

THE TRUTH ABOUT IYANLA VANZANT

By: Bod' Adeboyejo

"God told me to do four things: Tell my story, teach His law, write books, and make people laugh. That's what God told me to do..."

What I write about, I live." --- Iyanla Vanzant

Listening to or reading Iyanla talk about God, anybody can be misled into thinking that she's talking or writing about the God of the bible.

Especially, since she makes reference to the Bible or Jesus in some of her books.

But it doesn't take long for anybody to see through her falsehood, and see her for who she is. That is, a traditionalist and a paganist disguised as a messenger of God. Yeah! Now, that may surprise some of you. Particularly those of you who have read all or some of her books, and have come to see her as God-sent. But I intend to show you in this article, that she is anything but a messenger of God!

I didn't see the need to share some of the things I'm about to share in this article about Iyanla until now. Even though I have known some of these things, for some time now. Besides, I write to a predominantly Christian audience, so didn't see the need for the article, until I started seeing Christians, yeah! Born Again Christians, reading some of her books! That was what set me off! Therefore, the primary reason why I'm writing this article is to warn people, particularly those Christians eager for the Word, who would read anything that has "God" in it, about the danger of being exposed to some of Iyanla's books, particularly her books on spirituality. And even while in the process of writing this article, I got more and more confirmation for the need of this article.

Let me say that this piece is not an intellectual literary critique of Iyanla's works. Neither is it a review. Rather, this is a spiritual critique, if you will. Also it is not an attack on her personality.

Personally, I do not know her, and have nothing against her or her beliefs. My problem is with her spiritual ambiguity, which I believe is meant to fool people, particularly those with a genuine hunger for God, into believing that she is a messenger of God, when she is not. Also, I have a problem with her packaging paganism mixed with Yoruba mythology, sorcery, metaphysics, etc. as African religion, and sometimes even as Christianity! By the way, some of the things I know about Iyanla and her beliefs, I know

because I'm Nigerian, a Yoruba. Therefore, I'm able to know that some of the beliefs Iyanla tries to package as African religion are Yoruba mythology, mixed with paganism which is misleading to say the least. To mislead black folks, especially African-Americans into thinking that by adopting these pagan practices, they are identifying with their roots and its religion. And even if the Yoruba traditional religion has a lot of pagan practices, it still does not make it "African ". It is African because it's from Nigeria, but not African, in terms of general beliefs. So, for Iyanla to blanketly label Yoruba mythology as African tradition or religion is erroneous! First of all, the Yoruba tribe, even though one of the three major tribes in Nigeria is one of several hundred tribes in Nigeria. So the Yoruba culture or tradition (even though one of the richest cultures in the world) does not in any way qualify to be labeled "Nigerian Tradition" much less the blanket label, "African Tradition" as often labeled by Iyanla in some of her books! However, that's neither here nor there!

What's In a Name?

Let's start by exploring the name "Iyanla", a Yoruba word (pronounced "Ee-yan-la"). The word "Iyanla" is not so much a name but more of a title (A title usually given and used by the Yoruba traditionalists or idol Oshun worshippers, worshippers of a sea goddess.) The name, Iyanla, literally translated means "big mother". But figuratively means "Head Mother", "Head Priestess" or "Head goddess". However, since she was not born in Nigeria or a Nigerian (at least not by natural birth), I would not be making a wild guess to suggest that that's a name she adopted (as a result of her involvement with the Yoruba traditionalists) rather than being her birth-given name. She confirms her involvement with the Yoruba traditionalists in one of her books:

"When I was initiated into the priesthood (ministry) of Yoruba culture, many of my family members and friends admonished me. The general belief was that I would burn in Hell for turning my back on God." ---- Iyanla Vanzant (The Spirit of a Man)

Note the word "Initiated" in the verse above. It is cultic. It denotes rites, ritual, etc. I can't remember anybody called of God in the Bible that was initiated. When God calls you to service, you don't get initiated you are ordained, or sanctified. Which brings to mind that, before you name your children an African name, you may want to find out the meaning of the name. A lot of African names, particularly Yoruba names portray a family's religious belief. For instance, names beginning with the words Orisa, Oya, Oshun, Awo, Ifa, etc. all bear reference to some form of Yoruba gods or goddesses. A She-God?

Iyanla believes and often refers to God as a She in some of her books. Now,

that may sound cute, particularly to her predominantly female audience or those that do not know what the Bible says about God. But it is pagan belief. The belief in Mother Earth, Mother Nature, Father Sky, etc. A belief, which contradicts what the Bible says about God:

God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth. John 4:24.

And even where reference is made in terms of his gender; God is always referred to as a He. For example, God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. Or as Jesus often makes reference of Him, that they may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in them that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that you sent Me? John 17:21.

Sorry, Ms. Vanzant, God is not a She! What God?

When she's not referring to God as a She, a Higher Being or Creator, Iyanla, sometimes in some of her books or interviews alludes to God as God. And there's nothing wrong with that. But one should ask her the question, What God?? Because whenever anybody uses the word God, if you are a Christian, what comes to your mind is the God of the Bible or Jesus Christ. But this is not always the case. Because most people, other than atheists and agnostics, believe in God, without necessarily believing in Christ, as the ONLY way to God. So, a belief in God means nothing. The only name that separates God from other gods is JESUS! The name above all names! That somebody uses the word, "God" or believes in the name does not make the person a Christian. Christianity is not a belief in God but a relationship with God! Even satan believes in God and trembles! James 2:19. What Spirit?

In the book The Spirit of a Man, Iyanla writes: Spirituality asks you to find God within and find the religion that matches that interpretation

Iyanla Vanzant, (The Spirit of a Man:)

Really? Find God within and find the religion that matches that interpretation. That is, whether Buddhism, Islam, New Age Movement, Hare Krishna, Hindu, Idol worshipping, etc. It doesn't matter as long as one expresses that spirituality. Right? How deceived can anyone be? When Jesus clearly states in John 14:6 ... I am the way, the truth and the life no one can come to the Father except through me. Why then would anybody try to teach others to find God within and find the religion that matches the interpretation?? How shallow!

Also, in the same book, she writes about Christianity: Religion, in particular Christianity has been a spiritual main stay in the Black community. Unfortunately, many teaching of the Christian schools of thoughts have been used to miseducate and deny the inherent spiritual power of Black men? Among these formulas are those teachings that human beings are naturally sinful and lost from birth. ---Iyanla Vanzant (The Spirit of a Man).

Iyanla believes that it is wrong to teach (and in fact a religious formula) that human beings are naturally sinful and lost from birth. The Bible on the other hand teaches that, ALL have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23.

However, by faith in Christ, man is redeemed and reconciled back to God. It is because Man is naturally sinful and lost from birth that Christ came to redeem Man. If human beings were not inherently sinful and lost from birth, (i.e. separated from God as a result of the Adamic sin) there would be no reason for Christ to come. For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16.

Jesus came to the world, to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Notice the verse says the "sin" and not the "sins" of the world. Referring to the adamic sin, which was why Jesus died for humanity, not our individual day-to-day sins, (See my article: Sinful By Nature). Researching for this article, I couldn't help but imagine, how anybody, particularly some born-again, Spirit-filled Christians could read some of Iyanla's books and not flinch because of how much pagan beliefs they contain. For instance, in the book One Day My Soul Just Opened Up! (the book that I have seen the most with Christians) Iyanla writes:

God is within you and every living thing. Translated, this means that everything living is a unique representation of God's identity - mind, spirit, and life --- Iyanla Vanzant (One Day My Soul Just Opened Up!) Hello! How can every living thing be a unique representation of God's identity? When Man is the only creature made in the image and likeness of God! In other words, Man is the only creature God breathed the Breath of Life into. Not plants. Not animals. Which also are living things! And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life: and man became a living being. Genesis 2:7.

Of all of God's creation only Man did He form out of the ground. All other creatures He spoke into existence, ...Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind, and it was so. Genesis 1:24. So, Ms. Vanzant, God is not in every thing, neither is every living thing a unique representation of God's identity - mind, spirit and life! God's hands are in everything, (i.e. their creation), but He is not in everything! Besides, animals do not have minds or spirits! Man is the only creature with a spirit, because God (Spirit) breathed into his nostrils! Read Genesis 1 and 2. The belief that God is in everything is a pagan belief that makes people worship a creature rather than the Creator!

Talking about spirits, Iyanla writes in her book, Tapping The Power Within: Every living being has a God-appointed guarding spirit, which walks through

life with you. This good spirit unites with you at the moment you were born. Some refer to it as, guarding angel or protector spirit. In African culture, guarding spirits are called Egun.

While I cannot claim to be a Bible Scholar, I think I can say emphatically that all through Scriptures, there is no reference of guarding spirits or guarding angels! None! (More on "guarding angels" in an upcoming article).

The doctrine of guardian spirit or guarding angels is all humanistic with no scriptural basis. A doctrine, which has worked its way into the Church.

Which is why the Bible says in 1 John 4:1, Beloved, do not believe every spirit but tests the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Also Iyanla said in the above quotation that, "In African culture, guarding spirits are called 'Egun'." First of all, the word "Egun" is Yoruba for either 'ancestral spirits' or masquerades, which in Yoruba mythology are regarded as ancestral spirits. However, that does not make the belief in ancestral spirits African. It is Yoruba all right, but everything Yoruba is not African, just as everything African is not Yoruba! So, to say that a belief in 'Egun' is African, again is misleading!

Throughout the book, Tapping The Power Within, Iyanla encourages ancestral worship-worshipping ancestral spirits, rituals, erecting altars for ancestral or guarding spirits, using pictures of deceased family members, mirror, glass of water, burning incenses to invoke spirits, meditation through breathing, etc. The idea of ancestral worship is sorcery to say the least. The same thing King Saul did when he sought the witch at Endor to invoke the spirit of Samuel, (1 Samuel 28:

6-14). The same practice God warned the Israelites against: There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer. Or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or spiritist, or ONE WHO CALLS UP THE DEAD (caps mine). For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. Deuteronomy 18: 10-13.

Once a person dies that is it. So, to elevate the spirit of a dead person to a god is foolishness! Yet, Iyanla in the book, Tapping The Power Within:

A Path To Empowerment For Black Women, advocates making or maintaining contacts with dead relatives through the spirit world. Dumb! Dumb!! Dumb!!!

I can go on and on, to show you that what Iyanla believes contradicts what the Bible teaches. Researching and writing this article I came to this conclusion, that Iyanla must either be confused about what she believes and how she believes it. Or knows what she believes, but just wants to confuse and mislead as many people as she can. I mean, how can a person keep going

back and forth between pagan practices and beliefs, Eastern Religion and Christianity (i.e. her form of Christianity).

I mean, if you want to practice sorcery and witchcraft practice sorcery and witchcraft, and leave the Bible out of it. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. 1 Corinthians 10:21. You can't keep going back and forth between the Bible, and some dumb books written by some metaphysician or Buddhist or quotes by some philosophers, etc. You are either cold or hot. You can't be hot and cold at the same time! However, I do believe that all the God-talk and Scripture quotes are all to fool people, especially some Christians (who unfortunately are reading her books), into believing that she's God-sent, to increase her marketability.

And talking about fooling Christians, one of her many titles and phrases used to describe her is that of "an ordained minister". I mean, that can be misleading because what comes to mind when anybody reads that is to think that she is an ordained minister of God. I mean, I almost did. Until I learned that some Astrologers and Psychic people now use the title, Reverend. A title, which I once thought was reserved for Christian ministers. But how wrong I was! The word "reverend" means priest, vicar, preacher, pastor, etc. So, any priest can have the title Reverend. For instance, an astrologer's name read something like this:

Rev. Brown (Master Astrologer)! So, if you are among those who have been fooled into thinking that Iyanla is a minister of God, she is not! Her ordination was into the Yoruba priesthood (occult)! As she admitted above. So saints beware, don't be fooled!

To those of you Christians who have read or are reading or planning to read Iyanla's books, let me say that you are doing more damage to your soul than good. The Bible in Proverbs 4:23 says, Guard your heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life.? You do not need Iyanla or any other person that shares her belief to tell you who you are. Neither do you need to read about her life to relate. I said this because one of the excuses Christians use for reading her books, is I can relate with her, I know what she's talking about. Maybe you can. But do not need to expose yourself to the garbage she spews to relate. There is at least a story in the Bible that's similar to what you are going through that you can relate to. After all, the Bible says, there's nothing new under the sun! Everything you need is in the Bible. If it is not in the Bible, you do not need it! If only we take time out to study the Bible, we will be amazed at how much the Bible contains. >Everything a Christian needs to live a successful natural life is in the

Bible. But we can only find that out if we spend the kind of time we spend reading some of these dumb books written from humanistic stand points, to

study the Bible.

I also came to this conclusion, that a lot of people, i.e. non-Christians, who read Iyanla's books are people who have a desire to serve God, but just want to serve Him on their own terms. That is, they want a God that would allow them to do the things they still do, like fornication, adultery, lying, cheating, etc. and yet still serve Him. Which is the kind of God, Iyanla presents to her readers. And as a result never teaches against premarital sex or other immoralities the Bible teaches against. So, they (the readers) found through her a God they can serve without giving up their hang-ups, addictions or habits. That is not the God of the Bible! The God of the Bible, even though accepts you as you are, but empowers you (while patiently waiting on you) to get rid of the known sins, conscious or premeditated sins in your life. Which is the hallmark of true repentance! So, to those of you who desire a true relationship with Christ but looking in the wrong places, I say, "You do not need the likes of Iyanla - with all her unbelief to point you to God through ancestral spirits, etc." You do more damage to your soul exposing yourself to such junk and misconception about God. I once heard a preacher say that it's better you know nothing about God before knowing Him correctly, than to learn of Him wrongly before knowing Him correctly. Because, all of the junk or misconception about God has to be purged out of you, when you get to know Him correctly before you can have the right relationship with Him. The ONLY way to God is JESUS! That is why Jesus Himself said "I am THE way, THE truth, and THE life, no one comes to the Father except through me". John 14:6. Notice that Jesus said in this verse that He is THE way, THE truth, and THE life. Not A way, not A truth, not A life! The definite article in English is often used to mean a particular thing, or one and only. Unlike what Iyanla teaches that you should "find God within and find the religion that matches that interpretation." That is one of the biggest lies satan and his agents have been perpetuating since he was kicked out of heaven. Neither is making Christ the Lord of your life as complicated as Iyanla tries to make it. Simply, it's believing in your heart and confessing with your mouth that He died for you and that God raised Him from the dead for your salvation, (Romans 10:9-10). Then find a good Bible-believing, Bible-teaching church, so that you can grow in the knowledge of God. Now it may seem to some people, especially Africans that I'm against the spread of African culture. I am not! I am very proud of my heritage, and can categorically state that the Yoruba culture is one of the richest cultures in the world. And I'm very proud to be a Nigerian and a Yoruba. However, I'm against the teaching of African pagan beliefs, more so to African-Americans all in the name of identifying with their roots. Besides, I am more of God's family than I am African. I have a stronger allegiance

to my Christian brothers and sisters, than I have to my own natural siblings. The blood of Jesus than runs in my Christian Family is stronger than the blood that runs between my siblings and me! So, culture, belief or not, if it's contrary to the Word of God, it must yield. I am for teaching the truth, the absolute truth, which is the Word of God.

In closing, let me reiterate that I do not have a problem with Iyanla and her beliefs. She has a right to believe what she wants to believe. Neither do I really have a problem with her teaching what she believes, (there have been several other false teachers before her, and there will be many more after her). What I have a problem with is her mixing of Scriptures with paganism. As a matter of fact, I believe that she's an excellent writer, and a good motivational speaker. And people can learn from and be motivated by her past experiences, which makes her a good motivational speaker. But that's all she is. A writer and a motivational speaker! It does not make her a minister of God. But then, so are there many motivational speakers in pulpits all around the world, in the name of preachers!

So, all I'm saying to Ms. Vanzant, is that she leaves out the Bible or stop misusing the Scriptures to validate her pagan beliefs. She cannot keep quoting Scriptures only when it soothes her or to further her pagan beliefs, and condemn Christianity or the Bible when it teaches against her beliefs.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

That the man (or woman) of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 2 Timothy 3:

16-17. Meaning, you cannot embrace a part of the Bible and leave out a part. Particularly, parts that teach against your belief or practice. It the same Bible that teaches against making images of other gods that teaches against fornication (or living with a man or woman you are not married to), or cheating, lying, arrogance, etc.

My sincere prayer for Iyanla, is that one day her soul really opens up to the true and living God! Amen!