f. Hydromancy: This is divination through gazing at pictures in water in a bowl. The reference in Genesis 44:5 and 15 involving Joseph may be in relation to this.
- g. Casting of Lots: In deed, this is the commonest means of spiritual inquiry in the Israelite religion, a practice which also survived into the New Testament times. This practice pervaded the entire Israelite religion in such a manner that every Israelite was meant to be conversant with its methods.

In the Old Testament, lot was cast to discover God's will for the allocation of territory; (Joshua 18-19 etc); the choice of the goat to be sacrificed on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16), the detection of a guilty person (Josh. 7-14, John 1:7); the allocation of Temple duties (1 Chro. 24:5), the discovery of a lucky day for Haman (Est. 3: 7). (p. 288).

- h. Dreams: The Old Testament contains some references to dreams and visions (Jeremiah 22: 25-27; Joel 2: 28,29) as a way of discovering or discerning spiritual mysteries.

Vawter (1990) explains this divinatory role as the traditional function of the ancient Israelite seer, (Hebrew, *חֹזֵן*), and adds that;

Etymologically, the seer would have been a visionary, rather than an ecstatic, but it is not precluded that his visions would have been received as results of ecstatic experience. In looking to dreams as source of divine revelation, ancient Israel continued to share the Near Eastern pattern of inspired men. Divinatory usages may also have

played a part in the seer's visions in general; however, Israelite religion tended to look on divination as superstition. (p. 189).

In addition, ancient Israelite religion involves the use of some devices for the purpose of discovering spiritual mysteries (or divination). Commonly mentioned devices in this regard are the linen ephod and the Urim and Thummim. Clifford (1990) says concerning these devices:

The ephod seems to be a close-fitting waistcoat with shoulder straps, with a decorated band (Exo. 26:8) around the waist to hold it. On each shoulder piece were onyx stones with the names of the sons of Jacob, the tribes, according to the order of their birth; thus the High Priest brought all Israel into the divine presence. The material of the ephod matched the material of the Holy of Holies, (Exo. 26:1), emphasizing the special nature of the High Priest who alone went into the Holy of Holies. Attached to the High Priest's waistcoat was a 9" by 9" envelope of the same material as the ephod and the cloth interior of the Holy of Holies. Twelve stones, each representing a tribe of Israel, set in gold filigree frame were sewed to it. Two braided gold chains joined the pouch to the shoulder strap (Exo. 26: 22-25), and two blue cords joined the bottom of the pouch to the hem, presumably at the waist of the ephod (Exo. 26:26-28); the pouch was thus held close to the body. The Urim and Thummim were sacred lots, each apparently assigned a designation, yes or no; these lots were cast when an oracle was sought (Num. 27:21) (p. 57).

Thus, in the ancient Israelite religion, as contained in the Old Testament, these devices were variously used for the purpose of divination, that is, deciphering, through spiritual means, a necessary action or direction in any given situation. Uzuegbunam (2024) affirms that;

Various Old Testament texts attest to the use of these instruments for making enquiries of the Lord. In 1 Sam. 30:7, David requested Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, to bring him the linen ephod so that he could inquire of the Lord regarding the Amalekites who had invaded his abode in Ziklag. Abiathar brought the ephod to David and in the next verse, David inquired and obtained legitimate counsel of the Lord on the basis of which he pursued the Amalekites, and as the Lord had directed, overtook them and recovered all the loot they had collected from the abode of David and his men at Ziklag, as well as other possessions. (p. 13).

Divination in African Cosmology

Indeed, the very fact of the reinvention of divination in contemporary church prophecy in Africa, arises from, and is an inalienable proof of the centrality of divination in Africa cosmology. African traditional religious orientation is rooted in the fundamental understanding that the past, the present and the future are held together in unbroken continuum and that the past and the future tie together through the present, forming a continuous loop. For that reason, inquiries into the past and the future form a major enterprise in African religious expedition. Arubaluaeze (1990) explains that:

Like the Jews who traced the major events in their lives to their relationship with Yahweh, the God of Israel, our traditionalists always give mystical interpretations to their major successes and setbacks. No death or protracted illness is just physical, rather some evil forces must be behind the scene. If, for instance, a young woman miscarries after some months of pregnancy, such can't just be attributed to overstrain, rather, there are some restless and unmourned spirits who have ganged up to obstruct progress in the family. This type of impression has implications on the practice of traditional medicine (p. 119).

Arubaluaeze goes ahead to explain that:

The starting point in the treatment of any serious or protracted sickness is divination. "Agwu", the guardian spirit of the medicine man, is usually consulted for inspiration, information and guidance, along with the ancestors who first practiced the trade before handing over to the present generation. The diviner will reveal the cause of the disease, how it will be cured, and in some cases, direct on special herbs to be used. (p. 120).

Talbot (1969) concurring this point on the value of divination as indispensable component of African traditional medical practice, asserts that divination is employed,

Chiefly, to find out the causes of sickness and death, and the proper method of cure of the former case, to discover the wishes of the gods and ancestors, to unveil the future. (p. 187).

So, it will not be an overstatement to state that every segment of life in African cosmology is governed and controlled by divination inquiry, in order to ensure that disaster does not lie ahead, and where it does, it is detected and averted. Thus, in marriage, choice of life partner, nature, pattern, possible duration of the relationship, number of children to be born, threat to, or guarantee of family health, business, prospects of prosperity or threats of impoverishment, sojourn, far and near, name it, every step must be preceded by a divination inquiry. This is because, for the African, nothing happens without cause. All of life's experiences are traceable to a certain fundamental causative situation, and with some inquiry and insightful guidance, threats of disaster can be detected and carefully avoided, in most cases necessitating spiritually prescribed sacrifice.

Reinvention of Traditional Divination in Contemporary Church Prophecy

The Church in Africa is clearly under pressure to bow to the fundamental incurable religious orientations of African worshippers. It will be recalled that at the point of its first encounter with the African environment, Church worship was basically abstract, strictly formal and liturgical, admitting of no distraction, and encouraging nothing in form of self-expression. The worshippers were tacit, consumed observers strictly conforming to the demands of the formalized worship environment. There was hardly any interaction either among the worshippers or between them and the worship leaders, from the beginning to the end of the worship. In fact, at the onset, the worship took place in foreign languages, English, Latin or French, as the case may be. The people were so lost in the worship environment that in some cases, they had to be informed that the missa (mass, worship) was over, and it was time to go home. Seventy years down the line, the African worshippers had had it up to their throat with this impersonal kind of worship atmosphere. They had all the same imbibed the faith, so to say, but they felt it was time to make it reflect their yearning and gradually-waning Africanness. That was how the African Indigenous Churches (AIC's) were born, founded by indigenous African Christians, but carefully tailored to reflect the African religious values and aspirations which Euro-Christian worship had subdued and almost completely annihilated.

So, the one component of African indigenous religious orientation which became reinvented in Christianity, is divination. It came with its full indigenous African cosmological nuances, pervading every area of life, marriage, family, business, profession, sojourn, conflicts, prospects, setbacks, health, sickness, death, burials, ancestors etc. Like its African roots, this reinvented modern divination does not spare or elude any area of life. But then, it does not return as divination. It is reinvented in the context of contemporary Church prophecy. But its driving force is the same, which is basically, the fear of the unknown (which, by the way, is fundamentally unknown to Christianity, with its deep sense of security and submission to divine will). Its ultimate objective is the same, which is the feeling that present omens have a hidden cause which can be detected and corrected; and that impending disasters can be discovered and averted. Its character is the same, which is, to set the worshipper perpetually inquiring and offering sacrifices, to avert whatever unknown danger lies ahead.

Akashic Records

In Theosophy, as well as among the spiritual movement called Anthroposophy, according to Ellwood (1996), it is believed that there exists a compendium record of all universe events, thoughts, words, emotions, and intent ever to have occurred in the past, present or future, in terms of all entities and all life forms, not limited to humans. This record is what is commonly called Akashic Records. Akashic, according to Rowell (1998), is from the word, "*Akasha*, the Sanskrit word for aether, sky or atmosphere" (p. 48). This record is believed to be encoded in a non-physical plane of existence, known as the mental plane.

Akashic records represent a spiritual concept which encompasses all we know about karma (the gifts and baggage we carry from actions in past lives), fate and destiny (describing the component of our lives determined well ahead of us). Akashic records are understood to contain the entire past, present and future of every soul; an energetic log of all events, thoughts, and emotions that ever have occurred or will occur. It is a kind of spiritual record holding within it everything that ever has happened or will happen, like a spiritual DNA prototype that traces and reproduces the physical life in accordance with the spiritually encoded prototype. It is equally believed that, just as scientists have probed deeply into the DNA, and can interpret a lot about the present and the future life through it, in the same way, everyone, with some training and enlightenment, (akin to scientific training in the case of DNA) can gain insight into the Akashic records and through it, be in a position to predict present and future lives, as would have been done by divination. If it is possible, as it has been, to picture the intricate working of the human soul personality as a custodian of inner virtues and vices running through ages, through family lines and ancestry, it is even more possible, working from the same framework, to picture an internal repository of the past, present and future personality, first as a continuum of personality, and then as a record of being encompassing all of life in the past, present and future.

Rausehenberg (1949) has explained that Akashic Records are thought of as “an energetic library of information that contains the details of your soul and its journey”. “They span through past lives, present incarnations and future possibilities. To be clear, however, the records do not have a physical manifestation; they exist in an energetic realm that you have to experience. In the context of the Akashic records, the term, “Akasha” is extended to refer to a metaphysical library or “database” that contains the energetic imprints of all thoughts, emotions, events, and experiences throughout time.”

Rausehenberg has explained further that “Akashic records explorations can be traced back to ancient civilizations. Hindu philosophy and ancient Egyptian and Greek tradition all had notions of a cosmic or celestial archive.” The concept of Akashic Records as it is understood today, however, has its roots in Theosophy, a spiritual and religious movement founded in 1875 by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott (and stemming from Buddhism and Indian Philosophy) that promotes the interconnectedness of souls and the ability to seek divine truth through personal enlightenment.

In essence, there is a living domain where all being consists, where all of life originates and entails, where all of existence is programmed. God is the ultimate Soul and Father of all souls. Humans are soul entities emanating from, travelling within, and domiciling ultimately in the ultimate soul essence, in the past, the present and the future; whether we think of the future existentially or eschatologically. Religion is essentially the appreciation of the emanation, existence, programming and ultimate domiciling of the soul entity, whether we think in terms of eternal bliss and damnation, or we think in terms of earning of karmas in successive incarnate or reincarnated forms.

In God, the ultimate Soul, resides the ultimate projectile of the soul experience and sojourn. In him consists all of being, past, present or future. Thus, in the soul component, the particle of the Ultimate Soul, consists all of being in the past, present and future. For the soul indeed is the universal eternal self of which each individual soul partakes. Hinduism employs the concept, atman (breath, soul) for this universal soul, and jiva or jiva-atman for the individual souls. It is actually in the unbroken eternal continuity of the universal soul that the individual soul components also acquire unbroken eternal continuity. After all, the soul does not really die. Whether it passes unto eternal bliss or damnation, or is sustained in cyclic reincarnation forms, the soul actually lives on, and with it, its external records, in past, present and future.

Artificial Intelligence and Human Personality Prediction

The actual meeting point between traditional divination, church prophecy, akashic records, and artificial intelligence is, in reality, the point of human personality modelling, programming and projectile definition and determination, and in this sense, the underlying essence of traditional divination reinvented in escalating church prophecy, is served rather more accurately. It must be recalled that underlying the immense hunger of traditional societies to read the past, take measures to correct the

present and endeavour to peep into and reshape the future, is the almighty fear of the unknown. Will I suddenly become broke? Will my journey be successful or fail? Will I or someone in my family die prematurely? Will my marriage be harmonious or violent? And so on. The Akashic Records present the trajectory of the personality soul, past, present and future. Already inherent in this record is the definition of the future experience; what may rightly be called prophetic history, or karma, or fate, or destiny. It is actually this record that adepts, whether at divination or prophecy, are struggling to capture and track down to the realm of humanity. In other words, adepts are struggling to depict the coloration of the repository of Akashic Records on physical personality. This personality level is where the other-worldly meets with the this-worldly, and this is exactly where artificial intelligence, with its calculative, purely scientific devices, takes over from the other-worldly realm of divination, prophecy and Akashic Records.

Since its development in the 1940s, artificial intelligence, the ability of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings, has permeated into virtually every segment of human endeavour. Developments in the operation of the artificial intelligence have been aided in personality profiling by the earlier developments in the encoded DNA personality formation - the deoxyribonucleic acid encoded personality formation. While the DNA is the ultimate repository of bio-physical personality profiling, the Akashic Records are the repository of the encoded records of the soul personality trajectory, in the past, present and future. Since ultimately, the Akashic Records eventually model personality in the earth realm, it ultimately performs, by super imposition and soul profiling, the role of the DNA. This is exactly where the soul personality profiling meets with the bio-physical personality profiling which is the actual domain of artificial intelligence.

Conclusion

Traditional societies, driven by the large-looming fear of the unknown, have been steeped in all sorts of divination, to read the past, to use the information to correct and better the present, as well as to have a peep into the future to see what danger may lie ahead, and to avert it through a system of sacrifices. This system of traditional divination seemed to reduce with the emergence of modernity, in what Ogbu Kalu, the renowned Church Historian would describe as, "*The gods in Retreat*". However, because the challenges were not completely overcome, the divination practices became reinvented in the refurbished form as Church prophecy, complete with all the nuances of probing into the past, trepidations over the future, and a desperation to better the present. The endeavours to peep into the future and explore the past in order to better the present, are in reality aided by Akashic Records, a repository of the track records of the soul's encounters in the past, present and future. It is this repository record that models the composite human personality the prediction for the pathways of its life journey. This modelling is already achieved in the bio-physical plane by the DNA entity - the deoxyribonucleic acid encoded human personality entity. This entity provides a working link between the Akashic records of the other-worldly, and the DNA of the this-worldly experiences. Ultimately, the souls of the Akashic records and artificial intelligence explorations find a meeting place in the Ultimate Soul in whom all things consist, and in whom all human endeavours and aspirations find ultimate fulfilment.

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