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## Faith-Based Organizations and the Women's Empowerment Process in Nigeria: An Assessment of the Catholic Women Organization in Tivland

By Daniel Ude Asue

### Abstract

This article presents findings based on an interpretation of a gender survey on the changing socio-economic role of Nigerian women through a field study conducted intermittently between May 2011 and November 2012. Nigerian women's lack of access and control over resources has been identified by numerous findings as the single most important cause of gender inequality in the country. The study argues that the best way to improve the socio-economic status of women is through access to financial resources. It further argues that the Catholic Women Organization (CWO), a faith-based organization of the Catholic Church, and other women organizations have done much to open economic opportunities for women. The CWO in Tivland, central Nigeria is used as a case study on how to open women's access to financial resources in Nigeria.

### Introduction

The empowerment process recognizes women's ability to make meaningful contributions to their individual and collective development in society. This understanding sees "the categories of 'women' and 'men' not as biological phenomena (sex), but as cultural constructions (gender)."<sup>1</sup> Thus, women have ideas of their own, know their priorities, and can assert solutions. Women's empowerment is the third Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of the United Nations, which focuses on gender equality and women's empowerment. Exploring the concept of women's empowerment includes women's ability to make choices that ultimately link to other indicators associated with this goal, such as education, employment, and political participation.<sup>2</sup>

In traditional African societies, women have access to resources, but men have control over the resources. Women have no claim over household property. They own

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<sup>1</sup>Jacques Charmes and Saskia E. Wieringa, "Measuring Women's Empowerment: An Assessment of the Gender-Related Development Index and the Gender Empowerment Measure," *Journal of Human Development* 4, no.3 (2003): 420.

<sup>2</sup> Naila Kabeer, "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Critical Analysis of the Third Millennium Development Goal," *Gender and Development* 13, no.1 (2005): 13-24.

nothing. In fact, women are the property of their husbands.<sup>3</sup> However, in overall social production, women play a key role in performing duties in productive, reproductive, and community management roles. This corroborates with Caroline Moser's framework of gender analysis regarding the triple role of gender distribution of work within the household as outlined by Kabeer, which formulates women's roles as unrecognized, undervalued, and unrewarded when compared to male counterparts in Third World countries.<sup>4</sup> As a result of their non-economic independence, women's social significance is marginalized, to the extent that they are not permitted control over themselves. A pregnant woman in rural Nigeria, for example, has to wait for her husband to decide which hospital or clinic she can attend and when. And when certain factors result in complications during pregnancy that require urgent attention, women have no choice but to wait on the decision of their husbands, irrespective of impending danger or ill health.<sup>5</sup>

This study examines how the Catholic Women Organization (CWO), a faith-based organization that is part of the Catholic Church, is helping to articulate women's search for self-reliance. The central question of this study is: In what ways can Nigerian women's access to financial resources be enhanced as a preferential option in improving their socio-economic status and ensuring their empowerment? Except for a few instances of culture (not the law) working as intervening variables, sufficient financial condition should allow for women's access to resources in Nigeria. This work contends that women have been sufficiently recognized in Nigeria through official government programs; however, the problem is now a matter of sustaining that recognition, which calls for their socio-economic enhancement toward this goal.<sup>6</sup> In a field study conducted intermittently between May 2011 and November 2012, this study used workshop style, focus groups and personal interviews to study the CWO's work among the Tiv<sup>7</sup> women of central Nigeria.

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<sup>3</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (New York: Orbis Books, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Naila Kabeer, *Reversed Realities: Gendered Hierarchies in Development Thought* (New York: Verso, 1995), 275.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Ude Asue, "The Impact of Faith-Based Organization on the Socio-Economic Status of Women: A Study of Catholic Women Organization in Tivland" (Master's Thesis, Benue State University, Makurdi, 2007), 2.

<sup>6</sup> Doki, Ama Gowon. "The Women Empowerment Question in Contemporary Nigeria: A Minority View," *Review of Gender Studies in Nigeria* 1 (2002): 13-19.

<sup>7</sup> The term Tiv refers to "the people, their language as well as their progeny." See Pius T. Ajiki "The Tiv Christian Family and the Moral Formation of the Child" (Master's Thesis, Catholic Institute of West Africa, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, 1989), 4.

## Research Setting

This research is set among the Tiv people, a predominantly agricultural and rural people in central Nigeria. The Tiv number a little more than 5.6 million. Though found in the Nigerian states of Nassarawa, Plateau, Taraba, and Cross River, the Tiv are especially concentrated in the state of Benue, where they are the majority. In Benue State, Tiv number about 2.5 million out of a total population of some 5.2 million.<sup>8</sup> Benue State covers 34,059 square kilometers of a fertile river valley.

Below is a map of Nigeria showing Benue State where the Tiv people are located:



<sup>8</sup> National Population Commission of Nigeria, *Report on the Final 2006 Census Results*, last accessed July 24, 2011, <http://www.population.gov.ng>.

Benue State has land so rich that crops are planted without fertilizers. The land is so fertile with good produce that it is called the “Food Basket of the Nation.”<sup>9</sup> In this “Food Basket of the Nation,” sixty-five percent of the people are small subsistence farmers who live with their families in very poor conditions. Farming is performed by hand. Roads are inaccessible during the rainy season and most people travel long distances on foot. Even the use of bicycles or motorcycles is considered a luxury. Produce is typically carried to markets on the head. Infrastructure is poor: the rainy season washes away the fragile, locally built bridges and damages roadbeds.

This research studied women in the Catholic Diocese of Makurdi shortly before it was divided into the dioceses of Makurdi, Gboko and Katsina Ala on December 31, 2012. The Catholic Diocese of Makurdi occupied 24,461 square kilometers (9,448 square miles) of Benue State<sup>10</sup> and was divided into five deaneries. Two deaneries were urban, largely in the cities of Gboko and Makurdi, which have populations of 361,324 and 300,377 people respectively.<sup>11</sup> The other three deaneries were rural. Together, the diocese included fifty-nine parishes, seventeen independent missions, and fifteen chaplaincies.<sup>12</sup> The Catholic population of the then Diocese of Makurdi numbered 1.4 million in 2010.<sup>13</sup> According to diocesan statistics, women and girls made up 60 percent of the Catholic population of the then Diocese of Makurdi<sup>14</sup> in which the CWO was studied. One hundred and eighty CWO members were interviewed in both personal and focus group discussions including the officials.

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<sup>9</sup> All 36 Nigerian states have mottos. This is the motto of Benue State highlighting the rich agricultural land and rural nature of the state.

<sup>10</sup> Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, *2009 Catholic Directory and Liturgical Calendar* (Lagos: CSN, 2009), iv.

<sup>11</sup> National Population Commission of Nigeria, *Report on the Final 2006 Census Results*.

<sup>12</sup> A parish or independent mission in rural areas of the diocese has about 50 outstation churches or chapels. A chaplaincy here refers to a community that is not a parish, but is established to take care of the spiritual needs of the people in a specialized institutional environment, such as school, hospital, police, or military base.

<sup>13</sup> This is an official figure from the diocesan office.

<sup>14</sup> According to a 1992 survey research by Dennis A. Ityavyar, Tiv women prefer Christianity in general because it allows privileges not found in traditional religions. See Dennis A. Ityavyar, *The Changing Socio-Economic Role of Tiv Women* (Jos: Jos University Press, 1992), 58.

***CWO: Origins, Aims, and Objectives***

The CWO is an umbrella organization that includes all Catholic women's associations in the Nigerian church. It is affiliated with the World Union of Catholic Women's Organization (WUCWO). The WUCWO started in various parts of France, when mothers began to gather to pray for one another and their children. They also discussed their problems and advised one another on children's Christian upbringing. On May 1, 1850, the first conference of these mothers was held in Lile, France, under the leadership of Louise Josson de Bilhem, a court official (Lagos Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women Organization [LACCWO]).<sup>15</sup> Upon the reception of episcopal recognition by the mothers, the society grew rapidly in France and other countries. By 1881, the WUCWO had reached the United States and many groups had been formed. Their aim was to impart good home education and character formation among children. The members believed in sisterhood, unity, and the presence of Christ among them. The WUCWO enjoys the status of an international, non-governmental organization (NGO) and was officially founded in 1910. It unites 95 organizations across different continents. The WUCWO is divided into five regions: Africa, Asia/Pacific, Europe, Latin America/Caribbean, and North America. Each region has a vice-president who is also a member of the international executive committee.<sup>16</sup>

The WUCWO also has UN recognition for presenting women's interests at the international forum. The primary objectives governing the WUCWO, as expressed on the organization's Life Membership Identity Card, are as follows: "To promote the presence, participation and co-responsibility of Catholic women in society and church, in order to enable them fulfill their mission of evangelization and to work for human development."

In Nigeria, Catholic women have always joined different societies such as the Christian Mothers, Holy Rosary, and Sacred Heart in their parishes and dioceses. These societies have always drawn high membership from women. When the CWO was later introduced, it was built upon the structures of such existing societies and groups within the parishes.

In 1962, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria articulated the need to bring these women together, at least at the diocesan level. In 1964, as a follow-up action, late Archbishop J. K. Amuzu- Aggey of Lagos Archdiocese invited a team of women from the United States for the purpose of organizing women of the Christian mothers, holy

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<sup>15</sup> Lagos Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women Organization [L A CCWO], *Catholic Women Organization: Mobilizing for Action* (Lagos, Nigeria: Dedun Educational Books, 2000), 10-11.

<sup>16</sup> L A CCWO, *Catholic Women Organization: Mobilizing for Action*.



rosary, and sacred heart. The team was comprised of Evelyn Pugh, Ann Summerville, Olga Kolisnyk, Luidguard, Barbel Elsa, and Mary Boyd. They were attached to the Catholic Secretariat, Lagos. Pugh, Summerville, and Elsa remained in Lagos; Kolisnyk, Luidguard, and Barbel went to Akure; and Mary Boyd visited the present-day state of Anambra, Nigeria.<sup>17</sup>

The women invited immediately started organizing CWO as directed by the late Archbishop Aggey. Above all, their activities stressed apostolate formation, leadership training, and social work. Talks and courses covering themes such as praying together, preparing for the Church's yearly liturgical times, and community work were organized. The women came from different backgrounds and included working girls as well as students in their final year of school. The American women taught Nigerian Catholic women the value of working together as a team. In May 1964, women from the various dioceses who were educated by the U.S. team came together for the first time. They prayed, discussed, and carried out elections. It was here that the seeds of what would become the CWO were sown, giving rise to the national body known as the National Council of Catholic Women's Organization.<sup>18</sup>

The aims and objectives of the CWO, as outlined on the official Lifetime Membership Identity Card are as follows: To promote the spiritual well being of its members, to provide members with a forum to look for means of cooperating in the evangelizing mission of the church, to enable members participate meaningfully in the political, economic and social activities of the nation, to teach and lead others to Christ, and above all to speak with one voice.

In the Catholic Diocese of Makurdi, where this study was conducted, the late Anna Daboh, wife of the first Tiv Catechist (the late John Adzuana Daboh), founded the Women Society in 1962, what we now call the CWO.<sup>19</sup> Its organizational structure is: the president, vice president, secretary, assistant secretary, treasurer, financial secretary and public relations officer. Turning to the next section, the study examines the socio-economic approach of the CWO in leading women's empowerment.

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<sup>17</sup> L A CCWO, *Catholic Women Organization: Mobilizing for Action*.

<sup>18</sup> LACCWO, *Catholic Women Organization: Mobilizing for Action*, 15.

<sup>19</sup> Christopher I. Utov, "The Growth of the Catholic Church in Makurdi Diocese since 1930," Unpublished Manuscript, 1989.



### **Socio-Economic Activities of the CWO**

The socioeconomic activities of the CWO are individual skills enhancement, agricultural cooperative works and loan schemes. Through these they are able to help their members to have gainful self-employment. The trend of promoting income-generating activities for women emerged in Nigeria under the Better Life for Rural Women, initiated by the then-first lady, late Mariam Babangida (1984-1993). The name was later changed to the Family Economic Advancement Program (FEAP) by succeeding first lady, Mariam Abacha (1993-1999), who led the Nigerian delegation to the Beijing Conference in 1995.

The Beijing Conference recognized women's significant contributions towards the socio-economic welfare of their families and the general economic development of the nation.<sup>20</sup> The conference addressed the need to expand women's spaces in the adjusting Nigerian economy. The Miriam Abacha led FEAP determined that, due to the nature of Nigerian social and economic institutions, which are tied to customs and traditions, community-based action was needed. Indeed, grassroots mobilization was required for any program to be effective and sustainable.

As part of grassroots mobilization, the CWO too started mobilizing rural women in Nigeria. The CWO is one organization whose socio-economic activities are quite helpful to women in Nigerian society that are not covered by conventional forms of social security, as evidenced in the following section.

### **Capital Accumulation and Utilization**

Since the distribution and utilization of resources determine who controls what, and with what, a question was posed regarding how financial resources (such as capital purchasing power) are accumulated and shared in Tiv society. Between rural and urban women, who benefits more from the CWO?

CWO members were interviewed. One hundred and fifty respondents representing 83 percent of the sample are of the opinion that the CWO's activities providing basic capital incentives to women are urban-based. Part of the reason for this perception is that the CWO's activities in urban areas are better organized than those in rural areas. Thirty respondents which constitutes 17 percent of the sample, acknowledged the support of the CWO in the rural areas, however they did not consider rural-based support to be more than urban-based. They observed that in most of the

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<sup>20</sup> Williams, Stella B. Williams, "The Socio-Economic Potentials of Women in Riverine Small-Scale Fisheries in Nigeria," accessed July 1, 2011, [http://www.skk.uit.no/ww99/papers/Williams\\_Stella\\_B.pdf](http://www.skk.uit.no/ww99/papers/Williams_Stella_B.pdf).

rural communities, the society still toes around traditional lines that make women highly dependent on men. Research interviews show that about 75% of urban women benefit more from CWO activities as against 30% of rural women, which is unfortunate considering that the majority of Nigerians are rural dwellers. According to the UN's 2012 projections, although Nigeria has a population of about 172,000,000, less than 25% of Nigerians are urban dwellers.

One method, which the CWO adopts in organizing for capital among its members, is the Adashi savings and credit scheme. Adashi is a contributory social security system anchored on savings mobilization and credit schemes. There are two variants of the Adashi system. In the first variant, people make daily savings in any amount and collect their savings at the end of the month. The second variant involves contributing a specified amount on a monthly basis. This is usually organized in clusters. Each month, on rotational basis, one member collects the pool of contributions. The weakness of this system lies in the area of sustainability. The Adashi system like the conventional Nigerian banking system is risk prone. A default in payment by contributors, the absconding of coordinators or the death of any of the parties can immediately upset the system.<sup>21</sup> Through the Adashi system, women with a low socio-economic status are enhanced through greater capital to start small-scale enterprises or set up petty trading for daily sustenance. Though Adashi is in both urban and rural parishes, this study found that the Adashi system is much more common in urban parishes and among wage earners than in the rural parishes.

Another form of capital financing the CWO organizes for women's projects is through the Bam savings and credit scheme. Bam is a local thrift society where people save their money for a specified period of time, at the end of which they collect their savings. From these savings, loans are disbursed to members at low interest rates and only require guarantors, not collateral. The guarantors are always members who have saved enough to cover a loan even when borrowers fail to pay back their loans. The present study found that the rural parishes and the semi-rural parishes that the CWO organizes use Bam on a high scale. In different focus groups among different parishes, women were able to identify lack of trust as a significant problem facing this form of capital financing. This problem is similar to the experience of the Nigerian government in setting up funding schemes.

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<sup>21</sup>Jeminiwa, J.O. et al, "Civil Society and Workers' Security: Community, Women and Development (COWAD) in Nigeria," International Labour Organization, 2004, 1-33, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/ses/download/docs/cowad.pdf>.

The Nigerian federal government established the Nigerian Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND) to cater for the provision of funds for the assistance of small-scale industries to start off. According to Akin-George,

Loans under the scheme attract the same conditions that a prospective customer wishing to borrow money from the banking sector goes through since the operating bank will be held liable for any default. Consequently, prospective beneficiaries are required to provide necessary collaterals and guarantors before they can benefit from the scheme. These have made the scheme somewhat unattractive to those who have bankable projects but not the collaterals.<sup>22</sup>

Women often have access to resources but not control over them, which places them in a difficult position to secure collateral to procure loans for self-help projects. On the other hand, the Adashi and Bam systems are able to cater for their needs where the traditional banking industry fails to do so. Such systems would help women to have the capital that could improve their entrepreneurship especially with the right skills.

### Skills Enhancement Projects

Acquiring vocational skills prepares one for trade and increases a person's career prospects and means of livelihood/sustenance. Questions were asked to ascertain if the CWO provides vocational skills training. And, if so, how successfully? The table below shows the result of the study.

Table 1 Vocational skills acquiring projects

Type of Answer	No.of Respondents	Percentages
Slow implementation Process	140	88
Projects have not started	20	12
Total	160	100

The table shows one hundred and forty respondents representing 67 percent of the sample observing that the CWO has arrangements in place for the implementation

<sup>22</sup> John Akin-George, *Industrial and Economic Development in Nigeria* (Lagos, Nigeria: Malthouse Press Limited, 2002), 204.

of women's socio-economic enhancement programs, although their pace leaves something to be desired. On the other hand, twenty respondents representing 33 percent of the sample was under the impression that programs were not started, or that to their knowledge, the programs were not started. It was clearly observed that poor coordination and lack of focus were accountable for this.

The CWO is able to organize enhancement projects to increase the members' self-reliance skills. It provides members with some basic skills through activities such as tailoring, detergent making, etc. For example, after an initiation at a diocesan workshop on soap making in 2006, parishes were able to organize workshops to teach women soap making, dyeing, and petroleum jelly production. In a particular parish, soap making and dyeing are taught to women; special attention is given to those women infected with HIV/AIDS. This is development for the women. For Perkins, Radelet, Snodgrass, Gillis, and Roemer argue that the absolute welfare of women and girls is likely to subside as a result of economic development, specifically providing jobs and small-scale credit to lower income women.<sup>23</sup> In a case study of four different countries — South Korea, Brazil, Sri Lanka, and India, — Perkins et al. came to the conclusion that real economic growth is that which comes with growth in equity and a balanced income distribution. Here, the emphasis is on small and medium-sized firms that, interestingly, are sustained by skills such as the ones the CWO provides for women. These small and medium-sized firms build the national economy, as well as provide job opportunities for the underprivileged. They also create a middle class within the society so as to bridge the gap between the exceedingly rich and the exceedingly poor. South Korea is a clear example of rapid economic growth with equity. In the 1960s, when its economy was structured, it was based on small and medium-sized scale firms (though by 1970s large-scale firms were formed), and it enjoyed a high rate of economic growth despite a recession in 1997-1999, it rapidly recovered from the crisis. South Korea's economy is stronger relative to say, Brazil's, because the income of its citizens is divided more equally (The still-growing economy of Brazil has a small idle class). In 1990, the average income of those in the lowest 40 percent of Brazil's income distribution chain was only modestly higher than that of a comparable group in Bolivia, a country with less than half the per capita income of Brazil.<sup>24</sup>

Accordingly, this study argues that there is the middle class when there is a genuine attempt at income redistribution. Redistribution is vital in narrowing the wide gap between the rich and the poor. CWO officials said that some of the beneficiaries of

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<sup>23</sup> Dwight H. Perkins et al., *Economics of Development* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 133-134.

<sup>24</sup> Perkins et al., *Economics of Development*, 134-135.

their skills enhancement projects have already joined the labor market, turning their skills into commodities for sale. These newly skilled laborers either produce items like detergents, soaps, and dyed cloths for sale, or act as skills-enhancement facilitators at workshops. These skills-enhancement projects provide women with self-employment in the midst of patriarchal structures that do not allow them to compete favorably with men. The study shows that, whatever positions a Tiv woman occupies, disregarding her educational status, the prevailing expression is, “*ka kwase gaa?*” (Is she not a woman?). As such, these women are not given the same recognition and prominence granted to men in the labor sector. This appears to be the plight of women in many societies as observed by Bouta, Frerks, and Bannon.<sup>25</sup> The benefit of the skill-enhancement method is that it aims to support an even pattern of income redistribution and gender relations in the long run.

In traditional Tiv society, division of labor is based on gender. With skills-enhancement projects like those organized by the CWO, there emerges small-scale firms, which have started narrowing the division of labor that was based on gender. Women have started venturing into economic activities that were once reserved for men. This is creating new economic opportunities for women especially in the agricultural sector.

### **Agricultural Cooperative Works**

Agriculture is the backbone of the Nigerian economy. In fact, until the discovery and exploration of oil in 1956, agriculture was Nigeria’s principal export. In the 1950s and 1960s, agriculture accounted for about 60-70 percent of Nigeria’s total export. Nigeria was then a major exporter of groundnuts, cocoa, and palm oil, and a significant producer of coconuts, citrus fruits, maize, pearl, millet, cassava, yams, and sugar cane. About 60 percent of Nigerians work in the agricultural sector, and Nigeria has vast areas of underutilized arable land.<sup>26</sup>

Given the importance of agriculture and the difficulties surrounding farm work performed by hand, an important question presents itself: how does the CWO help in organizing the production processes? This study shows that the CWO organizes farm

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<sup>25</sup> Tsjeard Bouta, Georg Frerks and Ian Bannon, eds., *Gender, Conflict and Development* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2005), 94.

<sup>26</sup> A. Osuntogun, C. C. Edordu and B.O. Oramah, “Potentials for Diversifying Nigeria's Non-Oil Exports to Non-Traditional Markets,” African Economic Research Consortium, Research Paper 68. November 1997, 1-37, [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PNADR044.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADR044.pdf).

work on group level for willing members so that participating members take turns to help one another. Do women benefit from this? The table below shows the results.

Table 2 Organized women farm-working groups

Type of Answer	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Women participate in CWO organized working groups	75	50
Wives are held back by husbands	75	50
Total	150	100

The table indicates that the CWO forms groups to ease farm work and increase efficiency. Seventy-five respondents, representing 50 percent of those surveyed, affirmed that the agricultural cooperative’s work is helpful in expediting farm work. Also, some husbands of the CWO give them a free hand in participating in these works. The other respondents, with an equal percentage, said that though they intended joining the group work but were hindered by their husbands from participating in them. The fear among the men is that women’s association with these women will get them brainwashed with women liberation ideas.

CWO brings women together to help each other with work in turns, especially in rural areas that are highly agrarian, as work is conducted on a rotational basis among members. Since the mainstay of rural areas is farming, women organize themselves into groups and work on their farms en masse according to schedules. This lessens the burden of work on one person and increases the volume of work that a single individual would not be able to cover. The survey indicates that this is done in all the rural parishes studied. Organizing the agricultural sector like this becomes crucial since, among other things, it provides food and raw materials for local industries, and acts as a source of capital and employment for many people, principally women.<sup>27</sup> Though a primary export

<sup>27</sup> Ranjani K. Murthy, Josephine Sagayam Rengalakshmi and Sudha Nair, “Gender, Efficiency, Poverty Reduction, and Empowerment: Reflections from an Agriculture and Credit Program in Tamil Nadu, India,” *Gender and Development* 16 no.1 (2008): 101-116. See also Paul Kofi Taiwah, *Basic Economics for West Africa* (Benin City, Nigeria: Idodo Umeh Publishers, 2000), 238-239.

economy, Nigeria has witnessed a sharp decline in the value and volume of traditional, agricultural export products during the last few years. The consequence of this, for Akin-George, is that, “The agricultural sector today is a high cost sector that is also characterized by technological obsolescence and low land and labor productivity hence its inability to meet local demand let alone produce meaningful surplus for export.”<sup>28</sup>

It then follows that the boost in this sort of agricultural re-organization is a significant advantage to small firms whose raw materials will be supplied. Also, acting as a source of capital and employment, agriculture reorganization will bring about income redistribution and lessens gender inequality. The International Food Policy Research Institute in a study by Pena, Webb, and Haddad issued a document on the advancement of women through agricultural change, and highlighted the various advantages involved in making women the target group for agriculture. The advantages include the 1) promotion of equity – to ensure equal access to the benefits of policies and programs for women and men, 2) alleviation of poverty among rural dwellers who may have women as the poor majority, 3) improvement in household food security and child nutrition by raising women’s income; 4) increment in the effectiveness of project interventions by acknowledging trade-offs in household time and resource allocations that affect project participation; and 5) capitalization of huge potential for economic growth that exists among female farmers. It is hoped that there will be an improvement to women that may be underachieving at present due to the constraints that women face in gaining access to productive resources, as compared to men.<sup>29</sup>

This research indicates that both the urban and rural Tiv people are engaged in agriculture. This includes both the working class and the peasants. Out of the 102 women interviewed, 101 introduced themselves as farmers, though they were also working class and business class women. This suggests that agriculture is the mainstay of the Tiv economy, and is combined by both men and women with other jobs. Unfortunately for women, the domestic mode of production has kept women in a disadvantageous position of mere workers with men as owners and managers. Ityavyar writing on Tiv women observed that men always find a way of controlling the farms. In most yam farming areas of Tivland, families make two yam-farms each season. One is for family feeding and is controlled by the wife but is not allowed to sell yams from this farm. The other is commercial and is controlled by the man who sells these yams

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<sup>28</sup> Akin-George, *Industrial and Economic Development in Nigeria*, 18.

<sup>29</sup> Christine Peña, Patrick Webb and Lawrence Haddad, “Women’s Economic Advancement through Agricultural Change: A Review of Donor Experience,” Food Consumption and Nutrition Division Discussion Paper 10. International Food Policy Research Institute, Feb. 1996, <http://www.ifpri.org/divs/fcnd/dp/papers/dp10.pdf>.



whenever he wants. Ironically, the woman works on both farms but is not allowed to provide food out of the commercial farm. Women often go in for a third farm, which becomes their own commercial farm. This kind of practice is reported in other areas of Nigeria such as the Ishan people of Edo State.<sup>30</sup>

As Tiv women lack the collateral to pursue agricultural loans, the CWO’s Adashi, Bam, and cooperative works provide adequate security for their farming activities should they go in for a third farm. Two focus groups showed that women use the proceeds from the third farm to support their children most especially in polygamous homes where due to the number of wives and children, husbands as bread winners are not able to adequately take care of the family, wives use the proceeds from the third farms to sponsor their children’s education. Women also use the proceeds from the third farms to augment the family diet/nutrition amidst the poor living standards caused by the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP). Many of the SAP policies were meant to give comparative advantage to the Nigerian economy by strengthening the economy to produce what it was already producing - primary commodities. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Rather SAP has changed Nigeria as a primary commodity producer that looks towards the importation of the same goods from developed countries. This is the case with agriculture where there is increase demand for foreign rice as against the locally produced rice. The result is, households have witnessed a fall in their income due to the high importation of liberalized products. Those mostly affected are farmers. For example, in 1996, one out of every three poor Nigerian was a rural farmer.<sup>31</sup> This chain of poverty is passed to women who often do not own resources in the rural areas. And the little they acquire from their third farms is taken away from them making them socially vulnerable.

**Social Welfare Schemes**

Due to underdevelopment, social security is not in Nigeria. How does the CWO cater for less privileged members?

Table 3 Social welfare programs

Type of Answer	No.of Respondents	Percentages
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<sup>30</sup> Dennis A. Ityavyar, *The Changing Socio-Economic Role of Tiv Women* (Jos, Nigeria: Jos University Press, 1992), 1.

<sup>31</sup> Federal Office of Statistics, “Poverty Profile of Nigeria (1980-1996),” Abuja, 1996.

Less Privileged have really benefitted	100	59
The Upper Class is in control	70	41
Total	170	100

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Respondents representing 59 percent said the CWO is having a positive impact on the socio-economic status of less privileged women. These respondents were mostly urban women who feel they are helping to uplift the social conditions of the rural women. Seventy respondents, representing 41 percent of those surveyed, said that upper class women benefit more from the programs. These respondents on the other hand were mostly rural women who are not comfortable with their present situation and would like to see more improvement in their standard of living. This raises the question of class even among women themselves. The evidence shows that the issue of class distinction goes beyond the boundaries of marginalized people, be it on the basis of gender, race, or ethnicity. These are women of the same tribe yet their social backgrounds give them different outlook on life, and they have different needs.

The general observation, however, shows that the CWO gives its less privileged members (the poor, widows, etc.) a sense of belonging. Welfare packages (e.g. loans, gifts) are meant for needy members. The survey showed that this applied to all the parishes and missions in the study area.

The importance of accessibility to financial services as a means of extending socio- economic security to excluded women appears to be acknowledged. A number of parishes have procured buses to boost their economic position for social welfare projects and to help in mobilizing women. One rural parish has also installed rice milling/processing machines, using the proceeds for the social welfare of its members. This is a method of providing basic capital for women to start their private businesses. Many economists emphasize capital formation as the major determinant of economic growth.<sup>32</sup> With a basic capital to start their businesses, women will be in a position to

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<sup>32</sup> M. L. Jhingan, *The Economics of Development and Planning* (Delhi: Vrinda Publications, 2006), 319.

acquire a higher level of self-reliance. In fact, every capital counts in every trade or endeavor one undertakes, as evidenced in the study on black women in South Africa. As little as their earnings might appear, it makes a difference in their lives.<sup>33</sup>

### ***The Status Quo versus Change***

After evaluating the gender relations in Tiv society, it seems there have been noticeable changes over time. How do you appreciate these changes?

Table 4 Attitude towards changing cross-gender relations

Type of Answer	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Changes Acceptable	97	61
Not Acceptable	63	39
Total	160	100

There have been noticeable changes in the traditional roles of Tiv women in education/socialization patterns, economic workings, and reproductive tasks. More than half (61 percent) of respondents accept the perceptible changes as being beneficial to the Tiv people (both men and women). Though, the fact that thirty-nine of the respondents find it difficult to accept the changes shows the strength of other factors in enhancing the socio-economic status of women. Of the thirty men randomly interviewed within the study area they said they were not comfortable with the changes. This shows the level of resistance to the social changes by both men and women surveyed in this study.

<sup>33</sup> Catherine Dolan and Linda Scott, "Lipstick Evangelism: Avon Trading Circles and Gender Empowerment in South Africa," *Gender and Development* 17 no.2 (2009): 203-218.

At the CWO workshop/seminar in one of the parishes, where two hundred and thirty one women were in attendance, and the general question was put, “Are the growing perceptible changes in Tivland helpful to women and the society or not?” Of the respondents, one hundred and eighteen women agreed that the changes were beneficial to women and that these changes had improved their daily lives, socio-economic status, self-image and the image of their female compatriots. However, one hundred and eight participants disagreed. Those women who disagreed felt that women were losing the basic tenets of womanhood and were, therefore, *hingir nomsombaiorov* (i.e., “behaving like men”). It seems cultural factors are making it difficult for the incorporation of these changes in Tiv society. The clear, unmarked difference by just five percent portends that the changes are accommodated. This interpretation is buttressed by the fact that the majority of those who stood for these changes were either educated (literate) or had urban affiliations.

It seems ignorance and illiteracy contribute in no small measure to the reluctance towards accepting changes to the status of women in Tiv society. A later meeting of the CWO, members of St. Gregory’s Parish, Ikpayongo tested this position; ninety one women were in attendance, of which sixty one voted in favor of these changes, while thirty were against the changes. Based on the number of those in attendance, this gross shift was a result of the education of the women, that is, on the need for their progressive development by the researcher.

Variables like communication, roads, education, age, exposure to modernity, as well as culture account for some women’s resistance to change. This is noticeable among those parishes where poor roads keep women from town for most of the year. The idea of women’s self-reliance was frightening to them, as they repeatedly told the researcher *kasev a gande nôôv ave* (i.e., “women will become uncontrollable by the husbands/men”). This statement expresses the difficulty of accepting equal life chances for both men and women. Patriarchy as a cultural knot is indeed at work.

Tiv men have often appeal to popular culture to support women oppression. The women have believed them. If one goes into a Tiv compound and asks the women, *or nan ngu heene?* (is there anybody home?). If there is no man, the women would respond, *or nan ngu her ga ka se man mbayev tsee* (there is nobody except we and the children). This corroborates the findings of Tor-Anyiin and Baaki that “the Tiv society is still patrilineal and its family institution still highly respected and regarded. The rural nature has made it impossible for the incorporation of radical changes.”<sup>34</sup> The shift in

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<sup>34</sup>S. A. Tor-Anyiin and J. I. Baaki, “Change and Continuity of Female Roles in the Tiv Family System,” *The Journal of Family Development* 1 no.1 (2004): 101.

women's thoughts as this research progressed explains the power of systematically forming ideas and dismantling a popular culture.

### **Recommendations and Conclusion**

There is a need to reexamine the concept of gender in women's empowerment processes. While it is absolutely imperative that, together, men and women address issues that lead to women's subordination and marginalization in society, it is equally imperative that women-only spaces are preserved as spaces within which women can speak freely and express themselves without inhibition or fear of repercussion. There is a danger in using the concept of 'gender' in vague terms, in that it allows for the marginalization of women-specific concerns and the dislocation of women from centers of debate and discussion. What seems to be inclusive gender often leads to the neglect of women's concerns.<sup>35</sup> Gender development experts should focus on the Women in Development (WID) approach which targets women specific needs. "Supporting women's economic efficiency as a means to further their empowerment must be differentiated from increasing 'women's efficiency' for other goals."<sup>36</sup>

The CWO should establish educational scholarships that support girls' education. Education is the first step towards equality on many fronts, including job opportunities and wages. In the programs included in this study, the CWO has not done anything to pay tuition for girls; in cases where the skeletal attempts are made, it is directed towards boys. Since education is the gateway to economic emancipation and empowerment, girls should be given equal educational opportunities in society.

The CWO is urged to invite men to their seminars on gender sensitivity and awareness, which are routinely carried out. This will help shape men's understanding of female roles in society. The present arrangement sets women apart from men, thereby making their efforts towards emancipation and empowerment distrustful to both parties.

Specific attempts should be made to systematize micro-credit schemes to aid women in setting up cottage industries and small-scale firms.<sup>37</sup> In economic planning, conscious efforts should be made against the "feminization of poverty" and the "pauperization of motherhood" as observed in affluent countries like the United

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<sup>35</sup> Sunila Abeysekera, "Creating a World Worth Assimilating Into," *Media Development* LII (2005): 8-11.

<sup>36</sup> Murthy, Rengalakshmi and Nair, "Gender, Efficiency, Poverty Reduction, and Empowerment," 101.

<sup>37</sup> Murthy, Rengalakshmi and Nair, "Gender, Efficiency, Poverty Reduction, and Empowerment," 101-116.

States.<sup>38</sup> Specific attention should be given to poor rural women, since all measurements of women's empowerment focus on urban educated women in parliaments, schools, government jobs, political positions of authority, and so on. Beginning with UN Women, new structures and targets for Gender Empowerment Measurement and Gender Development Index must be evolved.<sup>39</sup>

Enhancing the socio-economic status of women will lead an income redistribution process that will help in redressing gender inequality in Nigeria. Addressing inequality in this society entails the liberation of the woman from male chauvinism. This means that women can no longer be resistant to the socio-economic processes that would empower them. Women cannot simply keep to their cultures based on the conviction that they are meant to play complementary roles. This is why development experts may shift from Gender and Development (GAD) which unwittingly makes room for continuation of women subordination.<sup>40</sup> Neither men nor women will come to full personhood in a society where the gifts of one or the other are suppressed. The processes of empowerment for both women and men are related to three dimensions: exposing the oppressive power of existing gender relations, critically challenging them, and creatively trying to shape different social relations.<sup>41</sup> This entails continuous dialogue and not a once-and-for-all aggressive policy as envisaged by the radical feminists. The CWO is one forum where women can be empowered to negotiate their existence in Nigeria.

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<sup>38</sup> Nancy Folbre, "Measuring Care: Gender, Empowerment, and the Care Economy," *Journal of Human Development* 7 no.2 (2006): 184.

<sup>39</sup> Beteta H. Cueva, "What is Missing in Measures of Women's Empowerment?" *Journal of Human Development* 7 no.2 (2006): 221-241. See also Stephan Klasen and Dana Schüler, "Reforming the Gender-Related Development Index and the Gender Empowerment Measure: Implementing Some Specific Proposals," *Feminist Economics* 17 no.1 (2011): 1-30.

<sup>40</sup> Joanne Sharp, John Briggs, Hoda Yacoub and Nabila Hamed, "Doing Gender and Development: Understanding Empowerment and Local Gender Relations," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 28 no.3 (2003): 281.

<sup>41</sup> Charmes and Wieringa, "Measuring Women's Empowerment," 421.

referred journals on women and gender studies. His recent book is titled, “‘BOTTOM ELEPHANTS’ Catholic Sexual Ethics and Pastoral Practice in Africa: The Challenge of Women Living within Patriarchy & Threatened by HIV-Positive Husbands.” His research interests are feminist/gender and sexual ethics, family and social morality; basic ethical frameworks in Africa, community and pastoral life; and public theology.

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## Christian Denominational Archives: An Assessment of their role in Cameroon Historiography

By

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### Abstract

The church in Cameroon has played major role in the country's economic and socio-political evolution. Among other efforts, it has contributed to documentation of events of national importance, thereby serving as a scientific reference point in the construction of the nation's political and socio-economic history. This paper is an attempt to examine the degree of aptness and relevance of church archives in the process of constructing the history of Cameroon. It asserts that Christian denominational archives - repositories of cartographic, linguistic, ethnological, religious, economic and political knowledge in various forms - can provide a crucial window into the construction of Cameroon history in spite of some pitfalls. It concludes that if church archives are better organized and exploited, they can serve as a store of credible data from which the past of Cameroon might be assembled and rewritten.

### Introduction

In investigating man's past, historians depend on a combination of primary and secondary sources for information. But it is relevant to note that at all stages of research primary sources (most especially archival materials) are the most indispensable.<sup>42</sup> The facts needed by the historian to reconstruct the past are available in documents, oral tradition, artifacts, pictorial survivals and archaeological remains. But the historian, as Carr observes, needs to first get facts straight before interpreting them.<sup>43</sup> For Cameroonian historians to be able to reconstruct the country's multifaceted history, they have to collect as many facts as possible relating to the subject they are addressing. Considering that such facts do not speak for themselves, they have to be processed by the historian before using them. As Fanson confirms, "facts are the established data of history, the foundation stone for further thinking about history, the knowledge that can

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<sup>42</sup> Wendy Duff, Barbara Craig and Joan Cherry, "Historians' Use of Archival Sources: Promises and Pitfalls of the Digital Age Author(s)", *The Public Historian*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 2004, p. 9.

<sup>43</sup> E. H. Carr, *What is History?* New York, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1963, p. 8.

be accepted as already established.”<sup>44</sup> Thus, it is the historian’s duty to discover significant facts in view of turning them into facts of history.

For the rich past of Cameroon to be accessible, there must be a continuous process of interaction between historians and existing facts. In fact, the bringing to light of Cameroon’s past in all its spheres significantly depends on the quantity and quality of facts that are identified, sifted and interpreted by historians. Like all scientific endeavour, the restitution of Cameroon history carries its reward in the joy of discovering unknown facts, of finding new interpretations and of shedding light on obscure phenomena. Thus, the writing of Cameroon history has to be a ceaseless exercise. Indeed, the historians of every generation need to rewrite the country’s history in view of providing the potential of an unending dialogue between the present and the past. This is supposed to be the task of all Cameroonian historians since no one can know the whole past. It is in this light that Kohn asserts that “no work of history is ever finished, and there can be in the true sense of the word no definitive work of history.”<sup>45</sup> The broadening of the frontiers of Cameroon’s historiography requires the coming on board of all experts (historians) addressing specific aspects in their areas of specialization.

As far as the study of Cameroon is concerned, historians have to rely on a plethora of historical sources. Interestingly, the weight of sources such as written, oral tradition, iconography, etc. on the reconstitution of the history of Cameroon is irrefutable. Concerning primary written documents which are usually kept in archival repositories, they contain facts that are incessantly searched by Cameroonian historians. These archival materials can be found in the national archives (Buea and Yaoundé), regional archives in the regional headquarters and abroad in countries like Britain, France, Germany, United States of America, Nigeria among others.

In addition to the above are the archives established and operated by institutions. In fact, the weight of institutions such as churches, armies and organizations in the making of history cannot be contested. The holistic missionary approach employed by missionary bodies and Christian churches in Cameroon gave them the potential to impact society in a multifaceted manner: political, economic and social. So, the history of Cameroon from 1841 when the London Baptist Missionary Society began work in the territory up to the present would be pallid and empty if church history was left out. The numerous Protestant and Catholic missionary societies

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<sup>44</sup> V. G. Fanso, *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges*, Vol. 1, From Prehistoric Times to the Nineteenth Century, London, Macmillan Publishers, 1989, p. 2.

<sup>45</sup> Hans Kohn, *Is the Liberal West in Decline?*, London, Pall Mall, 1957, p. 9.

that evangelized in Cameroon (London Baptist Missionary Society, Basel Mission, Pallotine Fathers, Sacred Heart Fathers, German Baptist Mission, American Presbyterian Mission, Native Baptist Church, Mill Hill Missionaries, Paris Evangelical Mission, American Baptist Mission and Cameroon Baptist Mission) alongside the churches that resulted from them such as the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC), Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC), Evangelical Church of Cameroon (ECC), Presbyterian Church of Cameroon, etc.) all owned archival depositories. These reservoirs kept stock of letters, reports, minutes, memoranda, deeds, contracts, diaries and correspondences of all sorts. These archives that are found in the countries that hosted the mission boards (Britain, France, Switzerland, America and Germany) and in the seats of the churches in Cameroon therefore have the potential of enhancing Cameroon historiography.

In the light of the foregoing, this paper is an evaluation of the role of Christian denominational archives in the reconstruction of Cameroon history. It discusses the weight of the church in Cameroon history and brings to light how historians have leaned on confessional archives in producing important works: books, articles, theses and dissertations relating to the history of Cameroon. The paper further examines the plethora of problems that have impeded historians from exploiting confessional archives. Finally, it seeks to suggest ways through which the pitfalls connected with church archives can be checked. Generally, the paper sustains the argument that the religious historiography of Cameroon has been significantly nourished by confessional archives at home and abroad in spite existing constraints.

### **Background: The Weight of the Church in Cameroon History**

In his study of the weight of institutions on History, Bernard Norling found that they have the potential to shape the course of events.<sup>46</sup> This explains why the undertakings of multiple collectivities such as governments, armies, churches and organized social bodies also constitute a hallmark of history. These organizations in their distinctive ways have influenced the course of history. According to Norling, the members of each organization in seeking to achieve its goals through involvement in varied activities “regard themselves as the heirs of their predecessors and trustees for future members”.<sup>47</sup> It is in this context that the role of churches in the making of history can be understood.

Throughout history, churches have had an extensive influence on society. In Cameroon, missionary bodies and the churches that emanated from their ecclesiastical

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<sup>46</sup> Bernard Norling, *Towards a better Understanding of History*, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 1960, p. 97.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

mold undeniably influenced the course of political, economic and social phenomena. Since 1841 when the first missionary body started work in Cameroon, the church has ceaselessly played a significant role in the mutation of society. All the missionary societies that operated in Cameroon had the duty to lead the whole society towards eternal salvation. Consequently, they altered the course of the country's religious history by planting Christianity which came to add to traditional religion and Islam. Besides, the missionary societies opted for a holistic mission strategy which dragged them out of the confines of preaching the Gospel. They embraced social works in various spheres: health and education. In fact, they played a frontline role in introducing western medicine and informal education in Cameroon. Their footprints are also visible in the colonial history of the country given that they significantly collaborated with successive colonial governments in varied domains: abolition of slavery and slave trade, spread of western culture, and the promotion of health and education. In the economic sphere, they promoted agriculture, trade, and local industries. So, the colonial history of Cameroon would be empty if the role of the church is not brought on board.

In the same manner, the Christian churches that emerged from the missionary bodies have influenced the course of political, economic and social events. Apart from aiding the national integration project, these churches have promoted education at all levels, opened reputable hospitals, and fostered democracy and human rights. In this regard, any historical work on such issues that ignores the role of the church is problematic and possibly anachronistic. Cameroonian historians must be conscious of the presence of church influence in the subjects they handle.

Interestingly enough, the authorities of missionary bodies and churches were aware of the influence their institutions exerted in the society. They were also conscious of the fact that the sustainability of such Christian bodies depended on the available knowledge on past experiences. This is the context in which they understood the need to document all their activities. With regard to the missionary bodies, they established archival depositories in their home countries. It was in these archives that original documents relating to their mission work in Cameroon were kept. For instance, the Basel missionaries opened an archive in Basel, Switzerland where letters, minutes, reports, deeds, and various correspondences on their work in Cameroon were preserved. This practice was common with all the other mission bodies like the Pallotine Fathers, Sacred Heart Fathers and German Baptist Mission who had archival depositories in Germany. In the United States of America, precisely in Louis-Ville, documents on the mission work of the American Presbyterian Mission in Cameroon can be obtained. With regard to the Paris Evangelical Mission and the Mill Hill Mission,

original documents on their activities are found in their archives in Paris and London respectively.

As far as mainline Christian churches in Cameroon are concerned, they have archival depositories at the various levels of their administrative structure. In the PCC for instance, each presbytery has an archive where documents on the activities of the church are kept. Since such documents are always produced in numerous copies, some are kept in the Central Archive of the church at the Synod Office in Buea. This archive, as evident in its 600-page catalogue, contains documents on education, health, evangelization, agriculture, church associations, church governance, humanitarian work, ecumenism, crafts just to name these few. Other Protestant churches like the CBC, ECC and Presbyterian Church of Cameroon also have archives where documents of all sorts are kept. The central archival depository of the CBC is located at its headquarters in Nkwen-Bamenda. This archive receives documents from the various regions and fields of the church.

More still, all Catholic Dioceses and Archdioceses have archives in which similar documents are kept. The documents relating to the Bamenda Archdioceses are found in its archive at the Archbishop's office in Bamenda. In fact, such archives are located in the seats of Archdioceses and Dioceses: Bamenda, Kumbo, Buea, Mamfe, Nkongsamba, Douala, Bafia, Bafoussam, Yaounde, Ebolowa, etc. It is worth pointing out that the schools and hospitals operated by these churches have small archives that can be very relevant for any historian interested in the history of such institutions.

What emerges from the foregoing is that an important contribution to enriching and broadening the historiography of Cameroon is found in the multitude of archival depositories established and managed by Catholic and Protestant missionary bodies and churches. These archives, taking into consideration the millions of primary source-documents they host, forced upon historians who were conscious of their existence the desire to focus historical research on the country's religious history and other domains where the influence of the church is evident. These archives do not only have the potential to enable Cameroonian historians to attain their special interests, but can enable the products of their research to be accurate and reliable. In other words, it is evident that the chief practical utility of confessional archives is the aid they render in that laudable task of broadening and enriching research on Cameroon history. As Marwick contends, "a historical work is deemed scholarly and reliable according to the extent to which it is based on primary sources."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Arthur Marwick, *The Nature of History*, Second Edition, London, Macmillan Publishers, 1981, p. 136.

Nowadays, it is a common belief among historians that the primary source is the raw material that is more meaningful to the expert historian than to the layman. In fact, the critical question in deciding the acceptance and publication of historical works is whether they parade a sufficient array of primary material. Therefore, Cameroonian historians, especially those interested in religious and social history have the duty to convert the varied primary materials scattered in confessional archives at home and abroad into coherent and intelligible historical works: books, articles, theses and dissertations.

### **Gains of Confessional Archives**

The multitude of confessional archival depositories and the ensuing religious historiography have had beneficial effects on Cameroon historical writing. Some Cameroonian researchers (university dons and students at the masters and doctoral levels) have patiently and painstakingly produced monumental works on the religious history of Cameroon by leaning heavily on confessional archives at home and abroad. These works extend from Published books, articles in scientific journals, dissertations and theses. In this section an effort will be made to survey some major contributions to the history of Christianity which have been made by committed historians.

As we argue, many historians of Cameroon see confessional archives as a store of credible primary sources from which data that can help recover the history of Cameroon can be assembled. Their reliance on these archives evidences a growing awareness of their significant role in Cameroon historiography. Before the surfacing of specialized works on Cameroon religious historiography, some historians had produced general works with portions reserved for religious history. This movement started nearly fifty years ago with the appearance of such general works on Cameroon history like those by Engelbert Mveng, Verkijika Fanson, Eyongetah and Brain, Victor Julius Ngoh, etc.<sup>49</sup> These works contained much material on the history of Christianity in Cameroon.

In addition to the general works, are specialized works produced by religious historians who depended greatly on church archives. In fact, a growing body of research on religious history emanated from the use of church archives by committed religious

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<sup>49</sup> Engelbert Mveng, *Histoire du Cameroun*, Paris, Presence Africaine, 1963; Verkijika G. Fanson, *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges, Vol. 2, The Colonial and Post Colonial Periods*, London, Macmillan, 1989; T. Eyongetah and R. Brain, *A History of the Cameroon*, London, Longman, 1989; Victor Julius Ngoh, *History of Cameroon Since 1800*, Limbe, Presbook, 1996.

historians. One of the earliest and most important of these works was E. Hallden's *The Culture Policy of the Basel Mission in the Cameroons 1886-1905*, which appeared in 1968. There was also Werner Keller's *The History of the Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon* (1969). Both scholars gathered their material from documents in the archive of the Basel Mission in Basel-Switzerland. These works helped in reconstructing the history of the Basel Mission in Cameroon. The history of the various Baptist missionary societies in Cameroon was illuminated by L. E. Kwast when he produced his *The Disciplining of West Cameroon: A Study of Baptist Growth* in 1971 after visiting the archive of the London Baptist Missionary Society in London and that of the American Baptist Mission in Michigan-USA. This study brings to light the motivations, strategies and difficulties encountered by Baptist missionaries in Cameroon. The birth and development of the PCC was provided by Nyansako-ni-Nku's *Journey in Faith: The Story of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, 1957-1982* published in 1982. Rev. Dr. Nku leaned profoundly on the Central Archive of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon in Buea to produce his work.

The most outstanding effort by any historian to write a general history of Christianity in Cameroon was that embodied in the *Histoire de l'Eglise en Afrique (Cameroun)*, by J. V. Slageren, which appeared in 1969. Considering the scope of the task and the difficulty he faced in perusing files in archives in Cameroon and abroad (London, Louis-Ville, Basel and Paris), the work remains one of the unmatched individual accomplishments in Cameroon's religious historiography. In addition to Slageren's general work, was the great work written by Engelbert Mveng, *Histoire des Eglises Chrétiennes au Cameroun : Les Origines*, which appeared in 1990. The analyses of this monumental general work were informed by facts gathered from Catholic and Protestant archival depositories in Cameroon.

The connection between the Mill Hill Missionaries and the state in Cameroon was the focus of Anthony Ndi's PhD research at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. The thesis which was captioned as "Mill Hill Missionaries and the State in Southern Cameroons 1922-62" was completed and defended in 1983 thanks to the consultation of varied primary material in church archives: Catholic Mission Parochial Archives in the North West and South West provinces of Cameroon, PCC Central Archives in Buea, Mill Hill Archives in London and Oosterbeek-Holland, and the Baptist Missionary Society Archives in London. Later in 2005, Ndi published his thesis which today remains the lone authoritative work on the Mill Hill Missionaries in Cameroon. It is also worth noting that many master's dissertations focusing on religious history, as recorded by Jean Paul Messina, were defended in the Department of History,



University of Yaoundé and Ecole Normale Supérieure de Yaoundé in the 1980s and 90s.<sup>50</sup> Among these works can be cited Nouk Andre Lucien's « La Mission Catholique d'Édéa de 1920 a 1960 » (1979), Elanga Anamba Pierre's « La Naissance du Clergé Camerounais, le Grand Séminaire de Yaoundé 1927-1977 », Samuel Efoua Mbozo'o's « L'œuvre missionnaire de la société des missions étrangères de l'Eglise Presbytérienne Américaine dans le Sud-Cameroun 1893-1957 », Mantobang Diana's « Christian Missions in the Bamenda Grassfields (A Study of the Basel Mission) 1903-1957 » and Albert Fombutu's «The Christian Missions in Bali, A Study of the Basel Mission Activities 1902-1957». Interestingly, the bibliographies of these dissertations reveal that the students consulted documents in the archives of the churches relating to their studies. Following the emergence of many other state universities in Cameroon, many student religious historians produced excellent master's dissertations. Their studies touched on diverse aspects of religious history: education, health, evangelization strategies, enculturation, ecumenism, church conflicts, humanitarian work, and economic activities. Outstanding among them are Richard Ndi, Michael Lang, Elvis Nkumbe, Confidence Ngam, Mark Bolak Funteh, etc.<sup>51</sup>

It is important to pay attention to some PhD theses relating to religious history that were defended in Cameroon after heavy reliance on confessional archives. The influence of Roman Pontiffs (Popes) on the evolution of the Catholic Church in Cameroon was best exemplified in the doctoral thesis of Roger-Bernard Onomo Etaba entitled “Les Pontifes Romains et l'évolution spatio-temporelle de l'Église Catholique du Cameroun des origines a 1991” that was defended in 2000. His sources were heavily dependent on the archives of archdioceses, dioceses and parishes in Cameroon. This brilliant work inspired many post-graduate students in the University of Yaoundé to specialize on religious history. It was against this backdrop that Mark Bolak Funteh completed and defended his doctoral thesis in 2008, the work was captioned “Intra-Cameroon Baptist Convention Conflicts 1954-2002: A Historical Investigation”. This thesis was a great contribution to the conflict historiography of Cameroon as it made accessible the chain of conflicts that roiled the Cameroon Baptist Convention, with spillovers into other denomination. It was the product of an insightful historical research in numerous church archives: Bamenda Diocese Archive, Bansa Baptist Hospital Archive, Baptist Centre Nkwen Archive, Bansa Field Archive, Belo Field Archive, Baptist Health

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<sup>50</sup> J. P. Messina, “Recherches sur l'Histoire du Christianisme a l'Université de Yaoundé: Bilan et Perspectives”, in *Afrika Zamani, Review of African History*, Nos. 20 and 21, Yaoundé, July 1989, pp. 143-153.

<sup>51</sup> The titles of their works are found in the references at the end of this essay. It is important to note that this enumeration is not exhaustive. In fact, there are hundreds of master's dissertations that were defended in the state and private universities in Cameroon.

Centre Mbem Archive, Binju Baptist Church Archive, Cameroon Baptist Theological Seminary Archive in Ndu, Cameroon National Baptist Convention Archive in Belo, Ebenezer Baptist Church Archive in Limbe, Etoug-Ebe Baptist Church Archives in Yaoundé, and the Jakiri Baptist Church Archives.

An important impulse to the history of ecumenism in Cameroon appeared in the doctoral theses of Moussa II and Michael Kpughe Lang. In his “Evolution et Role Politique de la Federation Evangélique du Cameroon et l’Afrique Equatoriale de 1940 a 1969” defended in 2008, Moussa II leaned on the archives of the Evangelical Federation of Cameroon and Equatorial Africa to comprehensively expose the political activities of the Protestant ecumenical body. On his part, Lang produced a thesis on the ecumenical activities of one of PCC’s presbyteries entitled “The Menchum-Boyo Presbytery and Goppingen Deanery Partnership 1968-2008: A Historical Investigation”. In realizing the study, he consulted varied primary documents in multiple church archives: PCC Central Archive in Buea, Menchum-Boyo Presbytery Archive in Wum, Goppingen Deanery Archive in Goppingen-Germany, Presbyterian Church Centre Archive in Bamenda, etc. The thesis unveils the bases of the partnership and what accounted for its failure to achieve streamlined goals.

The role of women in missionary work in Cameroon is admirably brought to light in Linder Lawyer’s thesis, “Female Missionaries in Cameroon,” defended in 2012. She exposed the contributions of women in the planting and growth of Christianity in Cameroon. Her main source also issued from the archival depositories of the PCC, CBC and Catholic Church. We must also add the doctoral dissertation of Beyama focusing on the involvement of the Catholic Church in enculturation in Cameroon. Just like the already discussed scholars, his analyses were informed by data from Catholic archives in Francophone Cameroon. Many other doctoral theses are near completion such as that by Mireille Mawa who is leaning on church archives in order to examine the role of churches in education in Cameroon. There is also Richard Ndi whose thesis on integration in the CBC is under scientific evaluation.

The biographies of some key foreign and local missionaries who were instrumental in the planting of Christianity in Cameroon caught the interest of some religious historians. The role played by Rev. Alfred Saker in the planting of the Baptist Faith in Cameroon came in the essay of W. S. Stewart, “Alfred Saker: Missionary to Africa”, which featured in the *Annals of the North American Baptist General Conference* in 1959. To this may be added E. B. Underhill’s *Alfred Saker: Missionary to Cameroon*; Jordan John’s *Bishop Shanahan of Southern Nigeria*; Jonas Dah’s *Rev. Kangsen as they Saw Him*; Brigid Mary’s *Bishop Shanahan and His Missionary Family*, and Anthony Ndi’s

“Alfred Saker: The Mission to Cameroon and the Founding of Victoria Colony”. These biographical works resulted largely from research in church archives and constitute a significant contribution to the religious historiography of Cameroon.

The literature on missionary strategies, church autonomy and humanitarian initiatives is especially rich. Here we have, among others, Jonas Dah’s “Missionary Motivations and Methods: A Critical Examination of the Basel Mission in Cameroon 1886-1914”; Mark Bolak Funteh’s “A Historical Survey of the Strategy for Church Expansion in Cameroon: The Case of the Mainstream Denominations”, and Michael Lang’s “The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon and the Management of the Lake Nyos Gas Disaster of 1986.” In addition to these works are a number of worthy histories on diverse aspects of religious history surveyed by Salvador Eyezo’o, Achille Mbembe, J. Ndang, E. Adams, Francis Isterwood, Thomas Guy Allexander, and Onomo Etaba.<sup>52</sup>

The foregoing rapid and necessarily sketchy survey of some of the significant works that have resulted from the reliance on church archives give credence to the centrality of confessional archival depositories in Cameroon historiography.<sup>53</sup> What emerges from this vast literature is that church archives have revitalised the history of Christianity in Cameroon, making it a vital field of religious historical study. In fact, the scholarship that emanated from the exploration of diverse documents in these archives has given Cameroon religious historiography a distinguishing mark, which it did not enjoy three decades ago. In contrast to these works are researches on Cameroon’s religious history that greatly ignored confessional archives in their writings. Such works do become problematic and are mostly found among the works presented by candidates for the award of bachelor and masters degrees. Most of such authors have been undergraduate students in seminaries and state universities. However, the most promising development is the increase in the number of professional religious historians (Professors Achille Mbembe, Jean Paul Messina, Anthony Ndi, Onomo Etaba, Salvador Eyezo’o and Doctors Mark Bolak Funteh, Moussa II, Michael Lang, Linder Lawyer Yang, and Beyama) who are taking an interest in church archives in view of further broadening and illuminating the history of Christianity in Cameroon. Unfortunately, church archives are trapped in diverse constraints with the potential of impeding the triumph of the religious historiography of Cameroon.

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<sup>52</sup> See references for the full bibliographical entries of their works.

<sup>53</sup> It is worth stressing that the works here mentioned are but the more important ones informed by data emanating from church archives in Cameroon and abroad. They have been chosen from the totality of works connected with Cameroon’s religious history.

## Challenges of Church Archives

Despite playing a pivotal role in enriching the religious historiography of Cameroon that is evidenced by the available important body of works, church archives are plagued by numerous pitfalls. It is, of course, important to highlight the multiple constraints that persistently impinge on the potential of church archives to broaden the frontiers of the historiography of Christianity in Cameroon.

The poor conservation of documents is one of the major impediments that have put to question the invocation of the church archive as the basis of historical practice in Cameroon. In his study of the scholarly research on the history of Christianity in Cameroon, Messina found that the varied documents in the numerous archives of the Protestant and Catholic churches in Cameroon are not classified.<sup>54</sup> Apart from the Central Archive of the PCC that has a 600-page catalogue containing all file titles and numbers, the rest of the archives lack catalogues. The dilemma is that historians visiting these archives would always find it very difficult to access the files. It is a painstaking exercise since researchers are compelled to peruse the files one after the other with the hope of finding information connected with the subject they are addressing. As a matter of fact, the absence of good finding aids especially catalogues results in time wasted sifting through chunks of files not relevant to the researcher's theme.

Besides, the documents are in a permanent state of deterioration since they are not given any attention by the authorities. This challenge results from inadequate or no technical expertise. Apart from the Central Archive of the PCC alongside some archives of the Catholic Church that have archivists, the others are not placed under qualified personnel. It is common to find piles of documents that are decaying due to humidity and poor conservation. This results in the loss of vital archival materials that are invaluable in the reconstruction of Cameroon history.

Another significant difficulty is that access to data is limited by the geographical location of church archival depositories. This is particularly the case of congregational, parish, field and presbyterial archives that are seated in remote areas. This has quite often discouraged researchers from visiting such archives.

In addition to this is the fact that a good quantity of archival materials relating to the activities of foreign missionary societies are found in their archives in Europe and USA as earlier noted. Cameroonian historians therefore find it difficult to visit such archives for research. Only those who studied in Europe in the like of Anthony Ndi, Jonas Dah, and so on, were privileged to exploit these archives. Worst still, the archives

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<sup>54</sup> Messina, « Recherches sur l'Histoire du Christianisme », p. 145.

in Basel, London, Louis-Ville, Limbourg and Stuttgart are not digitized. This has rendered it difficult for these records to be electronically consulted without necessarily travelling to these countries.

There are also impediments emanating from restrictions by church authorities. Messina notes that the ecclesiastical authorities have always acted as serious obstacles to the consultation of archives.<sup>55</sup> Some of the top officials of these churches, especially Catholics are too secretive to the point that they tend to control the flow of information. They do everything possible to scare away scholars from using their archives. Lang lived these events in 2007 when he was researching on Christian missionary activities in the Menchum Division. Despite his repeated visits to the Catholic Saint Martin Parish Archive in Wum with a research attestation issued by the authorities of the University of Yaoundé I, the parish priest incessantly prevented him from using the archive.<sup>56</sup> This is the dilemma in which many researchers quite often find themselves.

Furthermore, there is an acute language problem encountered by researchers who rely on church archives in Cameroon and abroad. The problem stems from the fact that the white missionaries in Cameroon studied local languages (Mungaka, Douala and Isubu) into which they translated the Bible and wrote minutes of meetings, letters, reports, and varied correspondences. Regrettably, most Cameroonian historians do not master these languages given that English and French were adopted and promoted as the country's official languages following the 1961 reunification between Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon. The incessant neglect of local languages in the Cameroon system of education explains why the present generation of religious historians visit church archives and are unable to harvest the facts contained in archival documents.

Worst still, some of the archival materials were written using the old grammatical and orthographic rules of the Modern German language which is not even understood by most Germans today.<sup>57</sup> It is common to find whole files written in this language by Basel and Pallotine missionaries of German origin who worked in Cameroon in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. So, some important scholars in the field of

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Author's (Lang) experience during repeated visits to the Saint Martin Parish Archive in Wum in 2007.

<sup>57</sup> Historically, the German language falls into three main periods: Old German (c. 750-c. 1050); Middle German (c.1050-c.1500); and Modern German (c.1500 to the present). The grammatical and orthographic rules of Modern German have evolved with time and circumstances. For more on this, read Linda Andread, "A Brief History of the German Language: The Language of Austria, Germany, and Parts of Switzerland", <http://www.cas.umn.edu/assets/pdf/GermanLanguage.pdf>, Accessed on 12 March 2013.

religious history in the course of researching on subjects that draw upon archival materials in German have always found it difficult to complete such studies. Thus, the language problem has certainly scared away scholars from religious history. Duff, Craig and Cherry confirm the research difficulties posed by language when they note that “archival materials in languages not understood by historians create barriers for them.”<sup>58</sup>

Expectedly, all the obstacles exposed so far have financial repercussions. In fact, some historians delay their research until when huge financial resources are assembled. Researchers have often hired students or research assistants to perform some archival research. Some have had to use whopping sums of money either to travel to Europe or to pay for the translation of documents into the language they best understand. In this regard, we share a similar view with Messina who holds that huge financial resources are required to conduct research on the history of Christianity in Cameroon.<sup>59</sup>

On the whole, the foregoing barriers undeniably detrimentally affected the historian’s research on the history of Christianity in Cameroon in general. They have slowed down research and caused delays. Besides, these barriers have certainly stopped major themes from being investigated by historians, caused some to reframe their work, and have resulted in less compressive or less complete researches. At other times, such has obstructed insightful and proper interpretation of vital topics, and brought about frustration. In light of this, the church archive still remains significantly problematic.

### **The Future of Church Archives in Cameroon Historiography**

Given the degree at which the above constraints have put to question the position of the church archive as the basis of religious historical practice, there is need for a therapy in view of eliminating these odds. There are many proactive measures that can be fashioned so as to eliminate the problems plaguing church archives in Cameroon.

First, measures should be taken to transfer the chunks of archival materials in the archives of churches and missionary societies abroad to Cameroon. As Messina had earlier suggested in 1989, the political power should assist local churches in negotiations with foreign missions for the eventual transfer of documents to Cameroon. This will eliminate the problem of using heavy financial resources to travel to these countries for research. However, if it is impossible for the archival materials to be moved to Cameroon, the authorities of the Churches and Missions owning these archives can be encouraged to digitize their systems. This can result in tremendous benefits for research

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<sup>58</sup> Duff, Craig and Cherry, “Historians’ Use of Archival Sources”, p. 26.

<sup>59</sup> Messina, « Recherches sur l’Histoire du Christianisme », p. 146.

in the history of Christianity in Cameroon. It permits the re-unification of disparate materials scattered in many missionary archival institutions in Europe and USA. Such materials can be electronically accessed by religious historians in Cameroon. In the words of Duff, Craig and Cherry, “the digital age provides opportunities to improve access to both the finding aids and archivists and thereby increases access to needed information.”<sup>60</sup> Besides, digitization has the potential of enabling researchers to search finding aids ahead of time.

Second, the problem of language can be resolved by translating the archival materials from local languages (Mungaka, Douala and Isubu) and German into English and French, Cameroon’s official languages. In doing so, the authorities of these churches can get into partnership with the *Société Internationale de Linguistique* that specializes in the study of local languages in Cameroon. With regard to documents appearing in German, the services of professional translators can be solicited. Such an innovation will assist the process of historical research since Cameroonian historians will now be able to access such files. Unfortunately, the success of such an initiative if ever considered would greatly require whopping sums of money to be allotted by these churches.

Third, the churches need to improve the preservation of archival materials in view of checking the incessant deterioration of files. As earlier noted, if church archival records in Cameroon are not properly kept and managed, not only will the archival resources be lost to future generations, but religious historians will face a number of risks associated with the failure to reconstruct the history of Christianity in Cameroon. So, they should acquire good shelves, conservation boxes and modern equipment with which to check the decay of documents caused by humidity.

Fourth, there is need to properly classify documents in church archives so as to avoid the perusing of files that are irrelevant to the historian’s topic. In fact, the churches operating archives should recruit competent archivists who possess what it takes to catalogue materials in an archive. As earlier noted, the PCC Central Archive in Buea is managed by a professional archivist who has successfully built a 600-page catalogue. The rest of the churches need to emulate PCC’s example. The catalogue has the merit of enabling historians in becoming aware of and locating archival materials invaluable for their topics.

Finally, the restrictions put in place by the authorities of churches should be dismantled. Instead of treating researchers visiting their archival depositories as spies, the ecclesiastical corps should see them as bona fide historians committed to the course

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<sup>60</sup> Duff, Craig and Cherry, “Historians’ Use of Archival Sources”, p. 21.

of producing scholarship on the history of Christianity in Cameroon. The secretive attitude of these church officials, we believe, is baseless and injurious to the further growth of churches. This is because the present and future generations will need to lean on the past to be able to position and maintain such bodies on the path to success. In light of this, we highly recommend that church officials should collaborate with historians as a leeway to enrich the historiography of the history of Christianity for the benefit of churches in particular and society as a whole. Further, considering that the church is dependent on government which has its own archives at different administrative levels and are by regulation required to deposit files that have lived 30 years, church authorities should as a matter of policy be subjected to this rule to give researchers the opportunity to exploit church data without restriction while respecting the regulations governing access to archives and usage of its data. In this connection, Christian churches such as the Catholic Church that consider their archives as secret will as a matter of regulation open up to historical researchers.

The foregoing recommendations will push the religious history of Cameroon in new and exciting directions. Indeed, if our suggestions are considered, the research inconveniences: delays, abandonment of major research topics, problematic interpretations, incomplete researches and the reframing of topics would be checked to a significant extent.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has examined the degree of aptness and relevance of church archives in the process of constructing the history of Cameroon. The findings of this assessment indicate that the weight of the church in Cameroon history alongside its involvement in recording and preservation of archival records served as a basis for the enrichment of the religious historiography of Cameroon. Church archives at home and abroad have provided opportunities to improve access to primary written materials and thereby increased the quality and quantity of scholarship on the history of Christianity. In fact, the religious historiography of Cameroon has been significantly nourished by church archives. This is evidenced by the growing body of research and the increase in the number of professional religious historians who are taking an interest in church archives. Despite these gains, the impact of the various pitfalls facing these archives on religious historiography is profound: slowed down research, caused delays, stopped major themes from being investigated, caused some historians to reframe their work, resulted in less compressive or less complete researches, obstructed insightful and proper interpretation of vital topics, and brought about frustration. The challenge that lies ahead is to further impel research in the history of Christianity by eliminating these



constraints: to digitize and transfer archival materials abroad to Cameroon, to innovate conservation methods, to translate archival records from German and local languages into Cameroon's official languages, to catalogue materials in local church archives, and to eliminate baseless restrictions fashioned by the ecclesiastical corps. These recommendations have the potential to further enrich Cameroon's religious historiography in particular and historical practice of Africa's Catholicism and other confessional archival impact on societies' narratives in general.

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## **TRENDS, DIMENSIONS AND EFFECTS OF CORRUPTION ON NIGERIA'S DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE**

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### **Abstract**

There is a consensus among Nigerians that corruption is endemic in the country. It has, over decades, enriched the political elite and endangered developmental process. There exists abundant literature on the causes and possible solutions to this social phenomenon but not much has been done by successive governments to halt the menace. However, there appears to be an emerging concern across different strata of the Nigerian society that money stolen by public officials should be invested locally- where the supposed joint owners of the commonwealth can benefit in terms of job creation for the teeming unemployed citizens- or through philanthropic gestures that can alleviate the pathetic condition of the poor, rather than being stashed in foreign bank accounts. The harsh economic condition in the country, paradoxically caused largely by corrupt practices, also reinforces this position, particularly with the observable incapacitation of the judiciary to curb the culture of impunity in governance. This essay identifies the forms of corruption affecting democratic governance in Nigeria. It also highlights the enduring phases, perspectives and patterns of corruption, particularly in the current republic. It examines what is being done by stakeholders to punish corruption culprits and the shortcomings inherent in the procedures and institutional framework.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Corruption is a key threat to good governance, democratic processes and fair business competition (OECD, 2011:3). It is now clear that corruption has played a major part in undermining the world's social, economic and environmental development. Resources have been diverted to improper use, and the quality of services and materials used for development has been seriously compromised. The impact on poorer communities struggling to improve their lives has been devastating and in many cases undermines the very fabric of society. Corruption has also led to environmental mismanagement, undermined labour standards and restricted access to basic human rights. As noted by Alemika (2010:3) corruption is widespread and is increasingly being

tolerated by the public. Corruption in the country seems to have acquired immunity against various political and legal measures aimed at its control. The problem is stifling economic development, eroding public bureaucratic efficacy, widening inequality, and undermining the creation of opportunities and delivery of social services for the citizens, especially those who are socially, economically and politically disadvantaged.

This essay explores the reasons why citizens are being railroaded into “local content” demand in a blatant preference to formal mechanisms of curbing corruption in Nigeria. By local content demand, I mean the desire of the people, borne out of frustration though, to have proceeds from corruption invested in the country as against being laundered abroad. Such investment by those individuals-who went undetected or whose malfeasance could not be proven- can be in form of small or large scale industries so as to generate employment for the citizens and discourage capital flight. This citizen perception about corruption is a fall-out of the inability of the various anti-corruption agencies to appropriately sanction corrupt public officials or the secrecy in which money retrieved from the Western countries in the past was shrouded. Local content demand of corruption is, therefore, a call by the impoverished citizens to directly or indirectly benefit from the proceeds of corruption rather than suffering while what rightly belongs to them and everyone is taken abroad to enrich other countries. This phenomenon can be classified as incredulous perverted variant of the Corporate Social Responsibility concept.

The essay is divided into five sections. Section one sets the background to the study while section two conceptualizes the key words for better understanding. Section three discusses the trends, patterns and perspectives about corruption in Nigeria while section four provides suggestions for curbing the social menace. The last section concludes the essay on a final note that the emerging intervention of the civil society organizations, in terms of advocacy and the instrumentality of law will put government on its toes on the one hand, and expose corrupt individuals in public and private services.

### **Conceptual Clarification of Corruption and Governance**

The concept of corruption parades an array of definitions by scholars and institutions. For instance, Transparency International (2003) defines corruption as ‘the misuse of entrusted power for private benefit’. Konie (2003:11) identifies two types of corruption. These are: (i) Vertical corruption, which involves managers and decision makers. This is more common in less developed countries and (ii) Horizontal corruption, which involves the entire official, informed, and laymen groups in the countries. The two types of corruption should be seriously addressed and eradicated if any meaningful

economic or political progress is to be made. While Dey (1989:503) sees corruption as any act undertaken with the deliberate intent of deriving or extracting monetary or other benefits by encouraging or conniving at illegal activities, the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (2007) defines corruption as the “behaviour of people who are entrusted with public or private tasks and who, by failing to respect their obligations, acquire unjustified advantages”.

Corruption in government is the misuse of public goods, funds, or office for private gain. It includes behaviour such as embezzlement, fraud and the taking or requiring of bribes for the provision of public services. In addition to undermining economic development, corruption also undermines good governance. Corruption is also defined as “the abuse of public power for private benefit, as a key constraint to efficient allocation of economically valuable resources, effective provision of public goods and services, and people’s confidence in the state and the legal system” (Deininger and Mpuga, 2005:171). A critical look at the literature suggests that, corruption is trans-systemic, that is, it exists in all political, economic and social system including the developed and developing states (Alatas, 1990: 3-4). It should be admitted too that “corruption has been a constant theme in human history” (Khan, 2000).

Just like corruption, the concept of governance attracts different definitions. Governance is widely understood as ‘the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented).’ The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) define governance as “the manner in which public officials and institutions acquire and exercise authority to shape public policy and provide public goods and services (World Bank and IMF, 2006:i). According to the World Bank (1991) governance includes the form or nature of the political regime; the processes by which authority is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources; and the capacity of governments to design, formulate, and implement policy and deliver goods and services.

Governance can be defined as the science of government behaviour and performance, including the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels (UNDP, 1997; Dethier, 1999). It provides the framework through which citizens and groups exercise their rights, meet their obligations and articulate their interests. It recognizes that effective, transparent, and accountable institutions lie at the core of development. Institutions establish the formal and informal rules that determine whether the public sector acts in its own interests, or on behalf of all citizens. These rules influence private sector investment decisions,

create incentives that either create or curtail rent-seeking opportunities for civil servants, and influence the expectations citizens have of their governments.

### **CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: THE ENDURING PHASES, PATTERNS AND PERSPECTIVES**

In its Corruption Perception Index released in Berlin, Germany, Transparency International said Nigeria scored 27 out of a maximum 100 marks to clinch the poor position, which it shares with Azerbaijan, Kenya, Nepal and Pakistan; and the Global Financial Integrity (GFI). A Washington-based research and advocacy organization, equally placed Nigeria seventh out of the 20 top exporters of illicit financial flows over a decade, with illegal capital transfers of 19.66 billion dollars (see Randle, 2013:56). This ugly development has entangled the country in a web of stagnation such that the majority of the populace- living in abject poverty as a result of this- does not believe any redemption can come soon. As argued by Yaqub (2007:29), it is corruption that has made many Nigerians more penurious. Pat Utomi (2013:16) expresses his worry about this trend:

What continues to bother me is whether the elite in Nigeria do not really realise the devastating consequence of corruption for all, because of the temporary advantage it confers on them when in the so-called lucrative positions. The depth of the rot includes what the executive pays the legislature to get budget passed, agencies of government pay to others to get approval and votes of budget released; the extortion from politicians by the judiciary in election petition cases, among others. It partially explains why billions of dollars went into the power sector for years, yet darkness reigns.

The National Planning Commission (2005) observes that “systemic corruption and low levels of transparency and accountability have been major sources of development failure. Illegal activities such as the advance fee–fraud (known as 419) and money laundering have torn the fabric of Nigerian society”. The state governors are known as a mainstay of Nigerian corruption, operating what are essentially fiefdoms under their spheres of influence. The state and local governments receive about half of the revenue accruing to the federal government, but with little oversight over their spending. Accountability is further undermined since state governors constitutionally enjoy immunity from prosecution. The EFCC says that it can trace more than \$17 billion in cash and assets transferred abroad by state governors (USAID, 2006:22).

With specific reference to the former governor of Bayelsa state, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, *The Nation* editorial (2012:19) submits that Nigeria’s public officials



have become thoroughly inured and reprobate. No lessons are learnt from these shameful episodes and treasury looting does not seem to be in the decline by any chance. In fact the propensity to steal public money has never been higher while impunity quotient would damage any gauge if there were any such device. Fraud and tales of it are so rampant in Nigeria today that Alamieyeseigha's forfeiture of about 150 million Naira to the US government is not significant enough to make front page in Nigeria's newspapers. Alamieyeseigha still enjoys a pride of place as a leader and power broker in the hierarchy of the country's ruling party as if nothing happened.

The wealthiest people in Nigeria are generally people who have acquired wealth through state power, by political corruption, by access to state contracts, agency rates or concessions such as import licenses. More often than not however, these people do not benefit the nation in any way since they do not engage in any meaningful production or creation of jobs. They merely enjoy the benefit of concessions arising from their socio-political connections, further denying the states of legitimate revenue. Osundare (2012:53) once described corruption as Nigeria's fastest-growing industry. He explains:

It is the real money-spinner, the oil which lubricates the engine of Nigeria's politics and economy, a *sine qua non* in business deals, a desideratum for advancement in all spheres...From every indication, it appears that those in position of authority in Nigeria especially in the political and economic spheres have been waging an undeclared war on the country's resources and general welfare. And it is a war that is savage in its method and dehumanizing in its impact. I have never seen or heard of a country in the world in which public functionaries are as pathologically perverse, blindly rapacious, brutally cannibalistic, and callously unpatriotic as the ones that hold this unfortunate land in thrall.

With the failure of successive governments in Nigeria to sincerely fight corruption and given the disastrous effects of this on the country and the masses that continually groan under the burden of lack and despair, there is an emerging concern that seems to ascribe some degree of appreciation to those corrupt individuals that invest such loot in the country. One of the famous columnists in the country, Fagbenle (2012) opines that: "all of a sudden, I feel like thanking Olusegun Obasanjo, Theophilus Danjuma, Ibrahim Babangida and other leaders who have confined their massive wealth largely within Nigeria. I am not questioning their probity at this point, but to the extent that they have set up businesses, industries, or charities here in Nigeria, employing hundreds of

workers. If they were ever found guilty of fraudulent enrichment, I will be in their corner for justice to be tempered with mercy”.

In the course of writing this essay, a number of informal Focus Group Discussions was carried out bordering on corruption and performance assessment of elected officials in the country. In discussions involving students, civil servants and politicians, it was clear that citizens wanted the few state governors they classified to be performing well to enjoy immunity from accusation (not to talk of prosecution) for any form of corruption. The general view was: “nobody is saying the Governor is not corrupt but he is doing well in meeting the needs of the people unlike others” or “it is in the process of awarding contracts that he too will make his money”. Their performance indicators are basically predicated on infrastructural development such as road construction, building of schools and hospitals or regular payment of workers’ salaries. One noticeable development from the discussions is that public office holders are rated high for merely carrying out their expected duties, more so on basic necessities that are taken for granted in other climes. This, deducing from their contributions, should serve as an *alibi* for corruption. Curiously enough, the performance assessment is usually done with faint knowledge of the financial resources available to the government. For instance, almost 90 percent of my co-discussants do not know the exact statutory monthly allocations to their states or the amount generated from Internally Generated Revenue, IGR. Ordinarily, government performance within a specific period should be measured against the financial resources available. It, therefore, becomes worrisome when “performance”, based on these highlighted activities, is seen as immunity against prosecution. The perception of the people is that such elected officials should be encouraged for setting the pace for others in a country where self-aggrandizement is the norm.

While local and state governments literally sit in court over monthly allocations, the governors too are busy building castles in the air and replicating the odious theft of the past regimes. In other words, corruption and its choking grip are common among cabinet ministers, legislators, governors, chairmen, councillors who are plundering the nation, competing to outdo one another in the art of cornering communal wealth. If what is happening to Nigeria under every successive regime had happened to the United States, the U.S would have run aground long ago; yet Nigeria is still moving despite the problems of corruption (Alamu, 2011:10). Citing a report by KPMG, a global audit and financial advisory firm, Onumah (The Punch, November 30, 2012) writes that Nigeria was rated the most fraudulent country in Africa, with the cost of fraud during the first half of 2012 estimated at N225 billion.

In his proposal on what he refers to as *time-stamped and measured amnesty* for corrupt officials in the country, Abidde (2007) suggests that: “within a given period of time, any public official who confesses, and gives up 100% of his or her loot before a properly constituted body should be granted a conditional pardon. The confession must come with a full detail of how much was stolen, who the accomplices were, and where the loot is kept. Once the money is returned to the state or federal government’s coffer, a conditional pardon follows”. This also appears as a variant of the plea bargain which in recent time has been applied to some high profile cases only that a very small fraction of the money looted was pleaded for in each of the cases. And those involved have been pardoned. Erinoshio (2012:36) cites some of these cases: The latest fad in the Nigerian judicial system is plea bargain. Mr Tafa Balogun, a former Inspector General of Police who was charged with extortion and corruption to the tune of 13 billion naira got away with six months in prison which he served at the National Hospital, Abuja. Cecilia Ibru who was sentenced to 18 months for offences relating to the near collapse of Oceanic Bank served 6 months in a health facility of her choice at Victoria Island in Lagos and at the Lagos University Teaching Hospital. Mrs Ibru forfeited property and investment worth 190 billion naira. Both former Governors Lucky Igbinedion of Edo State and Alamieyeseigha of Bayelsa received light sentences and forfeited property worth billions of naira including cash for misappropriating public funds. Alamieyeseigha has, since March 2013, been granted state pardon by President Jonathan.

Also, Mr John Yakubu Yusuf, a former deputy director in the Police Pension Office, who connived with five others to steal 32.8 billion naira belonging to police pensioners, was on January 28, 2013 convicted and sentenced to two years imprisonment but freed after paying a fine of 750,000 naira (see The Punch, The Nation, The Guardian of January 29, 2013). The pension scam was exposed on February 2, 2012 when the chairman of the Pension Reform Task Team, Mr Abdulrasheed Maina, revealed how his team “caught a top civil servant in the pension unit at the office of the Head of Service with cash of 2 billion naira stashed in his private residence” (cited in Fagbenle, 2013:80). Maina further revealed how another civil servant was caught with a pile of dollars in his house.

These outcomes, according to Odinkalu (2012) justifiably caused public outrage in a country in which petty thieves and sundry suspects spend an average of five years in pre-trial detention on suspicion and a famished child can be sentenced to a long prison term for stealing a tuber of yam or helping himself to some stray livestock for proteins. For a practice that is so clearly amenable to abuse, there is need for clear policy on its use and deployment. The appearance of abuse and discrimination exists because the plea bargain is mostly, if not exclusively, used for white collar criminals

who have committed quite egregious acts of breach of public trust and plunder. The public anger is understandable. The way for senior public officials to respond to this, however, is to fill the policy void through articulate policy making. One of the criticisms against plea bargain as identified by Adedeji (*The Punch*, February 6, 2012) is that it violates the constitutional right of fair trial. For instance, Section 36(4) of the 1999 Constitution is to the effect that any person who is charged with any criminal offence shall be entitled to a fair trial within a reasonable time. Furthermore, some legal scholars have argued that plea bargain amounts to unjust sentencing. This argument is premised on the fact that the accused person's fate is turned on a singular tactical decision, which they argue is irrelevant to deterrence, or any other proper objective of criminal proceedings.

Reports of different probe panels in the last few years, particularly by the National Assembly and other ad hoc committees, clearly reveal this malady in the Nigerian society. The probe panels are on several sectors but with similar mandate: to uncover corrupt practices and identify individuals involved for legal prosecution. Two of these will suffice here. In 2008, upon a claim by the then Speaker (House of representatives), Dimeji Bankole, that the country wasted 16 billion dollars on Power Project, a committee headed by Godwin Ndudi Elumelu was mandated to investigate why the country expended such huge funds and yet electricity supply did not improve. Months after, the committee made public its findings, indicting past leaders, ministers, government officials and many high profile personalities. It recommended their prosecution (*The Nation*, 2012:27). It was at this crucial juncture that the allegation of a 100-million naira bribe was hurled at the committee (*Osundare*, 2012:53). The report, just like the ones before it, may by now be gathering dust on the shelves.

Another committee, headed by Farouk Lawal, was on Fuel Subsidy Regime. The subsidy crisis had engulfed the country in January 2012. It started in Lagos and some other major cities. The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC) had declared a nation-wide strike. Protesters invaded the streets challenging the removal of fuel subsidy by the Federal Government. The Federal Government approved 240 billion naira in 2011 budget as petrol subsidy, but the Finance Minister told the Senate that 2.19 trillion naira was released to petrol importers. The House of Representatives waded into the crisis by investigating the scam (*Oladesu*, 2012: 43). In its report submitted to the National Assembly on April 18, 2012, the committee reprimanded a former chairman of the PPPRA, Senator Ahmadu Ali, and other board members. It recommended sanctions for some staff of the PPPRA and sanctioned 121 oil marketers as follows: 17 marketers that did not obtain FOREX but claimed to have imported petroleum products; 15 marketers who obtained FOREX but did not import

petroleum products; 71 others to face probe and refund 230.1 billion Naira; 18 indicted of committing other infractions.

There have been several agitations from individuals and organizations that these reports should not be treated as the usual perfunctory ritual that characterized previous ones. The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, CBCN, (The Nation, 2012:5) notes that serious allegations of corruption against former and serving government functionaries have been left largely unprosecuted. The body affirms that: the Nigerian citizenry has the right to receive comprehensive reports on the management of the fuel subsidy along with the appropriate application of justice on the criminals. Politics in Nigeria is still perceived by many in authority more as a self-serving opportunity for easy money and prestige than genuine service for the good of all. Fighting corruption requires sincerity and the fight has to start from the top to the lowest cadre.

Nigerians have watched as the bureaucracy abandoned its call to service and duty to the nation and turned itself into a den of thieves and outright criminality. That environment is now hostile to men and women of integrity (Kukah, 2012). Apart from poor execution of government projects, which is at the root of poor budgetary implementation and failure, the civil service has been aiding and abetting corruption across the tiers. In recent times, top public officers have been accused of embezzling gratuities and pensions of senior colleagues who had retired from service. They have also come under attack for deliberately misleading their ministers into taking steps that were not in line with national interest (Oladesu, 2013:43). Bureaucrats at the lowest levels of the civil service misuse allowances and other benefits, and the government nominal rolls are full of non-existent ("ghost") workers- created to enrich dubious officials with fictitious salaries. In 2001, the public sector had more than 1 million employees, 200,000 of whom were civil servants. Estimates suggested that as many as one fifth of public employees were "ghost-workers" (Duggan, 2009:10). Soyinka (2012:7) laments that "very few things unite us in Nigeria as corruption does. Corruption is now a status symbol in the country...it does not have tribal, ethnic or religious differences. It is a language understood by everyone in Nigeria today"

Despite structures introduced to curb it, corruption continues to thrive in Nigeria because the policies and measures were not backed with the necessary political will and sincerity. They are spontaneous mechanisms that often lose steam after attempting to curb deep- rooted or pervasive corruption (Nna and Jacob, 2012:123). For example, the former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Lamido Sanusi, disclosed that the country lost 7 billion Naira to crude oil thieves in 2011 (The Punch, 2012:15). Nigerians were also alerted to how subsidy claims shot up from N300 billion to N2.3 trillion under

President Jonathan (Onumah, 2012:20). A former World Bank vice president for Africa, Obiageli Ezekwesili averred that over 80 per cent of the nation's oil money ended up in the hands of only one per cent of the population (The Nation, 2012:10). Apart from the loss of over N2 trillion to the fuel subsidy scam in 2011, the Auditor-General of the Federation disclosed that N4.2 trillion collected by MDAs was not remitted to the Federation account from 2006 to 2009.

The Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) reported that oil companies failed to pay into the Federation Account about 10 billion dollars from 1999 to 2008. The Nuhu Ribadu-led Petroleum Revenue and Special Task Force claimed that the nation had been short-changed to the tune of almost 100 billion dollars (Falana, 2012:9). Nothing tangible has been done to bring these "thieves" to book. As argued by Obiagwu and Olumide (2012:10): "even as the debate rages and the country comes to term with the need to curb corruption, many would argue that in every circumstance, the rule of law must be respected. The process of apprehending even those who have defrauded the country will be defeated if the institutions constitutionally empowered to do that are compromised. When the institutions are encumbered with the devices of the individuals, caught within the limitations of their tenures, the country eventually suffers". While assessing Nigeria's democracy in the last 13 years, Agbaje submits that:

The return of democracy since 1999 has been a lamentation period for Nigerians...The only thriving industry in Nigeria today is corruption. In fact, corruption has become the 37<sup>th</sup> state with its own weekly and monthly allocation (The Punch, 2012:9).

Thomas Mättig, (2010:2) opines that "corruption is a problem in Nigeria, but not exclusively a Nigerian problem, as the involvement of foreign companies like the IOCs, infrastructure companies like Siemens or Halliburton, and the complicity of numerous foreign banks shows. However, only if decisive steps are taken by institutions of the Nigerian state can corruption be effectively battled". It is, however, worrisome that what would earn an American or Indian business man prolonged jail sentences at home and a Chinese summary execution earn them instant adulation and even state privileges in Nigeria (Alamu, 2012:5). While the people involved in the Halliburton Willbros and Siemens multi-million-dollar bribery scandal were tried and heavily punished in the countries from which the bribes originated, the Nigerian recipients of the bribes walk the streets freely at home. In its editorial, The Punch (2012: 18) affirms that corruption thrives because the country's leadership shields corrupt officials:

The case of a former Governor of Rivers State, Peter Odili, who obtained a perpetual court injunction against his investigation, arrest and trial, is still fresh in the memory; nothing has been done to vacate the obnoxious injunction. One also readily recalls that the first EFCC boss Nuhu Ribadu's problem started when he arrested a former Delta State Governor, James Ibori, said to be the chief financier of the late President Umaru Yar'Adua's election. The same Ibori was acquitted of all charges of corruption in Nigeria but is now serving a 13-year jail term in Britain for the same offences.

In an experiment carried out on corruption and political participation in Africa (Senegal as a case study), Andrew and Inman (2009:15) discovered that "subjects are unwilling to pay the costs of protesting to express personal economic grievances but are willing to pay the costs to protest against corruption". There appears to be a reverse of this finding in Nigeria where citizens are more prone to protesting economic hardship (being largely a symptom of corruption) rather than corrupt activities of public office holders. For instance, in January 2012, millions of Nigerians trooped out for a few days, at the instance of the labour unions and civil society organisations, to protest a new policy that removed oil subsidy from government's expenditure. It was expected that such policy would have a debilitating effect on their economic life with an astronomical increase in the price of petroleum. Yet instances abound when public officials accused of corrupt practices running into billions of naira, with no public protests save for opposing views by the media. Even the credibility of the media in this regard, has also attracted some criticism. According to Lodha (2007:6), the media has always played an important role in exposing corruption at high levels in Nigeria. The Nigerian newspapers and magazines are full of such reporting on a regular basis but for lack of in-depth and accurate investigative journalism, such stories are ridiculed by the readers. Moreover, credibility of the media has also been questioned because of the control that is exercised by a few media barons and the use of the media to settle political scores.

Corruption is a powerful force, but it is not inevitable or unavoidable. Diminishing its impact, restores diverted resources to their intended purpose, bringing better health, nutrition and education to victims of corruption, in addition to more opportunities and hope (TI, 2008:v). However, strategies to reduce corruption fall into three main categories: reducing the scope for corruption through policy change; increasing the costs of corruption through external monitoring and sanctioning; and devising systems to induce self-restraint within government organisations (Hamilton-Hart, 2001:67).

Results from the 2001 and 2003 surveys carried out by the *Afrobarometer* show that public officials are widely perceived as corrupt (see Alamika, 2004). The problem with Nigeria, according to Diamond (1997:586) is that institutions to restrain uncivil behaviour and induce co-operation, trust, honesty, and law-abidingness have been shallow and unstable. As policy recommendations, the World Bank (2012:16) identifies three sets of institutions that are central to the governance and anti-corruption agenda: those relating to cross-cutting core government systems (e.g., for managing policy development, finance, people, information); those relating to the ways in which the executive is held accountable to citizens (assets); and those relating to specific sectors (e.g., forestry, education, transport, natural resources, parliaments and parliamentarians, ombudsmen, anti-corruption authorities, the judiciary, third-party mechanisms at various levels, civil society).

Retrieving money stashed in foreign bank accounts has also posed some challenges to the developing countries. This seems to be a subtle support for corrupt officials and a sort of discouragement to emerging democracies that intend to fight corruption. In fact, it is also noted that financial institutions in rich countries play a role in facilitating corrupt payments. The World Bank (2004) estimates that the amount of money laundered by Northern financial institutions totals up to \$1 trillion annually. As suggested by the former World Bank President, Robert Zoellick (2007) developing countries need to improve governance and accountability, but developed countries should also stop providing a safe haven for stolen proceeds. There should be no safe haven for those who steal from the poor. Helping developing countries recover the stolen money will be key to fund social programs and put corrupt leaders on notice that they will not escape the law. With specific reference to Switzerland, Falana (2012:28) affirms that the country operates a fraud-friendly banking system which provides safe haven for corrupt leaders to keep stolen wealth. According to him, through such dubious banking system, Switzerland has frustrated all legal measures to recover billions of dollars stolen from poverty stricken nations.

After the Arab spring, it was revealed that the illicit wealth accumulated by the deposed rulers of Libya, Tunisia and Egypt stands at an estimated 190 billion dollars. The bulk of such stolen wealth is kept in secret accounts in Switzerland. It is on record that other African rulers like Mobutu Sese Seko, Omar Bongo, Idi Amin, Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha left billions of dollars in those secret accounts (ibid).

Although the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) has approved an anti-corruption convention, endorsed by its member countries, making



the bribery of public officials in developing countries by multinational corporations a criminal offence, I wish to suggest that the money laundering act, in particular, should be practically supported at the global level. Money retrieved from foreign accounts should be monitored and seen to be invested in developmental projects. For instance, in July 2006, British authorities returned US\$1.9 million of allegedly illicit gains of Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, former governor of the oil-rich Bayelsa state in Nigeria. Also, the Obasanjo administration retrieved some money (running into billions of dollars) stolen by the late Gen. Sani Abacha regime. An estimated \$3 - \$5 billion was looted from public funds and deposited in Western banks by the Nigerian dictator, Sani Abacha and his cronies during the 1990s and laundered through banks in the UK, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, Jersey and the Bahamas (The World Bank, 2007 cited in JIM, 2008:37). The subsequent Nigerian government sought the help of the governments of the UK, the US and the EU in recovering an estimated US\$2.2 billion of these funds (ibid). This recoup was seen as vital to a country in dire need of development but Nigerians have not at any time been formerly briefed on how, and on what, these funds were expended.

#### **THE WAY FORWARD**

Vertical and horizontal accountability has been variously suggested as an anti-corruption strategy. For clarification, vertical accountability has been referred to as the way in which political and public leaders have their decisions and activities monitored by news media, civil society and citizens (Diamond & Morlino, 2004; Goetz & Jenkins, 2005; Wampler, 2004, cited in Relly, 2011:4). Ekwewuo (2009:3) observes that one of the major gaps in the corruption war in Nigeria has been the absence of effective collaboration between governments, agencies, civil society and business community. Civil society organizations, for instance, can serve as whistle blowers against corrupt activities. Combating corruption, therefore, is not just a matter of making laws and creating institutions, but rather it is deeply rooted in the activities of the civil society itself.

Transparent and credible electioneering can also serve as an antidote to corruption as the process must have prevented questionable characters from being imposed on the people. It is a known fact that elections in Nigeria have always produced all manners of individuals deficient in integrity. These people, occupying different sensitive positions, are answerable to their *godfathers* whose only view of electioneering is that of political investment. Recognition of that moral determination in governance marks the direction in which those who govern must channel their efforts toward the common good if they are to justly serve the society. That direction calls for

individual moral responsibility and accountability, sacrifice, compassion, justice and a honest effort to achieve the common good (Ojo, 2008:24). The political will on the part of public office holders (particularly the leadership) is not only desirable but a core requirement in the fight against corruption in Nigeria. This has proved to be productive in some advanced democracies.

The corruption tolerance levels of the community too can be a force for or against corruption. This includes the opprobrium a society accords blatantly corrupt acts. Political will is undoubtedly a critical factor in the fight against corruption and the promotion of good governance. Of course political will transcends grand speeches. Political will incorporates leading by example and taking prompt and firm action where corruption is detected and supporting law enforcement agencies when they do their work in this regard (Madonsela, 2010:2). There is, therefore, the need for a vibrant civil society and the successful prosecution of corrupt public officials to instill a feeling within the citizenry that corruption can indeed be checked. This is because the fight against corruption cannot be left in the hands of the anti-corruption agencies alone. As suggested by Falana (2012:33) Civil Society Organisations, CSOs, should collaborate with institutions in other parts of the world that are working for recovery and repatriation of looted wealth.

According to Afe Babalola (2012:9) “the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC and the Independent Corrupt Practices (and other Related Offences) Commission, ICPC, have only had nominal rate of success. The EFCC has been more in the news for its failings rather than its successes. Nigerians must appreciate the fact that graft has become so ingrained in the national consciousness that it would take more than the effort of two anti-graft institutions to bring about change. Parents, teachers, religious leaders and indeed every person in a position of moral or religious authority must join the fight”. Before the establishment of ICPC and EFCC, development experts, who had established a link between graft in high places and failure of governance, maintained that the country may continue to wallow in poverty and squalor unless the corrupt individuals in the corridors of power are sent packing. As noted by Falana (2012:9) “while President Goodluck Jonathan has re-organised the EFCC, corruption is now carried out with impunity to the extent that the battle against corruption has been lost completely. It is as if no one is in control.”

Possibly making a case against the existing immunity clause in the constitution, the report of the Vision 2020 National Technical Working Group on political system (2009:23) advocates that “new legislation should request incumbent office holders – political as well as appointed, to step aside without losing their office (i.e., go on

suspension within a defined period) in the case of very heavy accusations of serious misdemeanor against them". Except for some dissenting voices among the political class, the popular opinion has been the total removal of the immunity clause that unduly shields the President, Vice President, Governor and Deputy Governor from prosecution while in office.

Using institutional approach in their analysis of corruption in Nigeria, Nna and Jacob (2012:118) submit that there is the need to make the various anti-graft institutions independent of any branch of the government, and allow them to investigate, prosecute and convict corrupt officials in their own special tribunal as against the regular courts in the land. This will go a long way in restraining the arbitrary and particularistic behaviour of the political gladiators. In the final analysis, the best way to fight corruption is to strengthen formal and informal systems and mechanisms for checks and balances: free and independent media, an effective judiciary system and active citizenship in fighting corruption (Dochas, 2007). Above all, as suggested by Ajibola (2013) government should provide for all and be fair to all. Our educational system ought to be made more functional and guided to address our national needs and aspirations. Government must necessarily diversify the economy to widen its revenue base. And all accruing revenues must be judiciously spent and meticulously accounted for.

Spiritual depth is also considered as a necessary qualification of being human to fight corruption. It is the theory of the meaning and value of human existence. In itself, spiritual depth involves the notion of God from whom love ultimately emanates. This religious love in conjunction with moral magnitude acts as a spark that insures the leader against what will undermine good governance, promote greed and naked selfishness or sickness that makes people loot the national treasury including the monies they do not need on earth. This leadership quality also promotes honesty in government business. For instance, Catholic social teaching seeks to apply the essence of Christian moral principles to life in society and offers a powerful way of thinking about what the common good requires, and how structures in society can promote or undermine human well-being and the requirements of justice. Churches have an exemplary role in society. They have important contributions to make in the debate about ethical standards and the fight against social injustice. Therefore, high expectations are placed on the churches in the fight against corruption (TI, 2007:6).

## **CONCLUSION**

It is affirmed that corruption has undermined the growth of country's economic base which is the hallmark of the substance of the democratic governance. In its various

forms, corruption results in the malfunctioning of the economic system which obviously results in such things as increased national debt, failed development projects and increased poverty of the people. The exploitation of the nation's oil resources, and the management of oil windfalls, have dominated the progress and decline of Nigeria's economy over the past two decades, and have significantly influenced evolution and perception of poverty. In fact, Nigeria is one of the top five countries that have the largest number of poor. Nigeria, according to the World Bank President, Jim Yong Kim, ranked third in the world while India ranked number one with 33 per cent of the world poor. China is ranked second with 13 per cent of the world's poor, followed by Nigeria where seven per cent of the world poor lives in. (See more at: <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014>).

It is my submission in this essay that for the Nigerian government to fight the menace of corruption, its leadership must demonstrate commitment and the political will to sanction those found to be corrupt while the civil society should be seen to be exposing corrupt practices at all levels of governance. It is believed there is no single nation of the world that makes progress when corruption permeates all aspects of people's lives; when public officials seek office with the intention to steal from the people's common wealth and when appointment to public office is greeted with celebration, forgetting that it is a call to serve. Therefore, as shown in this essay, the current epidemic of competitive corruption and excessive greed amongst the political class and our elites in appropriating national resources to themselves must be stopped.

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## HEAVEN AND HELL IN THE BIBLICAL AND AFRICAN CONCEPTS OF LIFE AFTER DEATH

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### *Introduction*

In various cultures and religions *heaven* and *hell* are usually conceived as being diametrically opposed in their natures and connotations. While the term heaven is understood as referring to the *place* (or more correctly to the *condition*) of the greatest possible happiness, hell is conversely regarded as the *place* or the *condition* of the most painful suffering imaginable, which individuals would experience after their earthly life, depending on their behaviour or their relationship with God and neighbours while on earth. This idea is clearly attested in the Bible. For instance, in one of his parables, Jesus points to the separation of good people from bad ones at the end of time saying: “Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt 13:40-43). The two opposing ideas of *shining* and *weeping* are indicative of heaven and hell. *Vis-à-vis* heaven and hell, therefore, there is the idea of *joy* and *suffering*, of *reward* and *punishment*. But such concepts of heaven and hell seem not to receive very clear expression in African cultures and African Traditional Religion (ATR). Without careful and in-depth study then, it would appear that the idea of heaven and hell is totally absent in the African cultures and ATR as some try to insinuate.<sup>61</sup> However, a close analysis of the ATR and African cultures and a look at the semantic import of the biblical teaching on the issue will reveal that what the Bible often presents in imagery language about life after death is exactly what the traditional Africans express in clearer terms. The burden of this inculturation-hermeneutical study is then to present and correlate the biblical teaching on the issue of life after death, heaven and hell and the African concept of the same, as a way of showing that what the Bible teaches can sometimes shine out more clearly when expressed in African socio-cultural and linguistic terms. In other words, the paper wishes to show that African inculturation theology, which generally involves expressing the gospel message in African socio-cultural terms, is doubly beneficial; it makes for a better understanding of

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<sup>61</sup> For instance, according to John Mbiti, “We may say, therefore, that on the whole African Religion has neither heaven nor hell, and neither rewards nor punishment for people in the hereafter”. John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975) 117.

the gospel message among Africans and also for a clearer presentation of the same to non-Africans in the wider world. Borrowing and modifying the words of the Letter to the Hebrews, I can then say that God really spoke to the traditional Africans in various ways long ago in preparation for the Gospel of Christ.<sup>62</sup> Employed in the work is the African tri-polar biblical hermeneutical approach<sup>63</sup> or method – examining the relevant biblical text(s), presenting the corresponding African context(s) and bringing them into meaningful dialogue for mutual enrichment. But before delving into the biblical and African concepts of life after death, heaven and hell, it would be necessary to briefly look at some general ideas of the same within the vagaries of philosophies and religions in the world.

### ***Some General Ideas of Life after Death, Heaven and Hell***

Throughout their history human beings, as intelligent animals or *Homo sapiens*, have been engaged with the questions: How did the universe as a whole come into existence? What is the origin of human beings? What are they supposed to be doing here on earth? What is their destiny at the end of the earthly life? Many philosophies, mythologies and religions have tried to proffer answers to these and similar puzzling existential questions. Majority of them either portray a desire for the immortality of persons or they categorically hold that the physical death of human beings does not spell their conclusive end, that they live on somehow and somewhere after physical death, meaning that there is life after death (also known as the life hereafter). For instance, in the Babylonian myth, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, “Gilgamesh is aware that his ancestor Utnapishtim is the only mortal who has acquired immortality, and he determines to find him in order to learn the secrets of death and life.”<sup>64</sup> Then the philosopher Plato presents the idea of the soul enjoying the heavenly happiness after death through the mouth of Socrates. Thus in the dialogue between Socrates and Crito, who was persuading him not to drink the hemlock, Socrates says: “When I have drunk the poison I shall remain with you no longer, but depart to a state of heavenly happiness....”<sup>65</sup> Plato believes that the soul is the immortal part of human beings and so it survives a person’s physical death, so he says: “...the soul is in all respects superior to

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<sup>62</sup> “Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds” (Heb 1:1-2).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Gerald West, “Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa”, 1, accessed on 21.05.2014 at 18:10 p. m., from: [http://www.chora-strangers.org/files/chora/west2008\\_Parratt.pdf](http://www.chora-strangers.org/files/chora/west2008_Parratt.pdf). Some people also speak of *Contextualization* (analyzing the world behind the biblical text), *De-contextualization* (analyzing the world within the biblical text) and *Re-contextualization* (using appropriate African concepts to analyze the biblical text). Cf. Albert Ngengi Mundele, *A Handbook on African Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Limuru, Kenya: Kolbe Press, 2012) 19.

<sup>64</sup> S. H. Hooke, *Middle Eastern Mythology* (England: Penguin Books, 1978) 53.

<sup>65</sup> Plato, *The Dialogue – Phaedo*, 115 C, D.

the body, ...what makes each one of us to be what we are is only the soul ... the true and immortal being of each one of us is called the soul....”<sup>66</sup>

Generally speaking, life after death is the physical or the non-physical (transcendental) sphere in which a person or an essential part of the person’s consciousness or identity is believed to continue to exist after the person’s bodily death. “...the essential aspect of the individual that lives on after death may be some partial element, or the entire soul, of an individual which carries with it and confers personal identity.”<sup>67</sup> This belief that something of a person survives bodily death is totally opposed to the notion of eternal oblivion which is the philosophical idea that the individual self permanently ceases to exist after the physical death. The concept of eternal oblivion denies that there is any other thing after the earthly life; that there are such things as heaven, hell, purgatory, or any other state of existence or consciousness after death. “Many people, who believe in an eternal oblivion, believe that the concept of an afterlife is scientifically impossible. Such views are typically held by atheists.”<sup>68</sup> However, according to Thomas W. Clark, “Rejecting visions of reunions with loved ones or of crossing over into the light, we anticipate the opposite: darkness, silence, an engulfing emptiness. But we would be wrong.”<sup>69</sup> I hold such views of total annihilation and final oblivion as being indeed wrong because they in effect limit human nature to only material realm, and human existence to only this physical world, thereby negating the natural longing of the spiritual part of human beings for the Ultimate Reality and for eternity. There is nothing in the whole universe that can adequately satisfy that longing because the human high psychic powers do transcend this transient universe in search of what is permanent, in search of heaven or union with God. Thus Augustine says: “You are great, O Lord, and highly to be praised.... You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You”.<sup>70</sup> The mentioned natural longing is given varied expressions in different religions. For instance, the Buddhists believe that there is rebirth at death. “The type of rebirth will be conditioned by the moral tone of the person’s actions (kamma or karma). For example, if a person has committed harmful actions of body, speech and mind based on greed, hatred and delusion, rebirth in a lower realm, i.e. an animal, a ghost or a hell realm, is to be expected. On the other hand, where a person has performed skillful actions based on generosity, loving-kindness

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<sup>66</sup> Plato, *The Laws*, 959. Cf. also B. E. Nwagwu, “The Concept of Immortality of the Soul in Classical Western Philosophy and in Igbo Culture – An Essay in Conceptual Analysis” in: *West African Journal of Philosophical Studies*, WAJOPS, Vol. 4, 2001, p. 7.

<sup>67</sup> “Afterlife” in: [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afterlife](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afterlife), accessed on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

<sup>68</sup> “Eternal Oblivion” in: [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eternal\\_oblivion](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eternal_oblivion), accessed on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

<sup>69</sup> Thomas W. Clark, “Death, Nothingness, and Subjectivity”, an article originally published in the *Humanist*, and reprinted in: [www.naturalism.org/death.htm](http://www.naturalism.org/death.htm), accessed on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

<sup>70</sup> *The Confessions of St. Augustine* (Revision of the Translation of J. M. Lelen) Book 1, Chapter 1 (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1997) 19.

(metta), compassion and wisdom, rebirth in a happy realm, i.e. human or one of the many heavenly realms can be expected”.<sup>71</sup> Robert Cameron Mitchell makes a distinction between this Buddhists’ idea of rebirth and the African concept of reincarnation by saying: “In African primal religions, it is believed that the transcendent-soul of a recently deceased ancestor might be reincarnated in an infant born to a member of the family. This ‘partial’ reincarnation is different from the Hindu and Buddhist ‘total’ reincarnation, in which an individual’s total spiritual self is reborn”.<sup>72</sup> Other religions like Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, etc. also have one form or the other of the belief in the life after death. In most cases, the condition of the person in the afterlife is believed to be determined by how the person has lived here on earth. For instance, Islam holds that a person’s life does not end with his/her physical death. In Islam heaven or paradise is understood as a place of everlasting happiness for those whose offences have been forgiven by God while hell is that of eternal punishment with fire for those whose sins are not forgiven.<sup>73</sup> In their Creed the Christians in general also “look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come”.<sup>74</sup> Concerning the nature of this *resurrection of the dead and life of the world to come*, the Christians of various denominations talk of either *heavenly happiness* for the virtuous people or the *agony of hell* for the unrighteous ones. But the Catholic Church goes even deeper and talks of three possible conditions or conscious states after the physical death of a human being: immediate *heaven* if the person is totally pure or sinless, since nothing impure can enter heaven (cf. Rev 21:10-11,27), delayed heaven or *purgatory* if there is need for some purification (cf. 1 John 5:16-17; 1 Cor 3:13-15; 2 Macc 12:34,39-45) and *hell* if the person is evil; has been adamantly very sinful and dies totally unrepentant (Matt 13:47-50). Thus the Church’s official teaching states:

Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven – through purification or immediately, or immediate and everlasting damnation... This perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity ... with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed – is called “heaven.” Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> “Afterlife” in: [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afterlife](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afterlife), accessed on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

<sup>72</sup> Robert Cameron Mitchell, *African Primal Religions* (Illinois: Argus Communications, 1977) 98.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Ahmad von Denffer, “Islam” in: Klaus Meier, et al., *Weltreligionen im Überblick: Die Bedeutendsten Daten, Fakten, Ereignisse und Personen* (München: Compact Verlag, 2008) 148.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. the “Nicene Creed” used by the mainline Christian denominations.

<sup>75</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines, Ibadan, Nigeria: St. Pauls, 1994), Nos. 1021-1024, pp. 266-267.

Regarding purgatory, the Church goes further to state: “All who die in God’s grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.... The Church gives the name *Purgatory* to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned”.<sup>76</sup> Then about hell, she adds: “To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God’s merciful love means remaining separated from him forever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called ‘hell’”.<sup>77</sup> Details of what Christianity and Judaism hold about life after death, heaven and hell can be read out from biblical texts.

### ***Some Biblical Data on Life after Death, Heaven and Hell***

That corporeal death is not the end of human existence is very clearly expressed in the Bible. There are both indirect and direct pointers to this. For instance, an indirect reference in the OT is found in Ezek 37:1-24 which narrates the symbolic raising of the demoralised Israelite exiles. It is Ezekiel’s vision of a valley full of dry bones and he was given the divine orders to revive them with prophetic oracle. To the Israelites who felt like dead people whose bones were already dried up (v 11), the vision was meant to provide reassurance that God who raises even dry bones back to life can bring them back from exile and give them a new and better future. On the other hand, it indicates that there is some hope of life after death. Such hope is also found in Wisdom 4:7 which says: “But the righteous, though they die early, will be at rest”. Again without being very direct, Job says something that tends to point to life after death: “For I know that my Redeemer lives ... and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God...” (Job 19:25-26). A more direct reference is found in Dan 12:2 which states: “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt”.

In the NT the idea of life beyond the grave comes out even more clearly (cf. 1 Cor 15:20-23; 1 Thess 4:14; Rev 14:13). Its nature is equally expressed: the unrighteous will suffer in hell while the righteous will rejoice in heaven. The joy of heaven is presented as utterly indescribable (cf. 1 Cor 2:9) while the suffering in hell is shown as the opposite: “there men will weep and gnash their teeth” (Matt 13:50). Jesus insists that heaven is so precious that it is worth giving up everything for it: “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold

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<sup>76</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Nos. 1030-10371.

<sup>77</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1033. This statement: “This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called ‘hell’” rhymes with the African idea of hell.

all that he had and bought it” (Matt 13:45-46). He presents the condition for reaching heaven as living in righteousness or doing God’s will (cf. Matt 5:20; 7:21). Conversely, to drive home how dreadful hell would be Jesus says: “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell” (Matt 5:29-30). It is interesting to note the Greek word translated as *hell* here – *geenna*. It is the Septuagint adaptation of the Hebrew *gê-hinnōm* (Aramaic *ge-hinnam*), which refers to the “valley of the sons of Hinnom” (cf. 2 Kings 23:10). It was the valley where human beings were once burnt in sacrifice and it later served as a public ever-burning incinerator. So from its etymology, it carries the semantic force of a place of excruciating suffering. As William Crockett has rightly noted:

In the New Testament the final destination of the wicked is pictured as a place of blazing sulfur, where the burning smoke ascends forever. This would have been an effective image because sulfur fires were part of life for those who lived in the Jerusalem of Bible times. Southwest of the city was the Valley of Hinnom ... The steep gorge was once used to burn children in sacrifice to the Ammonite god Molech (2 Kings 23:10; Jer. 7:31; 32:35). Jeremiah denounced such practices by saying that Hinnom Valley would become the valley of God’s judgment, a place of slaughter (Jer. 7:32; 19:5-7) ... Thus when the Jews talked about punishment in the next life, what better image could they use than the smoldering valley they called *gehenna*?<sup>78</sup>

Because the said human sacrifice in the Hinnom Valley was an obvious painful experience for the victims and also for the fact that the fire of the incinerator that later developed there was continuous, it served as a perfect imagery of permanent suffering of hell and was so presented in the NT. Thus John F. Walvoord says: “All the references to *gehenna*, except James 3:6, are from the lips of Christ himself, and there is an obvious emphasis on the punishment for the wicked after death as being everlasting.”<sup>79</sup> Another Greek word which is also rendered as hell in the NT is *Hades* which is the Septuagint word for the Hebrew *Sheol*, understood as the neutral abode of the dead, where they

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<sup>78</sup> William Crockett, “Gehenna” in: Stanley N. Gundry, et al, *Four Views on Hell*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishers, 1996) 58. See also “Gehenna” in: John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1978) 299-300.

<sup>79</sup> John F. Walvoord, “Gehenna” in: Stanley N. Gundry, et al, *Four Views on Hell*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishers, 1996) 20.

wait quietly until the final judgment.<sup>80</sup> So it is used usually where there is no indication of, or emphasis on, suffering (cf. Gen 37:35; Eccl 9:10).

### ***The African Concept of Life after Death, Heaven and Hell***

The principle of going *from the known to the unknown* is applicable to the African concept of the nature of the non-physical or the spiritual existence beyond this earthly life. So the African concept of life after death, heaven and hell derives much from their idea of earthly social and family ties, their cult of ancestors and their funeral rites or burial rituals. Because Africa is a large continent with many ethnic groups, too many to be considered individually here, the Igbo people<sup>81</sup> of Nigeria will serve as a representative example. Though some differences would be expected to exist between the Igbo ideas and those of some other parts of Africa, such differences would not be very significant. A brief look will now be cast at the three mentioned aspects of the African cultures which have to do with our topic, namely: the social and family ties, the cult of ancestors and the funeral rites.

#### *(a) The Social and Family Ties*

The social and family ties among the Igbo people and among Africans in general are very high. The Igbo society is usually organised along inter-connected family layers, moving from single or nuclear families (*ezi-nuno*) to the first level extended family or *kindred* known as *ime-nne* (lit. inside a mother), i.e., the few nuclear families within a polygamous family system that trace their origin to an “ancestral mother”.<sup>82</sup> Then comes the second level extended family or *clan* known as *umunna* (lit. children of a father), which is a closely connected community made up of the many kindred-families who trace their origin to a common ancestral father. Then all the *umunna* descending from a more ancient ancestor would form a larger community known as *ogbe* or *village*, a group of which would then make up a town (*obodo*). Thus, regarding Igbo social system, Uzukwu says: “The village-group is a federation of clans. The clan is composed of kindreds, and the kindreds made up of extended families. The head of the eldest or principal clan presides over the assemblies of the village-group attended by other heads.

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. Matt. 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; Acts 2:27; 2:31; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:11-15. Indeed when Jesus is said (in the *Credo*) to have descended into hell, it is *Hades* that is meant and not *Gehenna*.

<sup>81</sup> The Igbo people live in the south eastern part of Nigeria, their number over forty million people. Their annual population growth lies between 2.5 and 3.0 per cent. Cf. A. E. Okoroafo, “The Igbo Population” in: G. E. K. Ofomata (ed.), *A Survey of the Igbo Nation* (Onitsha / Cameroon: Africana First Publishers, 2002) 131.

<sup>82</sup> The “ancestral mother” is put inside inverted commas because it is deceased men that are usually referred as ancestors. But one could somehow talk of an “ancestral mother” because if an ancestor married many wives and they got children with him, the later families emanating from those children trace themselves first to their respective mothers as *ime-nne* before tracing themselves to their ancestral father as *umunna*.



But decisions that affect the life of all the clans constituting the village-group necessarily involve consultation on family, kindred, and clan levels".<sup>83</sup>

It is very important to an Igbo person that he or she finds acceptance within all those levels of community living because the people believe that *community is power (umunna bu ike)*, meaning that individuals derive strength from the community. Indeed individuals derive not only strength or assurance of protection from the community; there is also material help to gain from the community. A rich person that allows his relation to live and die in abject poverty is not accorded any respect because the Igbo people have a saying: *Onye aghana nwanne ya* which means *let nobody abandon his relation!* But more important than the material gain is the psychological need of *belonging*, of being accepted. Thus if at any of the community levels a person is ostracised for whatever reason, the person usually takes necessary measures to ensure reintegration. The Igbo idiomatic expression for ostracising a defaulting person from a community is *egonye ya nkwukwu oku* (lit. buying a box of matches for the person)<sup>84</sup> which in effect means that the person is no longer allowed to visit or even talk to anybody in the community. The person cannot be greeted by neighbours or receive any answer when he/she greets. Even if the person needs no material help from anybody, the social isolation still engenders a lot of psychological pains because he/she can neither attend meetings nor buy anything from a member of the community until there is reintegration.

The Igbo people believe that *etu esi eme ya n'uwaa k'esi eme ya n'enigwe* (lit. how it is done here on earth is how it is done in heaven). So if one can be accepted into, or ostracised from one's earthly community, such is equally possible in the spirit-community. Simply put, heaven for the Igbo people means acceptance or integration into the spirit-community after death (which engenders much joy), while hell is exclusion from it (which breeds internal agony). Temporary exclusion, for instance, for those waiting to be given funeral rites, would be like purgatory. This emphasis on the earthly and the heavenly communities is also expressed by some other Africans. Thus Häselbarth notes that for the Mamabolo people of South Africa, there is happy life after death for those who live and die in a community because if a person abhors community

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<sup>83</sup> Elochukwu E. Uzuoku, *A Listening Church. Autonomy and Communion in African Churches* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996) 15.

<sup>84</sup> This literally means that the person can no longer enter a neighbour's house to collect fire for lighting one's fire for cooking, as happened in villages in the past; he/she should make his/her own fire with the matches. But even today that one would no longer need such fire-help, it remains the symbolic expression of ostracism; the person should not associate with the rest any more until the matter is resolved.

life here on earth, how can he/she join and enjoy the spiritual community beyond the grave?<sup>85</sup>

*(b) The Cult of Ancestors*

Ancestors are the forefathers of various nuclear and extended families. They still remain active members of such families and are thus called living-dead. Unlike the Platonic dualistic idea of the soul living on after the body has died, the Igbo people see human beings as entities capable of physical and spiritual actions. For them, "...man is not a unity made up of soul and body, but an entity that performs both physical and spiritual functions. Death is not seen, therefore as separation of soul from body, but rather as a change from one state to another".<sup>86</sup> So at their death the ancestors have changed their mode of existence from physical to spiritual. John S. Mbiti says: "In many parts of Africa, people believe that the next world is invisible but very close to that of the living".<sup>87</sup> So the ancestors are very close to their living relatives. According to Arinze, "The Ibo family is not made up of only those who are still living in the flesh. The unseen ancestors are part of the family and are every inch interested in it. This can be said of most African peoples, but in varying degrees. The Ibos invite them to the family meal..."<sup>88</sup> This communion with the ancestors is like a fore-taste of heaven, which is the communion of a spiritual community beyond the grave. The ancestors are the spiritual elders of a community. They are venerated not only because they lived and died well here on earth but also because they now live spiritually in very close connection and relationship with God and the deities, and so they possess the spiritual powers they did not have in their earthly physical existence. Thus Francis A. Oborji writes:

Though the ancestors acquire greater powers which put them next to the deities in the ontological order and make them mediators between God and man, yet they are best regarded in ATR as glorified living-dead members of the family... However, death alone does not make an ancestor. In the view of ATR, old age

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<sup>85</sup> Cf. Hans Häselbarth, *Die Auferstehung der Toten in Afrika: Eine theologische Deutung der Todesriten der Mamabolo in Nordtransvaal* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlag, 1972) 164. In his words: „*Lebu le tswala bophel*: Der Tod gebiert Leben ... Für den einzelnen, der für sich lebt und der niemanden hat, der für ihn die Riten vollzieht, ist der Tod ein tragisch-endgültiges Faktum. Für alle, welche in der Gemeinschaft sterben, ist der Tod ein Geburtsvorgang, eine Phase der ganzheitlichen Bestimmung“, meaning: “*Lebu le tswala bophel*: Death gives birth to life ... For anybody who lives for himself (i.e., selfishly in isolation from a community), and so has nobody to perform the funeral rites for him/her at death, for such a fellow death is really a tragic end. But for all who die in a community, death is a birth process, a phase of the attainment of perfection.”

<sup>86</sup> B. E. Nwigwe, “The Concept of Immortality of the Soul in Classical Western Philosophy and in Igbo Culture – An Essay in Conceptual Analysis”, p. 20.

<sup>87</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 116.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Francis A. Arinze, *Sacrifice in Ibo Religion* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press 1978) 19. Death

(relatively speaking), life lived according to the accepted standard of the group, off-spring, appropriate funeral rites (which are regarded as rites of passage by which the dead are installed as ancestors), are some of the essential requirements.<sup>89</sup>

Some of the mentioned requirements are however more important than others, for instance, good life is of utmost importance since no community invokes a known dead criminal as an ancestor. On the other hand, the funeral rites could be played down when necessary, for instance, where the relations are financially unable to give a resounding funeral rite, it is regarded in Igbo custom as enough to simply burn a handful of gun-powder in place of the many canon-shots that usually go with high-profile funerals. Heaven and hell for the ancestors would then mean acceptance or non-acceptance among the members of the community of the spiritual elders. The other members of the community, like women and children who naturally cannot fulfil the said requirements for acceptance as ancestors or spiritual elders, are equally accepted into the general spiritual community of good people over there. Since the idea of the hereafter is based on the experience of the present order of things, good life is required for anybody to be accepted into the spiritual community beyond the grave just as it is required here on earth; criminals are not accepted in the earthly communities until they change their behaviour. In the same way a criminal that dies totally unrepentant meets with rejection in the spiritual world. It seems certain that such an unrepentant person is in hell, having excluded himself/herself permanently from spirit-community since repentance or the change of heart, which is necessary for possible reconciliation on earth, is rather too late after death.

### *The Funeral Rites*

Funeral rites, even the low-key type mentioned above, are necessary for gaining acceptance among the departed. So with the funeral rites a mock judgement starts already here on earth since it is not given to every person. According to Mbiti, "Meticulous care is taken to fulfil the funeral rites, and to avoid causing any offence to the departed. This is not done for unknown strangers, for thieves, murderers, witches and other trouble-makers in the community, or for those who have died abnormal deaths."<sup>90</sup> He says further:

In Nigeria some people believe that the dead appear before God to receive their judgment depending on what they have done with their lives. They are

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<sup>89</sup> Francis Anekwe Oborji, *Trends in African Theology since Vatican II: A Missiological Orientation* (Roma: Tipografica Leberit, 1998) 147.

<sup>90</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 113.

then sent to a good place where they rejoin their relatives who departed before them, or to a bad place where they remain in misery for a long time until eventually God takes pity on them. This idea of some people being punished after death is not common in Africa, and the only other place where it is reported is in a small area of Ghana. We may say, therefore, that on the whole African Religion has neither heaven nor hell, and neither rewards nor punishment for people in the hereafter.<sup>91</sup>

This last comment “that on the whole African Religion has neither heaven nor hell, and neither rewards nor punishment for people in the hereafter” is precisely what this write-up considers as improper understanding of the African Religion. The words *heaven* and *hell* may not be expressly existent in it but the idea or the real import of the same is surely found therein. For instance, in Igbo tradition, to ensure *acceptance* in the spirit world (which is what *heaven* means), and thus avoid possible *rejection* (which is the import of *hell*), some type of ritual cleansing or purgatory is carried out for the dead person. According to Francis Arinze, “Among the funeral sacrificial offerings in the strict sense are the kola, wine, fowls, etc., given to the ancestors to ask them to welcome the departed soul. Minor sacrificial offerings are also made to the person’s Chi, to Ani, Ogwugwu, and a few other spirits of the place, to ask them to clear the way for the dead man and to forgive him any debts he might have owed them.... a man who took part in the inter-town wars of old and probably killed an enemy.... When such a person breathes his last, his children buy a ram (*ebunu*). The ram is slaughtered and the blood is smeared on the deceased’s right arm to wash his hand of all the evils he may have committed.”<sup>92</sup> Therefore, death for the Igbo people and Africans in general, means a transition from the physical to the spiritual world where one is either accepted into or rejected from the happy community of those who went before. Rightly then have V. Y. Mudimbe and Susan Mbula Kilonzo remarked: “Most people would agree that death in Africa is a rite of passage when the soul moves to a spiritual world.”<sup>93</sup>

### ***The Nexus between the Biblical and the African Concepts of Life after Death***

The discussions so far show that the biblical concept of hell-fire is symbolic of agony. My close look at some biblical texts reveals that the source of this agony is really separation from the family of God. The Bible presents God as a Trinity of Persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:18-20). In Godhead there is internal activity

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<sup>91</sup> Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 117.

<sup>92</sup> Francis A. Arinze, *Sacrifice in Ibo Religion* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1970) 87-88.

<sup>93</sup> V. Y. Mudimbe and Susan Mbula Kilonzo, “Philosophy of Religion on African Ways of Believing” in: Elias Kifon Bongmba (ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to African Religions* (West Sussex, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2012) 41-61, 56-57.

(*processio ad intra*) which is mutual love, thus 1 John 4:16 says: “God is love” – the Trinity is a divine family of love. The flowing out of this love leads to God’s external activity (*processio ad extra*) which is creation and redemption of the world.<sup>94</sup> In the creation narrative God makes human beings special members of the divine family by creating them *in his image and likeness* (Gen 1:26-27) and also by breathing his life-giving spirit into them (Gen 2:7). The narrative shows that the first human beings were initially enjoying God’s company. But with their sin/fall they isolated themselves from the divine-human community/family: “They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden ... and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden” (Gen 3:8). Their final expulsion from paradise (Gen 3:24) indicates that they were no longer acceptable in community. That this loss was painful is evident from their frantic effort to *clothe* themselves when *they noticed they were naked*; empty of God’s grace (Gen 3:7). The devil had deceived them with *physical* death saying that they would not die if they disobeyed God (Gen 3:4). Now, they were physically alive but *spiritually* dead, having cut themselves from God, the fountain of life (Ps 36:9; John 1:4). Thus Jesus says: “I am the vine, you are the branches.... Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers ...” (John 15:5-6). That is what Ezekiel means by calling on his people to repent or to return to God so as to *live* (Ezek 33:10-20).

The aforementioned life-giving spirit (Gen 2:7) is a seed of glory, a sign that God wills to share family/community life with human beings. When this was jeopardized by the fall, God announced a second chance, the *proto evangelium*, by telling the deceiving devil: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head...” (Genesis 3:15). The masculine singular pronoun (*hû’*, he) in the phrase *hû’ yeshûpkā rō’sh* (he will strike your head) shows that a particular man is meant, known in the NT as Jesus, whose expiatory death undid the devil’s work and brought reconciliation (cf. Col 1:13-23). Therefore Rev 21:3 says: “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them’”. Those are then in heaven who for their life of love would receive acceptance from God and hear from Jesus: “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...” (Matt 25:34). But those others are in hell who, for their careless life and lack of love, are rejected thus: “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt 25:41). This synchronizes with the African idea that heaven is the happy acceptance into the spiritual

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<sup>94</sup> Cf. Ignatius M. C. Obinwa, “Biblical Perspectives on Collaborative Ministry: The Issue of a Model” in: Ignatius M. C. Obinwa (ed.), *Collaborative Ministry in the Context of Inculturation* (Onitsha: Africana First Publishers, 2006) 46-50.

community beyond the grave; the union of God's children which begins here on earth and continues in the hereafter. Hell on the other hand means the painful rejection from (the earthly and) the heavenly community. The term *hell-fire* is the biblical symbolic language for this rejection, the psychological agony of which is as painful as being burnt by fire.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I can say that the African concepts of heaven as the acceptance of a person into the spirit-community beyond the grave, purgatory as the temporary rejection from the same till necessary purifications or funeral rites are made, and hell as the permanent rejection from it, rhymes with the afore-mentioned Catholic teaching on these points. The said African concepts help to explain the issues better not only to the Africans but also to those non-Africans who find it difficult to reconcile God as a loving Father and hell as punishment from him. According to Fernando Armellini, for instance, "The first thing the incarnation of God reveals to us is that the Father loves us. He is not like the god of other believers, who lives far away, who made laws and keeps count of those observing them and of those infringing them in order to reward or to punish them. The God of the Christians is not like that. He likes people, a God who punishes nobody, a God who saves."<sup>95</sup> He calls the God of the Christians, "a God who punishes nobody." However, if one understands the statement to mean that it is totally indifferent to God whether people behave well or not, then it would be wrong and would run contrary to the numerous ethical teachings in the Bible. Even human intelligence leads one to the insight that good is different from evil, that virtuous acts are laudable while criminal acts call for punishment. But it would be correct if it is understood to mean that God loves all his children and wants them to come and live joyously in his divine family in heaven, but that some would feel totally unworthy of approaching the holy God due to their bad life style and thus suffer self-imposed ostracism, as Adam and Eve did after their sin (cf. Gen 3:8). That would mean precisely what the ATR/African culture teaches, the only slight uncertainty is whether it happens beyond the grave exactly how it is done here on earth where the community members pronounce the exclusion on someone deserving of such, or whether, as described above, one finds oneself unworthy of joining the spirit-community or the family beyond the grave and so stays sadly apart; thereby personally excluding oneself. Temporary exclusion with the opportunity of reconciliation is possible: the mentioned ritual-cleansing of warriors serves such a purgatorial purpose, just as the Catholic teaching on purgatory shows that people who die bearing venial sins can still be purified (cf. 1 John

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<sup>95</sup> Fernando Armellini, *Celebrating the Word: Commentary on the Readings, Year B*, Revised Edition (Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 2007) 38-39.

5:16-17). The African idea that harmonious community-living here on earth is a necessary preparation for the same hereafter compares with the biblical insistence on reconciliation before offering gifts to God (cf. Matt 5:23-24). The Catholic teaching can be enriched by the African emphasis on the earthly and heavenly community/family life while the Catholic clarity that hell is self-exclusion<sup>96</sup> would enrich the African uncertainty about who pronounces the hell sentence.

In summary I say that what the Bible and the Catholic Church refer to as the joys of heaven is described in African cultures/ATR as *acceptance* into a harmonious community/family beyond the grave. That is what Jesus means by this heavenly family-image: “And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (John 14:3). Again what the Bible calls the *hell-fire* in imagery language is for the African cultures/ATR *rejection* from the community of God and his children in the afterlife. Thus while heaven spells acceptance, purgatory would then be temporary ostracism and hell would be permanent ostracism or rejection from the spirit-community beyond the grave. It can then be seen that what the Bible and the Catholic Church say in symbolic language, the African cultures and ATR present in plain language, thus making the message sharper and clearer.

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1033, which states *inter alia*: “This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called ‘hell’”

## The Theological Functions of “Seek the Lord” (*bāqqaš ’ādōnāy*) in Zephaniah 2:1-3, for Contemporary Society

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### Abstract

Zephaniah 2:1-3 is a theological delight and a translational crux for exegetes and theologians. It reaches its climax with three imperatival parallel exhortations, “Seek the Lord” (*bāqqašū ’ādōnāy*), “Seek righteousness” (*bāqqašū tsaddiq*) and “Seek humility,” (*bāqqašū ’ānāvāh*). Using the “hermeneutics of faith,” this essay examines the addressee as well as the theological function of these phrases. It concludes that the shameless nations, (v. 1) and the poor of the land (v.3) are the theological recipients of Zephaniah’s prophecy. This essay argues that the theological and ethical functions of this unit (Zeph 2:1-3) are primarily exhortative and salvific for the faithful remnants of every age, time and culture.

### Introduction

The prophecy of Zephaniah (2:1-3) captures the nature of God’s relationship with Israel. It is a relationship that demands obedience and total repentance from idolatries, to be a witness of God’s mercy, love and generosity. This unit (Zeph 2:1-3) has always been a theological delight and a translational crux for many exegetes.<sup>97</sup> An invitation to “seek the Lord” (*bāqqašū ’ādōnāy*), “righteousness” (*bāqqašū tsaddiq*) and “humility” (*bāqqašū ’ānāvāh*) forms its exhortative and ethical climax. Who are the addressees and what are the ethical intentions or the theological functions of these

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<sup>97</sup> Scholars in the past who have considered Zephaniah 2:1-3 as both a structurally distinct unit and as a translational crux with different meanings include Arvid S. Kapelrud, *The Message of the Prophet Zephaniah: Morphology and Ideas* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1975), pp. 27–32 who has extensively argued for the unity of Zephaniah 1:7; 2:3 with a list of others who strictly view Zephaniah 2:1-3 as an independent literary unit; A. Vanlier Hunter, *Seek the Lord: A Study of the Meaning and Function of the Exhortation in Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah and Zephaniah* (Baltimore, MD: St. Mary’s Seminary and University, 1982), pp. 259–260 and Hubert Irsigler, *Gottesgreicht und Jahwetag. Die Komposition Zef 1,1–2,3 untersucht auf der Grundlage de Literarkritik des Zefanjabuches* (ATSAT 3; St. Otilien: EOS Verlag, 1977), pp. 113–318; Ehud Ben Zvi, *A Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Zephaniah* (BZAW 198; Berlin: Waler de Gruyter, 1991), pp. 295–298. Others who have argued that v. 4 be added to the unit since the literary syntax of vv. 1-3 points to it as an *inclusio*, include Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 25A; New York: Doubleday, 1994), pp. 95–102 and Marvin A. Sweeney, *Zephaniah: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), pp. 111–123.



imperative statements? These are recurring questions which this study intends to theologially reappraise, but with the help of faith hermeneutics.<sup>98</sup>

This is the harmony of faith and reason, biblical exegesis and systematic theology.<sup>99</sup> It is a “scientific” reading with an “explanatory power,” from the heart of the Church.<sup>100</sup> This approach has a twofold unifying power: (1) the power to hold fast the entire testimony of the sources, comprehend their nuances and pluriformity, (2) the power to transcend the differences of cultures, divisions, times and peoples, civilization and their values.<sup>101</sup> Hermeneutic of faith also represents a reverent listening, a seeking after the living voice of God who in his gracious love speaks to us in the human words of the biblical texts.<sup>102</sup> It is a dialogue in faith with God who speaks to the human person in every culture; it is the living experience of the people of God, the Church.<sup>103</sup>

With this approach this study translates the text and maintains in its exegesis the links between our unit of focus (Zeph 2:1-3) and the past prophetic traditions, particularly the remaining passages of Zephaniah, which emphasize divine judgment (1:2-18) and salvation for those who repent in Judah and in other nations (2:4; 3:1-20). In other words, the shameless nations (v.1) and the humble of the land (v.3) in this essay

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<sup>98</sup> See Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *Behold the Pierced One: an Approach to a Spiritual Christology* (trans. Graham Harrison; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), pp. 42–62, where Benedict explains that interpretation of scriptures today should not be restricted to historical method. It should be done from the standpoint of science that does not interfere with the integrity of the text. He stresses, “From a purely scientific point of view, the legitimacy of an interpretation depends on its power to explain things...the less it needs to interfere with the sources, the more it respects the corpus as given and is able to show it to be intelligible from within, by its own logic, the more opposite such an interpretation is. Conversely, the more it interferes with the sources, the more it feels obliged to excise and throw doubt on things found there, the more alien to the subject it is. To that extent, its explanatory power is also its ability to maintain inner unity of the corpus in question. It involves the ability to unify, to achieve a synthesis, which is the reverse of superficial harmonization...only faith hermeneutic is sufficient to measure up to these criteria.”

<sup>99</sup> Scott W. Hahn, *Covenant and Communion: The Biblical theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), pp. 41–62. See also the recent work of Jean-Pierre Ruiz, *Readings from the Edges: the Bible and People on the Move* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2011), 13–23. Here Ruiz joins Benedict's, Krister Stenddahl, Bernard Lonergan, Gerald O'Collins and Daniel Kendall, Fernando F. Segovia and many others in inviting exegetes and systematic theologians to be “good neighbors.” He adds that, if Scripture is to be the Soul of Theology or “while the increasing inter and intradisciplinary specialization is surely here to stay, good fences make for good neighbors only when well maintained gates grants easy access of each to the other side. Responsible biblical scholarship and responsible theological research call for—and call each other to transparency and accountability.”

<sup>100</sup> Hahn, *Covenant*, pp. 45–62.

<sup>101</sup> Ratzinger, *Pierced*, p. 45.

<sup>102</sup> Hahn, *Covenant*, pp. 46–47.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

represent the particular and universal recipients of these prophetic words. Besides the universal salvific elements of this unit (Zeph 2:1-3), its theological function is to exhort for faithfulness in the Lord.

### Exegetical and Theological Analysis of Zephaniah 2:1-3

In Zephaniah (2:1-3) we read:

BHS <sup>104</sup>	My Provisional Translation
<i>hithqô<sup>s</sup>sû wāqô<sup>s</sup>sû</i> ( v.1a)	Gather, and gather yourselves together
<i>haggôy lo' nikh<sup>s</sup>sāph</i> (v.1b)	O shameless nation not longing for
<i>b<sup>e</sup>terem ledeth choq k<sup>e</sup>mots 'ābhar yôm</i> (v.2a)	Before you are driven away like the chaff in the day
<i>b<sup>e</sup>terem lo'-yābô<sup>r</sup>'ālêkhem chārôn 'aph- 'ādōnāy</i> (v.2b)	Before the fierce anger of the Lord comes to you
<i>b<sup>e</sup>terem lo'-yābô<sup>r</sup>'ālêkhem chārôn 'aph- 'ādōnāy</i> (v.2c)	Before the Day of the Lord's anger comes upon you
<i>bāqqašû'eth- 'ādōnāy kol-'an<sup>e</sup>vê hā'ārets,</i> (v.3a)	Seek the Lord all you humble of the land
<i>'āsher misheppātô pā'ālû</i> ( v.3b)	Who do his commands

<sup>104</sup> I take this as a provisional or working translation from the Masoretic Text (MT) of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS), acceptable by many as the most reliable extant textual witness of the Hebrew Old Testament.

<i>bāqqašû tsaddiq bāqqašû ‘ānāvāh</i> (v.3c)	Seek righteousness, seek humility
<i>’ûlay tissāth<sup>e</sup>rû b<sup>e</sup>yôm’aph-’ădōnāy</i> ( v.3d)	Perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the Lord’s anger

This *pericope*, many scholars would agree, poses a translational crux such that “any translation and interpretation must be highly tentative.”<sup>105</sup> It contains ambiguous expressions and rare words, whose meanings are problematic and sometimes unclear, even in their context.<sup>106</sup> Ben Zvi, however, considers these words and expressions as characteristic and typical of Zephaniah.<sup>107</sup>

The difficulties begin right away with the initial verse (v.1a) where we meet a double imperatival usage of *hithpolel* (*hithqôš<sup>e</sup>sû*) and *qal* (*wāqôšsû*). Many theologians agree that these double imperatives share a common root verb *qšš*, derived from the noun *qš* (“stubble” or “straw”).<sup>108</sup> Questions have been raised whether these imperatives in Zephaniah 2: 1-3 were used with the intended meaning of gathering straw or stubble.<sup>109</sup> John Gray, for instance in “A Metaphor from Building in Zephaniah II, I”, argues that, although *qšš* is the identifiable root verb, it is not derived from the noun *qš*. Rather, he contends that it is related to the verb *qšh* “to be hard/severe.” He then translates this prime verse (v.1a) as “stiffen yourselves and stand firm.”<sup>110</sup> However, I would argue along Ben Zvi’s line that the use of *hithpolel* and *qal* of *qšš* here seems to fit well into Zephaniah’s creative style of employing rare terms not common in other OT passages. We find some exceptions in the Book of Exodus where the *poel* form

<sup>105</sup> Hunter, *Seek the Lord*, p. 260. See also Maria. E. Széles, *Wrath And Mercy: A Commentary on the Books Habakkuk and Zephaniah* (trans. G. A. F. Knight; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 90.

<sup>106</sup> Kaperlud, *Message of the Prophet Zephaniah*, p. 31.

<sup>107</sup> Ben Zvi, *Book of Zephaniah*, p. 297.

<sup>108</sup> Kaperlud, *Message of the Prophet Zephaniah*, 31, Hunter, *Seek the Lord*, p. 260 and Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 110. See also K.- M. Beyse, “vq qaš, vvq qšš”, *TDOT* XIII, pp. 180–182 where a detailed explanation for qaš, “straw, stubble”, primarily a noun, is further made. And “it is not found outside the domain of Hebrew and Aramaic, so that its use appears to have been restricted to Palestine”.

<sup>109</sup> For some of these questionings, see Berlin, *Zephaniah*, p. 95. See also Hunter, *Seek the Lord*, p. 262 for list of scholars who agree to this basic meaning.

<sup>110</sup> John Gray, “A Metaphor from Building in Zephaniah II, I”, *VT* 3 (1953), pp. 404–407.

of the verb is used to characterize Israelites who are subjected by Pharaoh's order to gathering their own straw (Exod 57-12; cf. Num 15:32-33; 1 Kings 17:10-12).<sup>111</sup>

Modern biblical versions and translators have also grappled with the meaning of this prime verse of the prophet Zephaniah (v.1a).<sup>112</sup> Theologically, Széles sees in this text, particularly on the bases of the RSV's translation of "come together," a moral or spiritual implication of pulling oneself together, or returning to one's consciousness or state of life.<sup>113</sup> Berlin views the specific sense of "gather like straw" as figurative in order to highlight the vulnerability of disobedient Judean and other nations to God's fire of anger (v.1b).<sup>114</sup> These modern commentaries and translations, including mine, undoubtedly bear the imprint of the generalized meaning given to this text by ancient versions as "assembling oneself."

In the LXX, for instance, we have "*sunachthēte kai sundethēte*" ("be gathered together and unite together," closely followed by the Vulgate's *convenite congregamini* (assemble, be gathered). Similar translations are found in Symmachus, Targums and in the Talmud.<sup>115</sup> Granted the difficulties the translation of these prophetic words (Zeph 2:1a) may pose to ancient and modern scholars, the sense of "gather and gathering of oneself," for me, is theologically more appealing for a few reasons. First, Zephaniah, is known for using rare and difficult words to communicate his prophecy. Second, this sense of the "gathering" of Israel is repeated in different forms throughout the entire text of Zephaniah. For example, we read two forms of the verb: *'āsēph*, (*hiphil* imperfect) signifying "annihilate" or "sweep," and *'āsof* (infinitive absolute), with the basic meaning of "to gather together" (Zeph 1:1-3). Again in the last chapter of Zephaniah we have *qābats* in the infinitives and *piel* imperfect forms (Zeph 3:8, 19, 20), with similar meanings of "gather" or "assemble."<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Kapelrud, *Message of the Prophet Zephaniah*, 31, Hunter, *Seek the Lord*, p. 260.

<sup>112</sup> See for instance, *NRSV*, "gather together gather", *NAB*, "gather, gather yourselves together", *JPS*, "gather together, gather", *Santa Biblia:Version Popular* (New York: Sociedades Biblicas Unidas, 1979), "reúnanse, júntense ustedes," *Parola Del Signore: La Bibbia in Lingua Corrente* (Roma: Alleanza Biblica Univesale, 1985), "radunatevi, raccoglietevi", *La Sainte Bible* (Paris: Société Biblique Française, 1980), "rassemblez- vous et recueillez-vous"

<sup>113</sup> Széles, *Wrath and Mercy*, p. 90.

<sup>114</sup> Berlin, *Zephaniah*, 96. See also Beyse, "vq qaš, vvq qšš", *TDOT* XIII, p. 181 for this figurative usage.

<sup>115</sup> See Kapelrud, *Message of the Prophet Zephaniah*, 31, Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, p. 110 and Széles, *Wrath and Mercy*, p. 90.

<sup>116</sup> See Ben Zvi, *Book of Zephaniah*, pp. 271-272 ; Széles, *Wrath and Mercy*, p. 75 and P. Mommer, "#bq qbsi *TDOT* XII, pp. 486-491 for extensive discussion of this verb and its synonymous usages especially with *'āsēph* (e.g., Gen 49:2; Isa 11:12; Ezek 11:17; Joel 2:16; Mic 2:12; Hab 2:5 and Zeph 3:8).

In addition, the *niphal* verb *nikh<sup>e</sup>sāph* (Zeph 2:1b) has its own translational challenges. This is true since *kāsaph* means different things in different contexts. For instance in the same text of Zephaniah *kseseph* means “silver” or “money” (Zeph 1:18). This has caused some to associate the *kāsaph* (“long for”) in Zephaniah 2:1b with the Semitic root word “money” or “silver.”<sup>117</sup> In my own view this is not very convincing. There are two other texts in the OT that can help shed light on the meaning of the use of *kāsaph* in our specific unit of investigation (Zeph 2:1-3).

The first is the episode where Laban says to Jacob, his son-in-law “now that you had to leave because you were really longing for (*kāsaph*) your father’s house, why did you steal my gods” (Gen 31:30). The second is the song “my soul longs and pines for (*kāsaph*) the courts of the Lord, my heart and flesh cry out for the living God” (Ps 84:3). In these two texts we notice the verb *kāsaph* occurs in *niphal* but with the active meaning “to long for” or “to desire.”<sup>118</sup> It is probably in this sense of “desire” or “long for,” as suggested by Hunter, that *kāsaph* is used in our text (Zeph 2:1b).<sup>119</sup>

In addition, since the proposition “for” is not deployed in Zephaniah, Kapelrud suggests that *nikh<sup>e</sup>sāph* be given a passive translation: “O nation which is not desired.”<sup>120</sup> This seems to resonate with the Vulgate’s “*gens non amabilis*” (O nation that is not loved or undesirable nation); while in the LXX we have “*to ethnos to apaideuton*” (undisciplined, unchastened or unruly nation). Many believe it has been influenced by the Aramaic tradition which translates *nikh<sup>e</sup>sāph* as “be ashamed.”<sup>121</sup> My conclusion to all this is that whether *nikh<sup>e</sup>sāph* is used in the passive or active sense, the basic meaning of a nation not seeking or longing for the Lord, or that has lost God’s favor theologically stands out.

Verse 2 presents some translational difficulties for theologians. The MT attests “*b<sup>e</sup>terem ledeth choq k<sup>e</sup>mots ‘ābhar yôm*” (“before giving birth or delivering a statue/decreed or chaff or wild flower has pass over as a day”), throwing the door open for varieties of interpretation.<sup>122</sup> Similarly, the LXX attests “*pro tou genesthai humas hōs*

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<sup>117</sup> This is particularly found in Széles, *Wrath and Mercy*, p. 90. See also G. Mayer, “\$s.K. kesep”, *TODT* VII, pp. 270–282, for further extensive discussion this word, and how it is used in different contexts.

<sup>118</sup> See also Ps 17:12 (like a lion longing for prey, like a young lion lurking in ambush) and Job 14: 15 (when you call, I will answer you; and you would long for the work of your hands). Here again *kāsaph* shows up in *qal* form in the sense of “desire”, “long for”, or “eagerness”.

<sup>119</sup> See Hunter, *Seek the Lord*, p. 263 lists of scholars who support this position.

<sup>120</sup> Kapelrud, *Message of the Prophet Zephaniah*, p. 31.

<sup>121</sup> For these debates see Kapelrud, *Message of the Prophet Zephaniah*, p. 31; Berlin, *Zephaniah*, p. 96 and Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, p. 110.

<sup>122</sup> See Széles, *Wrath and Mercy*, p. 91 who argues that, “the accomplishment of the judgment is given us in a clear picture of *ledet hoq*, “the birth of the decree.”

*anthos paraporeuomenon*” (before you become like the flower that passes over). Comparing these two attestations, *genesthai* (“to become”) of the LXX translates the *ledeth* (“beget” or “born”) of the MT and also logically fits the latter’s emendation of *b<sup>e</sup>terem ledeth choq* (before the birth of statue) to *b<sup>e</sup>terem lo’tiddāchqû* (before you are not driven away). This position seems acceptable to many scholars. And therefore makes sense in the overall context of Zephaniah’s message of judgment to idolaters, and moral teachings to those who resists seeking the Lord.<sup>123</sup> It is an invitation to be faithful to the Lord.

Besides this overwhelming divine invitation to seek the Lord the significance of the double negative or superfluous *lo’* (not) in verses 2bc, which is surprisingly absent in verse 2a, as a result of scribal editing, is worth noting.<sup>124</sup> In fact the expression “before you are not driven away” can also be theologically seen within the overall context of Zephaniah as pointing to God’s divine initiative. From the beginning God entered into a loving relationship of peace, love and forgiveness with Israel, particularly those addressed in verse 3. God preserves the remnant of Israel that shall not be driven away forever. This brings us to the question of the addressee.

### The Question of the Addressee

The “shameless nation” (*haggôy lo’ nikh<sup>e</sup>sāph*, v.1) and the “humble of the land” (*-an<sup>e</sup>vê hā’ārets*, v.3)) clearly are the two groups addressed by the prophet Zephaniah. But this question of the identity of the recipients of this theological message indirectly takes us back to Zephaniah’s background and his original settings, evident in the superscription (Zeph 1: 1). Based on this superscription, many have argued that the message of Zephaniah (2: 1-3) goes back to the time of the reforms of King Josiah (640-609 BCE).<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Cf. Kapelrud, *Message of the Prophet Zephaniah*, p. 32 and Hunter, *Seek the Lord*, pp. 263–264 for list of these scholars which I find unnecessary to recycle here.

<sup>124</sup> Kapelrud, *Message of the Prophet Zephaniah*, p. 32.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Michael U. Udoekpo, *Re-thinking the Day of YHWH and Restoration of Fortunes in the Prophet Zephaniah* (Das Alte Testament im Dialog= an outline of an Old Testament Dialogue 2, Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 86-97, where I have already discussed at length opinion of these authors on the socio-historical context of Zephaniah’s prophecy. Note worthy in particular are, H. Ferguson, “The Historical Testimony of the Prophet,” *JBL* 3 (1883), pp. 42–59; Donald L. Williams, “The Date of Zephaniah,” *JBL* 82 (1963), pp. 77–88; Kalperud, *The Message of the Prophet Zephaniah*, pp. 41–44; G. Langhor, “Le Livre de Sophonie et la critique de l’authenticité”, *ETL* 52 (1976), pp. 1–27; C. Stuhlmuehler, *Amos, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk* (Collegeville Bible Commentary, OT 15; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1986), pp. 96–97; J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1991), pp. 163–164; Ben Zvi, *Zephaniah*, pp. 325–357; Richard D. Patterson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary; Chicago 1991), pp. 275–278; James D. Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*

Prior to this reform Israel and Judah witnessed struggles and rivalries among the super powers (Egypt, Assyria and Babylon). The negative impact of these struggles was felt politically, socially and economically by the people. In addition to these external threats, the internal practice of idolatry in Judah, presided over by the idolatrous kings, like Manasseh (686-642 BCE) and Ammon (642-640 BCE), was also detrimental to Judean citizens. It is to these nation[s] (*haggôy*)) and the citizens, particularly the poor of the land (*‘an<sup>e</sup>vê hā’ārets*) that Zephaniah’s prophecy is directed.

It is also debatable whether these two designations, “nation” (*haggôy*)) and “the poor of the land” (*‘an<sup>e</sup>vê hā’ārets*) refer to the same or different nations, including the four Philistine cities: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod and Ekron (v.4) Széles thinks that “nation” is a restricted reference to the “chosen people and its leaders, the priests, the court officials, the army officers, the merchants, the financiers, the aristocratic rich, the self-satisfied, the apathetic citizens of the capital city,” but does not comment on the poor of the land.<sup>126</sup> Others specifically contend that both audiences are the same (nation and the poor of the land). They argue that verses 1-2 with its pejorative characterization of the nation as shameless people, serve to alert the recipient community to be attentive to Zephaniah’s exhortation in verses 1-3.<sup>127</sup> Wilhelm Rudolf, in particular, argues that the addressees are those to be blamed for the judgment but through haplography (v.3) the proposition *kî* (“as” or “like”) has dropped out before the *kol-‘an<sup>e</sup>vê hā’ārets* (all you humble of the land).<sup>128</sup> Otherwise the verse 3a would read, “Seek the Lord as all the humble of the land.”<sup>129</sup> According to Rudolf, the humble of the land are models of or complete opposites of the disobedient and unfaithful ones addressed in the entire text.

On the other hand, Hunter moves beyond this. He thinks the nation and the humble of the land point to two audiences. The first had to do with the people who have incurred the fierce anger of the Lord (vv.1-2), while the second deals with the poor and small humble group of less influential believers, who trust God and stand the chance of salvation (v.3). Zephaniah, he stresses, ironically uses reflexive imperatives

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(Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), pp. 173–215; Berlin, *Zephaniah*, pp. 33–42; J. Vlandingerbroek, *Zephaniah* (HCOT; Leuven: Peeters, 1999), pp. 13–17 and G. Savoca, *Abdia-Naum, Abacuc-Sofonia, introduzione e commento* (ILBPT 18; Milano: Paoline Editoriale, 2006), pp. 148–150.

<sup>126</sup> Széles, *Wrath and Mercy*, p. 91.

<sup>127</sup> See Hunter, *Seek the Lord*, pp. 265 for names of those authors who subscribe to this view.

<sup>128</sup> By haplography here Rudolf means to suggest that it is possible that during the hand copying of the manuscript text of Zephaniah the scribes may have accidentally omitted identical letters, in this case the *kî*.

<sup>129</sup> Wilhelm Rudolf, *Micha-Nahum-Habakuk-Zephania* (KAT XIII/3; Gütersloh 1975), pp. 273–274.

(*hithpoel*) to impress on the audience, what the Day of the Lord will bring to the disobedient ones (v. 2c).<sup>130</sup>

Contrary to these preceding opinions (Rudolf, Hunter and Széles), with faith hermeneutic, which strives beyond time and culture, I propose that our unit of study (Zeph 2:1-3) revolves around the threats of the Day of the Lord (v. 2bc). This concept was adapted from earlier prophetic traditions (e.g. Amos 5: 18-20). Zephaniah uses it to present the picture of God who loves, judges and punishes (Zeph 1:14-18), rewards and restores (Zeph 3:14-20). His theology is particularly addressed to Judah (Zeph 1:4-10) and universally to other nations outside Jerusalem, beginning with human beings, and all that God created (Zeph 1: 2-3,18; 2: 4-15; 3: 8-11).<sup>131</sup>

Zephaniah's invitation of the humble of the land to seek the Lord" (*bāqqašû'eth- 'ădōnāy*, v.3) opposes those, both in Judah and elsewhere, who did not seek the Lord (Zeph 1: 6; 2:1). Just as the concept of Day of the Lord was theologically adapted from earlier texts (e.g. Amos 5:4-6, 4-15),<sup>132</sup> the notion of the poor and humble members of the society, or the addressee (Zeph 2:1-3) were given priority place by earlier prophets like Amos (2:7; 5:10; 8:4) and Micah (6:8). Zephaniah was never a stranger to these concepts and their implications, which was not restricted to time and context.<sup>133</sup> In other words, in each of these texts, particularly in Zephaniah, the humble of the land (*an<sup>e</sup>vê hā'ārets*) must be viewed within the proximate and broader contexts of the earlier texts. The prophets Amos, Micah and Isaiah, view the humble of the land as the lower economic classes of the society who were faithful to God's commandments (v. 3b).<sup>134</sup> The same humble of the land were truly righteous. They represent the very opposite of the reckless, politically prideful, economically selfish and religiously vain whom the prophet condemns (Zeph 2:4-15). With this message, Zephaniah promotes a new religious and ethical behavior, including righteousness and humility.<sup>135</sup> He offers hope for salvation for those who respond to this promotion. Zephaniah's divine hope is introduced by the expression *'ūlay tissāth<sup>e</sup>rû b<sup>e</sup>yôm'aph- 'ădōnāy* ("perhaps you will be hidden on the Day of the Lord's anger" v.3d).

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<sup>130</sup> Hunter, *Seek the Lord*. p. 267.

<sup>131</sup> See Udoekpo, *Day of YHWH*, pp. 23–28, 197–234 for detailed discussion on this concept, in Zephaniah, in the OT and particularly in the prophetic traditions.

<sup>132</sup> Additionally, some of these texts are; Amos 4:14; Isa 1:6-20;7:3-9; 28:12-16;30:15-16; Hos 2:4-5;4:15;6:6;10:12;12:6-7;14:2-4 and Mic 6:6-8. See also S. Wanger, "vQeBi biqqēsh; hv'Q'B; baqqāshāh", *TDOT* II, 229-241 for different and synonymous ways this notion is used especially in biblical theology.

<sup>133</sup> See Kapelrud, *Message of the Prophet Zephaniah*, p.32.

<sup>134</sup> Berlin, *Zephaniah*, p.98.

<sup>135</sup> Széles, *Wrath and Mercy*, p. 92.



### Theological Function of Zephaniah 2:1-3

Establishing the addressee in the foregoing section serves as a transitional bridge to further outline the theological and ethical functions of this text (Zeph 2:1-3). In my own judgment, this text sheds clearer light on the intention of the overall prophecy of Zephaniah. It is an intention traceable to the much and already discussed *Sitz im Leben* of the prophet, his living experience, setting and time which hermeneutic of faith unequivocally seeks to promote.

In fact the situation was that of rampant idolatries, syncretism and corruption among leaders including religious officers in Jerusalem (Zeph 1:4-10), and the influence of foreign nations that were imported to Judah (1:8-13). In his response, Zephaniah reminds the nations and Jerusalem of the God of Israel, and the everlasting covenant relationship that exists between them. Obedience and faithfulness to God are consistently important ingredients for this relationship. Zephaniah 2:1-3 functions to promote this cause. It is an exhortation to nations and an encouragement to the rich and the poor in Judah to seek the Lord. It warns against the Day of the Lord (1:18-20). It functions exhortatively but particularly and universally to inspire repentance, humility, faith, hope and righteousness.

Sweeney takes particular interest and note in the LXX's reading of the MT as *ûbāqqašû tsaddiq bāqqašû û'ānāvāh* ("and seek righteousness and seek humility," v.3) in order to strengthen the exhortative function of this text.<sup>136</sup> Here, "seeking the Lord" stands parallel to seeking righteousness (*tsaddiq*) and humility (*'ānāvāh*), and with doing his commands (*mishppātō*).<sup>137</sup> If earlier prophets like Amos and Hosea, upon whom Zephaniah depended, could point to an expansion of "seeking God" beyond the ceremonial and external realms to an internal and ethical level, Zephaniah 2:3 according to Siegfried Wagner "seems to express this idea more clearly."<sup>138</sup> Amos 5 for instance condemns injustices committed against the poor and the humble of the society. Verses 4-6 particularly stress the need of "seeking the Lord" (*dārash*) and not just the external Bethel; while verses 21-27 compare righteousness (*tsaddiq*) with a constantly following

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<sup>136</sup> Clearly in the MT we have as in my translation: *bāqqašû'eth- 'ādōnāy kol-'an'vê hā'ārets, 'āsher mishpeppātō pā'ālû bāqqašû tsaddiq bāqqašû 'ānāvāh 'ūlay tissāth'ru b'yôm'aph-'ādōnāy*, rendered in the LXX as *zētēsate ton kurion pantes tapeinoi gēs krima ergazesthe kai disaiosunēn zētēsate kai apokrinesthe auta hopōs skepasthē en hēmera orgēs kuriou* ("seek the Lord all you poor of the land, who have carried out the work of the law and seek righteousness and answer to them") where "to seek" *zēteō* is repeated twice in the aorist imperative 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural and not thrice as in MT. Cf. Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, p. 111.

<sup>137</sup> See Abraham A. J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harperperennial, 2001), pp. 256-257 for additional explanation of how these concepts could sometimes be used interchangeably.

<sup>138</sup> Wagner, "vQeBi biqqēsh; hv'Q'B; baqqāshāh," p. 239.

stream in the wadi.<sup>139</sup> In his prophecy, Hosea also extends similar invitation for ethical responsibility to his contemporaries. For him those who seek the Lord (*bāqqash*) with flocks and herds without ethical living will not find him (Hos 5:6, 15).<sup>140</sup>

### Zephaniah 2:1-3, Beyond Prophetic Tradition

An invitation to seek the Lord transcends the prophetic traditions. With faith hermeneutics, the theological function of the content of Zephaniah 2:1-3 obviously resonates beyond the corridors of prophetic traditions and biblical exegetes to systematic theologians. In the Psalter, Israel is encouraged to seek the Lord, in songs, and praise.<sup>141</sup> Claus Westermann designates these forms of genre a “call to praise” and presents Psalm 103 as a typical example. Patrick D. Miller rightly identifies in Psalms 9 and 10 other genres such as lament, prayer for the hope of the poor.<sup>142</sup> In Psalm 105 similar imperatival forces *darashu/baqqashu* (you seek) as in the prophets are exhortatively employed (vv 4-5).

Several passages in the New Testament also lay exhortative emphasis on seeking the Lord (*zēteō*) by all, especially by the humble of the land, the poor (cf. Matt 6–7).<sup>143</sup> The Evangelist says, “but strive (“seek”) first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt 6:33).<sup>144</sup> The imperative here (“seek”) which is in the present implies a continuous obligation of the disciples towards God’s kingdom and his righteousness, rather than toward “idols” of

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<sup>139</sup> Some significant studies on this chapter, Amos 5 include, E. Würthwein, “Amos 5:21-27”, *ThLZ* 72 (1947), pp. 143–152; R. Hetscheke, *Die Stellung der vorexilischen Schriftpropheten zum Kultus* (BZAW 75; Berlin 1957); M. Skine, “Das Problem der Kultpolemik bei den Propheten”, *EvTh* 28 (1968), pp. 605-609; Larry J. Rector, “Israel’s Rejected Worship: An Exegesis of Amos 5”, *Restoration Quarterly* 21(1978), pp. 161-175; H. M. Barstad, *The Religious Polemics of Amos: Studies in the Preaching of Am 2,7B-8;4,1-3;5,1-27;6,4-7;8,14* (Leiden 1984), pp. 4–10.

<sup>140</sup> Wagner, “vQeBi biqqēsh; hv'Q'B; baqqāshāh,” pp. 239

<sup>141</sup> See Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms* (trans., Keith Crim; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986) 11-15 for extensive discussion on the significance of “Israel in the presence of Yhwh.” Metaphorically, “presence” (*pānah*), literally “face” especially in the Psalter refers to seeking God’s help, blessings, his love and recognizing his sovereignty and how limited we are as God’s creatures.

<sup>142</sup> Patrick D. Miller, *The Way of the Lord: Essays in the Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), pp. 168–169.

<sup>143</sup> See also Colossians 3:1-3; 2 Thessalonians 3:5 and Hebrews 11:5-6.

<sup>144</sup> Notice the Greek NT translation with similar noun (*dikaioṣunēn* *dikaioṣunēn*/tsaddiq=righteousness) and imperative forms found in the MT (*biqqeshu*= piel imperative masculine plural), and LXX texts of Zephaniah 2:3, LXX (*zētēsate*=2 person plural aorist imperative) and *zēteite*=2<sup>nd</sup> person plural present imperative in the NT), “*zēteite de proton tēn basileian (tou Theou) kai tēn dikaioṣunēn autou, kai tauta panta prostethēsetai humin*”

this world.<sup>145</sup> R. T. France insists we can deduce the primary theological emphasis here which “is on submission to God’s sovereignty and obedience to his will.”<sup>146</sup>

In addition, when the Matthean Jesus says to his disciples “take my yoke, upon you and learn from me; for I am humble of heart and you will find rest for your soul,” (Matt 11:29) he not only offers one of his qualities which he invites his disciples to seek or imitate but draws a contrast between true discipleship and the arrogance of “the shameless nations,” who do not seek the Lord (Zeph 1:6). These “words echo the description of God’s servant in Isaiah 42:2-3; 53:1-2 as well as in Zechariah in 9:9, which Matthew will pick up again in 21:4-5.”<sup>147</sup> Noticeably, the same Greek word *tapeinos* (poor, lowly, humble; downcast) used in the LXX translation of *‘an’evê hã’ãrets* in (Zeph 2:3) is found and contextualized in passages of the New Testament (Matthew 11:29; Luke 1: 46-52; Rom 12:9-16; 2 Cor 7:7; James 1:9).<sup>148</sup>

Beyond the NT, the expression “seek the Lord” is also a delight of the Fathers of the Church. St. Augustine, in one of his famous works, *Confessions*, displays his extraordinary life in search and praise of God.<sup>149</sup> In Book One Augustine says, “can any praise be worthy of the Lord’s majesty? How magnificent his strength.... Those who look (“seek”) for the Lord will cry out in praise of him, because all who look (“seek”) for him shall find him, and when they find him they will praise him.”<sup>150</sup> Augustine insists, “I shall look (seek) for you, Lord, by praying to you and as I pray I shall believe in you, because we have had preachers to tell us about you. It is my faith that calls to you.”<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> See R. T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), p.141.

<sup>146</sup> France, *Matthew*, p.141.

<sup>147</sup> France, *Matthew*, p. 201.

<sup>148</sup> In Luke 1:46-52 Mary’s Song of Praise the “magnificat” captures well those addressed in Zephaniah 2:3. And no wonder this text is read along side Zephaniah 3:14-18a and Romans 12:9-16 in the catholic liturgy of the Feast of the Visitation of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth celebrated on every May 31 each year.

<sup>149</sup> Benedict XVI, *The Fathers* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 2008) 176. See also Kevin Knight, “Augustine of Hippo,” <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02084a.htm>, accessed May 29, 2012, where his life and work is praised thus, “The great St. Augustine’s life is unfolded to us in documents of unrivaled richness, and of no great [character](#) of ancient times have we information comparable to that contained in the ["Confessions"](#), which relates the touching story of his [soul](#), the "Retractions," which give the history of his [mind](#), and the "Life of Augustine," written by his friend [Possidius](#), telling of the [saint's](#) apostolate.”

<sup>150</sup> See *Augustine Confessions* (trans., R. S. Pine-Coffin; New York: Penguin, 1961) 21. See also *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*; Book I-X (trans., F. J. Sheed; Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1942) 3. The word in bracket (seek) is mine. In fact, it is found in another translation, that of F. J. Sheed.

<sup>151</sup> Pine-Coffin, *Confessions*. p. 21.

St. Anselm affirms this faith through his many contributions particularly his famous definition of theology as “*fides quaerens intellectum*, faith seeking understanding.”<sup>152</sup> In *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, Louis-Marie Chauvet sheds further light on Anselm’s proposal. This include the fact that “theology is not just a believer’s task, but faith is at the beginning of this task....To make an act of faith does not mean simply either to believe that God exists... but to believe in.”<sup>153</sup> According to Chauvet this is never the product of a merely intellectual reasoning but it belongs to a relational order. And “desire” holds a decisive place in such a relationship.”<sup>154</sup> In other words, theology is not just a passive faith-discourse about God but an active search for and response to God who is the object of faith, addressed by Aquinas in his teaching on theological and cardinal virtues.<sup>155</sup>

At worship or in the sacramental liturgy of the Church these theological virtues are tied to prayer which is nothing else than seeking the face of God. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* repeats this relationship of prayer with seeking God at worship by stating unequivocally that, “one enters into prayer as one enters into liturgy: by the narrow gate of faith. Through the signs of this presence, it is the face of the Lord that we seek and desire; it is his Word that we want to hear and keep.”<sup>156</sup> Drawn from Isaiah 55:6-9, a tradition also known to Zephaniah, Roc O’Connor reinforces this exhortative theme in the song:

Seek the Lord while he may be found; call to him while he is still near. Today is the day and now the proper hour to forsake our sinful lives and to turn to the lord. As high as the sky is above the earth, so high above our ways, the ways of the Lord. Finding the Lord, let us cling to him. His words, his ways lead us to life. Someday we’ll in the house of God; gaze on his face and praise his name.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> See the analysis of this in Thomas P. Rausch, “Theology and Its Method,” in *The College Student’s Introduction to Theology* (ed. Thomas P. Rausch; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), p. 12.

<sup>153</sup> Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001), p. ix

<sup>154</sup> Chauvet, *Word of God*, p. ix.

<sup>155</sup> See Edward J. Gratsch, *Aquinas’ Summa: An Introduction and Interpretation* (New York: Society of St. Paul, 1985) 143-204 were faith (2a2ae.1-16), hope (2a2ae.17-22), charity (2a2ae.23-46), as well as prudence (2a2ae.47-56), justice (2a2ae.57-122), fortitude and temperance (2a2ae.123-170) are discussed in detail.

<sup>156</sup> See *Catechism of the Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994), nos.2656-2658.

<sup>157</sup> See “Seek the Lord, 540” in *Ritual Song; A hymnal and Service Book for Roman Catholics* (Chicago: Gia Publications, 1996).

In addition to this, H. Richard Niebuhr in his work, *The Responsible Self*, emphasizes these relational and responsible dimensions of seeking God. For Niebuhr, this ethics of responsibility is found in the contexts within which we are invited to respond to God, who is in fact, the ultimate source of value. We are *homo dialogicus* on a journey seeking an understanding of self and an inquiry into the meaning of Christian faith for ethical life.<sup>158</sup>

### **Conclusion**

It is evidenced in the foregoing discussion that Zephaniah 2:1-3 functions not only to exhort Judah and every nation to repentance, but also ethically invites all to seek

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<sup>158</sup> See H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self: an Essay in Christian Philosophy* (Intro., James M. Gustafson and Foreword, William Schweiker; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1999), p. ix.

the Lord, humility, and righteousness with sincerity of heart. It also breeds faith and hope for the salvation of the poor of the land in every culture and time. The text does not function on its own. It is related to the notion of the Day of the Lord (vv.1-2), central in the entire book of Zephaniah and prominent in the rest of the prophetic tradition.

With hermeneutic of faith Zephaniah 2:1-3 is a delight for theologians and worshippers of all contexts. This is true as well, even for those who hold rigidly or limit the addressees and the theological functions of this text to the confines of Judah. If Zephaniah could adapt older prophetic messages to the needs of his contemporaries, modern society, theologians of all contexts and culture can also faithfully relate today's problems and challenges to Zephaniah's salvific exhortation. His message of divine invitation, judgment, and hope remain relevant to modern culture.

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## **Religion and Armed Conflict in Northern Nigeria and Northern Uganda: Exploring a Symbiotic Relationship**

By Bamidele Oluwaseun

### **Abstract**

The growing trend of religion lining in African states leading to armed struggle portrays the shared experience of many African states which have similar ethno-cultural boundaries. It is on record that very many African countries were shared out among the colonial masters who, then, embarked on expansionism theory by imposing their cultures, values and system on the colonized territories. These African states, due to their colonial experience are bedeviled by crises that have similar patterns, shapes and prosecution. It is in this context that this paper sets out to explore the nexus of religion and armed conflict in Northern Nigeria and Northern Uganda as a case study.

### **Introduction**

Today, it is of pressing importance to understand the underlying causes for the nexus between religion and armed conflict in African States, and to seek to transform it to a positive relationship between religion and peace. Religion plays an important role in African's way of life. Religious laws in African states govern the peoples' clothing, food, marriage and even occupations. In a region as religious as Africa, it is comes as no real surprise that religious beliefs and practices were present in many of its recent armed conflict. Rather, because of the history of religion and religious transformation in Africa, religion has always been perceived, by Africans, as having the power to radically change social life and history, and religious practitioners have employed religious symbolism and enthusiasm in their efforts to totally reinvent social orders in opposition. Religion cannot be disassociated from the modes of thought that characterise an African society. While religion as such has not been responsible for the origin and growth of communalism, religiosity, that is deep emotional commitment to matters of religion, has been a major contributory factor and at the popular plane, imparted passion and intensity.

Religion has powerful emotional appeal and hence it is easy to exploit clouding real interests, though African communities have been committed to the ideal of unity among diversity, there have been frequent clashes between the different linguistic, rational, and religious groups in the region. Of these armed conflict, the relationship

among Christians, traditional worshippers and Muslims has been particularly salient. Depending on where one looks, religious beliefs and practices are a source of solidarity, comfort, account, assistance and peacemaking, as well as a way of vindicating extreme acts of oppression and violence. Although not necessarily so, there are some aspects of religion that make it susceptible to being a latent source of armed conflict. All religions have their accepted articles of belief and practice, that followers must accept without question. This can lead to inflexibility and intolerance in the face of other beliefs and practices. After all, if it is the word of God, how can one compromise it? At the same time, scripture is often vague and open to interpretation. Therefore, conflict can arise over whose interpretation is the correct one, a conflict that ultimately cannot be solved because there is no arbiter. The winner generally is the interpretation that attracts the most followers or supporters.

However, those followers/supporters must also be motivated to violent action. Almost invariably, the majority of any faith hold moderate opinions, they are often more complacent, whereas extremists are motivated to bring their interpretation of God's will to fruition. Religious extremists can contribute to armed conflict escalation. They see radical measures as necessary to fulfilling God's wishes. Extremists of any religion tend to take a Manichean opinion of the world.<sup>159</sup> If the world is a struggle between good and evil, it is hard to justify compromising with the devil. Any sign of moderation can be decried as selling out, more importantly, of abandoning God's will.

Some groups, such as Northern Nigeria's Boko Haram (BH) and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) of Northern Uganda, have operated largely through unconstitutional means and still pursue intolerant ends which they viewed as religious unconstitutional means.<sup>160</sup> In circumstances where moderate ways are not perceived to have produced results, whether social, political, or economic, the populace may turn to extreme interpretations for solutions. Without legitimate mechanisms for religious groups to express their views, they may be more likely to resort to violence. Boko Haram (BH) in Northern Nigeria and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Northern Uganda have engaged in violence, but they also gained followers through social service work when the government is perceived as doing little for the population. Radical extremists in Northern Nigeria and Northern Uganda are other examples of extremist movements driven by perceived threat to the faith. Religious revivalism is powerful in that it can provide a sense of pride and purpose, but in places such as Northern Nigeria and

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<sup>159</sup> Comaroff, Jean. 2003. 'Critically Reflections on Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding in Africa,' Unpublished paper presented in Jinja, Uganda.

<sup>160</sup> Ellis, Stephen, and Gerrie ter Haar, 2004 *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa*, New York: Oxford University Press



Northern Uganda it has produced a strong form of illiberal nationalism that has periodically led to intolerance and discrimination.<sup>161</sup> Some religious groups, such as the Boko Haram (BH) and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Northern Nigeria and Northern Uganda, consider violence to be a 'duty'.<sup>162</sup> Those who call for violence see themselves as divinely directed and therefore obstacles must be eliminated.<sup>163</sup>

Many religions also have significant strains of evangelism, which can be conflictual. Believers are called upon to spread the word of God and increase the numbers of the flock.<sup>164</sup> For example, the effort to impose Christianity on subject peoples was an important part of the armed conflict surrounding European colonization in African States (especially in Northern Nigeria and Northern Uganda). Similarly, a group may seek to deny other religions the opportunity to practice their faith. In part, this is out of a desire to minimize beliefs and practices the dominant group feels to be inferior or dangerous. Suppression of Christianity in Northern Nigeria is but one contemporary example. In the case of Nigeria, it is a conflict between religions (Christianity and Islam).<sup>165</sup> All of these instances derive from a lack of respect for other faiths.

Furthermore, religious extremists are primarily driven by displeasure with modernity.<sup>166</sup> Motivated by the marginalization of religion in modern African society, they act to restore faith to a central place. There is a need for purification of the religion in the eyes of extremists. Recently, cultural globalization has in part become shorthand for this trend. The spread of Western education and materialism are often blamed for increases in corruption and loose morals in general. Boko Haram (BH) in Northern Nigeria, for example, claims it is motivated by this neo-imperialism as well as the presence of Western Education in the Muslim holy lands.<sup>167</sup> The liberal underpinning of

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<sup>161</sup> Boyle, Kevin. 1992. 'Religious Intolerance and Incitement to Religious Hatred.' In *Striking a Balance: Freedom of Expression, Hate Speech and Non-Discrimination*, edited by S. Coliver London: Article XIX and University of Essex

<sup>162</sup> Ado-Kurawa, Ibrahim 2000 *Shari'ah and the Press in Nigeria: Islam versus Western Civilisation*. Kano: Kurawa Holdings Limited

<sup>163</sup> Appleby, R. Scott. 2000. *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation*. New York and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publisher

<sup>164</sup> Budde, Michael. 1997. *The (Magic) Kingdom of God: Christianity and Global Culture Industries*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press

<sup>165</sup> Almond, Gabriel A., R. Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan 2003 *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms around the World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

<sup>166</sup> Appleby, R. Scott. 2001. 'Religion as an Agent of Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding.' In *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, edited by Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, 821-840. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace

<sup>167</sup> Kimball, Charles. 2002. *When Religion Becomes Evil*. New York: Harper-Collins Books

Western culture is also threatening to tradition in prioritizing the individual over the group, and by questioning the appropriate role for women in society.

Popular portrayals of religion often reinforce the view of religion being conflictual. The scholars has paid significant attention to religion and armed conflict, but not the ways in which religion has played a powerful role in armed conflict. This excessive emphasis on the negative side of religion and the actions of religious extremists generates interfaith fear and hostility. What is more, scholars portrayals of religious armed conflict have tended to do so in such a way so as to confuse rather than inform. It does so by misunderstanding goals and alliances between groups, thereby exacerbating polarization. The tendency to carelessly throw around the terms 'fundamentalist' and 'extremist' masks significant differences in beliefs and practices, goals, and tactics.<sup>168</sup>

In virtually every heterogeneous society, religious difference serves as a source of potential armed conflict. Because individuals are often ignorant of other faiths, there is some potential tension but it does not necessarily mean armed conflict will result. Religion is not necessarily conflictual but, as with ethnicity or race, religion serves, as a way to distinguish one's self and one's group from the other. Often, the group with less power, be it political or economic, is more aware of the tension than the privileged. When the privileged group is a minority, they are often well aware of the latent armed conflict. It is difficult to imagine a place where religion's ambivalent power has been more profoundly experienced than in Northern Nigeria and Northern Uganda. In Colonial Northern Nigeria and Northern Uganda, for example, Christianity often bolstered, sustained and legitimated the violent process of governance. But more recently, movements that draw their authority from 'other-worldly' rather than 'this-worldly' sources have mobilized both countries publics against corrupt and abusive temporal regimes and facilitated innovative.<sup>169</sup> Viewed from this perspective, this paper sets out to explore and examine the nexus between religious and armed conflict in Northern Nigeria and Northern Uganda.

### **Religion and Armed Conflict**

Throughout the African states, no major religion is exempted from complicity in armed conflict. Religious conviction certainly was one of the motivations for the recent attacks and other violent actions by Boko Haram (BH) (Muslim) and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) Christian extremists in Northern Nigeria and Northern Uganda respectively.

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<sup>168</sup> Kukah, Matthew Hassan. 1992. 'The Politicization of Fundamentalism in Nigeria.' In *New Dimensions in African Christianity*, edited by Paul Gifford, 183-206, Ibadan: Safer Books

<sup>169</sup> Kukah, Matthew Hassan. 1993. *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited

Some Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) groups assert an exclusively Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) Christian identity for Northern Uganda, fanning the flames of armed conflict there. Some Christian and Muslim leaders from Northern Nigeria saw themselves as protecting their faiths when they defended violence against the opposing faith communities in religious armed conflicts. Yet there is need to beware of an almost universal propensity to oversimplify the role that religion plays in international affairs. Nigerian/Uganda's international assertiveness is as much due to Eurocentric's nationalism as it is to the dictates of Shiite clerics. The international policies that Nigerian and Uganda's clerics adopt rarely are driven by theological precepts or religious doctrine, but rather political power calculations and a desire to preserve the quasi-theocratic status quo. Similarly, in Northern Nigeria, armed conflict between Sunnis and Shias rarely stems from differences over religious doctrine and practice, but rather from historical and contemporary competition for state power. Sunni and Shia identities are as much ethnic as religious, and intergroup relations between the two are very similar, though more violent, than relations, where language and culture rather than religious belief constitute the primary sources of division. Meanwhile, the Boko Haram (BH) members-the third principal constituent community in Northern Nigeria-are ethnically and religiously based. Most Boko Haram (BH) members are also Sunni Muslims. This is not to suggest that religious identity is synonymous with ethnic identity, as in many circumstances religious identity implies explicitly religious behavior and belief. But in many cases the lines between ethnic and religious identities become so blurred that parsing them to assign blame for violence is difficult if not impossible.

Religious identity has often been used to mobilize one side against the other, as has happened in Northern Nigeria, Northern Uganda, and elsewhere; populations have responded to calls to defend one's faith community. But to describe many such armed conflicts as rooted in religious differences or to imply that theological or doctrinal differences are the principal causes of armed conflict is to seriously oversimplify and misrepresent a complex situation. This few years of insurgences in Northern Nigeria is often described as a religious armed conflict against Christians, with the north being predominantly Muslim and the south pre-dominantly Christian or animist. There is some truth to this characterization, particularly after 2009, when an Islamic extremist Boko Haram (BH) showed up in Borno State (Nigeria) with an agenda to Islamicize all of Nigeria. But the differences between north and south go well beyond religion and rarely are the disagreements religious or theological in character. Majority of Northerners speak Arabic and Hausa and want Arabic to be Nigeria's national language. Southerners generally speak Arabic only as a second or third language, if at all, and prefer English as the lingua franca. Northerners are more likely to identify with the Arab world, whereas southerners tend to identify themselves as Africans.

Thus, religious identity is fundamental to the division between northern and southern Nigeria. The religious division in Northern Nigeria and Northern Uganda between Christian and Muslim happens to overlap with these ethnic and geographical divisions, but the armed conflict's divide has not been confined to or even dominated by religion. British colonial policy also reinforced the divisions between north and south in both countries. In Northern Nigeria and Northern Uganda, religion is divisive and a factor in armed conflict, but it is often exaggerated as the cause of armed conflict. The popular local media asserts that tens of thousands of Northern Nigerians and Ugandans have died in religious armed conflict over the last few years.<sup>170</sup> True, many died, both Christians and Muslims, in riots over Danish cartoons depicting Mohammed. Others were killed when Christians opposed extending the authority of *Sharia* legal system in 12 Northern Nigerian states. But the causes of many of the killings have not been exclusively religious. In places like Kaduna and Plateau State, armed conflicts described as religious have been more complicated than that; the causes also include the placing of markets, economic competition, occupational differences, the ethnic identity of government officials, respect for traditional leaders, and competition between migrants and indigenous populations.<sup>171</sup>

In Northern Nigeria, one source of the armed conflicts is over which brand of religious group will prevail. But political and ethnic differences define the composition of the forces in armed conflict as much as religious differences do. In Northern Uganda armed conflict, the management of and access to religious sites are sources of serious disagreement and extreme religious group-both Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Uganda government-exacerbate the problem. But religion is not the principal factor underlying the armed conflict; rather, armed conflict is principally over control of land and state sovereignty. All of these cases demonstrate that while religion is an important factor in armed conflict, often marking identity differences, motivating armed conflict, and justifying violence, religion is not usually the sole or primary cause of armed conflict. This paper exemplifies the diversity of religious influences on the character and dynamics of armed conflict in two African states (Northern Nigeria and Northern Uganda) by examining vivid settings and situations chosen to underscore the range of social movements and political decisions affected by what Africans believe and practice in and through their churches, mosques and other religious spaces. There is no attempt to be comprehensive of any one region, much less the region. Nor do all religious and spiritual practices and practitioners of religiously sanctioned violence or religiously

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<sup>170</sup> Nepstad, Sharon Erikson. 2004. 'Religion, Violence and Peacemaking.' *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43(3): 297-301

<sup>171</sup> Enwerem, Iheanyi M. 1995. *A Dangerous Awakening: The Politicization of Religion in Nigeria*, Ibadan: IFRA

empowered peacebuilding make an appearance in these sections. Whatever case is being discussed, however, the author never stray far from an awareness of how religion in Northern Nigeria and Northern Uganda is shaped by the legacy of European colonialism and the slave trade, the continuing effects of political, economic and religious imperialism in an age of globalisation, and the depressing record of corrupt and incompetent governance in many of African states.

### **Northern Nigeria and Northern Uganda: A Case of Reinforcing Religious Identities**

One reason for the crisis-prone character of the African state is the nature of the historical processes that led to its formation. Religion in many parts of Africa is contributing to armed conflict, although exaggerated in many cases. This is well documented and broadly accepted. The cases described in the following sections illustrate the creative contributions that religion can make to armed conflict in places like Northern Nigeria and Northern Uganda. As these cases illustrate, religious approaches to armed conflict do not provide a panacea, but can complement secular violent conflict productively. This paper is meant both to demonstrate the value of religious contributions to armed conflict. The following sections explore and analyze religious and armed conflict in Northern Nigeria and Northern Uganda. Though all employ religious approaches, these cases illustrate several methodologies. The Northern Nigeria cases describe past and recent religious and armed conflict between Muslims and Christians in Plateau State and post 2011 election Boko Haram (BH) insurgency that is leading to bloody armed conflict. The Uganda case describes both religious and armed conflict between Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Northern Uganda and the state.

### **The Case of Northern Nigeria**

In Nigeria—with its 170 million people divided into 250 ethnic groups, speaking more than 400 languages and where 50% of the population is Muslim, 45% are Christian and a further 5% follow various indigenous faith traditions—the legitimacy of the state is also in question due to its history.<sup>172</sup> To understand Nigeria's federal system, there is need to understand British colonial rule, which began in 1852 and ended with independence in October 1960. Under the British, religious divisions were reinforced as the British imposed differentiation in how they governed the north, west and east of the country. Differential governance systems reinforced existing political, economic and religious divides. Since independence, Nigeria has been beset with the issue of secession. Nigeria has proven difficult for successive regimes to govern. Poverty and

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<sup>172</sup> Onuoha, Enyeribe. 2005. 'Religion and State in Nigeria.' *International Humanist News*, August:12-13

corruption are complicated by the country's great diversity. There are over 300 ethnic groups in 36 states, and the population is nearly evenly divided between Muslims and Christians.<sup>173</sup> The Muslim population is concentrated in the north, while Christians and followers of African traditional religions live predominantly in the south. There are over 200 language groups, there are extreme religious divisions, and there are economic disparities.<sup>174</sup>

There is a range of armed conflicts that divide Northern Nigeria. Two to three decades ago, these conflicts did not revolve around religion; even though there were the same religious divisions, the conflicts were more focused on ethnicity and economic competition. In more recent years, where these ethnic conflicts and economic competitions have overlapped and been reinforced by religious differences, religion has become the surrogate for these conflicts and has been a mobilising force for opposing sides in competition for resources or political power.

In the sixteenth century, Islam had already made major inroads into the north of the territory that came to be known as Nigeria.<sup>175</sup> The trend continued in later centuries as northern areas, traditional home to the Hausa ethnic group, came under the control of the Fulani who were intent on imposing a pure Islamic social order. In 1809, the Fulani established the Caliphate of Sokoto and continued to spread an Islamic political, social and religious order across the northern areas.<sup>176</sup> If Islam came to Nigeria through the north, Christianity arrived in the country via the southern coast. Initial contact with Christianity occurred around the fifteenth century through the influence of Catholic Priests who ministered to the Portuguese trading community along the West African coast. But Christianity only began to make effective inroads into southern Nigeria in the nineteenth century, with the arrival of Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian missionaries from Britain, Europe, and North America.

These missionaries contributed to the suppression of the slave trade, the provision of schooling and health services, and the rise of indigenous African churches, which developed to challenge the association of Christianity with western cultural and political imperialism. These churches, along with the mainstream Protestant and

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<sup>173</sup> Ukah, Asonzeh F.-K. 2004, 'Religious Propaganda in Afrika,' In *Plakate in Afrika*, edited by Dieter Kramer and Wendelin Schmidt, 83-88, Frankfurt am Main: Museum der Welkulturen

<sup>174</sup> Nigerian Population Census, Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria\(population\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria(population)) (accessed 21 February 2012)

<sup>175</sup> History of Nigeria, Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria\(History\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria(History)) (accessed 14 March 2013)

<sup>176</sup> Charles Anthony: Legal System in Nigeria, Wikipedia, <http://www.charlesanthonylaw.com/index.php?id=44> (accessed 14 March 2013)

Catholic missions, have spearheaded a massive evangelical spread of the Christian faith throughout southern Nigeria and the northern Middle-Belt, but have had only limited impact in the historically Muslim Hausa-Fulani far North. In the late 1950s, Islamic Sharia law made its first inroads into the legal system. Twelve northern states eventually adopted some form of Sharia legal system, alienating Christians, particularly those living in the north.<sup>177</sup>

In 1986, under a Muslim military leader, Nigeria became a member of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, further angering many Christians. On the other hand, in 1992 Nigeria restored full diplomatic relations with the state of Israel, which had been broken off in 1973. This move, which had the general support of Christians, angered many Muslims. Religion is not the only source of tension in Northern Nigeria. The country earns substantial revenue from the oil industry, which constitutes 95 per cent of foreign exchange earnings, but the lack of equitable economic development is another destabilising issue. Other sources of problem include issues of ethnicity, property and land use. Yet regardless of the origins of disputes, they frequently find expression along the deep fault lines of religion. More than one thousand people perished in Northern Nigeria during the period from 1980-2014 in armed conflict between Christians and Muslims.<sup>178</sup>

Northern Nigeria provides many examples of religious armed conflict that are routinely characterised as being the result of violent clashes between Muslims and Christians. The conflict intensified and violence began to erupt regularly after 1999, in the wake of the decision by twelve northern states to impose *Sharia* legal system for their criminal codes. In most cases this decision was instigated by local politicians to bolster their popularity with predominantly Muslim populations. Along with the subsequent movement of non-Muslims out of these states, violent clashes started to break out over the following years in a variety of towns, such as Borno, Kaduna, Kano, Gombe, Bauchi and Jos. This religious violence caused a large number of fatalities. Although the estimates vary wildly, it is clear that they would easily surpass the intensity levels necessary to be classified as a 'religious armed conflict' according to Philip Ostien *et al.*<sup>179</sup> They do not appear on these information-sets, presumably on the grounds that the struggles did not occur between organised religious conflict parties. Probably the

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<sup>177</sup> Matthews A. Ojo, 2007 Pentecostal movements, Islam and the contest of public space in Nigeria, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 18(2), 175-88

<sup>178</sup> Wellman, James K., and Kyoko Tokuno 2004 'Is Religious Violence Inevitable?' *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43(3): 291-296

<sup>179</sup> Ostien, Philip, Jamila M. Nasir, and Franz Kogelmann, 2005 *Comparative Perspective on Shari'ah in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited

most reliable estimates of the violence in Plateau State were from Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN): the former suggested that 'more than 35,000' people had been killed since 1999, while the latter put the figure at 'over 55,500'.<sup>180</sup> A committee appointed by the Plateau state government estimated many more deaths: between September 2001 and May 2004, 53 397 people were said to have been killed in the violence (18 931 men, 17 397 women and 17 459 children).<sup>181</sup> In the state of Plateau state alone, thousands of deaths were recorded. This predominantly Christians town of somewhere between 500 000 and 800 000 inhabitants, just few hour drive from Nigeria's capital city, became the epicentre of the insurgences. Among the more widely reported episodes of mass killings were those in September 2012 (about 5 000 dead), November 2013 (over 700 fatalities, immediately followed by the Boko Haram (BH) arbitrary killing of more than 130 young Christians by Boko Haram (BH) militants), and March 2014 (over 500 dead), which were widely seen as reprisals for the more than 300 people killed in January 2014.<sup>182</sup>

Recently insurgence such as those in Borno looks like spontaneous outbursts of inter-religious hatred between Muslims and Christians. In the eye of the violent storm, individuals were targeted because of their religious affiliation. Having a look, however, reveals that the root causes of the insurgency are linked more closely to the historical bequests of mining-related and colonial-related migration in the region and the deliberate manipulation of ethnic and religious identities by politicians and other community leaders.<sup>183</sup> The point is particularly important because it is difficult socio-economic considerations, rather than religious differences, that better account for the underlying grudges felt by the participants in the insurgence. In this political situation, however, the mobilisation of religious and ethnic identities could spark violent conflict relatively easily. 'Even when religion is not the most basic cause of armed conflict', Smock noted that 'it is oftentimes used to incite either or both sides to mob violence'.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Human Rights Watch, (2011), A History of Election Violence, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/05/16/nigeria-post-election-violence-killed-800> (accessed 14 March 2013)

<sup>181</sup> Charles Anthony: Legal System in Nigeria Wikipedia, <http://www.charlesanthonylaw.com/index.php?id=44> (accessed 14 March 2013)

<sup>182</sup> Zeidan, David. 2003. *The Resurgence of Religion: A Comparative Study of Selected Themes in Christian and Islamic Fundamentalist Discourses*. Leiden: Brill

<sup>183</sup> David R. Smock, 2006 Mediating between Christians and Muslims in Plateau State, Nigeria, in David R. Smock (ed), *Religious contributions to peacemaking: when religion bring peace, not war, no. 55*, Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 17-20

<sup>184</sup> Oshita, O. Oshita. 2007. Religious Conflicts in Nigeria: Paradoxes in the Market Place.' Paper presented at the Post Graduate Colloquium, Department of Religious Studies I, University of Bayreuth, Bayreuth, Germany, June 14



Similarly, HRW concluded that divisors related to political governance played a more important role in the outbreak of armed conflict than religious differences, especially discriminatory government agenda which banished many 'non-indigenes' to the status of second class citizens. In their words, 'Non-indigenes are openly denied of the right to compete for state and local government jobs or academic scholarships, while state-run universities subject non-indigenes to discriminatory admissions policies and higher fees. As poverty has both become more widespread and severe in Northern Nigeria, competition for scarce opportunities to secure government jobs, education and political patronage has intensified dramatically. Religious and ethnic disputes often serve as mere proxies for the severe economic pressures that lie beneath the surface.'<sup>185</sup> In Taraba and Benue States, much of the animosity appears to have developed between the Hausa-Fulani (who are mainly Muslim) and the other communities who have increasingly become Christians. As many local people began voting along religious lines, the dominance of Christians - who make up over 90 per cent of the town's residents - made it very hard for Muslim candidates to win.<sup>186</sup>

Indeed, it appears the appointment of a Christian to a key position sparked the recent Boko Haram (BH) insurgence in the Northern Nigeria, but the armed conflict was able to escalate so quickly because the government ignored the warning signs and failed to engage in any serious attempts at reconciliation with the group. It may be safely concluded in line with Danfulani that these violent 'rage on because of bad socio-economic conditions' but politicians 'use the religious card, under the cover of ethnicity'.<sup>187</sup>

In addition, both Islamic history and Jihadist perspective are dominated by dichotomies. In Islamic history in Northern Nigeria, the two principal branches of Islam are separated by a conflict between majority Sunnis and minority Shia. Aside from the differences in theological interpretation, their relationship has been characterized by centuries of enmity and armed conflict. Though extremists can come from both branches, group ideology is found to divide along party lines. As an example, the justification used by the Boko Haram (BH) extremist group differs from the predominantly Suuni perspective of other groups.<sup>188</sup> A clear demarcation between good and evil is central to extremist reasoning. In their interpretation, 'good' is characterized by a rigid fundamentalist perspective of Islamic belief and practice. Sani characterizes

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<sup>185</sup> Sani, Shehu, 2011 'BOKO HARAM: History, ideas and Revolt (2)', *The Guardian Newspaper*, July 8,

<sup>186</sup> Ibid

<sup>187</sup> Umar H. Danfulani, 2005. *The shari'a issue and Christian-Muslim relations in contemporary Nigeria*, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International

<sup>188</sup> Sani, Shehu, 2011 'BOKO HARAM: History, ideas and Revolt (1)', *The Guardian Newspaper*, July 8

Islamism as a religious totalitarianism: 'the phenomenon of Islamism combines a totalizing movement and the ideology of political religion'.<sup>189</sup> Conversely, 'bad' is defined by Islamists as non-believers who fail to submit to Allah's will by converting to Islam. In jihadist parlance those who reject religious conversion to Islam are 'infidels'.<sup>190</sup> More specifically, extremists have politically and inaccurately modified the Muslim concept of 'kafir'--an atheist--to be synonymous with non-believer.<sup>191</sup> As Sani noted, demonizing the enemy is a facet of the jihadist mentality.<sup>192</sup> Using a heuristic mode to explain the Boko Haram (BH) mind set, Obafemi posits that the development of an extremist ideology involves a four-stage process. In the first 'context' stage the extremists cite some undesirable state of affairs or condition (i.e., social or economic deprivation) claiming 'they not right'.<sup>193</sup> The second 'comparison' stage consists of an allegation that the deprivation created an inequality that is 'not fair'. Third, during the 'attribution' stage the extremist blames the perpetrator by professing 'it's your fault'. In the final fourth 'reaction' stage, the ideologists demonize their enemy declaring 'you are evil' in an effort to focus their resentment on the chosen enemy.

Boko Haram (BH) members demonize and target their near and far enemies.<sup>194</sup> Obafemi argues that jihadists and Boko Haram (BH) members consider the near governments of Christian and Muslim nations that are corrupt, secular, or subject of Western hegemony or influence, to be adversaries. Their failure to install a fundamentalist Islamic leadership and establish *Sharia* legal systems aligns them with Western infidels. Boko Haram (BH) members also target the Western nations as enemies. Typically, blaming them for abuses perpetrated against Muslims and Muslim countries. Moreover, Boko Haram (BH) members accuse Western governments of working to destroy Islam.<sup>195</sup> When taken together, Boko Haram (BH) members vilify and target a wide range of adversaries under the aegis of global purification. Given the framework of Islamist jihad, no peaceful compromise is possible. Boko Haram (BH) members have launched a dichotomous non-negotiable cosmic war between evil (i.e., Western ideology) and good (i.e., radical Islamic fundamentalism). The eschatological nature of the Islamist and jihadist design bespeaks finality and fatalism. The

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid

<sup>190</sup> Laqueur, W, 2004 'The Terrorism to Come', *Policy Review*, 8:49-64 (2004)

<sup>191</sup> Ibid

<sup>192</sup> Ibid

<sup>193</sup> Obafemi, Olu, 2009 'Boko Haram and the Return of Sectarian Bloodbath', *The Sun Newspaper*, August 6

<sup>194</sup> Ibid

<sup>195</sup> Ibid

predisposition ingredients to Boko-Haram (BH) insurgency could therefore be located largely in the real or perceived discrepancy between the preferred way of life (to maintain the sanctity of orthodox Islam) and the actual state of their existence (secular state). The voice of the few elements that initially reacted to the perceived dissonance has garnered popular support. In effect, the personal dissonance grows to become group level grievances and discontentment. By this means, a micro-level dissonance is transformed into a macro-level phenomenon that agrees with what Sani refers to as relative deprivation and largely provides explanation to what Sani refers to as precipitating or accelerating factors.<sup>196</sup> The discrepancies could manifest within economic, social, cultural political and religious spheres as these issues form the micro level of analysis that could be regarded as the structural background conditions operating at individual level.

Islamization of Nigeria (especially the Northern Nigeria) under the *Sharia* legal system has always been the motive behind various religious armed conflicts in Northern Nigeria. Indeed, Sani noted that Islamization of Nigeria was the major disposition factor behind the Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio in 1804. Sani also reported that Boko Haram (BH) insurgency believed in the Quranic verse which states that 'Anyone who is not governed by what Allah has revealed is among the transgressors' (Quran 6, 49).<sup>197</sup> For this reason, Abubakar bin Muhammad Shekau (leader of the Boko Haram (BH) members) submitted that 'we would continue to fight until Islam is well established and the Muslims regain their freedom all over Nigeria. We would never be ready to compromise and we don't need amnesty. The only solution to what is happening is for the government to repent, jettison democracy, drop the constitution and adopt the laws in the Holy Qur'an.'<sup>198</sup>

### **The Case of Northern Uganda**

Uganda is a British colonial creation like that of Nigeria, and the educational systems, legal systems, economic systems betray a strong kinship to the systems of the former colonial master. The majority of Ugandan citizens are Christians, divided among Catholics, Anglicans, Orthodox, Adventists and new Christian sects. But alongside these Christian groups, there exists a sizable Muslim community, whose origin in Uganda predates the earliest Christians by at least thirty years. Despite their minority status, Muslims are quite visible in public affairs, largely because the Christian groups tend to conceive themselves as distinct denominations with longstanding internal social and

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<sup>196</sup> Tsokwa Albert, 2012 'With strong political will *Boko-Haram* can be dealt with, *The Guardian Newspaper*, February 21, 8

<sup>197</sup> Ibid

<sup>198</sup> Ibid

political power struggle.<sup>199</sup> Islam was first introduced in the Kingdom of Buganda [the central region of present day Uganda] by Arab and Swahili Muslims from the East African coast in 1844, during the reign of Kabaka [king] Sunna II.

However, while Kabaka Sunna allowed Arab preachers to teach Islam in his court, he did not convert to Islam and did not permit the spread of the religion outside the king's court. His son and successor, Mutesa I, took more interest in the religion, and eventually became Muslim. Mutesa ordered observance of some Muslim customs such as the five daily prayers, fasting in the month of Ramadan, abstinence from alcohol, Muslim burial ceremonies, and prescribed methods of slaughtering animals. He constructed mosques throughout the kingdom and provided several incentives to persuade his subjects to become Muslim, sometimes forcing people to accept his new faith. The other route that Islam used to enter Uganda in the mid-to late nineteenth century was through northern Uganda, where it was preached and practiced by Egyptian ivory traders and Nubian and Sudanese soldiers.

By the 1870s, the land now known as Uganda was on the road to full Islamisation, with Islamic culture enjoying popularity and political power in both the central and the northwest regions of Uganda. However, the fortunes of Islam began to decline with the coming of Christian missionaries in 1877. Christian missionaries not only challenged the monopoly of Islam, but also came with a new approach to evangelisation. They sought converts through direct preaching to ordinary people, and also built schools and hospitals and introduced other institutions that prepared their converts to manage an emerging colonial society. A combination of these methods of evangelism began to slowly alter the religious demographics of the Kingdom of Buganda, culminating in a power struggle within the kingdom. As this struggle intensified, Christian converts were supported militarily by their religious sponsors, which shifted the power balance away from Muslim domination. But military defeat had the ironic effect of spreading Islam to other regions of Uganda, as fleeing Muslims took their religion with them to both the western and eastern regions of Uganda.

In some places, such as Bugweri County in Busoga [eastern Uganda], Muslim refugees converted traditional leaders, which precipitated the subsequent conversion of these leaders' subjects. The effects of these conversions have rippled through history: thus, today, Bugweri County is the most Islamised rural region of Uganda, with more than 80 percent of the population professing Islam. When Mutesa I died in 1884, he was succeeded by his youthful son Mwanga II. The kingdom that Mwanga inherited was

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<sup>199</sup> Abasi Kiyimba, 2012 The domestic relations bill and inter-religious conflict in Uganda, in James H. Smith and Rosalind I. J. Hackett (eds), *Displacing the state: religion and conflict in neoliberal Africa*, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 240-280

deeply divided along religious lines. When Mwanga rejected both Islam and Christianity and allied with the traditionalists, Muslims and Christians joined forces in what has come to be known in Ugandan history as the 'unholy alliance', and together they overthrew Mwanga in the August Revolution of 1888.<sup>200</sup> This inter-religious alliance proved successful in revolution but not in governance. Following a power struggle between the former allies, which resulted in Muslims gaining control of the government, Christians were exiled from the kingdom. With their Christian rivals away, the Muslims set about the task of fully Islamising the country, starting with the installation of a king of their own. The Muslim king, Kalema, was installed in 1888, and immediately initiated a series of foreign and domestic policies aimed at firmly entrenching Islam.

In that same year 1888, he wrote a forceful note to sultan of Zanzibar, which read in part; 'I am now the King of Buganda and a Muslim. I believe in Allah and his prophet Muhammed; and I always thank God for that. Please send me your flag, Islamic books, and arms and ammunition to convert the infidels.'<sup>201</sup> Muslim ascendancy did not last long, however. At about the time when the religious wars were starting in Buganda, British colonial policy on the territory was taking a clearer shape. The Imperial British East African [IBEAA] Company, the agent of British colonialism operating in the region, had already signed an agreement with the king making Buganda a 'British sphere of influence.'<sup>202</sup> With material and military support from their European allies, the Christians soon defeated Kalema's forces and turned the tables, driving the Muslims out of the country, to a place in Bunyoro famously known in Uganda conflict history as 'Kijungute'. The Muslim flight to Bunyoro, in the northwest of Buganda, marked a major downward turn in the fortunes of Islam in Uganda. Islam, which had reached the status of a state religion, was relegated from the center of political authority to the periphery. It was now in danger of becoming extinct in Buganda, as its followers were hunted down and either intimidated into converting to Christianity or forced to seek asylum in neighbouring territories. After a period of protracted negotiations, interrupted frequently by continued fighting, relative peace was achieved with Mwera Settlement of 1892. The settlement addressed the burning issues at the time, but these issues remain strikingly relevant to contemporary times. For example is the Lord's Resistance Army

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<sup>200</sup> Kiyimba, *The domestic relations bill and inter-religious conflict in Uganda*, 244-245

<sup>201</sup> Abasi Kiyimba, 2009 'The Muslim Community in Uganda Through One Hundred and Forth Years, *Journal of Religion and Philosophy* 1, no 2, 99

<sup>202</sup> Abasi Kiyimba, 1986 *The Problem of Muslim Education in Uganda*, *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 7, no.1, 252

(LRA) in northern Uganda, which has been portrayed as an irrational religious genocide against the Acholi people.

However, Acholi are just as likely to blame the secular Ugandan government for their situation as they are the LRA, and many analysts have argued that the international community's complicity in the secular, anti-LRA narrative has helped extend the Ugandan government's control over the region, causing much anxiety and resentment among Acholi. Yoweri Museveni's victory in 1986 unfortunately did not bring peace to the northern part of Uganda: his army failed to clear up the remnants of opposition to his take-over, and in the north several guerrilla groups sprang up, some of them led from outside the country. The main group was the Holy Spirit Movement, led by Alice Lakwena, which later became the strangely-named Lord's Resistance Army led by Joseph Kony.

It is this group that continues the fight against Yoweri Museveni, and which Museveni and his army, the Uganda People's Defence Force, have so far been unable to defeat. Joseph Kony is a mystical figure, inspired by the Bible, and he claims he is fighting to establish the rule of the Ten Commandments in Uganda. The armed conflict waged by Joseph Kony's LRA against the Uganda government and many civilians in northern Uganda and the surrounding region has often been depicted as having a significant religious dimension. Although he was never in command of more than several thousand fighters, for more than two decades Joseph Kony's LRA left a trail of destruction and displacement, becoming particularly infamous for its gruesome atrocities and its abduction and abuse of thousands of children. Once again, however, it is important to note that religious beliefs were just one source among several in this particular war recipe. The LRA's emergence can only be understood in the context of Acholi community and its predecessor, the Holy Spirit Movement, led first by Alice Lakwena and then, briefly, by her father Severino Likoya Kiberu.<sup>203</sup>

With regard to Acholi Society, three factors help account for the formation of these movements.<sup>204</sup> In material terms, the two key issues were the continued widening of economic inequalities between north and south Uganda, and the militarisation of politics in the region. Both were processes started by British colonists but reinforced and sometimes intensified by subsequent independent governments. The region also endured another round of fighting in the late 1980s, when the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA) rebelled against Yoweri Museveni's new regime in Kampala.

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<sup>203</sup> Heike Behrend, 2000 *Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirits: war in northern Uganda, 1986-1997*(*eastern African Studies*), Ohio: Ohio University Press, March 31

<sup>204</sup> Behrend, *Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirits: war in northern Uganda, 1986-1997*(*eastern African Studies*), 157-182

The third factor concerned the religious dimension of Acholi life, specifically the importance given to protective spirits, or jogi, which were used to explain afflictions that befell the Acholi, from Arab and European influences to tuberculosis. The mixture of these conventional beliefs with Christianity and, to a lesser degree, Muslim thoughts gave rise to a widespread religious syncretism across the region. In this difficult time for the Acholi people, Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement came forth to offer 'hope for worldly as well as spiritual redemption in a dark hour of despair'.<sup>205</sup> It was not surprising that Alice received considerable support from the Acholi, but simply being Acholic did not assure membership of the Holy Spirit Movement. Membership required induction, which was thought to empower recruits with powers such as the ability to turn stones into grenades and immunity from bullets.<sup>206</sup> In armed forces terms, the Holy Spirit Movement's impact was limited. While Alice won a battle near Kilak Corner in 1986, her fighters were overcame near Jinja in 1987, although she was able to escape to Kenya. Subsequently, her father Severino Likoya Kiberu, tried to revive the movement's fortunes but failed. It was into this political space that the mantle of resistance passed to Joseph Kony. A cousin of Alice, an altar boy in the Catholic Church and later a member of the UPDA's black battalion, Joseph Kony rose to power claiming he was possessed by multiple spirits.

By 1987 he commanded the Holy Spirit Movement II, the goals of which seemed to be little more than vague ideas of 'overthrowing the government' and doing the bidding of the Holy Spirit.<sup>207</sup> Joseph Kony initially sought Alice's blessing but after she declined he modified the name of his movement various times, finally settling on the Lord's Resistance Army (in 1990), a intentional source to Museveni's National Resistance Army. As in the Holy Spirit Movement, Joseph Kony's recruits also underwent initiation to separate them from ordinary Acholi and turn them into *malaika* (angels) - interestingly, Joseph Kony wore a Muslim kanzu during the ceremony.<sup>208</sup> Between 1987 and 1994, religious ideas infused Kony's depiction of himself as a mouthpiece of God's apocalyptic vision for the Acholi and he spoke on a regular basis of his Ten Commandments (although these were primarily Christian-urged, he later came up with some Muslim-inspired commandments, such as people farming pigs should be killed and those who worked on Fridays should have an arm amputated).<sup>209</sup> The thrust of Joseph

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid, 156-167.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, 174.

<sup>207</sup> Tim Allen and Koen Vlassenroot (eds), 2010 *The Lord's Resistance Army: myth and reality*, London: Zed Books

<sup>208</sup> Peter Geschiere, 1997 *The modernity of witchcraft: politics and the occult in post-colonial Africa*, Charlottesville, London: University Press of Virginia

<sup>209</sup> Peter Geschiere, *The modernity of witchcraft: politics and the occult in post-colonial Africa*

Kony's message was that the only way out of this predicament was the complete greening of the Acholi citizenry.

In the late of 1991, the government's pacification effort, Operation North, almost overcame the LRA but didn't finish them off - at which point a lifeline emerged in the form of support from the Sudanese authorities.<sup>210</sup> Although the LRA had always employed brutal tactics, a turning point occurred after the failure of the 1994 peace talks. This mentality may also have encouraged him to abduct children, as a way not only to bolster his forces but also to acquire a clean slate on which to create a new collective identity for the next Acholi generation.<sup>211</sup> As with other analysis, it shows that religious beliefs do not offer a convincing account for the LRA. Joseph Kony's army did come from a society concentrated in religious beliefs but it was also an economically marginalised and militarised region, and the Acholi could point to a range of legitimate grudges against central government. All these elements helped swell the ranks of the resistance movements in their early years. The LRA also owed a great deal to the formation and defeat of Alice's Holy Spirit Movement. But unlike Alice, who proposed to revitalise the Acholi's chances, Joseph Kony never purported the LRA as a vehicle for essential political reclaim.<sup>212</sup> Instead, he claimed to be on a spiritual mission to 'rid the Acholi of witches' as part of their collective salvation and rejuvenation.<sup>213</sup> His heaved agenda entailed killing many Acholi in order to save them. Without any element of surprise, it quickly alienated his army from Acholi society. Having survived Operation North, the LRA endured because of the combined effect of Sudanese support, an ineffective Ugandan military, and a central government that frequently failed to pursue non-military solutions and even hampered peace initiatives.<sup>214</sup> All of these issues had any religious support but strictly political.

## Conclusion

The reality is that religion becomes intertwined with a range of causal factors-economic, political, and social-that define, propel, and sustain armed conflict. Certainly, religious disagreements must be addressed alongside these economic, political, and social sources to build lasting reconciliation. Fortunately, many of the avenues to ameliorate religious violence lie within the religious realm itself. It is also essential to

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<sup>210</sup> Behrend, *Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirits: war in northern Uganda, 1986-1997*(*eastern African Studies*), 157-182

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 169

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid*



establish a healthy relationship between religious wisdom or spirituality and the foundations of governance. As existing institutions and processes of global governance are being challenged for both their legitimacy and their effectiveness, and are losing credibility due to their inability to predict, prevent or mitigate religious violence, there is an urgent need to examine how the time-tested wisdom of spirituality might contribute to enhanced peaceful governance of human societies.

So far, despite some academic studies, neither policy makers responsible for decision making on governance and peace, nor the public has a deep understanding of the complex and contentious relationship between religion and armed conflict, and how it might be changed. The views of both public and policy makers are largely shaped by media reports, hearsay and generalizations, and this is hardly a sound basis for policy making. There is an urgent need to move towards a deeper understanding and begin the work of transformation. The upheavals in the West Africa demonstrate in good part the great changes are afoot in the world, whose dimensions, contours and consequences cannot be predicted. Relationships and assumptions, such as the role of religion in politics, once regarded as irrevocable are shattering. This is a ripe moment to conduct this research and undertake the seminar and conference proposed in this paper, in order to contribute to the critical debate on the future role and contribution of religion and spirituality to armed conflict. It is this attribute of religion and welfare that is evident in the applicable learned literature. While it is possible for religion to remain, first, a personal matter among people and their God(s), when religious organisations and communities form, religion becomes a social and political affair. It is this process of sect formation and dynamics that is most relevant to the study of Africa's armed conflicts. Once again, thinking about officially sponsored religious literatures for armed conflict helps explain variation in emotion and passion among people with similar religious beliefs.

The proof presented from some of the situations in the past and present post African conflict debate suggests that there have been no religious armed conflicts in Africa goes too far. In the eyes of many, religion is inherently conflictual, but this is not necessarily so. Therefore, in part, the solution is to promote a heightened awareness of the positive peacebuilding and reconciliatory role religion has played in many conflict situations. More generally, fighting ignorance can go a long way. Interfaith dialogue would be beneficial at all levels of religious hierarchies and across all segments of religious communities. Where silence and understanding are all too common, learning about other religions would be a powerful step forward. Being educated about other religions does not mean conversion but may facilitate understanding and respect for other faiths. Communicating in a spirit of humility and engaging in self-criticism would

also be helpful. Similarly, the violence in northern Uganda makes little sense without recognising how different interpretations of Christianity served as a mobilising force for various parties to the armed conflict. The same might also be said about northern Nigeria, where religion's role was more crucial than deeply rooted in political cultures amidst a socio-economic circumstance of serious poverty and unemployment.

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