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Johannes Hunter & Joachim Kügler (Ed.)

THE BIBLE AND VIOLENCE IN AFRICA

Papers presented at the BiAS meeting 2014 in
Windhoek (Namibia), with some additional contributions

University
of Bamberg
Press

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Bibel-in-Afrika-Studien

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Ezra Chitando and Nisbert Taringa

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Foreword

Johannes Hunter & Joachim Kügler

Following the Conference on "Bible and Practice" held in 2009 at Bamberg, Germany, the thought of dedicating a volume to the same theme but with special focus on Africa was born. And the result was not only a book, (BiAS 4),[1] but a series of meetings also. Since then the University of Bamberg, on the initiative of Prof. Joachim Kügler and his team, holds a biannual conference on **Bible in Africa Studies**. This conference is jointly organized with colleagues in the fields of Theology and Bible Studies, and other related fields in Africa. The conference has the aim of deliberating on pressing issues in the world and, more particularly, in Africa. The initiative started with the first conference held in Germany in 2010 at the overwhelming *Kloster Banz* (cf. BiAS 7), with the second held in Gaborone, Botswana, in 2012 (cf. BiAS 17).

In 2012, those who attended the conference on social and political issues relating to the Bible and its use in Africa unanimously decided to next hold a conference on the ***Bible and Violence in Africa***. It was decided that the conference of 2014 should be held at the University of Namibia in Windhoek, in cooperation with colleagues from the University of Bamberg in Germany. Because of the presence of a number of Alexander von Humboldt fellows, who indicated that they will attend, a proposal was made to the German *Alexander von Humboldt Foundation* to designate this conference as a ***Humboldt-Kolleg*** (a conference mainly sponsored by the Foundation to tackle pressing issues in various parts of the world). The proposal was successful and all our guests joined me in thanking the *Alexander von Humboldt Foundation* for its generous support for this ***Kolleg***. Without this sponsorship we would not have been able to present such a successful event for this particular week of discussing an issue very close to the heart of Biblical scholars and all Christians.

We were overwhelmed with applications for papers from colleagues in various countries in Africa and also Germany. Colleagues from Nigeria,

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[1] All the volumes of BiAS series are listed at the very end of this volume.

Tanzania, Kenya, Cameroon, Botswana, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia indicated their attendance, which is also an indication of the enormous interest that exists in the theme of ***Violence and the Bible***.

The continual and, in certain countries continuous, violence that upset the livelihood of enormous numbers of inhabitants of Africa is well-known. The current refugee crisis rocking mainly the African and European continents (but also influencing the rest of the world), bringing with it a major humanitarian crisis, is of such a scale that crisis meetings have been held all over the world in order to amicably address, not only the intense humanitarian consequences for the people and peoples involved, but also to address the main cause of the migration crisis, namely the extreme violence that uproots people so much that they leave their livelihood, the places where they have been born, and where generations have lived, for nowhere but for the hope that they would be received somewhere, not to live as normal citizens, but at least in safety, albeit as refugees.

The violence in Africa is, to a large extend, even unjustifiably so, attributed to religious differences, particularly, religious extremity. In many cases this may not be the main or real reason for violence, and religion may in many cases only be the veil of hidden political expectations, yet religion always seems to be drawn into the picture.

Of course, large scale violence, war and destruction are not the only forms of violence. African countries, such as Namibia or South Africa enjoy peace and even stability in terms of the grand and terrorist types of violence plaguing other parts of Africa. In these countries other types of violence are at the order of the day. For example, South Africa had to deal with xenophobic outbreaks recently and may not have seen the end of that. In Namibia, domestic violence is said to be the highest per capita in the world.

Governments in Africa do not necessarily ignore religion but its role in society is often not recognized as much as it should be in countries with a secular constitution. This often gives an opportunity for the mushrooming of all kinds of small and house churches. In a recent raid on such churches, the Namibian government discovered that many of these churches are driven by greed and, in many cases, by foreigners who seek the opportunity to make money by exploiting the deeply religious people of Namibia.

Namibia is going through a phase of the mushrooming of churches as many other African countries are experiencing, but apart from that, despite having a secular constitution, the country's government leaders have called for a day of prayer on the 6th of March, 2014, to pray for a joint effort by all the people of the country to stop the terrible spate of gender-based violence, or so-called "passion killings", gripping the country at the time. It is most upsetting to report that between January and March, 2014, 36 people were murdered through this kind of violence in the scarcely populated country of only 2.1 million people. Weapons in these "passion killings" were, with a few exceptions, knives, *pangas*, and axes.

In this light, therefore, the decision to spend some time to deliberate on the role of the Bible in the thinking of people who, nominally, are estimated to be 70% Christian in orientation, was most necessary at the time. It is, for instance, quite disturbing to note that the last "passion killing" happened during the very night after the day that the President called for the day of prayer, and that this killing happened on the premises of the Evangelical Lutheran Theological Seminary, Paulinum, in Windhoek. The young woman, who was murdered, was studying to become a pastor. Before that, the last attempt to kill a woman (a teacher) was on February 26, 2014, but the woman survived the 10 strikes with a knife and a screw driver.

A conference such as the held in July 2014 at Windhoek, with a theme of this nature, naturally causes a wide range of opinions. Issues which normally provoke much discussion are Gender and Violence, Pluralism and Violence, Homophobia, Land and Restitution, and many others that are part of the wider discussions. Fortunately, scholars who attended these deliberations stayed within the realms of scholarly debate and looked at the influence of biblical texts on our reading of social problems. Of course we hope that our academic efforts contribute a bit in the everlasting struggle to reduce violence, but maybe we have to face the fact that violence will stay part of human existence. The discussion in Windhoek, as well as the articles in this volume, indicated that it will be very difficult to eradicate the universal and highly seductive violence mechanism: "Sometimes" and "under certain circumstances" even people usually most peaceful feel that violence is "unavoidable", "necessary" or even "justified". As much as we detest violence in the Bible, in antiquity or in the recent history, as easy we are convinced that it is necessary to shoot down terrorists or drop bombs on ISIS camps. However, academics should try to at least reduce violence and not to foster it through what they think and write.

The core issue which has come to the centre of attention each time was the issue of the interpretation of the biblical texts in cases where human rights and specific biblical texts seem, on a general level, to stand in direct conflict with each other. Such an issue is, for example, that of homophobia and violence, and the examples of a number of African countries whose leaders have made strong utterances against gays and lesbians specifically, and which have indeed introduced harsh legal measures against homosexual persons and practices are well-known. In such cases, it seems easy to escape into a normal human rights debate where about everybody agrees about the rights of all mature persons to freedom of expression and sexual practices, but when such a discussion is taken a level down from the abstract human rights discussion to specific biblical texts and the interpretation of those texts, even the biblical scholars present have difficulties in agreeing on specifics in texts.

This volume starts out with more theoretical discussions, which brings the focus down to the interpretation of biblical text. The first article tries to present a general hermeneutical strategy on how to deal with violence in biblical texts. The second one, on “Othering” places the focus on the general shift of the power balance that happens when people are finding reasons for violence.

The arrangement of the articles in this volume is such that the more general or theoretical are at the beginning, with more specific foci on countries, such as Nigeria, Rwanda, and especially, Zimbabwe, later on. The articles from Zimbabwe strike a somber note, with the focus on the churches, particularly Pentecostal churches, on the forefront of discussions. Here gender violence seems to be the most striking and disturbing factor.

This volume represents a range of thoughts and opinions about the causes of violence, the types of violence, the dreadful results of violence, and possible solutions for violence proposed by scholars of the Bible and Theology and we hope that the volume will not be the last in a series, in particular view of the current migrant crises in Europe and elsewhere, which is most probably going to last for some time still.

Last but not least we want to thank the association of ***Bamberger Theologische Studien e.V.*** most cordially for their generous support in printing this volume.

How to deal with Violence in Biblical Texts

Some Considerations towards Biblical Hermeneutics of Violence

Ottmar Fuchs

Abstract

This article tries to develop a peace oriented biblical hermeneutics which is able to reduce violence- at least among the readers of the Bible. The way in which violence occurs in biblical texts is very different. Therefore readers need different access modes (or models of approach) as well if they want to deal with violence texts without producing new violence. These modes must me understood in the context of theologically motivated hermeneutical perspectives that is meant to reduce violence and to contribute to peace. Basis of a hermeneutics that does not abuse biblical texts to legitimize violence in any form whatsoever is always the specific social form of the Church in which the reception takes place and gains relevance. The article uses several examples to show how such a biblical hermeneutics of multiple approaches can work.

1. Introduction

Quite unsurprisingly, since September 11, 2001, Christian believers have been facing a deluge of knowledgeable reproaches regarding specific biblical texts, namely those that do not only legitimize violent destruction and murder of people who think differently but actually call for it. This provides our fellow contemporaries with further arguments for giving short shrift to Christianity along with institutionalized religion in general. Here we have, as it were, recent acquisitions *ex negativo* to society's collective and cultural consciousness. Those at the receiving end are having a hard time in the face of violent incidences from the history of the churches which are now pressed all the more forcefully, and no less in the face of the current devastating suicide attacks by Muslim fundamentalists (who in their turn harness their own holy book, the Qur'an, for their purposes). The frightful ambivalence of all revealed book religion has become a talking point.

We shall need to both counteract this particular sentiment and take it seriously, by giving account of how we intend to handle those texts from the Bible. For the existence of such passages cannot be denied. But people allege that we apply a hermeneutics of imitation[1] to them: Whatever the Bible says Christians are allowed to, and indeed have to imitate – in doing so they will please the God of their Bible. The fact that – unlike in the past – they do not do so (and in fact shamefully avoid such texts in their liturgy and everywhere else) is due to modernity, the Enlightenment and the universalisation of human rights, but not to the Bible. Such critics among our fellow contemporaries in society adapt a particular hermeneutics and at the same time reject it: they assume that all biblical texts are of an equal standing as guidelines for a Christian lifestyle and may be appropriated accordingly.

This problem cuts right to the heart of practical biblical hermeneutics, and its resolution, though delicate, must not be delayed. Reassuringly, the varied character of the biblical texts allows for some freedom as far as their reception is concerned; but it offers less reassurance regarding the critical flanking of this freedom on the background of texts that claim it not only for oneself but also for others – to the point where the life and survival of the other as the subject of this freedom are paid for by a reduction in one's own freedom and life. The biblical texts are quite diverse on this point. They arguably represent both ends of the scale: the destruction of the freedom of others as well as a veritable devotion to safeguarding it.

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[1] The difficulty with an ethic of imitation is parodied by an US American who published an open letter to Dr. Laura on the internet. On her US radio programme, Dr. Laura had argued "that homosexuality cannot be condoned under any circumstances because Leviticus 18:22 states it to be an abomination." He writes: "I would like to sell my daughter into slavery, as sanctioned in Exodus 21:7. What do you think would be a fair price for her? ... I have a neighbour who insists on working on the Sabbath. Exodus 35:2 clearly states he should be put to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him myself ...? ... Most of my male friends get their hair trimmed, including the hair around their temples, even though this is expressly forbidden by Lev.19:27. How should they die? ... My uncle has a farm. He violates Lev. 19:19 by planting two different crops in the same field, as does his wife by wearing garments made of two different kinds of thread (cotton/polyester blend). He also tends to curse and blaspheme a lot. Is it really necessary that we go to all the trouble of getting the whole town together to stone them? (Lev. 24:10-16) Couldn't we just burn them to death at a private family affair like we do with people who sleep with their in-laws? (Lev. 20:14) I know you have studied these things extensively ... Thank you again for reminding us that God's word is eternal and unchanging."

Such a fundamental criticism of biblical hermeneutics retrieves exactly those problematical texts from our own unconscious denial and places them squarely in the public domain. We are left wondering at our own helplessness and inability to properly account for them, and indeed at our failure to even start to identify conceptional hermeneutic solutions to these issues. We are left appalled to find that up to 1986, parts of the South African United Reformed Church justified the violent regime of apartheid wrought by the white descendents of the Boers as an integral element of their Christian faith on the basis of biblical texts (cf. Berner: 2006). We are left shocked at the violent and unfair settlement policies of fundamentalist Jewish settlers, who use the very same texts to cement their abysmal contempt of the Palestinians. It is hard not to agree with Andreas Michel, who writes:

> "Those ... who adopt a fundamentalist reading of the texts of God and violence, who even use them to inspire their own violent actions, measure up to the level of neither the texts nor modern reflection. Yet those who do not like to acknowledge them may try to ignore them – up to the time, perhaps, when the experiences of God condensed in the text catch up with them." (Michel 2003:352)

For some time now, many of those in teaching and pastoral occupations have been highlighting the ways in which the issue has been making itself increasingly felt in those contexts. Pupils and students of theology as well as believers in the congregations are asking probing questions, not least because in their everyday lives they, too, face increasing pressure for explanations in the face of the negative appropriations of such biblical texts in society. Yet there aren't any easy answers; at the most there are pointers to a constructive hermeneutics of violent biblical texts (cf. Baumann 2006). For we can neither eliminate the passages concerned from the revelatory canon by branding them as unbiblical, nor reconstruct their reception in the horizon of a positivist-unilinear understanding of revelation. Inner-ecclesial attempts to defuse the issue by downplaying it will no longer do either. There is nothing left to hide – the texts have become public property in a qualitatively new way through negative appropriations. Just as abstaining from communication is a way of sending a message, so is not facing up to the violent texts.

Face up we must, furthermore, to the defensive smoke screens which, though in various ways they do have some efficacy, ultimately fail to satisfy and need clearing up. Among them:

1. extenuation and mitigation through translation[2];
2. anesthetization of what is understood as poetic license;
3. contextual interpretation, i.e. the historisation of texts in terms of the problem of violence obtaining at the time of origin only;
4. metaphorisation, implying that the stark images are no more than stand-ins for something else – but that does not cut much ice, because the imagery is a significant part of reality as it helps to construe the content!
5. liturgical deflection (for example through avoiding texts in readings);
6. educational instrumentalisation and relativisation, based on the notion that we need the texts to learn where violence will lead us, and that studying the way the 'enemy' is constructed will help us see through and thwart the process in our own reality; and
7. perhaps the worst mitigation strategy of all – denigrating the Old Testament as an inhumane "preliminary" stage or imperfect phase of faith history proper.

Ultimately, all these cop-outs lack an appreciation of the profound ambivalence of God and humans themselves. Those texts are not archaic, inhumane stories that we might smugly distance ourselves from, deeming ourselves more "advanced" (cf. Michel 2003:350). Down to the present day, the lesson of history is a different one. Jean-Pierre Wils points at the heart of the matter with his call to keep alive the awareness that

> "beneath the thin sheet of civilisation there is a gaping abyss of bestiality and violence. Perhaps the most fundamental and important rectification of this omnipresence of violence starts when that knowledge of man's violent nature is not sacrificed to an abstract philanthropy" (Wils 1997:548).

It seems that Charlie Chaplin was acutely aware of this on the set of "The Great Dictator". After filming had ended, he said with a view to Hitler: "He was the madman, I the comedian. But it could just as well have been the reverse!" Crying out, we are left with the words of St. Paul in Romans 7:24: "Wretched man that I am!" This is always a characterization of the current day. The Bible confronts us remorselessly with the hidden depths of humans as well as with those of God. What will remain true is St Paul's statement from Romans 15:4: "What ever was written was written for our instruction." But how is it meant? Definitely not as a training in wickedness!

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[2] Such mitigations occur already in the Septuaginta LXX, cf. Michel 2003:333.

Which are the texts concerned here? Some brief examples will give a flavor of their forcefulness. A survey of the material reveals the following scenario among others: The Lord himself wages a war against the enemies and destines them to total destruction (Isaiah 34:1-17; 63:1-6). God calls for revenge upon other peoples and for their annihilation (Numbers 31:1-20; 1 Samuel 15; Deuteronomy 20:10-20; 25:17-19); God chastises his own people and shows his wrath by delivering them to their enemies (Lamentations 2; Deuteronomy 28: 15-68); God uses violence against individuals (Job 16:6-17; Psalm 88); a curse calling on God to destroy the enemies (Psalm 109; Psalm 137:7-9; Psalm 139:19-22); God restores his servant who accepts violent humiliation to atone for the sins of others (Isaiah 52:13-53:12); God judges and scolds "before the eyes of the lamb" those who "worship the beast" (a reference that arguably includes the imperial cult) (Revelation 14:9-11, also 19:11-21).

2. Hermeneutical explorations

2.1. The hint of God's dark sides in history?

Arguably, we have a pragmatic and universally shared premise in the notion that texts containing religious revelation may never serve to motivate, legitimize, enhance or aggravate human violence. Wherever such texts or specific ways of handling them generate segregating and destructive violence, the index of revelation itself must be questioned. Cases where one's own submission to revelation legitimizes the subjugation of others must be recognized for what they are: violent fundamentalism.

If some biblical texts portray violence as exerted and sanctioned by God, what is the significance of this fact? Is this evidence to suggest that God cannot be fit into prevalent plausibility frameworks, not even those of commonly accepted humanity? This would be a dangerous undertaking. Is God's violent nature then the signature of his concealment, even for his dark sides? Explorations along these lines suggest that God's violence in the Bible is the very mystery which humans must not wrest it from God by copying his violence, and which humans can not accept unopposed.

Many people are forced to experience that God does not prevent violence, the violence of painful illness, the violence of being poor or oppressed and afflicted. In the Bible humans who are in such situations pray the psalms of lament and accusation against God (see below section 4.3).They cannot excuse, they can not forgive God: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death" (Ps 22:15). God is the one, who does all this violence; at least he is responsible for that (cf. Fuchs 2014). On the cross Christ himself is forced to pray such a prayer, praying this lament with all humans who pray in such a way and with all who became silent (cf. Rom. 8:26-27). The only answer we get is: that in Christ God is near to suffering people and does not leave them alone.

Thus we will have to take it uncompromisingly seriously: God's negative action links his *mysterium* with man's tremulous awe. This negativity also extends to the irrationality of God and thus establishes the ineffability of his reality to human capabilities, including those of reason and well-being. It is a hard way to realize the Fourth Lateran Council's insight that however many similarities there are between the creator and his creatures, the dissimilarities will always be greater (cf. Denzinger & Hünermann 1991:361). Those who integrate God only in their naive understanding of a harmless God, succumb to magic by needing God for their well-being only.

What is at stake is not only human ambivalence, but the negative dialectic in God's action and in our relationship to God, indeed the ambivalence of our images for, encounters with, and experiences of God. Oddments will always remain here and we will have to bear with God in his strangeness, his ineffability and hiddenness, both in suffering and in violence. For what continues to be fatal and incomprehensible about the pertinent biblical texts is the fact that God's intervention is experienced not only as the power of authority but indeed as naked violence. God's intervention for the benefit of the Israelites is experienced as brutal destruction by the Egyptians (i.e. outside this authoritative relationship with God). God continues to owe them their salvation. With great care, then, we might suggest that, somehow, both love and violence are rooted in God; that within the mess of history, he commits himself lovingly to someone or to his people while at the same time inflicting injustice or violence to others. Ultimately, it is hoped, his love will bring about the kind of violence that will universally create a new world without suffering and death, where neither God nor humans desire to cause injustice and no longer have to. Before that, however, all evil and suffering must be crushed.

2.2. The signature of God's eschatological power over history

God's violent interventions as they occur in the Bible, show that God possesses extraordinary force against certain powers of this world; that he is not a jumping jack; that his power may discriminate even against the will of those concerned, as for example in discriminating between perpetrators and victims. This is a category we seem to have dropped from our awareness: the belief in God's this-worldly (affirming the already of a not-yet) and other-worldly, that is to say, his eschatological power over history. The prayers in their speech acts presuppose from the start God's power over history. The request is an appeal for suitable intervention. The lamentation presupposes God's power over history *ex negativo*, lamenting God's apparent absence from history. The God of creation is the God of history, even though in Israel the possibility of this affirmation developed the other way around: on the basis of the experience of the God of history (especially in the events of the Exodus), YHWH is promoted to God of creation. Creation means: God holds power over all reality. There is no historical place he could not relate himself to, through either intervention or its rejection.

For example, texts like Psalm 137:8-9

> "though they are horror images critical of the people, are nevertheless images of hope in so far as through destruction God is willing to put a stop to destruction as a guarantor or indeed perpetrator for the sake of collective justice; in so far as he is willing to destroy at its roots the cycle of destructive violence. God's enforcement of his sovereignty ... involves his mightiness, and this in turn involves positive, justice-creating aspects of his violence" (Michel 2003:341).

Already at this point we find traces of the eschatological power described in the New Testament Revelation of John. Way beyond Israel and into the period of the Church, there is an emerging potential for threat and warning urging us to appreciate the reality and gravity of God's future forceful intervention in history (cf. also Mark 13:17ff). But at the same time, there is the potential for hope that comes with this ambivalence of God.

The biblical texts about God's violent intervention hold a lesson for us: Tendencies to reduce belief in God's power over history to stories about a God that helps individuals must be reversed, thrown open and universalized into collective (concerning the people and all peoples, just like collective lamentation) and cosmic (concerning the whole world, as did the Flood at Noah's time) dimensions. At the core of such lamentation lies, not doubt about God's ability to intervene because he does not exist or is too weak, but distress at his failure to intervene even though he could. Why does he not step in mightily? Why does Jesus not call on the heavenly hosts (cf. John 18:36)? The belief that He will never intercede because he cannot intercede is tempting for the victims to resign to and the perpetrators to be reassured by. But that is a delusion. Here the biblical texts about his violent interventions remind us never to forget that he can intercede and surely will do so ultimately with unimaginable might (described in Revelation), wiping out violently and uncompromisingly all destructive violence (cf. Görg 1996:100) destroying the freedom of evil and the "violence of injustice" (cf. Sobrino 1997a).

This eschatologisation of God's power to intervene at the end of history is, at the very least, what must not be suppressed. Otherwise there would be no hope of justice, and the victims would be lost forever. This would be so if there was no resurrection of the dead. Yet as death is the last and ultimate violence against life, only a more powerful force can lead to the resurrection of the dead and put an end to death (cf. Fuchs 2002).

The Lord of history is not only capable of intervention, but does so continuously and powerfully in the form of people's insights, encounters and worship, in their actions and decisions, in the churches and the religions, and further than that, wherever God's justice and mercy and his sustaining and liberating guidance in life are accepted and passed on. For us Christians, this happens especially in our practice of following Jesus, in witness, in "martyrdom" for his divine presence in history. But beyond that, God's immediate intervention should be expected continuously and doubtlessly at the end even though it remains a crucial hermeneutical and existential question whether perhaps He has already intervened, in the form of Marian apparitions in Lourdes or Fatima, or in certain experiences where people were saved from profound need and danger. Modernity does not make it easy for us to decide whether something like direct intervention by God exists, or whether we fail to recognize it because we do not think it possible (or indeed, too effortlessly possible). Our own failure to see is easily projected onto God and understood as his renunciation, as a moratorium of violence to which God subjects himself for a limited time only.

2.3. Not imitation but delegation

There are a number of texts, among them the cursing Psalms, which delegate the violence to God because those concerned are themselves victims lacking any capability for it: “O God, break the teeth in their mouths!” (Psalm 57:7; cf. Psalm 3:8). But do such delegation strategies apply also in cases where those concerned do have such power? Is God’s power called on only to compensate for one’s own weakness? Is this a matter of principle applying to all situations? Clarification will come only from a hermeneutics that generalizes the semantics of those texts on a meta-contextual level. As a matter of principle, even in situations of acute hatred, the cursing Psalms’ demand to renounce becoming a source of violence and to delegate violence to God applies to those capable of violence as well. This is certainly not the highest form of spirituality (cf. Fuchs 1995), but still a necessary one that can prevent the worst in a potentially violent situation and, above all, block knee-jerk reaction. Those not yet ready to turn the other cheek will at least hold back their own violence in appealing to God for it. But does this not mean to instrumentalise the relationship to God to satisfy instinctual drives? But perhaps He wishes to help with this particular historical problem? The questions remain open.

Again, relevant texts are not only from the Old Testament but from the New Testament too. St. Paul radicalizes the issue in Romans 12:17-21:

> “Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’ To the contrary, ‘if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”[3]

The prospect of divine revenge does not only prevent violence, but on its back makes possible love of the enemy, or more precisely, loving action towards the enemy, which, eschatologically speaking, actually amounts to hatred of the enemy. Again, this is hardly the pinnacle of anti-violent motivation. But it does offer a biblical strategy for dealing with the violence of texts and of human desires in a constructive way, preventing at least violence of human origin from affecting others. And ultimately, delivering someone to God's wrath means delivering them to his mercy, which leaves the question unsettled for the moment. In the end, everything is left to His autonomy and thus to the justificatory activity St. Paul described so intensely.

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[3] Paul quotes Dtn 32:35.41 und Prov. 25:21ff.

Those reflections on a delegatory hermeneutics of violent biblical texts leave us with the renewed realization that those who rely on a revelation must in no case take violence into their own hands. Taking God's violence seriously means taking it seriously with him as the starting point and the end point – a covert swap of roles allowing man to exert it, is precluded. A practical hermeneutics of discipleship, of the kind conceptualized in discipleship of Jesus, is definitely out of bounds here. There can never be a unilinear hermeneutics in relation to the violent texts, neither one of discipleship, nor of comprehension, nor of approval.

2.4. Being alarmed at ourselves

There is thus no uniform hermeneutics that could be applied to all biblical texts. Woe to the people if we get our categories mixed up and, for example, read violent texts in the category of a hermeneutics of imitation. Rather, given the variety of texts in the Bible, we should expect hermeneutic approaches to vary correspondingly, ranging from imitatory hermeneutics to hermeneutics of confrontation and challenge (cf. Bechmann 2002), where the biblical texts disclose to us our real or potential nature, leaving us alarmed at it and revolting against it. Being mutually dependent, the hermeneutics of self-explication and the hermeneutics of confrontation constitute the sinner's repentance! Both may be termed forms of confrontative hermeneutics provided that two aspects are kept in mind: explicative confrontation with self and self-activating confrontation with violence.

Then, our reading of the violent texts will have an all the more forceful impact as, in the light of repentance, through self-critical "identification" they will reveal our own part in being actual or potential perpetrators. Thus, our horror at the texts merges with horror at ourselves and at our temptation, on reading the texts, to wish for such a violent God and such violent solutions to our problems. One may wonder how important it might have been for our perception of the German Holocaust to identify more with the perpetrators than with the victims in order to notice as early as possible tendencies to become perpetrators resurface in ourselves.

Thus, the texts facilitate self-knowledge and also disclose to us our own susceptibility to violence in order to warn us in time and protect us against outbreaks of violence. There is no use – especially not to others – suppressing them if we do not want to face them, and this includes violence that others inflict upon others. Is it fair to say that our refusal to face violent texts reveals our refusal to face our own hidden depths or actual (especially structural and global) realities of violence? The resulting marginalization and scorning of the Old Testament (because of the allegedly low level of ethicality of its violent texts) has always been tied up with an actual proclivity towards violence against the Jewish people! Hence these texts have indeed been written for our education, in order that from the catastrophic rifts of revelation we may come to see our own flaws and may open ourselves up to those violent texts which present the severest of all criticisms of violence at the same time (see below, section 2.5.)

Therefore, eliminating specific violent texts from the Bible on account of their incompatibility with a particular image of God revealed in other passages is no solution. This would be to repeat Marcion's mistake of making the Bible "holier" than it is. If, then, we stay true to the Church's tradition of seeing all those texts as integral to the biblical canon of revelation, we need different hermeneutical approaches in order to take the various texts seriously in exactly the way they are to be taken seriously. In this way, we reaffirm that all biblical texts have revelatory status while their content is plural and sometimes contradictory and must be accessed through a corresponding plurality of approaches.

Hence the notion of biblical revelation as something entirely good, holy and salvific is discredited. Holy Scripture makes no pretenses about the (allegedly?) unholy. Its character as revelation derives from the fact that it presents encounters with God in a variety of situations and against the backdrop of the ambivalence of human longing and thinking. The Bible is God's revelation as reflected in humans, their evil and their bad traits, their hatred and their love, their oppression and their justice. As soon as God enters this ambivalence through his actions they become part of it and their divine "purity" is tainted.

The Bible has not been purged of the profound ambivalence of creation and human existence; rather, they are integral elements of the multifaceted encounter of God and man. It abounds with instances where humans misunderstand God (and vice versa) and in this is no different qualitatively from the later history of the churches, the history of the ambivalence of the religions and of the encounter of man with God and vice versa. The Bible reveals the misunderstandings, the dark sides, and the often explosive ambivalence of encountering the divine, to later generations so that they may become aware of the ambivalence of their own faith: alarmed at themselves and fearful of God. The dark mysteries of humanity, creation and God are not banned from the Bible. Rather, in the stories of the Bible, we encounter the mystery of our violence and of the power which God has over history and which in the present eon cannot be explained without ambivalence.

2.5. A martyrial criteriology

Finally, I want to highlight a certain attitude which can be found within the Bible itself, even though it calls for an active decision on our part. Wherever someone accepts to suffer violence in someone else's stead and does not respond with violence, we see a different kind of "violent texts": for example, the suffering servant in Second Isaiah, the suffering Son of God praying for his violent tormentors even from the cross (cf. Luke 23:34), returning the violence he suffered as love (cf. Schwager 1990:146). Both scenes presuppose a context of violence in reality and could, especially for Christians, suggest a specific hermeneutics of violent biblical texts which Horst Eberhard Richter (cf. id. 1993) put in these words: Those who don't want to suffer must hate! So do the violent texts seek to educate us about self-discrimination for the sake of others, even the perpetrators, in other words, to endorse martyrdom? Not the martyrdom of suicide bombers who, rather than breaking free from the vicious circle of violence, augment it ad infinitum. One of the "signs of the time" may be found in the increased necessity for Christianity to take a stance in a wider argument about the correct understanding of Christian martyrdom (cf. Fuchs 2005 and 2009) vis-à-vis an emerging societal interest in the concept, and to bring out the specific nature of Christian martyrdom: It is better to suffer defeat than to prevail by violence. Those in view here are those who, for the sake of justice, share when there is time to share, to avoid having to kill later (cf. Matthew 2:13-18), those who, for the sake of keeping violence in check, suffer and withstand more (direct and structural) violence than they inflict, starting right from the first small discriminations. Those who ultimately, and consistently, prefer being killed to being a killer (cf. Sobrino 1997b:491).

Are those the violent texts that provide an authentic inner-biblical key to Christians and for all other violent texts indicate the "centre" of meaning and interpretation? This perspective establishes an interrelation between the different texts, maintaining their multiple perspectives, and at the same time it drives on a particular dynamic which cares about their equal validity while challenging hermeneutic carelessness. Here we have a hermeneutics acknowledging all forms of human and religious violence. It is also critical because it undermines violence by surrender, euphemizing neither active nor passive violence, or rather: neither the violence inflicted nor that actively suffered.

They are counter-texts of intransitive against transitive violence: Servant and Son of God inflicting violence upon themselves, allowing it to be inflicted upon them, juxtaposing the non-violent force of their own bodies. The body is their resistance. The "heroes" and protagonists here are not the subjects of violence, but those sub-jects who non-violently rise against the violence wrought by others and who expose themselves to it (vicariously) for the sake of others. They are not objects in this process because they are and will be in charge of their decision. They could decide otherwise: run away rather than hold out; call for or apply violence rather than resist with their own life and body (which the opponents need to clear away before carrying on or, indeed, deciding to refrain from doing so); destroy the perpetrators rather than protect them. After all, Cain has a mark put on him so no-one would kill him without attracting the sevenfold revenge of God (cf. Gen 4:15).

Still the question remains: why this particular intra-biblical red thread, why put those texts at the apex if they "surpass" and often run counter to the other texts? Ultimately, the approach outlined remains an externally applied set of options, because as they stand the texts are presented with no valorization or prioritization. What is the basis for prioritizing our critique of violent texts away from transitive and onto intransitive violence? From inflicting onto accepting suffering? For the texts of martyrdom too portray violence, albeit substantively and perspectively different: with a view to the victim rather than the perpetrator. The texts that criticize violence are part of the Bible, but what prevents readers from prioritizing those legitimizing violence over the martyrial ones? The Bible itself, for one, does not. The ambivalence it contains is that of life itself, that of our lives.

Nevertheless, it is important to establish an intra-biblical authenticity for this perspective and identify relevant texts. Once this perspective is adopted, we discover significant texts taking it up and grounding it within the Bible. I will try to sketch the line from the Flood to the Gospels – the crucial rainbow, as it were, considering that in Genesis 9:17 YHWH promises never again to intervene with such violence, and that in the Gospels Jesus gives the command to love one's enemy rather than calling on the heavenly hosts. The relevant intra-biblical dynamic appears to be notably robust, all the more so since there are no positive texts capable of establishing a reverse counter-dynamic of equal validity. And to avoid misunderstandings, this dynamic of valorizing non-violence, this intra-biblical gradient, does not juxtapose the Old with the New Testament but cuts right across them, as examples show.

3. Outlook

3.1. The path of the Church...

Though we might find evidence for this dynamic, there is one question that remains as yet unanswered: What is the basis on which believers' take the decision for such prioritizing in dealing with biblical revelation? How can we talk of the will of God in a criteriologically sound way, given the variety and diversity of texts? There is only one answer to this, and it is an ecclesiological and pneumatological one: as and when believers read the Bible in the spirit of the God whom they believe to be love and freedom, in the spirit of the risen one and his judgment on human violence. For this transformation to be firmly and plausibly established (against many of the plausibilities of Church and society), a social context is needed that sustains this perspective, this "hierarchisation" of the biblical texts, through internal and external interaction. Now, how to arrive at a compass for balancing, or better: constituting the reception of biblical texts in this very specific way? For actively violent texts are important too, albeit in a different way than other texts, namely as an explicatory or analytical hermeneutics, as a negative foil of our existence in the face of the renunciation of violence for the sake of fellow human beings and of God.

The Christian Creed could provide such a compass through its substantive dynamic of God's descent and self-emptying in Jesus Christ and his resurrection and the resurrection of man. However, the texts of the Creed possess a high degree of abstraction and need images that can be thought and visualized. The more God's people tell each other the relevant stories (or hear them told about "Saints" and exemplary figures past and present), the more there will develop that willingness to delegate all violence, both current and eschatological, to God and to God only – conscious of the permanent danger and temptation of taking violence into their own hands. The biblical message exposes our profound sinfulness, that is, our violence, and at the same time proclaims a God who accepts sinners back into his love and justice and, at least according to St. Paul's theology of justification, refrains from violent punishment. Those who in their proclamation and belief are able to join God in this unconditional love will from the very heart of their being no longer be driven to violence. Grace alone can conquer violence.

Once more, the social forms of the Church emerge as the external condition for the possibility (or impossibility) of this perspective on the Bible's internal variety. There is no hermeneutics of the text without such prior hermeneutics of the context. Social hermeneutics leads to biblical hermeneutics and vice versa. If Christian and ecclesial existence accepts discrimination for the benefit of the less fortunate in the name of God, rather than chasing their personal advantage, certain biblical texts (and their context) will disclose their meaning quite differently. People treat the Bible the same way they treat each other and outsiders. And certain biblical texts engage our lives because we have a longing for them, a faint experience of them. This kind of appropriation of Biblical texts remains a constant challenge throughout our lives, until the final surrender in death. Thus, in conclusion, we return to the passage in Romans that expands on St. Paul's statement that everything has been written for our education: "... so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope ... Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." (Rom. 15:4.7)

The ancient fourth century depictions of Christ the Emperor prevailing over evil, treading on lions and dragons, do not add up. The underlying idea of the fight between the forces of good and evil probably remains valid in its portrayal of what is called a fight and what today, within a different linguistic framework, we call the permanent negative dialectic of history, its worst contradiction, that between perpetrator and victim. But the category of eschatological time, too, must be applied to this. Ultimately, Christ will prevail over evil upon his return. But wherever today someone thinks they can accomplish through their own violence what Christ does not presently through his (just as Jesus did not), the picture is misread. In this eon, God's power over history unfolds differently, namely according to the dynamic of a particular image: that of the lamb bound and put out for slaughter. And is not the shepherd carrying the lamb both the person who found it and the person who delivers it to slaughter, in other words, to the sacrificial altar?

Can we find "plausibility" for this in our faith and proclamation? It would be high time, so that a millennium of mainly violent Christianity may be succeeded by a millennium where Christian existence embraces surrender and "vicarious" existence rather than the subjugation of others, empowerment rather than the exerting of power.

3.2. ... towards the Bible's fivefold conception of violence

We derive the strength for this, not only from the hope that God's ultimate power over history and the secular forces will one day be manifest, but also the fact that even now he accompanies us on our ongoing path of blocking and reducing violence; just as on the cross he walked this path right to the end, so he will walk and endure it with us. That is the root of his credibility: he will eventually exert his power for the benefit of justice and mercy because even now he gets involved in the necessity of justice and mercy and its consequences. If God does not intervene now, if he did not interfere on the cross, this does not mean he is not able to interfere. The reason why in the present he intervenes in the form of the one who bears violence and sends back love remains hidden from us. But one thing is made plain by this: He does not sit on the fence and does not abandon humans in their violent actions, but gets involved himself and, in doing so, indicates how to deal with them.

Thus in the Bible we find a fivefold conception of violence: Firstly; one that emphasizes God's ineffability, his incomprehensible and inexcusable concealment (see above section 2.1.); secondly; one that makes unambiguously clear that the omnipotent God has both the power and the intention to eventually use violence to put a stop to the violent and destructive forces of the world and establish an eternity of surrender and non-violence (2.2.) thirdly, one that embraces the compromise of forcibly expressing human hatred and desire for violence but delegating its implementation to God (2.3.); fourthly, one that makes perfectly plain to us our profoundly violent nature (2.4.); and finally one where the Servant of God on the cross endures our violence in all its fierceness, returning it as reconciliation (2.5).

Corresponding to these conceptions of violence, there is a hermeneutics of confrontation with God himself (accusing him not preventing the experience of violence and letting the world be as it is); an eschatological hermeneutics (in hope for and awe of God's powerful intervention to destroy violence at the end of time), a kind of hermeneutics of delegation (concerning our encounter of God's unfathomable omnipotence, sovereignty and irrationality), a hermeneutics of confrontation (in exposing our violent nature and triggering resistance against it), a properly theological hermeneutics of martyrdom (a willingness to pay with one's life for one's renunciation of violence). These hermeneutic perspectives contain partially interlocking and overlapping triggers that are paramount if anyone is to open themselves up for the biblical message and form their lifestyle correspondingly. And this is where biblical hermeneutics and a Christian lifestyle meet and enhance each other.

Let us turn now towards three practical examples of encountering biblical texts in a hermeneutically responsible way.

4. Violence begins with wrong identifications

4.1. A famous example: 'Joshua fit the battle of Jericho'[4]

In a kind of Bible-workshop let us now look closely to a rather famous biblical text of violence, I mean the story of the fall of Jericho (Joshua 6:1-7.16-21).

We all know this story, but as a reminder we hear the main parts of it:

> Now Jericho was shut up inside and out because of the Israelites; no one came out and no one went in. The LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have handed Jericho over to you, along with its king and soldiers. You shall march around the city, all the warriors circling the city once. Thus you

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[4] This whole chapter concerning the woman of Jericho I do owe to the idea and text of Ulrike Bechmann 2014: 183-186.

> shall do for six days, with seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, the priests blowing the trumpets. When they make a long blast with the ram's horn, as soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and all the people shall charge straight ahead."
> So Joshua son of Nun summoned the priests and said to them, "Take up the Ark of the Covenant, and have seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark of the LORD." To the people he said, "Go forward and march around the city; have the armed men pass on before the ark of the LORD."

(As the story goes, Joshua did all according to the commandment of the Lord.)

> On the seventh day they rose early, at dawn, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city. The city and all that is in it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live because she hid the messengers we sent. ...
> So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpets, they raised a great shout, and the wall fell down flat; so the people charged straight ahead into the city and captured it. Then they devoted to destruction by the edge of the sword all in the city, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys.

- *The winner*

When we as Christians meet the persons in the story we normally go with Joshua and the people of Israel. Joshua, who follows Moses to lead the chosen people in order to bring them to the Promised Land, is someone who cannot fail. We follow him, we stand on his side, and we admire how the walls of Jericho come down. And all this only through marching around with the ark, blowing the trumpet and shouting aloud at the same time. With Joshua and the people of Israel we trust God's word. Even if it is as wondrous as it is at the sight of the falling walls of Jericho. We even have a victory-song for that story: “Joshua fit the battle of Jericho...” But let us now hear the different story of a victim, the Jericho woman:

- *The victim*

> “Hello. You don’t know me, but we met already in the story. I’m a woman of Jericho. You don't know me by name - by the way, my name is Nachla – I’m one of the forgotten ones. But I’m there in the text, in the last verse you just heard. ‘Men and women, oxen, sheep and donkeys.’ You see – I'm

> one of these women.
> I want to meet you. You are going with Joshua? Well, still the wall of Jericho is there and the gate is open. I'll show you around a bit if you like. You know, we live in a nice city. We have a fountain that never dries up, not even in the summer. This is important, because Jericho can be a hot city, especially in summer. Because of the water we have all these greenery here! You can see a lot of fruit trees all around the city. And palms! Many of them.
> Look at the wall and the big gate. It is necessary to have it and to protect it well. Many travellers and merchants come to our city. We are a rich city! Come with me down our main street, I'll show you our temple. Isn't it a fabulous building? Perhaps you can get a glimpse through the open door of all the silver and gold vessels that are in there! We are really very thankful to our Gods to live in such a good place.
> But come to my house. You must be thirsty. I can offer some milk and some fruits. Here is my house. Look, these are my children. I have three. Here, my daughter is 12. Isn't she a beauty? And I can tell she is bright, too! I really have to find a good man for her who likes her. Oh, here comes my youngest child. He is three years old. He likes to play around with our donkey. And you know, we sometimes think that the donkey likes him best, too.
> But, look at the sun, time is running out. You have to hurry to join Joshua again. You must leave before the gate is closed. If the gate is closed, nobody can go out or in. So, hurry up to go back. Tomorrow, when the sun rises, the wall will fall down. The city will be burnt. Joshua will take all the silver and gold for his God. You know, the God of Joshua has no mercy at all, not even for the old ones or the children. So go now and tomorrow we will meet again – and you will kill me." (Bechmann 2014:185).

- *On whose side?*

We see: Biblical texts can be dangerous for us, to misuse them as legitimation for forgetting the victims and for degrading those who do not belong to ourselves; then they become very dangerous for those who are forgotten and excluded.

This brings us to the insight that the encounter with the Bible has to take place out of an intention which leads this encounter into the "right" direction. Concerning the Joshua text this would mean that only victims of oppressions are entitled to sing the song "Joshua fit the battle of Jericho", expressing their hope, that God will destroy the walls of exclusion and oppression. Others should solidarize with the victims in order to judge the situation out of their perspectives. They should sing another text: "Listen to the people of Jericho..."

These leading motive and motivation are the condition to understand the texts according to the spirit, who should guide every reception of the

Bible. For example, this spirit differentiates between biblical texts which are to imitate, and those, we have to use as mirrors of our destructive longings and thus to reject. All texts of the biblical revelation are important, of course, but in different ways: For example, if we believe that we meet Jesus in suffering and oppressed people, then all biblical stories, in which peoples bring others into pain and oppression, are written to us in order to detect our permanent danger and temptation to do the evil.

4.2. Prophetical perspective

Let us now look at a biblical story which demonstrates the necessity of having a "prophetical" spirit who points at the biblical text out of a decisive perspective, which communicates God's will with the listener or reader. I mean 2 Sam 11:27-12:9:

> When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD, and the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him.
>
> Now there came a traveller to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him."
>
> Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."
>
> Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.

David reacts as one who was not meant: He identifies himself wrongly with the false man. But Nathan makes clear: He has to identify himself with the wrongdoer, the perpetrator. The prophet provokes the real and true hermeneutics between David and the story: The parable itself does not achieve this result. Nathan personifies the perspective, which leads the encounter with the text. Thus Nathan is the hermeneutical key in this story: to repent in front of God and thus to accept God's unconditional acceptance of the sinner, and concerning the human beings the willingness to deal mercifully and justly. All of this happens for the sake of the victims of oppression and destruction. God himself is on their side. This is the most important criterion of the hermeneutics of biblical and recent stories.

4.3. Prayer in solidarity

At last I would like to invite us to pray a Psalm of lament, for example Psalm 22. But before we do it we need a kind of training to use the right language game, not veiling the Reality, but detecting it! Are we all allowed and entitled to pray the Psalms of Lament and Accusation of God, even if we are not in situations of need, misery and danger? Yes, we may, but in different ways! Otherwise we would ourselves use a language of violence which makes the suffering people invisible by expropriating their own language.

- By listening when we pray

Without grieving, we cannot and may not pray the psalms of lamentation. We grieve with the oppressed who voice their situation of utter loss there, who cry out in prayer, wherever they may be, weep and raise their voices in accusation. And we will the more truly pray with them these psalms, the more we listen to these texts, hear the cries of suffering on the page. Then we pray these psalms of lamentation not directly, rather, we pray them as “hearers of the Word,” in that we in praying hear the cries of the needy. In doing so, we let the world of suffering into our lives. It is the world we so often do not wish to see it in this light, not least because we fear its claws, fear that we too will be made to suffer. To listen thus as we pray, is to embrace the suffering of the world in our prayers. It is the condition for a spirituality that sees us, our human environment, our village, suburb, or city, our country and the wider world through the eyes of the suffering people.

- By praying with a contrite heart

Once we have listened to the language of suffering, we are not far from a condition of repentance that will let us see with open eyes, hear with listening ears, those who are suffering, whether they be nearby or far off. Praying this way impels us to see where we are ourselves situated in the contradictory between victims and perpetrators and not to repress what we discover and uncover but to look at it closely. Not least, we confess our sins and pray for forgiveness, for a new beginning in which we may be set free, such as is articulated often enough in the psalms—and when we pray this way we find that such a prayer has urgent and immediate subversive force. We acquire a sense of how utterly dependent we are on justification by God's grace, of the necessity for repenting our sinful ways.

- By praying in memory of the victims

Praying the psalms of lamentation with a listening spirit has, however, not just a synchronous but a diachronous dimension, in that such listening also involves remembering the victims of history, of those who have prayed, or lamented, in the same or similar words, sharing their accusation of God, because he did not save them! Prayer of this kind trained on the past becomes in itself a prayerful willingness to act now to remedy injustice, so that in future far fewer of our fellows will have to pray like this, so that in future many more will be free from torture and oppression.

- By praying in communion with sufferers

There is another form of prayer, one that takes the part of sufferers and stands in solidarity alongside them, one that makes the case against God and man. So in this manner too we may pray the psalms of lamentation with the afflicted: in communion with them, though not in the sense that we obscure the situational and role differences between them and us; but rather, in that we range ourselves alongside them in fellow feeling and that we make their struggles our own. This will avoid the often embarrassing attempts, to acquaint sufferers with the causes of their suffering, either by quoting some framework of reference or, worse, trying to see their plight through the God's eyes (like the friends of Job).

- By praying in proxy of others vicariously

When we pray the psalms of lamentation we may do so on behalf of the real addressees, those whose crying out in prayer has now grown still, who can no longer, so great is their pain and desolation, think any thoughts at all or utter them with their lips, who may even be beyond having a God to whom they can address their prayers. So the psalms are a prayer for intercession of a special kind. We pray these in their stead, as intermediaries, and this is what we pray: that they may, if it be still possible, find new trust and new hope as well towards God as towards mankind. This is a solidarity in companionship with the spirit of the Resurrected One, Christ Himself, who, in our hour of weakness when prayer dies on our lips, intercedes for us, even then, with a sigh that we cannot express in words (cf. Romans 8:26).

- By praying in anticipation of what is in store for us

Not least, we may pray the psalms in anticipation of what is in store for us. We should so "learn" from our solidarity with the suffering, that when our turn comes, and we find ourselves on the losing end of life, hedged in by pain and misery, that we then may dare to pray and also know how to. Also, it is possible that prayer offered up now will have anticipatory value, as if we were proxies for our future selves, if we can no longer pray and lament.

And so it turns out that all of us may, after all, pray the psalms of lamentation, but according to different situations in different ways.

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The Bible and Others: Root of Violence in Africa?*

Jeremy Punt

Abstract

The relationship between violence and the Bible on the African continent goes back to early times, when the arriving colonists had the Bible in the one hand and a gun in the other. Through many centuries, the Bible was used to justify various kinds of violence and injustices in Africa ranging from slavery to land-dispossession. However, the most persistent and enduring violence for which the Bible has been and still is put to use, is Othering. Often sublime and unobtrusive, intermingled with social conventions and cultural norms, the appeal to the Bible to construct, rationalise and justify difference between selves and others is the root of much violence on the African continent. The complex connections between Bible-claimed politics of Othering and violence in Africa, past and present, are discussed with reference to the Pauline materials in the New Testament, in particular.

1. Introduction: Africa, biblical texts and identity

Violence in Africa flood newspapers and TV-screens almost on a daily basis. Horrifying tales and graphic pictures of armed combatants and dead bodies in the streets, children kidnapped and forced to become soldiers or sex slaves, the large-scale rape of women as military strategy and destitute people as refugees or in perpetual displacement often extend beyond war zones. Beyond armed conflicts the spectrum of violence in Africa often includes such wide-ranging practices as homophobic attacks on lesbigays and same-sex couples, ongoing female genital mutilation, xenophobic tensions and so forth. Often the response that such practices are not unique to Africa, does not offer much comfort and does not dispel stereotypical and predetermined positions about Africa. The realisation that sensationalist portrayals of Africa as dark and violent continent are driven by consumer demand does not negate violence in

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Africa. The complex and varied origins and nature of violence in Africa should not deter us from inquiring about its link with biblical Othering.

The role of Christianity in past and present violence in Africa is much debated. However, at least as far as Africa south of the Sahara is concerned, the juncture between colonisation and Christianity – and its Bible – was very strong. The Bible was used in past colonising endeavours to sanction slavery, to deny women equality with men, to demonise lesbigays, to legitimate racism; a list that can be augmented in various ways in different parts of Africa. Religions are notoriously implicated in violence, and Christianity is often seen as a particularly good example of the close links between (organised) religion and violence. That the worst of all human wars have probably been fought for religious reasons of various kinds is no mere truism. In his discussion of obstacles regarding the problematic nature of genuine dialogue between Christianity and Judaism, Jacob Neusner (1991:105-116) suggests that all religious systems has an *incapacity* to think about the Other or outsiders.[1] Similarly, Peter Beyer argues that religious faith often stimulates and contributes to a particularist identity (1994:3). Although Isichei (1995) contends that religion is not such a determinative factor for many of the conflicts in Africa, opinions and evidence to the contrary abound.[2]

The foundational documents of Christianity are not exempted from the accusation of being involved in violence, notwithstanding the claims made about both Christianity and the Bible as peace-promoting. A cursory look at the foundational texts of Christianity, and the NT in particular as condensate of a multifaceted, incipient religious movement, already provides evidence of a relationship between religion and violence. The NT's concern with love and peace does not exclude its penchant for violence.[3] A subtle yet tenacious tendency concerns processes of Othering, creating outsiders in different ways. If "Acts of identity formation are themselves acts of violence" (Schwartz 1997:5), prospects do not look too good for the NT to shun violence. The use of the Bible to construe identity, of the self and of others, of Bible-based Othering is a subtle but pernicious strategy and effective because biblical texts are particularly concerned with matters of identity – as in the case of the Pauline letters which are so intently concerned about being true followers of Christ. Building on earlier discussions (e.g. Punt 1999; 2012), the Othering-practices in the Pauline letters form our focus here, and are considered in the context of violence on the African continent.

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[1] Volf argues that people rather than religions should be ascribed as the cause of religion-based violence. "If peace is what we are after, then a critique of the religious legitimation of violence – the critique of the bellicose gods – is more urgent than reconciliation between religions." (Volf 1996:285)

[2] Isichei's study on the history of Christianity in Africa, also Southern Africa (1995:98-127; 299-322) – while perhaps not always giving due attention to the significance of the Bible in the history of the interaction between Judaism and/or Christianity and Africa – clearly sketches some of the injustices perpetrated in the name of the Christian religion often bolstered by biblical appeals. Smith (1993:213-214; cf. Archambault & Tinker 1995:300-301) lists examples of injustices sanctioned by the scriptures of various religious traditions globally including slavery, oppression, violence, sexism, and so on.

2. New Testament, Othering and violence: Exploring links

The New Testament advocates peace, and never issues a direct call to take up arms or to engage in conflict. In fact, peace and the advocacy of peace are characteristic of large parts of the New Testament. But the emphasis on peace stand side by side with the tolerance and even promotion of violence,[4] which in the past were found useful for supporting violence. Attempts to reconcile its calls for peace with advocating violence fail, mainly because the texts themselves do not seriously engage in such reconciliation of perspectives. The tension between the advocacy of both peace and violence remains,[5] and requires the readers of the

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[3] Swartley (2006:3) claims that "peace and peacemaking [have] been topically marginalized in the NT academic guild". While he admits that peace is often studied under other rubrics (Swartley 2006:5-8, 11-26), Tite (1995:2-4) warns that the modern desire to promote peace, impedes the study of violence and peace in the NT. Could the reluctance to account for the violence generated by practices of othering be related to the New Testament's strong calls for peace, which are more easily explained within theological perimeters and are more palatable than its malevolent tenor? Could it be that the New Testament's ambivalent attitude on both peace and violence is simply subsumed in a rather facile, spiritualised notion of peace? (Punt 2006)

[4] Various attempts were made in the past to explain the New Testament's ambiguous position regarding violence. So e g the prohibition against violence is often connected to a call to willingness to suffer violence, even to the point of death. "We know that the message [of peace, JP] has continued to resonate with varying degrees of intensity throughout the centuries." (Desjardins 1997:61)

[5] Possibly due to a number of factors: the involvement of many authors in the formation of the New Testament texts; the long period of time during which the NT texts were formed (40-140 CE); the different and specific historical, socio-cultural situations

New Testament to recognise and to take the promotion of both peace and violence seriously, especially where these texts are used to promote a certain worldview, lifestyle and even particular actions. Amidst ambiguity, the NT tolerates violence, and at times even promotes and incites violence. The violent element is related to various socio-historical and theological factors, determined by interests of communities, ideologies, and others.[6]

2.1. Harsh language, subtle violence: Towards an insider-outsider mentality

Apart from noting the substantive vocabulary of terms for violence, scholars (e.g. Desjardins 1997:63-108) point out elements of the violence contained within the NT: exhortations to and actions of violence; a broad non-pacifist stance; the ever-present apocalyptic worldview; the role of women; and *the insider-outsider mentality*. In its acceptance of violence, the NT allows for the infliction of physical and non-physical violence on others. The rationale appears to be that God and Jesus at times choose to act violently and occasionally may also sanction human violence. "The God of the New Testament is violent. So is Jesus, although to a lesser extent." (Desjardins 1997:109) But it is especially the differentiation between insiders and outsiders which proves potentially hazardous and ultimately destructive: the insistence on an in-group in possession of all truth and essentially superior to the others. Here animosity starts, and here lurks the potential for violence.

Violence can refer to all actions and everything that restrict, damage or destroy the integrity of things, living beings or people, or of cultural and

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which were the breeding ground for these documents; and, the modern worldview of contemporary readers (Desjardins 1997:115-116).

[6] Different approaches to biblical violence range from those who argue against the presence of violence in the Bible to those who see no reason for retaining what they take to be a violence-ridden collection of documents. One-sided mono-causal or moralistic explanations often border on the naïve; violence is at times the result of the inability to deal with changed circumstances. E.g., unpalatable developments in the Christian tradition – Constantine religion, Crusades, etc. – were accompanied by other considerations: even in those dark years other forms of Christianity (and Islam) also existed, and the notion of "Christian" differed from the modern view and allowed for, e.g., coercion towards conversion; and the idea of a pristine and pure primitive Christianity is not borne out by compelling biblical evidence to the contrary (Häring 1997:268-270).

social entities through superior power (Häring 1997:266). In short, violence is the "violation of personhood" (Brown, quoted in Desjardins 1997:99),[7] and occurs in many forms.[8] Sociological or structural violence emerges in the context created for it by such conceptual and ideological climates, and therefore there is room to take conceptual violence and ideological violence into consideration as well (Tite 2004, esp. 33-41).[9] In what today would be called identity politics, insider-outsider notions are often used to justify violent reactions towards the Other. Othering was not only the result from identity politics among early Jesus followers, but was also the consequence of certain beliefs and practices in incipient Christianity, as much as in its inherited beliefs and traditions and their prevailing and continuing legacy(-ies).

Othering and violence in the New Testament are linked to the harsh language in which the New Testament was written. But, at the time such language was conventional rhetoric.[10] Harsh and polemical passages in the NT include Paul's descriptions of the Jews as those "who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets ... they displease God and oppose everyone" (1 Th. 2:15); the Gospel of Matthew which has "all the people" baying for Jesus' crucifixion and them screaming that "his blood be on our heads and on our children" (Mt. 27:25); Jesus in John's gospel who tells the Jews, "You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires" (Jn 8:44). But the language of polemic is not unique to the New Testament. Amos and Jeremiah, Nahum and Ezekiel criticised neighbouring countries, their rulers or the priestly establishment in less than civil tones. In comparable passages in the Qumran Scrolls fellow Jews are denounced in harsh terms: the "sons of darkness" are full of "wickedness and lies, haughtiness and pride, falseness and deceit, cruelty and abundant evil, ill-temper and much folly" (1QS 4.9-14). First-century Jewish writers often responded in harsh terms to fellow Jews with whom they disagreed, and in even stronger terms about gentiles[11] (Levine 2012:1-3). Violence seems to be lurking in such texts, at least the threat of violence if not enacted violence.

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[7] Violence is not an abstract concept, but practical actions which damage, humiliate, torture, kill and destroy with intent as apparent in programmes of torture and death, strategies of terror and war, practices of exile and marginalisation (cf. Häring 1997, 267). As physical and social concept, violence in conceptual and ideological format (different nature) also deserves attention. Further distinctions re violence are possible, e.g. also in terms of actions (physical or non-physical including verbal); agency (individual, social, structural/systemic); scope (individual; social; cosmic); and so forth.

[8] Violence is primarily an anthropological problem and can therefore be explained according to sociological, psychological, political and cultural frameworks. Also religious and theological analyses of violence, at times almost imperceptibly embedded in such frameworks (particularly in the case of the first century context), can prove helpful in exploring the connection between religions and violence, in different forms and at different levels. To come to grips with the relationship between religion and violence requires a "double correction": the recognition that religions are as ambivalent as other cultural phenomena, complete with internal tensions and contradictions typical in society at large; and in addition, even in our secular, modern society the influence of religious regulations and rituals, beliefs and experiences should be acknowledged (Häring 1997:268). Showing connections between religion and violence often are easier than making a case for opposition between them. As one scholar put it, "Religies spelen niet slechts met vuur, maar wakkeren het voortdurend aan" (Religions not only play with fire, but continuously fan the flames [JP] - Häring 1997:285).

[9] The focus is on the often positive position towards and even promotion of violence in the New Testament; while possible links are not denied, it means that the violence that the authors claimed they or their groups suffered, is not primarily in focus. Cf. Frankfurter (2005, 144-150) on the use of legends of violence to provide a hegemonic group or culture the pretence of persecution or suffering, and the concomitant identity of being a victim, with the purpose of mobilising and legitimising violence against the other, who often are often minority groups.

The voices of Paul and others in the NT with their claims and counter-claims on identity of course cannot be posited as simply and generally exclusive or hostile – as much as sweeping demands about their promotion of inclusivity fail to convince. Rather, the insider-outsider mentality in the NT is a complex matter, revolving largely around matters of identity, and was influenced by social, political, economic and other concerns. Besides those who are defined as outsiders from the outset, there are those who although they at some stage became insiders, over the course of time and for various reasons became outsiders again. The NT shows how certain lines of demarcation are broken through, if not broken down, but at the same time reinforces other divisions. Paul's own position (below) illustrates how he wielded the yardstick for aspirant insiders, and considered certain beliefs and actions as appropriate for belonging to the community and for maintaining community solidarity.[12]

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[10] The role of language both in polemics as well as in configuring insider-outsider categories is important. As Rhoads (2010:6) notes, "speech, particularly rhetorical speech, is often agonistic, because it regularly occurs in contexts in which there is an in-group and an out-group".

[11] Josephus called the Sicarii, the "dagger men" who promoted the Revolt against Rome in 66-70 CE, "slaves, the scum, and the spurious and abortive offspring of our nation" (*Jewish War* 5.443) who "left no words of reproach unsaid, and no works of perdition untried, in order to destroy those whom their contrivances affected" (*Jewish War* 7.262). Philo criticised fellow exegetes in Alexandria who do not read Scripture as he did as "impious ones" who "use these and similar passages as stepping stones as it were for their godlessness" (*Confusion of Tongues* 2).

2.2. Communities and identity: Insiders and outsiders (Us and Them)

The insider-outsider mentality requires further consideration of first-century identity, but in the interest of space, a few remarks have to suffice. The strong sense of identity and continuous efforts to maintain and also elaborate notions of identity necessarily required procedures of demarcation as much as processes of identification. The erection of borders between people, the construction of "us" and "them", the selves and the others, was within the first-century, agonistic society not seen as complementary, as the New Testament documents attest. Opposites did not attract as in today's cliché, but led to competition and at times called forth hostilities, which was understandable in the first-century Mediterranean world where violence was endemic, the extent of which emerges clearly even from a brief analysis of the New Testament vocabulary.[13]

Given the volatile and fragile nature of identity in the changing first-century environment, defining communal identity was a precarious undertaking.[14] Despite the difficulties involved in identity-processes, and regardless of a community's ability to maintain beliefs or the level at which these are posed as normative, the identification of self and others was part and parcel of being a faith community built around some core beliefs. Such beliefs generally exuded and even encouraged a certain ethical practice. In the Hebrew Bible, with its strong monotheistic stance and theocratic setting, the people of Israel not only identified themselves accordingly, but conversely and by default identified other people in contrast to such claims and ideals.[15] This was the case in early Christianity too, with (at times, diverse!) beliefs centering on Jesus Christ, accompanied by the promotion of a strong ethos in communities. Again, traces of inclusivity related to the universal impact of Jesus Christ are found in the NT, with religious ritual and entrance requirements that could have posed barriers for new recruits at times trimmed down. At the same time, the NT also attests to the identification and allocation of people into groups, undergirding such practices and their accompanying claims with both religious fervour and argument.

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[12] Segal reckons that Paul saw the terms of commitment and choice more rigidly than many other contemporary Jews; as a recent convert, he considered no middle-positions. "In any event Paul's polarized sense of choices available marks him as a Pharisee ... Paul retains his preconversion superiority to those who do not keep the law as the Pharisees do" (Segal 2000:186-7). Castelli (1991) finds in Paul's frequent calls for imitation a (warped) discourse of power (cf. Polaski 1999).

[13] The vocabulary for violence is varied, including physical human violence, the cosmic struggle between good and evil, and (metaphorically) the Christian's life of service to God as a spiritual battle; however, military terms dominate, indicative of the military environment of the day (Desjardins 1999:63-64). On the other hand, the failure to address social justice issues, and an emphasis on "peace" that does not allow for resistance against physical oppression, can also be considered violence. (Desjardins 1997:34)

[14] The difficulties are evident in, e.g. non-retaliation, a topic appearing often if differently in early Jewish and Christian writings. Exhortations on non-retaliation relates to two broadly different contexts, intra-communal conflict and persecution, and external oppression of the community. In the case of the former, the concern is generally with reconciliation and harmony, and with the other, longing for God's vengeance becomes

Absolute claims inevitably lead to rigid categories, as much as strong boundaries have a way of calling out for their own protection, and for the custody of those on the inside. The NT authors, explicitly or otherwise, claimed a particular way to gain God's favour as described and prescribed by them. Dissent was outlawed, except for inconsequential matters, and compromise not warranted, in a world dominated by the struggle between evil and good forces. The grouping of humanity in camps necessarily entailed (mutual) exclusion and, depending on control over power and ideology, also marginalisation.

The New Testament's saturation with language of identification renders images, processes and structures of claiming and disavowing identity, of tracing insiders and allocating status, pointing to outsiders and margin-

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the motivational argument. And in intra-communal conflict, the definition of the community is sometimes more specific than in other instances, where even other friends or neighbours are included. Where inter-personal conflict and non-litigious offenses are concerned, non-retaliation was seen as forgiveness, love and good deeds aimed at reconciliation. In some texts, reconciliation is restricted by "sharp socio-economic divisions, moral elitism or personal enmities" whereas in other documents, non-retaliation applies regardless, to the extent that some even included Gentiles "in the horizon of application" (Zerbe 1993:219-294).

[15] The accuracy and legitimacy of such claims regarding self as well as regarding the Others in an era where stereotypical slander reigned, is a discussion reserved for another time; but cf. e.g. Knust (2006).

alising them or appealing for their maginalisation. First-century faith communities rarely indulged the concern for diversity, flexibility and being open-ended, at least not in its twenty-first century, postmodern format.[16] The "we-they perspective" is found in all the major corpuses in various contexts in the New Testament. In the Gospels it is the strong tone of intra-Jewish conflict which surfaces repeatedly, revealing two strata of the Jesus story. On one level, it is a relative simple story of Jesus that is primary, but amidst the reinterpretation of the events, which took place after his death, the story about him is told with the communities' concerns in mind. The Fourth Gospel expresses anger against Jews who became the symbol for all who rejected God (Jn 5:16; 8:57-59; 18:12; 19:10), in a context where the early Jesus followers dreaded the Jewish authorities for fear of exclusion and the might of the Roman Empire to annihilate whole communities for dissent.[17] Echoes of the concern with the insiders and outsiders are heard throughout the associated Johannine writings, invoking categories of the saved and the damned.[18] Other binary opposites are found throughout the New Testament corpus, often playing on religious or spiritual distinctions and employing symbolic language, such as to be free or enslaved, children of the light or children of the darkness, the faithful or the apostates, those on the narrow or those on the broad way, the wheat or the chaff, the sheep or the goats, the strong or the weak. Some opposites invoked sentiments that entail going beyond religious categories for explaining the force of the contrast and even the original identity-concerns, and might be related to categories of privilege and marginalisation, wealth and poverty, and other socio-political configurations (cf. Punt 2009:137-152). The Pauline letters with their focus on communal identity are particularly strongly involved in us-them discourse, in a rhetoric of Othering.

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[16] Even today, the notion of human diversity as a "great resource, which is underpinned – this is our strength – by universal cultural values that must be passed on from the cradle to the grave" (Mayor 1997:2), often remains idealist.

[17] The Johannine writings provide interesting parallels: The Fourth Gospel begins with a (negative) reference to the insiders, καὶ οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον (Jn 1:11: "and his own [people] did not receive him") – it sets the tone for the rest of the Gospel with its exclusionist tendency.

[18] Cf. Pippin about the boundaries of the new covenant group in Rev. 21 and 22: "The boundary of the redeemed sets up a system of opposites expressed as insider and outsider, Christian and non-Christian, and fornicators and virgins. There is no room for dissent and no place for women's power and women's voices" (Pippin 1992:55-56). Cf. Lieu on insiders and outsiders in 2 and 3 John (1986: 125-165; esp. 145-148).

3. Paul, the dynamics of Othering and violent overtures

The Pauline letters (like the NT generally) promote a *new identity*, together with a new ethos and worldview.[19] These letters advocate a renewed social location and standing of the Other, becoming part of the Christian family as brothers (and possibly, sisters). Increasingly these letters are seen as not primarily aimed at persuading their receivers about justification by faith as opposed to works-righteousness, nor at the salvation of the Gentiles, but rather to forge one, unified community consisting of believers from among the Jews and Gentiles (cf. e.g. Dahl 1977:20; Segal 2000:188). However, the very attempts at forging one community appear to hold in reserve consequences which mitigated against the very goal such attempts wanted to achieve. It can be summarised as a politics or rhetoric of Othering.

The identification of the discourse of power in the Pauline letters is a first step in uncovering the disempowerment of others and those on the margins of the Pauline communities, in particular (Polaski 1999:136). But Paul's rhetoric of Othering should be situated in its broader context. In the imperialist context of oppression and want such as the first-century Mediterranean world, marked by dispossession and persecution, communities of faith were attuned to identify the foreigner and especially the opponent. A rhetoric or Othering deals with ideological justification, and can in its more well-known forms be traced back to the "classic undemocratic discourses" of Plato and Aristotle, even if they were later refined and continued by the post-Enlightenment philosophers such as Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau and Hegel.[20] Keeping the social world in focus, the Greek *polis* of times before the NT already reflects the patterns of identification and domination, marginalisation and exclusion.[21] In its patriarchal context, the city-state embodied political-philosophical values in accordance with an andro-social understanding of democracy. Political and social power was the province of elite, propertied men, excluding slave men and women, free-born propertied women, poor men and women, and of course, barbarian (i.e. not Greek) men and women. Socio-political arrangements, in view of Sophist belief that all people are equal by nature, were given ideological justification through articulating dualisms,[22] and notions of natural superiority and inferiority of some people.[23] The politics of Othering did not intend to describe the generic person, but generalised the imperial standard as the universal subject (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000:46), a practice which has through the centuries become the norm in hegemonic and colonialist discourse. Once the hierarchy is established and legitimated, mechanisms of control are put in place within systems of domination and subordination, and an authenticating discourse is adopted to obscure these practices by claiming them as natural or (divinely) ordained.[24] *These are the dynamics of a politics of Othering.*

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[19] Paul's striving to articulate a new identity, built in part upon the vestiges of his own history and that of the Jewish people, took place within the Roman Empire with its ideology of violence and scripts of power. Those who resisted the contemporary dominance through visions of future utopia nonetheless were obliged to use the language and images of the current social system to formulate and construct a new world that could be considered attainable and conceivable (Perkins 2009:176). Perkins (2009:172-176) refers to Tertullian who in the later second and early third centuries ascribed harsh punishments to the Roman overlords, relishing his own joyous reaction in anticipation of their brutal suffering (cf. *Spect.* 16.6) yet condemning the cruelty of the games (cf. *Spect.* 19.1). Paul's re-descriptions of his communities' identity took up the scripts of the religiously influential (Jewish), the politically dominant (Roman) and the socio-culturally normative (Greek/Hellenistic).

The link between the formation and evolution of biblical texts and the constantly changing constructions of identity is self-evident (cf. Wills 2008:3). However, if Stimpson (1992:252) is correct in arguing that “[a]

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[20] “Not just religious studies but all modern theories of political and moral life are shot through with the politics of othering, that is, with ideologies of sexism, colonialism and racism, the systems and discourses of marginalization, vilification, and dehumanization” (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000:45).

[21] E.g., the distinction between the public and private realms of life, leaves the civic public inhabited by an “impartial and universal point of view of normative reason”, and the private with its emphasis on the family seen as the domain of women, and thus of “the body, affectivity and desire” (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000:45).

[22] Such as human-animal, male-female, slave-free, native-alien (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000:46). For the stratified society, cf. e.g. Meeks (1986:32-38).

[23] It was predominantly about the assertion of the inferiority of slaves and (free-born) women as the targets of the ideological constructs on the inferiority of these groups, and the concomitant need to treat them accordingly.

[24] Dorothy Smith calls these “relationships of ruling” (cited in Schüssler Fiorenza 2000:46).

mark of otherness is one's inability to shape one's psychological, social and cultural identity", the sharp side of negotiating identity and Otherness is equally clear. And if identity formation gestures are a hairbreadth away from violence (cf. Schwarz 1997:5), similarity in terms of identity implies difference also; i.e. constructing the self, invokes and construes others (cf. Lieu 2004:15). Paul's letters (and other NT documents) that were written in varied social locations and perceptions of identity of who or what constituted "Self" and "Other", shared in these constructive but often ambivalent energies.

3.1. Self and other in Paul

In the Pauline letters communities are encouraged to develop a sense of belonging, and in this regard familial and affectionate terms (e.g. 1 Th. 2:7-8) are often encountered, and the body metaphor (Rom. 12:3-5; 1 Cor. 10-12; etc.) is of specific significance.[25] Baptismal discourse (Gal. 3:27-28; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; cf. the later tradition, Col. 3:9-11) underscores the notion that a community of people with the same focus is established through their commitment to Christ. A case can be made for Paul's advocacy of the inclusivity of the reign of God and its earthly manifestations as seen for example in Romans 1:14 and 13:1-14 (Jewett 2000:62-68). However, Paul generally made such inclusiveness dependent on the communities' assent to his visions, understandings and praxis so that people in the Pauline community had access to spiritual information and knowledge not available to others.[26]

Claims regarding the identity and status of the self and others *vis-à-vis* the community were expressed in numerous ways, according to the style of the particular New Testament author, the issue at hand, the nature of the community, relevant to the message conveyed, and so on. With no particular, agreed-upon way of expressing notions of belonging and dissociation, Paul (like John in the Johannnine letters) often resorted to sibling language. But insiders were positioned against outsiders, reminding insiders of hostile people who threaten them, and increasing the degree of hostility as can be seen in the vice catalogues (e.g. 1 Cor. 6:9-11), and the frequent virulent attacks on opponents.[27] In the New Testament, the adjectival adverb ἔξω (outside) is used a total of 63 times, six instances of which it is substantiated and in five[28] of these it expresses the notion of the outsiders, those outside the community, the people not part of the in-group – the others. Probably not without significance, the substantiated use of the adverb ἔξω occurs with one exception (Mk 4:11), in the Pauline tradition only (1 Cor. 5:12, 13; 1 Th. 4:12; cf. Col. 4:5).[29]

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[25] In the subsequent Pauline tradition, the body metaphor is altered in Colossians and Ephesians, with Jesus Christ now portrayed as the head of the body, while Christians make up the rest of the body (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22; 4:15).

[26] This ambiguity clearly emerges in Galatians with Paul's explanation of the covenant, which is exclusive by nature, presupposing insiders and outsiders. The reference to "Jerusalem above" (Gal. 4:26) entails divine origin, but not necessarily "an invisible people, to whom all races belong in their diversity, who receive the logic of faith as the founding principle of their practices, attitudes, and relations in their own particular world" (Dunn 1993:249). The choice is not for or against Jews, for or against Gentiles, but an inclusive choice for all people (cf. Park 2003) – but such inclusion is according to the requirements of Paul's understanding.

In some of Paul's letters (e.g. Gal. and Phil.) it becomes only too clear how inclusivity turns into sharp exclusion, when those threatening the fiber of the community or the veracity of Paul's expressed convictions and commitments are vilified and marginalised. Those who reject the Christian message fall into a different category of human beings, and are accused of vile acts.[30] The claim that Paul eschewed particular ethnic identities[31] in favour of an all-inclusive community of the Lord ignores other evidence: it is often not ethnic identity as such, which is the cause for exclusion, but rather the position people assumed.[32] "[Paul] initiates a discourse that in many cases validates sameness, that condemns certain kinds of difference and by means of silence renders others unthinkable, that promotes community cohesion by self-discipline and outright self-denial" (Polaski 1999:136).

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[27] At times conflicts provide the context and requirement to define identity, e.g. Paul in Galatia (cf. Taylor 2003:915-945).

[28] In the other instance, ὁ ἔξω refers to corporeality, the external or outer side of being human, and as opposed to the inner being, ὁ ἔσω (2 Cor. 4:16).

[29] Tracing single words (such as ἀδελφός), or phrases (such as with ἴδιος) through the NT writings lead to limited, and even incomplete pictures. Since words and phrases – and their particular usage – are reflective and representative of one tradition, the contributions of other New Testament traditions are then often marginalised, or even excluded.

[30] In the later New Testament traditions, the intensity of the animosity increases, as illustrated well by the accusations leveled against the "ungodly" one of the letter of Jude.

[31] "[S]ometimes Paul's opponents must be Christians as well as, presumably, Jews. I would include in that category gentile Christians who had already been circumcised, making them Jews for all intents and purposes" (Segal 2000:186).

[32] The claims that "Paul's mission implies an alternative vision of the path towards global reconciliation. It runs neither through Roman propaganda and imperial rule nor through conversion to a single ethnic identity or theological orientation", and:

As in other NT documents, moderating features are present amid Pauline letters' politics of Othering. In his letters the boundary lines are generally not fixed, since the missionary drive allowed for the outsider to be seen as a potential insider. Attempts to break through insider-outsider, us-them moulds are found in celebrated texts such as Galations 3:28 and other baptismal formulae. Calls for inclusivity, for tolerance, and respect for difference are found in Romans 12:3-8 (esp. 4-5); 1:14 (cf. also Jewett 2000:62-65); 15:7-13 (cf. also Jewett 2000:69-71). A niggling question is whether such calls are limited to the intra-communal situation, restricted to the different groups or factions inside the early Christian church? And although as a rule the NT does not portray Christians as violent towards the outsiders, exceptions exist. More fundamentally, and even when granting the differences of the first-century context at many levels, a basic problem still persists in the lack of respect for another person's right to exist differently.

3.2. Othering in the Pauline texts: The opponents

Identity establishment and maintenance inevitably required the construction of perimeters and borders. The purpose of borders was to provide a social location for the insiders, as much as it was to fend off outsiders whether or not they challenged the insiders and their sense of identity. Even without the benefit of Girard's scapegoat theory (cf. Selengut 2003:53), it is possible to understand how keeping the outsiders at bay even to the extent of their elimination, is considered vital in an intentional community, especially in those early days of formulating a new, or different at least, sense of identity.

The politics or rhetorics of Othering found in the Pauline discourse is situated primarily in two particular ways of establishing and treating counter-identity: assimilating the differrences of the other to the same

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"Since God's grace is equally available to all, no claim of superiority remains valid and therewith the basis for every kind of imperialism has been removed" (Jewett 2000:71), may be accurate on one level, but does not address the broader picture, where the Pauline notion of identity rule the day.

(but, of course, an inferior version), and vilifying and idealising difference as otherness (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000:45ff). Claims to identity, and exclusion from identity, and resulting structures of domination and subordination are substantiated through an appeal to naturalised differences, as embodied in a perceived or even revealed *natural* order. Only through recognising such appeals to be part of a historical political process rather than an absolutist revelation or universal, transcultural natural order, can the process of dismantling a politics of Othering begin.

A politics of Othering, then, is predominantly a rhetoric of legitimisation, constructing a discourse replete with cause, development and effect. Certain people or groups of people are identified *contra* the selves, and considered as deserving of exclusion, marginalisation, vilification and at times brutalisation. The strongest invectives originating from his politics of Othering are possibly reserved for Paul's strongly worded opposition to the opponents in Galatians, Philippians and Corinthians (e.g. Gal 1:8-9; Phil. 3:2; 2 Cor. 11:1-15). The politics of Othering, however, was not reserved for opponents only, whether inside or outside the Pauline communities, but also included strategies of marginalisation and silencing, where variously defined groups in- and outside these communities are the targets of the Pauline controls.[33]

4. The legacy: Paul's interpreters and remaining ambiguities

The canonical texts and their history of their interpretation are implicated in the Pauline politics of Othering.[34] Differences are taken by the powerful as legitimate warrant to control and rule, and they portray the differences to the powerless as either natural or divinely ordained sanction for submissiveness and subordination. Theological as well as sociological angles on the disputes recalled in the Pauline letters accord Paul's voice pride of place, dismissing the positions of the opponents of Paul as either heretical challenges to orthodoxy, or sectarian deviance (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000:46-47).[35]

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[33] A prominent strategy on Paul's side is the gendering of his discourse, often claiming himself as the *father* of the communities, and the one who will present the community as *bride* to her husband (e.g. 2 Cor. 11:2-3). The negative overtones in gendering the community relate to the narrative of the seduction of Eve. Such a symbolic construct of gender dualism at once coheres in and undermines the other dualistic oppositions insofar as it casts all speaking subjects (Paul, the opponents, contemporary interpreters, and so on) as masculine and construe their audience (the Corinthian community, Judaism, or contemporary readers, etc.) in feminine terms as passive, immature, and gullible (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000:47).

[34] "This Western 'politics of identity' and 'rhetorics of othering' establishes identity either by comparison to the other as an inferior 'same' or by emphasizing and stereotyping difference as the otherness of the other" (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000:46). Pauline interpretation is faulted in particular for two illegitimate processes of identification which lead to a hegemonic politics of interpretation. "Malestream" interpreters identi-

The nature of discourse and its many binaries in Paul's letters, mostly theological arguments over meaning and interpretation, are often constructed as a series of dualistic religious, cultural and political discords (e.g. orthodoxy-heresy, apostle-community, honour-shame, mission-propaganda, and theology of the cross-libertine enthusiasm). The first elements of such binaries are privileged, claiming them for Paul, the early Christian church or even for Christianity today.[36] Attempts to "understand" Pauline calls for submissiveness are often castigated as nothing less than acquiescing to domination: such attempts only make them (more) palatable and therefore acceptable. But, is it an ethical reading to transpose the political sensitivities of today – a longing for egalitarian communities with democratic participation – onto Pauline texts, effectively exercising hegemonic control from a position of hermeneutical privilege based on the shaky ground of political correctness?[37] In short,

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fy themselves with (the letters of) Paul, and assume Paul to be identical with the communities he addressed (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000:44).

[35] The need to investigate Pauline rhetorics and politics of meaning is clearly important. Similarly, not to valorise and re-inscribe a (Pauline) rhetoric and politics of othering is an abiding concern. This requires biblical interpreters to avoid a hermeneutics of identification with Paul as a "master-voice" in the New Testament, through an investigation of the politics of meaning in contemporary interpretation and by holding onto an appropriate ethics of interpretation!

[36] "Such interpretive dualistic oppositions muddle and play down the linking and connecting terms such as 'audience, community, gospel' by subsuming them under either pole of the opposition rather than seeing them as a possibility for overcoming the argumentative dualism constructed by Paul" (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000:47).

[37] For example, Schüssler Fiorenza (2000:48-53) argues against Horsley's reading of 1 Cor. as a challenge to the social values and dominant relations of the Greco-Roman Empire, claiming that the "self-understanding" of the *ekklēsia* is rather to be privileged. She similarly challenges Elliott's account of the apparent advocacy of voluntary subordination in Rom. 13 as the lesser of two evils – the other being political annihilation! – questioning both the *accuracy* of Paul's representation of the historical contexts or the rhetorical situations, as well as the *adequacy* of his "theoretical" responses.

is the ambiguity of the Pauline texts dealt with accurately and responsibly when stark categories are employed by which all interpretation of Paul's letters are vanquished which does not render either a liberation-focused Paul or *ekklēsia*, or a contra-Paul reading?

Such questions remain important as religion, identity and insider-outsider notions are today often implicated in animosity and armed conflicts across the world. As the history of the inquisition and other more recent religious-based programs have shown, "belief in one's own absolute religious truth leads to intolerance and dissonance which calls forth violent means to destroy religious dissent" (Selengut 2003:84). The enemy within, the dissenters found inside the own religious tradition, are very often the first to come face to face with religious violence, in a context where guilt can play an instructive role (e.g. "they deserved what they got"; "they were looking for it"). Paul's anger, in Galatians but also elsewhere, is not so much directed at the opponents or not as harshly as towards the erstwhile faithful (e.g. Gal. 3:1), the new converts who have departed from the way of the community (cf. Johnson 1986:304,307). It appears that the danger of "otherness within" was a greater cause for concern than the threat from (those) outside the community.

The existence of powerful social structures in the (post)modern world challenges established identities, also those which are religious in nature.[38] The interesting paradox inherent to *globalisation* is that it challenges inherited particularistic cultures and identities, but also contributes to the invention (reinforcing?) of other cultures and identities as a measure of taking control over systemic power.[39] Amidst the real or perceived threat which globalisation poses to local identities, religion can often become the last sanctuary within which a particular identity is fostered.[40] Such religiously justified consciousness often proves more recalcitrant to accepting change and adjustments, and can even lead to societal conflict when the actions and aims of such communities clash with those of broader society.

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[38] In our postmodern times a politics of location that allows for a "fluid, shifting, and generally context-dependent" view of identity is called for. Rather than some essential category, identity depends on location, which again is determined by "facts of blood" – social, personal and familial alignments – and "facts of bread" – national, economic and political matters – elements which are often at violent odds with one another (Tolbert 1995:305).

[39] "Globalisation carries with it a danger of uniformity and increases the temptation to turn inwards and take refuge in all kinds of convictions – religious, ideological, cultural, or nationalistic" (Mayor 1997:2). Cf. Povinelli (1998:574) on the abuse of multiculturalism in order to maintain a new form of monoculturalism; Asad (1993: esp. 266) on the contribution of multiculturalism in Britain to "the reinforcement of centralized state power and the aestheticization of moral identities"; and Žižek (1997:29-51) seeing multiculturalism as an excuse for imposing capitalism.

Today still, an ecclesiocentric theology creates problems in relating to religious pluralism – the saved community against the unsaved world (Ariarajah 1985:69) – and, depending on the boundaries of the *ekklesia*, potentially also among different faith communities.[41] The problem is foremost however with the formulation of identity (consciousness) and the construction of community (boundaries). Marginalised groups can claim their detrimental status as both an indication of their special status before God, and as a warrant for venting anger and violence on their opponents and rest of society in general.[42] Groups who feel exposed, ignored and humiliated, with frustrated expectations are fertile feeding grounds for anger and violence (Selengut 2003:85). Assuming a special status with God, they believe they are endowed with unique rights to punish their victimisers and perpetrators to gain their rightful place in society and undo their position as persecuted and stigmatised community.[43]

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[40] More ominously, "[v]arious kinds of cultural *'cleansings'* demand of us *to place identity and otherness at the center of theological reflection* on social realities." (Volf 1996:17, emphasis in original)

[41] The danger is always there that the insider-outsider rhetoric will mutate into the call for holy war, "the earliest and most elemental expression of religious violence" (Selengut 2003:17).

[42] *Multiculturalism* often equals tension and conflict, especially where "identity with itself" is found as is the case with the identity of modern Europe with its history of colonisation, oppression and destruction of cultures and imposition of its religion "all in the name of its identity with itself" (Volf 1996). This resulted in a totalising, absolutising self-identity, therefore exclusivist and oppressive, and often violent towards the other.

[43] The link between normative writings (Scripture) and a sense of identity, or "enscripturalised identity", entails self-definition but also the identification of the other through the interpretation and appropriation of the biblical texts. Identities of the self and other are often also textually enscribed. The relation between hermeneutical processes of identity and othering, and social identity and othering is worth noting, especially against the background of a pragmatist or interpersonal hermeneutic: hermeneutical and social "otherness" is interrelated (cf. Punt 2002).

Animosity and even conflict is generated by the insider-outsider mentality. "Until interpreters uncover the complex dynamics of power, until communities of faith acknowledge the hidden structures that quietly oppress, Paul's writings will remain blunt instruments in the hands of those who would reinscribe their denial of difference" (Polaski 1999:136). Again, a particular threat is the discovery of otherness within, especially in the Christian tradition that is for a large part a scriptural community,[44] given the function of the Bible as its foundational document (Green 1985:49-69). As long as otherness in Christianity is expressed in biblical terms, the Bible is useful for identifying Others and legitimating violence against them.[45] The impact of the insider-outsider rhetoric found in the NT and the potential of such rhetoric to fuel animosity, also on the African continent, is evident.

5. Conclusion: Othering, the Bible and Africa

In our African context where the Bible has for centuries long and still continues to play such an important role, in faith communities but also in society generally, impacting on people and traditions in numerous ways, the New Testament texts' ambivalence on matters such as violence and peace cannot be ignored. This contribution was not intended to deny the Bible's contribution to peace efforts over the course of many centuries, and certainly not to claim that the biblical texts are inherently flawed when it comes to peace and its promotion.[46] Rather, my contribution explored the subtle ways in which a relationship between the Bible and violence can and – as the history of the world shows – has been sustained through these texts' reliance on Othering, the insider-outsider contrast. Such investigations are of particular importance on our continent, given high levels of violence at times couched in religious terms, at times found in countries and among people with statistically the highest number of Christians and Bible-readers. In short, it needs to be asked to what extent biblical Othering provides a (or, the) rationale for contemporary violence, whether biblical Othering is the root of violence also on our African continent? Especially when two months ago we remembered the victims of xenophobia and socio-political practices of Othering, that so violently tore Rwanda apart two decades ago. Around the same time we in SA celebrated our democracy but also remembered the terrible past of discrimination and violence – to mention only two countries with overwhelmingly Christian populations. The violence and devastating effects of conflicts in Sudan, Nigeria, CAR, and other locations on the African continent are (especially) in the forefront of our minds as we have this conference.

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[44] Christianity is largely a "scriptural community" rather than a textual community; the latter is "defined by shared devotion ... to an authoritative text or set of texts", which constitutes the community's worldviews and regulates the community's life. In a textual community, the texts form a "superstructure of agreed meaning, the textual foundation of behavior having been entirely internalized", defining the center of the community and as well as its periphery (Green 1985:53-54, 68). In a "scriptural community" the emphasis shifts to Scripture, which is often, but not exclusively, inscribed textually: the "textual" aspect is incidental to the scriptural, the "foundational" tradition (cf. Punt 1999).

[45] Scriptural communities, like textual communities are fragile, in the sense that the "ultimacy, primacy, and constitutive character" of the community's sense of Scripture can be corrupted or diminished. In scriptural communities too, "[t]he most threatening kind of otherness, [is] the otherness within." (Green 1985:69)

[46] "I would hope that an appreciation of the New Testament's dual nature by Christians and non-Christians alike might contribute to our society's movement toward a more

Neither a sociologist nor a religion studies scholar, my contribution focused on the NT texts, tendencies towards Othering, and looking at possible connections with violence. As the Pauline letters indicate, the advocacy of a new identity involved more than a new consciousness. The question for us is an apparently simple yet immensely complex one: can the NT – although the documents of a faith community – be claimed as a partner in the global search for peace and human rights, given its contribution to common human values? And if so, then the even more difficult question remains: H*ow*?

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peaceful world, particularly given the freedom we now fortunately have to arrive at our own views on these matters" (Desjardins 1997:121).

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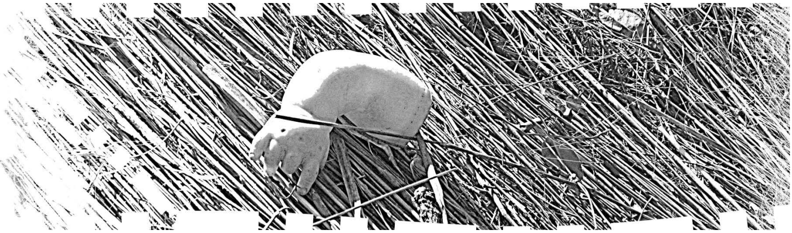

Rethinking the Role of Group Thought in Religious Violence and Extremism

Obert Bernard Mlambo & Clive Tendai Zimunya

Abstract

Religion has been cited as one of the contributing factors to violent conflicts in the world. In this chapter we ask the question: why would a free rational human being, capable of good judgement, choose an extremist position that may result in the death of thousands of innocent human beings when it is clear that there are other peaceful methods of resolving problems? To this end, we argue that when individuals become part of a religious group, they suspend reason and are led by the need to conform to group standards. In most religious groups, individuals are likely to be polarised to an extreme position based on this need to conform. If, in a given situation, the individual has an opinion that might be contrary to the group's position, the individual member suppresses their opinion so that they are not labelled a rebel or dissenter. It is interesting to note that avid followers and enemies of religion alike have acted in similarly destructive ways throughout history. People of both persuasions have at times operated in the same unbending and despotic fashion that many ascribe solely to religion. The argument advanced in this paper, therefore, is that violence is not intrinsic to religious beliefs, but it is a notion of group thought that plays a major role in leading members of religious groups to develop pugnacious tendencies.

Introduction

Throughout history there have been numerous religiously motivated conflicts. Although scholars do not agree on the extent to which religious convictions influence conflicts, it remains true that religion has had some influence on wars and conflicts from biblical times and beyond. Religious conflict can involve two or more completely different religions or can rip apart one religion from within. Religious beliefs are so deeply engrained into cultures that conflicts arise with change or when religions come into contact. Even if the differences are minor, followers of all religions can become fervent when threatened. In short, religion is considered by followers as something worth fighting for, according to history. However, possibly one of the greatest ironies is that religious conflict usually goes against the teachings of the religions involved. Imagine the strength of religion when war and violence are justifiable only when defending the faith, a faith that promotes good-will, peace, and the acceptance of others. In order to understand the origins of religious conflict, one needs to realise that every individual has a unique mind, personality, and religious experience. When these complex individuals in various geographic centres inter-associate in their religious experiences, each group evolves towards a different social expression of their religious experience. These characteristics of human nature make diversity and conflict inevitable in all social relationships. Since religion deals with the central values in human experience, religious conflict is charged with great importance and emotion. It is the contention of this paper that when individuals become part of a group, they lose a part of their individuality and it is the group's dictates and beliefs that motivate individuals to sometimes take violent courses of action. But what exactly is this violence that is referred to?

Violence: a definition

There are several definitions that can be given on violence. Violence can be understood in both physical and psychological senses. Aiming to capture the multi-dimensional nature of violence, Ray proposes that "violence refers to diverse behavioural forms and multiple levels of analysis. It may range from local and unregulated to orchestrated and controlled behaviour. Violence breaks through moral prohibitions but may be legitimated with elaborate normative systems" (2000:145). A number of distinctions are conventionally drawn in distinguishing forms of violence. Religious violence, according to David Bromley (2002:1), is variously conceptualised as an act, a process or a relationship. Violence may involve individual actions as in the personal murder of one person by another, an outsider by an insider, or an insider by an outsider. It may also involve collective action by or against a group, as in war, revolution, repression and terrorism. For Bromley (2002:1), violence may or may not explicitly invoke religious objectives. For example, an individual who is a member of a religious group may simply be the perpetrator or victim of an act of violence, with no connection to a religious purpose, or violent acts may have a specific religious, goal such as the assassination of a spiritual leader or execution for heresy.

Particularly important to this research is the definition by Rakhamim (2011:30), who defines violence as "... the attempt of an individual or group to impose its will on others through any nonverbal, verbal or physical means that will inflict psychological or physical injury". Violence may occur within the confines of a group, as in the case of a schismatic conflict; it may also occur across institutional boundaries, as when the religious group is the target of political repression or the instigator of an attack against societal institutions (Busittil & Gerrie 2004:3). Violence occurs at different levels of injuriousness, with extensive loss of life being a limiting case. Apart from the physical sense in which violence can be understood, as just described, violence can also be understood in another sense which involves the deliberate withdrawal of certain "freedoms" from individuals within a group (2004:3). For example, it is a necessary human freedom that children have to be immunised against certain diseases such as polio and measles. If a religious group, however, decides to deliberately exclude children of its members from getting such a necessity, based on religious grounds, then such an act can be considered violent. Similarly, marrying off under-aged female children to elderly male members of the religious group in the name of religion can count as violence because it also involves the deliberate exclusion of the child's freedom to choose their own life path. A parallel can be given of a husband who forbids a wife from working because of the traditional belief that a woman's place is in the kitchen. This too constitutes violence because the wife's freedom is taken away from her. It is clear, then, that studying the connection between religion and violence involves a variety of distinct issues and relationships that require invocation of very different types and levels of theoretical explanations. The focus of this research, however, is on violence that is collective in nature. This means that even if violent acts are committed by individuals, they are undertaken in the name of the movement or control agent, and the violence is legitimatised in terms of some organisational purpose.

Religion: For peace or for violence?

In the wake of recent terror attacks, Western society has jumped to an easy and, it might seem, obvious conclusion. The perpetrators of the attacks on Glasgow, London, Bali, Madrid, New York and other places have all claimed inspiration from their religion. Osama bin Laden justified the World Trade Centre attacks by quoting the Qur'an, leading to the notion that "belief causes terrorism." According to Carlson and Ebel (2012:13), if religion is the cause, many argue, surely eradicating all forms of belief would remove terror from our world. They argue that Islam today is viewed by many in the West as an aggressive religion that promotes terrorism. Sadly, it is often the case that the killing of innocent people, suicide bombings, and terrorist activities are carried out by people who claim to be Muslims; however, in reality, the responsibility for such malicious acts rests with the so-called scholars of Islam, who are gravely mistaken in their understanding of *Jihad*. They consider the unjustified killing of human beings "by the sword" as a religious duty. These scholars have deliberately misinterpreted some of the *Mutashabihat* (complex and multi-faceted) verses of the Holy Qur'an and equated true Islamic *Jihad* to rebellion for their own benefits (2012:13).

Neuroscience researcher Sam Harris, author of *Letter to a Christian Nation,* contends that religion propagates myths that are dangerous, and that the world would be far better off without them. Harris claims that only when religion is eradicated "will we stand a chance of healing the deepest and most dangerous fractures in our world." Elsewhere he writes that "intellectual honesty is better (more enlightened, more useful, less dangerous, more in touch with reality, etc.) than dogmatism. The degree to which science is committed to the former, and religion to the latter remains one of the most salient and appalling disparities to be found in human discourse" (Cited by Carlson & Ebel 2012:13).

The new U.K. edition of *Letter to a Christian Nation* features an introduction by celebrated evolutionist Richard Dawkins, with whom Harris appears to be in perfect accord. Dawkins, speaking in a British documentary titled *The Trouble with Atheism,* declared: "I think that the crimes done in the name of religion really do follow from religious faith. I don't think anyone could say the same with atheism." (Carlson & Ebel 2012:14) Religious extremism has become the main driver of terrorism in recent years, according to a 2013 Global Terrorism Index. The report recorded 18,000 deaths in 2013, a rise of 60% on the previous year. The majority (66%) of these were attributable to just four groups: Islamic State (Isis) in Iraq and Syria, Boko Haram in Nigeria, the Taliban in Afghanistan and al-Qaida. Overall there has been a five-fold increase in deaths from terrorism since the 9/11 suicide attacks (Underwood 2011:2)

The political philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1968) famously observed in his *Leviathan* that human life is "nasty, brutish and short". He and other influential philosophers have identified violence as virtually a "state of nature" that humankind has endlessly struggled to ameliorate, and with precious little success. Every credible religious or ethical system condemns murder, yet sacred texts claimed by adherents of most (if not all) religious traditions describe in often grisly detail how believers have had recourse to divinely sanctioned violent means in defence of a "people" or to spread the sacred message. For millennia, preachers and teachers of religious values have discerned in their scriptures a divine logic both for and against engaging in large-scale violence, yet confusion among religious believers remains pervasive. Scholars of religion and journalists alike have in recent years concentrated on religious fundamentalism and, after the events of 9/11, on religious terrorism: terror carried out in the name of God. Recent attacks in the West have led many people in Western Europe and North America to associate religion-related violence almost exclusively with Islam, an indication of the degree to which the so-called "war on terror" appears to be directed against the religious worldviews of Islam (Underwood 2011:3). The uncritical equation of Islam with global terrorism has created the conviction in the Muslim world that the American-led war is in fact a war against Islam.

The emergence of interest groups that espouse violence and that seem to be inspired by a particular religious ideology has tempted many observers, notably in the West, to assume an intrinsic connection between religion and violence. Hence it is common today to consider religion as a source of conflict rather than a resource for peace. Examples abound. One needs only to look, for example, at Nigeria, a country which has made international headlines with religion-related riots that have left hundreds of people dead; or at India, where many others have lost their lives in recent years in violent conflicts between Hindu and Muslim believers; or at Northern Ireland with its longstanding, bloody conflict between Protestants and Catholics, to understand the aversion that many observers feel towards religion (Underwood 2011:3). We may also think of the participation of Buddhist monks in the recent political and military struggle in Sri Lanka. Often, in such situations, political violence becomes legitimised through religion, if necessary with due reference to the founding charters of the respective religious traditions.

Colonialism is another example. In the 15th and 16th centuries, colonialism was closely connected with a Christian and missionary enterprise. This becomes particularly clear in the voyages of Prince Henry, the Navigator of Portugal (1394-1460) (Rackamim 2011:30). For him, and for many of his contemporaries, the colonial enterprise was based both on the necessity to develop European commerce and the obligation to prop-

propagate the Christian faith. These early Christian endeavours were not meant to occupy foreign lands, but rather to install commercial posts along the coasts of Africa and elsewhere. Later, colonialism adopted a more violent character, as can be seen from the invasions in the Caribbean and in Central and South America. The slave trade made things even worse. There was little Christian motivation to be found for this horrendous enterprise. The reputation of the Christian faith and ethics was tainted by the cruel violence of European and American slave merchants *vis-à-vis* their human cargo. Since the colonial masters were Christians, the link between conflict, violence and the Christian faith can easily be seen (2011:30). However, it should be noted that missionaries were often the only group of foreigners on the colonial scene who were considered to have altruistic motives for their presence, and at times played an advocacy role in respect of the local population against colonial injustice. But in general, the colonial presence of "Christian" powers in the South established or strengthened the conviction that Christian religion had more in common with violent conflict than with visions for peace.

It is evident from all this that there are two contrasting positions on religion that can be discerned. The first is that religion is a negative force and another that religion is basically good. If it is true that a widespread theoretical assumption (that religion is something good) contradicts a widespread experience (that religion is in practice usually bad), this reflects the ambiguous nature of religion itself. For religion is neither inherently peaceful, nor does it automatically or inevitably lead to conflict. From a philosophical point of view - which is different from the theological perspective of individual believers - religion is a human construct, something that has grown among human communities and serves human interests, which are in many cases conflicting ones. As such it becomes a tool in the hands of human beings that can be used for good or evil purposes, for constructive or for destructive aims and objectives. However, a point to note here is that it is through human agency that religion can go in one or the other direction. From this it can be argued that to understand the nature of religious violence, one has to understand the nature of religions as groups, comprised of individual members who advance the agendas of the group as an agent. In this sense, the findings will not be peculiar to religious groups only, but to other social, economic and political groups, for it is the understanding of this paper that all groups have the same basic structure that can make them adopt good and bad decisions.

Group Agency

Over the centuries philosophers have long questioned the passivity and nature of a group. There are certain conditions under which unified rational human beings can act over and above their individual members (List & Petit 2012). In this sense a collective of individuals can normatively be viewed as a single agent. But is it possible to have the group acting just as an individual human being would? Usually, talk of a group agent is metaphorical, giving a group characteristics that would make it seem like an individual. As Anthony Quinton puts it:

> We do, of course, speak freely of the mental properties and acts of a group in the way we do of individual people. Groups are said to have beliefs, emotions, and attitudes and to take decisions and make promises. But these ways of speaking are plainly metaphorical. To ascribe mental predicates to a group is always an indirect way of ascribing such predicates to its members...To say that the industrial working class is determined to resist anti-trade union laws is to say that all or most industrial workers are so minded (Quinton 1975, as cited in List & Petit 2012:3).

According to this “eliminativism” about group agents, there are only individual agents such as Clive, Obert and other people; when such individuals cooperate in groups, they do not bring novel agents into existence. Anything ascribed to a group, so the line goes, can be re-expressed by reference to its members. Eliminativism about group agents seems supported by a methodological conviction at the heart of much of economics and the social sciences in the 20th century (List & Petit 2012:3). This is the methodological individualism of the philosopher Karl Popper, the economist Friedrich Hayek, and many others for whom individualism became an orthodoxy. We understand individualism here as the view that good explanations of social phenomena should not postulate any social forces other than those that derive from the agency of individuals: that is, from their psychologically explicable responses to one another and to their natural and social environments. Individualism is to the social sciences and economics what physicalism is to biology and psychology. Physicalism is the view that biological explanations should not appeal to any physically or chemically mysterious life-force – a *vis vitalis*, as it was once called – and that psychological explanations should not appeal to any physically or biologically mysterious source of mentality – anything like Descartes' *res cogitans*. Similarly, individualism says that economic and social explanations should resist any appeal to psychologically mysterious social forces (2012:3). However, it is the conviction of this paper that individuals can constitute a group which can act as an agent which can function in the same way as individuals do. It is through this understanding of groups that religiously extremist, violent activities can be fully understood.

Two theories that explain the possibility of group agents can be explored, namely, the authoritarian model and the animation model. According to the authoritarian model, made popular by the 17th century political philosopher Thomas Hobbes in the *Leviathan*, a number of people become an agent when they surrender their power as individuals to an authority or leader who will act on their behalf as a sovereign (2012:3). In such groups, individuals are under the guidance and leadership of a single (or a number of) identified leader(s). This idea was carried on with varying alterations by philosophers such as John Locke and Jean Jacque Rousseau in their social contract theories. However, it is the conviction of the writers of this paper that this account of group agency is inadequate. This is because already implicit in the idea of this type of group agent is the notion of an individual, namely the leader of the group as one who acts on behalf of other humans. The group agent in question here is the whole group acting as a *collective* agent, not with one individual member acting on behalf of others. The animation theory recognises this problem and argues instead that individual members of a group should have collective attitudes, goals and desires that should animate the group into action. When individual members of such a group act, they act in a way that advances the goals of the group (2012:4). In order for this to be possible, there has to be coordination of rationality amongst individual members as well as a collective effort to ensure that the objectives of the group are met. When such groups do something, individual members do execute the action but the group as a collective. It is our conviction that religious groups of the extremist type are of this nature. Now that this brief outline has been given, it is necessary to look at how individuals in such groups can relate to the group, considering that these individual members are individuals in themselves, with their own autonomous lives to lead that may be separate from that of the group as a collective agent. Several theories will be looked at to this end, specifically the group polarisation theory, the social comparison theory, the groupthink theory, as well as the self-categorisation theory.

The group polarisation thesis

It is a general observation that often, human beings behave in a way that resembles other people within their group setting. Social norms are put in place by the founders of a society or group that are to act as a guide as to how the individual members of that group ought to behave and engage with one another. As Sustein (1999:15) puts it, people frequently do what they do because of what they think (relevant) others do. Thus, for example, teenage girls who see that other teenagers are having babies are more likely to become pregnant themselves; littering and non-littering behaviour appears to be contagious; the same is true of violent crime; a good way to increase the incidence of tax compliance is to inform people of high levels of voluntary tax compliance; and students are less likely to engage in binge drinking if they think that most of their fellow students do not engage in binge drinking, so much so that disclosure of this fact is one of the few successful methods of reducing binge drinking on college campuses. However, group homogeneity can be quite damaging to good deliberation. A lesson to be learnt is that particular forms of homogeneity can be breeding grounds for unjustified extremism, even fanaticism.

According to Margaret Gilbert (2009:33), group polarisation refers to the tendency of group members to increase the extremity of their position following discussion of a relevant issue. According to the social comparison theory, actors in a group initially espouse opinions that conform to others for fear of being labelled a deviant and that they may even leapfrog over the more extreme opinions of others. The moderates are motivated to adopt more extreme positions, while there is no corresponding pressure on extreme members to moderate their opinions. The net result is an overall polarisation of opinions, that is, a choice shift. The group erodes individual members' opinions and reinforces the normative attraction of adopting extreme positions. When it comes to religious groups, individual members might hold a less extreme alternative to solving a problem which can avoid lots of conflicts. However, when they get to the group level, if the generality of the group members are in favour of a more extreme position, the individual members of such groups will be polarised into adopting the more extreme position so that they get recognition as part of the group. Any deviance is viewed as an attack on the group. If, for example, a member of the Boko Haram group sees that kidnapping innocent girls for the sake of a group or, in this case, a religious cause, is not a moral thing to do, they cannot express this position because of fear of being labelled a dissenter. They would rather take the more extreme position as a way of showing their allegiance to the group and as a way of advancing the group agent's goals.

Another closely related theory is the self-categorisation theory by writers such as Mackie and Turner (1984). According to this theory, individual members of a group conform to an extreme norm or prototypical position of the group. Polarisation occurs after group members have defined the social identity of the group and identified with the group. Given these identifications, group members modify their opinions in the direction of the normative opinion. According to McGarty and others (1992:11), the basic argument of this theory is that group members conform to a shared in-group norm, and that this position is the most prototypical position of the group. The prototypicality of in-group members is defined by means of the meta-contrast principle: the less a person differs from in-group members and the more he or she differs from out-group members, the more representative he or she is of the in-group. Thus the prototype is the position which best defines what the group has in common in contrast to other relevant out-groups. The most consensual, normative position is understood both as a defining categorical property of the group prior to interaction and as the position on which members converge through social interaction (McCarty et al. 1992:12). Proponents of this theory argue that group members modify their opinions to reduce discrepancy between their initial opinions and a group norm because they identify with the group norm and because they find members' opinions more or less persuasive, depending on the extent to which they represent the group norm. For example, if individual members of a religious group that does not endorse child immunisation feel that their children should get immunised at the hospital, because this is inconsistent with the in-group norm of not immunising, they are more likely not to get their children immunised.

The groupthink theory

Groupthink is a psychological phenomenon that occurs within a group of people, in which the desire for harmony or conformity in the group results in an irrational or dysfunctional decision-making outcome (Gilbert 2009:36). Group members try to minimise conflict and reach a consensus decision without critical evaluation of alternative viewpoints, by actively suppressing dissenting viewpoints, and by isolating themselves from outside influences. Emphasis is placed more on group unanimity at the expense of critical thinking. In a groupthink situation, group members squash dissent, exert pressure to conform, suppress information from outside the group, and selectively focus on information that agrees with the group's point of view.

Groupthink is more likely to occur when groups have certain characteristics:

- High cohesiveness. Group cohesiveness is the strength of the liking and commitment group members have toward each other and to the group.
- Isolation from outside influences.
- A strong leader.
- The intent to reach a major decision (2009:36).

It now is apparent that there are several reasons why polarisation occurs. The first (and most important) involves the exchange of information. Fortunately, most people do listen to the arguments made by other people. In any group whose members have a definite initial inclination, the views of most people in the group will be skewed in the direction of that inclination. Suppose that the majority position within a group is that a defendant should be convicted, that global warming is a serious problem, or that the incumbent president is doing a terrific job; as a statistical matter, the arguments favouring that initial position will be more than the arguments pointing in the other direction. As a result of hearing the various arguments, deliberation will lead people toward a more extreme point in line with what group members initially believed. Through this process, many minds can polarise, and in exactly the same direction.

The second explanation more relevant to this discussion involves social comparison. People usually want to be perceived favourably by other group members. Sometimes people's publicly stated views are, to a greater or lesser extent, a function of how they want to present themselves and want to be perceived. Once they hear what others believe, some will adjust their positions at least slightly in the direction of the dominant position (Sustein 1999:17). In a left-wing group, for example, those who lean to the left will be more acceptable, and for this reason they might well end up leaning somewhat more to the left. So too on a jury for example: most people do not want to be perceived as silly or stupid, so if eleven people are inclined to convict a defendant, the twelfth will usually go along. The third explanation of group polarisation stresses the close links among confidence, extremism, and corroboration by others (Rovane 2014:5); as people gain confidence, they usually become more extreme in their beliefs. Agreement from others tends to increase confidence, and for this reason like-minded people, having deliberated with one another, become more extreme as they become less tentative. In many contexts, people's opinions become more extreme simply because their views have been corroborated, and because they become more confident after learning that others share their views. So, too, on a criminal jury: if ten people want to convict a defendant, and two others are unsure, their pro-conviction inclinations will be strengthened after polarisation.

Significance to religious groups

The question now becomes, is religion inherently violent or is there something about being in a religious group that induces tendencies of following the group? The group polarisation theory is most important to this research and serves as proof that religion is not the main culprit in causing violence throughout the world today. It is the contention of this paper that the extremist groups in question are not so much influenced by religion, but instead by the nature of group agency which tends to make people lose their individuality in support of the goals and agendas of the group as a whole. In Zimbabwe on the 30th of May 2014, for example, nine police officers, two Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) staffers and one Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe (ACCZ) official were seriously injured and taken to hospital after members of an apostolic sect had been informed that the church had been banned. Members of the ACCZ and the police had gone to the shrine which is led by one Madzibaba Ishmael to enforce the ban after reports of human rights abuses in the church involving the denial of children's educational rights and allegations of fathers being allowed to inspect their daughters' virginity using their fingers, among other issues (Matenga 2014). Executive president of the ACCZ, Bishop Johannes Ndanga, who had made a pronouncement of the ban of the church, said that the association had effectively banned the church for engaging in human rights abuses and engaging in "satanic" acts. They would watch their female children bathing and fathers would use their fingers to test their daughters' virginity (Matenga 2014). There was rampant physical, mental, emotional, psychological as well as economic violence against the girl child involved, and women in the church. Pregnant women were not allowed to attend either ante-natal and or post-natal care from trained medical personnel as this was regarded as satanic by the group. Married women, who were not virgins at the time of marriage, were also ordered to secure virgin girls for their husbands as compensation. The church further operated on strict rules and told their members not to use cellphones, even at work, and not to watch television. This was to guarantee them entry into what is termed “Canaan”, and those who violated the orders were threatened with death (Mbiba 2014).

When Ndanga had finished his statement, the church members started to sing their church songs whilst advancing towards the officials. The church members vented their anger on them, threatening to kill anyone they thought was against their church doctrines. A popular sentiment of the public concerning the issue was raised by the National police spokesperson Senior Assistant Commissioner, Charity Charamba, when she said “We do not expect this from church members. This is lawlessness which is unacceptable. More arrests will be made and we will charge them with assault and malicious damage to property. We also expect people to respect law enforcers and this is uncalled for.” (Matenga 2014) Stones and the shepherds’ staff flew from the scene and some victims could be seen soaked in blood. The members of the sect could be heard shouting, ordering others to kill, whilst claiming they were fighting a “holy war”.

From this example, it is now evident that when people become part of groups they lose a greater part of themselves and are led more in their decisions by the dictates of the group. It is true that religious motivations have a role to play in influencing the decisions religious group members make, but at the core, it is group thought that polarises people to take extreme positions. In this case, religious violence was taking place within the church. Young girls being married off and deprived of education and children (as well as adults) not being allowed access to modern health care. It is certainly possible that group members could have thought otherwise and break free from this but, because they were so overwhelmed by the group thought phenomenon just described in this chapter, they could not do otherwise. Reason is suspended for the sake of group coherence. The same is true for the attacks on the police when they and other officials had tried to stop such ‘violent’ acts against church members. The majority of the church members, because of the group thought phenomenon, could not see their acts against their members as violent or abusive. They saw their group dictates as good causes to fight for until the end. Accepting that the church be closed on "violence-against-their-own-members"-grounds was contrary to the group agent's goals. Also, those rational members who could easily envisage an alternative way of solving the dispute could not openly air their opinions for fear of being labelled rebellious. Perhaps they could have been attacked too, had they voiced alternative peaceful ways of resolving the dispute. Instead, they were polarised into taking the extreme position of brutally attacking the police, fully aware of the fact that these were state police and that they had the capacity to arrest all church members or even retaliate in a more violent way. It is not the case that this information was not in the minds of the perpetrators, or that it was their religious beliefs that led them to become violent. It is because of the phenomenon of group thought.

Conclusion

It has been observed in this paper that religion is neither inherently violent nor inherently peaceful. Religion, according to our findings, is in itself neutral but it is the individuals who comprise the religion as group agents who have the ability to force its incline towards either violent or peaceful extremes. Members of a religious group come to form a single group agent and the interests of the group override those of the individual members. Confronted with a situation, rational human beings will suspend the kind of reasoning whilst acting what they will normally do when they are on their own (as opposed to being part of the group) and, for fear of being labelled an outcast or a rebel, such individuals will most likely be polarised towards adopting an extreme position which may be violent in nature. On closer analysis, then, religion is not necessarily to be blamed for the violence involving religious people. It is the nature of any group to polarise its members into taking extreme positions, be they religious groups or not.

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Compassion – A Uniting and Binding Ethos for Pluralistic Africa

Theophilus Ugbedeojo Ejeh

Abstract

Johann Baptist Metz, a German theologian has in the modern times dealt extensively on the concept of compassion which for him is closely related to the concept of suffering and particularly, violence. Compassion, according to him, is the right ethos for a pluralistic society with different religions and ideologies, and is particularly suited as the key word for the World Christian Programme in the age of globalisation. It is an ethos and a sort of principle that is common to the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam; (Metz 2000b:2). Compassion cuts across nations, races, cultural and religious milieus and unites all people created in the image and likeness of God, who is in himself compassion incarnated in the person of Jesus Christ. This has to do with the 'thought-about-God' that is elementarily a 'thought-of-piece' and not of violence (Metz 2000a:10). It is along the same pattern of thought of Metz that I propose in this paper 'compassion' as a mandate for Africa in the face of many challenges of our time, particularly that of violence.

Introduction

When people become violent, there is a particular and special virtue that they lack, and that is 'compassion'. Violence against the other shows a negation of compassion. There have been many cases of violence in Africa in recent times. Deserving particular mention is the present wave of terrorism that is sweeping across Africa by Al-Shabaab in Somalia and Boko Haram in Nigeria. These groups came into existence through political conflicts that are ethnically and religiously oriented. It is in view of this, that this paper has the goal of establishing an ethos that is uniting, binding, practical and violence eradicating.

The definition of the concept of compassion will be attempted first, followed by the exposition of the biblical background that culminates in a hermeutical approach of the so-called fourth Servant Song (Isa. 52:13-53:12) that is considered as containing a practical example of compassion which has its *apogee* in the sacrifice and death of Christ. Following this, the "earthing" of the concept of compassion in relation to human history of violence and suffering will be dealt with. Here the understanding of Metz of this concept will be exposed and evaluated as a mandate for every human person.

The last stage of this paper will deal with the concept of compassion as it concerns Africa as a continent; this will begin with the narration of the sacrifice of Inikpi *Ọma Ufẹdọ Baba* (Inikpi the beloved child of the father) of the Igala people of Nigeria as an example of compassion. In conclusion, a compassion hermeneutics for Africa with practical suggestions that could aid the reduction of violence in Africa as a whole will be proposed.

The concept “Compassion”

The word “compassion” has its origin in the Latin word *compassio* which comes from *compati* - to suffer with or for (Soanes 2000:216). It can in a way be seen as a form of shared suffering and is most often understood as the desire to alleviate or reduce the suffering of one’s neighbour through some special act of kindness.

In the acts of compassion, the person involved attempts to become part of the suffering of the victim with the purpose of getting the victim out of the suffering; this often includes the making of a sacrifice which sometimes might even involve one’s own life (Drago 2001:43).

Another description of compassion comes from the Latin *misericordia*, which has to do with the feelings that one has in the heart for the suffering of the other (Georges 1879:1253).

The word ‘mercy’ is often used in the Bible, and also in normal conversation in place of the word ‘compassion’. Mercy is, however, mostly used where the forgiving aspect of compassion is in question. There are many examples in the Bible where God had to forgive the Israelites their offenses. He, instead of punishing them, relented and forgave them (cf. Jer. 33:1ff.; 2 Kgs 20:1-11).

Another concept that is sometimes used for compassion is ‘pity’. It is defined as “a feeling of sorrow and compassion caused by the sufferings of others” (Soanes 2000:861). In spite of this definition, ‘pity’ does not really give a true meaning of compassion, since its usage pertains more to feeling than to action. More often than not it remains at the passive level. It should be mentioned that people would normally not like to be the object of “pity”; not many people would like to be pitied (Koffler 2001:21).

The Hebrew word for compassion is רחם. This connotes the concepts of pity, mercy, sympathy, tenderness, and womb (Gesenius 1962:755). The concept of “womb” here is connected to the concept of ‘maternal bossom’. In this sense, it represents the feeling of love that the mother, father, brothers and sisters have for one another in the family.

It is worth noting that the concept of compassion differs from other forms of helpful or humane acts in that it refers primarily to the alleviation of suffering. Other acts of kindness which primarily seek to give benefit, rather than to relieve existing suffering, are better classified as altruistic acts. Compassion, however, may also be seen as a kind of altruism, but in the sense that the action carried out seeks to benefit others by way of reducing their suffering.

Compassion as God’s attribute

When we talk about compassion in the biblical sense, it is mostly about the loving acts of God towards his people (Koffler 2001:179); this Godly compassion provides a measure for human behaviour (Wuthnow 1991:122). The initiative mostly comes from God and is directed towards the human person. This has its background in the Old Testament in the creation account, where God says: “Let us make man in our image, in the likeness of ourselves” (Gen. 1:26). In this manner, God identified with the human person from the beginning by making him in his own image and likeness and giving him a share of his powers. This actually forms the basis of God’s love and compassion to the human person. Though God is transcendent in nature, he constantly initiates relationship with the human person and makes himself part of the human life and destiny (cf. Is. 57:15-19). C. Drago (2001:23) buttresses this by saying:

> “The God of the Bible is not the unchanging Absolute and Unmoved Mover of philosophy. Yahweh, God of the Bible, readily identifies himself with the misery of human beings (Jer. 31:20; Is. 63:15). Yahweh is merciful, tenderhearted, slow to anger, loving and universally kind. His tenderness embraces all his creation (Ps. 145:9); his indignation does not last for ever; his resentment exists a short time only. He never illtreats us, never punishes us as our sins deserve (Ps. 103:8-10).”

God's compassion is mostly presented in the Old Testament in terms that create a sense of a family within which God and his people are united.

– God's compassion in familial terms

As earlier observed, the Hebrew word for compassion is רחם which, among other meanings, signifies "womb". In this sense, it represents the love and solidarity that people from the same womb have for the other (Buttrick 1962:352). God is, in this sense, sometimes presented, particularly in the Old Testament, as Father or Mother: "As tenderly as a father treats his children, so Yahweh treats those who fear him." (Ps. 103:13) Israel as a people depends solely on this love of God, who is seen as a father. This is expressed in the following prayer of the people:

> "Look down from heaven and see from your holy and glorious dwelling. Where is your zeal and your might? Are your deepest feelings, your mercy to me, to be restrained? After all, you are our father." (Is. 63:15)

It is in this familial relationship that God lives, relates and deals with his people; this is further expressed in the following passage in which God is presented as calling the tribe of Ephraim as his son:

> "Is Ephraim, then, so dear a son to me, a child so favoured, that whenever I mention him I remember him lovingly still? That is why I yearn for him, why I must take pity on him, Yahweh declares." (Jer. 31:20)

This declaration of God gives Israel as a people a strong hope and assurance that he can never desert them in any situation of life. The certainty to this is further granted in the following passage: "Can a woman forget her baby at the breast, feel no pity for the child she has borne? Even if these were to forget, I shall not forget you." (Isa. 49:15)

The compassionate love of God for his people is also expressed elsewhere in a language that portrays marriage. God is even presented as the husband of his people who loves them forever. "Do not fear, you will not be put to shame again, do not worry, you will not be disgraced again; for you will forget the shame of your youth and no longer remember the dishonour of your widowhood. For your creator is your husband, Yahweh Sabaoth is his name; ..." (Is. 54:4f.)

God's compassion, like his faithfulness, his strong love and righteousness, shows his constant respect for his covenant with his chosen ones (cf. Ex. 33:19; Is. 63:9).

This God-Israel relationship is clearly explained by Benedict XVI as follows:

> "The Prophets, particularly Hosea and Ezekiel, described God's compassion for his people using boldly erotic images. God's relationship with Israel is described using the metaphors of betrothal and marriage; idolatry is thus adultery and prostitution [...]. The history of the love-relationship between God and Israel consists, at the deepest level, in the fact that he gives her the *Torah*, thereby opening Israel's eyes to man's true nature and showing her the path leading to true humanism." (Benedict XVI 2005: No. 9)

There is a strong tone of love in the choice of words by God in his expression of his love for his people; this unlimited love is expressed thus:

"For the mountains may go away and the hills may totter, but my faithful love will never leave you, my covenant of peace will never totter, says Yahweh who takes pity on you" (Isa. 54:10). It is this that leads God to always forgive his people, forget their past and to provide a future for them.

The compassionate love of God reaches its peak in his readiness to make sacrifices for the human beings whom he has created. Such sacrifice was made by him for his suffering people through the suffering of his Servant presented in the so-called Fourth Servant Song of Isaiah.

– *The Servant of Yahweh in Isa. 52:13-53:12. A figure of God's compassion*

In Deutero-Isaiah, in the so called "Fourth Servant Song" (Is. 52:13-53:12), we find an example of one who makes a sacrifice on account of his people, so that they could be free of slavery which is a form of violence against the human person. This person suffers violence in order to liberate others from violence. I particularly wish to dwell on the following verses of the text:

> "Surely, it was our suffering (*guilt*) he was bearing and our pain (*sickness*) he was carrying ..." (53:4)
> "But he was pierced for our transgression, and was crushed on account of our sin (guilt). The chasetisement upon him was for our healing (wholeness) and by his wound (spell) healing became ours." (53:5)

These verses clearly indicate that someone is bearing the suffering of others. This person is motivated by compassion to bring the sacrifice of his life for a group of people. There is actually no consensus in the history of scripture scholarship as to who this person is, and for whom he made the sacrifice. There are, however, mainly four types of interpretation concerning this person who is popularly called the Servant of Yahweh. We have the individual historical theory, the autobiographic theory, the messianic theory and the collective theory. These theories and interpretations are scattered in rabbinic and Old Testament writings, and some scholarship work of the modern time. From all of these, only the New Testament displays an almost uniform interpretation that regards the Servant as the person of Christ (cf. Mt. 8:17).

Though the full range of the forms of interpretation of the text is not of major concern in this paper, I, however, briefly submit the opinion that the Servant of concern in the Fourth Servant Song is one who was among the exiled Israelites in Babylon at around 587 BC, and who fought, most probably through prophetic messages, for the liberation of his people from slavery (Ejeh 2010:83f.).

The Servant as part of the Jewish people in exile experienced a call and had a sense of responsibility for the liberation of his people with whom he had a blood tie (רחם). He was moved to solidarity with his people, not just in the sense of feelings, but also on the level of active participation in their suffering (*Compati* – to suffer with or for). In his participation, he made the suffering of his people his own. This is expressed in the conviction of the people (the so-called "we") in whose mouth the author of the text puts the following words:

> "Surely, it was our suffering (guilt) he was bearing and our pain (sickness) he was carrying ... he was pierced for our transgression, and was crushed on account of our sin (guilt). The chastisement upon him was for our healing (wholeness) and by his wound (spell) healing became ours." (Is. 53:4.5).

It is from this perspective that a re-reading of the Fourth Servant Song is done with regard to our topic of "The Bible and Violence in Africa". Through the servant's compassionate act of suffering, he liberated his people from any further form of violence that they may have suffered as prisoners of war in exile.

It is important to mention here that the Servant of Yahweh who was a definite historical figure that had a mission for the people of his own time, was, in my opinion, a prefiguration of the person of Christ, who sacrificed his life for the liberation of humankind from all evil (Ejeh: 251). This is in accordance with the opinion of Thomas Aquinas who, reflecting on the Psalms, expressed the notion that prophecies are uttered on some occasions in the context of present life situations which are not principally meant, but must instead be seen as prefiguration of events of the future (Thomas Aquinas, *Super Psalmos: Prooemium*).

– Jesus Christ: The revelation of God's compassion

The God of the Old Testament, who showed himself as a compassionate and loving Father to his children, makes his love more concrete in the life of the human person through the incarnation of his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ took the form of a human person to identify with and go with him or her along the difficult road of life. It is in light of this that Benedict XVI says:

> "In the Old Testament, the novelty of the Bible did not consist merely in abstract notions but in God's unpredictable and in some sense unprecedented activity. This divine activity now takes on dramatic form when, in Jesus Christ, it is God himself who goes in search of the 'stray sheep', a suffering and lost humanity. When Jesus speaks in his parables of the shepherd who goes after the lost sheep, of the woman who looks for the lost coin, of the father who goes to meet and embrace his prodigal son, these are no mere words: they constitute an explanation of his very being and activity. His death on the Cross is the culmination of that turning of God against himself in which he gives himself in order to raise man up and save him. This is love in its most radical form." (Benedict XVI:12)

In his entire life, ministry, teaching, passion, death and resurrection, we see Christ as one who intends to liberate humankind from every form of violence, and most particularly, from eternal violence against the soul. In his teachings, he especially showed that compassion (*compati* – to suffer with or for) is the way of salvation and liberation for humankind. When he spoke about his readiness to suffer and to die for the salvation of humankind and Peter challenged him, he rebuked him strongly, for the path that the Father had marked out for him is that of compassion – suffering with and for the human person (cf. Mt. 16:22f.). It is the same path that he has called his followers to take. This he clearly expresses in the following: "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." (Mt. 16:24)

Johann Baptist Metz: Compassion as a mandate

In this part, I shall dwell particularly on the concept of c*ompassion* as understood by Johann Baptist Metz. For Metz, compassion is closely related to the concept of suffering and more particularly violence (Metz 2000a:13).

Metz's choice of the word "Compassion" in his theology is influenced by his personal experiences of violence at the end of the Second World War in the barracks of Würzburg in Germany. He was sixteen years old when he was taken from school and recruited into the Army. He found himself in the company of over hundred boys. One evening the leader of his company sent him to a battalion command post and on his return the next day, he discovered that his colleagues in his company were all dead. He was terribly touched by this and had crises with his Catholic faith. The constant cry of suffering which he experienced led him to question the meaning of suffering in human life.

Auschwitz also plays an extremely important role in the theology of Metz. Auschwitz for him is a point in history which theology cannot do without. It is an experience that makes many forms of theology look empty and blind. Metz asks himself whether God can still be a topic of theology in the light of such catastrophes. For him, Auschwitz can be seen as a 'negative myth' in theology, a real experience of the destruction of human life. His question in theology, therefore, is: Could there still be a factual theology after all these experiences? (Metz 1992:81)

Metz's question whether there can be a real theology after all the horrible experiences of the destruction of human life in Auschwitz, is also relevant for theology in Africa today. One can ask a similar question in the context of the African slave trade that dealt a deadly blow to Africa as a continent: Can there be any serious theology with the memory of the horrible wastage of human life that took place in the 17th and 18th centuries when the need for workers on the plantations of America led to the rapid growth of the slave trade? Shagbaor Francis Wegh, a Nigerian theologian and anthropologist describes what took place during this period:

> "A triangular route came into being, ships would leave Europe with tradable items, exchange them on the African coast for captives, and sell the slaves in the American Island for sugar and tobacco, to be sold in Europe. Not only did Africa lose millions of young men and women to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, with serious consequences for her socio-cultural and economic development, the experience of slavery, and colonialism inflicted great wounds on her ego and human dignity." (Wegh 1997:94)

In the face of such a horrible human disaster that shook the continent of Africa, it is also proper to ask the question: Should theologians, particularly African theologians, continue to do theology with the pretention that there was no such catastrophe which is a violence that caused wounds that may also be part of the cause of some forms of violence that exist in Africa today, and probabaly elsewhere in the world? A similar question is important in the face of ever persistent violence in African countries: Can there be an authentic theology in the face of the terrible destruction of life caused by some radical religious groups like Boko Haram of Nigeria?

Metz's intention is that questions on suffering and violence must become part of theology, even though the answers may not be fully given. For him, it is of particular importance that suffering as phenomenon should not be forgotten (Metz 1992:82). This accounts for his interest in the theology of theodicy which pertains to the questioning of the existence of an Almighty God in the presence of sufferings and horrors in the world.

Metz'a theology of theodicy is, eventually, a product of two reactions: Firstly, to the question of how such a catastrophe in Auschwitz could take place in the middle of christianised Europe without any great opposition, and secondly, why theologians of the generation after Auschwitz could keep quiet over such a happening in their discussions in theology (Metz in: Oelmüller 1990:103). For Metz, theology after Auschwitz must include a definite focus on the remembrance of the suffering of the millions of Jews that lost their lives. Nothing should take this memory out of the minds of contemporary theologians. Contemporary African theologians must, likewise, make the violence that their people suffer a topic of their discussion and discipline.

According to Metz, what one does in the 'theodicy case' in theology is not to justify God in the face of the suffering and violence in the world, but it has to do with 'how to talk about God' in relation to them (Metz 1992:82). It is all about saying how God relates to the human person in his experience of suffering and violence. For him, God does not overlook the suffering of the human person; instead, he partakes in their suffering. For this reason Metz says that theology must not just be about the Easter-mystery but also about the paschal mystery; what he calls the *Karsamstagmysterium* – The Mystery of Holy Saturday (Metz 1992:83). He wants to point out that God is the one who suffered in his son Jesus Christ with and for humankind that was in need of a saviour. This is the key to the theology of Metz on the concept of compassion. God, for him, is the God of compassion who has his eyes fixed with concern on the suffering of the human person. Metz refers to the everlasting love of God for his people as the *Allmacht Gottes* - 'God's omnipotence'.

The *Allmacht Gottes* in the theology of Metz addresses the fact that God has concern for the suffering of the human person. He is touched by the past and the present suffering of his people and shows his righteousness by responding to their cry (Metz 1992:91). Here Metz alludes to the compassionate love of God that never fails, which is victorious in the end, and stronger than death. Any discussion about God in theology, according to Metz, must consider this aspect of God. When it does not, this theology has not yet reached sensibility.

The omnipotence of God, for Metz, primarily concerns the promised love of God to his children (cf. Ezek. 20:41f.). This love which takes into account the past and the present suffering of the human person, culminated in the coming of Christ into the world as the Messiah. It is God himself who came in his beloved Son to show his unending and never-failing love for humanity. The unfailing love of God, which is embedded in his remembrance of his people's suffering, Metz calls *Gottesgedächtnis* – "God's memory". This, for Metz, is the solution for the conflicts in the world caused by cultural and religious differences that exist between people. This particularly has to do with the remembrance of human suffering. By remembrance he means that the human person should not forget the suffering of the past generation and that of the present; and this should be a motivation to a compassionate approach to life by way of the option for the eradication of the present suffering, which is only achievable through personal suffering and sacrifice, in accordance with the example of God who has always, through his remembrance of human suffering, initiated ways of deliverance for humankind (Metz 2000a:10f.).

Gottesgedächtnis concerns God who engages with the human person in history; he is part of what the human person experiences. He accompanies him or her in all encounters. In Metz's view God identifies himself with every human person at all times. According to him, this idea of God should basically be seen as the unifying principle that brings peace among the people of different cultures and religions. God is the God of all. And it is his will to unite all people in love. This is a principle which can be universalised in the sense that all people should be made to realise that they have the duty to have compassion and love for their fellow human beings, taking the example from God (*ibid.*). They should be compassionate like God is compassionate (Lk. 6:36), for all have their origin from God who is compassionate.

Inikpi *Ọma Ufẹdọ Baba* (Inikpi the beloved child of the father): an African example of compassion

Inikpi *Ọma Ufẹdọ Baba* (Inikpi, the beloved child of the father) is a well-known figure and legend among the Igala people who are over two million in population and live in Kogi State, in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria in West Africa.

Inikpi was a daughter of one of the Attas (the Igala King and Father) of the past whose name is *Ayegba Ọm' Idoko*. Inikpi is reputed to have been very beautiful and of a noble disposition. Her father loved her more than anything else in the world, and she him. During the reign of her father there was a move by a neighbouring tribe to destroy the Igala people. The Atta made some traditional consultations and was told that the only remedy and path to victory will be the sacrifice of his beautiful daughter.

When the father heard this he was overcome with grief, and appeared prepared to lose all that he had rather than to carry out the sacrifice. Inikpi, however, found out what was happening and is said to have gone to her father nine times to present herself for the sacrifice in compassion for her father and the entire Igala tribe (Boston 1964:23f.).

Although the sacrifice of Inikpi has no moral justification, there is a general acceptance among the Igala people that Inikpi had made a meaningful contribution to the existence of their race today. It is a common story among the people that she offered her life to avert the danger of war that was to extinguish the Igala ethnic group. In view of this, Fidelis Egbunu opines that Inikpi offered her life as "a lamb of sacrifice to take off the shame and disgrace that would have befallen the Igala race" (Egbunu 2001:20). As a result of her sacrifice, Inikpki has been given a special position in the history of the Igala people. She represents a symbol of life, compassion and unity for the people. She is particularly seen as a moral authority, and with this in mind, Idegu, an Igala historian, has put the following words in her mouth in his play "The Legendary Inikpi":

> "My people, my people the Igala people. I am Inikpi Ọma Ufẹdọ Baba calling. Listen to the voice of one who died to give you life. I am not happy. My soul is troubled, the ancestors and gods of the land are aggrieved. Is this the same land I died to redeem. Are you the same people for whose sake I suffered to death? Over here where I talk from, we are grieved. Why is there division in the land I died to unite.[sic] Tell me, why these unnecessary envy, jealousy and hatred between my people for whose peace I suffered untold pains? The tradition during which I gave my life for people was a positive one. A selfless one. A loving, saving one. What do you have

> today oh yea leaders of the people‘s tradition. Uphold tradition that preaches love, unity and togetherness so that my soul shall have its deserved rest. You have been warned, those of you who desecrate the land. Go home and keep records straight. Re-adjust your selfish priorities at the expense of my people, else it will remain thus, if I had known it will be like this, I would never have died. Go home I say again and put records straight. Then and only then shall I remain contented and wholly satisfied.”

Here Inikpi speaks as an ancestress who is interested in the people’s welfare. Even in the world of the dead (*ef’ọjegwu*) she still has concern for the people and warns them against anything that is detrimental to peace and growth. For her, the selfless way of life is the right one and not a kind of life dominated by egoism and pleasure. Her words in the play warn against all sorts of rivalry that exist among the people because of their lost sense of love and compassion for one another. Even in the world of the dead, Inikpi remains a voice that calls for love, compassion and selfless sacrifice for others.

Inikpi is generally seen by the people as the goddess of fertility. Sacrifices for showers of rain and an abundant harvest are made to her in times of drought (Etu1999:158). Inikpi by this means has attained the status of a great ancestress of the Igala people and is deeply venerated by them. Having made the sacrifice of her life for the deliverance of the people of her time from the hands of their enemies, she remains a perfect example of a selfless and compassionate life, particularly for the present generation of Igala people and, in a wider sense, for the whole of Nigeria and Africa at large.

Conclusion

Applying the concept of Compassion to the problem of violence in Africa, I submit that in general, there is a lack of a sense of responsibility for the alleviation of the suffering of the other in Africa. The case of Nigeria is of particular interest. This is alleged in disregard of the fact that Africans are generally united as communities. Even though this may be the case, a lack of commitment, responsibility and solidarity towards the general society exists, even on the part of those in government. This is evident from the underdevelopment of many parts of Africa.

The lack of commitment on the part of the people for the larger African society may arise from the fact that Africans have many ethnic groups and clans. Persons seem to stick to their own particular tribe, clan and family, and neglect the rest. Politicians are majorly affected by this problem. We have, for example, the problem of regional and clan politics in Nigeria which has caused a lot of misunderstanding among the people.

Nigeria has at the moment of this writing a serious challenge with the terrorist group called *Boko Haram* which is a dangerous and merciless organisation whose name means "western education or book is forbidden/a sin". One can see that the terrorising activities of this group are at its highest as power remains in the hands of a southern president. This group is devoid of 'compassion', as defined and discussed. Their aim is to frustrate democracy and to spread their Islamic convictions. Those who are members of this group are mainly the uneducated, half-educated and jobless youths who were mostly denied of proper basic education by the elites. Like J. P. Pham, a political scientist rightly observes,

> "Frustrations with living conditions are keenly felt in northern Nigeria, where the proportion of the population living below the poverty level is between two and three times the rate in the south. Dramatic action is needed to end corruption, build a more inclusive government, alleviate poverty and lack of access to health care and expand access to education." (Pham 2012:7)

It is clear that the few educated elites of the northern part of Nigeria who have been part of the government have been quite selfish and egoistic, taking less care in educating their youth properly, thereby creating a breeding ground for radical ideologies such as that of *Boko Haram* (Oyibo 2014:68).

In light of this, I suggest a compassion educational programme for Nigeria and for all Africa which has the aim of educating and giving the people (young people in particular) the orientation of seeing one another as one and to have respect for the other; the compassion programme should be introduced into the curriculum of the pupils and students (Metz 2000a:18). With this approach children should be taught from the beginning, particularly to acknowledge one another in their humanity and take responsibility of others who are in need. Gerd J.J. Biesta, a philosopher of education, says in view of this:

> "what makes us into a unique, singular being – me, and not you – is precisely to be found in the way in which we respond to the other, to the question of the other, and to the other as question" (Biesta 2006:27-28).

The sense of acknowledgement and concern for the other, their quest and needs should be extended not only to one's family, clan and religion, but to every human person created in the image and likeness of God. One is, in view of this, particularly overwhelmed to meet, for example, primary school pupils in Germany, who are interested in knowing about what happens to poor children in other countries of the world. Some of these pupils have taken up responsibility for their poor counterparts in other parts of the world. Children of Heideweg Schule in Kassel, Germany, have, for example, started a sponsorship drive for some poor pupils of St. Thomas Moore Primary and Nursery School Anyigba in Nigeria. This and other achievements earned them acknowledgement by UNICEF.

With the orientation towards compassion, school children will grow up with a sense of responsibility for their fellow human beings and learn to always encourage life and development and avoid violence. Education and learning in Africa should in this regard be purpose driven. The studies of mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, etc. should be done with the focus of helping to alleviate the suffering of others in order to better African societies and environment.

Lothar Kuld, a German theologian has, in view of the compassion programme for schools, suggested that pupils and students should be made to do practicals in some social institutions where they encounter people with diverse problems that will challenge the application of what they have learnt (Kuld 2003:22-23). Pupils and students could, in this sense, be made to do practicals in places like orphanages, hospitals, prisons, etc.

There should also be a kind of adult and enlightenment programme of compassion for African politicians who are ignorant of the suffering of the masses. In such programmes they should be made aware of the situation of the poor people they govern. An example could be: A night in a rural area with a poor family! It is only by encountering those that they govern that those in the government will become more aware of the problems of the people and be able to feel for them. Hermeneutically the case of the Servant of Yahweh in the Fourth Servant Song could be applied here. He could only make the sacrifice of his life for his people, because he was part of his people in exile.

A compassion programme could help African politicians and rulers to have a reorientation of their concept of governing, which should be tailored towards helping the people to find solutions to their problems, provide job opportunities for them, and take care of their basic needs. This will in end effect help in the reduction of the rate of violence in the

African society. There will be less violence if each member of the African society feels loved and cared for by those who govern them, and also by their neighbour. This should eventually be the focus of the programme of compassion for Africa in the 21st century.

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The Historical Jesus and (non-)Violence

A contemporary challenge

Eben Scheffler

We don't want to study the historical Jesus, because then we must do the same.
– James Murphy O'Conner.

There is no way to peace, peace is the way.
– Mahatma Ghandi.

You must have breakfast by yourself, lunch with a friend and supper with your enemy.
– Nelson Mandela (during term as President of South Africa)

Abstract

The fact of the existence of Jesus of Nazareth is recognised in Judaism, Christianity and Islam and these religions are all in one way or another involved in the violent conflicts that still ravages our present-day world. Despite making the proposed task more difficult, in this contribution attention will therefore be paid to the historical Jesus' stance on violence (as contained in the Gospel tradition), our expressed hermeneutical intent being to address contemporary violence, in interpersonal relationships as well as on a global 'political' scale (e g war). After some remarks on the possibilities and limitations of historical Jesus research, Jesus own stance or teaching on violence (e g blessed are the peacemakers, loving the enemy and turning the other cheek), as well his possible involvement in, or opposition to violence in the Palestinian and Roman context of his day will be scrutinised. The second, 'hermeneutical', part of the paper will consist of a reflection on the possibility of the contemporary appropriation of Jesus' (non-violent) stance in today's world.

1. Introduction

The fact of the existence of Jesus of Nazareth[1] is recognised in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and the basic values of his teaching (amongst others on peace and violence) are condoned in all three Abrahamitic traditions.[2] Religions that developed separately from Christianity (such as Buddhism and Hinduism) are also not particularly hostile towards the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth – to the contrary[3]. Ironically, despite this fact, religions (particularly the Abrahamitic ones) are still deeply involved in (and often the cause of) the violent conflicts that still ravage our present-day world. Neo-atheism often claims that atheism is to be preferred above religion, because of the positive role that religion plays in causing violence, and justifying such violence (e.g. Dawkins 2006). With the person and teaching of Jesus, some of these neo-atheists (e g Russell [1957] 2004:11-12; Dawkins 2006; Machovec 1972) have no problem; they even laud him because of his views on peace-making. In fact, the famous British philosopher, Bertrand Russell ([1957] 2004:11-12), mentioned four precepts of Jesus (turning the other cheek, not judging, lending, giving one's possessions to the poor) which he regards as laudable but which are not readily accepted and practised by Christians.[4] The ironic misfortune seems to be that the opposition to faith is based to a great extent on the very fact that Christianity is perceived as not following Jesus as far as the very basic values of his teaching are concerned. In the process, these critics not only reject the church, but also Christian faith as such.

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[1] So-called "mythicists" who deny the existence of Jesus represent a minority view that is, with evidence, confuted by even scholars with no "doctrinal" interest, e.g. Ehrman 2013:5-6. It suffices to mention Paul's reference in Gal. 1:19 that he saw "James the brother of the Lord", which implies that this "brother" indeed existed.

In what follows, I shall comment on the feasibility of historical Jesus study, on Jesus' attitude on violence as transmitted in the gospel traditions, as well as its reception in early Christianity and 2000 years of (bloody) Christian history. Some hermeneutical reflections aimed at the possible curbing of conflicts in the present day world conclude the contribution. The latter touches on (1) the impossibility of the justification of violence, (2) the (im)practicality of nonviolence, (3) the priority of ethics above doctrine, (4) the embarking on peace-making projects, (5) the scientific research on conflict resolution, and (6) the existential choice for peace.

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[2] As far as Judaism is concerned, despite the violent traditions in the Old Testament, peace traditions are present (e.g. Is. 2:4; Zech. 9:9-10). In the Qu'ran the gospel of the historical Jesus (as prophet and Messiah) is attested to (Sura 5:46), and peace making is promoted (Sura 5:8; 49:9). For Christianity, see the arguments below, and the work of Yoder 1972, in particular.

[3] One can, amongst others, refer to the views of the Dalai Lama (1998:45-52) and Mahatma Ghandi, the latter insisting that he got his non-violent stance from Jesus of Nazareth (Rynne 2008:22-29; cf. Gandhi [1927] 2007). See also Amore (1978) for a systematic comparison between the message of Jesus and that of the Buddha.

[4] For the (minority) argument that Jesus was "unloving", "hateful" and "violent", see Avalos 2015: 31-128.

2. The necessity and possibility of historical Jesus study

In his *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* the famous Albert Schweitzer ([1906] 1984) concluded that research on the historical Jesus always reflects the views of the researcher, and that after any attempt to construct his life, the real Jesus of history disappears into his surroundings in the Galilee of the first century. This led many to conclude that writing a history of Jesus is virtually impossible[5] and that Christianity should instead confine itself to the *kerugma* or message *about* Christ, which urges every individual to an existential decision about his or her own individual life (cf. Bultmann 1926; 1968; Theissen & Merz 2011:25-26). The result was that in the 1930's the stance of the historical Jesus on peace played virtually no role in the decision of young men who was called up to fight in the army of Adolf Hitler.[6] However, Schweitzer was misunderstood. He did not advocate that no study of Jesus should be made, and made his own construction – a construction that inspired his "reverence for life philosophy" and his decision to become a doctor working in the malaria-stricken area of the central African Congo. Schweitzer also won the Nobel Prize for peace, and in his acceptance speech made a plea against the development for nuclear weapons. Schweitzer served in Africa, whilst in Germany virtually no pressure went out from the main stream churches to stop Hitler in his war efforts.[7]

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[5] Acutely expressed by Bornkamm ([1956] 1994:13) who wrote that Schweitzer, in his classical work had erected the memorial of the first quest, "but at the same time had delivered its funeral oration". („Albert Schweitzer hat ihr in seinem klassischen Werk ‚Die Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung' [6. Aufl. 1951] ein Denkmal gesetzt, aber zugleich die Grabrede gehalten" (Bornkamm [1956] 1975:11).

[6] Interestingly, Gunther Bornkamm opposed the Nazi regime before the war.

[7] In the Germany of the 1930's Martin Luther's teaching about the two kingdoms of the state and church was still widely accepted in protestant Germany. The consequence was the church – except the minority group which formed the Bekennende Kirche (confessing church) – played no role in opposing Hitler's war efforts. The basic theology regarding a justified war (Thielecke 1967; for Luther's views, see Pelikan 1985:173-176) was accepted by all and if an ordinary German young man was called up

Quests for studying the historical Jesus seemed to come and go in the past, but since the third quest started in the 1980's, it (to my mind, fortunately) has escalated and seems to be persisting (Borg 1994:3-17). Apart from popular work, about 2000 scientific works on the historical Jesus have already been published and about 10 to 15 studies appear every year.[8] Of course, they all do not agree on a final (re-)construction, but we all know that this holds true for *any* history. And although not much can be known about Jesus as can, for instance, today be known about somebody of whom much video footage exists and who wrote extensively about himself or herself (e.g. Ghandi [1927] 2007 and Mandela 1997), what we do know about Jesus' teaching is radical and of cardinal importance, especially as far as the theme of violence is concerned.

Jesus' command to love the enemy is well-known. However, other gospel traditions also exist, which do convey the opposite, and the onus is on the historically honest exegete to consider them. We shall therefore consider both the traditions which portray Jesus condemning violence (par. 3 below), as well as those where he seems to promote it (par. 4).

3. Jesus' non-violent stance in the Synoptic tradition

3.1. Loving the enemy

Today all historical Jesus scholars of note (e.g. Crossan 1991; 1994; Borg [1984] 1998:113; Ehrmann 1999; Theissen 1992:115-156; 2004:269-289; Dunn 2003:586-88; Horsley 1987; Stegemann 2010:290-296) and earlier ones such as Bultmann ([1926] 1983:77-84); Bornkamm ([1956] 1975:97-104), Stauffer (1959:119-146) and Jeremias 1971:204-206; 219-221 would agree that Jesus' prescription to his followers to love their enemy belongs to the first stratum of transmission of the Jesus tradition and that it is virtually certain that this tradition started with himself.[9] It is to be

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for military service to defend the fatherland, patriotism expected of him to go, and he went. This was also the case in Apartheid South Africa regarding military service for white South African men.

[8] For a comprehensive bibliography (98 pages), see Rhea (2014:934-1025) and the *Literaturberichte* in *Theologische Rundschau*.

[9] Mark's Gospel, which also forms part of the oldest tradition, does not contain the words "love your enemy", although love for the neighbour features prominently (Mk 12:28-34). However, the tradition on the healing of the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mk

found in the Q-source (now lost but could be constructed from the gospels of Luke and Matthew) which probably existed in written form already in the 50's. Paul's admonition to do good to the enemy in Rm. 12:14-21 (written in the 50's as well), also reflects this tradition (cf. also 1 Cor. 4:12 and 1 Pt. 3:9). A synoptic comparison between Matthew's and Luke's versions provides a more profound insight into the depth of this tradition. I shall quote both versions, in order to refresh our memory regarding this powerful text.

Loving the enemy (Matthew 5:38-48)	**Loving the enemy (Luke 6:27-38)**
"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'	"But I say to you that listen, *Love your enemies,* *do good* to those who hate you,
[39] But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer.	[28] bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.
But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also;	[29] If anyone *strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also*;
[40] *and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well;*	*and from anyone who takes away your coat* *do not withhold even your shirt.*
[41] *and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile.*	[30] *Give to everyone who begs from you;*
[42] *Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants* to borrow from you.	*and if anyone takes away your goods,* *do not ask for them again.*
[43] "You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'	[31] *Do to others as you would have them do to you.*
[44] But I say to you, *Love your enemies* and *pray for those who persecute you,*	[32] "If you love those loving you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.
[45] so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good,	[33] If you do good to those who do good to you,

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7:24-30) clearly represents *inclusive* thinking, which transcends *tribal* thinking. Moreover, this very passage suggests that the earthly Jesus himself changed his mind from nationalistic exclusive thinking to inclusive thinking during his lifetime, because of the insistence of the woman (cf. also the tradition about the Roman Centurion's servant, not in Mark but significantly present in John's Gospel, Mt. 8:5-13; Lk. 7:1-7; Jn 4:46-54; see however Mk 15:39). His change of mind could also have occurred because of his being asked to define the neighbour (Lk. 10:29). If the parable of the Good Samaritan goes back to Jesus himself, this change of mind from *exclusivism* to *inclusivism* seems to be proven.

and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. [46] For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? *[47] And if you greet only your brothers and sisters,* *what more are you doing than others?* *Do not even the Gentiles do the same?* [48] Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.	what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. [34] If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. [35] But *love your enemies*, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. [36] Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. [37] "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; [38] give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

For our present purposes, the following remarks focus more on the resemblances (italicised in the text) between the two versions than on the (not unimportant!) differences (cf. Lambrecht 1985:216-224).

Firstly, although there are differences between the two versions (Matthew pronounces his admonitions more as a repudiation of the *lex talionis* – eye for eye, justice, the reciprocity code of Jewish tradition), they are virtually the same in emphasising the notion that love for the nation should *extend beyond the boundaries of the own* to include the enemy. According to Jesus, loving those of the own group (family, friends, compatriots) is natural. According to Bultmann [1926] 1983:82-84), this love for the enemy is not based in a sympathetic feeling, affect or sentiment, but in an *attitude of the will* (*Selbstüberwindung des Willens*), in obedience to God. The real challenge (which would establish peace) is the decision to *cross the boundaries* of the own group. This was surely a challenging idea to exclusive nationalistic thinking amongst contemporary Jews, as it is today.[10]

Secondly, for Jesus the admonition to love the enemy functioned on *individual* as well as *collective* level. This is important to realise, for in subsequent Christianity, up to the present, in discourses for the justification of war, the presence of second person pronouns in the text in question has been used to limit Jesus' instruction to the sphere of interpersonal relationships, where on societal and political level enmity (with war and violence as the result) could be justified.[11] Besides such distinctions being foreign to the ancient world, they contradict the text. Jesus lived in a country occupied by the Roman Empire and they were the contemporary enemy of the Judeans (Horsley 2007:335-360; 2003). In Jesus' context, the admonition to walk the second mile (Mt. 5:41) referred to Roman soldiers forcing locals to carry their bags. To carry them a second mile is an expression of what love for the political enemy (Romans soldiers, cf. Allison 2001:885) could imply in the contingent contemporary context. By carrying the soldier's bag, the enmity between perpetrator and victim is directly confronted in a non-violent manner.

Thirdly, loving the enemy does not simply entail a change of feeling or thinking, however important the latter may be. It also does not entail a declaration that the enemy does not exist (ignoring) or that there are no longer any differences with the enemy. According to Jesus loving the enemy is *something to be done;* it entails conscious, concrete and proactive action. Furthermore, this action is not confined to the well-known *"turning of the other cheek"* (Mt. 5:39; Lk. 6:39) which, although important for absorbing violence, when taken alone or out of context, seems to suggest an absolute pacifistic attitude. In both Matthew's and Luke's versions loving the enemy by doing good to them has *physical* (turning cheek, carrying bag), *spiritual* (pray, love, bless, greet) and *economic*

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[10] In Hellenistic Judaism Greek culture was indeed embraced, but not so much from the principle of inclusive love as because of the benefits which Hellenistic cultured offered. For a comprehensive treatment of this aspect of Jesus' teaching, see Helllerman (2013).

[11] Allison (2001:855) to my mind wrongfully claims: "Jesus does not overthrow the principle of equivalent compensation on an institutional level – the question is just not addressed – but declares it illegitimate for his followers to apply to their private disputes". Grundmann (1972:170) appropriately remarks: "Hinter der Ordnung, die Matthäus dem Ganzen der Űberlieferunng gibt, wird die Frage nach der Heilung der gefährdeten und bedrohten Gemeinschaft sichtbar."

(lend, give) dimensions which go beyond mere pacifism. It implies seeking the latter's good and embarking on a process of thinking and acting differently regarding the enemy. By giving and lending to, and forgiving an enemy, loving the enemy becomes concrete and visible and the actions even challenge the enemy to abandon their own hatred.[12] Thus, Jesus did not merely advocate a sentimental feeling of love for the enemy, but also gave directions on how this could be accomplished in reality.

3.2. Loving the enemy, doing good, forgiveness and reconciliation

Loving the enemy (as an actualisation of the golden rule, Mt. 7:12, Lk. 6:31) forms the dominant theme in Luke's shorter version of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Lk. 6:20-49; Klein 2006:250-256)[13]. Other aspects of Jesus' teaching such as, for example, forgiveness and refraining from judgment and condemning (6:37; cf. Mt. 7:1-5) are in the Lucan text integrated in Jesus' argument to love the enemy (cf. Lk 6:37; in Matthew some verses later, Mt. 7:1-5). In Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, similar aspects – more widespread through the larger sermon – also complement the instruction to love the enemy.

In Matthew *peace-making* is already promoted in the beatitudes (5:9), and the command not to kill of the Decalogue is radically interpreted with a view to curb aggressive thoughts and feelings (Mt. 5:21-22). The second mile should be walked with the soldier forcing one to carry his bag (5:41). Matthew is also unique in promoting that followers of Jesus should take the initiative in reconciliation and negotiation; in fact, the instruction to leave the gift at the altar in order to reconcile with the fellow human being (Mt 5:23-25) who feels wronged, implies that reconciliation with the enemy has a higher priority (for God!) than traditional (legally prescribed) service to God (Crossan 1994:168).

The centrality of *forgiveness* is emphasised in Matthew's version of the Lord's prayer (being implemented in the act of praying, cf. Lk. 11:3-4) and elaborated upon in two further verses (7:12-14). In order to love the enemy, the reader is therefore required to consider other traditions where Jesus teaches about forgiveness, for instance, the healing of the paralytic (emphasing the human role in forgiveness, Mt. 9:2-8, Mk. 2:3-11 and Lk. 5:21-26), the requirement to forgive 70 times 7 (not necessarily after being asked), and the parable of the lost son that relates the father's unconditional welcoming of the son, indicating the unreserved social acceptance of outcasts (cf. the reference to Jesus eating with toll-collectors and sinners in Lk. 15:1-2). Of special importance here are recent studies in positive psychology on forgiveness and peace-making which investigate these concepts scientifically, also indicating specific strategies to be followed in order to accomplish them (McCullough & Witvliet 2005; Scheffler 2015; Blumberg, et al. 2006).

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[12] In accordance with his well-known emphasis on possessions and poverty (see Scheffler 1993; 2011), Luke elaborates more than Matthew does on the economic dimension, when writing about loving the enemy.

[13] Luke's version becomes a sermon on the plain (for him mountains are for prayer and plains for preaching, cf. 6:12; Conzelmann 1953:37) consisting of only 29 verses, as opposed to Matthew's 106 verses.

In Matthew 6:19-34 Jesus warns against *greed* and gathering wealth, which Luke transmits in another context (Lk. 12:13-34). Since greed most often leads to competition with the neighbour, oppressing the neighbour and exploiting the poor, its role in enmity can easily be indicated (cf. Js. 4:1-2). To love one's enemy, and ultimately curbing violence, therefore has the implication to curb one's own greed and to give to the poor as a pro-active intervention, thereby minimalising the probability of enmity. On a collective level this was the anomaly of Europe's colonial past: on the one hand, the colonisation of African nations involved development of infrastructure, but on the other, the exploitation of these nations through possession of the land and the snatching of the wealth of the occupied countries.[14] At the same time the missionaries preached Jesus' gospel, which, in its essence, supposes that the poor are blessed and that the rich should care for the poor - a constant challenge to all exploittation policies.

Both versions of Jesus' sermon conclude with his admonition that saying "Lord, Lord" and even performing acts of power, does not constitute membership of the kingdom (Mt. 7:21; Lk. 6:46). What is needed are deeds specifically related to loving the enemy and curbing hatred in human relationships. Interestingly, the history of Christianity has a history indicating that this warning of the historical Jesus regarding peace-making has generally not been heeded (Pelikan 1985:168-181). Doctrines ("Lord, Lord saying") were predominantly more important than mastering the art of peace-making; in fact, doctrinal disputes contributed to enmity, hatred and violence as witnessed in inquisitions and executions in Christ's name. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the teaching of the historical Jesus regarding love for the enemy and peace-making be rediscovered and appropriated, with the spectacles of the own ecclesiastical tradition being removed. This may imply suffering, ostracism and persecution for the Jesus follower, but also a deep notion of consolation, since this forms the basis of the follower's "blessedness" as expressed in the beatitudes.

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[14] For a sombre report on this, see Ferguson (2011).

3.3. Resumé: The values of the kingdom of God and Jesus' non-violent political stance

Jesus preached the *kingdom of God* which, for him, entailed the alleviation of human suffering here and now (and not only as a future apocalyptic incursion to be realised by God, cf. Mt. 11:3-4; Lk. 7:21-23; 11:20; 17:20-21). His use of the term "kingdom of God" had political implications as a resistance to the Roman oppressors who cherished different values (Horsley 2007). Because his view of the kingdom implied the *alleviation* of suffering, destructive physically violent resistance (which *causes* suffering) was not an option. However, his non-violent stance did not imply pacifism; Instead, it implied non-violent resistance (turning the other cheek) and proactive intervention (doing good). This stance of Jesus is complemented by the other values of inherent to "the kingdom", especially with regard to forgiveness, compassion, humility, combating of greed and caring for the poor. This was done in a critical appropriation of his Jewish (Old Testament) tradition.

4. Jesus corroborating violence?

Besides the traditions advocating a distinct non-violent stance regarding Jesus, traditions in the synoptic gospels exist which seem to portray an opposite picture.[15] Since these traditions are often quoted in arguments justifying war or violence (even in liberation theology), or alleging that Jesus was violent and thus bad (Avalos 2015), they deserve our proper consideration. The most important is his *words* on bringing the sword to the earth and his *act* of cleansing the temple.

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[15] The woe sayings regarding the rich (Lk. 6:24-26) and the hypocritical Pharisees (23:13-32), the town Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum Mt. 11:21-24; Lk. 10:13-15), as well as harsh remarks against the own family (Mt 13:31-35??; Mt. 13:46-50; Lk. 8:19-21), are often mentioned to the effect that, in practice, Jesus was inconsistent with his own instruction to love the enemy. However, this would be to confuse loving the enemy with

4.1. The Matthean Jesus' bringing of the sword

Despite positive notions about peace in Mathew's gospel, the latter also contains traditions which seem to communicate the opposite. Of these, Matthew 10:34-39 is the most prominent:

The synoptics on division and conflict (sword) amongst Jesus' followers

Mt 10:21-21; 34-39	Mk 13:12-13	Lk 12:51-53
[21] Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death;	[12] Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death;	
[22] and you will be hated by all because of my name.	[13] and you will be hated by all because of my name.	
[admonition for missionaries]		[49] "I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! [50] I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and

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submissiveness and not having an own strong opinion. The Pharisees and the religious leaders were indeed the opponents and enemies of Jesus (Casey 2010:313-352), and his command to love the enemy did not change that fact. We also have accounts in the gospels attesting that he ate with the Pharisees (Lk. 7:36-50) which certainly testifies to non-violent behaviour regarding them. Moreover, there is also evidence in the Gospels that Jesus was a passionate person which could express himself assertively. To expect that what he said and did could always be harmonised, is to deny his humanity and to judge the historical Jesus prematurely as being Son of God or God. All human beings lose their temper on occasion which need not nullify their ideal views on for instance love and compassion.

		what stress I am under until it is completed!
[34] "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a *sword*.		[51] Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather *division*!
		[52] From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three;
[35] For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; [36] and one's foes will be members of one's own household.		[53] they will be divided: father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

It is important to note that there is a development (from Mark and Q to Matthew and Luke) in this tradition. Mark's version only refers to the division that will ensue as a result of choices family members would make about following Jesus. Jesus did not intend it, but it happens nevertheless. Matthew and Luke spell it out in accordance with a Q-tradition in which Jesus himself says that he will cause this particular division, which in Luke is stated only in terms of division in general (Lk. 12:51), but in Matthew the division is spelled out in terms of violence (the sword) and enmity (Mt 10:34).

The different *contexts* in which the tradition is transmitted in the various Gospels should be noted. In Mark it is reflected in his *apocalyptic* discourse, with Jesus clearly predicting the fate of his followers in the last days, whilst in Matthew it forms part of his *missionary* discourse (Mt. 10), addressed to the twelve (Mt. 10:1), and thus pertains to the immediate future while Jesus was still alive.[16] In Luke it also forms part of a general discourse addressed to Jesus' disciples and the crowd about their behaviour in future, of which the attitude towards possessions (Lk. 12:13-32) and the readiness for the master's return (note the criticism of violence in 12:45) feature prominently. In all three cases therefore, the text elicits a reading in a post-Easter context which dealt with the contingent situation after Jesus' death (which could even differ in each evangelist's community). Words of the historical Jesus were transformed and even created for these contexts.

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[16] The transparency of the text for post-Easter is hereby not ruled out.

Especially Matthew's version (employing the word "'sword", Mt 10:34; see also Mt 26:52) seems to polemise directly against Jesus's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount: there he advocated *non-violence, peace-making and love for the enemy*; here he speaks against all three. This state of affairs leaves the reader in a state of cognitive dissonance: two views are advocated by one evangelist.

Without minimising the problem, to my mind the text should be understood in terms of Matthew's context when he wrote his gospel in the eighties. The experience of the Christian community was conflict and strife, rather that the peace which Jesus advocated in the Sermon on the Mount. With this contingent situation the community had to deal. By putting these words in Jesus' mouth, clearly in a post-Easter situation, the gospel communicates that in Matthew's day, Jesus' followers can at least find some comfort in the fact that their master knew all along what would happen. By no means is Jesus' ardent teaching on love, forgiveness and reconciliation compromised by these words; to the contrary, they still function prominently in the Sermon on the Mount and still spell out the way to peace for the Matthean community. Luke's omission of the word "sword" thus interpreting the non-peace that Jesus brings in terms of divisions in households, seems to better reflect the situation of the Q community and, as such, is closer to the original words of Jesus.

4.2. Jesus' cleansing of the temple

Throughout the history of Christianity the tradition on Jesus' cleansing of the temple (transmitted in all four canonical gospels) has been used in arguments to justify violence in war situations.[17] In the process not much attention is paid to the historical Jesus' motivations for his behaviour, or the different gospel's reports about the degree of actual violence involved in Jesus' aggressive behaviour.

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[17] See Yoder (1972). Even Nelson Mandela, whose person and behaviour are often compared to Jesus of Nazareth (see Scheffler 2014), in his autobiography referred to this tradition in order to justify his pre-prison position on the use of violence in the struggle against apartheid (Mandela 1997).

The canonical Gospels on Jesus' cleansing of the temple

Mt. 21:12-13	Mk. 11:15-17	Lk. 19:45-48	John 2:13-17
[12] Then Jesus entered the temple and *drove out* all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he *overturned the tables* of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. [13] He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you are making it a den of robbers."	And he entered the temple and began to *drive out* those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he *overturned the tables* of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; [16] and he would *not allow anyone to carry* anything through the temple. [17] He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."	[45] Then he entered the temple and began to *drive out* those who were selling things there; [46] and he said, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer'; but you have made it a den of robbers.	[4] In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. [15] Making a *whip of cords*, he *drove all of them out* of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also *poured out the coins* of the money changers and *overturned their tables.* [16] He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" [17] His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

It is noteworthy that in the four versions of the cleansing of the temple the gospels differ on *how much* (or to what degree) violence or aggressive action is employed by Jesus. Luke reports the least violence, with Jesus only driving out the sellers; in Matthew Jesus also overturns the tables. Mark adds that Jesus also prevented people carrying anything through the temple. John's version is the most violent, portraying Jesus as making a whip and also driving out the animals.

As far as using this text to justify war or armed action (as it happened in conventional theologies *and* liberation theology), it should be noted that, according to the synoptic gospels, Jesus did not *kill* anybody with a sword and that in strict understanding of the gospel reports, his actions need not be labelled as extreme *physical* violence. It can also be interpreted as non-violent resistance or minimal aggression, with the intention not to harm anybody, but instead to be to the ultimate advantage of everybody, even the sellers. However, Jesus surely lost his temper (similarly to what even the meekest human beings could at some stage in their lives). He took some aggressive action which all four gospels attribute to his zeal for God and God's temple as a house of prayer. His purpose was therefore clear. To use this text to justify a war or a human political agenda is therefore to misread it. The above interpretation is corroborated not only by Jesus' non-violence, but his pro-active "peacemaking" behaviour reported during his arrest. There he not only rebuked his disciples for using violence, but also responded with the good deed of healing the ear of the high priest's servant (Lk. 22:47-51; Mt. 26:47-56; Mk 14:43-52).

In view of the discussion above, we may conclude that Jesus took a proactive non-violent stance in so far as the latter refers to physical violence that can destroy human life. His maxim on love for the enemy did not mean that he had no opponents with whom he disagreed. He launched verbal attacks on the Pharisees with whom he did not agree and could even lose his temper because of his "zeal" for the temple of God. But he could also eat with the Pharisees (Lk 7:36-50). When it counted, at his arrest and crucifixion, he did not respond with violence, but in terms of his non-violent pro-active ideology.

5. The (failed) reception of Jesus' non-violent stance

5.1. The New Testament

How Jesus' stance on non-violence was accepted in early Christianity also facilitates the understanding of the stance of the historical Jesus. In the New Testament itself we can distinguish a fairly positive reception of Jesus' stance on non-violence.

Paul, in Romans 12:14-21, echoes Jesus' teaching on loving the enemy by quoting Proverbs 25:20: give your enemy something to drink and live – as far as possible – in peace with everybody. In a moving, almost poetic passage (1 Cor. 4:11-13), Paul reports how the apostles (4:9) as "slaves of Christ" (4:1) have in situations of violent persecution, acted according to the precepts of Jesus' teaching, responding with positive behaviour (blessing, enduring, speaking kindly):

Paul following Jesus' non-violent teaching

1 Cor. 4:11-13

[11] ἄχρι τῆς ἄρτι ὥρας καὶ πεινῶμεν καὶ διψῶμεν καὶ γυμνιτεύομεν καὶ κολαφιζόμεθα καὶ ἀστατοῦμεν	[11] To the present hour we are hungry and thirsty, we are poorly clothed and *beaten* and homeless,
[12] καὶ κοπιῶμεν ἐργαζόμενοι ταῖς ἰδίαις χερσίν· λοιδορούμενοι εὐλογοῦμεν, διωκόμενοι ἀνεχόμεθα,	[12] and we grow weary from the work of our own hands. When *reviled*, we *bless*; when *persecuted*, we *endure*;
[13] δυσφημούμενοι παρακαλοῦμεν· ὡς περικαθάρματα τοῦ κόσμου ἐγενήθημεν, πάντων περίψημα ἕως ἄρτι.	[13] *when slandered, we speak kindly.* We have become like the rubbish of the world, the dregs of all things, to this very day.

Furthermore, in his letters Paul reinterprets terms implying violence metaphorically, thereby indirectly criticising the violence of the original practice as implied by the term. The *first* concerns *circumcision*: In Galatians 2:3-7 (cf. also Rm. 2:25-29) he declares circumcision as unnecessary for gentiles and in the process refers to the circumcision of the heart (Rom. 2:29, echoing Jer. 31:33). *Secondly,* he reinterprets *sacrifice* in Romans 12:1-2 as referring to church members who should devote their *bodies* as *living* sacrifices to God; sacrifices in which violence and death involved in traditional sacrifice are absent. He further refers to the *weapons* of faith using a military term (*hopla,* cf. Rm. 6:13; 13:12; 2 Cor. 6:7; 10:3-5) for a spiritual cause, thereby subtly criticising or demilitarising the violence suggested by a real military weapon. His designation of Jesus' followers as "*slaves* of Christ" (1 Cor. 4:1; 7:18--22) can be viewed as a fourth example, if the violence involved in the contemporary practice of slavery is taken into account.

This metaphorical use and sublime criticism of violence are most clearly detected in Ephesians 6:10-20, which stems not from Paul himself, but most probably from the Pauline school. As Paul did in 2 Corinthians 10:3-4, the author of Ephesians promotes the idea that the battle of the faithful is not against flesh and blood as with literally happens in war. It is a spiritual warfare. By using the Roman military uniform to describe the armour of God (the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the boots of readiness to proclaim the gospel of peace (!), the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the word as the sword of the spirit) the writer makes a caricature of Roman violence. The metaphorical use has a modern resemblance in the Salvation Army, which calls itself an army, wearing a uniform and playing a band, but in practice (by alleviating human suffering) does exactly the opposite than violent, killing and impoverishing actions associated with war.

1 Peter 3:8-17 prescribes behaviour amongst Christians who most probably lived in a situation of persecution. Having compassion, community members should reciprocate a wrong or an angry word with a blessing, must practise good and not yield to evil and must seek and pursue peace (verses 9-11), while they are willing to suffer "because it is better to suffer for doing right than doing wrong" (verse 1). This attitude also clearly resembles the non-violent teaching of the historical Jesus.

The letter of James (4:1-2) is of special importance because it not only axiomatically accepts that war is wrong, but reflects on the (psychological) *causes* of war:

James 4:1-2

Πόθεν πόλεμοι καὶ πόθεν μάχαι ἐν ὑμῖν; οὐκ ἐντεῦθεν, ἐκ τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν τῶν στρατευομένων ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ὑμῶν;	Where do he conflicts and disputes among you come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you?
2 ἐπιθυμεῖτε καὶ οὐκ ἔχετε, φονεύετε καὶ ζηλοῦτε καὶ οὐ δύνασθε ἐπιτυχεῖν, μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε, οὐκ ἔχετε διὰ τὸ μὴ αἰτεῖσθαι ὑμᾶς,	2 You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask.

The letter of James' teaching (albeit in different words) resembles that of the historical Jesus. The letter gives the impression of being written by James (the brother of Jesus). Whether this holds true or not (cf. Kümmel 1983:363-365), in both Jesus' and James' teaching violence and conflict are negatively judged and ascribed to human greed (note the economic link). James therefore translated Jesus' teaching uttered in the latter's contingent Palestinian context, into his own context, addressing the needs of his own community.

To conclude these brief remarks on the New Testament and violence, it is worth mentioning that violence is completely differently portrayed in the Book of Revelation, where, as is usually the case in apocalyptic literature, real violence abounds. There we meet a heavenly powerful Christ,[18] no less than a warrior, a flagrant distortion of Jesus of Nazareth (Rev. 6; 19:11-21). However, the portrayal of a violent exalted Christ in Revelations can be regarded as a *Fremdkörper* (exception) in the corpus of the New Testament writings.

5.2. The positive reception of Jesus' stance in pre-Constantine Christianity

It is well-known that no evidence exists of Christians partaking in wars during the first three centuries. That this is due to their perception of Jesus as being expressly non-violent is clear from the writings of various Christian fathers, amongst others, Hippolytus, Origin, Justine Martyr and Tertullian. During this phase Christians were often persecuted, and the reaction was martyrdom, and not retaliation. Their practice of loving the enemy as the historical Jesus had taught, ironically contributed to the growth of Christianity and the undermining of the Roman Empire (Latourette 1953:242-244).

5.3. The betrayal of Jesus' stance in 'imperial' Christianity throughout the ages

In the third century (312 AD), Constantine's toleration and support of Christianity as a recognised religion of the Roman Empire (Latourette 1953:91-93) meant a death blow to the non-violent stance of Christianity and an essential betrayal of the unpretentious gospel of love and peace preached by Jesus in Galilee. The big trade-off occurred: Constantine recognised the religion and the population came to be regarded as Christian, but they simultaneously received the obligation to fight in the wars of the empire, with the motto that in *hoc signo* (namely the sign of the cross) the Empire will win its wars. This had devastating consequences for the role that Christianity was foreseen by the gospels to play in the world regarding the eradication of violence. Instead of the message of peace presented by the historical Jesus, now the orthodox faith regarding his divine and human nature became central. At the Nicaea council that decided on Jesus divine nature, soldiers of the empire stood outside watching over the proceedings (Crossan 1991:424 refers to Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 3.15, in this regard). In the fourth century Ambrose an Augustine were the first theologians to argue that some wars, which had as their object the "punishment of injustice" and "the restoration of peace", being fought "without vindictiveness and unnecessary violence" and with "inward love", could be justified (Latourette 1953:244). Their view became the default one in mainstream Christianity ever since (see Pelikan 1985:168-181).

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[18] It is virtually impossible not to understand 'the Lamb' and the 'Word of God' as referring to the risen Jesus.

The Constantine turn resulted in Christianity becoming the world's largest religion and, simultaneously, the one that betrayed its Galilean master by taking part in the Crusades and many other bloody wars purportedly fought in his name.[19] About the crusades Bomans (1971:115) wrote the following:

> The actual object [of the crusades] was the Sepulchre ... The lamps above the sepulchre, which had been extinguished by the unbelievers, must burn again. ... A trail of blood was laid across Europe to the Holy City. On the way, all Jews were eliminated – you know why – and there was a blood bath in Jerusalem leaving, it seems, no survivors. It is incomprehensible that none of these people saw the contradiction of all these enormous slaughters for a sepulchre in which a man was laid who preached the opposite for three years. The same mystery is there when you see a heretic being tortured with a member of the clergy nearby holding up a cross. How is this possible? What gives people the idea to do this to each other with an appeal to the person who gave his life to stop such happenings? I can't figure it out ...

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[19] The bloodshed not only occurred in relation to other nations, but even among Christians themselves (e g the Donatistic struggle supported by Augustine, cf Küng 1994:93-95, not to mention the balefires of the inquisitions.

6. Conclusion: Following Jesus' non-violent stance today

Today the Christian church is diminishing in traditionally Western countries.[20] Neo-atheists ascribe this not only to the influence of the theory of evolution, but also to Christianity's history of violence, as well as the Old Testament (being regarded as Word of God) as a book of violence.

In Africa, on the other hand, Christianity is growing because European history is not shared and hope exists there that Christianity could somehow redeem large levels of poverty and disease, and bring peace in regions plagued by violence. African and Latin American Christianity are not as much interested in the correct doctrine as they are in a religion that can address their suffering. It stands to reason that all the afflicted regions of the world (whether they be African, Latin American or Asian) stand in need of the kind of religion which the historical Jesus proclaimed; one where compassion and the alleviation of suffering in all its dimensions are priority, and where peace replaces violence, and extreme poverty and sickness are substantially addressed.

The construction of the essence of the religion of the historical Jesus is not impossible, despite great challenges regarding detail. His religion is a religion for this life,[21] where love for the enemy eliminates violence, and forgiveness and reconciliation restore positive human relationships; where the poor and the sick are catered for and the outcasts of society (the "scum of the earth") are accepted and integrated.

But how could this be achieved? Everyone attempting a life based on these values knows that it is extremely difficult – even more difficult than crucifying one's intellect by believing the illogicality implied by the many tenets of the traditional Christian creeds. In searching to realise it, some aspects are of importance in my opinion, especially regarding violence, whether it be interpersonal or on the collective level (Deist 1983:114-127).

First, it should be realised that in no instance can violence be justified, even though human beings tend to continuously do just that. Ghandi's truth should be realised: “There is no way to peace, peace is the way”. Inflicting suffering through violence cannot eliminate violence; instead, it feeds violence and defeats peace.

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[20] Already in the fifties, Casserley (1951:69-152) wrote on the theological, sociological and psychological reasons for this decline.

[21] Jesus' preaching of the kingdom of God entails a future kingdom that breaks into *this* life whenever suffering is ameliorated (see above). Viewed in this way the choice between a future, or imminent eschatology in Jesus' thought is proven to be invalid.

Secondly, (and importantly so), the myth should be dispelled that Jesus’ basic message of peace and love for the enemy is impractical during periods of conflict. To the contrary: it is then when it is needed most. It is no achievement to be a pacifist between wars or a vegetarian between meals. Cases where non-violent intervention or resistance succeeded should be constantly recalled, researched and internalised to dispel the persistent myth regarding impracticality. In this connection, Ghandi’s practice of *Satjagraha* in India (Ghandi [1927] 2007) that led to the latter’s independence and Martin Luther King’s non-violent resistance that led to civil rights for oppressed blacks in America, can be mentioned; indeed, as shown above, both claim to be inspired by Jesus of Nazareth. Oscar Schindler’s role in the limited liberation of some Jews from the holocaust in Germany, as well as the post-prison Mandela’s embarking on the path of a negotiated settlement and reconciliation in South Africa, also come to mind (Mandela 1997). And so do Albert Schweitzer and Albert Einstein’s efforts in the 1950’s to prevent nuclear war. Many more examples on an individual level involving interpersonal relationships abound (some related by Stauffer 1959:119-146).

Thirdly, Christianity should become less doctrinal and more *ethical* (Gal. 5:6).[22] It should be realised that the continued division of the church into different dominations contributes to its ultimate downfall and betrays Jesus of Nazareth’s basic message. There is no need to wait for the ultimate unification of the church before embarking on ecumenical cooperation. Nor need peace endeavours be confined to the church. If the real suffering of real people plagued by poverty and violence is prioritised, mutual strife among one another (on individual or group level) would automatically be diminished.

Fourthly, in accordance with the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, the realisation of love for the enemy demands *deeds* of provocative and challenging benevolence that directly address conflict. This will not happen spontaneously. Christians and churches, and all those interested should therefore be engaged, and they should function as agents in concrete *projects* of peace-making. They should not simply side with whimsical political agendas of egoistically motivated people amongst whom they happen to exist.

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[22] Arguing for the priority of ethics above doctrine, Van Niekerk (2014:109) quotes Desiderius Erasmus: “You will not be damned if you do not know whether the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son had one or two beginnings, but you will not escape damnation if you do not cultivate the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, long-suffering, mercy, faith, modesty, continence and chastity.”

Fifthly, relevant scientific research (consisting of already developed theological, sociological and psychological strategies) for peaceful global conflict resolutions in our (post-)modern world should be embraced and supported by every human being with peace at heart. Peace conferences are of importance but should lead to peace missions (Otto 1999; Blumberg, et al. 2006).

Ultimately, the way to peace involves an *existential choice* by every individual or church (the latter should be pressurised towards peace solutions), not only to abstain from partaking in and condoning violence,[23] but also to consciously embark on a *project* – appropriate for every contingent situation – that will facilitate the realisation of peace. All those who made that choice should join efforts and share the possibilities and ultimately embark upon common action. Christians and even unbelieving followers of Jesus need not wait for projects by their churches or organisations, but should as individuals be challenged to become involved in such peace-making projects, . For Jesus was no pacifist, instead, he was an activist for non-violence and peace.

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[23] Even those who still believe in the justification of some wars should be included.

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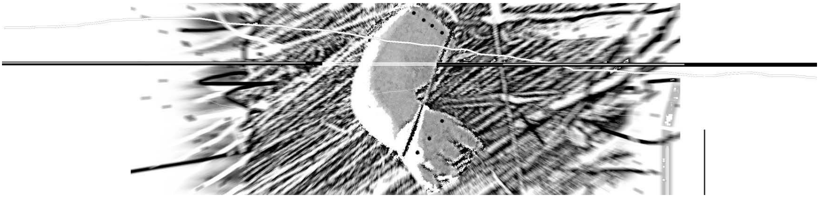

Marginalisation and Electoral Violence

Interpreting the Secession Narrative (1 Kings 12:1-24) in Nigerian Context

Solomon Olusola Ademiluka

Abstract

This study assesses the relevance of the secession narrative (1 Kgs 12:1-24) with the attendant violence in the context of electoral violence in Nigeria. According to the Deuteronomists' account, the northern tribal leaders, representing their oppressed and marginalised people, spearheaded the revolt and violence at Rehoboam's coronation ceremony. Similarly, in Nigeria the principal actors in electoral violence, which has characterized elections since independence, are the marginalised youth usually hired by the politicians. The research reveals that marginalisation can always be a remote cause for violence; which implies that curbing electoral violence must necessarily always involve addressing the problem of marginalisation. In Nigeria, this means addressing the problem of youth unemployment, and the major precipitant of unemployment, namely corruption.

Introduction

In the Deuteronomist's account of the secession of northern Israel, the coronation of Rehoboam, son and successor to King Solomon, witnessed violence that claimed at least the life of one person, Adoniram, the "Minister for Labour and Security" (1 Kgs 12:18). This event was perhaps the peak of the outward expression of the frustration of northern Israelites under the reign of Solomon, characterised particularly by forced labour and the burden of tax. The incident is reminiscent of the frequent electoral violence in Nigeria, not only in the characteristics of killing and destruction of property but also in the fact that marginalisation is a major remote cause of electoral violence also in Nigeria. Therefore the aim of the research is to examine the link between Solomon's policies of oppression and marginalisation and the division of the united monarchy. The ultimate aim is to assess the relevance of the study for contemporary Nigeria in the context of electoral violence.

The Secession Narrative

According to the Deuteronomists' account, after the death of Solomon, his son Rehoboam had to go to the northern city of Shechem where "all Israel" had come together to make him king (1 Kgs. 12:1-24). David sealed his rule with such a two-stage process (2 Sam. 2:1-4; 5:1-3) but Solomon apparently did not need such a northern approval, which perhaps suggests that a problem had developed during his reign. The people expressed their dissatisfaction with Solomon's policies directly to Rehoboam, asking him to "lighten the hard service of your father... and we will serve you." Mann (2011:274) observes that the word "serve" here plays on the meanings of labour and political allegiance. As we shall see later, their burden was not only the forced labour but also disproportionate taxes (4:7-19) and loss of land (9:11). Their request seemed reasonable enough, and was made without any threat.

Rehoboam asked for three days to think things over. He consulted with "the older men" who attended to him, and they suggested a magnanimous response, urging him to promise to serve the people so that they could serve him in return. However, Rehoboam dismissed their advice and turned to his age mates who grew up with him, whose advice was as "childish and arrogant as the elders' was mature and humble" (*ibid.*). Rehoboam's response to the people's request was that his yoke would be heavier than that of his father. This response led to what Mann (*ibid.*) terms as the moment of civil revolt. The people cried out: "What share do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Look now to your own house, O David" (v. 16). In response, Rehoboam sent his chief supervisor of forced labour, Adoniram, to regain control, but the northerners promptly stoned him to death. Rehoboam had to flee to Jerusalem to save his own life, while the northern leaders called on Jeroboam, a former leader of Solomon's forced labour gangs who had revolted and fled to Egypt, to be their king. Now there were two kingdoms, a northern one which called itself Israel, after the old tribal customs, and a southern one, still loyal to the house of David and Solomon, and made up of only the tribe of Judah and the remnants of Simeon (Boadt 1984:292-293).

Nyirimana (2011:717) dwells on the role of the young men (*hayy*^{e}*ladim*) in the narrative who dictated the arrogant answer Rehoboam gave to his people. The description of these advisers as *hayy*^{e}*ladim* (12:10) may help understand their attitude. *y*^{e}*ladim* is the plural form of *yeled*, meaning "child," "boy," "son" or "youth." In the context of this story it refers to young men who grew up with Rehoboam. Thus, the word is used here as a technical term referring to a special group of youngsters raised at court, the sons of officials and courtiers. According to 1 Kings 14:21, Rehoboam was 41 when he acceded to the throne; hence those of the group of *hayy^{e}ladim*; were about that age. Compared to *hazz^{e}qenim*, the elders who had served his father, they could be called young men, but certainly not boys. That they were Rehoboam's agemates seems to surmise that they were mature enough to understand the pain of the oppressed people. In the Deuteronomists' view they deserve the description as *hayy^{e}ladim* probably because their advice is naïve, betraying their inexperience. The only regime they knew was that of Solomon. They are therefore contrasted with the experienced elders, who knew about the charismatic style of leadership where it was the leaders who served the people and not the other way round. According to Nyirimana, that *hayy^{e}ladim* had probably grown up with Rehoboam may indicate that they were men from Judah and had not suffered the hard labour which Solomon had imposed on the northern tribes, but who had been and were still benefitting from this exploitation and oppression. Thus, the spoilt aristocrats who knew only the privileged life of the monarchy advised against giving in to the people's demand because that had serious implications for their privileges. Hence, they vetoed the wise advice of *hazz^{e}qenim* and decided what Rehoboam should implement, namely to resort to intimidation, threatening the people with a heavier yoke and harsher discipline to keep them delivering services.

This narrative thus links the division of the monarchy to Solomon's oppression of the common people of Israel. However, the specific historical context of Solomon's reign in ancient Israel has been a subject of debate among scholars; hence we need to have a brief look at this.

Solomon's Reign in Historical Context

In Moore and Kelle's (2011:200-213) survey, early-twentieth century biblical scholars praised the literary artistry of the David and Solomon narratives in 2 Samuel 9 - 1 Kings 2, often called the "Succession Narrative" or "Court History." There was a general consensus that these chapters were fine examples of reliable historical writing and that their composition was to be regarded as essentially contemporary with the events which are related. However, by the late twentieth century historians found reason to seriously reevaluate their assumptions about the texts describing the early monarchy and the conclusions about the past that they had drawn from them. The mid-1980s saw the introduction of new ideas about the beginning of kingship in Israel, which came as a result of new archaeological finds and methods, reassessment of existing archaeological remains, and the increasing use of social-scientific models in historical reconstructions. About this time there was (and still is) very little archaeological evidence for the united monarchy in Palestine. Furthermore, the few artifacts that were widely considered indications of Solomon's activities did little to clarify the worth of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (HB/OT) as a historical source about state formation, Saul, David and even most of Solomon's reign. Israel Finkelstein (quoted by Moore & Kelle 2011:213) introduced a new chronological sequence called the "low chronology" by which artifacts that had been traditionally dated to the tenth century were now to be dated to the ninth. This implies that monumental architecture that had been attributed to Solomon in the tenth century – including the monumental gates at Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer – should be assigned to the ninth century (the time of the northern kingdom of Israel). In the words of Finkelstein (2007:115) himself:

> The mention of the "House of David" in the Tel Dan inscription from the ninth century BCE leaves no doubt that David and Solomon were historical figures. But the great biblical story of the United Monarchy is left with no material evidence. In the ninth century places such as Megiddo in the north still featured Canaanite material culture. The kingdom of David and Solomon was no more than a poor, demographically depleted chiefdom centred in Jerusalem, a humble village.The beautiful Megiddo palaces – until recently the symbol of Solomonic splendor – date to the time of the Omride dynasty of the northern kingdom, almost a century later than Solomon. They were probably constructed by King Ahab. This should come as no surprise. Contemporary monarchs – Shalmaneser III of Assyria, Mesha of Moab and Hazael of Damascus – all attest to the great power of ninth-century Israel. If there was a United Monarchy that ruled from Dan to Beersheba it was that of the Omride dynasty, and it was ruled from ninth-century Samaria.

However, as Moore and Kelle observe, deciding which archaeological interpretation is right, or at least which archaeologist to trust, is crucial for historians' writing about Solomon. For example, in clear disagreement with Finkelstein, Mazar (2007:139) states: "The archaeological chronology that I utilize allows for the dating of the monumental structures to the tenth century. Therefore such buildings might have been Solomonic in origin." Moreover, as Moore and Kelle (2011:251) also point out, though the low chronology is by far the most discussed archaeological topic pertaining to Solomon, other interrelated archaeological considerations play into the question of what central Palestine looked like in the tenth century. Outside of the monumental architecture, there is the claim that material culture, especially pottery, took on new, uniform qualities during the latter half of this century, which is evidence showing the growth of a unified people under a central authority. Furthermore, since Solomon is reported to have built the temple and a grand palace, remains of such structures dating to the tenth century would do much to support the Bible's picture of them. Unfortunately, the area of Jerusalem where these structures were located is now sacred to Muslims (under the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque) and therefore not available for excavation (Moore & Kelle 2011:254). But we cannot afford to ignore completely the fact that the biblical description of the temple may hold clues to its antiquity. As Moore and Kelle (2011:254) affirm, actual temples similar in layout to the description of Solomon's have been found in the Levant. These coincidences, combined with the biblical attribution of the temple to Solomon, have led many historians to conclude that Solomon was the likely builder.

The suggestion that the monumental structures in ancient Israel most likely date to the tenth century and originated from Solomon seems to be corroborated by certain epigraphic sources. Of high importance in this regard is the inscription of Pharaoh Sheshonk (or Shoshenq) found on the wall of the temple of Amun at Thebes which describes a campaign that took the pharaoh through Palestine (Bimson 1994:355; Moore & Kelle 2011:217). Though Sheshonk does not report going to Jerusalem, 1 Kings 14:25-6 says he (called there Shishak) went to Jerusalem and took palace and temple treasures as tribute. Thus, Sheshonk's campaign provides a chronological anchor for the early kings in that non-biblical sources indicate that Sheshonk's campaign took place in about 925 BCE. When this is understood along with the 1 Kings passage which locates Shishak's move against Jerusalem in the fifth year of Rehoboam, the end of Solomon's reign is placed in about 930 BCE. Hence, for the purpose of this research, it is accepted that the monumental structures in the Kings narratives were built by Solomon and that in the course of these constructions the king imposed forced labour and heavy taxes on his subjects.

Solomon's Policies of Oppression and Marginalisation

Solomon embarked on heavy building projects, kept a large royal household and a costly army, all of which made him to engage his subjects in heavy taxes and forced labour. For the building projects, Solomon entered into a treaty with Hiram, the Phoenician King of Tyre, which apparently covered the construction of a lavish complex of structures erected in Jerusalem of which the temple was the most important. Besides the temple, these projects included the building of the palace, which should have been an impressive edifice if the time of thirteen years spent on it is anything to go by (1 Kgs 7:1). Other buildings included a fortress, the "House of the Forest of Lebanon" (7:2; 10:17, 21) so called apparently because of the massive cedar pillars that supported it, a judgment hall called the "Hall of the Throne" (7:7) and a palace for his wife, the pharaoh's daughter (7:8). By the terms of the trade agreement, Hiram provided building materials and technicians to Solomon while the latter paid for the services with a regular provision of natural produce, namely 20,000 cors (4,400,000 liters) of wheat and 20,000 baths (440,000 liters) of pressed olive oil (5:11, NIV notes). According to Nyirimana (2013:186), the quantity of the produce involved could be estimated to almost twice Solomon's yearly receipt, which has caused some scholars to wonder whether Israel could have been as fruitful as to provide for the needs of two royal houses in addition to the common consumption, and this for a period of twenty years. The biblical tradition seems to acknowledge that the load was too heavy on Israel, so much so that at the end Solomon had to resort to selling to Hiram a part of his territory (9:11). In other words, since this concession was not part of the initial agreement, it is reasonable to conclude that Solomon resorted to this option in order to settle a large debt that had accumulated over years.

Apart from the toll on the nation's resources, Solomon's enormous projects also required a considerable supply of labour force which was not readily available to him. He therefore resorted to compulsory labour. In the time of David forced labour seems to have been reserved for the conquered people (2 Sam. 12:13). Solomon, who no longer had a great supply of such people, imposed forced labour first on the Canaanites who were left in the land (1 Kgs 9:15-21), and subsequently forced labour was extended even to the Israelites. It is reported in 1 Kings 5:13-18 that Solomon conscripted a crew of 30,000 men out of Israel whom he sent in shifts of 10,000 each for a month at a time to Lebanon and two months off at home. Their task was to cut, haul and ship timber from Lebanon. He recruited 70,000 carriers and 80,000 stonecutters. This army of workers worked under the supervision of 3,300 foremen with Adoniram as general overseer. As Nyirimana (2013:188) rightly observes, when understood in the light of the total population of Israel at the time, these figures suggest a severe sap of manpower.

Solomon burdened the people not only with his building projects, but the same people also needed to support the army. It is reported in 1 Kings 9:15-19 that he used forced labour also to build fortified cities which were made into military bases. These included Hazor in Galilee, Megiddo near the main pass through the Carmel range, Gezer, Beth Horon, and others. The military bases hosted sections of the army that included charioteers, mercenaries and a drafted infantry. According to the biblical account, Solomon's army counted 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horses (10:26). Chariots cost 600 shekels (about 7 kg. of silver) each and trained horses, 150 shekels (1.7 kg. of silver per horse) (Nyirimana 2013:188; cf. 1 Kgs 10:26-9, NIV notes). The opulence of the king's palace was perhaps the main cause of the heavy tax on the Israelites (cf. 4:7). According to the biblical record, each day Solomon and his men and their families ate thirty cors of flour (about 6,600 liters), sixty cors (13,200 liters) of meal, thirty oxen, a hundred sheep and goats, unspecified amount of deer, gazelles, roebucks and fowl and unspecified quantities of wine and oil (4:22-5, NIV notes). The ordinary people had to source for all these provisions in addition to those for Hiram's court, as mentioned above.

Thus, the burden of maintaining Solomon's regime and his dealing with Hiram weighed heavily on the people through heavy taxes and *corvee*. It is also important to note that the distribution of power and privileges apparently involved aspects of tribalism and sectionalism as administrative and economic policies seems to have been dictated by Judahite interests. As Nyirimana (2013:190) notes, Solomon's innovations that could attract antipathy were in the first place his administrative policy. All of Israel, excluding Judah, was divided into twelve districts over which Solomon appointed governors (4:7-19). This arrangement may have allowed Solomon through the representatives of his regime to control the *corvee*, taxation and military levy; but Mann (2011:274) observes that the exclusion of Judah from it might imply that the *corvee* was imposed only on the northern tribes. Nyirimana notes further that the presence of Solomon's sons-in-law among the twelve governors (4:11,

15) may betray elements of nepotism in his administration. Solomon did not waste any time in quelling the revolt led in the south by King Hadad of Edom (11:14-22), but he seems not to have shown the same enthusiasm in defending the north from the revolt of Rezon, who went as far as seizing Damascus, then Solomon's provincial capital (11:23-5). Also significant to the northern tribes was the alienation of the plain of Akko, the Cabul region, given by Solomon to Hiram of Tyre (9:10-14), as earlier mentioned.

From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that Solomon's golden age was not golden for all. The king may have enriched himself through trade and industrial monopolies, and many individuals may have acquired wealth in his service or through personal efforts. But to many the price of Solomon's prosperity was only an increase in the powers of the state and a burden without precedent in Israel. "It appears many people endured the cost of Solomon's opulence more than they enjoyed the benefits of his prosperity" (Nyirimana 2013:190). Hence, Solomon's regime became unpopular, especially with the northern tribes. The challenging attitude of the tribal leaders on the day of Rehoboam's coronation is best understood in this context: "Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labour and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you"(12:1-5, NIV). In Nyirimana's (2013:192) description, the northern tribes united against a regime that ignored them and usurped their authority. They stood their ground and resisted a regime that had become not only exploitative and oppressive but also totalitarian and exclusivist. They rejected a regime that was frustrating their ambition of having a significant role to play in the leadership of the country and significant share in the benefits.

Thus, two opposing forces at the fatal coronation were *hayy*^{e}*ladim* who had been beneficiaries of the exploitation and oppression of Solomon's regime on the one hand, and the northern tribal leaders who desired a change, on the other. It was their conflicting interests that led to the violence. In the context of elections in Nigeria, the two forces are represented in the supporters of opposing contestants at the polls whose desperation for victory for their political fathers lead to the violence that has characterized elections in Nigeria since independence. In other words, as we shall see presently, just as the violence at Rehoboam's coronation had its remote causes in Solomon's marginalisation of some sections of the Israelites, so also in Nigeria marginalisation constitutes a major remote cause for electoral violence; the thesis to which the rest of this study is devoted.

Electoral Violence in Nigeria

Electoral violence has been defined in various ways by various writers. Balogun (quoted by Obakhedo 2011:102) says: "Operationally, electoral violence connotes all forms of violence (physical, psychological, administrative, legal and structural) at different stages engaged in by participants, their supporters and sympathizers (including security and election management staff) in the electoral process." According to Nwosu (quoted by Akanji 2011:2), electoral violence refers to all forms of violence that emanate during the process of election. It is the employment of force by political parties or their supporters to intimidate opponents. Electoral violence is an organized act or threat to intimidate, physically harm or blackmail a political stakeholder in seeking to determine, delay or influence an electoral process. Ladan (quoted by Akanji 2011:2) states that electoral violence means any act of violence perpetrated in the course of political activities before, during or post election periods, and may include acts such as thuggery, use of force to disrupt political meetings or voting at polling stations, or the use of dangerous weapons to intimidate voters and other electoral processes, or to cause bodily harm or injury to any person connected with electoral processes. Fischer (quoted by Orji & Uzodi 2012:10) defines electoral violence as "any random or organized act that seeks to determine, delay or otherwise influence an electoral process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault, forced 'protection,' blackmail, destruction of property, or assassination." Thus, electoral violence can simply be defined as any physical act embarked upon to influence the process of an election.

The use of violence in elections is not peculiar to recent emerging democracies in the developing world. Seymour and Frary (1918, quoted by Aniekwe & Kushie 2011:9) report that in the eighteenth and nineteenth century England and America there were documentted cases of electoral violence in which force and intimidation were used as a tactical means of winning elections. However, as Austin (1994) and Chaturvedi (2005, both quoted by Aniekwe & Kushie 2011:9) affirm, new democracies are currently leading on cases of electoral violence as highlighted in the cases of India and Sri Lanka, and those of Kenya, Zimbabwe and Madagascar.

As we shall demonstrate here, reports on elections in Nigeria since independence indicate that the nation is competing keenly with the above mentioned countries in matters of electoral violence. All the eight general elections conducted in Nigeria since independence (1964/65, 1979, 1983, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011) have been marred by various degrees of violence (Smith 2002, quoted by Orji & Uzodi 2012:9). Hence, Obakhedo (2011:104) laments that Nigerians seem to have acquired a culture of electoral violence. As Aniekwe and Kushie (2011:1, 12) put it, "The Nigerian electoral and political landscape has moved from violence to greater violence.... Nigerian politicians are habituated to fraud, corruption, intimidation and violence, and consider violence the necessary weapon for political success." These claims have been demonstrated in the history of elections in Nigeria. The announcement of the result of the Western Region elections in 1965 was followed by violence and breakdown of law and order in the region. It was the Region's crisis that gave rise to the famous "operation *weti e*" (combination of English and Yoruba, meaning "wet it") – an atrocious practice of dousing political opponents in petrol and setting them ablaze (Anifowose 1982; Soeze 2011, quoted by Orji & Uzodi 2012:9). In the opinion of Bamgbose (2012:210), the most violent mayhem of the 1983 elections took place in the then Ondo State. The ostensible cause was the popular reaction against the rigged gubernatorial election which followed the declaration of a National Party of Nigeria (NPN) candidate in an overwhelmingly Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) state. In the violent demonstration entire families of politicians were wiped out, and hundreds of houses set on fire, including the state Headquarters of the then Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO). The nation was thrown into a violent mayhem when in June, 1993 the Babangida junta annulled the presidential election believed to have been won by M. K. O. Abiola, and generally acclaimed as free and fair (Aniekwe & Kushie 2011:12; Bamgbose 2012:211).

The 1999, 2003 and 2007 general elections that brought Olusegun Obasanjo and later Umaru Yar'Adua to power were equally marred by widespread rigging, intimidation, fraud and violence so much that *Human Rights Watch* (2004, quoted by Aniekwe & Kushie 2011:12) reported that in April and May, 2003 at least one hundred people were killed and many more injured during the federal and state elections. In 2007 the US-based Jimmy Carter Center for Democracy also reported, "It is not possible for us to make an accurate judgment about the outcome of the presidential election" (*Human Rights Watch* 2007, quoted by Obakhedo 2011:104). According to Bamgbose, the 2007 elections were so deadly and frightening that they were generally perceived as the worst in the history of elections in Nigeria. For example, in Rivers State a police station was burnt down by unknown assailants the night before the elections. Similarly, in Anambra State voters were faced with violence and intimidation. Offices of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Onitsha, Nnewi and Akwa were burnt in protest. Violence equally marred the elections in other parts of the nation. In Katsina, opposition supporters burnt down government buildings as the PDP swept the gubernatorial polls. In Oyo State PDP thugs beat up opposition party officials and hijacked ballot boxes.

In the 2011 elections violence swept through the six geo-political zones. In March, Amnesty International issued a report in which it noted that hundreds of people had already been killed in politically motivated communal and sectarian violence across Nigeria ahead of presidential and parliamentary polls (Amnesty International 2011, quoted by Orji & Uzodi 2012:10), and advised the authorities to take immediate action to prevent further violence. This advice was ignored to the peril of several Nigerians who died in the post-election bloodbath. On the eve of the National Assembly elections held on 9th April 2011, a bomb attack at the INEC office in Suleja, Niger State, killed at least ten people and injured several others. There were reports of election related assassinations of political candidates and their supporters, and clashes between party supporters.

In the southwest clashes ensued among supporters of political parties which led to the death of many people, while others were injured less than nine days to the general elections. In Ondo State the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) later claimed in a report that the elections were marred by violence, particularly ballot snatching (Bello 2011, quoted by Bamgbose 2012:213). There are similar reports from other parts of the nation. In fourteen northern states, including Adamawa, Kano, Kaduna and Bauchi violent protesters killed several people, including an unspecified number of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members; torched, looted or destroyed businesses, churches and private houses (Shuaibu & Iroegbu 2011; HRW 2011; Bekoe 2011; Ajayi 2011; HRW 2011, quoted by Orji & Uzodi 2012:9).

The nation is awaiting the 2015 general elections fixed for 28th March and 11th April, and the atmosphere is already charged with desperation, particularly on the part of the major contesting political parties, the All Progressive Congress (APC) and the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP). Already there have been reports of pre-election violence across the country. Buildings and vehicles have been burnt; there have been shooting and bombing at campaign rallies claiming lives and property.

In Nigeria acts of electoral violence and those that often lead to it are numerous, some of which have been mentioned above. They include purchasing of ballot papers and boxes; stuffing of ballot boxes with already thumb-printed papers; fielding of unqualified candidates; illegal printing of voters' cards; vote allocation where voting does not take place; wrongful disqualification of candidates duly elected; wrongful declaration of candidates who lose elections; bribery; stealing/snatching of ballot boxes; wrongful cancellation of election results; undemocratic selection of candidates, etc. (see Aluko 2011:49).

As Aniekwe and Kushie (2011:20) correctly observe, these acts are most often carried out by gangs (commonly called thugs) whose members are openly recruited, financed and sometimes armed by public officials, politicians or their representatives. These gangs comprise primarily unemployed young men who are mobilized to attack their sponsors' rivals, intimidate members of the public, rig elections and protect their sponsors from similar attacks. "Often, sponsors of electoral violence take time and again to the same criminal gangs, violent campus-based "cults" and other sources to recruit agents of political violence. Those recruited are paid, often very little, and sometimes armed for the sole purpose of carrying out violent abuses on behalf of their political sponsors."

Thus, the principal actors in electoral violence in Nigeria are identified as the unemployed youth. Many other writers on the subject agree with this view. For example, Maslow (1954, quoted by Obakhedo 2011:102) identifies poverty/unemployment as part of the factors that cause electoral violence while Aniekwe and Kushie (2011:9) find the machinery for perpetrating election violence as mostly unemployed youth who thereafter resort to the use of those arms for other social vices. Ageng'o (2009, quoted by Akanji 2011:2) puts it succinctly that, "Electoral violence has become a veritable tactic of the superrich in Nigerian politics to recruit jobless men and women to harass, intimidate and physically hurt not only political opponents but the entire society." Orji and Uzodi (2012:13) state:

> A high rate of illiteracy, unemployment and poverty is a vital sign of underdevelopment. In Nigeria a large section of the population lacks access to opportunities and resources to actualize their potentials. This situation breeds a class of economically marginalised people (mostly youths) who can be used to perpetrate electoral violence. This group of people is pliant and easily enticed by the wealthy violent entrepreneurs who sponsor most of the violent political encounters.

Marginalisation and Electoral Violence

With the above submissions, it is correct to propose marginalisation as a major remote cause of electoral violence in Nigeria; in which case marginalisation is viewed in terms of the situation where the ruling class and politicians live in affluence while the majority of Nigerians suffer neglect, unemployment and the concomitant poverty. In Nigerians thus marginalised politicians find ready tools for electoral violence. This situation bears affinity with the ancient Israelite context, even though the marginalised groups who cause violence and the terms of marginalisation differ in the two contexts. In Israel a section of the people, particularly the northern tribes, were subjected to Solomon's tax burden and the *corvee* whereas in Nigeria the marginalised group is primarily the unemployed youth. The marginalised and frustrated Israelites were the elements that led the violence on the day of Rehoboam's coronation. Just as Solomon's policies precipitated this event, so also in Nigeria there exists a connection between government behaviour and electoral violence. Hence, many have blamed marginalisation as explained above on corruption by government and politicians. The nation's resources that are supposed to be expended on the various aspects of the economy are embezzled by government functionaries and their surrogates; in this respect, names such as those of Abacha, Ibori, Maina, Alamieyesigha, have made frontline news. As projects are not funded, jobs are not created, hence the mass unemployment. As Omar (2012:9) puts it:

> We continue to report annual rates of growth of the Gross Domestic Product in excess of 7% while unemployment continues to swell. Just last month (April 2012) we were told we were now the third fastest growing economy in the world, after Mongolia and China. Yet the ranks of the unemployed continue to grow. Conservative estimates put the unemployment rate at 25%. On the average, graduates of the nation's universities and polytechnics remain unemployed four years after the National Youth Service Corps discharge.

The claim of 25% as the rate of unemployment is too conservative. The Governor of Ondo State, OlusegunMimiko, was more realistic when, on the occasion of his swearing-in for the second term in February, 2013, he put the rate of unemployment in the country at 80% (*Radio News, Adaba* 88.9 FM, Akure, Nigeria). It is also not correct to say Nigerian graduates remain unemployed for only four years after the NYSC discharge; we will be nearer to the truth to say about ten years. As the present writer put it elsewhere, "It is as if there has been a permanent embargo on employment. The number of graduates roaming the streets desperately in search of jobs increases yearly by the thousands. Groups of retirees and retrenched workers have joined the number of beggars on the streets" (Ademiluka 2007:37). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2011, the rate of unemployment rose from 11.9% in 2005 to 23.9% in 2011 with states like Yobe, Zamfara and Niger recording as high as 60.6%, 42.6% and 39.4% unemployment rate respectively (see Orji & Uzodi 2012:29). Unemployment translates to the current unprecedented poverty in the land. Nigerians have been subjected to abject poverty. Many people agree that less than 1% of the populace is living in affluence while the rest are condemned to poverty, oppression and deprivation. The National Bureau of Statistics puts the percentage of Nigerians living in absolute poverty (i.e. those who can afford only the bare essentials of food, shelter and clothing) at 54.7% in 2004, 60.9% in 2010 and 69% in 2012 (see Orji & Uzodi 2012:29; Omar 2012:10). In 2011, more than 70 percent of Nigerians lived below the poverty line of US$1 per day. Thus, poverty index in Nigeria has been on the increase despite huge revenues accruing to the government (Danjibo 2011:136).

Thus, as it was in the days of Solomon in Israel, the Nigerian society is replete with marginalised and frustrated people, thereby providing a breeding ground for all categories of people available for electoral violence. It is therefore no surprise that violence has always characterized elections in Nigeria, and the people who are usually engaged in it are mostly the marginalised youth.

Conclusion

This study interprets the secession narrative (1 Kgs. 12:1-24) in the context of electoral violence in Nigeria. The Deuteronomists' account of the secession of northern Israel with the attendant violence links the event to Solomon's policies of oppression and marginalisation. The northern tribal leaders, representing their oppressed and marginalised people, spearheaded the revolt and violence that led to the death of Adoniram, the coordinator of the *corvee*. Similarly, in Nigeria the principal actors in electoral violence, which has characterised elections since independence, are the marginalised youth usually hired by the politicians. The research thus reveals that marginalisation can always be a remote cause of violence; therefore curbing electoral violence must necessarily always involve addressing the problem of marginalisation. In Nigeria, this means addressing the problem of youth unemployment. Admittedly, successive governments have instituted many programmes towards youth employment and poverty alleviation but, unfortunately, they have achieved very little in the lives of Nigerians because much of the funds provided for them is usually diverted to private pockets (Ademiluka 2013:17). Hence, youth employment and poverty alleviation programmes must always be done along with the fight against corruption.

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Rwanda, Auschwitz, Shechem – Locations of Violence in Africa, Europe and in the Bible

Stephanie Feder

Abstract

This article examines what place is, how meanings get connected with places and how places become locations of violence. The biblical Shechem, Rwanda and Auschwitz are presented as places of violence. An analysis of Genesis 34 will show how the violent experience of Dinah's rape is connected with Shechem. A Rwandese short story, similar to Genesis 34, will lead to nowaday places of violence. Auschwitz as a violent place will be presented as a third example. Eventually, it will be asked how places of violence can be changed into places of reconciliation.

Introduction

What images come to your mind when you think of the following places: Rwanda, Auschwitz, Hiroshima and Robben Island?

These places are linked to the experience of violence. Place and actions are intensively connected and cannot easily be erased from the people's minds. If I told someone in Germany to travel to Rwanda, people would be surprised, astonished and probably even advise me not to go there. Although the genocide, in which around 800,000 people (Johannsen 2014), mainly Tutsi, died, happened 20 years ago, the country is still associated with violence.

Auschwitz is another example: it is connected with the Nazi concentration camp in which approximately 1.5 million people, mainly Jews, died (Böhnisch 2005). I knew Auschwitz only in association with the concentration camp. But do people live in Auschwitz? Anna Sommer was one of the citizens of Oświęcim, as it is called in Polish. She writes in her article *Auschwitz today*:

> "Although, hundreds of thousands of people visited Auschwitz since its liberation in 1945, there is nothing in downtown Oświęcim that makes it as a major tourist destination. Though, history of Auschwitz and its proximity to the town of Oświęcim exerts a profound impact on the lives of its inhabitants and even the decisions we make regarding our future career."
>
> (Sommer 2011:88)

It becomes obvious that a town, a place, is permanently affected by the violence that happens within it. Names of places are synonyms for their history. A history like the one of Auschwitz can hardly be ignored when hearing its name.

Place – a definition

In his article on "Place", the geographer Tim Cresswell (2009:169) distinguishes between place, location, locale and the sense of place. A sense of place includes the emotions and feelings which awake when thinking of a place. Some of these emotions can be individual; others are shared – mainly through media – as it is with Rwanda for Europeans, for example.

Furthermore, "places are often recognized in terms of their material structures which come to stand for the place." (Cresswell 2009:169) Not only streets, shops, sidewalks and parks are parts of these material structures, but also vehicles passing through them. The material structures can be regarded in their entirety but details of the material structures of a place may represent the whole as well. This is, for example, easy to imagine in the case of Paris and the Eiffel Tower but what would it be for Rwanda and Auschwitz? For Auschwitz, it is probably the tracks and the gate with the inscription "Arbeit macht frei". For Rwanda, it is perhaps the church in Nyamata which today is a memorial site.

But how do places get their special meaning? Cresswell's (2009:170) answer is: "Places are practiced. People do things in place. What they do, in part, is responsible for the meanings that the place might have." That is why places have names according to what happened there, like treaties and battles.

Another important aspect mentioned by Cresswell (2009:169) is that the meanings of places "are never fixed once and for all." New representations can overwrite the last meaning of a place allowing another, different meaning, to dominate. If we think of a continuity of different meanings connected to one place, we can speak of palimpsest as was done by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin in *Post-Colonial Studies. The Key Concepts.* They write: "History examines place as palimpsest on which the traces of successive inscriptions form the complex experience of place" (Ashcroft 2007:165).

Rwanda is unique in that the genocide is not only associated with certain places or towns, but also with the whole country (at least in Europe).

Only well-informed people will associate the genocide directly with Nymata, Ntarama or Murambi.

Bartholomäus Grill, an Africa correspondent from Germany, remembers the genocide in Rwanda and cites the 34 year old Nturo who survived the massacre in Murambi: "I sometimes wonder that the grass is still growing, that life continues." (Grill 2014) Nturo was asked to guide visitors through Murambi "but everytime he declined. He built a high wall of protection around himself, but it crumbles every time he comes back to the place of death." (Grill 2014) With the place come memories. Those memories are preserved in a memorial center, as it is the case with Murambi and other places in Rwanda. Through a historical unforgettable occasion, the place receives a meaning which sticks to it. Time, history and a special location are inseparably connected.

If asked to imagine a place in the Bible associated with violence – what comes into one's mind?

Probably not Shechem, or Sychar, as it is called in the New Testament, or Nablus as the place is called nowadays. Nevertheless, I shall show that Shechem is a place of violence in the Old Testament: violence is done to Dinah, Jacobs only mentioned daughter; it is done to the people of Shechem, and it is done to Joseph when he was sold by his brothers to the caravan of the Ishmaelites and the Midianite merchants. Shechem also plays an important role in the renewal of the covenant in the book of Joshua. Furthermore, the book of Joshua ends with the burial of Joseph's bones in Shechem (he had been buried in Egypt, but his bones were later returned to the Promised Land).

All these aspects cannot be examined here, but the story of Dinah, focusing in particular on the meaning of Shechem as place of violence, will be closely examined.

Analysis of Genesis 34

In Genesis 33, after the reconciliation of Jacob and Esau, it is told that Jacob reached Shechem in Canaan. He camped nearby and bought the land where he lived from the sons of Hamor.

Chapter 34 directly starts with Dinah, who was mentioned earlier in Genesis 30:21 as the only daughter of Leah and Jacob. Interestingly, Dinah is introduced here as the daughter of Leah, and therefore only indirectly as the daughter of Jacob.

Dinah wants to see the daughters of the land. But she meets Shechem who is not only the place of the story but also a person in it. He sees her and rapes her. Shechem loves Dinah and convinces his father to ask her clan for permission to marry her. Hamor and Jacob start a negotiation. But when Simeon and Levi, the sons of Jacob, return from the field, they take over the negotiation and tell Hamor and Shechem that they will have to be circumcised otherwise marriage would be impossible. Hamor and Shechem tell the male inhabitants of Shechem to get circumcised. As soon as they are circumcised, however, and suffering from the circumcision's fever, Levi and Simeon enter the town and kill all its male inhabitants. The women and children are taken and the town looted. Dinah is taken from Shechem's house and brought back to the family. Jacob admonishes his sons for their deed in Shechem. Chapter 34 ends with a (rhetorical) question by Levi and Simeon: "Should our sister be treated like a whore?" (NRSV, Genesis 34:31)

Genesis 34 can be divided into five scenes (Scholz 2000:133): verses 1-3: the rape; verses 4-7: the reaction; verses 8-24: the negotiations; verses 25-29: the killing; and finally verses 30-31: Jacob, Simeon and Levi.

While reading the places in Genesis 34, it is interesting to realise that Shechem is both the name of a place and the name of a figure. Although it is quite clear in the text when "Shechem" is reffered to as the person, or as the town, it nevertheless seems as if the town has been personified. The person Shechem represents his whole town with its inhabitants. His actions are identified as the deeds of the town.

Shechem means "back" or "shoulder", but is mainly used in combination with the town Shechem, which lay in between mountains, so that "shoulder" or "back" may refer to the geographical position of the town and thus the two terms become geographical phenomena.

Although Shechem was translated here from a Hebrew root into English, Shechem does not signify a Hebrew place, e.g. a town or city, but a Canaanite one. The combination of place and person with the same name indicates that the town is possessed by the "others", by a foreign people. Ashcroft (2007:165) writes: "To name a place is to announce discursive control over it." The Shechemites have discursive control even though the end of chapter 33 tells that Jacob bought the land from them. A closer look indicates that Jacob did not purchase Shechem but instead the campsite close to the town.

As mentioned above, the place Shechem is a crucial place within Genesis, especially in the life of Jacob. Shechem plays an important role in the Joseph cycle, too, since it is the place where Joseph is sold by his brothers to the Ishmaelites and Midianites and where he finds his final rest.

This is an example of a palimpsest about which I spoke before: the meaning of the place changes and new senses are inscribed on to the same place.

Along with Shechem other areas are referred to in Genesis 34: region, land, field, town, house, and the city gate. These areas are imprecise; they could describe areas or spaces almost anywhere. The narrator refers to special physical aspects but no unique feature of the town is mentioned; its identification would be difficult.

Nevertheless, the city gate is an important space in the story. It is the border between the town and the fields, the Shechemites and the family of Jacob. Traditionally, it is also the border between civilization and wilderness. The negotiation between Jacob and Hamor and Shechem probably starts outside the town, since it is said: “And Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him.” (Genesis 34:6, NRSV) Furthermore, the two sons of Jacob come from the field. In order to inform the people of their town, Hamor and Shechem move towards the city gate (Genesis 34:20) where they hold their speech and convince their people. A border place is chosen to bring the message, which seems to overcome the borders of the mind.

Interestingly, in verse 24 the city gate is mentioned again: “And all who went out of the city gate heeded Hamor and his son Shechem; and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.” (NRSV) The men went out of the gate (!); not into the town. They went out – no return is reported but it is told indirectly that they were back in town on the third day. Then Simeon and Levi break through the border and enter the town. The city gate is not mentioned again. The enclosure of the town is only marked by the city gate and is therefore incomplete. Nevertheless, it is clearly marked what is in and out of the town, and when the border is breached. Only the last episode of the story leaves us placeless: There is no hint when and where Jacob speaks to his sons.

The rape of Dinah and the meaning of place

In the first two verses we have a similar placeless situation: the place where Dinah is raped is neither mentioned nor described. It seems to take place in a vacuum. Only in the process of the story does it become obvious that Dinah lives in the house of Shechem. It is like a non-space (*Unort* in German), an *u-topia*.

Both in German and in English, *Utopia* hints at dreaming for the future, though it seems unlikely that such dreams would become real. Such an *Utopia* is not meant in Genesis 34. It is the opposite of future and the opposite of what a woman like Dinah wished for herself. By locating the rape in a non-space, it is as if the rape never happened. Things and events only exist when they can be located. As Cresswell (2009:170), with the help of Aristotle puts it: "Place comes first because everything that exists has to have a place – has to be located." By not locating the rape, it never took place.

In exegetical literature about Genesis 34 one finds many scholars who state that Dinah was not raped and may even have had consensual sex with Shechem. This idea is underpinned by the way the narrator reports the rape of Dinah: he does not mention the place of rape and therefore questions himself whether it really happened this way. Many efforts are taken to transform the story of violence into a story of love, as verses 3 and 4 show.

Besides, the text does not stint on verbs of movement: to go, to go out or, to come. In this regard, the verb *yatsa* is of particular importance since it is used for Dinah in the very beginning of chapter 34, for Hamor in verse 6 and finally for Dinah and her brothers when their leave Shechem's house in verse 26.

Dinah's movement is described with a critical perspective. Why does she need to leave the camp? Does she endanger herself by doing so? It is the only reported active movement by a woman in this story. All other movements are done or organised by men. Ron Clark (2006:4) refers to Genesis Rabbah in which the behavior of Dinah is seen as an improper action, even as an action of a prostitute.

Opposite to the verbs of movement, the verb *yashab* – to dwell, appears in the text. Whereas Jacob and his family move continuously, Hamor and Shechem try to convince them to stay and dwell. Only when Simeon and Levi negotiate with Shechem and Hamor, do they pretend to settle and dwell in the land. In the end, they do not settle there. Ironically, at the very end, Jacob's son Joseph is buried on his land nearby Shechem and so "settles" there permanently.

If it is here argued that Shechem indicates a place of violence, we should also look closely at the reported violence in the text. Usually, the focus is on the rape of Dinah and the applied force. This aspect will be addressed first. Secondly, the violence suffered by the Shechemites will be emphasised, and their experience of violence will be further looked into. Finally, it can then be determined whether Shechem really constitutes a place of violence, and what violence is remembered.

First, what really happened to Dinah has been discussed over centuries of biblical scholarship. In verse 2 it is said that "Shechem [...] saw her, he seized her and lay with her by force." (NRSV) Or: "Shechem [...] saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her." (KJV) Or, as Susanne Scholz (2000:135-136) translates in her study "Rape Plots": "But-saw her Shechem [...]. And-he-took her, and-he laid-her, and he-raped her." In translating the verse the problem of force occurs: Did Dinah have sex with Shechem voluntarily? How do we translate the verb *anah*? Ron Clark (2006:5) clearly states:

> ענה (defiled) indicated an act of humiliation and shame. [...] and also suggests oppression and violation of another human's rights. While a common word for intercourse שכב was used the surrounding verbs indicate a violation of Dinah's personal rights and sexual exploitation.

He refers to the story of Tamar and Amnon in 2 Samuel 13 where the same verbs occur.

Therefore, to deny the rape of Dinah means not to take the victim seriously. The text is told from an androcentric point of view and therefore reads through the eyes of the males (cf. Blyth 2009:485), for example, Shechem, Jacob and the brothers, and not through those of Dinah. A hermeneutic of suspicion frustrates reading with the grain of the text and takes the rape of Dinah seriously.

Violence against the Shechemites

The force used against the inhabitants of Shechem is hardly regarded in the text. The reason is similar to that deduced in the reading of the first aspect: the reader reads with the grain of the text, in this case with Jacob and his family. Although Jacob disapproves of what his sons are doing, as becomes clear in verse 30, he does not stop their actions. He is silent from the moment his sons enter the scene until the Shechemites are killed.

Comparable to verse 2, a series of three verbs stress the action of the two brothers: they took, they came, they killed. These actions are repeated in verse 26 but in a different order: they killed, they took, they went out. (Cf. Scholz 2000:162) Although Simeon and Levi got all they desired, the violation of Shechem is not over. Verse 27 refers to the "sons of Jacob" who came and "plundered the city" (NRSV). Then follows a long list of what they took: animals, probably food, their material goods and eventually even "all their little ones and their wives" (NRSV). If Shechem, the person, and Shechem, the city, are identical, it is not unlikely that not only Shechem but also the people of the whole city are killed or taken captive.

The cruel deed done to Dinah is avenged hundredfold by her brothers. Simeon and Levi's revenge does not undo the rape of Dinah. The analogy of the three verbs in verses 2, 25 and 26 indicates that the brothers are not humiliated any longer, but that they now humiliate. By killing Shechem, they killed the whole city. The same happened with them: by raping Dinah, the whole family was defiled. The circle of violence only begins.

The story ends with Simeon and Levi irritably asking a question: "Should our sister be treated like a whore?" This is a rhetorical question to which no answer is given – but nevertheless expected. Clark (2006:8) compares this final question with the end of the book of Jonah where a rhetorical question is asked by God. It gets the reader involved in the story and to find his own answer in form of another question: was it right to kill the Shechemites in order to avenge the rape of Dinah?

Whereas the book of Jonah ends with a pedagogical question from God directed at Jonah to hint at God's mercy, the question in Genesis 34 is more complex since an act of violence has to be justified. First and last words always have special meaning, so one wonders whether the dominating perspective of Simeon and Levi are necessarily the final perspective and as such the ongoing one.

Véronique Tadjo: Anastase and Anastasie

After dealing with a biblical story, another text deals with the violence which happened in Rwanda. It is the story "Anastase and Anastasie" which the Ivorian author Véronique Tadjo published in her book *The Shadow of Imana.Travels in the Heart of Rwanda* (2002). It is a dissatisfying story, since the first and the last parts thereof are not directly linked. The story is told from different points of view: first, the sadness of Anastase who feels lost and empty because of the death of Anastasie, his sister. The perspective changes in the next section when Anastasie now tells how much she suffers from the rape at her brother's hands. Anastase wrote a letter to her and hope she will forgive him but she thinks "How dared he write those lines, believing that they might still have something in common?" The story ends with a note about the death of Anastasie:

> "Officially, Anastasie died several years later towards the end of April 1994. [...] Despite her youth, Anastasie belonged to a resistance group which held off the militia for several weeks. The militia had to call for reinforcements of soldiers and police to defeat them. The residents had joined together to erect barricades to prevent the attackers entering the area. They had fought night and day. But the killers finally infiltrated the area. Houses, schools, churches were set on fire. The killing began. All the Tutsis and those who had tried to defend them were massacred." (Tadjo 2002:67)

Véronique Tadjo, who grew up on the Ivory Coast, lived in several African countries and is now professor for French studies in Johannesburg, South Africa. She came to Rwanda in 1996. In an interview she explains why:

> "There [in Rwanda] I was a part of a project involving some dozen African writers [...] at Lille's Fest' Africa festival in 1998, when we were to reside in Rwanda and respond to its recent genocide [...]. We felt it was important to reflect on what had really happened. So we accepted to go there, with the only condition being that we should respond as writers – not like the many journalists or historians who dealt with the genocide, but in our capacity as pure writers." (Gray 2002:114-115)

Tadjo's story left me perplexed. Why the rape? What did the rape have to do with the resistance against the militia? As Campbell (2010:172) writes in his dissertation on Tadjo's work with special focus on "Anastase and Anastasie", one "finds at least one satisfying answer in an allegorical reading." The missing link of the rape story and the story of the murder of a group of Tutsi and defenders is an allegorical one. Like Anastasie tries to resist her brother's actions and finally gives in, she and the group of Tutsi resist the militia and were eventually defeated and murdered. Her "first death" (Tadjo 2002:66) comes with the experience of rape and her imprisonment in her defiled body. The second death happens by the handy of the militia.

There are many links to the story of Dinah: the rape of a young girl, a brother involved, a massacre of a community or town, a house in which the rape takes place, the motive of love by the perpetrator, and even the sentences said by Anastase: "Shut up and don't move, or I'll hurt you!

I'll cut you up. You think I haven't seen you flirting with boys? You are behaving like a prostitute!" (*Ibid.*:65) These sentences are reminding of Simon and Levi's rhetorical question at the end of Genesis 34.

The main difference between these stories are the points of view: whereas Dinah's perspective is only taken in one verse in Genesis 34, Anastasie's point of view is taken several times so that her struggle with her rape is directly presented to the reader. It seems as if Dinah's story is updated by Anastasie's.

In Anastasie's story place also plays an important role. The place of violence is her body. It is described from Anastasie's point of view as "the prison of her flesh", (*Ibid.*:63) in which she is trapped. "She no longer recognised the inside of her body, felt a stranger to this heavy mass which was crushing her spirit." (*Ibid.*) Through the rape her body was "inhabited by Evil. There was no room in her life for frivolity any more" (*Ibid.*:65). In order to leave her body, which is a place that reminds her every morning of the violence which happened to her, she tries to "revisit her favourite places, re-create special moments" (*Ibid.*:63).

Her bed in which she lies the whole day becomes her place of refuge despite at the same time, being the place of her rape. Her brother came into her room. Anastasie's room is without enclosure. Though her brother tries to rape her secretly, and therefore silently, it is not said that he shut a door. The rape happens in an open room without any borders.

Eventually, "she no longer existed" (*Ibid.*:66). This is in contrast to Dinah, where the rape does not exist because of the missing place. In this story, the place is described, and thus the rape is not denied. But Anastasie's existence, the inhabition of her body, is endangered, and finally she dies within her body.

The story ends with the attempt of the militia to enter the town in which Anastasie was one of the members of a resistance group. The inhabitants defend themselves and their town but in the end they are crushed down by the invaders. Unlike in Genesis 34, in this story the town defends itself, but eventually, both Shechem and the nameless town of Anastasie are destroyed and slaughtered. Anastasie's body was a border between her inner self and the world outside. She tried to defend her body but she could not – her first death. The same happened with the town. Barricades became the border between the militia and the inhabitants of the town. They fought but they lost – her second death.

Both stories report the single most traumatic experience of a woman: rape. Both stories report the massacre of a town. In the biblical story, the rape of Dinah somehow serves as a justification for the killing of the Shechemites. In the story of Anastasie, there is no such justification or inner logic. However, both places become stigmatised places of rape and violence where life is paused and their storylines follow the same order.

Auschwitz

In the German context an important unforgotten place of violence is Auschwitz. About this place Ruth Klüger, a survivor of Auschwitz, writes:

> "I never went back to Auschwitz as a tourist and never will. Not in this life. To me it is no place for a pilgrimage. [...] The place which I saw, smelled and feared, and which now has been turned into a museum, has nothing to do with the woman I am. And yet in the eyes of many, Auschwitz is a point of origin for survivors." (Klüger 2001:111-112)

She embossed the word "timescape" ("Zeitschaft"):

> But the concentration camp as a memorial site? Landscape, seascape – there should be a word like *timescape* to indicate the nature of a place in time, that is, at a certain time, neither before nor after. (*Ibid.*:67)

The place is actually tied with time and a specific experience. The sense of place is changeable and therefore the idea of Zeitschaften (timescapes) is the correct expression for what was earlier called a *palimpsest*. Eventually, that is why we do not associate violence with Shechem and why places of violence in the past will fade if they are not remembered. It shows that places do not have to be places of violence forever, but that the process of remembrance will find a way of past and future, of old and new, of violence and reconciliation.

From places of violence to places of reconciliation

Places of violence can shift into places of remembrance and reconciliation. This is true for Auschwitz where young volunteers of Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste work as guides in the former concentration camp, collect the material of contemporary witnesses, and help to organize tours for young people coming to Auschwitz.

This is also true for Rwanda. The United Nations promote two ways of reconciliation: First, "justice after the genocide" in terms of "the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the national court system, and the Gacaca courts." (UN 2014) Second, programs for reconciliation between the inhabitants of Rwanda are offered, such as *Ingando* which is a program for peace education. (*Ibid.*)

For the biblical story of Dinah there is no such reconciliation. Following the chronology of the Bible, Shechem at least once more becomes a place of violence when Joseph is sold there by his brothers. The main story of Shechem ends with the burial of Joseph in Shechem, and as a reader, one wonders why this place is chosen for the final burial place. Isn't it an act of ignorance when Joseph is buried at the place where he suffered so much? The whole Joseph story is about reconciliation, and it may well be that the place of Joseph's burial is the final sign of reconciliation with his brothers. Taking the last argument into account, it shows that a transformation of places is possible, faster than we think. As Cresswell (2009:175) writes: "Place is produced through action and action is produced in place through a constant and reiterative process." By changing the actions the place may be transformed and thus another sense of place can be imagined.

Conclusion: *Heterotopoi*

I wish to conclude with the idea of *heterotopoi,* a concept invented by Michel Foucault and refined by the German theologian Hans-Joachim Sander. A *heterotopos* is an "other place":

> [i]t names a place, which is real, on which a discourse is imposed, a discourse which is precarious and which makes an issue out of that what is excluded in certain utopias. The utopia's arrangement of things is exceeded so that the heterotopos is raised. The cemetery is such a place.
>
> (Sander 2008:16)

Heterotopoi force discourses which cannot be avoided but want to be avoided. *Heterotopoi* are, for example, Lampedusa, the Tahrir Square and Guantanamo. Sander also refers to Auschwitz as a *Heterotopos*. Rwanda is one as well, and the biblical place of Shechem can be seen as an "other-place", too. Sander states that the Bible is full of *heterotopoi* and not necessarily *utopias*. In the New Testament Jesus went to these *heterotopoi*. He did not avoid them but sought for them. Sander writes (2008:9):

> God makes himself visible at heterotopias such as in exile, in the destroyed Jerusalem, by the cross on Golgotha, at the empty tomb, within the quarreling community in Corinth. [...] You may need spiritual strength to expose yourself to the heterotopoi. They alienate but at the same time they have a serious potential because they break the utopias with which we like to build our big and our small worlds.

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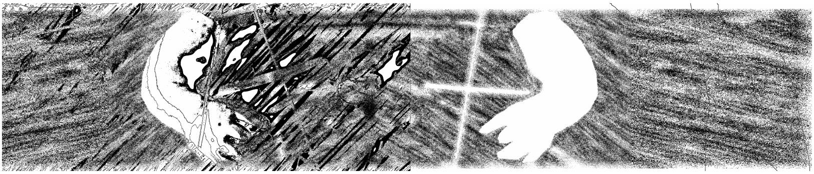

The Bible and faith-based Homophobia/Homomisia* in Africa

A case study on the use of biblical texts in the post-colonial war on gay people

Joachim Kügler

Abstract

This article focuses on the use of the Bible in the campaign against gay people in Africa. The basic source is an anti-gay song of Paul Dzampah, a Christian singer-songwriter in Accra, Ghana. The song shows a multi-layer image of homosexuality which can be seen typical for post-colonial Africa's hybrid cultures. Traditional views are hybridised with Western concepts and the whole is integrated in the struggle for an African identity characterised by ethical purity and religio-cultural independence from the West. The article states that the influence of biblical texts should not be overestimated. The Bible is used selectively as an additional authority but the anti-gay concept is not deriving from an interpretation of specific biblical texts.

Introduction

One of the most obvious phenomena relating to the Bible and violence is the global movement which can be labelled as the "God-hates-fags"-movement. Activities against sexual minorities are globally spread and can be found in societies as different as the USA and Iran, Russia and Uganda. *Homomisia* is not necessarily related with religious ideas, but in many countries it is clearly a faith-based (or at least faith-related) concept. In the United States it is a special topic for conservative Christians; in Saudi Arabia and other Islamic countries it is even backed by state laws which root in the religious tradition, 'Sharia'. As the – traditionally Christian – societies in the West tend to separate secular laws from religious traditions they do not give much legal basis for homomisia. Antidiscrimination regulations tend to protect the right of sexual minorities – even in countries where conservative Christianities are very strong, e.g. the USA.

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* *Homomisia* (= hate against homosexuals) seems to be a better word than "homophobia" (= fear of homosexuals) as the latter one may be understood as a psychological excuse of hatred, discrimination and even killing others. (Cf. Gunda 2010:64f.)

The separation of secular laws and religious traditions is typical for those societies influenced by the philosophy of the Enlightenment, Europe's evolution to religious neutrality of the state since the 18th century. This philosophy also developed the idea of general human rights; rights which are independent from state, culture, religion, sex and status. It is obvious that during the 19th and 20th centuries, especially in the era of colonialism, European societies have not been a convincing example for the impact of human rights on politics, but that fact cannot expel the idea of human rights itself. On the contrary, it proves the necessity of the idea.

It took two world wars and the unprecedented crime of *Shoa* until my own country, Germany, allowed the concept of human rights to find its way into the constitution and into political practice. And even after that this concept was primarily focussed on political freedom, whilst sexual rights were left unattended to for a long time. In fact, even political rights were mainly interpreted in a nationalist way. Every country in the West thus focussed on ensuring the rights of its own citizens. The rights of migrants' for example, were completely disregarded. Even nowadays only a few western politicians keep in mind that the global economic injustices and the restrictive migration policies are brutal violations of human rights. If an average politician in Germany is asked why the right to live in this country is a *national*[1] right and not a global *human* right, there exists a high probability that they simply would not understand your question.

It is obvious that the political reality of human rights often is no more than public pretence without substance. It is, however, equally obvious that some progress has been made over the centuries, and the fragmentary character of human rights practice be no reason to give up the concept as such.

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[1] Nowadays 'national' must be understood in a broader sense. The permission of residence is granted with only slight restrictions to persons from the European Union and some wealthy countries, while normal citizens of 'poor' countries are kept away by highly restrictive visa regulations.

Seen from the outside, it seems that in post-colonial African societies the topic of poverty and injustice is dominating the life of ordinary people while the political discourse is often dealing with other topics. This might be linked to the specific problems of post-colonial states. More or less half a century after gaining independence it is more and more difficult for the African elites to explain all the misery by blaming the impact of colonialism. Thus it is inviting to direct the public attention to "previously advanced" minorities. The "othering" of homemade problems has always been a favourite strategy – more often than not a politically successful one. Germans are experts in this since the time of Hitler's strategy to "solve" Germany's problems by killing the Jews. As an African leader – Zimbabwe's all time messiah-president – proudly labelled himself as "Hitler",[2] it may be not too farfetched to interpret the kill-the-gay-rally taking place in some African countries within this paradigm. The purpose of this article is, however, quite modest. I shall not attempt to present an overall exposition of the sociological mechanism of homomisia. Instead, I shall present only a brief case study by analysing an example from Ghana, the Christian song *Abomisexuality*.

Some biographical notes on the author

The song I will deal with was written by Paul Dzampah, a Ghanaian singer-songwriter based in Accra. Together with other songs, it is well documented since I had the honour to edit them in one of our previous BiAS volumes (cf. Kügler 2014). As I gave a biographical introduction on Paul in this edition (Kügler 2014:8-27) this will not be necessary to repeat here at length. Just short information will be given:

Paul Kosi Dzampah was born in 1965 at Kpando, a small town located in Ghana's Volta Region. He studied at Legon University (Accra Region) and graduated in Linguistics and French. At the same time he learned the German language at the Goethe Institute, Accra, up to C 2 Level. After Paul completed his university studies, he worked as a part-time French teacher at the Regional Maritime Academy in Accra (1995-1997).

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[2] In 2003 Mugabe told journalists: "I am still the Hitler of the time, [...] This Hitler has only one objective, justice for his own people, sovereignty for his people, recognition of the independence of his people, and their right to their resources. If that is Hitler, then let me be a Hitler tenfold. Ten times, that is what we stand for." (Thornycroft 2003)

Since 1998 he is teaching German at the Goethe Institute in Accra. In the years from 1999 to 2004 he worked as an officer for the Ghana Prisons Service. Nowadays, Paul's main job is teaching German at Goethe. Paul is married and a father of four children, two daughters and two sons. Dzampah's religious biography is characterised by several changes. Born in a Catholic family, Dzampah started his religious life as a Catholic, but he became an Anglican when his family left the Catholic Church and went over to the Anglican Church in the 1980s. As was general the case, the children joined their parents in their shift. Later Paul began to look for his own personal faith. He found his way to the Pentecostal movement – quite typical for higher educated urban youth at the time. In 1985, at the age of 20, Dzampah received the Pentecostal baptism with the Holy Spirit and he also shared in the Pentecostal practice of *glossolalia*. In accordance with Pentecostal theology, Paul understands speaking in tongues as speaking in a heavenly language, the tongue of the angels, which is regarded as superior to human language; therefore he relates *glossolalia* primarily to 1 Cor. 13:1 and 14:14-19. Despite his highly impressive experiences with Pentecostal spirituality, Paul left from his church. He thought that many Pentecostals were more occupied with collecting money than with prayer, and the "gospel of money-making" was not what he was looking for in his spiritual life. Leaving Pentecostalism behind, Paul decided to lead a Christian life without any specific church membership.

When I met the artist-teacher-prophet in 2013 – during an excursion with students of mine to Accra, Tema, and Ashaiman – I was deeply impressed by his spirituality, which allowed him to lead Christian life beyond making money with his religious gifts. Paul's Christian way of life was also fascinating to me as it transcended the denominational competition, so typical for post-modern Christianity in Africa, with all the boasting and self-praise of prophets, apostles, bishops, and healers. Particularly, his concept of a Christianity which is "not too churchy" made me consider editing some of his texts. When the first part arrived via e-mail, I was surprised – even somewhat shocked – about the harsh words against homosexual persons uttered by this man otherwise so friendly and peaceful. Although I indicated to Paul that our book series usually has a quite friendly attitude towards sexual minorities, I refrained from any censorship. And to my surprise, when he handed back his texts after proof-reading the part against homosexuals had even been expanded and currently it is so large that the reader might think homosexuality is the most important topic in contemporary African Christianity – a problem even more urgent than poverty, corruption and destruction of the bio-sphere. Compared with the few, and short biblical texts mentioning same-sex acts the enormous stress put on this topic at least is astonishing.

Dzampah's image of homosexuality in contrast to Western political correctness

The prime source for analysing his attitude towards homosexuality is Dzampah's song *Abomisexuality* (Kügler 2014:51-90).[3] As the text is too long for a detailed exegesis, just the main aspects of its image of homosexual practice will be analysed. According to the song, homosexuality is characterised as follows:

It is

- a phenomenon mainly involving **men**,
- a matter of **choice**,
- a way of physical **violence** damaging the penetrated person,
- an expression of social **hierarchy** (connected with economic difference between rich/powerful/adult and poor/powerless/young,
- an act **humiliating/dishonoring** the penetrated person.

It is obvious that this description is quite different from what Western societies would label as 'homosexuality'. From19th century, until the "sexual revolution" in the second half of the 20th century homosexuality was viewed as a sexual orientation which was abnormal, a kind of disease which should be cured, if possible. According to the various opinions about the origin of this disease the best treatment was seen either as re-education, specific drugs or psychological treatment. Quite exceptional for a disease, in most countries homosexual acts were also forbidden by law (in Germany, e.g., the famous § 175 StGB/ penal code) and were punished by the state. Since the 1970s the view changed and homosexuality was seen as a more or less unchangeable sexual orientation which should be allowed among consenting adults. Rape and child abuse, of course, are still forbidden and sanctioned but the gender of the involved persons does not matter.

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[3] Quotation of this song will be rendered as: *Abomisexuality* with page numbers.

In summary, Western political correctness currently conceives "homosexuality" as an orientation/life style. It is connected with sexual identity and cannot or should not be changed, except by the persons themselves. It is a human right to be sexually different from the majority and the state should not interfere in sexual matters as long as the human rights of other persons are not touched by homosexual persons.[4] Dzampah's concept of homosexuality seems to be close to the minority (or at least politically incorrect) view in Western countries which still sees homosexuality as something that should be forbidden and/or cured. Yet, similarities may not be as big as they seem at first sight. For example, the matter of sexual role is only seldom mentioned in Western public discourse. When Klaus Wowereit (later Berlin's *Regierender Bürgermeister* [mayor], 2001-2014) confessed publicly that "I am gay and this is ok!"[5], there was no public discussion of whether he is 'top', 'bottom' or 'versatile'. Contrary to this Western position, the matter of sexual role is, in general, regarded as extremely important in African discourse about homosexuality. No surprise, therefore, that Dzampah also focuses almost exclusively on the penetrating man, whilst regarding the penetrated mainly as the helpless victim. This is only one indicator that his homomisia is not simply a copy of a Western original. I agree with Adriaan van Klinken who convincingly nuanced

> "arguments that explain African controversies regarding homosexuality in terms of exported American cultural wars, proposing an alternative reading of these controversies as emerging from conflicting visions of modernity in Africa" (Van Klinken 2014: 259).

Although it is clear that postcolonial African views of homosexuality are predominantly influenced by Western colonialism,[6] a proper understanding of Dzampah's homomisia cannot be achieved when his specific African context is ignored.

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[4] In order to protect non-consenting persons, the legal sanctions for rape (in marriage also) and child abuse were even made more rigorous in most Western countries. The gender of the involved persons does not matter anymore.

[5] German: "Ich bin schwul und das ist auch gut so!". Wowereit's outing was in all probability motivated by political reasons. Running for his first term in Berlin, he successfully tried to avoid that right-wing opponents could play with the topic. (Cf. Wikipedia 2015, Klaus Wowereit).

[6] Until today this influence is resulting in the different penal sanctions put on homosexuality. While Anglophone countries usually preserve the rigorous regulations of British colonial government, francophone Ivory Coast never had such regulations as the French colonialists were not so much interested in the topic. (Cf. Aldrich 2003; Engender/Oxfam 2009).

The African background of Dzampah's concept

In the cultural context of a modern African country such as Ghana, Dzampah's attitude towards homosexuality is not as surprising as it is from a Western perspective. Research done in the last decades suggests that the whole idea of homosexuality coined in 19th century Europe may not be fully adequate for the African situation, which is characterised by a high pluriformity (cf. Murray & Roscoe 1998; Murray 2000). Due to the fact that in Africa sexual activity between men "is most often not associated with a homosexual identity, but men having sex with men usually have sex with women as well, get married, and have children" (ARWPS 84, 2005, Abstract), some authors simply speak of "men having sex with men" (MSM) as, e.g., the World Bank report (ARWPS 84, 2005) does. The authors of the World Bank report define MSM as including "all males who engage in same gender sexual relationships, including boys and adolescents" (ARWPS 84, 2005: ii). In this article the definition will, however, be changed insofar as I substitute "sexual relationships" with "sexual encounters". In the context given here, it is necessary to use a broad definition which includes all MSM by leaving open several aspects, e.g., the existence of a personal relationship, the number of sexual encounters, and also the number of partners implied. This broader definition of MSM includes men who identify themselves as gay, "born this way" (cf. Van Klinken & Phiri 2015), as well as the boy who is raped by an elder neighbour boy, and the "gay-for-pay" youngster browsing the internet in search of a "sugar daddy"[7] to bring him out of the high-density-suburbs of Greater Accra, or at least helps him to have a better life there. It includes the man who is striving for a long-term-relationship with a male partner as well as the married man paying young men for penetrating him from time to time. When the word "homosexuality" is used here, I consider this in the broad sense of the MSM-concept.

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[7] The 'sugar daddy' phenomenon of course is not limited to MSM. Cf. Feder & West 2013: 21f., where Gerald West interprets Boas in the book of Ruth as a "sugar daddy": wealthy, powerful men helping women to survive or live better and require gratefulness/love/sex as a reward.

Due to several factors, among which the societal pressure on non-accepted sexual behaviour maybe an important one, homosexuality in modern Africa often is characterised by phenomena that would be punishable in Western countries too. These things may always have existed in Ghana as they did in most countries, but people seemed to live better with public silence on sexuality in general (cf. *Abomination*: 66), and specifically on homosexuality, which "did not exist" in societal consciousness. As the wall of silence is crumbling more and more, things come to light of which the society apparently "never knew"– due to successful tabooing. However, as they are seen right now, in a period when African societies are struggling considerably in building up a post-colonial identity, they are often linked with fatal Western influence. And the more Western countries, the former colonial powers, are pushing African governments to respect sexual rights, the more inviting it is to interpret these rights as something neo-colonial and un-African, even if the pressure is not meant to allow sexual violence or child abuse. Western politicians usually have consensual sex between adults who "are born like this" in mind when speaking of "homosexuality" and "gay rights". The reality of homosexuality in Africa, however, is not adequately expressing the Western concept of the "gay couple", i.e., two men with a homosexual orientation/identity, integrating sex in a long-term-relationship on the basis of equal rights. If Western people and Africans use the term "homosexuality", they usually mean completely different things. This makes understanding even more difficult than what it is anyway – due to colonialism, neo-colonial capitalism and other factors. Dzampah's negative image of homosexuality is influenced by the cultural reality he is sharing. This cultural reality is determined by specific discourses, such as post-colonialism, and by personal experiences and observations he may have had and made. Some aspects of these cultural and/or biographical factors for Dzampah's homomisia can be figured out.

As a language teacher at the Goethe Institute he is familiar with biographies (mostly of women, but of men too) that were influenced by the contact with Western "lovers":

> Students are promised studies abroad
> The jobless are promised well paid jobs
> Just mellow and all these become yours
> And when asked say it's my own will
> (*Abomisexuality*: 60)

Of course the text does not specify who is promising here, but when it says "students are promised studies abroad" we may not only think of local MSM but also of the white male tourist coming to Ghana for sexual adventures/relationships with young African men. Even if the persons involved will not understand their doing as prostitution, it must be clear that the differences in age, wealth, and power are enormous and a partnership of equals is constituted with difficulty. The hierarchy of rich/powerful and poor/powerless can, of course, not be limited to this scenario. Dzampah generally characterises homosexuality, connecting it directly with the role in the sexual act:

> When two gentlemen forge a marriage
> Surely the poorer becomes woman
> The richer won't have his back let loose
> He never wants to be in pampers
> Surely he finds that so degrading
> He degrades won't let be degraded
> Here too oh poor man is exploited
> Injuries added to his injuries
> Economically exploited
> And politically exploited
> Intellectually exploited too
> And again sexually exploited
> Managers do not wear the pampers
> Ministers do not wear the pampers
> Presidents do not wear the pampers
> Only poor man is put in pampers
> (*Abomisexuality*: 60f.)

The focus on hierarchy and violence all through the song may also be explained by observations Dzampah might have made during his time as an officer for the Ghana Prisons Service, specifically, his repeated mentioning of the physical damage of the penetrated man, suggests the sexual violence which can be found in prisons when powerful men select prisoners of lower status to be their "wife". The following passage in particular may hint to violent MSM in prisons as one possible background for the song:

> Those who cause others to lose control
> Of their rectums given by nature
> Commit crime that should be chargeable
> Prosecutable punishable

Those who force adults to wear pampers[8]
Reducing adults to old babies
Commit crime against humanity
And should face justice of human beings
This is crime against human nature
The nature of a healthy rectum
Those who condone this should be co-charged
And prosecuted with the culprits
(*Abomisexuality*: 56)

It must be said, however, that Dzampah quite generally sees homosexuality as sexual and violent expression of dominance. The central target of his critique is the penetrating man, who uses economic, social and physical power to achieve his goal:

It's major part of gay strategy
Using money food and other baits
Turning thereby full men to women
And using force as a last resort
(*Abomisexuality*: 60)

On the other side, the penetrated man is seen as a victim suffering from physical damage and dishonoring:

The victims may be good lecturers too
When they want to call a spade a spade
They would tell you they are not happy
That their only rectum is destroyed
And the pampers they have to put on
Without a hope to leave it one day
As the babies who grow always do
Once in pampers always in pampers
Some can no more afford the pampers
The destroyer suddenly vanished
On his way to destroy some others
In the on-going degradation
(*Abomisexuality*: 59)

Protecting people from getting victims of homosexuals is a matter of human rights and a prime task of the state. Dzampah is interpreting the existing laws against homosexual acts as tools of such protection. If foreign politicians[9] (and local activists/politicians as their puppets) criticise these regulations, they follow a neo-colonial plan to gain power over Africa again. Thus, the hierarchical structure of homosexuality is understood also in a global scenario where the West, rich and powerful, with its gay-friendly attitude, is the (sexual) aggressor, while Africa, poor and helpless, is the victim who has to protect the back[10] of his sons (cf. *Abomisexuality*: 74).

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[8] I must confess that before reading Dzampah's text I never knew that penetrated men need "pampers", but in his view pampers are a symbol of the damage that gay sex does to the penetrated man. They are mentioned often (51.54.54.56.59.60.61.67.74.82.85), 24 times in total.

> Gays are degrading people's rectums
> This is what we are complaining of
> And you say we must amend our laws
> To permit this abomination
> (*Abomisexuality*: 62)
>
> Colonialist Goliath Kangaroo
> Has become missionary for gays
> His Fathers brought here Christianity
> He's bringing homosexuality
> (*Abomisexuality*: 66)
>
> These cheats want to cheat in everything
> The cheats of the corporatocracy[11]
> Are the driving forces behind all these
> By and by they'll regret all these frauds
> Thank God for Russia and all others
> Who refuse to bow under pressure
> From these emperors of vanity
> They must know they cannot buy us all
> These wicked lions are too greedy
> Bottomless pits they can't have enough
> Now hide behind our mis-leaders
> With their great plan of indirect rule
> (*Abomisexuality*: 85)

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[9] Political agents named are UK Prime Minister Cameron (*Abomisexuality*: 60, 66, 73), USA President Obama (*Abomisexuality*: 61.66) and "UN chief" (*Abomisexuality*: 70).

[10] As *Abomination* is very much focussed on penetration as the physical aspect of homosexuality it is not surprising that 'back' occurs 9 times (*Abomisexuality*: 58, 60, 61, 74, 75, 76, 77). Even more often we find "rectum" (*Abomination*: 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 64, 84), 31 times in total.

[11] The expression refers to the global rule of international corporations.

The role of the Bible in Dzampah's homomisia

When we ask for the role of the Bible in *Abomisexuality*, it must be kept in mind that Dzampah sees his songs as given directly by the Holy Spirit. It would be strange if a divine authority would cite the Bible instead of speaking in its own words. Thus, we cannot expect too much literal quotations of scripture in these texts. But, of course there is a lot of the Bible in Dzampah's songs. The earthly author (the only object accessible to academic analysis) grew up in a Christian environment and his thoughts and language are impregnated by biblical texts. It therefore makes sense to ask which biblical texts/concepts are in the background of *Abomisexuality* even though there are no direct quotations.

The title of the song can be seen as a first hint, as *Abomisexuality* is a newly created word combining 'abomination' and 'sexuality'. 'Abomination' refers to a most influential text in the Christian debate on homosexuality, Lev. 18:22:

> [22] You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.

Also relevant in this regard is Lev. 20:13:

> [13] If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.

In these texts we find important elements of Dzampah's concept of homosexuality, as they both focus on homosexual acts without speaking of concepts such as sexual orientation/identity. Homosexual acts are seen as a matter of choice which should be avoided as they are against the divine commandment. The reason why Israel's God is against such acts can be deducted from the specific expression "with a male like with a woman". The obvious argument is that this expression serves to indicate it is against the divine world order that a man should be "turned into a woman" by being penetrated. In a patriarchal world, where the male gender is connected with domination, strength, and the power to rule, while the female gender is connected with being dominated, being helpless, weak, needing guidance and protection by a man (father, brother, husband), it is a crime to reduce a male person to the lower female status by treating him like a woman.

This concept can also be found in Gen. 19, where Lot saves his male visitors from a mass rape by offering his virgin daughters to the aggressive masses.[12] In Ancient Near Eastern societies this was not a simple solution for a father, as his honour lay in preserving the virginity of his daughters until marriage. But it is apparent that the sexual abuse of male strangers was a much bigger damage than that of the own daughters. This is so because the females are naturally made for penetration, while males are not. The story in Gen. 19 also indicates that penetration was seen as an expression of power (cf. Gunda 2010:270f.). The father decides on the sexuality of his daughters without asking. Later their husband would decide without asking. And also the men who want to gang-rape the strangers use penetration as a power tool useful to put men of lower status on their place in the social hierarchy. This may also indicate that men in Judah/Israel could use the penetration of other men to show them their lower status.[13] If that is true, the "Code of Holiness"[14] (Lev. 18-26), to which both of these texts belong, even has implications of social justice. It states that no man should be humiliated by being used like a woman. This ideal of equality was perhaps no more than an ideal, and even one excluding women, but it can be used to make a difference between Judah/Israel, the chosen people, and the others.[15]

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[12] *Abomisexuality*: 70 f. alludes to this story: "Sodomization of world nations / In the name of so called human rights / Gomorrisation of the world nations / Is a rifle that will backfire".

[13] See also Judges 19, where another story of "phallic aggression" is told (cf. Gunda 2010:272-280).

[14] The "Code of Holiness" is a collection of older material which most probably was put together in post-exilic time, in a period when Judah was a province of the Persian Empire. Compared with the elite of the empire Israel had all reason to feel powerless and poor. Through the strategy of othering, the "Code of Holiness" works on the problem of inferiority and precarious identity. The dominated ones are defined as those who are the chosen people of the only God while the others (adhering to non-existing gods) have nothing to do with him. By depicting Judah/Israel as a zone of holiness, the authors try to establish a national identity which *de facto* was not a given anymore. The tiny spot of Judah, unimportant Persian province, should be understood as the centre of creation, an area of holy otherness. Banning homosexual acts from this holy area was meant to disenfranchised the hierarchical structure of the empire. All Jewish men should be equal and different from pagan men (cf. Seidl 2009).

[15] If we try to express the concept in gender language, the most powerful penetrator is the Persian king as the manliest of all men in the empire. His local vicar is the most powerful penetrator in Judah and the dominated local men are his wives. In the virtual zone of holy otherness, however, they can be real man, equal to each other, socially and also sexually. Women must be left out in this concept of equality as real man of

The strategy of othering (cf. Punt's article above) can be found all over the "Code of Holiness". Other peoples are doing evil things, but Israel will not do such. "Abomination" is one of the central expressions for the taboos which separate God's own people from others. The dietary rules belong to this strategy also. They are identity markers and create corporate identity by making a difference between Judah/Israel and the *gojim*, and reducing communication between them by excluding the central point of eating together. The regulations on sexuality given in the "Code of Holiness" also are part of othering strategy. Israel is holy, different from the pagan profane world, not only by avoiding abomination food but also by avoiding abomination sex.

The othering strategy in Leviticus perfectly corresponds with the discussion on homosexuality as an un-African phenomenon. Othering homosexuality as something colonial/neo-colonial is a good contribution towards building up a post-colonial identity, especially since most African states are colonial products and still lack a national identity. Many Africans still feel/are poor and helpless, dominated by foreign powers.

Related with the idea of holiness is also the death penalty in Lev. 20:13, which finds no reception in *Abomination*. The reason may be twofold. The first is because Dzampah sees imprisoning as sufficient.[16] And secondly, Lev. 20:13 not only sentences the penetrating man to death but the penetrated one as well. To punish the victim is clearly against Dzampah's ethics. In the framework of the Book of Holiness, however, ethics are not the major point. The supreme value is the pure holiness of God's people. A man turning into a woman by being penetrated is as much disturbing the holiness as does his abuser, and that is why he must also die.[17] It would be difficult for Dzampah to adopt this thinking as this

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course need someone to dominate/penetrate and homosexual acts must be banned as they would annihilate the equality of all men. If we add, that in the Ancient Near East many men were MSM, the tabooing of homosexuality contributes even more to the creation of corporate identity by othering.

[16] As a born Catholic he may also have a principle distance to the death penalty since the Popes are preaching against it.

[17] The same structure can be found in the ban on sex with animals, where the penetrated animal also has to die. This logic can be understood if one compares Israel with the temple. It is holy to be being separated from the pagan surroundings and therefore it can be the pure and holy house for God? If a priest violates the purity of the temple by killing or injuring a fellow priest, both of them will be thrown out. Aggressor and victim are both disturbing the holiness of the sanctuary.

archaic concept of holiness would be "immoral" for him. His main focus is always on the victim and on the physical damage which is done to him:

> The human being is dehumanized
> Losing nature's break for his rectum
> And the power to apply the break
> Surely this is our *major* complaint
> (*Abomination*: 53, my italics)

Another important biblical background text for *Abomisexuality* is that which is referred to in Romans 1:26-27:

> [26] For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.[18]
> [27] Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

While Old Testament texts do not put much emphasis on "nature", the concept of "nature"/*physis* was of extreme importance in the Greek-Hellenistic culture which the New Testament context shared. Romans 1:26f. belongs to a larger part (1:18-3;20) of Paul's letter where the apostle attempts to show that all human beings – pagans as well as Jews – are sinners, deserving death. *Sola fide*, only by believing in the salvific death of Jesus Christ can they gain salvation. For the Jews he can use the Torah to "prove" their sinfulness. Being God's chosen people Israel has the explicit commandment in the Mosaic laws and can be judged on this basis. With the pagans, however, the case is more complicated. The apostle knows that it would be unfair to punish someone for not abiding by a law unknown to them. Paul solves the problem by saying that the pagans have the law in their hearts. Of course, this cannot be the Mosaic Law specifically; it is the law of nature. Thus nature is extremely important to him, as only an appeal to this "natural law" could provide a basis upon which he can declare acts as sinful which the doers themselves did not see as evil in their cultural context.[19]

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[18] Paul has to mention women also as he wants to show that *all* are sinners and need the salvific power of Jesus' death. Although this article focuses on MSM, it might be worth saying that verse 26 may not refer to lesbianism only. The use of an artificial penis or even reptiles for the pleasure of upper-class women can be meant similarly.

[19] Of course, Jews always saw pagans as sinners without using the idea of *physis*/nature, but in Romans Paul is addressing a mixed Christian group, consisting of a Jewish mi-

Many men in Greek and Roman time were MSM. In the tradition of the Greek cities, pederasty, the erotic relationship between an older citizen and a free boy (son of another citizen) was a cultural institution which (officially) was meant to educate the boy and introduce him into the society of free men. Pederasty can even be understood as a *rite de passage* indicating the end of childhood.[20] While only Plato made an attempt to exclude any sexual aspect from this relationship (so-called "Platonic love"), the common understanding of this was to have sex with a boy but to avoid anal penetration.[21] The boy as a future citizen should not be "turned into a woman". The free citizen was part of the ruling elite and women could not rule as being "female" was the same as being "inferior". That is why such a boy was supposed to show no interest[22] during intercourse and stay without any arousal during the act. This, however, seems to be an artificial construction and reality of pederasty most probably was different from this. From her analysis of Greek literature and pottery painting, Carola Reinsberg (1993:189-199) assumes that full penetration was a taboo but nevertheless widespread. As pederasty with its initiatory/educational understanding was an exclusively aristocratic phenomenon there was an ongoing cultural discourse on it. Therefore, it is much better documented than other types of homosexual acts. The remarks made in popular texts such as comedies indicate that, apart from pederasty, the sexual use of slaves and prostitutes was common

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nority and a majority of non-Jews (*hellenoi*). Therefore, he cannot simply share in the traditional Jewish "pagans-bashing". Instead, he must argue in a way that is plausible to non-Jews too.

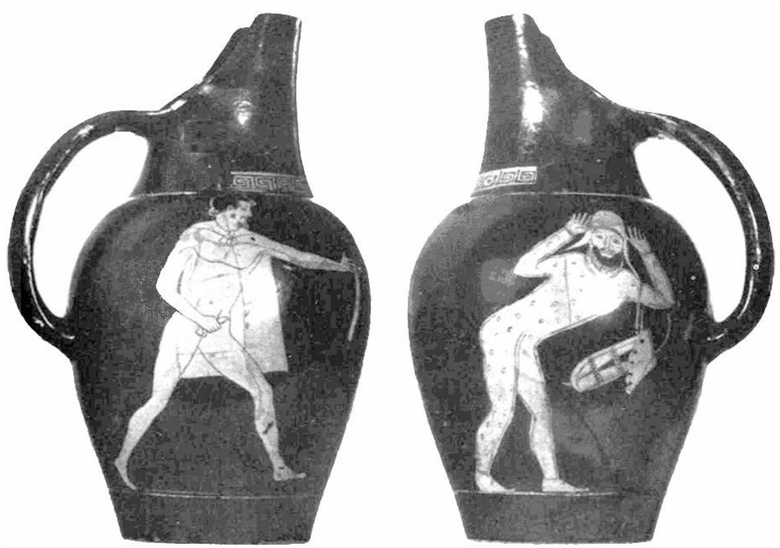
[20] The pederastic relationship often started when the boy was 12 years old and should normally end with the boy's adolescence. Citizens, who loved someone who already was beyond puberty, were mocked by their fellow citizens as loving "a hairy ass" (Reinsberg 1993:168f.). Erotic relationships could lead to the charge of prostitution when the "boy" was found to be beyond 18.

[21] The ideal sexual technique, therefore, was seen in intercourse between the thighs of the boy who was supposed to stand upright, face to face with his partner. Turning his back, bowing or laying down would have been seen as too feminine.

[22] For the boy's later career it was important to have a lover of high social status. That is why particularly attractive boys tried to find the best man and reject others. The elder one had to impress the boy in many ways. Gifts are often depicted, specifically rabbits and cocks. These animals were connected with hunting and fighting. So they served well as symbols of aggressive masculinity. (Cf. Reinsberg 1993:176-178) Often the difference between pederastic gifts and prostitution payments was not clear. (Reinsberg 1993:180-187)

and included all genders. As shame was exclusively put onto the penetrated man, there was no problem, as long as the social hierarchy was maintained in homosexual acts, i.e. the higher ranking man had to be the (male) penetrator while the less honourable man should be in the (female) role of being penetrated. Homosexual relationships between equals were a taboo, especially when the persons involved were two citizens. Free men must not have sexual intercourse/relationship with each other as at least one of them would have lost his male honour by being "turned into a woman". Only high discretion could save the men involved from societal marginalisation and other sanctions.

The hierarchical context of sexuality given, homosexual acts can also be found in the context of war. The successful soldiers could use penetration to humiliate the defeated enemy. Sexual violence against men and women was seen as the perfection of victory – as it is even today.



[23]

The cultural basis for this concept was the understanding of penetration as aggression in order to subjugate. Penetration shows the superiority of the penetrating man. Women were seen as inferior "by nature", which means that it was their "natural" role to be penetrated. Slaves and defeated enemies were inferior and thus it was their role to be penetrated. While most modern discourses are dominated by sexual identity, in ancient times the only relevant category for MSM was "role". As long as a man played the masculine role of penetrating, it was not important if he penetrated a woman, a man or even an animal. To penetrate a man could even be seen as boosting his manliness, because a man who managed to dominate another man could be considered stronger than one who could dominate only women.

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[23] The pottery painting (470/460 BC) shows a Greek soldier hunting a defeated Persian in order to rape him (Cf. Reinsberg 1993:177).

This aspect of domination/superiority was of great importance in Roman times too. Roughly stated, it was the only important aspect because Roman culture did not know the institution of pederasty as a *rite de passage*. When the emperor both slept with the wives of his senators and penetrated their sons, he showed to the aristocratic ex-elite in a sexual way that republican times have gone and senators are no better than slaves. When the same emperor allowed a slave to penetrate him, it served as a reason to find him ridiculous. A penetrated man (= woman) cannot the leader of the Roman world power.[24] That is also why Caesar's opponents mocked him as "the Queen of Bithynia" (Suetonius, Caesar: 49) in order to block his way to autocratic rule. The rumour that he had been penetrated by Nicomedes of Bithynia, i.e., a regional king inferior to Rome, had a clear political message: a penetrated (female) man cannot rule over the Roman Empire (cf. Suetonius, Caesar: 22) as female persons are unable to rule. If Caesar would have penetrated the Bithynian king he would have played the "natural" role of a Roman ruler chosen by the gods to dominate the world. Of course, homosexuality was not limited to the political elite. We must assume that the cultural world the addressees of Paul's letter were living in was full of MSM. Usually free men used slaves (of any gender) for their personal pleasure. That was no ethical topic as long as they preserved their role as the dominant man. Sexual encounters or relationships between free men were rejected in Rome as they had been in Greek *polis* culture. No citizen should loose his status as member of the ruling elite by being turned into a woman.

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[24] The concept can already be found in Ancient Egypt. The myth of Horus and Seth (papyrus Chester Beatty I, 20th dynasty) tells how Seth tries to discard his competitor by penetrating him. Seth fails. Horus, however, manages to triumph over Seth by making him pregnant from his semen. So Horus gains the divine throne (cf. Lichtheim 1976:219f.).

To sum up, the Roman context of Paul and his addressees was fairly similar to the Ghanaian context as Paul Dzampah sees it: Homosexuality is conceived as a hierarchical act of domination. Neither sexual orientation/identity nor relationships between equals play a role.

Both the apostle and Dzampah reject such homosexuality as against nature. We must, however, note a difference here. These two Pauls do use the concept of nature differently: while, with *physis*, the apostle Paul refers to the (culturally) natural role of the man who should penetrate women and not be penetrated by another man, Paul Dzampah focuses first and foremost on the physical aspect of nature. The rectum is biologically built as an exit and should not be used as an entrance. As mentioned above, role aspects can be found also, but the health of the rectum is a major concern.

In summary it can be said that Dzampah's homomisia is influenced specifically by the abomination concept of the "Holiness Code" in Leviticus and the *physis*-concept of Romans 1. Although he understands the Bible as the direct Word of God his hermeneutics are quite selective as only specific aspects of the biblical texts are adopted. It would thus be mistaken to claim that his homomisia is a result of biblical interpretation. Rather, his concept of homosexuality is formed by cultural factors of post-colonial Africa, particularly the debate on African Christian identity. Biblical elements are used to support this cultural construction, but this is where it ends. Therefore Dzampah's homomisia differs from the specific biblical texts which condemn same-sex intercourse. Even if his reading does share certain aspects from those texts, such as "nature", these are entirely absorbed by the discourses of today and so lose their original contextual meanings for current cultural or contextual readings. Thus, Dzampah's use of the Bible is quite similar to what Gunda (2010:154-157) found in the Zimbabwean debate on homosexuality. The Bible users do not necessarily derive the knowledge about right and wrong from the Bible but, instead, from current cultural sources. As in many cases biblical traditions are amalgamated into these cultural sources, bible users do not notice that the text of the Bible is not the origin of their concepts. One's own position (views, concepts, attitudes and values) is usually derived from non-biblical sources such as the family tradition, education, culture, the dominant societal mainstream, political correctness, personal preferences or deformations, and so on. The Bible only serves as a source for finding confirmation of one's own view in the Word of God. Gunda shows in a most convincing way that not only the conservative-homomisian party reads the Bible in a highly selective and ideological way, but also the gay-rights movement does so. The difference is, however, that the gay-friendly interpretation is usually only pro-gay and not anti-heterosexual. That means that a gay-friendly reading of the Bible may also be highly ideological but, at the same time, it is self-defensive and not trying to aggressively eliminate other sexual orientations.

Abomisexuality, the Bible and violence against homosexuals

In contrast to the texts in Leviticus, Dzampah is explicitly against killing gay people. They have to be put in prison as the state has the duty to protect their potential victims, but he clearly rejects violence:

> We don't call for the gay to be killed
> He's our brother he may change one day
> But we don't want him to change our sons
> We have right to defend our interest
> We don't call for gays to be harassed
> They must stop harassing our sons
> We have the right to defend our laws
> And how dare you to take that from us
> (*Abomisexuality*: 74)

The supreme goal is to change gay men: "Come let's change gays before they change us" (*Abomisexuality*: 78). The problem is, however, that most homosexuals are not known. So it would be an advantage to have "open gays". Then they could be watched and be isolated:

> Mic. was tried for molesting children
> After showing them pornography
> If he were to be an open gay
> The parents would have been more careful
> Yes open gays can help us better
> We can then rescue our children
> We don't have our girls too close to males
> We would then keep our boys far from gays
> By removing gays from boys' hostel
> By removing gays from male toilettes
> By removing gays from the male wards
> We want to avoid tempting the gays
> Marriage does not help the sex-crazy
> Neither does it help the sex-deviant
> Even we, we try not to get too close
> For sex is highly inflammable

The public eyes help us in this case
We care how people would regard us
But the gay evades public satellite
That's what makes him really more dangerous
(*Abomisexuality*: 75)

This passage is highly interesting as it shows the partial influence of the Western homosexuality concept when it regards homosexuals not simply as MSM, but as a species beyond male and female. This species must be separated from the world of men as can be seen from the following quotation (*Abomisexuality*: 70) too:

The gay no more fit for boys' hostel
Neither qualified for girls' hostel
Gays cheating on us in boys' hostel
Activist where do we house them now?
The gay no more fit for male prison
Neither qualified for the female
Gays cheating on us in male prison
UN Chief where do we lock them now?

The whole society must be united against homosexuality as the litany of different groups in *Abomisexuality*, 67-70 suggests:

You the biologist must rebuke the gay
He's confusing students of the subject
/…/
You the scientist be concerned by this
He is distorting the facts that you wrote
/…/
You good footballer must rebuke the gay
He's robbing you of future spectators
/…/
You the good trader must rebuke the gay
He's robbing you of future customers
/…/
Army General must rebuke the gay
He's robbing you of men and officers
/…/
You politician must rebuke the gay
He is robbing you of future voters
/…/
You, the President must reprove the gay
He's robbing you of future citizens
/…/
You the good doctor must rebuke the gay
He is robbing you of future patients
/…/

> You the employer must query the gay
> He presides over our depletion
> /…/
> You the humanist must topple the gay
> He presides over our extinction
> /…/
> You naturalist must talk to the gay
> He must be your student number A 1
> /…/
> You psychologist must counsel the gay
> He must be your client "numéro un"
> /…/
> You the psychiatric examine the gay
> He must be patient of intensive care
> /…/
> You the policeman must arrest the gay
> He is disturbing the public order
> /…/
> You the good preacher must preach to the gay
> He must be your target Nummer A eins
> /…/
> You the spiritual must pray for the gay
> He needs your prayers for his deliverance

This is a strategy of othering which creates a firmly united "We" against homosexuals and their supporters. The wish that homosexuality should not exist, is obvious. Homosexuals simply have no place in the ideal Afro-Christian society Dzampah is striving for. This way of thinking is not at all innocent. The wish that a specific group of people may change so that the group as such no longer exists can be seen as an eliminatory concept of ideological violence. If ideas are suggesting a specific way of acting, then Dzampah can be called a *Schreibtischtäter.*[25] Paul is an extremely peaceful person and he never will be found with the street gangs chasing and killing men alleged to be gay. His eliminating concept, however, can be seen as a preparation of physical violence. Eliminatory texts such as *Abomisexuality* contribute to a social climate fostering the development of hate, resulting in physical violence finally. The combination of laws against homosexual *acts* and the hybrid concept of seeing MSM as a dangerous *species* produces a potentially explosive mixture. In the end, like in Uganda, it may happen that men can be beaten to death

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[25] On the contribution of modern theologians to the climate of hate, cf. Van Klinken & Gunda 2012.

(even without ever having had sex with a man) simply because someone *says* “he is gay”.[26] If modern African societies want to avoid creating an additional source of violence they will have to develop more inclusive concepts of African identity and African Christianity. And they will also have to think about the role of the Bible in public discourse. In modern African societies it will not suffice to use the Bible selectively as a manual for public and private life. Instead, kind of a critical reading of the Bible will be needed (cf. Gunda 2015).

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[26] For the situation in Uganda seen from a victim perspective cf. Dada 2014.

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Precursor to Restoration: Biblical Violence in Perspective

Canisius Mwandayi & Lucky Hwati

Abstract

The paper illustrates how violence in the Bible is unlike violence in the contemporary world, but has a greater purpose than just inflicting pain, meting out justice or wanton destruction. Violence is seen through the lance of a restorer of God's ideal world. The paper also argues that violence in the Bible is instituted as the last resort, as God's creation is given chances to redeem themselves and restore God's will independently. Further, the paper argues that God himself condemns violence and seeks to protect the weak from violence. As explained in the conclusion, it is God's condemnation of violence that builds the foundation of peace upon which Christianity challenges the violent nature of today's world. As a result of the restoration of God's will of love, peace and tranquillity after the cross, Christianity is incompatible with violence.

Introduction

Violence in the contemporary world is not a new phenomenon. From the earliest days of human existence violence has been a constant theme. The Bible does contain accounts of mayhem, uncontrolled rage and destruction, and ruthless violence. In fact, the Bible recently came back in the spotlight with a study suggesting that reading passages from the Bible with violent content provokes aggression in the same manner as violent video games or television allegedly do (Bushman, Ridge, Das, Key & Busath 2007). But is violence in the Bible wanton? Towing the line of the theology of restoration, this paper seeks to push forth the idea that, while violence has been taken as a dramatic representation of sin's devastating impact on the created order, it is arguable that on the flip side violence is constructive, and as shown in the Bible, is a precursor to restoration of the created order. As such, the influence of violence in the Bible cannot be explained by any of the contemporary social theories of violence.

Violence in the Bible

The perceptions of violence today differ from the situation as experienced in the Bible. In today's world, violence can be perceived mainly as human being's way of dominating/showing dominance; or refusal to be dominated. This is seen in the various levels of violence the world experiences today, running the gamut bullying at school, through domestic violence, civil wars, terrorist attacks, to international political and social frictions. Various theories have been put forward to account for violence in and of individuals, and in the society, among them is the social process approach. The social process approach consists of three branches: social learning theory, social control theory, and social reaction theory (labelling theory), which views criminality as a function of an individual's interactions within society (Siegel 2000). The social learning theory assumes people are not predisposed to engage in criminal behaviour. Instead, they learn their criminal behaviour through social interactions (Huck & Morris 2014). In essence people learn their norms, values, and behaviours about crime from their close intimate relationships (Akers 2002). In contrast to the social learning theory, the social control theory maintains that all people have the potential to engage in criminal conduct and ultimately human behaviour is controlled through close associations with institutions and individuals (Siegel 2000). The last branch of the social process approach, whose roots are found in the symbolic interaction theory, is the social reaction theory (Huck & Morris 2014). The social reaction theory maintains that the labels placed on an individual in society impacts the individual's perception of themselves and ultimately their behaviour, including criminal behaviour (Siegel 2000).

Violence in the Bible is, however, much more complicated to be explained by the above mentioned theories. In the Bible, although issues of dominance do come out, domination is not the great concern. Instead, central to violence in the Bible is the theme of restoration. An interpretation of the incidences in the Bible reveals a distinction between profane violence which is destructive, retributive and self-sustaining as practiced by men, and sanctioned violence which is constructive in that it brings the violence caused by imitative desire to an end as practised by God.

Given that all creation is ordered toward God, who is the greatest conceivable being and is also goodness itself, as defined by St. Thomas (Thomas, cited in Fradd, 2015), there is every reason to argue that the violence sanctioned by Him is not instituted for its own sake, but for a better, more rewarding purpose. It would totally be absurd to think that what God sanctions would be meant for evil otherwise He would be contradicting Himself. God, as St. Thomas puts it, cannot contradict himself (Thomas cited in Fradd, 2015). Having been created in the image of the Absolute Good, humans have been tasked with absolute moral demands hence have to conform to the will of their Creator. In cases, however, where a whole group of people agree to do what is against God, they have to face his anger, which is expressed through violence. It would be important though to understand that this anger followed by violence is not simply meant to destroy, but to rebuild.

Textual Evidence

An analysis of a number of narratives in the Bible shows that there are incidents which actually confirm that violence in the Bible was not always meant to destroy but to rebuild. The first incident is the destruction of the whole earth through flooding in the days of Noah (Gen. 6:9-9:17). Though the story falls within the primeval history (Gen. 1-11), the moral of the story is clear. Herein, the purpose of the violence can best be understood as a renewal factor. People's sin had reached a point where it needed to be deterred, so God used violence to restore order and righteousness to the earth. Unlike in the Mesopotamian stories (Epic of Atrahasis, Sumerian story of Ziusudra and the Epic of Gilgamesh), for example, where the gods destroy the humans capriciously; in the biblical story, God's uncompromising ethical standards leads him to bring the flood in an act of divine justice. He does not act capriciously but punishes the evil corruption of human beings that he has so lovingly created and whose degradation he could not bear to witness. As interpreted by Christine Hayes (2006), the earth, according to the biblical text, is destroyed because of *hamas*, a word that literally means violence, bloodshed, but also all kinds of injustice and oppression. In the story it is important that God did not totally destroy his creation but allowed some animals, and some people to live. Thus the most important achievement was the wiping away of ungodly lives and let new life and order be rebuilt by the few creatures he saved through Noah's ark. This serious step taken by God was motivated by none other than the fact that when humans destroy the moral basis of society by being violent or cruel or unkind, they endanger the very existence of that society. The world dissolves; hence God has the right to preserve what he created. This basic concept later also found expression in the words of the Psalmist when he said: “How long will you [...] show partiality to the wicked? [...] They have neither knowledge, nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all foundations of the earth are shaken” (Ps. 82:2, 5).

Another story that illustrates that violence in the Bible was not just for the sake of violence is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18-19). Just like the foregoing flood story, the tragedy that befell the highly iniquitous cities of Sodom and Gomorrah presupposes a universal moral law that seems to govern the world. The basic idea attached to these stories, in other words, is that all peoples, Israelites or non-Israelites alike, by virtue of having been created by God in the image of God - even though they may not know that God, or may ignore that God - are bound to a basic moral law that precludes murder, oppression and violence. As for Sodom and Gomorrah, their greatest sin for which they are punished primarily appears to have been that of inhospitality. The sin of homosexuality that appears to take a center stage in most interpretations of this story, as noted by Ragies Gunda (2010), was but one form of the various manifestations of inhospitality. Gunda further argues that the common association of the fate of Sodom and homosexuality was actually a late development, finding explicit mention in the works of Philo and Josephus who were responding to Hellenistic same sex practices (Gunda 2010). This also finds echo in the words of Hayes (2006) who argues that the idea that the fundamental sin of Sodom as homosexual behavior is not present in the Hebrew Bible. For her, it is instead found in later documents, especially in the New Testament in the books of Jude (7:2), Peter (2:6-10), and subsequent interpretations of these texts. Since there was an infringement of God’s law against immorality by the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, God had to make the inhabitants of these cities account for their transgressions and the only way He could restore his will and order was through the use of fire to destroy them together with their sins.

The granting of land to Abraham (Gen. 12:6-7) and the subsequent dislodging of the autochthonous inhabitants of Canaan (Deut. 9:4-6, 18:12) as a way of paving the way for the “Chosen People” equally deserve mention to further illustrate the argument proposed here. As implied in the narrative, God is the owner of the land and like a land lord, he is empowered to set conditions or residency requirements for those who reside in it. The failure to abide by the set rules inevitably results in the spewing out of those tenants. It is against such a conception that the habitants of

Canaan stand condemned in God's eyes for they were seen as polluting the land, filling it with bloodshed and idolatry (Gen. 15:16). The book of Leviticus has an additional list of the detestable practices of the Canaanites, which they are listed as follows: child sacrifice to the god Molech, incest, bestiality, homosexuality and cultic prostitution (Lev. 18). This decadence, as suggested by Barnabe, Assohoto and Samuel Ngewa (2006), may have in part originated from the curse pronounced on Canaan (Gen. 9:24).

In the Bible writer's view, God was thus justified to restore order by seeking replacement tenants who would follow the moral rules of residence that he has established for his land. The Israelites were constantly reminded, however, that their being chosen was not a result of them having done something great (Deut. 9:4) or to think it was a result of their own strength (Deut. 8:17) but that it was simply due to Yahweh's providential concern for them (Deut. 8:11-16, 18). To put across his point that there was not any favouritism, Yahweh was not mean in his words to the people of Israel: "And if you forget the Lord your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you this day that you shall surely perish. Like the nations that the Lord makes to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the Lord your God (Deut. 8:19-20). To show that he was not impartial in his treatment of people, Yahweh judged the Israelites as he had done the Canaanites when the former adopted the religious practices of the latter. Just as Yahweh had warned in Leviticus 18:24-29 that "the land vomited out its inhabitants", the judgment of Israel was affliction of people through pestilence following the evil expansionist motives of their leader, David (2 Sam.24:1-17) and finally the expulsion from the land through exile following Israel's infidelity to Yahweh (1 Kings 11:11-12; Jeremiah 2 – 6).

What the above texts show then is that Yahweh did not capriciously bring about any form of violent action on his created order but once he saw that order being threatened he would quickly move in to see that order restored. Even when Yahweh moved in to restore that order, he did not command genocide against the inhabitants of Canaan. As reflected in Deuteronomy 20: enemy cities must be offered the chance to make peace before being besieged (verses 10-12); when a city was captured only the men were to be executed – the women and children were to be absorbed into Israel and the possessions to be kept (verses 13-15), and they were not to use a 'scorched earth' policy in siege warfare. They must leave the fruit trees belonging to the city standing (verses 19-20). While some texts clearly speak of extermination, for example, Deuteronomy 9:3: “you will drive them out and annihilate them quickly, as the LORD has promised you”. God’s intention was that the Canaanites would have a possibility of fleeing the land as the Israelites advanced (Paul Coulter 2010). Naturally, in such a scenario, those who would have resisted were exterminated.

While God used violence at times to restore his will, peace and order, he himself condemns violence and seeks to protect the weak from human violence. As written in His word, He "will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight" (Ps. 72:14). Violence is roundly condemned in the prophetic books of the Old Testament. Those whom God hates are those whose hands are dripping with violence (Is. 59:6; Jer. 6:6-7; Ezek. 7:11; Jonah 3:8). Given such proofs one cannot convincingly conclude that the God of the Old Testament is a violent and cruel God as Marcion did (Marcion cited in Price, 2002) but rather view him as an advocate of non-violence.

Restoration through the Cross

Though some would like to cite Jesus’ sayings: “I have not come to bring peace but a sword” (Mt. 10:34); “I have come to cast fire upon the Earth; and how I wish it were already kindled” (Lk. 12:49); “he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one” (Lk. 22:36) and Jesus’ cleansing of the Temple (Mk. 11:15-17) as proof texts showing the violent nature of Jesus, he, to a greater extent, advocated non-violence. The New Testament, in other words, largely brings out a picture of a non-violent Messiah, confirming the promises of the Old Testament. Jesus consistently condemned violence beginning in the Sermon on the Mount ("Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God" - Matt. 5:9) and ending with the garden scene where Jesus rebukes Peter's use of violence against the arresting mob ("Put your sword back in its place" - Matt. 26:52a). From the time that Jesus was arrested, he suffered emotional and physical violence in the hands of many different people. Eventually Jesus was slain by the very crowd that had found him so intriguing.

Could the people who subjected Jesus to violence have been influenced by their interaction with the community? Could their actions have been influenced by close association with institutions such as the Pharisees and Pontius Pilate, with the element of criminality having been inherent in them already? Could the individual perceptions of some of the people advocating the beating and killing of Jesus been shaped by what the society thought of them? All these explanations cannot fit in with any certainty. Which begs the question: What influenced the people to engage in acts of violence against Christ?

It may be argued that in the example of Jesus' experience of violence, the people involved felt they were justified (Mk. 14:64) and so there was no criminal intend. A closer look, however, shows that the criminal intent was fully present. Since they could not be allowed by the Roman law to beat up and nail anyone on the cross without any proper and lawful procedure leading to conviction, they exercised their will on the courts as an act of disguising their own criminality. The criminal intend was therefore present in the violence. Even when they thought they were acting to bring an undesirable to book, through a criminal justice system that suited them, they were violent and acting outside the confines of the law. The biggest question therefore is: How can this act of violence be explained? The only plausible explanation is irony: While people thought they were restoring their way of life before Jesus, where the Pharisees were not challenged, where they did not witness any miracles, where God spoke through prophets and no-one claimed to be God or his son; they in fact were using violence to restore what was beyond their imagination and understanding. The Pharisees would have never imagined that through Jesus' violent suffering and eventual death which they masterminded; God was restoring order to a broken world, reconciling all things to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, thereby making peace through the blood of his cross (Colossians 1:20).

Even though through violence Jesus was nailed to the cross, he refused to retaliate. "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." The risen Jesus offers a judgment that does not condemn but instead brings life in a new creation, a new community. Jesus' mission was to rescue humankind from the cycle of violence, not by sacrifice (to a vengeful God who sought atonement for the sin of Adam and Eve and all humankind) but by example, showing people how to be human, how to respond to our propensity for imitative desire and condemning. Human beings through violence were taken back to their old, initial being, the loving and appealing (to God) that they were before they disobeyed God and ate of the forbidden tree in the garden of Eden. The Kingdom of God does not advance itself on the cusp of violence but, with deeds of love and mercy. This is the face of what God created that is eventually restored through Jesus' death on the cross, at the hands of a heartless and violent mob.

Conclusion

The ultimate way to understand violence in the Bible is to realise that God's judgement on sin is a reality. As the originator and guardian of the universal moral law, he expects all people to abide by his ordinances. Knowing that the human society was exposed to the danger of extinction when human sin was allowed to reign, God in earlier times would move in to restore his will, peace and order through some form of violence. In later times, however, Christ's death on the cross came to replace the older system of restoring peace and order to a sinful world.

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Violence in Africa and Violence in the Atonement: Possible Solutions

Pieter Verster

Abstract

The Christian gospel is a gospel of peace, but are there not elements of violence in the atonement? Feminist theologians and others question the way in which the atonement was achieved, even if the atonement does not implicate God as violent. Does the Gospel have an answer to the violence of the communities in Africa if it has violence as a central aspect of deliverance itself? Many solutions are proposed, specifically the Christus Victor suggestion, where Christ also became a victim rather than the object of God's wrath against sinners. However, the way in which God, in His glory, judges and saves, must not be equated with human ways and ideas. God is absolutely holy and His glorious love is present in the atonement where Christ, as God and human being, takes upon Himself the fullness of human sins. He is the One in the place of others who gives Himself up so that God's anger against sin may be taken away. He has done this exactly so that violence must end.

Introduction

Violence is a worldwide problem. Africa was, and still is, a violent continent. We live in a horrific world and Africa also suffers much from violence. Currently, many wars are waged in Africa. In 2014 a civil war was raging in the Central African Republic with the looming danger of escalating into genocide. In Somalia, Nigeria, the Congo, and Kenya peace seems to be a remote possibility. The atrocities of Boko Haram in Nigeria shock even soldiers. Many people think that it is impossible to bring about peace in these African states. Some people question whether Africa will ever be free from the horrendous strives and struggles of civil wars. Even in the Christian South Sudan, Christians are waging war among themselves after years of warring between the Muslim north and the Christian south. The challenges Africa is presently facing are vast and require intensive attention. Although the Christian gospel is a gospel of peace, the question is raised whether atonement, especially penal atonement, does not enhance violence and is therefore detrimental to the efforts to bring about peace in Africa. Different positions are taken regarding atonement and the answers to human conflicts.

Challenge of Conflicts in Africa

Himbara (2014:16) states that the progress in Africa, with positive strides in all aspects of the continent's economic and social endeavours, is in serious danger in view of the violent conflicts, which are evident in even the economic powerhouses. Nigeria, Kenya, Egypt and Libya are in danger of slipping into the classification of conflict-ridden countries. Himbara refers to the serious situation in the Central African Republic and is of the opinion that unity in the CAR is seriously hampered by these conflicts. Many are dying in the CAR and the conflict between Christians and Muslims is horrific (*The New Age* 2014:21). Mhlana (2014:5) refers to terrible atrocities in South Sudan, where doctors of *Medicins sans frontieres* (MSF) experienced that the conflict took a serious turn for the worse, rife with torture and atrocities. In Nigeria, Boko Haram is committing unspeakable atrocities and IBham (2014:20) pleads that, for our continent's sake, Boko Haram has to be stopped. In the Darfur area in Sudan, civilians are still attacked, even though the government denies it (*Business Day*, 28 March 2014:5). Kaarsholm (2006:1) refers to the fact that the promise and wave of democracy in Africa could not avert the violent conflicts, war and genocide. There remains serious difficulty in arriving at consolidated forms of democracy (Kaarsholm 2006:3-4). Many states collapsed (Kaarsholm 2006:6-9). The reasons for this are manifold, but economic and political problems are at the forefront (Kaarsholm 2006:20).

The genocide in Rwanda, where between 507 000 and 937 000 Tutsi's were massacred, is still fresh in the minds of many people (Eltingham 2006:67). It is now the 20th year that we remember it. The challenges remain immense. The past of Africa is marked with ethnic wars, colonial wars, and genocide. Ethnic war was waged among different ethnic tribes, and resulted in terrible atrocities being committed. Colonial wars were also horrendous. Colonial powers tried to enforce their rule on people all over Africa. Often people did not accept that and colonial wars erupted. Genocide of African people by colonial powers also occurred. Ethnic rivalries were often exacerbated by colonial powers and wars erupted (Van der Walt 2003:10). The challenges remain massive.

Chabal (2005:1) writes: "Conflict today seems to be a hallmark of African societies. Indeed, the continent now endures a greater degree of violence than at any time since independence." He refers to large scale regional conflicts, civil wars, genocide, etc. The situation seems hardly better in 2014. Even in Southern Africa, violence is part of reality. Terrible murders are committed and people are sometimes killed for as little as a mobile phone or a few rands.

The reasons for the violence are not the main issue in this paper, but rather the reality thereof and how theology interacts with the issue. However, a brief note by Engel (2005:225) warns:

> The very reason for the disintegration of the African State is the result of low levels of institutionalization, the neo-patrimonial nature of post-colonial politics…, and the combined effects of permanent economic crisis, structural adjustment and globalization.

How are we going to solve the crises in Africa? How are we going to solve the challenges of violence? Can Africa ever become free of the challenges and the dangers of violence, and how should Africa become free of its violent past? It seems as if there is no solution to the problem of violence and this continues to be detrimental to the future of Africa. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of peace. But the question is, are there not elements of violence in the atonement? How do we deal with the atonement? Can the atonement really bring peace when there is an element of violence present? How can the Christian Gospel change the situation? Should atonement be regarded in totally new ways to amend the violent aspects or can only God in His grace bring about atonement by the death of His Son because He is God?

The Atonement Challenged

Challenges

Jersak (2007:23) refers to the fact that the penal substitution, where Christ is regarded as the One punished for the sins of the other so that they may be saved from the wrath of God, was and is challenged in many ways. Charges against penal substitution include the aspect that the Father is being regarded as against the Son and that it makes God hostage to His own sense of honour and that it requires a death for sin to be paid back by punishment. According to the opponents of penal substitution this paints God as retributive, distorts divine justice and creates atheists (*ibid.*).

Jersak (*ibid.*) explains that many theologians rebutted this penal substitution. Abelard's moral theory was brought against Anselmus' satisfaction theory; the Socinians attempted to rebuff the reformers; and John Owen answered Hugo Grotius' "governmental theory". Recently Gustav Aulen's Christus Victor and René Girard's Mimetic theory were proposed.

Particularly this element of violence from God in the penal substitution is regarded by many as unacceptable. Is it possible that God reacted violently towards His own son to punish sin? Is this not also a justification of violence in the world as such? Would that not also be a way to vindicate the violence in Africa? If violence is intrinsically part of atonement, can it not be accepted as part of this life also, and then also as acceptable? Violence in this view of atonement, according to these proponents, comes from God and can lead to more violence. The question then remains: If we regard the atonement as violent, can we allege that the atonement is an answer to the problems of Africa? Does atonement not instigate further violence in Africa then? Should we not also be conscious of the fact that the struggle for freedom in Africa brought about terrible violence and that that violence cannot be justified by regarding the atonement to be violent?

Penal Substitution in Theological History

Doyle (2006:105) states that penal atonement was embraced by the early church fathers. Williams (2011:215) further explains that penal substitutionary atonement was fully accepted by Justin Martyr, Eusebius of Caesarea, Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus, Ambrose, and Augustine.

Hannah (1978:333) explains that Anselm's view was one of the most important theological positions taken. Not only did he provide the foundation for substitutionary atonement, he also influenced the reformers profoundly. Anselm states that man totally failed to honour God. God cannot just forgive, because His justice needs an answer. The only answer as appropriate punishment to the satisfaction of God is His provision of Christ as substitute:

> Therefore, Anselm argues that the placation of wrath could only be effected by the God-man, and this would not be out of arbitrary choice but out of absolute necessity. The sinner's substitute *must* be *God* in order to present a worthy sacrifice, and the substitute *must* be *man* in order to re-

> store Adam's fallen race since this was man's obligation (Hannah 1978:336).

Sumner (2013:31) refers to the word *satisfactio* (what is necessary), as the essence of Anselm's theory, rather than *poena* (punishment). The substitutional love of God remains essential. He (*ibid.* 34) is of the opinion that Anselm did not use penal language – he used satisfaction language, which is its cousin.

Doyle (2006:97), however, refers to the fact that Anselm still does not explain how the merits of Christ are meted out to the sinner. The penitential system of the medieval church provided the connection. This, however, meant uncertainty. Therefore, the Reformers had to start with a new perspective. This perspective was that of the absolute certainty of salvation precisely because Christ as ultimate sacrifice bears the sin of the person.

Hannah (1978:342) refers to the fact that the objective work of Christ as demonstrated by Anselm was also present in the Reformers' views, but they extended this to include the subjective experience of the atonement. Furthermore, Doyle (2006:97) explains that Calvin developed Anselm's ideas to include the union of the humanity of Christ, because it brings about great joy to the believer. Through faith, the believer is connected to Christ by the Spirit. The misery caused by the medieval penitential system is overcome, because the believer is now united with Christ and they may have full confidence that their sins are forgiven. Confession of sin is a response to grace already given in the life and death of Jesus Christ. Thus Calvin was of the opinion that Christ suffered *sufficiently* for the whole world, and *efficiently* for the elect, namely the true believers (Rouwendal 2008:333). Hay (2013:371) emphasises that the understanding of the cross stood at the heart of Calvin's exposition of the atonement. Through the cross Christ achieved salvation for us. Hay states that the dominant categories by which Calvin clarified the importance of the cross for the salvation of human beings were the categories of wrath, judgment, satisfaction and penal substitution:

> [F]or God's wrath and curse always lie upon sinners until they are absolved of guilt. Since he is a righteous Judge, he does not allow his law to be broken without punishment *[non sinit impune legem suam violari],* but is equipped to avenge.

Christ, therefore, stood in the place of sinners; the weight of the sin and guilt of sinners was transferred onto Him. That is the way that sinners are pardoned from sins. He took our death upon Himself. Only through His death God's wrath against sin abated.

Karl Barth, who stands in the tradition of the Reformers, also regarded the atonement as substitutionary. Jones (2010:276) explains that, like Anselm, Barth believes that Christ must deal with sin. The relation with God was totally destroyed by disobedience. Christ had to repair this relationship. This is, however, not achieved solely by paying the debt of sin by His death:

> To his mind, Christ draws into His being the totality of human wickedness on the cross, thereby effecting an unmediated confrontation between God and sin – a confrontation in which the fire of God's love 'burns up' humanity's morbid fascination and involvement with *das Nichtige*, with that which God does not will.

Hay (2013:377) is critical of Barth and is of the opinion that he should be criticised for his views on atonement. The unity of grace and holiness, mercy and righteousness, as perfections of the divine loving, is also divided. He refers to Barth's treatment of the atonement in the *KD* II/l and is of the opinion that it is a mistake to regard the death of Christ as a "satisfying deed" presented as divine righteousness:

> Again, this verbiage tended to divide righteousness from love as mercy. If the objectives articulated in Barth's dialectical organisation of the divine perfections were to be fruitful, a different way of viewing satisfaction would have to once again be proposed.

Of importance is the fact that Barth regards the unity of Christ as Son of God in the atonement as not apart from the Godhead. The Trinitarian unity is not dissolved because in the incarnation, the unity remains the unity of God in his love. The atonement is thus the atonement of God in his unity, both Judge, Judged, and the one being judged for others. Never is the unity dissolved - not even in the incarnation and atonement (Molnar 2014:52).

Theology, in the tradition of most of the church fathers and the reformation, did regard the penal substitutionary atonement as the way in which God saves. This means that they regarded the death of Christ as the way in which God transferred His justice to sinful humans. God's wrath against sin was averted by the deed of the obedient Son. He was embedded in sin on behalf of human beings. Gloriously he conquered death because He was the One in their place who took away the wrath of God on sinners. The violence in the atonement was necessary, because of sin. God had to judge sin. Violence is not an attribute of God, but He has the right to judge, and in this violent world Christ took death upon Himself as a means to end all the violent aspects of sin.

Challenges to Violence in the Atonement

Weaver (2001:3) explains that Anselm of Canterbury's views of the sacrifice of Christ should be challenged. The question of retributive justice in the system of sanctification atonement cannot be denied (2001:3), but he explains that black, feminist and womanist theologies have brought new questions to atonement theology (2001:5). These theologies relate to the fact that earlier theological efforts tried to justify violence or oppression of women and people of colour by appealing to the suffering of Christ, because His suffering was required by divine mandate and therefore suffering by oppression may be accepted (*ibid.*). Therefore, many black and feminist theologians are of the opinion that the reconciliation, brought about by the killing of Jesus, and understood as an act in which the divine justice of God was meted out to Jesus (and therefore, to sinners), has to be challenged (*ibid.*).

Black Theology

Weaver (2001:99ff.) refers to James H. Cone's comprehensive development of black theology. Cone (1990) tries to read the Bible differently, namely as a critique of classic theology and classical views on atonement. According to Weaver (2001:99ff), Cone rejects the violence of the sword, because it accommodated slavery and oppression. He reformulated Christus Victor in a new way that differed from that offered by Aulén, which includes political perspectives. Cone (1990:118) writes: "The finality of Jesus lies in the totality of His existence in complete freedom as the Oppressed One who reveals that God is present in all dimensions of human liberation." He is of the opinion that theology's great sin is to be silent in the face of white supremacy and that theology should fight this (Cone 2012:154). God is present in the depth of suffering (Cone 1993:111). Thus, the violence of the atonement is regarded differently: as radical rejection of oppression. The death of Jesus is protest against oppression.

Feminist Theology

Feminist theologians ask the question whether the atonement in itself does not implicate God as being violent. Many feminist theologians reacted strongly against the idea of a God that provided His Son to be crucified so that His anger could subside, and His anger be consoled. They ask whether that could not be called "Godly child abuse". They ask whether it can ever be accepted that God is so cruel and so violent that He killed his own son. Oduyoye (1995:186) asks why religion does not emancipate women. Schüssler-Fiorenza (1999:182) is of the opinion that the discourse on Paul should allow for dualism to be rejected. Paternalism, which underlays the classical atonement theories should be challenged, because it leads to dualism. Women should be liberated to live without dualistic impairing. She writes: "When women recognize their contradictory ideological position in the kyriocentric language system, they can become readers resisting the master-identification of the androcentric, racist, classist and colonialist text" (1992:135).

Weaver (2001:123) refers to Rosemary Radford Ruether, who asks the question: Can a male saviour save women? She finds the Jesus of the gospels more compatible with feminism and rejects the interpretations of atonement which emphasises Gods' wrath against his own Son (2001:126). Weaver (*ibid.*) is of the opinion that Ruether's conclusion is that the atonement should rather be seen as an unjust suffering.

Weaver (2001:156) summarises the feminists' viewpoints as follows:

> While feminists offer differing alternatives, this [= Weaver's] survey has revealed significant agreement on problems posed by traditional atonement imagery: because salvation of sinners depends on the Son's willing submission to violence willed or needed by the Father, it poses an image of divine child abuse. The logic of what is required for satisfaction points to the will of God behind the death of Jesus. Such an image is particularly harmful for women and for others in oppressive situations. Further, to the accommodation of the sword, slavery and racism by the ahistorical, abstract formulas of traditional atonement that was pointed out in early chapters, feminists add that these formulas accommodate patriarchy and male supremacy.

Although, generally, feminist theologians argue against penal substitution, Tamez (2012:710) warns that feminist theology should guard against strengthening a patriarchal paradigm with their particular reaction against the substitution. Tamez (*ibid.*) is of the opinion that one should first receive the gift of justification by faith oneself before being able to embrace a different paradigm than the 'patriarchal' structure of sin and death. She regards justification by faith as a start to a new way of life; a life by faith like Jesus, which ensures empowerment by becoming a free woman in Jesus. Faith should then enhance the understanding of the possibility of change in a society in which the power of sin could be overcome by an alliance to Christ. She explains that this salvation differs vastly from Anselm of Canterbury's view that blood sacrifice is needed in order to satisfy divine justice and to bring about salvation by the necessary work of salvation (*ibid.*).

Stichele (2012:749) is also of the opinion that Paul's anthropology unmasks modern dualism and exposes its simplicity. She warns (*ibid.*) that discrimination against women cannot be viewed in isolation from other forms of injustices; therefore, the struggle for greater justice and wholeness must also be understood inclusively. She (*ibid.*) is of the opinion that for Western culture this means the inclusion of the body and of the earth, or in other terms, of economy and ecology.

Wagener (2012:865) particularly refers to European and American white female theologians, who have warned that Christ's sacrificial death could be understood as necrophilia and thus belittle violence and glorify suffering. In this way those in power may turn away from the protest of the oppressed.

Feminist theologians, therefore, regard Jesus as a victim of murder instead of the One who suffered the wrath of God. He was not the object of God's anger, but instead the One from God who displayed the reality of violence in all its depths.

Christus Victor

Some proponents of non-violent atonement purports that viewing as punishment emphases on atonement in the Gospels and in Paul or punishment of the people of Jesus Christ as Son of God in the place of other people, which seems to be the Lutheran theological view - is unacceptable.

Hardin (2007:54ff) states that atonement theories fall into two types: sacrificial and non-sacrificial. He regards sacrificial as "myth" and the latter as the "gospel". The Gospel is the truly good news and it proclaims in Jesus the forgiveness of the subject. Anketell (2009:60) emphasises the rejection of Jesus also means that He proclaimed the "gospel" of forgiveness while he was rejected and indicates that He, like the prophets, continued to speak out irrespective of the consequences.

Is there possibly a different view of atonement, other than *violent* atonement? The idea of Christus Victor suggests that Christ becomes a victim rather than an object of God's wrath against sinners. Christ becomes the victim amongst humans and humans are the murderers. This takes place because the murderers are against the message of non-violence of Christ Himself.

Jersak (2007:19) is of the opinion that three common themes should be considered when interpreting the meaning of atonement. Firstly, God's non-violence in Christ at the cross was a violent episode, but not God's violence, and the atonement is non-penal. It was God's rejection of wrath and His affirmation of love. Secondly, Christ's total identification with humanity in his incarnation, and thirdly, the victory of Christ over Satan, and sin and death. Jersak (*ibid.*) continues:

> According to Jesus of the Gospels and the Gospel writers themselves, God sent His Son with good news of love, and then we responded by killing Him. They are set free through his death, because he didn't reply to our vengeance and violence but set us free.

Borg (2007:161) agrees and refers to a normalcy of civilization that led to the conviction of Jesus. Alison (2007:179) also refers to Christ as the One who we despised, but He came to bring the love of God.

Weaver (2001:12) refers to the non-violence of Jesus Himself, although not all accept that Jesus was teaching non-violence. However, Weaver (2001:13) refers to the fact that a narrative Christus Victor clearly fits and gives meaning to the story of Jesus and that it emphasises that atonement presumes non-violence. The classic Christus Victor motif views the atonement as victory over Satan. Currently, the narrative Christus Victor is taking a totally different view. Weaver (2001:36) explains that the teachings and the life of Jesus show that the objectives of the reign of God are not accomplished by violence. Rejection of violence, however, ought not to be interpreted as passivity (2001:41). Jesus' mission was to make the reign of God present and visible. That mission meant witnessing to and presenting God's radical and encompassing forgiveness. Sinners are forgiven by God's act only and not by averting His anger (2001:43).

Narrative Christus Victor (Weaver 2001:210) is then proposed as a non-violent Christ and in this sense as a possible solution to the question of the atonement. The devil is reinstitutioned, but not in a personal sense. The powers and principalities, the dark forces of this world, are overcome in Jesus' death. The total accumulation of the dark forces killed

Jesus; not His father for His justice (2001:211). Narrative Christus Victor explains that the cause of Jesus' death is obviously not God, and thus one does not need to accept Anselm's explanation to absolve God of needing the death of the Son, but not compelling it. There is then, according to Weaver (*ibid.*), no need to play language games concerning whether Jesus willed Himself to die, or whether God willed the death of Jesus. The answer is profoundly NO, according to Weaver (*ibid.*):

> Rather, in narrative Christus Victor the Son is carrying out the Father's will by making the reign of God visible in the world – and that mission is so threatening to the world that sinful human beings and the accumulation of evil they represent conspire to kill Jesus. Jesus came not to die but to live, to witness the reign of God in human history. While He may have known that carrying out that mission would provoke inevitably fatal opposition, His purpose was not to get Himself killed.

And (2001:228):

> ...narrative Christus Victor is a viable expression of God's saving work in Christ that makes visible and real in our history the victory of the reign of God and invites our participation in it. It is an image of atonement that takes the Bible very seriously.

Marshall (2003:81) points out that Weaver transfers the work of atonement from the cross to the earthly ministry of Jesus on the one hand, and to the resurrection of Jesus on the other. The focus is put on Jesus' life as the reign of God rather than on Jesus' death as an act of God. Therefore, the cross is regarded as something that came about from the evil powers, but not as a soteriological necessity for salvation. God turned the tables by raising Jesus from the dead. Would this not mean that Jesus could have achieved universal redemption without the cross? Marshall (*ibid.*) asks. Would His ministry of healing, delivering and loving not be enough to establish God's rule? "His death was an inevitable, but unessential, circumstance, although one turned to greater good by God's response of resurrection. Now both of these claims – that Jesus' death was not willed by God and that it was not a saving necessity – seem to me to fly in the face of the accumulated weight of New Testament evidence" (*Ibid.*)

Christus Victor is an important attempt to find a solution to the question of violence in the atonement, but as will be explained later, it lacks the essential aspects of the Pauline interpretation. The redemption in Christ is then also not fully appreciated and the salvation in Him not fully accepted.

Restorative Justice

Brümmer (2005:77-78) suggests restorative justice rather than retributive justice as the way to understand the atonement. He says that it must be assumed that God is a God of love. He seeks restorative justice and is always willing to forgive. He is, however, also prepared to pay the price of forgiveness. That sacrifice is the sacrifice made by God. Brümmer (2005:78) continues and explains that this view on atonement runs contrary to the ancient doctrine of divine impassibility where God is viewed as the One who lacks nothing and therefore can have no desires that could be thwarted, causing Him to suffer. Brümmer (*ibid.*) states that it is thus necessary to radically change human ways in order to be reconciled with God and to seek ultimate human happiness in the kind of fellowship in which humans identify with God by seeking His will as their own.

Brümmer (2005:79-80) briefly summarises the obstacles for reconciliation with God. He mentions that humans first of all became estranged from God and lost their self-knowledge and they are mistaken about the true nature of their own *daimon*. They are satisfied, like the prodigal son in a faraway country, with what they have. They have to be made attentive to their estrangement so that they can turn back to God. Secondly, estrangement from God does not only make humans ignorant of themselves, but also of God. They have to get to know God, the God of love. Thirdly, God should make his will known to humans and they have to be enlightened in the will of God. Fourthly, God should grant them the gift of empowerment to live their life consistently according to His will and fifthly, doing the will of God does not make them ultimately happy. They can only be happy if they do so joyfully out of love and not merely out of duty, because they have to. This is possible because Christ made the restorative justice of God a reality.

Henrikson (2009:295) regards the cross as a gift, but in the sense of a scandalous gift. This, however, should also lead to a relationship with God that humans should positively affirm and recognise as God's gift. He (2009:300) further states that the cross must be viewed as an event which is more than a manifestation of sin, death, or human finitude. The cross identifies the human as sinner, but also as a person to whom a new identity is offered in Christ. Thus, a combination of an inclusive interpretation of the cross (it is given for all) and an exclusive interpretation (in the sense that it can only be given as a gift by the one and only one) must be acknowledged (2009:327): "Christ's substitution for me is not something that necessarily contradicts my independence and leaves me alone with my own subjectivity in a way that is irrelevant for what is happening in the cross."

Penal Atonement Justified

Wonderful Exchange

In his approach to atonement Torrance (2009:2) refers to the mystery of atonement and the fact that the new divine intervention (explained in the New Testament) was needed. Torrance (2009:3-4) states:

> This reversal means that *we cannot think our way into the death of Christ because the continuity of our thinking and striving has been interrupted by it, but we may think our way from it* if we follow the new and living way opened to us in the crucifixion... We can understand the cross only by metanoia, repentance and change of mind, which is correlative on our part to the 'wonderful exchange' of *mirifica commutatio* on Christ's part when he who was rich was made poor for our sakes that we might become rich, when he the just exchanged his place with our place, with us who are utterly unjust, that we might be make the righteousness of God in Him.

Torrance (2009:103) refers to atonement in the teachings of Paul as justification. He refers to three key elements in justification: "Gods righteousness is his own supreme righteousness", "the act of God is on God's part both revelation and deed in one, and on man's part knowing and being in one" and "the righteousness of Christ is proclaimed to us the Gospel of Grace and it is freely bestowed upon us in and through Christ."

Torrance (2009:120) interprets the justification act of atonement and the death of Christ as an expiatory sacrifice. God judged sin but human guilt is completely taken away at the cross. It was a complete judgement that was enacted and he refers to Jesus as the Lamb of God who bears our sin and who sacrificed Himself under God's holy judgement. It is clear then that Torrance (2009:125) regards Jesus' death as the atoning death of the one for the many and that only the Creator Word can be the one for the many. In Christ God **is** humanity so as to engage the human condition for the redemption. The unity in God is upheld, but the Creator yielded himself in the atonement to bring about the total salvation. Remaining the Trinitarian God as Creator He, however, became human in his creation (cf. Molnar 2014:52).

The Redemptive Work of Christ

Unger (2012:6) clearly emphasises the redemptive work of Christ: "...the basis upon which we must build toward gaining an understanding of the totality of Christ's redemptive work is his sin-of-the-world embracing, penalty-bearing, wrath-accepting manifestation of love, mercy, and grace for the healing and restoration of lost humanity and for the entire cosmos."

Turrettin (1978/1859:20) states that sin has to be viewed in the threefold light of debt, enmity, and crime. God, therefore, also has to be regarded in the threefold light of creditor, party offended, and judged. Christ must also assume the threefold relation corresponding to all these: "He must sustain the character of a Surety, for the payment of the debt. He must be a Mediator, a peace-maker, to take away the enmity of the parties and reconcile us to God. He must be a Priest and victim, to substitute himself in our room, and make atonement, by enduring the penal sanction of the law."

Recently Packer and Dever (2007) make the case for penal substitution by confirming the aspect that Jesus stood condemned in our place. Packer (2007:25) explains that penal substitution emphasises God's encompassing love for lost sinners. Packer (*ibid.*) shows how the cross reconciled humans with God, ending the alienation and estrangement that previously existed between God and human beings. The cross was, according to him, propitiation, ending God's judicial wrath against people. The substitution was the way in which it was accomplished. The One in their place is the essence of the atonement because for Paul this is central to the salvation. Christ, as the penal substitute, makes the new life in faith with God possible. For Packer (2007:26) the depth of sin needed the penal substitution. The penalty for sin was paid by Christ, by whom humans are made the righteousness for God in Him. This leads to a life of love and service. Packer (2007:26ff.) wants to confirm that penal substitution is exactly God's way and answer to the depths of sin. In Christ the radical turn to God is possible. The end to sin is the way in which God radically rejects violence.

O'Collins (2007:171-172) emphasises that Christ died because of His self-sacrificing love. His passion, death and resurrection were linked with the Passover season from the outset of Christianity.

These different views on the atonement open the way to regard penal substitution as acceptable with full acknowledgement of the glory of God. Violence in the atonement is necessary because of sin and not because of God. He is beyond this, but because of His justice has to reveal His wrath.

The Glory of God

The Pauline Emphasis in Romans

Williams (2010:583) is of the opinion that penal substitution is the foundation of Paul's soteriology in Romans. Therefore, it cannot be dismissed. Williams (2010:599) writes:

> In Romans, the evidence affirms that (1) Jesus' violent death for sin provides the necessary atonement for sin; and (2) every soteriological benefit in Romans (redemption, justification by faith, forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, the resurrection of the dead, deliverance from God's wrath, predestination, and glorification) comes to Jews and Gentiles by faith only because Jesus died as a penal substitute for their sin. Without violent atonement, Paul's soteriology is incomplete and the argument of Romans 1-8 breaks down because penal substitution is foundational to his soteriology in Romans and central to the Pauline gospel.

A few important texts in Romans are relevant for the argument:

> [25] God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood – to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearrance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished – [26] he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:25-26)

The aspect of sacrifice is clear, and sacrifice undoubtedly has the essence of penal substitution. Shedding of blood is part of Paul's reference to the substitution. God presented Christ as substitute and sacrifice. God justifies Christ. The wrath of God against sin is taken away. The aspect of atonement should be emphasised. Paul's reference to the Old Testament and the implication of sacrifice so that the wrath of God can be taken away is clear. Dunn (2002:171) is of the opinion that Paul regards the death of Christ as somehow averting the wrath of God. God is, however, also portrayed as the one who offers the sacrifice, rather than its object. Dunn (*ibid.*) writes: "At all events, in view of this background, it can hardly be doubted that Paul (and the pre-Pauline tradition) was thinking of Jesus' death as a sacrifice (so explicitly NEB, NIV, and NJB), a judgment that is confirmed by the reference to Jesus' blood." The reality is that God has taken away the sin of the people by the death of Christ

(Bruce 1963:106). Included is the aspect of the Christ's self-offering in which He averts the divine wrath (Bruce 1963:106). Ziesler (1989:115) explains that due reparation has been paid. This is all accomplished by the free grace of God (Barret 1982:78). However, Cobb and Lull (2005:64) emphasises the aspect of liberation instead of expiation in the death of Christ but they also accept that atonement lies at the heart of Paul's view. Tobin (2004:139), on the other hand, places in the centre of Paul's view the aspect of expiation by the shedding of His blood so that many can be saved. The aspect of revelation is also important. God reveals Himself in the Crucified Christ who simultaneously is both the place of sacrifice and the sacrifice Himself (Kruger 2000:85).

> [6] You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. [7] Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. [8] But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. [9] Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! [10] For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! [11] Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (Romans 5:6-11)

The aspect of the One for the other is clear. Christ is in the place of the sinner. He is the One that brings the redemption by yielding Himself. Dunn (2002:180) explains:

> The purpose of Christ's expiatory sacrifice, in the first place, was to demonstrate or provide proof of God's saving action on account of the fact that in his forbearance he had let former sins go unpunished. This must mean God's purpose was to demonstrate that his saving action on Israel's behalf was in accord with the covenant obligations he had taken upon himself and laid upon Israel.

Christ lay down his life precisely so that the enemy can be saved (Bruce 1963:124). The generous nature of God is made clear (Ziesler 1989:141).

Justification through the blood of Christ is clear. The wrath of God is taken away by the justification through the blood of Christ. It is exactly this transformation through blood by which the renewal takes place. Cobb and Lull (2005:81) are careful to accept that Jesus was sent into the world to be killed, but instead explain that God affirmed His righteousness. However, cultic language is used to emphasise the radical justification for the Roman readers of Paul's letter (Tobin 2004:165).

> [18] Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. [19] For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:18f.)

The obedience of the One for the others is also considered important for full redemption. The obedience led to the blood of the righteous One given for the others. A new principle of God's grace has been introduced (Bruce 1963:128). Justification and reconciliation are linked in the death of Christ (Barret 1982:108).

> Romans 6:23: For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Only the One that takes away the wrath of God presents eternal life. This is accomplished by Christ's free gift (Barret 1982:134).

> Romans 8:32: He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Although the Son is not spared, He takes the place of others. God's justice is present in Him. It related with Jewish martyrdom as redemptive efficacy (Bruce 1963:179). Reference to the *Akedath Isaac* is made to find a relation with the Jewish idea of the perfect sacrifice (Ziesler 1989:229) Acquittal and freedom are, according to Cobb and Lull (2005:133), of essence in this verse.

God is above everything that humans can say or do. God is the Holy one. His glory is high above everything and in the Bible there is no question about the fact that God judges sin. In His righteousness and His glory and His holiness He judges sin. He shows His power and His glory against every aspect of sin. God's glorious love is present in Christ in His atonement, because Christ takes up human form and takes upon Himself the fullness of human sin. This must be understood in the most profound way. He is the One that says that in the fullness of His glory and of His glorification. He is the One in the place of others so that God's anger against sin will be taken away, and He does that exactly so that violence must end. What Christ does is to end violence by what He is doing.

Hannah (1978:344), concerning the aspect of atonement, explains that it is substitutionary:

> The death of Jesus Christ is important; indeed, it is the focal message of the Christian gospel. It is the proclamation that the eternal God came into the cursed world and as the God-man became the sinner's penalty-bearing

> Substitute, suffering an accursed death, the quality of that death verified by the Resurrection. His death is not an idle word for the complacent dreamer or the stoic scholar, but the hope of the world and the joy of the saint.

It is also important to refer to N.T. Wright (1996:592) who seeks to understand Jesus' role in the atonement from the perspective of the the explanation in the gospels of Jesus' own perspective. Jesus regarded Himself as a prophet of the second temple and He established the symbols of the new exodus, the renewal of the covenant and the forgiveness of sin as the real return from exile. The victory of God is Jesus' victory of the true prophet who died but who is resurrected. As Jew Jesus regarded himself as the One whose suffering would have redemptive implications (1996:593).

Wright also (2007:148) writes:

> Jesus therefore took up his own cross. He had come to see it, too, in deeply symbolic terms: symbolic, now, not merely of Roman oppression, but of a way of love and peace which he had commended so vigorously, the way of defeat which he had announced as the way of victory ... It was to become the symbol, because it would means, the victory of God.

Wright (*ibid.*) remains convinced of the idea of substitutionary atonement but also of the political and practical emphases of the gospel. The implication from Wright's view is that the atonement has implications for the present world. The atonement leads to justification which means that changed humans can live a life of love in a world of need.

Mouw (2012:31) emphasises a variety of images such as debt-repaying, ransom, sacrifice, and enduring divine wrath against sin, and says that all these point us to "the fact that on the cross of Calvary, Jesus did something for us that we could never do for ourselves as sinners. He engaged in a transaction that has eternal consequences for our standing before a righteous God." According to him N. T. Wright, although he is prodding evangelicals to think anew on the atonement, is quite clear on the classical implications of the atonement for the sinner.

There can be no question that Christ does on the cross in order to end all violence. On the cross He becomes a message against all violence. He makes humans understand that a new compensation arrived and He is the one who brings this about. In this sense, although Christ suffers much and although He takes away the sins of humankind, it must be understood that He does it because He yields Himself for salvation and through His presentation of His glory, His love and His kindness He changes the concept of violence. Therefore in Africa, with all the challenges of Africa, with all the dangers of Africa, a new way of dealing with the problems of Africa can appear. In Christ a new revelation can come about, and through Christ a total salvation is possible, because He does that precisely with a view to ending violence and this message about the coming of the kingdom of God can be proclaimed for in all African states. This is for the kingdom of God to change the situation and to bring about peace. Christ is the ruler of peace and in Christ this magnification of peace should be emphasised so that the peace can be established for all who believe in Him. The believers can make the wonders of God's grace present in this world and positively attest to Christ's love for all human beings. His love for all and his substitutionary death, which have meaning for all, then bring about the possibility of peace. This love should be proclaimed to call all to end violence and war. Strife and other aspects of war must be addressed through the peace of Christ and the church of Christ must be the church of peace, bringing about peace in war situations. Peterson (2011:109) explains:

> Though penal substitution has been overemphasised by some and rejected by others, it is one of six major biblical pictures of Christ's saving accomplishment. For four reasons it is to be regarded as foundational to the pictures: its key place in redemptive history, the fact that it overlaps many of the other pictures, its prominence in both Testaments, and its key position in the most important direction of Christ's saving work – the Godward one.

And Unger (2012:14) writes: "Substitution is the sure foundation of the atoning work of Christ. Here is a secure place where we can stand."

The situation in Africa calls for intensive involvement from the people of God. Engel (2005:223) explains that conflict prevention in Africa is dominated by reactive policies. Prophylactic, precautionary and protective purposes are needed. Before state failure and disintegration, a solution must be found. Van der Walt (2003:542ff.) suggests a positive manner in which the gospel transforms society by way of a deeply Christian worldview. All aspects of life must be regenerated. The whole society must become new. The totality of human existence must be renewed. Dualism must be rejected and a holistic worldview, in which all aspects of the regenerating atonement are present, is needed. A biblical worldview is necessary to bring about a totally new way of looking at Africa and the challenges of violence in Africa.

In agreement with Van der Walt, it is clear that a new dawn is only possible when Africa is rebuilt starting from this perspective. It seems exclusivist but it is in Christ a universal message. Violence in the atonement does not exclude that God is against violence. He brought about the peace of the salvation precisely through the violent death of His Son. God's holy justice is completely different from ours. He redeemed us from our violence so that we can be in His peace. Volf (2007:284) states that the will to actually embrace forgiveness is best received if some form of restitution is given in addition to the repentance that takes place. This restitution must not be regarded as a contribution to forgiveness but as a sign of repentance.

Christ is the One who is yielded for the others through the sin of humans and so that the wrath of God can be averted. However, the way in which God in His glory judges and saves must not be equated with human ways and ideas. Human beings usually think in categories of humans. They think from human perspectives of violence and non-violence and they try to understand God from their own perspective, from this perspective of violence and non-violence, and they do not understand that God is above all their ideas of violence and non-violence.

Conclusion

It is not possible to turn away from the violent aspects in the atonement. God, however, does not become violent Himself because He puts His anger against sin on Christ. It is the token of His love to bring about new peace and His kingdom forever. Africa is in need of this gospel more than ever before.

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The Applicability of Jesus' Ethics as a Panacea to the Thorny Issue of Peace and Reconciliation in Zimbabwe, 2008-2013

Sheila Wimbai Chamburuka & Phillemon Munyaradzi Chamburuka

Abstract

This article is a theological reflection on the applicability of Jesus' non-resentment ethics in the call for peace and reconciliation by the Zimbabwean government (through the work of the Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration, ONHRI) following the socio-political violence between 2008 and 2013 which characterised the Zimbabwean political environment. The article explores two major schools of thought: (i) Jesus' non-resentment or non-violence ethics should be applicable unconditionally; (ii) Jesus' non-resentment ethics can only be attainable if and only if confession, truth and justice prevail. The research concludes that the applicability of Jesus ethics could be a panacea in bringing peace, healing and reconciliation in Zimbabwe, however, the process has been derailed because of lack of truth telling, confession and justice in this process.

Introduction

This article focuses on the applicability of Jesus' non-resentment ethics to the issue of the call for peace and reconciliation in Zimbabwe following socio-political disturbances that characterised the Zimbabwean society between 2008 and 2013. Two schools of thought will be discussed, (i) Jesus' non-resentment or non-violence ethics should be applicable unconditionally (ii) Jesus' non-resentment ethics can only be attainable if and only if confession, truth and justice prevail. Scholarly opinions which support each school of thought will be critically assessed. For purposes of clarity, a brief background of the socio-political environment will be highlighted.

A Brief background of the Zimbabwean Political Environment (2008-2013)

Zimbabwe experienced severe political conflict before, during and after the harmonised elections of March 2008. However, with the help of a mediated process by the former South African President, Thabo Mbeki and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) party, and the opposing Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) factions (MDC led by Tsvangirayi and MDC led by Mutambara) signed a the Global Political Agreement (GPA) on the 15th of September 2008. While this historic event was envisaged to mark the end of violent politics, it also ushered in the beginning of the many challenges in rebuilding the country. Therefore by signing the agreement, Zimbabwe as a nation entered another challenging process which includes the creation of a new era of democratic and transparent leadership, anchored in transitional justice with national healing and reconciliation as pre-requisites for sustainable peace and nation building (Mbire 2011).

It is important to note that, since the signing of the Global Political Agreement by ZANU PF and MDC formations, there have been moves to promote national healing and reconciliation with a view to rebuild the country (Chamburuka 2012:201). A summit to explore ways of reconciling Zimbabweans who were divided by almost a decade of political violence between the two main rival political parties was held on 13 February 2009. The ZANU-PF chairman John Nkomo, MDC M vice-president Gibson Sibanda and Sekai Holland of the MDC-T were appointed as Ministers of State responsible for administering the Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration (ONHRI). The creation of the ONHRI was an acknowledgement and endorsement of the adoption of the need for some form of transitional justice in Zimbabwe. The establishment of the ONHRI seeks to ensure "restoration of the dignity of all Zimbabweans regardless of age, gender or creed: to achieve peace, stability, unity and prosperity for individual Zimbabweans, their families, communities, organisations and the country as a whole" (ONHRI: 2009). However, since the establishment of the ONHRI in 2009, communities that were largely affected by the violence have not gone through a process of reconciliation and the government did not do any official investigation on the allegations raised by the affected people. Cases of political violence continue to be reported in the media; a clear sign of the prevailing tense environment in the country and political intolerance among people (Kaulemu 2011:79). Moreover, there are arguments as to whether the national healing and reconciliation project should be led by politicians given the politics of partisanship that have characterised the political landscape of Zimbabwe since independence (Mbire 2011). These observations on the failures and weaknesses of the operations ONHRI calls for an assessment of the relevance and applicability of Jesus' ethics in the call for peace, national healing, reconciliation and integration in Zimbabwe. With the above background we now shift our focus on the two schools of thought that dominate the applicability of Jesus' non-resentment ethics.

The first school of thought's conception of Jesus' non-resentment ethics

According to Schrage (1988:77), Jesus' ethics of love is the predominant ethic that is prevailling through all the four gospels (Mark, Matthew, Luke and John). For him the commandment to love your enemies and persecutors, to do good to those who hate you, to bless those who curse you, and to pray for those who abuse you (Luke 6:27-28) shows that love cannot consist in discovering something that can be loved in the resentment ethic. More so, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus teaches his followers to love their enemies and pray for their persecutors (Mt 5:44). Jesus seeks to break the cycle of violence by challenging his hearers not to retaliate for injuries suffered. Lefebure (2000:67) asserts that instead of responding in kind, we are to imitate the all-inclusive love of God, who sends sun and rain upon the just and the unjust alike (Mt 5:45). Jesus broadens the range of the term "neighbour" so that even enemies are to be included as the objects of love.

In the gospels, Jesus enters into situations where the drama of mimetic desire, violence and scapegoating is being acted out; but he refuses to play along. For example, elements of the surrogate victim mechanism shape the story of the adulterous woman (Jn 8:2-11) but the usual violent conclusion is prevented. The crowd has captured a woman, but they did not bring the man. He must have been there too, but apparently was able to or was allowed to escape. In first century Palestine, adultery was only a crime against a man; a man could not commit adultery against his wife but only against another man by having relations with the other man's wife. The crowd surrounds the woman, threatening to kill her. It is a highly charged scene of sex and violence. As the men took on the woman, they can project all their anger, guilt and lust on her as they pick up stones. Where the crowd publicly shames her in the name of morality and righteousness, Jesus reminds everyone present, particularly the men who want to stone her, of our common sinfulness (*ibid*.).

Jesus is bringing out into the open the bias of a society that condemns the woman to death allowing her male partner to escape unharmed. This does not only represent a personal act of forgiveness of one woman, it is an exposure of the scapegoat mechanism itself: the pattern of a male dominated society one-sidedly blaming a woman for sexual misconduct and using women as scapegoats so that men can feel virtuous and righteous. Jesus moves into a highly charged situation and reminds the crowd that we all are sinners (*ibid*.).

The gospel of Matthew retells the drama of scapegoating, but simultaneously reveals its demand for violence as a fraud. Acknowledging that all of history was dominated by violence Jesus says: “

> Therefore I sent you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify; and some you scourge in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, that upon you may come all the righteous bloodshed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zecharia the son of Barachiah whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Truly, I say to you, all this will come upon this generation (Mt 23:34-36).

These views are also found in early Christianity as they remembered Jesus as condemning violence and urged Christians to make peace and to suffer violence without retention (ibid.). When Jesus entered into Jerusalem on a colt (Mk 11:1-10) he rejected the Jewish concepttion of a military or political Messiah. Furthermore, while two of Jesus’ followers are reported to have carried arms on the night of his arrest (Lk 22:38; 49-51), Jesus himself rejected the option of violent resistance (*ibid*.). The above arguments have clearly demonstrated that really Jesus advocated for non-violence.

Musasiwa (2012) argues that the issue of Jesus’ ethics should be viewed in two different categories. The first one being Jesus’ attitude towards the violence perpetrated against himself; such as being betrayed, given false accusation up to the crucifixion on the cross. Moreover, when he was betrayed one of his disciples had cut an ear off one of the soldiers, he rebuked this disciple and restored the ear (Lk 22: 49-51). In other words Jesus rebutted revenge but insisted on non-violence. Therefore he did not retaliate against the violence exerted upon him.

Taringa (2012) asserts that for Jesus' ethics to be applicable in the process of peace and reconciliation in Zimbabwe, reconciliation can only be sustained if the victim of violence unconditionally forgives the perpetrator. He argues that the power of forgiveness comes from the victim who must also initiate the process of reconciliation. Taringa (2012) further asserts that on the cross Jesus was the one who uttered the words of forgiveness and not the perpetrators. Thus, according to him, reconciliation can only be attained if and only if it is advocated by the victim not churches or any other organisations or government ministries.

Chitando (2012) contends that

> our values system should correspond to the ethics of Jesus because those who are called to follow Christ should also imitate Jesus ethics. He is of the opinion that Jesus' non-resentment ethics and forgiveness is applicable to the Zimbabwean situation of national healing, peace and reconciliation.

More so, Chitando (2012) reiterates that, "if I return violence with violence it will create a spiral of violence." He argues that we need to follow Mahatma Gandhi's theory of non-violence, who stresses that the best solution to conquer the oppressors is to give them love. Violence is the most primitive reaction as a human being but if people act in non-violent ways they disarm the oppressor.

Musasiwa (2012) asserts that ONHRI was set into place for political gains. He is of the opinion that the organ was given to those involved in politics but this did not yield positive results. He further asserts that the two main political parties (ZANU PF and MDC T) clearly knew that politicians were not the best people to head this organ. In fact the two parties do not want the issues of national healing to be functional because they were preoccupied with their internal party politics. They knew that if this organ was spearheaded by neutral organisations such as churches (or any independent board) it was going to be viable and their weaknesses will be exposed.

The second school of thought's conception of Jesus' non-resentment ethics

Machakanja (2010:11) asserts that the first question that needs to be asked is: what and who needs reconciliation and healing? Whilst wrongdoers and victims or survivors will have different answers to this question, she argues that reconciliation should aim at addressing the most obvious human rights abuses and the root causes of the conflict, focusing on land rights. The success of any reconciliation and national model would depend on the extent to which it is inclusive and consultative of all key stakeholders at all levels of society. Related to this question is whether reconciliation and healing are the best way to address the human rights abuses, or whether means such as legal action should rather be adopted. One possible answer is that the choice between pursuing justice and opting for reconciliation is not an easy one, as this depends heavily on circumstances. For instance the Zimbabwean situation where some of the people perceived to be perpetrators of human rights violations continue to hold power or are in strategic positions that abstract the advancement of the envisioned reconciliation and national healing process (*ibid.*). In light of the above observations it is evident that the application of the non-resentment ethics of Jesus in Zimbabwe is problematic because of the silence on the need of truth telling (confession) and justice.

Tutu (1997:271) asserts that, in relations between individuals, if you ask another person for forgiveness you may be spurned; the one you have injured may refuse to forgive you. The risk is even greater if you are the injured party, wanting to offer forgiveness. The culprit may be arrogant, obdurate, or blind, not ready or willing to apologise or to ask for forgiveness. He or she thus cannot appropriate the forgiveness that is offered. Many political commentators allege that Tutu's observations above are a true projection of what is experienced in Zimbabwe. For instance in most parts of the country victims of political violence are still leaving in fear and trauma because their persecutors are promising more torture and horror if they do not join their party. To make matters worse, they are demanding to be appeased in cash or kind. In such a scenario the application of Jesus' ethics is problematic. A daily newspaper carried a story which states that in Cashel Valley (Manicaland Province) it is alleged that MDC T supporters' homes were torched by suspected ZANU PF militia (Newsday 2011). What baffles the mind is that most of these party supporters are moving scot free even if they have been reported to the police. The police in some cases confess that ZANU PF supporters are untouchable, once you arrest them you can be victimised or face unspecified action (*ibid.*).

Tutu (1997) further asserts that the leaders in South Africa were ready to say they were willing to walk the path of confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation with the hazards that lay along the way. Unfortunately, as highlighted before, the parties in the Zimbabwean Inclusive Government lack the will and commitment which was seemingly present in South Africa. More so, Tutu (1997) contends that it is crucial that, when a relationship has been damaged or when a potential relationship has been made impossible, that the perpetrator should acknowledge the truth and be ready and willing to apologise. These initiatives would help the process of forgiveness and reconciliation immensely. He purports that perhaps the most difficult thing in the world to do and in almost every language the most difficult words to utter: "I am sorry". Therefore it is not all surprising that those accused of horrendous deeds and the communities they come from, for whom they believed they were committing these atrocities, almost always try to find ways out of even admitting that they were indeed capable of such deeds. They adopt the denial mode, asserting that such-and-such has not happened. When the evidence is in controvertible they take refuge in feigned ignorance (*ibid.*).

Notably those from the ZANU PF party mainly blame the MDC for being the puppets of the West who are destined to betray the gains of the liberation struggle. They argue that Robert Mugabe is the messenger of God who was sent to defend the sovereignty of Zimbabwe. This message is spearheaded through various songs composed by ZANU PF youth and women leagues. One of the songs has the following lyrics: "...*VaMugabe muri nhume yakatumwa kuzosunungura Zimbabwe*..." (The song implies that Mugabe is a "messiah" sent to liberate Zimbabwe). The implication is that president Robert Mugabe has to rule forever. Such songs and ideology is an indicator of the root causes of permanent hostility and intolerance of anyone who is outside their party.

On the other hand, the MDC T accuses the ZANU PF former government for the economic turmoil of the last decade. In an interview on SW radio, the former MDC T spokesperson Nelson Chamisa expressed that the relationship between his party and ZANU PF was likened to that of water and oil to such an extent that they do not mix. In one of their songs: *"ZANU yaora baba..."* they lament that ZANU PF is "finished", has disintegrated and is dead. Such rhetoric is for campaigning purposes, yet they incite violence and a lack of tolerance to opposing views even if they may be constructive to their own guard (Muwati & Mangena, 2013:202). Therefore the applicability of Jesus' ethics faces an uphill task because periodically the parties indoctrinate their members through hate speech. Hence people are exposed to violence whilst aiming at out-witting another party and acknowledging that they are lamenting the atrocities which might have been caused before, during and after the 2008 elections. In some cases parties are not tolerant to people who confess their participation in politically motivated ills. If you confess you are deemed a traitor or sell-out.

However, Tutu (1997:271) argues that if the process of forgiveness and healing is to succeed eventually, acknowledgement by the culprit is indispensable if not completely so, then nearly so. Acknowledgement of the truth and having wronged someone are important in getting to the root of the matter. For him, forgiving and being reconciled are not about pretending that things are other than they indeed are. We do not pat one another on the back and turn a blind eye to the wrong. True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the pain, the degradation, the truth. It is a risk to call for understanding but in the end it is worth-while because ultimately, dealing with the real situation helps to bring real healing. Spurious reconciliation can bring only spurious healing. If the wrongdoer has come to a point of realising his wrong, one would hope that there will be remorse, or at least some contrition or sorrow. This should lead the person to confess the wrong deeds and they should ask for forgiveness. It obviously requires a fair measure of humility, particularly when the victim is someone in a group that one's community had despised, as was often the case in South Africa when the perpetrators were government agents. The victim, we hope, would be moved to respond to an apology by forgiving the culprit (*ibid.*). Chitando (2012) concurs with Tutu in his suggestion that there is need for perpetrators to be forgiven and yet they should not end there. The perpetrators have to compensate in particular to those victims who lost their body parts and those who lost their loved ones. For instance, the children of the deceased may be compensated (if need be, through practical assistance, with, for example, school fees and those with amputation of any kind, with artificial prostheses. This process will greatly enhance the trust that genuine of remorse on the part of the perpetrator. If this process runs its course, the assurance of forgiveness or reconciliation might certainly turn out to be successful in Zimbabwe.

Tutu (1997:271) however, asserted that, in forgiving, people are not being asked to forget. On the contrary, it is important to remember not to forget in order for such atrocities to never be allowed or encouraged again. Forgiveness does not mean condoning what has been done. Thus forgiveness means taking what happened seriously and not minimising past atrocities; it simply aims at removing the sting from the memory that threatens to poison our entire existence. The process involves trying to understand the perpetrators and so have empathy to attempt to stand in their shoes and appreciate the sort of pressures and influences that might have motivated them.

Tutu's (1997) understanding of reconciliation reminds of the story of the adulterous woman who was caught red-handed with someone's husband and the Jews wanted to stone her for the sin she had committed but Jesus forgave her sins whilst at the same time he warned her against sinning again (Jn 8:2-11). This is a clear sign from Jesus' ethics that wrong-doing must not be deliberately repeated. In which case, therefore, the perpetrator of violence must refrain from repeated violence. In other words, there must be true signs of repentance. The problem with the Zimbabwean context is that the political climate is still tense such that those who may be willing to confess are afraid of a double tragedy that is, from his or her party and unpredictable response from the victims (and or their party).

Volf (1990:290), however, charges that, though not the dominant theme, violence provides a prominent backdrop for much of the New Testament narratives. The drama of salvation starts and ends with violence, and without violence its central act is unthinkable. However, Volf (*ibid.*) argues that a Christian perspective on violence must be gained by reflecting on attitudes to the violence in the whole drama of Jesus Christ's coming into the world, living in it, and judged in it (Mt 26:52). Volf (*ibid.*) urges to take a look at Paul's instruction about how a sword–bearing state is a servant of God (Rom. 13:1-5) although Christians are "never to avenge themselves, but leave room for the wrath of God" (Rom. 12:19). Furthermore, to reflect on the failure of John the Baptist to tell the soldiers that they should give up their jobs (Luke 3:14). Each of these texts is significant in its own right, but none of them compare in importance to what is inscribed in the drama of Jesus Christ notably the cross and the second coming.

The cross breaks the cycle of violence. Hanging on the cross, Jesus provided the ultimate example of his command to replace the principle of retaliation ("an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth") with the principle of non-resistance ("if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also") (Mt. 5:38-42). By suffering violence as an innocent victim, he took upon himself the aggression of the persecutors. He broke the vicious cycle of violence by absorbing it, taking it upon himself. However, Volf (*ibid.*) contends that Jesus refused to be sucked into the automatism of revenge, but sought to overcome evil by doing good even at the cost of his life. "Jesus' kind of option for non-violence had nothing to do with the self-abnegation in which I completely place myself at the disposal of others to do with me as they please; it had much to do with the kind of self-assertion in which I refuse to be ensnared in the dump redoubling of enemies' violent gestures and be reshaped into their mirror image."

Volf (*ibid.*) argues that the crucified Messiah is not a concealed legitimation of the system of terror, but its radical critique. Far from enthroning violence, the sacralisation of him as victim subverts violence. Secondly, the cross lays bare the mechanism of scapegoating. All the accounts of Jesus' death agree that he suffered unjust violence. His persecutors believed in the excellence of their cause, but in reality hated without a cause that he was an innocent victim. This, however, is not to say that he was an arbitrarily chosen victim. In a word of deception and oppression, his innocence, his truthfulness and his justice was reason enough for hatred. Jesus was a threat, and precisely because of his threatening innocence, he was made a scapegoat. Instead of taking the perspective of the persecutors, the Gospels take the perspective of the victim; they constantly reveal what the texts of historical persecutors, and especially mythological persecutors, hide from us: the knowledge that their victim is a scapegoat (*ibid.*).

Moreover, though Jesus was innocent, not all who suffer violence are innocent. The tendency of persecutors to blame victims is reinforced by the actual guilt of victims, even if the guilt is minimal and they inflict it in reaction to the original violence committed against them. Are the strategies of "absorbing" and "damasking" the only ways Jesus fought violence? Is the suffering of violence, paradoxically, the only cure against it? Certainly not! The cross is the third part of Jesus struggle for God's truth and justice. Jesus' mission certainly did not consist merely in passively receiving violence. The cry of anguish to an absent God was not Jesus' only utterance; falling under the weight of the cross on the road to execution was not his only accomplishment (*ibid.*). If Jesus had done nothing but suffer violence, we would have forgotten him as we have forgotten so many other innocent victims. The mechanism of scapegoating would not have been unmasked by his non-resistance. The pure negativity of non-violence is barren because it shies away from "transgressing" into the territory of the system of terror. At best, oppressors can safely disregard it; at worst, they can see themselves indirectly justified by it. To be significant, non-violence must be part of a larger strategy of combating the system of terror (*ibid.*).

However, we need to raise such questions as: Does the cross teach us to abandon reason along with violence? Is its message that the immediacy of self-donation is the only antidote to the immediacy of violence? Certainly not! We cannot dispense with reason and discourse as weapons against violence. The cross does suggest that the "responsibility of reason" can replace neither the "consciousness of sin" nor the willingness to embrace the sinful other. Only those who are willing to embrace the deceitful and unjust as Christ has done on the cross will be able to employ reason and discourse as instruments of peace rather than violence (*ibid.*).

However, Tutu (1997:272) suggests that Jesus did not wait until those who were nailing him to the cross had asked for forgiveness. He was ready, as they drove in the nails, to pray to his father to forgive them and he even provided an excuse for what they were doing. If the victim could forgive only when the culprit confessed, then the victim would be locked into the culprit's whim, locked into victimhood, whatever her own attitude or intention. That would be palpably unjust. Tutu (*ibid.*) gave an analogy in trying to explain the need for a perpetrator to confess. "Imagine you are sitting in a dank, stuffy, dark room. This is because the curtains are drawn and the windows have been shut. Outside the light is shining and a fresh breeze is blowing. If you want the light to stream into that room and the fresh air to flow in, you will have to open the window and draw the curtains apart; then that light which has always been available will come in and air will enter the room to freshen it up. So it is with forgiveness." The victim may be ready to forgive and make the gift of her forgiveness available, but it is up to the wrong-doer to appropriate the gift to open the window and draw the curtains aside. He does this by acknowledging the wrong he has done, so letting the light and fresh air of forgiveness enter his being (*ibid.*).

In the act of forgiveness we are declaring our faith in the future of a relationship and in the capacity of the wrong-doer to make a new beginning on a course that will be different from the one that caused us the wrong. We are saying that here is a chance to make a new beginning. It is an act of faith that the wrong-doer can change. According to Matthew (18:22), Jesus charges us to be ready to do this not just once, not just seven times, but seventy times seven, without limit provided. Jesus seems to say your brother or sister who has wronged you is ready to come to confess the wrong they have committed yet again. That is difficult, but because we are not infallible, because we will hurt especially the ones we love by some wrong, we will always need a process of forgiveness and reconciliation to deal with those unfortunate yet all too human breaches in relationships. They are an inescapable characteristic of the human condition.

Tutu (*ibid.*) further asserts that, once the wrongdoer has confessed and the victim has forgiven, it does not mean that is the end of the process. Most frequently, the wrong has affected the victim in tangible, material ways. Apartheid provided the whites with enormous benefits and privileges, leaving its victims deprived and exploited. If someone steals my pen and then asks me to forgive him, unless he returns my pen the sincerity of his contrition and confession will be considered to be nil. Confession, forgiveness, and reparation, wherever feasible, form part of a continuum.

More so, Tutu (1997) stresses that in South Africa, the whole process of reconciliation has been placed in considerable jeopardy by the enormous disparities between the rich, mainly the whites, and the poor, mainly the blacks. The huge gap between the haves and the have-nots, which was largely created and maintained by racism and apartheid, poses the greatest threat to reconciliation and stability in our country (South Africa). The rich provided the class from which the perpetrators and the beneficiaries of apartheid came and the poor produced the bulk of the victims. For unless houses replace the hovels and shacks in which most blacks live, unless blacks gain access to clean water, electricity, affordable health care, decent education, good jobs, and a safe environment things which the vast majority of whites have taken for granted for so long, we can just as well kiss reconciliation goodbye.

It is important to note that the Zimbabwean context is more complex because the oppression, torture, abductions, rape, brutal killings in the 21st century were not perpetrated by whites but it happened almost mainly between fellow blacks and in many cases, such as with white farmers, just the opposite: blacks against whites. In some cases it was son versus father, mother against daughter, brother against brother. Hence, the animosity between these kinsmen and kinswomen has reached unprecedented levels to such an extent that a reckless application of Jesus' ethic of "turn the other cheek" will cause more harm than remedy. Naturally forgiving someone who is not a close relative is easier than your kinsmen or kinswomen. Hence compensation is one of the methods which may reduce hard feelings between oppressor and the oppressed. This concurs with Chitando's (2012) assertion: *"kugona ngozi* *kuiripa"* (which means that the effects of an avenging spirit can only be settled through paying compensation). A typical example is the story of a Gokwe man, Tawengwa Chokuda, whose son, Moses Chokuda, was murdered in cold blood on 21 March 2009, who is refusing to bury his son until he is compensated with 15 cattle from the perpetrators, Farai Machaya the son of ZANU PF Midlands province chairman and governor, Jason Machaya, and Edmore Gana, son of ZANU PF Gokwe South district coordinating committee chairman, Isaac Gana. The body of his son is still lying in state in Gokwe General Hospital mortuary over two years after the incident. The Newsday newspaper of 10 May 2011 carried a story in which Tawengwa Chokuda appealed to attorney general Tomana to ensure that justice take its course in the case of his murdered son, but nothing has been done so far. This example serves to show how complicate the application of Jesus' ethics of non-resentment ethics is, because the judiciary is deliberately reluctant to administer justice. The story of Chokuda family shows the gravity of grief, wrath, bitterness, and lack of forgiveness in the Zimbabwean society and people with such feelings cannot be blamed because they have a genuine feeling that justice must prevail first in order for forgiveness to be rendered. For the Chokuda family forgiveness must not be offered on a silver platter. In any case, these people who have been wronged have feelings; they are not angels who are incorporeal.

The above scholarly suppositions are supported by a case study which was done in October 2008 by three researchers from the church-funded organisation, Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) in Chitungwiza 20 miles (30km) south of Harare. They set up a reconciliation process in Chitungwiza, starting with a three-day group therapy workshop, involving 17 victims. They began interviewing hundreds of torture victims. "It was just horrible," said Joel Nkusane, a coordinator, "We were reopening the wounds. We were listening, then we would leave them in pain, without giving any help?" Getting Zanu (PF) perpetrators to attend, was far more difficult, yet they managed to attract seven, one of whom was Harry, who was a commander of a torture base for President Mugabe's Zanu (PF) party in the bloody run-off to the Zimbabwean presidential elections in Chitungwiza.

Nkusane testified: "Harry was sweating and shacking when he started. The guilt with him is still there. He said what he did was evil, that he caused death and suffering. He and the others said they wanted to look into the eyes of their neighbours and stay in harmony. They want to go back and talk it out." Harry was one of thousands of previously "untouchable" Zanu (PF) militia who murdered as many as 180 people and tortured thousands to make sure the election went Mugabe's way. He controlled mobs of rampaging youths who sought out supporters of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and subjected them to unspeakable torture. Now, seven weeks after the establishment of the coalition Government between Zanu (PF) and the MDC, he cannot sleep at night for fear that his house will be burnt down in retribution. He says that he is so wrecked with guilt that he contemplates suicide. He is frightened to go to the grocery store. He will not accept a meal from anyone in case it is poisoned and often spends the night in the bush. Harry talks only when we drive to a secluded spot far from the crowded, garbage-strewn sheet that he lives in. "Maybe one morning, I will wake up murdered," he says, 'I know other people won't forget what happened.' They may never forget but there is some hope that they may forgive, thanks to a new reconciliation effort."

Furthermore, the CCJP came across George Simango, 28, who was the head of the MDC in one of the wards in Chitungwiza. On the night before the election he was dragged out of his home and beaten and had boiling water poured over his back. Red-hot embers were shoveled into the T-Shirt that he was wearing and he was forced to lie on it. Mr Simango has kept the burnt T-shirt. "For the time, I cannot forgive", he said. "But revenge is not the way. The only thing I want is a law that they should confess, give details of what they did and who sent them." Mr Nkunsane also believes that a public acknowledgement of the act of violence that goes right to the top of the political parties responsible, is critical for a process of reconciliation across the country, along the lines of the post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.

Villa-Vicencio (2009:170) contends that reconciliation is a new and friendly relationship with someone you argued with or fought with. He stresses that it is a way of making it possible for ideas, beliefs, need and other related issues that are opposed to each other to exist together. He reiterates that reconciliation is both process and goal. As a process it is inevitably uneven, lapsing into counterproductive and even violent ways of redressing a conflict. It requires restrain; generosity of spirit, empathy, and perseverance. He argues that reconciliation is about exploring ways of gaining a deeper and more inclusive understanding of the problems that the root cause of a conflict (*ibid.*). It is about opening the way to better understanding, respect and trust building. Above all, it is about finding ways to connect people across what are often historic and entrenched barriers of suspicion, prejudice, and inequality. This could lead to an adaptation or change of values and a new or less rigid sense of identity and outlook on life (*ibid.*).

Trevor Saruwaka (2012), an MDC Member of Parliament of Mutasa Central Region argues that, being a victim of violence the issue of "turning the other cheek" only applied in the past because the victims need justice. As long as the perpetrators are walking scot free we will not sit down and watch. We need the perpetrator to be tried and judged, and be jailed or serve their sentences so that peace and reconciliation will prevail. If one has broken his/her body part, therefore justice must be done. He reiterated that, "if justice is not done we are waiting for our opportunity to rule in the next government because to forget about it is impossible. Saruwaka (2012) contends that the Organ of National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration was created, but without resources. He also argues that the ministry must not be led by politicians, and proposed that it must be led by independent officers from churches and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). He lamented that, right now, we are experiencing circumstances where the victims of politically motivated violence are the ones who are jailed at the expense of the alleged persecutors.

Magaya (2012) argues that Jesus is very unique; He was certainly non-violent but this does not mean that he applied docility and passivity to perpetrators. This is because Jesus as a man was for justice. By saying "turn another cheek" he means reducing the dignity of the perpetrator. Magaya stresses, that non-violence will leave the perpetrators naked. Because you will be saying "Yes, destroy our homes, beat us and torture us so that your shamelessness will be visible." Moreover, Magaya argues that "by 'turning the other cheek' we end up having no cheeks if we do not apply justice." He further cautioned that with a reckless ideology of "an eye for an eye we end up having every one blind." For him eye for an eye is not good where-as a pacifist approach is not accepted also. He is asking the church to stand firm as Yemen has managed to deal with non-violence by moving into the streets with their Bibles in Yemen spreading news of how bad violence is and asking for peace and justice. It is his contention that as Christians in Zimbabwe we need to come in the open and march with our Bibles and talk of peace, truth and justice for this nation to be healed.

Ruzivo (2012) is of the opinion that non-violence or non-resentment is a revolutionary action in itself because it goes against this time which emphasises the issue of justice. He argues that ZANU PF is not a homogenous party; there are some who advocate for peace and some who are instruments responsible for torture and violence. For him the involvement of the church in national healing might be difficult in the sense that politicians create disorder in order to benefit from that, for example, in Zimbabwe the deregulating of the Zimbabwe dollar made them gaining massively and the church was not able to intervene. Another example he cited, was that of Daniel Arap Moi in Kenya, who factionalised churches and this situation is also found in Zimbabwe.

The Anglican Church is, for example, bleeding with seeming politically motivated division. One faction, led by Kunonga and allegedly supported by ZANU PF, terrorised the faction led by Gandiya. Some of the African Initiated Churches are now political stooges to the extent that they are given special places of sitting at state functions, especially during the burial of national heroes. A good example is the Johane Masowe weChishanu. In recent developments, President Mugabe appeared on state television putting on full religious regalia of Johane Marange Church.Political leaders are being seen wearing their church uniform garments attending their church services for political gains.

Gunda (2012) further argues that "turning another cheek appears to be peripheral to those who claim that they are followers of Christ. Jesus himself was not a pacifist but was violent, because non-violent and revolutionary approaches are parallel. You cannot be revolutionary whilst you are not violent. Jesus says the same in Matthew 10:34-39: "... I have brought the sword...." He stresses that this text should be interpreted metaphorically. Jesus did not take it literal because if we take this verse in the literal sense, the text might be harmful, for it gives power to the perpetrators. Gunda is of the opinion that, justice is a pre-requisite and the essence of following Jesus. How can we advocate for forgiveness leaving the victims suffering? The church leaders seem to be afraid of Zanu (PF), but if they want to be true Jesus' followers they need to stand firm because Jesus himself stood for justice and challenged his opposition even on his cross. Therefore, there is need to preach for justice and fairness. Gunda cites Amos in the Old Testament as one good example of a prophet who pre-figures Jesus Christ. Amos was executed for his revolutionary actions. He even advocated for justice and his concept of justice was not only legal but it was also an appeal to human morals. In his assessment of the ONHRI Gunda argues that, this ministry is useless and, has no theological legitimacy. It is a ministry created for political expedience. He reiterates that for Zimbabweans achieve success in the process of national healing and reconciliation, two essential procedures must be put in place: (i) they need to create a legal board which is constitutionally created because what they have now lacks legal basis; (ii) there is need to manoeuvre in such a way that someone religious or theologically trained should be allowed to head it.

It is important to note that, currently violence has resurfaced and this has jeopardised the application of Jesus' non-resentment ethics in the process of national healing and reconciliation. In response, the Zimbabwean church leaders have condemned the escalation in political violence ahead of possible elections this year and amidst rising tension between President Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF and Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai's MDC-T party, which threatens their tenuous power-sharing government. The churches, however, said they would hold prayer vigils for peace and proposed the eventual formation of an independent truth, justice and reconciliation commission to deal with "truth telling, acknowledgement of past wrongs and restorative and transitional justice issues."

Some analysts suggest that the church should be the one which should advocate for peace and reconciliation however, this suggestion has challenges because of the following points: (i) Some of the church leaders have been affiliated to politics as proper political activists who are not even shy to disclose their political allegiance. Some are even seen on state television sloganeering for a political party, a sign of being mischievous court prophets. Magaya (2012) argues that the problem we have in Zimbabwe is that some of the church leaders are now affiliates of political parties. This will not enable this process of national healing to succeed. He gave an analogy: "if a dog has been given a bone it will not bark hence making robbers do whatever they want." So there is need for church leaders to be true ambassadors of Jesus Christ for us to heal our nation of Zimbabwe. (ii) Some church leaders have been infected with some form of political phobia such that they fear to be the voice of the voiceless. These are toothless; they are shepherds who watch their flock being helplessly devoured by political wolves. (iii) Some claim to be apolitical arguing that we leave politics to politicians and we only minister the word of God. These are even dangerous because they do not know their prophetic role in the society. (iv) a few are proactive in engaging and checking the excesses of politicians. They voice but at times they face a double tragedy: on one front they are criticised by court prophets and on the other hand they are chocked by politicians who cite them as being unchristian and detractors of the gains of independence. In other words the church is a divided house which is full of discords, contradictions, misfiring and at times generates poisonous theologies which are either retrogressive or rubber stamp political misdemeanours.

Following the above insights, reconciliation is a tough, slow moving process. It requires a decisive beginning, creative enough to bring former enemies to a point where they are willing to explore a shared solution to the conflict, which often has the capacity to consume a society in violence but not to bring peace. It requires a commitment to an inclusive regime of human rights, as an incentive to deepening peace. Its goal is a society within which enemies begin to engage one another as fellow citizens and even friends.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has explored how the ethics of Jesus can be applied in the process of peace and reconciliation which was called by the Government National Unity in Zimbabwe 2008-2013. In as much as peace is needed it seems it is not ready to be implicated right now because of several factors which include (i) Unless the ministry of national healing is not led by those who are politicians, (ii) unless the church play that role without being political affiliates, (iii) unless we come to a point of everyone accepting justice and truth telling. It is the contention of the researcher that the applicability of Jesus' non-resentment ethics in the process of national healing and reconciliation is problematic because of the sprouting of fresh political violence. Moreover, the process has been hampered because of lack of truth telling, confession and justice.

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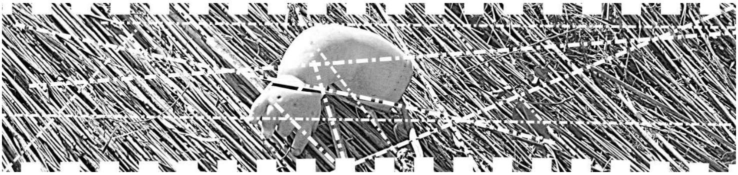

Proverbs 31 Woman: Pentecostalism and ‘Disempowering Femininities’ and ‘Oppressive Masculinities’ in Zimbabwe

A Critique

Kudzai Biri

Abstract

This paper examines how women’s rights and well-being are infringed with, violated and sacrificed through the literal interpretation of the Proverbs 31 woman. Utilising Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA) of Ezekiel Guti, I argue that Proverbs 31 has been used to nurture both “soft masculinities” and disempowering femininities. These soft masculinities and disempowering femininities also sourced from Shona traditional religion and culture have done a lot of harm to women in marital relations. Therefore the study challenges Pentecostal literal interpretation of the scripture and proposes a contextual reading that is sensitive to the modern and current developments. This is because modernity has ushered a new dispensation for women such that they have acquired multiple identities. Therefore, the literal and uncritical application of the Proverbs 31 woman militates against the rights, status and well-being of women of diverse experiences who are in marital relations.

Introduction

Several studies on gender issues have focused on masculinities more than on femininities. This might be explained by the fact that masculinities have been viewed as fuelling gender based violence such that the subject has gained attention and popularity in academia. However, there are some studies on femininities and Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe including Mate (2002) and Togarasei (2011) among others. Soothill (2008) examines how Pentecostalism encourages women to be high fliers in society. Most of the Circle of Concerned African Woman Theologians (Circle) publications focus on how women “groan in faith” as they critique inequalities that disadvantage women both in church and society. Building on the insights of all these in my critique, I focus on how ZAOGA’s cultural and theological discourses on gender through the examination of the deployment of Proverbs 31. I also examine the role and status of women in Shona traditional religion including the oral literature. The study critiques ZAOGA's femininities and masculinities and argues that Pentecostalism perpetuates traditional 'oppressive masculinities', source disempowering femininities from the traditional religion, and as a result 'contradictory postures' on the Proverbs 31 woman in relation to the headship of men are manifested. In this study special attention is given to the role, status and significance of women as purveyed by Zimbabwean Pentecostalism, focusing on the theological motifs pertaining to the marital relationship.

Utilising ZAOGA as case study, I argue that the Bible has given space to these Pentecostals to project their religious and cultural perceptions on gender issues in their interpretation of the Proverbs 31 woman. I argue that the interpretation of Proverbs 31 brings out femininities that are disempowering because they negatively infringe on the well-being of women. This study identifies patriarchy as the dominant powerstructure in religions and cultures, hence the key concept in analysing teachings on the Proverbs 31 woman. I argue that the dominance of patriarchy in Pentecostal teachings extends to the interpretation of Proverbs 31.

In the light of this, the central questions include:

- What is the role of Proverbs 31 in the development of femininities in ZAOGA as an expression of Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe?
- Which aspects of femininities are/not in conformity with the biblical teachings that have been incorporated in ZAOGA?
- To what extend has Pentecostal gender ideology been sourced from Shona traditional religion and culture and not the Bible? And
- How do Pentecostals theologise gender roles and what is Pentecostal perception and attitude towards patriarchy?

Methodology

As an African woman and an indigenous Shona speaker, I capture the experiences of women in both Shona traditional religion and in Pentecostalism using a comparative approach. Also through participant observation as a member of ZAOGA, experiences have widened my scope in terms of understanding gender dynamics in Pentecostalism against the background of Proverbs 31 and Shona traditional religion and culture. Not only did I limit my research on Pentecostalism to ZAOGA but I also attended various Pentecostal women's fellowships to establish teachings on gender and gender relations. Apart from published material on gender, I utilise material gathered over the years to establish and critique the teachings on the Proverbs 31 woman and establish how they either empower and/or oppress, or disempower women in ZAOGA.

For the purposes of engagement I first need to establish the general sentiments on gender issues in Pentecostalism.

African Pentecostalism and gender participation: A Critique

Several scholars have published on the interpretation of Proverbs 31. Adriaan Van Klinken (2013) has examined masculinities in African Christianity and he highlights that there are gender controversies and the quest for transformed masculinities. Most important are his insights on the dominance of patriarchy, even in Pentecostal denominations in Zambia. Uchendu (2008) examines masculinities by focussing on models of masculinities – what it is to be man in Africa. Mate (2002) carried out a comparative study of ZAOGA and the Family of God churches' women's fellowships in Zimbabwe. She argues that the churches teach women to endure hardships in their marriages. While Mate examines some of the femininities in these Pentecostal churches, her study goes further to critique Pentecostal teachings on Proverbs 31 by focusing on femininities and masculinities against the background of femininities and masculinities in Shona traditional religion and culture in order to establish how they either empower or disempower women. Biri (2013) argues that in Zimbabwe ZAOGA and other Pentecostal churches have economically empowered women through entrepreneurship programmes. However, on gender roles, women carry most of the burdens because the churches adhere to the traditional roles of a woman. Yet, women have acquired multiple identities in a modern and globalised world. She also argues that in Zimbabwe Pentecostal women‘s fellowships teach partnership in gender roles but this is rather more theoretical because of the emphasis that men and women are not equal. It is therefore important to establish the roles that are designated to women in ZAOGA based on Proverbs 31.

Roles and Qualities of the Proverbs 31 woman: Mark of Excellence

In this section, I establish the teachings of ZAOGA Gracious Woman (ZAOGA women's fellowship) on the role of the woman and in the following sub-section critique those teachings. ZAOGA teaches that a woman has to take care of her husband. There are certain qualities that are associated with men. A man is depicted as a "puppy", *murume imbwanana*. This implies that men are fragile and they need care, warmth and love. Therefore, a woman has to strive to provide these necessities. Failure to take care of the husband drives him to the woman next door! Men are described as having a fragile ego and a natural sense to lead, dominate and rule. In one of her books, Eunor Guti (2006:20), the wife of Ezekiel Guti, wrote: "Even if you are wrong, there is an ego in a man that he can tell you to shut up and you have to shut up!" This means that submission to the husband at all costs is crucial. A Proverbs 31 woman submits to her husband. The teachings on submission are based on Ephesians 5. Guti (2006) says that a woman can only refuse to submit when she is told by her husband not to serve God.

Alongside submission is respect. Through participant observation on ZAOGA couples meetings, most men complained that their wives did not respect them and that they were disregarding Ephesians 5 (although it was noted that there were no specific issues that were levelled against these women that show disrespect). A Proverbs 31 woman should be hard working in order to feed the family including the extended family (extended family is important among the Shona). The woman has to take care of the children. The emphasis on taking care of the children is emphasised following family disintegration and the neglect and vulnerability that most children of divorced parents suffer. There are statements that appear to condone men's neglect of children and condemn women, for example, *dai ari murume* (it is understood if it is a man) and *ndizvo zvinoita varume* (that is what men are like). Women are socialised to put up with men's irresponsibility. They should pray to God for their problems to be solved.

Another important aspect related to submission to a husband pertains to conjugal rights. A married woman should not refuse her husband sex. Biri (2013) points out that Pentecostals in Zimbabwe are not at ease with human rights. These Pentecostals uphold what their government (this is also true of Pentecostals in some other countries in Southern Africa) has stipulated that they do not recognise rape in marital relationships. The church condemns women who refuse to have sex with their husbands. A ZAOGA female pastor declared at a ZAOGA Gracious Woman Conference:

> What has never been heard on the land: a married woman reports her husband to the police and claims that the husband raped her. Why did you get married to him if you do not want to have sex with him?

In spite of all the challenges that the woman faces, she should have the qualities of the Holy Spirit because she is a helper (Genesis 2). The Holy Spirit is gentle and soft. To be a helper is construed to mean that she has to endure challenges. In as much as the Holy Spirit bears with the weaknesses of the church therefore, a woman should bear with her husband's weaknesses. Asking and questioning a husband appears to be construed as an embodiment of a strong and challenging character that puts away men's interest in the woman. A man is the head of the family and it is a God given order. Guti (2010) had to challenge women who are not married to be submissive to put off the strong character traits because *"pamba hapaite machongwe maviri"* (there cannot be two cockerels in the homestead because they always fight). Note that this is a Shona idiom. Cockerels generally dominate and lead. This implies that a man is the only head of the family. In the light of the above teachings, it is important to subject them to criticism in order to establish whether they are empowering or disempowering women.

ZAOGA Gender Ideology: Empowering or Disempowering?

In this section, I critique ZAOGA's teachings on the role of women against the background of the status accorded the husband in the home. In this way, I shall be able to establish areas that have disempowered women. The under-lying questions are: How do we reconcile the role designated to the Proverbs 31 woman with the headship of the man? Do these roles promote partnership and empower women? Are not women burdened with all these roles? And how do we define the status and role of men in a marital relationship?

I argue that teachings are largely sourced from Shona traditional religion and culture which have shown levels of versatility and resilience among the Pentecostals. The teaching of the Proverb 31 woman does not correspond with the overall teaching of the Bible on the status and roles of men and women. It absolves men of their responsibilities and encourages the nurturing of "soft masculinities" that do not challenge men (Chitando 2007). Chitando's insights are useful to the study as we identify the "soft masculinities" and how they have been sourced from the Shona traditional religion and culture through an examination of Shona proverbs and idioms. There is a need to understand the cultural context in which ZAOGA Pentecostals operate. Chitando and Biri (2013:38) point out: “In general, a man is expected to lead, to command, not to demonstrate emotions in public and to be longsuffering”. However, the portrayal of a man as “puppy” does not correspond with the “oppressive masculinities” that are nurtured in ZAOGA.

Motherhood is depicted as a ministry that the married woman has to undertake and will get a crown. Men are rarely challenged and it is taught that God will deal with their failure to be responsible husbands and fathers. That is why in most cases, the legal route to deal with an abusive husband is denounced. Ela (1993) condemns Christianity for encouraging resilience to suffering people and to promise a reward in heaven which she construes as a folly. Her observations are directly applicable to the teachings on the consolation of suffering women in ZAOGA. The discouragement of divorce means that most women in unhappy marriages suffer and endure in those marriages in order to escape the social opprobrium of being labelled divorcees. Among the Shona, a woman should not divorce but the husband may divorce from her at his will (Bourdillon 1976). The Shona perception that a woman should not divorce from her husband is inherited by ZAOGA. *ZAOGA Rules and Policy* does not allow divorce. I argue that such an attitude, apart from being sourced from Shona traditional religion, overlooks the diverse experiences of women in marital relations and renders women powerless and defenceless in abusive relationships and renders them vulnerable to infection in an HIV and AIDS era. Also, the Bible (Mat. 5:32) allows divorce on the grounds of unchastity. Encouraging women to bear with the weaknesses of the husband disempowers a woman and encourages men to oppress women because men know that women are taught to be docile and submissive. However, there is a need to establish the positive side of the deployment of Proverbs 31 in ZAOGA.

Empowering Women: Empowering Nations and Generations

The positive side of the teachings on Proverbs 31 is the economic empowerment of women. Gifford (2009) noted that Pentecostalism does not encourage the folding of hands and this is also true of ZAOGA. However, there is the positive side of Proverbs 31 to keep in mind. Soothill (2010), using a Ghanaian case study that resonates well with Pentecostal women’s teachings in Zimbabwe, acclaims Pentecostals for empowering women economically and encouraging them to be "highfliers" in society. David Maxwell (2005) also noted that many ZAOGA converts join the church with low esteem but gain confidence with time. Togarasei (2012) also applauds them for empowering women because of their entrepreneurship programmes. However, the Bible has given ZAOGA a space to project their traditional religio-cultural life, history and experience, focusing on the interpretation of Proverbs 31.

There are areas of resonance between Proverbs 31 and Shona traditional religion and culture, specifically on the role of women. While Pentecostalism has shown an adversarial stance towards the traditional religion and culture (though theoretical at times), they re-create or re-fashion some of the traditional aspects in their churches through deployment of Proverbs 31. Thus the observation by Constance Jones (2002:75) is significant. She points out that those women join new religious movements with both extremely conservative and radical gender ideologies. I argue that, generally, women are poor and therefore the need for empowerment comes first and foremost and, as a result, women seem to overlook the patriarchal grip in Pentecostalism. Economic empowerment means the ability to fend for their families as expected and therefore the issue of oppression and exploitation by men becomes secondary. This argument appears robust because female leaders are the ones who lead in the teaching of Proverbs 31 and become leading oppressors of fellow women by pampering irresponsible men!

Togarasei and Biri (2013) have noted how Pentecostalism has empowered women through the gospel of prosperity and emphasis on working Talents. Talents is the name given to entrepreneurship projects that ZAOGA members embark on in orde to generate extra money apart from the salaries and wages that they get (Biri 2013). While it encourages women to work and to be self-sufficient, it places the burden on women to do most of the work. Mostly women work on Talents in ZAOGA. Yet, it appears carrying the burdens, is a mark of excellence for women in ZAOGA, or what Masenya (2011) calls "the woman of worth". In fact, I argue that the teachings on the Proverbs 31 woman in ZAOGA, and the femininities and masculinities that are emphasised, are part of the religious and cultural heritage of the Shona as men capitalise on the Proverbs 31 teaching to neglect their responsibilities. Women become "household managers" Masenya (2011) but without power and authority.

This is part of the findings established in interviews carried out among most ZAOGA ladies who pointed to irresponsibility by their husbands.

The crucial question is to establish whether the teachings and the one sided emphasis are sourced from the traditional religion or the Bible? I argue that ZAOGA sources teachings from both Shona traditional religion and culture and the Bible. However, there is an inclination to overrely on the traditional religion as shown by the use of proverbs and idioms to authenticate the teachings on the Proverbs 31woman. As a result, the Shona masculinities and femininities find avenues of expression and display unprecedented resilience among Pentecostals and the resultant negative effect is the disempowerment of women. While on other occasions ZAOGA compels the men to internalise masculinities intended to transform them to be responsible seem to be superficial. Therefore, it is important to query whether or not economic empowerment translates to the equality of women in marital relations even when they get to top leadership position.

The Politics of Power: Powerful Positions but Disempowered Lives

ZAOGA has widened space for women because there is no limit in terms of occupying leadership positions. Eunor Guti, the wife of the founder of ZAOGA, Ezekiel Guti, has been appointed archbishop in 2013 (note the husband is also archbishop). Many women are bishops, overseers, pastors, elders and deacons. However, although women occupy these positions they are compelled to adhere to the traditional roles that are assigned to women. Tradition celebrates the significant status and role of women theoretically in most cases but women continue to live at the mercy of men. I argue that the deployment of Proverbs 31 in their discourses overrides the important top positions that women occupy. The irony is that women in ZAOGA have got powerful positions but are powerless in decision making (Biri 2013).

In spite of occupying the top posts women are still under a patriarchal grip. The popular declaration that “God is not a democrat” is common. It is taught that God’s divine order is that a woman should submit to the husband (Guti 2006). Eunor Guti (Guti’s wife) emphasises that women should submit to their husbands because God’s desire for a woman is to see her yielding to the authority of the husband (Ephesians 5:22) and to sleep with the husband because she has to fulfil her duty (of sex). She gives her own example by saying that she does not express her opinion when Guti has made a final decision. She would cook for him even though she was a nurse and would be tired and even if she would be woken up at midnight to write the things that Guti wanted because she strives to be a Proverbs 31 woman (verses 10-31 describe a hardworking woman who is praised by her husband). Guti's wife encourages women to endure hardships in marriage, even with a promiscuous, troublesome and ill-treating husband.

Lovemore Togarasei (2006) has noted that women are taught that it is because of their passivity in matters of sex that their husbands go out and bring back HIV/AIDS. David Maxwell (1995) has also made similar remarks on ZAOGA:

> Although ZAOGA offers security, women and youth remain vulnerable, especially in the context of HIV and AIDS because ZAOGA seems to accept a husband's adulterous liaisons and women are still required to fulfil their sexual duties to such aberrant husbands.

This is in spite of the fact that Guti wrote that God hates adultery, fornication, infidelity, laziness and divorce. Therefore, the contradictions bring about an almost insignificant change to empower women in gender relations. This seems to contradict Guti's catchwords on women: "Not above the husband, not under him but side by side with him..." This statement features on most ZAOGA advertisement pamphlets for women's conferences. In one of the discussions that I participated after the Tuesday prayer meeting in 2011, one woman said:

> The problem is that our husbands know the teachings in ZAOGA, especially on Proverbs 31 and submission. My husband complained to the pastors that I do not respect him, ask advice from him and that I just make decisions on my own. He knows how *amai* (referring to Eunor Guti) teaches on submission and he wants to capitalize on that, yet I am doing most of the things at home. I think it is time for our pastors to teach our husbands to be practically responsible (a complaining woman).

Another one added:

> My husband does not even make an effort to look for a job. I do everything at home, paying the school fees for the two children at boarding schools, paying the rentals, buying food. He just claims that God will open doors for him one day. What type of doors to a lazy person? Surprisingly, he also wants me to take care of his ailing mother. Honestly *mhamha* Guti (referring to Eunor Guti) should revise her teaching on submission. It's too much. Proverbs 31 is good but did God say a man should be idle or lazy?

These complaints reflect a number of issues. First, the grievances that some ZAOGA women harbour in relation to the burdens they carry as a result of neglect by their husbands. Second, they also bring into question the meaning of headship in marital relations and role in a family set-up.

The qualities and characteristics of men become controversial. How does one reconcile the claims that men are "'puppies, cockerels, heads", yet they are practically spared of responsibilities and the "helper" does most of the duties, if not all? Third, it appears, the grievances show the bias in ZAOGA that does not challenge male dominance in the home. For Guti's wife (and other leaders who have adopted her teaching) one's husband is a perfect "shoe." Even if that "shoe" is irritating, women have to do their best to protect their husbands from looking for other women because "in a man there is that ego that needs to be given its place and even if he is wrong he can tell the wife to shut up." Eunor Guti, therefore, urges women not to try to change their husbands but to love them and give them treats and to continually pray for the situation to change. Biri (2014) queries the "perfect shoe" by asking:; What if the shoe is itching and is painful?

However, at some point, Guti (1997) appears to be sensitive to the needs of a married woman. He writes that things that bring sorrow to the woman are *kuneta, kudzvinyiririrwa, kuiswa kurutivi, kushaikwa korudo, kunetsa nezvemari, dambudziko revana zvavanoita, dambudziko ravatezvara nevamwene* (tiredness, oppression, sidelining, lack of love, financial problems, troubling children and in-laws). I argue that Proverbs 31 appears to be the cause of the injustices of the oppression of women and overworking, which does not demonstrate empathy for women's energies when men relegate major responsibilities to them. To men Guti (1997) says: *"Kuva murume ndiko kuva munhu anodzivirira, achishanda kuti zviratidze kuti une hanya nemhuri yake"* (To be a man is to protect, work hard to show that you care for your family). Yet, it appears the overemphasis on Proverbs 31 overrides the role of husbands and leaves them without any duty to perform. Guti also teaches that, "*mukadzi ishamwari yakanaka pabhizimusi kupfuura vese uye zvinokosha kuteerera mukadzi pane zvekunamata"* (A woman is a friend in business and it is important to listen to her in matters of praying). Women are depicted as "prayer warriors" and it explains why a woman having marital challenges is encouraged to pray to defend her marriage. Guti adds: "*Murume ndiye anofanira kuva nepfungwa kudarika iye mukadzi"* (A man should have sharper ideas than the wife).

In the teachings above, a woman is depicted as a second class citizen because she is not expected to think the way men think. Thus, in spite of women's intelligence and organizing capabilities, such a teaching encourages them to hide their intelligence and capabilities in an endeavour to give way to “men who should have sharper ideas” than them. However, Guti encourages men to love, work and protect their families. He acknowledges that women establish businesses and pray but there are challenges of oppression, sidelining, carrying too many burdens, as well the problem of children and in-laws. Guti further says:

> Men and women are different, not equal in function or needs or position but equal in importance...Man has two major needs, lordship and the wife has to give this position, need to be respected, honoured and reverenced. A woman needs security...This is why she was made from the portion from left side of a man next to the heart and just under the arm to be well secured, protected and loved...the other important thing is love (Ephesians 5:25).

While Guti’s teaching above indicates reciprocity in marital relations, the problem appears to be centred on the issues of lordship of husbands and submission of wives and the claim that a woman needs security from the man. Most women are managing their affairs well and the exegesis of the creation in Genesis 2 is problematic. A woman was taken out of the man to get security from him and therefore it gives men an attitude of dominance towards women. Guti (2006) adds that the woman should submit to her husband and not challenge his leadership, but in order to reinforce his masculine image, she should concentrate on the positive because submission is a choice that brings honour to the woman.

In the light of the above, the questions that can easily be posed are: Are men not expected to fulfil their duty in a given marital relationship? With regards to women who refuse to have sex with their husbands, should we criticize them in this HIV and AIDS era? What about the socio-economic hardships they face? This is one area in ZAOGA where that Gifford’s view that Pentecostalism lacks sociological awareness, finds justification. (ZOAGA ignores the real social issues and economic realities on the ground and emphasizes that God is able in all circumstances).

The qualities based on Proverbs 31 that ZAOGA idealizes, especially for women, are those of a victim, sacrificial love, passive acceptance of suffering, humility and meekness. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are portrayed as role models that reinforce a scapegoat syndrome for women. Jesus take orders from the Father (the Godhead), alluding to submission. The characteristic of the Holy Spirit as a helper is a role-model for women in ZAOGA. The Holy Spirit is gentle, meek and persistent, and women should display the same characteristics. Thus in ZAOGA both the portrayed role-models Jesus and the Holy Spirit reinforce the scapegoat syndrome. This is why Biri and Mutambwa (2013) argue that the empowerment of women in Zimbabwe cannot happen through formal education. There is a dire need to pay attention to Zimbabwe's socio-religious ethics that largely define and shape women's experiences.

According to this study, in spite of the economic empowerment of women in ZAOGA, the cultural expectations and conditioning of women that ZAOGA source from the traditional religion do not empower women in the HIV and AIDS era. More so, ZAOGA Pentecostals' hermeneutics on Proverbs 31 betrays a projection of Shona cultural life that gives women the responsibilities that burden her, while men remain free from household chores and demands. There is a need to engage Shona oral literature (proverbs and idioms) that is dominant in ZAOGA teaching and which infringes on the welfare of women in marital relationships.

Proverbial Sayings: A Critique

In interpreting the Proverbs 31 woman ZAOGA women often quote proverbs and idioms from Shona traditional religion and culture. These include, for example, *Mukadzi Mutsigo wemusha* (A woman is the dignity of the homestead). This proverb captures well the significant role of women in households. Other examples include; *mukadzi anounza chiremera* (marrying a woman brings dignity to a man) and *musha mukadzi* (a home can only be established with or by a woman). Apart from the significant role, it also points to the significant status she should enjoy among her paternal relatives. However, the nature of the patriarchal society has failed to affirm the significance of this proverb in a practical manner. Its recognition of the importance of women is overridden by the "oppressive masculinities" that theoretically scoff at injustices perpetrated by men against women. Because men define the worldview of women and provide checks and balances in ritual ceremonies, they perpetuate their interests. This disempowers women who are sacrificial victims in the name of a Proverbs 31 woman. The insights of Beyer (2003) are very significant. He points out that a norm that is developed by society end up viewed as godly stipulations from the divine.

Yet, contradiction becomes apparent in Pentecostalism because they teach liberty in the Holy Spirit but at the same time employ both biblical patriarchal and Shona patriarchal culture in their discourses of gender relations as they interpret Proverbs 31. Another area that the proverbs touch upon, is a reflection of male sexuality. Men are depicted as of sexually weak will. Their sexual promiscuity appears to be justified by Shona proverbs. Shoko (2007) has described a Shona man as a Shona bull that can prey over many cows as it can without any problem. Maxwell (2006) has also observed that women in ZAOGA are encouraged to submit to aberrant husbands. While they seek to transform masculinities (Chitando 2007) and re-socialise men to be responsible (Maxwell 2005), ZAOGA has built on the limitations of Shona traditional religion and culture (Chitando 2007). There is a lack of enforcing measures to 'tame' aberrant husbands and to make a follow-up on the responsibilities of men as heads in order to encourage gender partnership and to empower women. Chitando and Biri (2013) point out that in ZAOGA they teach that when men fail to assert their headship there is chaos. It is in that context that this study critiques the response given to men who fail to assert their expected roles as heads. Women are encouraged to take over and provide for the family (as a mark of an industrious Proverbs 31 woman). They should not question. Guti (2006) wrote that the husband must not be questioned. The idea of not questioning the husband presents a challenge because men are presumed to think sharper than women (Guti 2007). These perceptions are significant. First, the teachings contradict the teaching that women should excel and that the sky is the limit (Soothill). As a result women are trapped by the paradoxical character of Pentecostalism and the result is damaging. Second, they limit women's mental capabilities as subordinate to that of men, which is disempowering. They empower men to ignore women's contributions as a result of self-centeredness (construed as natural ego in men) that the teaching encourages. These teachings are reinforced by traditional and biblical patriarchies.

A married woman is expected to submit under all circumstances. Bourdillon (1976) points out that the Shona women were burdened in the traditional society because they did most of the fieldwork with children when their husbands were drinking beer. Women had no power to challenge a lazy or idle husband because the aunt would say *Chakafukidza dzimba matenga* (Houses are covered by roofs). This is manifest in Eunor's teachings in *Wise Woman*. This proverb is used in situations where there is trouble in the marriage or in the home. It encourages the woman to endure because she is not alone in her challenges because many others are undergoing the same and may even be in worse situations, except for the fact that these challenges are mostly kept secret. The idea that she was/is not alone seems to be held by Eunor as the premise for the woman to endure the hardships, and is considered to be a source of comfort because *handisi ndega ndirikusangana nematambudziko aya/dambudziko iri* (I am not alone who is facing this problem or these challenges). This study questions the moral integrity of such an approach to the life challenges that women face. It appears the fact that more women suffer the same fate with their marriages translate to acceptability and normativity. Hence Pentecostalism establishes a "theologically bound patriarchy" (Burdick 1993) that takes men from being "masters of the streets to kings in the household" (Chesnut 1997).

Conclusion

ZAOGA's teachings on the Proverbs 31 woman continue to be influenced by masculinities and femininities in Shona traditional religion and culture. Key aspects of femininities and masculinities in Shona traditional religion and culture have been negotiated by ZAOGA Christians in their interpretation of the Proverbs 31 woman. ZAOGA affirms the significant role and status of women, like it is done in Shona traditional religion and culture. However, the masculinities and femininities that are sourced from Shona religion and culture have produced a "theologically bound patriarchy". Hence ZAOGA has not enhanced the empowerment of women in order to have a "safe space" in their marital relations. It did, however, manage to empower women economically and raise their self-esteem.

Notes

1. It is important to note the published books by Ezekiel Guti, the founder of Gracious Woman and Eunor Guti, his wife.
2. By "disempowering femininities" I am referring to features and expressions that encourage women to be subordinate to men as a result of cultural and theological justifications, however, detrimental to the well-being of women.
3. On the phrases "oppressive masculinities" and "redemptive masculinities", I am indebted to Ezra Chitando.

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The Pentecostal Understanding of Violence vs. Peace in Zimbabwean Society

Francis Machingura

Abstract

Zimbabweans value co-existence which they expect not only to be seen in church, but in the society at large. Men and women of the cloth as well as the generality of Christians are expected to live in the peace of God. This article seeks to look at how Pentecostal Christians qualitatively and quantitatively engage the Bible as their point of reference when promoting peace in Zimbabwe. In that regard, Matthew 5:9 is commonly used in that biblical engagement to sum up the importance of promoting peace and Matthew 5:9 will be used to exegetically analyse the Pentecostal portrayal of peace and violence in their understanding of the Kingdom of God.

Introduction

It is clear by merely looking at the Bible that, it is not one book, but in fact a library of sixty-six books that were written at different periods by different authors giving the Bible a human face. The different authors chose to use different literary forms to communicate God's word. Each of the writers wrote to a different audience. The writers chose their words and conveyed the message in a way that fit their purposes just as done by any literary writer. However, biblical literature is unique due to its consistent theological message and its emphasis on moral virtues This possibly explains the Bible's continued popularity and relevancy.

The moral character of the Bible has become the rallying call for Pentecostals with regards to the violence witnessed by Zimbabweans in both private and public places. Violence that has defined the country for three decades have psychologically, politically, spiritually, socially and economically affected the Zimbabwean society. The violence has not spared the Church either. Violence occurred in some respected Christian groups' as exemplified by the Anglican Church saga where parishioners and men of the cloth belonging to different factions fought against each other to take control of church properties (Gunda 2008:299-318; Chitando & Togarasei 2010:151-162; *The Herald*, November 22, 2012; *Daily*

News, December 17, 2012; *Daily News*, February 19, 2011; *The Herald*, December 22, 2009). Since the biblical authors are generally regarded by many Christians as having been inspired by the Holy Spirit in their thinking as they were writing the scriptures, the Bible is revered as an important document that can be used to bring about healing and unity in the country after the violence experienced. For most Christians, the Bible is the source of guidance and truth in the face of whatever challenges. For Pentecostals, it is the inspired Word of God without any mistakes. As a result, the Bible has managed to have some influence on peoples' beliefs and interaction. Zimbabwe used to have people carrying Bibles in public places but this has changed with the coming of technology where people can have it electronically on their gadgets. It is now not surprising seeing cars with stickers citing biblical verses dotted around it. Chitando (2012) rightly observes that:

> The eruption of biblical names, the presence of car stickers with biblical verses, swearing by the Bible, and the use of the Bible as a protective charm all confirm the centrality of the Bible in the lives of many Africans.

As a result, the violence that has been associated with the Zimbabwean political landscape have compelled many believers especially Pentecostal Christians to call for a return to the teachings and obedience to the Bible. The Bible is regarded as the solution to every problem and challenge. Most calls are motivated by Matthew 5:9 which says "blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God". The call by Jesus is taken as a literal call to troublemakers to appreciate the importance of peace in society. The call to *return to the Bible and meditate on the divine word* is due to the challenges and the multiple crises experienced by Zimbabweans in relation to politically motivated violence (Machingura 2010). It is not surprising that the level of domestic violence has risen to astronomical levels. Paradoxically the violence does not spare believers and non-believers, Bible users and non-Bible users. The Bible is taken as free of violence despite the existence of many texts in both parts of the Bible that depict, legitimize or even promote violence (cf. the contribution of Ottmar Fuchs in this volume). The crisis of violence is still with us in Zimbabwe yet Christian believers find the Bible an important body of scriptures with answers to all violent challenges of life. The Bible forms part of the hermeneutical communication model that helps the modern reader cope with the challenges that people face. The hand of the author, text and reader in contributing to the biblical document is not taken seriously. However, Eagleton (1989:119) periodised the history of modern literary theory into three stages:

a) The time when there was this pre-occupation with the author (Romanticism and the nineteenth century);
b) the time when there was this exclusive concern with the text (New Criticism); and
c) the marked shift of attention to the reader over the recent years.

In the case of Zimbabwe, the third and final stage takes the biggest nod where readers actively use the Bible to address day to day challenges of life especially the broader problem of violence (domestic, gender and political). Biblical texts that touch on peace are literally invoked to cultivate a peaceful environment that is good for everybody. Readers have to become active players in making the Bible alive in their situations of life. West (1991:23) argues that, "the reader is no longer seen as merely a passive receptor or acceptor of the text but an active, even creative contributor in the interpretive process". The Bible is no longer seen as literature with a logical code lying beneath the text but as a document with social, religious, moral, economic, political and literary artifacts that convey meaningful communication to readers. As such the biblical texts are made to contribute to social, cultural, political and theological meaning even though there can be challenges to do with interruptions of interpretation as a result of the plurality of language. Tracy (1987:79) argues that,

> There is need for the believer to have both a "hermeneutics of trust" and a "hermeneutics of suspicion", recognizing that, we can only trust ourselves to a conversation with significant texts if we admit that everything, ourselves, our texts, and the conversation itself, is deeply affected by ambiguity and plurality that touch all. There is no innocent interpretation, no innocent interpreter, and no innocent text.

For any proper interpretation to take place there is need for both suspicion and critique of texts in order to have a proper biblical, literary and philosophical hermeneutics. A hermeneutics of suspicion helps avoid the abuse or manipulation of texts by those in power especially in the context of Zimbabwe where biblical texts have been used in the public sphere to convey certain messages at political rallies. Unfortunately, such appeals and use of the Bible have not helped stop violent behaviour in Zimbabwe especially whenever elections were held. The 2013 elections were peaceful compared to the other elections in the past three decades. Interestingly Christians especially Pentecostals have applauded the role they played as peacemakers with prayers as well as with fasting for peace. In this way, Christians claim to have united contending political groupings resulting in the peaceful 2013 elections. They unfortunately fail to interpret what that means in light of the other previous elections. What are the implications of such claims to victims of violence who are also Christian believers? The claims for peaceful 2013 elections ignore the claims of rigging made by the opposition groupings. Some Pentecostal Christians like Gutusa (interviewed, August 10, 2013) have even claimed that,

> The demons of violence have been manifesting in Zimbabwe at different periods like: pre-colonial, colonials and post-colonial eras. Before the coming of whites, our forefathers fought against each other for territories. The colonialists came on scene and used violence against the disunited tribes. We used violence to gain our independence and that demon has continued to manifest through the Gukurahundi, Murambatsvina, even in most of the elections witnessed in Zimbabwe as from 2008. It is important to fully understand this background of violence in order to appreciate why Jesus' call has a meaning to us as Zimbabweans when he said 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. The peace that we realised in 2013 elections is because of the role that we played as Christians in commanding the demons of violence to be quiet.

If we are to fully understand and appreciate the concept of 'peacemakers' as declared by Jesus and how Zimbabweans take that statement, there is need to first look at the background of violence in Zimbabwe and the context of Matthew 5:9 in relation to violence and how the text has become relevant in Zimbabwe. The history of violence in Zimbabwe and the quest for reconciliation has found Jesus' teachings on peacemaking welcome to most Zimbabweans across the religio-political divide.

Violence and its Manifestations in Zimbabwe

The fight for independence resulted in many indigenous peoples losing their lives or getting maimed for life. According to Sachikonye (2006:11), it is believed that, approximately 1000 whites died against 30 000 blacks (men, women, children) who also died. Sachikonye further adds that, some independent reports put the estimates as follows: 80 000 lost their lives; 450 000 were wounded; 250 000 became refugees. Both the Rhodesian and guerrilla armies committed crimes of murder, rape, extortion, beatings, theft, tortures, abductions and burning up of houses belonging to innocent people. Rural women were raped and had children as testimony to the agony they were made to endure. On the other hand, towards the end of the war, three quarters of schools in rural areas had been closed; medical services had collapsed and one third of the national herd of cattle perished (Sachikonye 2006:11). However, it is important to note that, violence can sometimes be justifiable as long as it leads to the liberty and freedom of the oppressed as was the quest in Zimbabwe for majority rule before the attainment of independence in 1980 was a long awaited event.

The euphoria was short-lived when *Gukurahandi* (1981-1987) – "the sweeping away of rubbish" – almost wiped out the people of Matabeleland and Midlands provinces who were supportive of the opposition Zimbabwe African Peoples Union led by Joshua Nkomo (Geoffrey 2006:134; Machingura 2012:218). Scarcely a family in Matabeleland escaped the *Gukurahandi* violence of those years, and the people of that province were forced to live with their silenced memories of horror and fear (Machingura 2010:331-354). Sad memories still haunt victims and generations of victims of *Gukurahundi* who suffered severe beatings, curfews, detentions, disappearances, tortures, and raping, savage murders and victims being buried in mass graves or shallow graves, their homes burnt, their properties looted or destroyed (Auret 1992:140; Eppel 2005:46). President Mugabe once referred to the 1980s massacres; after the death of Joshua Nkomo as "regrettable and as a moment of madness" (*The Herald*, 22 June 2011; *The Herald*, 10 January 2013). Many thousands of civilians died and the bodies of their loved ones were left to rot in the sun or eaten by wild animals (Verstraelen 1998:67). The atrocities were only stopped through the signing of the Unity Accord in 1987 between the warring parties of PF-ZAPU under Nkomo and ZANU-PF under Mugabe. However, Zimbabweans have continued to witness and some experiencing violence since Independence. The violence became worse as from year 2000 onwards with reported cases of: murders, displacements, abductions, torture, assault, destruction of homesteads (Eppel 2005:147). The violence was also predicated by the farm invasions that were taking place during that time (Raftopoulos 2004:7). The violence that accompanied the exercise became an open sore for many Zimbabweans. For critics, colour and political affiliation became the defining feature for one to access land as well as getting the necessary protection from possible violence. The emergence of a formidable opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party in 1999 made life difficult for Zimbabweans; as people were divided on political grounds resulting in politically motivated violence. As from independence, Zimbabwe has always been at political cross roads which have been known for being coloured with violence. However, elections that took place from the 2000 deeply divided Zimbabweans politically, for example, those who voted for the opposition MDC were labelled sell-outs (Machingura 2012:212-235).

The Operation Restore Order (Murambatsvina in Shona) of May 2005 came against the backdrop of the disputed elections on 31 March 2005 in which the ruling party lost heavily in all the towns. The operation was described as a programme to enforce by-laws to stop all forms of alleged "illegal activities" like: vending, illegal housing structures and illegal cultivation. The operation Murambatsvina affected mostly urban citizens. It was done with little or no warning to the urban poor. Yet it was in winter. For critics, the operation was in fact violence manufactured by the ZANU-PF government against the urban poor who had continued to vote against them. It resulted in the deaths of several people during the clean-up operation and also affected the education of thousands of children whose education was disrupted (http/www.ijr.org.za/site-workplace). It was the June 2008 elections that put Zimbabwe on the spotlight because of the level of violence and brutality against opposition party's supporters, for example, the violence meted against the defenceless civilians, systematic setting up of torture camps, brutal attacks, murders, rapes, beatings and displacements of opposition supporters (Chitando & Togarasei 2008:157-168). The violence engulfed the rural folk. It is in the rural areas where in the run up to the 2008 harmonized elections where brother was killing brother and sister killing sister (*The Chronicle*, 28 July 2009). However, opposition supporters bore the brunt of violence than ZANU-PF supporters. As a result of the violence surrounding the 2008 presidential June elections; a Global Political Agreement was signed between three principals and government of National Unity was formed in a bid to pacify the contending parties in Zimbabwe. A ministry of The Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration was created and it was co-managed by three full-time ministers from three parties: their job specification and description was to drive the National Healing Organ and also to ensure that the culture of political violence and intolerance was wholly eradicated from national politics (*The Independent*, 30 July 2009). When the Government of National Unity was formed, it did not bring peace and unity but only helped to tone down the level of violence in some areas of Zimbabwe. This is the context through which Christians especially the Pentecostal ones appealed for peace as taught by Jesus (Mt. 5:9) in relation to the role of peacemakers in an environment of adversity and continual violence thereby dividing society.

An Exegetical Analysis of Matthew 5:9 in the Context of Violence in Zimbabwe: The Pentecostal Response

The Sermon on the Mountain contains many injunctions that call men and women to be merciful to others (Mt. 5:7) as well as being peacemakers (Mt. 5:9). Almost 80% of the interviewed pastors, Pentecostal Church leadership and the generality of Pentecostal Christians in the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) in Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe Assemblies of God indicated that, Jesus' teachings on peacemaking forms the model of healing that can unite Zimbabweans. The understanding is that, peacemakers are generally regarded in many societies as instruments of peace, for example, those who take active steps to make peace. Peacemakers act as creators and facilitators of peace. Pentecostals generally view their role of recreating the world (world-making) through the global outreach programs such as international crusades and prayer meetings. Peacemakers seek peace and pursue it (Ps. 34:14). The major thrust for most Pentecostal teachings is that, they follow in the footsteps of Christ by not forcing peace but living it (Rom. 16:29, 15:33; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thes. 5:23; Heb. 13:20). Peacemakers have peaceable dispositions themselves whereby they live peaceably with all men as a pointer to the lifestyle that will be experienced in the Kingdom of God. Peace as shown in the Old Testament means more than just the absence of strife by being highly personal and socially-based (Buttick 1951:286). However, Matthew 5:9 then has been taken by some scholars as eschatological in nature hence pointing to life at the eschaton (Park 1995:122). According to Kennedy (1984:41):

> The Sermon on the Mountain can be regarded as eschatological, ethical, legal wisdom, or law as instruction in view of the kingdom, not coercively but eschatologically enforced, but a fusion of several OT genres. The dominant themes of the sermon are the kingdom of God and justice.

Some scholars regard Jesus' ethics as eschatological because they take the Jesus' ethics as not achievable in our human context of strive and violence. Yet peacemakers' behaviour and actions oblige them as taught by Jesus to seek for peace and justice with everybody. Peacemakers are always ready, willing and serviceable in making peace between their fellow creatures and fellow Christians.

The Hebrew term for peace is shalom (שלום) implying all of the above things hence the kind of peace that Jesus talked about (Colquhoun 2010). According to Stassen and Gushee (2003:37), most of the beatitudes focus much on social relations and not simply peace between individuals and God as frequently anticipated by many people. Social relations can be easily destroyed when there is violence between people as in the case of Zimbabwe. The context of Matthew 5:9 just like most of the beatitudes seem to have been directed against the Zealots, the Jewish revolutionaries who hoped to use violence to bring the Kingdom of God (Stassen & Gushee 2003:37). The Zealots used their military piousness as a mark of demonstrating that they were the "loyal sons of God". As a result, Zealots gave the highest honour, esteem and prestige to those who were prepared to be warriors. Jesus intervenes on this by stressing that, "it is the peacemakers who will be called the children of God" (Mt. 5:9). Therefore, beatitude on peacemaking must have sounded like a clap of thunder over the hearts of those who were revelling in the imagination that the time had arrived to carry out war to the bitter end against the Romans (Broadus 1990:91). But Jesus reverses that by showing that, it is the task then of peacemakers to make bridges between the warring parties or those people at odds. There is never any real peace unless contending parties are united. The Bible has four hundred direct references to peace and many other indirect references which have been interpreted as relating to peace (MacArthur 1985:209). Most of the interviewed Pentecostal pastors indicated that, many biblical texts on peace indicate where the heart of God falls when people live peacefully. The call was made to all Zimbabwean political leaders and their supporters to desist from violence and revenge. Prayer sessions were called and Pentecostal religious leaders preached on the importance of peace and development. The peace was packaged as emanating from trust, love and obedience towards God. For Christians, peace forms the foundational motif in the New Testament as shown by God towards humanity through Christ (Rom. 14:19; Heb. 12:14; James 3:16-18; 1 Pt. 3:11) when he calls people to make peace with their enemies. The understanding given was that, Jesus was bringing into the community through his frequent emphasis on peace and peacemaking, a quality which when followed would bring stability and development to societies where peacemakers carry the image of God as His children since God is the God of peace and those who bear His name automatically become peacemakers. The Church looks beyond the parties and derives its ethos from the eternal Kingdom of God, a kingdom of love, truth, justice, freedom and peace.

For Tembo (interviewed, 17 July 2014), the exaltation of peacemakers to "sons of God" is not surprising as peacemaking is very difficult and the only God-like work to be done in this world and Zimbabwe included. Many love peace but few make peace as most of us prefer to evade conflict. According Rev. Maitabasa of the ZAOGA (not his real name, requested to remain anonymous, interviewed, 20 July 2014):

> Christians at peace with God (Rom. 5:1) make peace because they reflect the God of peace. They have a "blessed" quality about them. God's standard is for us to live at peace with one another and that was our message in Zimbabwe. Violence has sowed disunity, anger, hatred and disharmony amongst us. Politicians will never bring or preach genuine peace because they are selfish and greedy. They are the ones who use violence as a tool of subduing people into submission. They don't have the conscience of God because of demonic spirits that pester them to engage in violence.

These challenges arising from violence make peacemaking in Zimbabwe very difficult although it is a noble idea as it unites people and at the same time brings development to any given community (Broadus 1990:91). If everyone was at peace to begin with, there would be no need for a "peacemaker." And, peacemakers keep peace wherever peace is threatened or lost or in the mess? It doesn't matter that, the world we live in is full of strife, the followers of Christ work for peace in the spirit of Christ their Master (Lenski 2008:193). Peacemaking becomes a real test of faith and of discipleship. For Rev. Masiyiwa of the AFM in Zimbabwe (not his name, requested to remain anonymous, interviewed, 26 July 2014),

> There are also the hidden conflicts which people don't talk about, the sin and rebellion, poverty, the aspects of greed, of pride, of selfishness feed into violence. Greediness has not spared the Church especially Pentecostal Churches. Zimbabwe has of late since the official use of the American currency witnessed the sprouting of new Pentecostal Churches that preach on prosperity hence 'Gospreneurship'. This type of gospel seems to have benefited the religious elite despite growing poverty and political violence that have characterised Zimbabwe.

Peacemaking plays a preventive role by examining the root of the problem by banishing unmerited poverty and corruption (Buttick 1951:286). Jesus was diametrically against self-centred and subjective view of humanity as presented by modern existentialism. Of the men and women of the cloth that were interviewed, eighty percent argued that, peace and violence are the two sides of the coin where one side represents tranquillity, integrity, respect, success, truthfulness, love, progress, happiness, creativity, innovation, self-actualisation and innovativeness. On the other side, self-assertiveness, greediness, violence, disrespect, selfishness and a divisive spirit that knows nothing of peacemaking and love. Peace as understood by Martin Luther King Junior is not merely the absence of war, poverty, insecurity, political intolerance, violence, impunity, lack of transparency and accountability, intimidation, corruption, maladministration, confusion, tension but the presence of goodwill, justice and brotherhood (Downing 1986:188). Elections are not meant to divide people and breed hatred. Some have found Jesus' teaching on peacemaking as too idealistic whilst critics have regarded Jesus' beatitude teachings as an indisputable proof that man's true destiny is to act responsibly in a social situation than being individually answerable to God and humanity (Guthrie 1981:155). For most Christians, the reward of the peacemaker is that God acknowledges them as children of God who strive to use every opportunity available to them to work for reconciliation between those at variance (Tasker 1975:62).

The general understanding that clearly came up from the interviews and questionnaires is that the, violence, poverty and unemployment that people witnessed in the Zimbabwe crises were a result of sin and the deliberate deviation from the word of God. It is a common feature to begin by prayers at most of the Pentecostal Church services whenever there were calls for the impending elections. Violent elections campaigns are interpreted as linked to violent demons. It was not surprising to hear people commanding and 'spiritually binding demons' of violence (to do what?). Most of the interviewed Pentecostal leaders and the laity do not believe in confronting the perpetrators of violence especially politicians. Confronting political leaders is tantamount to insubordination. Prayer is taken as the only tool that the Bible talks about. Texts like Romans 13 and Matthew 5:9 are popular with Pentecostals as they are regarded as indicating the only duty expected of every Christians in their relation with government. Christians are expected to just pray for a change of situations. It does not matter that people pray and violence still accompany all the elections held in the country. The context of the text is deliberately and blatantly ignored. The understanding is that, prayer is the only tool to peaceful elections. Whatever outcome of the elections as long as they were peaceful is not put to the test as to whether the elections were fair or not. A number of respondents (45 %) were not prepared to respond to questionnaires and interviews that focused on political issues. Politics is generally regarded as a ‘dirty’ game not meant for Christians. Everything is left to God to deal with and the only duty of Christians is to pray for peace. The prayerful call for peace characterised major church events like conferences, for example, the AFM in Zimbabwe General Conference that ran from 25th to the 28th of April 2013. Even the selection of hymns focused on peace and the role that Christians were expected to play. Musicians who participated at the conference were encouraged by the Church leadership to take from their selection those songs that cultivated prayerfulness and peace in Zimbabwe. Takesure Ncube (an AFM in Zimbabwe gospel musician) and his Gospel Music band became popular because of his music that calls for peace in Zimbabwe and focus on God to intervene. The title song goes as follows:

Zimbabwe Mwari Vanongoida
    God loves Zimbabwe
Hatingapererwi neTariro
    We will never lose hope
Isu tichadaidza Mwari wedu [x 3]
    We will call upon our God [x 3]
Nyangwe zvikaoma zvikasvikepi
    Even if things become hard,
Vakadzidza vakazvitadza
    The Educated professionals have failed,
Nyika dzimwe dzikatiseka-a-a-a-a
    Other countries laughed at us,
Hatingaperegwi neTariro-o-o-o
    We will not lose hope
Jehovha-a-a
    Jehovha-a-a
Mwari munogona-a-a-a
    God you are able
Jehovha-a-a-a-a
    Jehovha-a-a-a-a
Vanhu vose tinokundikana
    All people fail in life
Asi imwi munogona
    You alone God are able
Jehovha-a-a-a-a
    Jehovha-a-a-a-a
Mwari munotigonera
    God you are able

In this song, there is acceptance that the Zimbabwean crisis was as a result of failure which led other nations to scorn Zimbabwe. As to what or who contributed to the failure, it is taken as not important. The song pleads with God to intervene for the sake of progress and development in Zimbabwe. Texts like 2 Chronicles 7:14 were quoted to support the intermediary role that believers can play as stipulated in that text when it says:

> If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." Unfortunately, there isn't an interrogation on the factors that led to the crisis in the first place save to leave everything to God.

Praying, following what the word of God says and repentance heals the nation. Therefore, prayer and repentance are taken as the only remedy or prescription to Zimbabwean problems. This augurs well with the vision and mission of both the AFM in Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa. As for the AFM in Zimbabwe's Vision, Aim and Mission seek to advance the work of God through preaching so as to uphold highest standards of Christianity. Thereby building prayerful, spirit filled, well-equipped and morally upright members which is part of the extension of the Kingdom of God until the second coming of Christ (cf. AFM website). ZAOGA has almost the same Vision and Mission statements that seek to build spirit filled people (cf. Forward in Faith website). It is not surprising that most of the interviewed members belonging to the above mentioned Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwe believe that prayer is the only answer to violence in its various manifestations.

The AFM in Zimbabwe has an intercession department that only prays for peace in Zimbabwe as well as the success of the denomination in Zimbabwe. According to the AFM in Zimbabwe Overseer for Chitungwiza West Province,

> "as a ministry, we cherish the peace and tranquillity of the AFM in Zimbabwe in general and at our assemblies in particular. It is our belief that the peace which we enjoy is derived from the interceding worshippers from our ministry".

The Vision and Mission statements of most Pentecostal Churches are testimony to their beliefs and practices in the face of any form of violence. The world for many Pentecostal Churches is divided into two entities of light and darkness. The world of darkness is portrayed as under the control of the devil and his demonic spirits. It is such spirits that manufacture poverty, violence, sickness and disunity in society. As a result, the AFM in Zimbabwe and ZAOGA generally interpret their Christian faith as that of ministering to the poor, to the violated, to the spiritually deprived, to the forgotten, to the ill, to the discarded, to the despised and the homeless. Yet such challenges might not be addressed if the environment is politically unstable because of violence. An unstable environment breeds disease, despondence, poverty and desperation. It is such crises that call for both prayer and action by confronting those in power (religious and political) but abusing it. If politicians use violence to retain power, it does not help if Christians evoke the power of prayer and wait for the intervention of God. Depending on prayer alone may not help heal the wounds of the victims of violence as long as perpetrators of violence are not confronted and challenged to stop it. In response to politically motivated violence, some churches such as the Roman Catholic, Methodist in Zimbabwe and United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe among others, have developed mechanisms to help victims of violence by providing shelter and food for victims of violence. In some cases, besides giving prayers the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference has issued pastoral letters in support of victims of violence (ZCBC 2012; id. 2013). This is not the case with most of the Pentecostal Churches.

Most of the Pentecostal churches are members of the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) whose mission statement advocates for the mobilization and empowerment of evangelicals. How can believers be empowered if they can not engage and tell those with political power to use it for national development, peace and unity than dividing people? The association or affiliation of Pentecostal churches to the mother body, the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe seems unhelpful. The active role of AFM in Zimbabwe and ZAOGA in peace building, conflict resolution and management is n0t action oriented in promoting a peaceful culture of co-existence for sustainable development and peace in Zimbabwe. The AFM in Zimbabwe has failed to cultivate peace and solve disputes that erupt within it resulting in assemblies splitting on a daily basis and in extreme cases; violence has erupt amongst followers and between men/women of the cloth. A number of new Pentecostal churches like United Family International of Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa; Heartfelt Ministries of Apostle Tavonga Vutabwashe and Apostolic Faith Ministries of Rev. Chipunza to mention were founded by people who were once pastors in the AFM in Zimbabwe. As a result of unresolved conflicts and misunderstandings in AFM in Zimbabwe, they were pushed out and responded by forming their own ministries. It is not a new phenomenon in church formation and splits. This is despite the major aims of traditional Pentecostal Churches like AFM in Zimbabwe that they seek to be a united church that works as a family that transforms mankind. It is not surprising that most of the above mentioned new Pentecostal Churches have been formed out of strife, disputes and conflicts. According to Rev. Ndlovu (AFM in Zimbabwe pastor, not his real name for anonymity, interviewed 15 August 2014):

> Pentecostal churches don't have the capacity and necessary skills to deal with good governance and advocacy principles that cultivate and nurture peace, transparency, justice, participation and responsiveness, and accountability. The Church in broad and Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe in particular has greatly failed in that regard. If the leadership can't unite amongst themselves or solve internal disputes but resort to violence to silence those who disagree with leadership styles, how can they bring together contending political groupings? The silence of Zimbabwean Pentecostal churches in the face of blatant political violence against the voiceless and weak citizens is then understandable because they are clueless and lack the conflict management skills that help resolve disputes. Prayer becomes their only solution to conceal their timidity, ignorance and cowardice. In fact the prayer solution supports the status quo of violence and worsens the plight of those who are victims of violence. Most men and women of the cloth are not concerned about the plight of their followers as long as they get their piece of cake from the same people facing abuse. They are selfish and corrupt. Some of the conflicts in their churches are fuelled by them.

The failure and fear by religious leaders to condemn the use of violence by political leaders is because of selfishness and greed where they are afraid to lose whatever wealth they have accumulated by abusing the same poor people, if they become the target of the state for standing up for the victims of violence. In most cases Pentecostal Christians are barred from any negative talk or bad mouthing both religious and political leaders. In fact they are encouraged to engage in "positive talk or positive confession" for change or God's intervention in their lives and that of the nation. If there are any problems or crises as in the case of Zimbabwe; it is common to witness Pentecostal Christians claiming to wait for God's intervention. No blame is ever levelled against leaders at whatever level. It was not surprising that most of the interviewed laity and some of the religious leaders found it very difficult to condemn the use of violence by political leaders. Most of them ascribed all forms of violence to activities of demonic spirits. It is such mystical ascriptions that leave perpetrators of violence unaccountable for their violent actions. Critics have dismissed this as the kind of fundamentalism that disempowers society and bars people from interrogating their leaders who would have been voted into office. The political and council leaders are not put in office confirmedly through prayer but through the ballot box. If they fail to perform or deliver, there is no need to wait for God to intervene but to hold the leadership accountable as another way of God's intervention through peoples' actions. Cases of corruption, underperformance, underdevelopment and high level of unemployment call for stiffer penalties through the set strong mechanisms or institutions which people can resort to when faced with such problems as in the case of Zimbabwe. Critics blame Pentecostal Churches as reservoirs of retrogression against peace building and development. People are not empowered to constructively challenge their leaders in case of problems.

However, there were some men and women of the cloth from these Pentecostal Churches who professed to be politically active though they requested to remain anonymous. According to Rev. Masunda (not his real name),

> Anyone or any Church that profess to believe in the Triune God must also believe in justice, in human rights and in peace. If we keep quiet when there is violence surrounding us, we are being accomplices to violence and supportive of violent people. I encourage people to even divorce even in marriage if it is characterized by violence. Violence is evil and must be condemned and not just hide behind prayers. We can individually condemn all forms of violence and stop mystifying it by blaming demons and evil spirits.

If the problem of violence is to be ever addressed in Zimbabwe, there is need to translate the private or public transcript of prayer to the private or public transcript of action that confronts all evil manifestations of violence. Jesus confronted every evil as shown by his actions (Mt. 8:14-15; Mk 1:21-28; Lk. 4:31-37; John 5:1-18). The message of Jesus Christ and the broader Church today must resonate and synergy with issues of justice, peace, human rights, freedom of choice and expression. These are the same rights embedded in the Zimbabwean constitution (The Final Draft Constitution of the Republic of Zimbabwe, 2013, Chapter 4, Part 2). The image of Jesus Christ as a liberator is voided if the Church fails to recreate their theology, soteriology, ecclesiology in light of the violence characterizing Zimbabwe.

Conclusion

The call for peace by Pentecostal Christians is a noble call if Zimbabwe is going to develop but that call must not end just in prayers. Politically motivated violence has long been a polarising phenomenon that has divided the Zimbabwe nation for too long. The use of the biblical texts in both the literal and literary sense must help cultivate peace, healing, development and reconciliation in a polarised society. National leadership (political, religious, civic, and community) utilise their roles as ambassadors of peace in Zimbabwe to promote democracy, peace and good governance for the common good. However, as shown in this paper peace cannot only be realised through prayer and fasting alone but also through building public awareness and engagement by religious leadership on challenges related to political violence in Zimbabwe.

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Questionnaire Used

I am working on an academic paper entitled: *The Binary Opposites: The Pentecostal Understanding of Violence and Peace in Society*. My findings are based on Pastors' response. If you are comfortable with it, I shall quote your name. If not, I will present you as 'ANONYMOUS'. After the presentation, the paper will be published as an academic paper. Please respond to the following questions:

1. What is your understanding of peace and violence?
2. What do you think is the source of violence? Why?
3. Can violence be demon linked? Why?
4. Can violence be tolerated in certain circumstances? Why?
5. What role did Pentecostal Churches like the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe play during the violent crises in Zimbabwe?
6. What do you think were the short-comings of Pentecostal Churches in Zimbabwean Politics?

N.B. YOUR RESPONSES WILL GO A LONG WAY IN PORTRAYING THE POSITION OF PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES ON VIOLENCE AND PEACE

The Bible, Violence, Women, and African Initiated Churches in Zimbabwe

An Analysis

Elizabeth Vengeyi

Abstract

This article begins by defining violence from a human rights perspective. The article proceeds to highlight the various forms of violence which prevail in most African Initiated Churches that have seen biblical interpretation being part to. Such forms of violence include, for example, sexual violence, emotional or psychological violence, and domestic violence. It also offers a section on positive interpretations of the Bible whereby these churches have been fighting against violence in some spheres. The article also offers a critique of the "one size fits all" interpretations of the Bible, for this may promote violence against others. I argue that there is need to interpret biblical texts as products of their communities. With this approach, some biblical texts may (while some may not) respond to the needs of our contemporary communities.

Introduction

Generally, women are mostly affected by violence. Violence is not only a problem in developing countries; to the contrary, it has become a global issue. Many women in some AICs suffer from physical, psychological, economic and sexual abuse. Some cases of violence that are experienced by these women remain unreported because of fear and threats from the perpetrators of violence. As a result, women remain victims and or survivors of violence. Violence has left many women facing double oppression. In this paper, I argue that women face various forms of violence within African Initiated Churches. Many women within these AICs are violated sexually, psychologically and economically. Some of the young women are forced into early marriages, whereas others are forced to undergo compulsory virginity inspections. These and other problems which will be discussed shortly are some of the challenges women face within some AICs.

The position of the Bible in AICs

African Initiated Churches are churches that are independent of the western mission churches in their organisation and worship (Daneel 1987:31). They are churches that broke away from white-dominated church groups to create their own that are self-supporting, self-led and fully independent (Larlham 1992:22). AICs, for example Johane Masowe yeChishanu and Johane Marange Apostolic Churches were founded by Africans to address the needs of Africans, hence their resistance to foreign interference.

Even though AICs do not tolerate foreign interference, they use the Bible which was brought to them through colonisation, by the missionaries. The Bible is read and interpreted in the vernacular languages of the adherence. But not all AICs read the Bible as it is, for example Johane Masowe yeChishanu, regards the Bible as *munya* meaning that the Bible is considered as a secondary source. However, most AICs accept the Bible as an authoritative book as is confirmed by 2 Timothy 3:16 that says "All scripture is inspired…" This biblical verse is often used in some of the AICs to justify that all scripture is holy and should be applied as such, hence when applied, the Bible plays a crucial role in all spheres of life.

How the Bible is read, depends on the position of the reader and to some extent, the audience of the Bible. For instance, in both Johane Marange Apostolic Church and Johane Masowe yeChishanu, leadership is primarily for males. This could be because indigenous churches appreciate the significance of kinship, when it comes to leadership hierarchies, an aspect which they adapted from the traditional setting (Daneel 1987:156). Thus, the "button stick" will never be passed to a female. This then affects the way the Bible is read and interpreted for an audience comprised of more women than men. Thus the Bible is sometimes used as a weapon to suppress people (Vengeyi 2012:323). In this paper, I argue that the Bible has been dominantly used to suppress women and not to liberate them.

Violence from a human rights perspective: A definition

Bott, Morrison and Ellsberg have noted that in 1993, The United Nations General Assembly defined violence as "any act…that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats such as acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life."(Bott, Morrison & Ellsberg 2004:8). Nieves Rico (1997:7) defines human rights "as a group of ethical principles having a legal dimension that arise out of the need of each and every individual to enjoy the conditions essential for a decent life." Thus from a human rights perspective, violence against women includes "all types of violent crimes perpetrated against women and female children, as well as psychological abuse and deprivation. It would include ruthless traditional practices, such as virginity testing or inspection, and forced or child marriages. It also includes discrimination of women that deprives them of their basic human rights" (Tjaden (2005:4). Thus the abuse of women has been identified as a serious problem by activists and scholars who have been and are still working on the issue of violence worldwide. As violence knows no boundaries, in Zimbabwe, for example, statistical data show that 52 per cent of women reported being victims of political violence, rape, and physical abuse by their intimate partners (*The Financial Gazette*, 2013).

In most AICs violence is found in various forms depending on the relationship that exists between the perpetrator or doer and the victim. Generally, there is use of "power" which is exerted on the victim by the perpetrator. This "power" exists in two forms in that, first, in most of AICs, the husbands have authority over their wives and children (family), which is also part of the belief that, traditionally, men are heads of households. Second, men are heads of the church, hence "powerful" over everything that includes the doctrine of the church. Thus, in this case, usually the church leaders, who are mostly men and hence powerful in both decision making and church teachings, are the perpetrators of violence and women, remain as victims and or survivors of violence. As a result, women in AICs end up facing double oppression both at home and at church due to the use of "power" (Vengeyi 2013:63).

The abuse of the Bible and Culture by AICs

Usually in AICs culture, and to some extent, some biblical passages are used as sources of power to suppress women and girl children. Girl children become victims of abuse as women in that they are born and bred within such churches as AICs. Thus in this case, in AICs, it is the Bible and culture which are considered as authoritative; hence powerful and abusive tools in the lives of the ordinary women. For example, the use of uncritical reading of biblical texts such as I Corinthians 14:34-35 and I Timothy 2:11-12 are used in most AICs to authenticate the subordination of women. For example, in a meeting with the Johane Marange Apostolic Church to bring awareness on the laws such as the Domestic Violence Act that protect women and children; the Zimbabwe Women's Lawyers Association was shocked to hear Madzibaba Paul saying: "As community and church leaders from the *mapositori* sect we do not accept that at all. How can we (men) be equal with women? It is in the Bible that women will always be under men." Also, because of the churches' emphasis on the literal interpretation of biblical texts as in Johane Marange Apostolic Church they often say "*bhuku rinotaura kudaro*" - the Bible says so (Mazambara 1999:260), and women end up being deprived of their freedom as they are expected to submit to their husbands (who happen to be in the church leadership). This, therefore, implies that women should be submissive to their husbands, and failure to do so leads to violence. Thus the Bible is used as a resource tool to justify the subordination of women. Wanjiru and Chitando concur with the abuse of the Bible by some men as they state that "the Bible has been deployed as a 'weapon of mass destruction' in relation to violence against women ... Men have used their strategic positions to safeguard their positions by marshalling the Bible." (Wanjiru and Chitando 2013:244). Sarojini Nadar argues that if women fail to submit to their husbands or men, it leads to violence as culturally, there is a belief that men are the heads of the homes, and as a result violence go unchallenged and women remain in abusive relationships (Nadar 2012).

The literal interpretation of biblical texts such as I Corinthians 14:34-35 and I Timothy 2:11-12 by some AICs could be incorrect. The Johane Marange Apostolic Church should understand that when I Timothy and I Corinthians were written, they were addressed to a specific people for a specific purpose. The prohibition of women to speak did not mean that women should be denied their voices in all matters, be it in church or not. In fact, women were not allowed to ask questions in church. Possibly, the reason was that women were in the habit of interrupting the worship by asking questions. Therefore Paul says that if they wished to learn anything, they were supposed to put their questions to their husbands at home. Thus to apply such texts literally to our contemporary setup could be wrong. AICs should consider the context and or communities from which the passages are coming. There is a need for the critical reading of the texts. The "one-size-fits-all" concept that is being practiced by some of the AICs in their interpretation of biblical texts is unjustified since it may be used to promote violence.

The next few pages will be devoted to discussing forms of violence in some selected AICs. This violence includes, among others, sexual violence, virginity inspections or testing (*musecho*), and forced or child marriages.

AICs and sexual violence

The Musasa Project, a non-governmental organisation based in Zimbabwe, supports women and children who suffer as a result of gender-based violence. It defines sexual violence as unwanted touching of a woman by a man. Sexual violence also includes attempted and forced intercourse, and withdrawal of sex by a man. In most AICs, usually young girls and women are forced to engage in sexual activities at tender ages hence they become victims of sexual violence (Nenge 2011:154).

Forced sex usually happens in various situations where, for example, a woman does not want to get married to her intended husband. A number of cases have been reported of teenage girls who have been forced to be intimate with old men whom they would have been told to marry unwillingly. For example, a 15 year old and a member of Johane Marange Apostolic Church narrated her ordeal as follows:

> That evening, my own father gave the two of us a separate hut to sleep in. He tried every trick to force me to succumb to his demands, but since I was refusing to be married to him, I refused to have sex with him...
>
> (Kadungure 2012)

Sexual abuse has also been reported in situations where the woman no longer wanted to bear more children and had the right to refuse sex for the reason that she will not be using any modern family planning methods. AICs such as Johane Marange Apostolic Church do not encourage the use of modern family planning methods. Elliot Tofa argues that in Johane Marange Apostolic Church, they prohibit the use of contraceptives based on Psalm 127:3-5 that says:

> Lo, sons are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the sons of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

By that they justify the belief that the Bible is against the use of modern family planning methods (Tofa 2013:119). Thus, to Johane Marange

Apostolic Church, the passage implies that there is need to have many children, hence no need to make use of modern family planning methods.

The use of contraceptives may be a cause of concern to women, especially since they are the one's who give birth and are exposed to maternal complications. In some AICs, such as Johane Marange Apostolic Church, a number of women have been loyal to such a doctrine which teaches them that they should not use any form of medication whatsoever to prevent them from bearing children. But recently, some women from the Johane Marange Apostolic Church have found ways of resisting church practices that violate their rights to decent family planning. These women secretly look for modern family planning methods from their local village health workers. In his report, Guvamombe noted that the women connive with village health workers and get the family planning pill at the village gardens. The village health worker is told under which stone at the gardens she places the pills, from which the women of white cloth secretly pick them up and take them (Guvamombe 2011). Also, the Manicaland provincial medical director, Tapiwa Murambi, commenting on Johane Marange Apostolic Church's practice of denying women modern family planning methods, said: "In our clinics, we keep baby cards, immunisation record cards and family planning cards of members of the sect who come for medical services but cannot keep them in their homes." This evidence shows that women in churches like Johane Marange are being denied their rights to access good healthcare.

AICs and Virginity Inspections (*musecho*)

Virginity testing implies that young teenage girls are inspected by elderly women to see if they are still virgins. The testing of girl children who had reached puberty stage practice was done by women only. Prior to colonialism, virginity testing was widely practiced by the Shona people in Zimbabwe. Girls were encouraged to preserve their virginity for marriage or risk tarnishing the image of the family since the son in-law would not pay *mombe yechimanda,* a cow offered to the in-laws as a token of appreciation for ensuring that the bride preserved her virginity. This custom still holds much value in the Shona culture and some people still carry out virginity tests (Kambarami 2006). It was realised on the first night of young woman's wedding that she was a virgin since the bed linen was checked by her aunt. Also, traditionally, the husband would pay an extra cow to indicate that his bride was a virgin. For instance, "a non-virgin would command a price of 10 cows while a virgin was worth 11" (Berthiaume 2004). If the bride was found to be virgin, it would bring honour to her parents. Gelfand (1999:166) argues that both the wife and the husband should not have had any previous sexual knowledge. Emphasis was and is still mostly of girls though, since virginity is difficult to prove with boys. This is why some AICs inspect virginity of girls and not that of boys.

However, AICs regard virginity testing as a religious programme which is performed to check the purity of girls only, and not boys too. The churches encourage young girls to remain intact until they get married. Whether the apostolic churches are practising virginity testing to keep up with their Shona tradition or not is difficult to arrive at since AICs have merged some of their traditional beliefs with that of Christianity, but the way it is being done is no less than an abuse of girls' rights. Thus, this compulsory virginity testing of young girls popularly known as '*musecho*' violates their rights. It is reported that a young lady from one of the AICs confirmed that those found "deflowered" were then targeted by the church leaders because they say the girl has nothing to lose because she has lost her virginity already. One victim of *musecho* said that "we are the most vulnerable at the church and the main culprits are the church leaders who usually abuse girls and even women under the pretence that they are casting out evil spirits" (Masaraure, 2014). Thus, virginity testing that is being practiced by the apostolic churches violates the rights of girl children as those who would have "failed" the test will be discriminated and humiliated. Berthiaume (2004) notes that for those who would have passed "the test," "the certificates are like a status symbol" because if you do not have one, you become a shame to everyone who identifies you. Also, as soon as the fathers of the "deflowered girls" realise that their children are no longer virgins, they feel embarrassed and would insist the girls should marry even old men from within the church.

Recently, on 30 May 2014 in Budiriro, Harare, some members of Johane Masowe yeChishanu Church physically attacked and injured police, journalists and some officials from the Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe. The officials from the Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe had gone to the shrine led by Madzibaba Ishmael to impose the ban after receiving reports of human rights abuses within the church that involved the denial of children's educational rights. It is also reported that some fathers from this church would watch their female children bathing and would insert fingers to test their daughters' virginity. Also, married women who were not virgins at the time of marriage were being ordered to secure virgin girls for their husbands as compensation (Matenga 2014). This implies that young girls are denied their voice on marriage issues. These fathers were sexually violating the children's human rights and the AACZ had the authority to ban such a church.

The banning of Johane Masowe yeChishanu of Budiriro by Bishop Ndanga was received with mixed feelings. Some people were of the opinion that, as the President of Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe, he did not have the right to ban the church as it is the duty of the Police commissioner of the Zimbabwe Republic Police. But others have been saying he had the right to do so as he had banned one church before, which is The RMG Independent End Time Message that was founded and led by Robert Martin Gumbura. Gumbura was jailed for 40 years for sexually abusing female congregants from his church. He had 11 wives and 30 children and he would twist biblical texts and declare in church that the female congregants were his.

AICs and Forced or Child Marriages

Forced or child marriages are rampant in AICs. Forced or child marriages occur when one is compelled to marry without giving one's consent. Consensual agreement is usually between the parents and the man who intends to marry the child (Vengeyi 2013:64). This practice is also present in the Shona tradition. Since AICs retained some of their traditional customs upon establishing their own churches, this custom of child marriages is commonly practiced in Johane Marange Apostolic Church.

Usually, many girls drop out of school and are given in marriage to very old men by their fathers. Girls as young as 12-13 years are married off to old men sometimes aged between 65 to 70 years. A Johane Masowe Apostolic Church member, Madzibaba Ishmael supports the idea of not sending girls to school but agree that they, instead, get married early. He says: "Girls must never go to school…it is easier to brainwash uneducated people than those whose skills of analysis have been sharpened." According to the Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe, an organisation which has 700 apostolic churches affiliated to it, of about 7.3 million followers in all AICs, it is estimated that 4 million are children, and out of the 4 million children, 2.3 million did not finish their Ordinary Level Education because of early forced marriages (Sauti 2014).

One of the reasons why children are forced into early marriages is that the families want sustenance. According to a report compiled by Joshua Chakawa, "... many families within the church were and are still surviving by marrying off their young daughters to fellow church members." (Chakawa 2010:38). Usually the bride-to-be is forced to agree with her parents' decision when they arrange for her marriage. Thus such young girls are denied their rights to choose their future life. They are also not able to develop independently as persons. Also, the fact that the parents of these girls use force in the form of beating, weapons and intimidation with threats, is a clear sign that these girls experience violence from both their parents and fellow churchpersons, who happen to be mature enough to be their spiritual fathers.

Why Women Live in Violent or Abusive Relationships

In most cases, women who are victims of violence economically depend on their husbands for survival and for their general upkeep. Their husbands or those in authority are the bread-winners; and as a result, they end up remaining silent because they cannot sustain themselves financially. Most of these women in some AICs are economically disempowered due to the fact that they drop out of school quiet early, which will hinder their potential to get jobs. As mentioned earlier, about 2.3 million children did not finish school because of early or forced marriages.

Another reason is that some of the girl children and women in AICs live in fear because they are threatened with death if they disclose anything to those in authority. For instance, one victim of a virginity testing said that "a lot of cases go unreported because the girls or women were intimidated with death threats if they dare take the cases up with police" (*The Standard* 2013).

Also, due to cultural orientation, a woman or girl child is told not to report the matter to the authorities because *anofanira kushingirira* (she should persevere). This results in many women and girl children remaining quiet as per cultural orientation. While addressing people towards bringing awareness on gender-based violence, the Minister of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development, Oppah Muchinguri had this to say:

> We still live in a patriarchal society, where men continue to enjoy the upper hand. There is a lot of abuse going on in churches. Women are taught that they should be strong in prayer and their problems will vanish. We are saying prayer is not a solution, yes it consoles but the abuses should not go unreported," she said. "I have declared a war on those churches. It is a war we need to fight as women. They (women) are taught *shingiririra chakafukidza dzimba matenga* (Keep your domestic issues to yourselves), and we are against that. We are saying *ngaafukurwe matenga acho, ngazvitaurwe* (Come out in the open). We want to get rid of those customs and practices that oppress women (Madhomu 2014).

However, even though we noted instances where violence prevails within AICs, there are situations where some biblical texts have been used by AICs to shun violence, especially in the political realm.

Use of the Bible by AICs to Shun Violence

In Zimbabwe the land reform programme that took place between years 2000 and 2008, was marked by violence in the form of assaults and torture. One of the AICs, Johane Masowe Apostolic Church's response to violence was that of non-participation. The church seemed to be apolitical despite the fact that on almost every state function, for example, the burial of national heroes at Heroes Acre, Independence Day and welcoming back the President from his foreign trips at the airport Johane Masowe members always attended in huge numbers (Sibanda & Maposa 2013:132). The AICs supported the ruling party based on Romans 13:1 that says: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." The participation of the Johane Masowe Apostolic Church in state functions could mean that the church was in agreement with the ruling party, ZANU PF, in its move to redistribute land to the ordinary people of Zimbabwe. Obvious Vengeyi argues that ZANU PF courted AICs for political survival as many main-line churches, such as Anglican and Roman Catholic Church, distanced themselves from supporting the land reform programme which was marked by violence. Main-line churches became more vocal critics of the ruling party, ZANU PF, by blaming the economic collapse on the violent and unplanned nature of the land reform exercise (Vengeyi 2011).

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed how women in African Initiated Churches experience violence in the form of sexual abuse, virginity inspections or testing and forced or child marriages, practices held in high esteem in churches such as Johane Marange Apostolic Church. Women are also denied the right to modern family planning methods which results in them bearing more children than they anticipate having. There is a need for the AICs to consider the environment in which biblical texts came from rather than accepting and applying them as they are.

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Zimbabweans and the Prophetic Frenzy

Fertile Ground for Women's Sexual Abuse?

Molly Manyonganise

Abstract

This paper intends to establish whether the prophetic craze currently being experienced in Zimbabwe is providing fertile ground for the continual sexual abuse of women. The crux of the paper is to establish how socio-religious positions of women in society expose them to sexual abuse. In what way is prophetic authority as exhibited in Zimbabwean prophetic ministries an entrenchment of hegemonic masculinities which are a danger to women? How can biblical texts be used to empower women to fend off sexual advances from the "prophets"? What needs to be done to make sure that prophetic ministries are safe spaces for women in Zimbabwe?

Introduction

The emergence of Pentecostal Prophetic ministries in Zimbabwe has seen a euphoric response. It has been observed that while in the beginning, Pentecostal Christianity was dubbed as "other-worldly", the current form of Pentecostalism tends to be "this worldly" as it seeks to deal with issues that trouble its followers, for example, poverty, violence, unemployment and social pressures, to mention but a few. It has been noted that Zimbabwean people have of late developed an inherent desire to want to know why they are not where they believe they should be in life. According to a contribution on *My Zim News,*

> "the shift towards the apostolic and prophetic approach in Christianity has seen a mass exodus from the traditional prophets who operated from shrines in the bush and under trees, to hotel conference rooms and large fancy buildings."

While men are also part of the emerging prophetic ministries in Zimbabwe, it has been noted that women are in the majority. It would be very difficult to give a conclusive reason why this is the case, suffice to say in a patriarchal society such as Zimbabwe, women face numerous challenges which are social, economic, religious as well as political. Riesebrodt and Chong (1999:57) argue that "women's active participation in recent fundamentalist religious movements urges us to realistically identify their interests under given political, cultural, social, and economic circumstances and constraints…" It is in light of the above scenario that this paper is written. The paper seeks to establish the major causes of women's participation in Pentecostal prophetic churches especially given that these movements "advocate a return to or strict enforcement of patriarchal structures of authority and morality". In such cases, the following questions need to be answered: Has the emergence of Pentecostal prophetic ministries in Zimbabwe provided fertile ground for the continued sexual abuse of women by the "prophets" and male church leaders? Can prophetic ministries be transformed so as to guarantee safe spaces for women? How useful are biblical texts in this transformation? Before addressing these issues there is need to give a brief background to prophetic activities and women sexual abuse on the Zimbabwean religious terrain.

Historical Background

The issue of prophecy is not really new to the Zimbabwean people. Scholars such as Daneel (1988) and Barrett (1971) have traced this practice to the traditional practice of divination. In fact, the absence of this aspect of fore- and forth-telling in missionary churches which the Shona were used to, led to the formation of African Initiated Churches. Amanze (1998:148) notes that "prophecy is one of the fundamental elements in the life and work of the African Independent Churches." According to Amanze (*ibid.*):

> African Independent Churches claim that their prophetic activities are based on the prophetic nature of the Bible and that their prophets operate under the power of the Holy Spirit who calls them to that holy office to be God's mouthpiece.

Thus, although scholarly analysis has pointed to the fact that there exist numerous commonalities between traditional divination and prophecy in AICs, prophets in these churches argue that they are worlds apart from African Traditional Religion(s).

It is important to note that often prophets in these churches assume the role of healers (Amanze 1998:150). Shoko (2007:124) concurs with Amanze when he says:

> The prophet-healer plays a crucial role in the diagnosis of the causes of ailments brought forward by patients and their kith and kin for attention.

> Quite significantly, the church prophet concurs with his clients on the causal factors and perceptions of illness and health. Thus, the prophet becomes a special mediator between the divine and human because he claims supernatural powers derived directly from God. Like his traditional counterpart, the prophet is able to explain in meaningful terms the source of illness, disease and misfortune and proceeds to provide treatment which may be simple but spectacular in its results. It is this double role of the prophet-healer which makes him a unique being.

However, while the prophetic and healing activities tend to have made AICs popular generally in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular, there are times when some of the prophets have been accused of "unholy" practices such as the sexual abuse of women. For example, on 16 March 2003, Madzibaba Nzira of Johanne Masowe WeChishanu was convicted of rape by a Harare Magistrate Court. He was convicted of seven counts of rape and one count of indecent assault. According to a Newsday report, Nzira's followers, mostly women, shouted loudly: "You cannot do that to our god". In another case, on 19 July 2011, the Herald reported that a woman who was barren visited a prophet in Kuwadzana (a high density suburb in Harare). On seeing the woman, the "prophet" quickly prophesied that the woman had problems with conception. However, the woman was told to come back later. When she did, the "prophet" told her to strip her top while at the same time close her eyes as the prophet prayed for her. She was told to lie down and the prophet raped her. One of the interviewees for this paper narrated how she had gone to an AIC prophet in 2006 because she was experiencing marital problems in her polygamous marriage. The prophet then prophesied that she needed cleansing. The prophet and she were to go to the river so that the prophet would work on her (*kushandira*). This was to be done in the evening. The woman complied. During the ritual, the prophet raped the woman. The woman never disclosed this to her husband for fear of divorce (Interview with Chinga Makuvi in Harare, 8 March 2013).

The above analysis points to a continued occurrence of women sexual abuse in African Initiated Churches in Zimbabwe. Some critics have tended to explain these abuses by pointing out that the most possible cause could be that the women who throng these churches are not sophisticated, hence their inability to interrogate and question some of the activities of the prophets. Vengeyi (2011:368) points to the perceived gullibility of the members of AICs. If the above explanation is true, one needs to interrogate further the sexual abuses of women currently taking place in the newly formed Pentecostal prophetic ministries in Zimbabwe which are dubbed to be modern and sophisticated. Prophetic Pentecostalism in this paper refers to a new form of Christianity currently sweeping across Zimbabwe which has its anchor in prophecy. Basing their argument on Joel 2:28, this kind of Pentecostalism believes that God is still speaking to his people today. Founders of these churches allege that traditional Pentecostalism stifled the voices of prophets. In this case, they believe that the emergence of the type of Christianity should be viewed as a blessing from God. Commenting on the emergence of the United Family International Church, one of its members said:

> *Zimbabwe inofanira kuziva kuti yarangarirwa. Muporofita mwaka, ukayera wapfuura unozodzokazve mambokanganwa. Zvino vanhu vemuZimbabwe vanofanira kuziva kuti Mwari wakavada kutivararame munguva yemuporofita wavo.*
> (Zimbabwe should know that it has been remembered. A prophet is a season; if it passes it will come back when you would have forgotten. So people in Zimbabwe should know that God loves them to allow them to live in the time of the prophet) (Interview with a member of UFIC in Harare, 3 March 2013).

The Emergence and Popularity of Pentecostal Prophetic Ministries in Zimbabwe

Pentecostalism is a global phenomenon (Achunike 2004:52). Hence it warrants scholarly analysis. Pentecostal Christianity has been referred to as charismatic and sometimes as fundamentalist. According to Van Dijk (2001:217) this kind of Christianity “is very much the product of transnational and trans-cultural modernity.” From his perspective, Pentecostalism in modern African societies is seen as causing both a debate within modernity as well as a discourse on modernity. Achunike (2004:18) asserts that the demographic picture of Pentecostals the world over has been very impressive and that their massive growth is a force to reckon with. Thus, subjecting Pentecostalism to scholarly analysis helps to overcome the parochialism of certain perspectives on religion in the era of globalization (Freston 2001:196).

The Pentecostal phenomenon in Zimbabwe dates back to the pre-independence era. Pentecostal churches such as the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe and ZAOGA and many others were formed then. For years, Pentecostals were perceived as a weird form of Christianity and were always looked down upon by main stream churches. They were usually referred to as '*chechi dzemweya'* (churches of the spirit) or '*chechi dzevanochema'* (churches of those that cry) (cf. *The Cultic Mindset of Pentecostals*). However, in the current epoch, the Pentecostals are fast emerging as a dominant Christian grouping, which is in stark contrast to twenty five years ago, and earlier. It emerged that from 2008 to date, there has emerged new Pentecostal prophetic ministries led by relatively young male prophets. Most of these prophets were once pastors in other Pentecostal churches. *The Cultic Mindset of Pentecostals* notes that "there has not been marked difference in the way that people worship except that titles have been added to qualified pastors." Of notable concern is the fact that Prophetic Pentecostalism has become the most popular form of Christianity in Zimbabwe. During the period under review, Zimbabwe witnessed the emergence of churches such as, for example, the United Family International Church (UFIC) led by Emmanuel Makandiwa, Spirit Embassy led by Uerbet Angel, Kingdom Embassy founded by Passion Java, Crossover Ministries led by Ronald Mambohaatumwi. As one moves around cities and towns of Zimbabwe, one is bound to notice the advertisements of these prophetic ministries on billboards and posters. UFIC and Spirit Embassy are now regarded as mega churches because they have over 35000 and 15000 congregants respectively at every Sunday service. Tracing the historical backgrounds of these churches is beyond the scope of this paper. This has been dealt with by Chitando, Manyonganise and Mlambo (2013).

Having emerged during the Zimbabwean crises that peaked in 2008, prophetic Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe needs to be understood as an attempt to offer people a way out of the cage of, among other things, the socio-economic and political uncertainties. The non-performance of the Zimbabwean economy has resulted in high levels of unemployment, implying that the majority of the people are living in abject poverty. This has been worsened by the HIV and AIDS epidemic. Commenting on the public response to Pentecostalism in Benin, Mayrargue (2001:282) noted that:

> Faced with difficult situations and new problems, many inhabitants turn to religious practices in the hope of finding solutions, remedies and assistance. Turning towards religion in times of trouble is a sensible and rational reaction, especially in a traditional religious environment where, for example, the divine is consulted to give meaning to problems and to provide solutions. Solutions to material problems are thus sought in the spiritual field.

While men also form part of the attendees of prophetic Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe, I have observed that women are the majority. When discussing the issue of women's sexual abuse by "prophets", the question often asked is why women make themselves vulnerable by consulting these prophets. While this paper may not provide clear-cut answers to this question, it may attempt to make some pointers to the possible reasons. The above-mentioned challenges that Zimbabwe has faced affect women more than men due to the fact that Zimbabwean society has largely remained patriarchal. Women continue to be blamed when infertility occurs in marriage. Thus, Mayrargue (*ibid.*) argues that "health and fertility difficulties are the foremost problems leading people to seek solutions in the religious sphere." Despite various legislations being put in place to ensure gender equality, women in Zimbabwe continue to be disadvantaged, especially in the private sphere. Thus, Uzodike and Isike (2012:43) posit that:

> Informal barriers to gender equality, because they occur in the subtle realm of social relations between men and women where "traditional" male authorities continue to dominate, are actually more difficult to overcome, as they cannot be simply legislated away.

In this regard, prophetic Pentecostalism has become very popular in Zimbabwe because it highlights its ability to provide solutions to these problems and to satisfy needs. As Riesebrodt and Chong (1999:56) argue:

> Much of the surprise regarding the resurgence of religion and the participation of women in fundamentalist movements has been due, on the one hand, to conventional and broadly functionalist understanding of religion, and, on the other hand, a somewhat abstract and socially non-contextualised image of patriarchalism.

As such the promise of getting rich quick, instant healing and deliverance has led many to be attracted to prophetic ministries in Zimbabwe. In one of his sermons, Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa of UFIC said: "A prophet is like a warehouse, you shop anything that you want, be it money, marriage, cars, health." This type of statement leads people to hero-worship the prophets, hence the need to critically analyse the phenomenon of prophecy and prophetic authority and establish whether it promotes the entrenchment of hegemonic masculinities.

Prophecy and Prophetic Authority: An Entrenchment of Hegemonic Masculinities

Generally, in Zimbabwe, the prophet is regarded as an embodiment of the divine. When declaring the oracles of God, the prophet does not speak for himself, but is the mouthpiece of God. The Greek word *prophetes* from which the word "prophet" derives, means "to speak in the name of..." (Van Oostrom 1986:7) Not only does the prophecy come with power but the prophet also has authority. The majority of prophets in Zimbabwe are male. To make matters worse, in the current scenario, prophetic ministries are being founded by young male prophets some of whom are single. Surprisingly, one finds that relatively old men and women refer to these church leaders as "Father", "Papa" or *Munhu waMwari* (Man of God). These prophets wield a lot of power which they use to control their followers. One of the major teachings in these prophetic churches is that out of the five ministries mentioned in Ephesians 4:11, the ministry of prophecy is unique. In other words, the office of the prophet is above all the other offices including pastors, evangelists, teachers, preachers and apostles. As such, there have been attempts by prophets in these churches to isolate themselves from the rest of the church members to the extent that even when they are in church, they have tight security around them to ensure that members of the church do not come near them when not called to do so. This makes the personality of the prophet not only the object of admiration but also of awe. In this regard, Ukpong notes that:

> Pentecostalism has involuntarily tightened personality cult in the contemporary Christianity. It has succeeded to turn attention of the faithful not simple to 'deceased saints' but to the 'living saints'. This attitude is creating what we may call 'spiritual titanism' among Christians, that is to say, those with spiritual gifts, exercise them in a titanic manner, using their gift to lord it over others and to bring them to servitude.

If one critically looks at the creation of these personality cults there is evidence of portraying the prophet in these churches as the unchallengeable father figure, thus projecting them as the centres of absolute power. This idolisation of the prophet as the centre of power and the voice of God entrenches a kind of masculinity in the church which could be called hegemonic. Aboim (2010:46) defines hegemonic masculinity as the "configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" and even of other men. The subordination of congregants in these churches is shown in the fact that, whenever the prophet arrives where they are gathered, they kneel. Whenever one is being prophesied to, they are expected to show their enthusiasm and appreciation for a chance of a lifetime and never to show that the prophet has wrongly prophesied to them. When prophesying in Stilfontein in South Africa in November 2012, Uebert Angel declared that a prophet never makes mistakes and that even if he were to make a mistake, God would turn the mistake to be correct. Cognisant of the fact that most prophets are male, what Angel is saying can be construed to mean that a prophet who is male cannot lie. Thus, instead of ensuring that patriarchy and all the privileges that men enjoy from it, have been challenged, some prophets in these newly formed churches are actually strengthening the patriarchal ideology. In this case, religion becomes an oppressive tool for women in these churches whose subservience is perpetuated by the prophets. Despite this fact, the voice of women and girls in some of these churches has been silenced even when their bodies are violated under the pretext of prophecy. This would lead one to come to the conclusion that the creation of personality cults, especially in Pentecostal Prophetic ministries in Zimbabwe, has resulted in a number of vices, chief among them the sexual abuse of women by some prophets.

Prophets and Women Abuse in Pentecostal Prophetic Ministries: The Zimbabwean Experience

The treatment of the prophet as a super-human being has led some prophets to take advantage of unsuspecting women. Some women have fallen victim to sexual abuse by these prophets. As *My Zim News* notes,

> "religion in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular, has become subject to abuse from individuals and groups of people who have taken advantage of the human being's need for due diligence, the desire to accumulate wealth, and the need to live a healthy life."

As mentioned earlier, women's desire for prophecy stems from their social condition in society. In most cases, when a couple fails to have children, the barrenness is blamed on the woman; in polygamous marriages, it is women who suffer the psychological trauma; it is also women who are the majority of victims due to domestic violence, and moreover: single women are looked down upon in African societies.

When faced with these scenarios, women seek a higher power to solve their problems. Pastor Sarah Nyathi confirmed this when she said: "Women are always looking for solutions. They get desperate and look for authority figures in the church ... Out of desperation at times women go for miracles and wonders without checking if they are done in God's way" (*Newsday*, 8 May 2011). In some cases, these women have been sexually abused in Pentecostal Prophetic Ministries. The following cases serve to show this occurrence:

a) Ronald Mambohaatumwi (aka Prophet Ronny) is the founder of Crossover Ministries in Marondera, a town in Zimbabwe's Mashonaland East Province. In 2012, he was arrested for sexually abusing women in his church. Charges laid against him are that he used his Facebook account to stalk and eventually lure several women from his congregation who were friends with him onto the social networking site. He would call these women to his home and made them to stay for several days on the pretext that he wanted to counsel and pray for them. The counseling sessions were conducted in his bedroom. He would then deceive the women into believing that it was their prophetic calling to sleep with him and eventually marry him in six months' time. One of the victims said:

> ... At the house, he invited me to his bedroom at around midnight, then he told me that the 'Lord' had revealed to him that I had been favoured to be his wife in the next six months. He then asked me to intimate with him claiming that we were already spiritually married since his prophecy had confirmed me as his future wife. We slept together that night ...
>
> (Internet source *Zimbabwean Pastor uses Facebook to Rape Women*)

This lady only became suspicious after she told her friend what had happened and the friend told her that she was not the only one but a number of women in the same church had fallen into the same trap. Tendai Chirisa says:

> "A lot of women in Marondera were raped by this 'prophet', but are afraid to come out in the open for fear of their husbands because they had gone there without their knowledge."
>
> (Interview with Tendai Chirisa in Marondera, 9 March 2013)

b) In 2011, a Bulawayo pastor, Greatness Tapfuma, of the Kingdom Rulers Church raped a 25 year old congregant twice and in 2012, another woman aged 22 years. They were invited to his house on the pretext that they were holding prayer sessions and eventually raped them (cf. internet source *Zimbabwe Pastor Arrested for Raping Church Members*).

c) In 2012, the media in Zimbabwe reported that a ZAOGA pastor in Chihota was on the run after allegedly raping and impregnating a 25 year old disabled woman from his church (cf. internet source *ZAOGA Pastor Rapes, Impregnates Disabled*).

d) In May 2011, a pastor in Chitungwiza's Krist Kingdom Church raped and impregnated a 15 year-old girl who was left in his custody by her mother. Pastor Kadhufu would call the girl into his bedroom and rape her (cf. internet source *Pastor Rapes, Impregnates Girl*).

In most of the above cases, it is apparent that the pretext of prayer and deliverance has been used by leaders in the churches in order to sexually abuse women in their congregations. Most of the women who are abused are threatened with curses and even death as some of the prophets in the churches claim to have the power to kill dissenting voices.

It would be far from the truth when this paper would present women only as victims of sexual abuse at the hands of all prophets in Pentecostal Prophetic Ministries. There are certain prophets in these churches who have managed to keep their names from appearing on the women's sexual abuse sheet. "Prophets" such as Emmanuel Makandiwa and Uebert Angel have so far (2013) not yet been accused of sexual scandals though they have caused controversies through their doctrines concerning miracle money, miracle babies and instant weight loss. What it means is that there is hope that these prophetic ministries can thrive with women participating without the fear of being sexually abused. The transformation of Pentecostal Prophetic Ministries is of paramount importance as it ensures the safety of women in religious spaces, particularly in a nation where sexual violence against women is on the upward trend.

Transforming Prophetic Ministries into Safe spaces

The church has the option to remain a desirable part of society or to become part of the perverse structures that must be dismantled (Gunda 2013). In a world where abuse against women generally has received condemnation from all quarters, it means that the church needs to align itself correctly and transform itself so that it becomes relevant and habitable for all female members. Evidence of sexual abuses happening in churches provided in this paper serves to prove that the general perception of the church as a safe place for women is not always true. It needs to be noted that traditionally, the church has been socially constructed as a "safe" space for women (Manyonganise 2010:21). This space only becomes dangerous "when some men use [sexual] violence to impose women's place, that is, both the physical space women inhabit and the psychological and social space by which women are culturally defined (*ibid*.). In this section, I wish to suggest ways in which transformation can happen in Pentecostal Prophetic churches so that they become safe spaces for women.

The Bible is the major source in Pentecostal Prophetic Churches. As such, it should guide them in the creation of safe spaces, particularly for women. While prophecy is an important aspect of the Christian faith, women need to be empowered by the scriptures to judge the character of the prophet. In the Old Testament period, standards were put in place to distinguish between true and false prophets. In the New Testament dispensation, even those that are claiming to be operating under the influence of the Holy Spirit should be put under scrutiny. For example, women can use 1 John 4:1ff. as the basis of this scrutiny. This scripture says:

> Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. (KJV)

Bourdillon (1990:103) says "… Human beings have to decide for themselves what oracles really come from the spirits, and therefore the acceptance of an oracle ultimately depends on the human judgement." He further explains that human judgement is influenced by the self-interest of the persons making the judgement (*ibid*.). Thus, from this verse, women need to be taught that they have the power to decide whether to believe what a prophet says or not. In this vein, it is important to quote at length what Van Oostrom (1986:9) says about those that listen to modern day prophets. He says:

> We who listen to the modern day prophets, have the task of testing and discerning the truth and the responsibility of identifying the true messengers of the Lord. To be able to do this we need ourselves to be in close union with the spirit of the Lord. This will enable us to discern the prophets through whom He speaks to us. If we are in the right disposition we can discern God being present and God speaking to us through such a person. Then it is up to us to respond. We have the responsibility to search for the truth and for the true prophet in our days. This truth will make us free and save us and our African world.

The major problem in most Pentecostal churches the world over and in Zimbabwe, in particular, is that there is no standard theology that guides the practice of healing and deliverance. While some do their healing and deliverance sessions in public, the dubious ones opt for private sessions. In an internet response to women raped by 'Prophet Ronnie', E. Chigs retorted:

> Deliverance *inomboda* privacy here?
> These women are a shame, *ndomene haichemedzi*.
> God have mercy on your children
>
> (Does deliverance need privacy?
> These women are a shame,
> one should not cry over what they bring upon themselves.
> God have mercy on your children).
> (Internet source *Zimbabwean Pastor uses Facebook to Rape Women*)

Churches need to bring awareness campaigns against private healing and deliverance sessions. Women need to be empowered to say "No" to demands by the prophets who go against their conscience. Teachings on how prophecy works should be conducted in churches so that people are made aware of the fact that although a prophet is inspired they can speak in their own person. Hence, if the prophecies being received from the "Man of God" are not in tandem with biblical texts, women need not pay attention to them. One interviewee said:

> *Vakadzi vanofanira kuziva kuti muporofita murume asati aporofita, murume achiporofita uye murume apedza kuporofita* (Women should know that a prophet is a man before prophesying, he is a man when prophesying, he is a man after prophesying. They should not be fooled by the spiritual gift to the extent of ignoring his physiological make up and needs.
> (Interview with a male interviewee in Harare, 2 March 2013)

This was supported by a professor from the University of Zimbabwe who explained that like the traditional hunter used bows, arrows and snares, prophets in these churches are using the gift of prophecy as a bait to lure vulnerable women. In his own words:

> "It is therefore up to the women to understand that the same system they are running away from their homes is the one that created the prophet. The prophet himself is the product of patriarchy."
> (Interview with a University of Zimbabwe Professor, 14 March 2013)

The Tamar story of 2 Samuel 13:1-22 could be used for the transformation of Prophetic Pentecostal churches into being safe spaces for women. When Tamar was raped by her half-brother, she did not keep quiet, but exposed the abuse. This story, therefore, advocates for the breaking of silence when women are raped by those they trust. Van der Walt (2011:43) is of the view that

> "although the story of Tamar is temporally and culturally removed from modern readers/hearers by two thousand years and a series of cultural changes, it also remains the story of many women today."

Tamar's courage to name the violence that was committed against her can also be the starting point in the modern context to offer resistance against acts of violence and abuse (Ackermann 2001:16). In Zimbabwe's Pentecostal Prophetic Churches, women need to be encouraged to derive inspiration from this biblical text to name and shame sexual abuse that is perpetrated against them by the so-called prophets. On the other hand, the story can be used to bring these church leaders to a point of introspection. This introspection should lead them to rise up and publicly denounce the sexual violence of women. Public pronouncements against women sexual violence will go a long way in empowering women to then question future sexual advances by the church leaders.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that Pentecostal Prophetic Ministries have become a popular brand of Christianity in Zimbabwe. The emergence of these churches has brought new dimensions to the prophetic phenomenon. It has also been established that some prophets in these churches are sexually abusing women who adore and respect them for their prophetic gift. The paper interrogated the creation of personality cults which presents the prophet as the centre of power and highlighted that this is helping in the maintenance of hegemonic masculinities. It has, however, been noted that not all prophets in these churches are sexually abusing women. The paper noted that through the use of biblical texts, Pentecostal Prophetic Ministries can be transformed into safe spaces where women's bodies are not violated.

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“A voice is heard in Ramah!” (Jeremiah 31:15)

Re-Reading Jeremiah’s Prophetic Statement in the Light of Political Violence in 21st Century Zimbabwe

A Case of Zaka and Bikita Districts in Masvingo

Nyasha Madzokere & Francis Machingura

> *Violence may murder the murderer, but it doesn’t murder murder.*
> *Violence may murder the liar, but it doesn’t murder lie; it doesn’t establish truth.*
> *Violence even murders the dishonest man, but it doesn’t murder dishonesty.*
> *Violence may even go to the point of murdering a hater. It doesn’t murder hate.*
> *It is always a descending spiral leading nowhere.*
> *This is the ultimate weakness of violence. It multiplies evil and violence in the universe.*
> *It doesn’t solve any problem.”* (Rev. Martin Luther King jr 1963)

Abstract

This paper is a re-reading of a biblical text in order to address the political wrangles and challenges in Zimbabwe. Further questions related to the issue of violence are: What are the reasons of political violence? How can we put an end to it? What is the role of the church in curbing political violence? These questions triggered the authors to examine the biblical text in light of the politically volatile Zimbabwe in the 21st century.

Introduction

The above citation from Martin Luther King is pivotal as this paper reflects on the prophetic statement of Jeremiah in light of political violence in the 21st century Zimbabwe. Political violence was prevalent during the pre-independent, independent and post-independent era in Zimbabwe. The life of Hebrews during pre-exilic, exilic times and post-exilic was also characterised by violence and suffering. This paper appropriates the biblical message to a politically violent Zimbabwe context. This paper is a re-reading exercise of the Bible in order to address the political wrangles and challenges in Zimbabwe in particular, and Africa in general, as has been the case of the Bible in Africa Studies (BiAS) project (Gunda &

Kuegler 2012:7ff.). The paper then continues to ask more questions related to the issue of violence in Zimbabwe: Why was there political violence in Zimbabwe in the 21st century? How can we put an end to it? Does the church have any role to play in curbing political violence? These questions triggered the writers of this paper to examine the biblical text in light of the politically volatile Zimbabwe in the 21st century? The word, ‘‘Violence” in this article is defined broadly to mean the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, intentional abuse of power, underdevelopment or deprivation (World Report on Violence and Health 2015*)*. “‘Political Violence”’ in this study means an intentional abuse of power by the government and its agents to systematically cause gross deprivation of human rights either physically, psychologically, economically, socially, spiritually or otherwise to the detriment of the people of Zimbabwe. Firstly, the paper would focus on an exegesis of Jeremiah 31:15. Secondly, the paper focuses on a summary of political violence in 21st century Zimbabwe. Thirdly, the paper examines the Run-Off Presidential Election of 27 June, 2008 which is viewed by various scholars as the worst politically violent incident in the history of Zimbabwe politics (Chitando & Togarasei 2010; Masunungure 2009; Sachikonye 2011). Fourthly, the typically hot spots of political violence – Zaka and Bikita districts in Masvingo - would be examined for as the caption, “hotspots” show the level of political violence. Finally, this paper would examine the ambivalent role of the church in addressing political violence in Zimbabwe.

“The lamenting and bitter weeping Rachel” (Jeremiah 31:15): An Exegesis

> This is what the LORD says: "A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more." (Jeremiah 31:15, RSV).

What has triggered this? Why was Rachel weeping and lamenting? What is a possible interpretation of Jeremiah 31:15? Ramah was a small town about five or six miles north of Jerusalem. The community was located on the border between the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern regime of Judah; thus, in reality, the community could function as a representative of either territory – or both (Rachel Tears 2015). Ramah was the point at which Nebuchadnezzar assembled the people of Judah for their long trek into the captivity of Babylon (Jeremiah 40:1). The voice is that of a woman who is weeping bitterly. Her name is Rachel, the wife of Jacob. Metaphorically speaking, Rachel, who had died a millennium earlier, is lamenting her lost "children", i.e., her distant offspring. Who are these children? Rachel was the mother of both Joseph and Benjamin. Joseph was the father of Ephraim and Manasseh, both of whom were children of Israel, while Benjamin was of Judah. Hence to weep for her children signified a bitter lamentation over the entire nation. The occasion of Rachel's weeping was the terrible suffering of her descendants. Israel had been taken into Assyrian captivity (722-721 BCE), and the final disposition of Judah came with the third deportation of the Jews into Babylonian captivity in 586 BCE (Jeremiah 2015). The desolation was so heart-wrenching that it seemed that her children "were no more", meaning that they were dead. She simply refused to be comforted because of the deplorable situation which she was in as a result of the violent massacre of the children hence the caption, "lamenting and bitter weeping". The Lord spoke, however, and instructed her to refrain from crying and to dry her tears. There would be a "reward" for her "work" of bringing her children into the world. They would "come again from the land of the enemy" (v. 16). They had learned the hard lesson of rebellion and acknowledged Yahweh's "chastisement". The Hebrew people had "turned" away from God, but through divine discipline they were brought to repentance and so "turned" back to the Lord (vv. 18-19). This is a commentary on the nature of repentance. God promises to have mercy upon those who are of this disposition (Jeremiah 2015).

To get more clarification of the meaning of Jeremiah-a study of Gospel according to Matthew could help. Jeremiah 31:15 is the text quoted by the apostle Matthew as a "fulfilment" when the vicious king, Herod the Great, slaughtered the male infants in his brutish attempt to eliminate the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:17-18)? What is the connection between the two texts? Different scholars in biblical studies proffered various views and five of these are going to be discussed in this paper namely: the modern school of thought; the illustrative school of thought; typological prophetic school of thought; the Messianic school of thought and, lastly, the millennialist school of thought. The modern school of thought sees no relationship between the Old Testament text and Matthew's use of the passage. Typically, William Barclay wrote: "Very certainly the verse in Jeremiah has no connection with Herod's slaughter of the children. ...

Here again Matthew is doing what he so often did. He is finding a prophecy in his eagerness where no prophecy is" (Barclay 1958:29). This view cannot be accepted by anyone who respects the doctrine of Bible inspiration. It indicts the apostle Matthew as an unscrupulous manipulator of the Old Testament. However, the illustrative school of thought holds a divergent view. For this school of thought there is an interconnection between the two texts, but it is not a case of genuine prophecy. Instead, Matthew only used the text from Jeremiah in an illustrative way to indicate affinity of the prophetic narratives to gospel narratives. There is an interconnection between the Old Testament and New Testament. Most biblical exegetes believe this text reflects an example of a typological prophecy (i.e., a picture prophecy, as distinct from the term prophecy). In such a case there was an application of the text to a relatively immediate situation, but foreseeing a fulfilment in the future. A typological prophecy is different in kind, but no less a prophecy in words. The words, "then was fulfilled," seem to reflect "a real recognition of divine intention ... a real prediction and not mere illustration" (Blomberg 2007). The Messianic school of thought contended that Jeremiah's prophecy was not typological, but was strictly Messianic and thus had nothing to do with "the deportations of either the Northern or the Southern Kingdom." (Blomberg 2007*)* This view seems strained. This school seems to deny the reality of any "typological" prophecy. Last but not least, the extreme case of the millennialist school of thought points to the fact that Matthew points to the "ultimate fulfilment" of Jeremiah's prophecy in the Millennium when Israel is restored to her God. This view follows the theological approach to the Bible which views the Bible as an inspired text.

The writers of the present paper argue that the typological school of thought hold water and seem to fit all the evidence in both the Old and New Testament. Israel, in the days of Jeremiah, suffered estrangement from its sacred land, the equivalent of a separation from a holy environment; hence, figuratively, it was their spiritual death. Later, however, there would be restoration to a state of happiness. Similar circumstances would occur five centuries later. A brutal king would slaughter Bethlehem's male babies in an attempt to eliminate a rival king, Jesus; but God saved his son from King Herod's evil machinations through an escape to Egypt. In this case therefore, Herod was a cruel personality and initiated devilish policies which was evidenced by the massacring of almost all the boys who were born the same time Jesus was born. Herod thought he would eliminate the Jesus by the massacre of Bethlehem’s babies. His plans were rendered futile for Jesus of Nazareth escaped but many male Hebrew babies were butchered (Krentrick 2010).

“A Cauldron of Fire”: Zimbabwe in Turbulence of Political Violence

The caption above describes the political situation of Zimbabwe in the 21st century which was volatile due to political disasters. These political disasters were masterminded by the ruling party, ZANU-PF, and its leadership for political survival. Zimbabwe passed through a chronicled politically volatile time in its history.(Raftopolous 2009; Sachikonye 2011; Madzokere 2014). This was detrimental to peace, justice and development of the country. The political disasters are a plethora and scholars have written a lot on them. This study would just tabulate them and select the most recent and notorious of them. An in depth study of each of them is beyond the scope of this study. Some of such disasters are: the *Gukurahundi* in 1981-1983 (Tofa 2012; Chamburuka 2012), the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (*Hondo yeminda*) in the year 2000 (Manzungu 2004; Sachikonye 2004), the Presidential Elections of 2002 (Raftopoulous 2004; Melber 2002*),* Zimbabwe Parliamentary Elections of 2005 (Madzokere 2014; Chamburuka 2012), Zimbabwe *Tsunami-Murambatsvina* (Tabaijuka 2005; Chirongoma 2009; Tofa 2012; Madzokere 2014; Chamburuka 2012*)* and the bloody Run-Off Presidential Election of June, 2008 (Badza 2009; Masunungure 2009; Makumbe 2009; Chitando 2012; Madzokere & Machingura 2015). These political disasters were created and bred by Robert Mugabe who is presiding over Zimbabwe for over three decades now. Zimbabwe the ‘jewel of Africa’s crown’ as it was referred to by Julius Mwalimu Nyerere in 1980 lost such status long back so now regarded as a ‘tarnished jewel’ by Matanda and Madzokere (2014*). The country is now in tatters socially, politically, economically and morally. Scholars prefer to describe year 2000 to 2008 to as the *Zimbabwe crisis* (Chitando 2005; Raftopolous 2009; Machingura 2010; Sachikonye 2011; Chamburuka 2012; Tofa 2012) due to mostly these political disasters. Violence in Zimbabwe has become part of life hence so inert and entrenched. Demographic statistics indicate that 70-80% of the Zimbabwean population subscribe to church membership of a Christian denomination and 98% to a belief in God and the power and influence of spirituality in the affairs of man. One then wonders and will be forgiven for asking this simple question 'what has really gone wrong? (Machingura 2010) This paper now summarises the disasters which occurred as a result of political violence orchestrated by Robert Mugabe and his adherents:

- ***Gukurahundi* (The rain that clears off the chaff):** This was the government of Mugabe's repressive programme designed for the people of Matabeleland and the Midlands in reaction to them being loyal to his rival, Joshua Nkomo, in the guise of hunting the so-called dissidents. The whole exercise was done for political survival and was characterised by serious violence exercised on the people of Ndebele origin.
- ***Jambanja* (Fast Track Land Reform Programme-FTLRP):** This was a bitterly disputed Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) of 2000 which was carried out to redistribute land to indigenous Zimbabweans. The whole exercise, though noble as an idea, was characterised by naked violence which spoiled it to the worst condemnation by local, regional and international bodies.
- ***Murambatsvina* (Operation Clear-Off the Filthy):** This was an ambitious project carried out by the government of Mugabe in 2005 aiming at "cleaning up" the urban and the growth points of shanty, crime and subversion. This event is generally referred to as the *Zimbabwe tsunami* because of its violent nature. Approximately 700 000 people in the cosmopolitan centres were directly affected, whilst 2.5 million were indirectly affected.
- **Rigged Elections – 2000, 2002, 2005, 2008 & 2013:** A series of elections in Zimbabwe took place from 2000-2013 but were marred by violence, murders, rape, abductions, torture, and destruction of property. They were *militarised and bloody.*

A "Bloody Run-Off Presidential Election": When a State Turns on Its Citizens

The 2008 election was the worst and most condemned election in the history of Zimbabwe politics. That is why Masunungure (2009) boldly refers to this election as 'bloody and militarized'. Sachikonye (2011) coined a title of the book, "*When a state turns on its citizens*", which the writers of this paper conscientiously decided to be the above caption, for it portrays the actual picture of the Run-Off Presidential Election of June, 2008. In 2008 Zimbabwe held harmonised elections on 29 March and a

Run-Off Presidential Elections on 27 June, after a stalemate in the Presidential Elections held in March, 2008. According, to Amnesty International (2009) Morgan Tsvangirai of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-T) garnered 47.8% of the vote, Robert Mugabe of ZANU-PF garnered 43.2% of the vote while Simba Makoni of Mavambo-Kusile Dawn and other independent candidates got less than 10% of the vote. According to Sachikonye (2011), the 2008 election was the most violent in the annals of Zimbabwe’s post-independence history. A lot of violence was experienced in the run-up to the March 29 harmonised elections as well as the run-up to the June Presidential Run-Off elections. Most of the perpetrators of violence were ZANU-PF supporters and the victims of the violence were (mostly) MDC-T supporters and their relatives and friends. Robert Mugabe of the ruling party ZANU-PF is alleged to have employed the state -military, police and intelligence- to dish out systemic violence to the masses. The violence experienced was characterised by the use of hate speech at rallies, torture, beatings, murder, intimidation, looting of personal property, destruction of houses and property, and human rights were further violated by the selective distribution and controlled access to food. Tools or weapons utilised during the violence included logs, sjamboks, machetes, steel rods, knobkerries, knives and chains (Manavele 2014). An approximate figure of two hundred people killed was reported but this figure could be under-estimated since an alarmingly high figure of missing people was also reported after the Presidential Run-Off Election. This created an even worse situation for people in the Diaspora fearing to come back to Zimbabwe to vote in any future elections in the country. They are of the opinion that, if the political environment remains politically and violently hostile, wasting time and resources to come back home for elections would only be to their detriment. These people of the “Diaspora” are currently regarded as the worst enemies of the state because of their escaping the *Zimbabwe crisis* (Financial Gazette 2013) The ‘political disasters’ have ripple effects in the society and, according to Machingura (2010) and Madzokere (2015) these can be grouped as follows:

1. *Physical*: Violence has adverse consequences to the physical nature of human beings. Political violence in Zimbabwe left it a wounded society characterised by scarred people who are physically harmed.

2. *Sexual*: Rape is a typical example of sexual violence. In the 21st century sexual violence was a prevalent tool used to punish political opponents in the Zimbabwe political jigsaw puzzle. ZANU-PF agents - youth mili-

tia, CIOs, police, war veterans and army personnel applied various tactics to punish their perceived MDC opponents in order to overpower them, especially in the Run-Off election of June, 2008 (Madzokere 2015).

3. *Spiritual:* Political violence affected the spiritual life of the people of Zimbabwe. Those with relatives who were massacred by political opponents raised questions of theodicy especially Christians. Where was God when the people of Zimbabwe kill each other? African traditionalists were triggered to question the intervention of the ancestors in their lives especially in times of disasters like this.

4. *Psychological:* "Political disasters" have been traumatic to victims of violence, rape, murder, abductions and torture and those who lost their properties. The involvement of security forces in persecuting people has left a deep wound in the lives of victims, considering that those entrusted with the protection of citizens are those violating human rights.

5. *Economical:* These "political disasters" have created a situation where some people took advantage of the situation to rip-off helpless people, for example, stealing or "removing" movable and immovable property, and livestock (cattle/goats and other livestock have been confiscated for selfish gain with the pretext of punishing sell-outs).

6. *Social:* The "political disasters" created animosity between family members, neighbours (abhorring bitterness against each other as a result of belonging to different political parties) and groups (religious and social). It is not surprising that family members went at each other's throats for the sole reason of belonging to a different political party, for example, father and son reporting each other to their respective political authorities for retributive measures, or accusing each other of being politically disloyal (Machingura 2010).

A "voice was heard in Zaka and Bikita": hotspots of political violence

Masvingo is one of provinces in Zimbabwe which recorded many cases of political violence, particularly in the Zaka and Bikita districts. According to Manavele (2014), these districts fit well the designation "hotspots" of political violence because of the intensity of the political situation in these districts. After the defeat of the ZANU-PF Presidential candidate, Robert Mugabe, in the first round of the Presidential elections of March, 2008, war veterans and other ZANU-PF supporters began setting up bases as centres where they held meetings, especially at night. These bases were set up in areas where strong support for the opposition party, The MDC-T had gained support in rural areas as shown in the first round of the Presidential elections. (Madzokere & Makahamadze 2013; Zhou & Makahamadze 2012) These bases became torture camps for known and suspected MDC supporters. War veterans ordered community members to gather at the bases to witness the punishment of MDC supporters. The opposition supporters would be beaten severely at base meetings and some could have their hands amputated as a punishment for voting for the opposition party. Revolutionary songs that were sung during the liberation war struggle were sung at these meetings whilst beatings were taking place. Beatings were a method employed to instil fear in the community in order to convince people to vote for ZANU-PF in the Run-Off Presidential Elections.

The period of the run-up to the Run-Off Presidential Elections was characterized by an increase in the use of hate speech as a way to encourage a crackdown on the opposition supporters in order to discourage them from voting for their party in the run-off elections. In the rural areas of Zaka and Bikita, where villagers had overwhelmingly voted for the opposition party, gangs of ZANU-PF youths, war veterans as well as army personnel moved around beating opposition party supporters and, as a result, many known MDC supporters had to flee the violence and seek refuge in churches, mainly Roman Catholic parishes, which offered accommodation to victims of political violence. Others had to seek refuge in Masvingo Urban, where the situation was relatively calm (Manavele 2014). The violence also saw a crackdown on white commercial farmers who were accused of supporting the opposition party. According to ZANU-PF, the slogan, "Defending Our Land and Sovereignty", was coined by ZANU-PF after they lost to MDC-T in the March Presidential Elections in 2008. This led to a fresh farm invasion of commercial white farms by the war veterans. It was reported that former white commercial farmers were returning to the country to repossess their land after Tsvangirai won the first round of the Presidential Elections in March 2008. The white commercial farmers were accused by ZANU-PF of bank rolling funds for the opposition party, MDC-T, in their operations and campaigns, and were regarded as agents of the West used to reverse the gains of the liberation struggle of which one of the causes of the war was indeed land. John Borland, a commercial farmer in Masvingo, was subject to intimidation by a gang of ZANU-PF youths and war veterans in April 2008. The gang ordered Borland to return to his country, Britain, and they told him that they wanted to take his farm as he was accused of supporting the MDC party. The gang also looted some of Borland's personal belongings. Farm workers were forced to resign from their duties and leave the farm to pave way for new ownership of the farm. The war veterans went on to set up a base near Borland's farm where they would hold their meetings denouncing the opposition party and calling for Borland to leave his farm and return to his home country. The war veterans looted food from Borland's farm for their personal use (Manavele 2014).

Burning of houses and the closing of shops of suspected MDC supporters was a common tactic used by ZANU-PF supporters during the 2008 political violence in Masvingo. ZANU-PF supporters would burn houses of opposition party supporters to deprive them of shelter, and to prevent them from participating in the Run-Off Presidential elections. According to the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe-CCJP Report (2009), sixty-four houses were burnt in Bikita. A Mapare lodge in Bikita, which belonged to the Bikita East MP for the MDC, was burnt down by suspected army and security agents. The lodge provided housing for people who were running away from violence in Buhera. One of the alleged leaders in the instigation of violence against the MDC supporters in Buhera, was Joseph Chinotimba who lost the seat to the MDC-T candidate in the Buhera South Constituency. In Zaka the house of a Roman Catholic priest of the St Antony Mission was burnt down by ZANU-PF supporters immediately after he delivered a sermon denouncing violence. The ZANU-PF supporters came to his homestead during the night demanding him to come out of the house so that they can deal with him as they regarded him as a sympathiser of the opposition party., The priest was not present at the time of the gang's arrival, and after there was no response, the ZANU-PF supporters went on to burn the house destroying everything in it. One businessman in Zaka ward 16 was ordered by ZANU-PF supporters to close his grinding mill as punishment for supporting the MDC party in the March 2008 harmonised elections (Manavele 2014).

Zaka was a hotspot of political violence in Masvingo province in 2008. Known and suspected MDC supporters were targeted by ZANU-PF supporters who included mainly youth and war veterans moving in groups and instigating violence against opposition party supporters. At one disturbing incidence which occurred at Jerera growth point a group of suspected armed soldiers attacked MDC offices at night. They shot and set ablaze seven opposition party supporters who were on the premises during the night of the attack. However, three people managed to survive the attack: Edison Gwenhure, Isaac Mbano and Kudakwashe Tsumele (Daily News Live 2012). Two MDC councillors who won in the March harmonized elections also had their houses burnt and their property destroyed by a group of suspected ZANU-PF supporters. Despite being beaten, those who were accused of supporting the opposition party were fined. According to the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (2008) those who were MDC agents in the March harmonised elections were fined a goat or five chickens each. In Bikita officials of the opposition party, MDC, such as aspiring candidates for parliamentary and local government seats, as well as MDC polling agents, were the main victims of the political violence experienced in the area. Perpetrators of the violence included war veterans and ZANU-PF youths who moved around attempting to force people to denounce the opposition party and support the ruling ZANU-PF party. People were forced to attend meetings at bases where opposition party supporters were forcibly converted to the ZANU-PF party. According to the Zimbabwe Peace Project, on 12 June 2008, Bikita South MDC MP elect, Jani Makuku, was attacked at his home by a group of war veterans and ZANU-PF youth, and he was left with broken legs, his house burnt and his goods stolen. Also in Bikita South, a farmer in ward 28 was attacked by a group of ZANU-PF supporters who accused him of supporting the opposition party and his livestock and property were looted, his house burnt, and he was also ordered to leave the farm (Manavele 2014).

"Extinguishing or Fuelling the Fire?": The Ambivalent Role of the Church in the Midst of Political Violence

In the light of the above, one has to ask the following simple question: "What has really gone wrong?" It is disturbing to realise that the same violent methods of abuse and intimidation of the weak or opponent are used by those in power, and sometimes even by the weak side in order to defend themselves against the violence and intimidation of the powerful. Supporters of political parties in Zimbabwe generally seem to resort to violence whenever they differ politically, or feel threatened by opponents. The same approach of using violence has been witnessed amongst religious groups. A case in point is the Anglican Church saga in which parishioners and men of the cloth belonging to different factions fight against each other in an attempt to take control of church property. How can a nation be healed if Christians, the supposed champions of peace who are meant to safeguard the word of God, are still fighting among themselves? This indicates that not even the Anglican Church is spared violence. More particularly, the case of the deposed Nolbert Kunonga of the Anglican Church, who employed violent means to harass members of the Anglican Church which belonged to the faction of Sebastian Bakare, can be mentioned (Machingura 2010). What should be the role of the Church and Civil Society in curbing violence in the politically violence-torn nation of Zimbabwe?

The role of the Church in the midst of the violent and turbulent environment of Zimbabwe can be summarised in one short phrase: "Extinguishing or fuelling the fire?" which is the caption of this particular section of this paper. The Church as an umbrella body (consisting of the mainline, Pentecostal Churches, and African Initiated Churches) plays an ambivalent role in violence in Zimbabwe, because it serves both as a catalyst for and an antidote to the problem of political violence that troubles Zimbabwe. Despite the stern role of the Christian organisations such as the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), the Zimbabwe Council Of Churches (ZCC), and the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishop Conference (ZCBC) with their sole mandate to promote justice and peace in society, most of the religious groups and personalities have a compromise role to serve as catalysts to the veld fire of political violence. The Church has a mandate call to be the voice of the voiceless, to offer pastoral services to the nation and to be part of the reconstruction and reconciliation efforts in the country torn apart because of political violence. In pursuit of its vision of justice, peace, prosperity and total salvation for all, the Church vowed to continue its mandate to speak against political violence but, as observed by Chitando and Togarasei (2010) the Church remains deeply divided. The Church was/is deeply divided because they are some denominations who supported the state whilst the other did not. Chitando (2005) called some pastors "party affiliated" because of their close relationship to the ruling party, ZANU-PF, for example, Nolbert Kunonga, Obadiah Musindo, Emmanuel Makandiwa, Walter Magaya and others (Madzokere& Machingura 2015). On one end there are churches that are *pro-ruling party a*nd on the other those that are *anti-ruling party* (Madzokere 2013). The *pro-ruling party* group supports those who are governing Zimbabwe despite being politically violent to the citizens as categorically stated in Sachikonye's book, (2011). This group serves as a catalyst in the fuelling of political violence. The *anti-ruling party* group on the other hand, attacks those that govern the nation with the application of dirty political tactics, for example, Pius Ncube, Levee Kadenge, Oskar Wemter and others (Madzokere & Machingura 2015). This group therefore serves as an antidote to political violence in Zimbabwe. Such a chasm within the Church creates polarisation which further compromises and worsens the role of the Church in curbing political violence in Zimbabwe. The ultimate consequence is disunity, hatred and disharmony among the people of Zimbabwe. The Church as the voice of God on earth should act as the "'conscience of the state" (Madzokere 2013). It should foster its mandate to promote national healing, reconciliation and integration in the politically torn Zimbabwe nation. It holds water to argue that unless humankind finds an amicable solution to the problem of violence; violence will ultimately put an end to humankind. This has been expressed explicitly well by the catchy statement by Reverend Martin Luther King Jnr.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this paper would advocate for a Church which takes a balanced role in addressing political violence. The caption which captures what the writers of this book paper are trying to put forward should be, "a Partisan for the Truth Church"-a Church that neither takes side with any political party but takes sides with what is true. This Church of this kind is only partisan when it comes to telling the truth whether to those who are politically giants or politically underdogs. This designation of such a Church is not easy to come by but the Church should adopt the Christo-centric approach to life (Madzokere 2014). A Christo-centric approach to life uproots all those facets of life that dominate and violate human rights-men, women, children and even animal rights. Zimbabweans across the political divide are now deeply divided because of political violence and such deprives the country of peace, justice, love and human development. Experimenting with violence is detrimental to peace, unity and the development of Zimbabwe. The quotation from Reverend Martin Luther King jr serves as a beacon for Zimbabwe if taken with the seriousness it deserves. Pius Ncube (2004) stated categorically that the role of every Zimbabwean now is to preach the values of the Kingdom of God-love, justice, peace, patience and tolerance which are precursors to tranquillity, stability and development. The role of the

Church should not be ambivalent but more an antidote than a catalyst to political violence. The Church needs to be complemented by political and civil leaders in its effort to curb political violence. Overall, however, the paper established that violence in spite of it being rampant in Zimbabwe has detrimental consequences to societal development so should be tackled from various angles-social, political, economic and religious to promote peace, justice, tolerance and love which serve as precursors to the development of Zimbabwe as a nation.

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Christianisme et Islam au Cameroun

Entre rivalités inter-ethniques, intra-religieuses et inter-religieuses ou le défi du vivre-ensemble au quotidien*

Jacques Fulbert Owono

Abstract

Religious practise in Africa remains a multi-facetted challenge for daily living – especially since religion is accompanied and influenced by ethnic, cultural, and social factors. The question imposed to Africans of today is not only: The Bible, the Quran or the Ancestors. As can be seen in many cases the Bible and the Quran are not playing the unifying role that might be expected as ethnic and cultural identities seem to be even more holy than the Holy Scriptures. The article demonstrates this pattern focussing on rivalry, conflicts, and violence in northern Cameroon. The ethnic groups of Fulani, Arab-Choa and Kotoka are living in conflict although they all are Muslims. The ethnic identity is more important than the religious one. However, whenever it comes to tensions between Muslims and Christians the religious identity gains importance and the Holy Scriptures of Bible and Quran are used as a unifying factor and weapon against the others.

Introduction

Selon Engelberg Mveng dans son Histoire du Cameroun, autour des années 500, c’est-à-dire quatre ans après le baptême de Clovis, une civilisation originale naît sur les bords du lac Tchad et qui pousse ses ramifications au Cameroun : les Sao. Vers 700, sous la poussée des envahisseurs venus de l’est, la civilisation Sao va s’éteindre pour donner naissance à l’empire de Kanem, contemporain de celui de Charlemagne, qui se développe grâce au trafic d’esclaves (Mveng, 1984). De par sa situation géographique, le Kanem se trouve être au centre de plusieurs routes commerciales, ce qu'on a appelé le commerce sahélo-saharien. Et c'est sans doute par les marchands que l'islam s'est rendu présent dans cette région. On peut penser à juste titre que c'est du XIe au XIII siècles que les musulmans s'installent et répandent l'islam dans la région, puisque d'ailleurs l'empire dès cette période va connaître un développement important grâce à des souverains convertis à l'islam au XIe siècle et qui y pratiquent le commerce des esclaves. Le XVIe siècle est une période de grande stabilité politique. Le royaume de Bornou reconquiert le Kanem : c'est le début de l'empire de Kanem-Bornou qui atteint son apogée sous le règne d'Idriss Aloama. Ce dernier sera le protecteur de la poussée migratoire peule partit du Macina et qui atteint le pays Haussa. Ce n'est qu'après avoir soumis tous les Etats Haussa que le plus illustre des Peuls de cette époque, le Chehou Ousman Dan Fodio, fonde en 1804 le califat de Sokoto. C'est sous le leadership de son lieutenant, Modibbo Adama, que le djihad est déclaré en 1804 dans le Fombina (Adama et Mouctar, 2001). A partir du 19e s, au moment où l'Europe chrétienne organise les expéditions qui mettront bientôt toute l'Afrique subsaharienne sous sa coupe, on assiste à une sorte de regain de la conquête musulmane. En Afrique Centrale, Rabah, un chef de guerre musulman d'origine soudanaise, après avoir soumis le Kanem-Bornou, qu'il veut agrandir, décide de se lancer à la conquête de l'Oubangui-Chari, aujourd'hui RCA. Il est le premier à avoir tenté sur une grande échelle l'islamisation du plateau oubanguien. Son entreprise guerrière d'islamisation forcée se heurte aux Français. Pris en tenaille lors de la bataille de Kousséri, Rabah est tué en avril 1900. Cette défaite stoppa net l'islamisation forcée de l'ancien Oubangui-Chari. Il faut souligner que jusqu'au milieu du XIXe siècle, l'islam africain n'est en contact qu'avec le monde arabo-musulman et, par lui, avec le reste du monde, même s'il existe des contacts avec les esclavagistes européens sur les côtes. Les principaux problèmes de cet islam ont été, d'une part, la purification dans la pratique quotidienne et l'établissement d'une société islamique, et, d'autre part, la conversion à l'islam des peuples dits « païens ». A partir de la moitié du XIXe siècle, un autre problème va se poser, celui du choc avec l'Occident, sous la colonisation d'abord, et sous la forme de la culture et de l'éducation occidentale. La politique musulmane de la France coloniale va vite se heurter à « la question arabe ». Seulement, il n'y a pas eu une politique définie pour ou contre l'islam, ce ne furent ni une croisade, ni une guerre sainte. La politique française a surtout été marquée par un grand pragmatisme. Quand la carte musulmane pouvait servir pour asseoir le pouvoir colonial, l'islam a pu être favorisé de la bienveillance de ce pouvoir et d'appuis de sa part. Elle va à dessein favoriser le développement d'un islam traditionnaliste, coupé de ses racines arabes. La tactique coloniale encouragea de manière positive un autre aspect de la diffusion de l'islam et de la consolidation institutionnelle de l'ordre Soufi.

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Au Cameroun, La crainte de l'islamisme et de l'arabisme des Arabes Shoa relève d'un préjugé. Proche du Tchad où se dessine un courant réformiste, l'administration juge qu'ils sont susceptibles d'en subir l'influence. Il faut par conséquent empêcher que se matérialise la solidarité ethnique entre les Arabes du Cameroun et leurs congénères du Tchad. Par ailleurs, que ce soit l'autorité coloniale ou l'autorité camerounaise aux lendemains des indépendances et ce jusqu'à aujourd'hui, l'accent est mis sur l'ethnie peule comme auxiliaire de l'Etat, au détriment des autres peuples, voire de l'unité et de la cohésion nationale. Ce qui laisse constater que les contours de la pratique du religieux au Cameroun se dessinent entre des frontières intra-religieuse, inter-ethnique et inter-religieuse où l'ethnie occupe un large part. Dès lors, on est en droit de se demander quel rôle jouent les Saintes Ecritures pour les chrétiens et les musulmans dans ces conflits. Peut-on envisager une pratique du religieux au Cameroun au-delà de l'ethnie ?

1. Le problème foulbé ou l'expression d'une rivalité intra-ethnique

L'islam camerounais, faut-il le rappeler, est foncièrement tourné vers l'extérieur, le Nigeria, notamment. Mais dans sa pratique quotidienne interne, il fait face à de nombreux problèmes à connotation ethno-religieuse et dont le « problème foulbé » en est une variante. L'historien camerounais, Engelbert Mveng, n'y va pas par quatre chemins pour affirmer qu'il « existe un problème foulbé » que les historiens et les écrivains ont extrêmement brouillé. Sur l'origine des Peul ou Foulbé, la tradition de Ray-Bouba reprend la version musulmane commune à l'ensemble de l'Adamawa, à savoir que ce peuple résulterait du métissage d'Arabes et de Noirs soudanais de la vallée du fleuve Sénégal (Mohammadou, 1979). Pour Engelberg Mveng, les Foulbé de l'Adamaoua se répartissent entre les deux grandes familles Wolarbé et Yillaga. Cette répartition n'est pas strictement géographique. Cependant, le groupe wolarbé domine surtout dans l'Ouest et la zone britannique : Sokoto, Yola, Ngaoundéré, Gaschiga, Banyo, Koncha, tandis que le groupe yillaga, par contre, englobe les lamidats de Rey, Bindir, Tibati, Maroua, Garoua… Les Wolarbé sont originaires du Fouta-Djalon et du Macina, tandis que les Yillaga, qu'on appelait à l'origine les Torobé, sont issus du Fouta-Toro. Leur surnom de Yillaga qui signifie "les hommes de la lance", n'est apparu que tardivement. Ils le doivent d'ailleurs au fait qu'ils ont un caractère guerrier.

Les Peuls de l'Adamawa attribuent un trait de caractère à chacun des clans peuls habitant le Nord-Cameroun. Les Yillaga auraient un caractère impétueux et seraient avant tout des guerriers, tandis que les Wolarbé sont des Peul marabouts qui n'ont pas l'habitude de gouverner par la force. Ce sont des gens préoccupés d'études et de savoir, au tempérament calme et pondéré. Sauf que l'histoire retiendra que c'est Modibbo Adama, l'un des plus illustres peul wolarbé, qui allait conduire le Jihad dans l'Adamawa historique. A en croire Mohammadou Eldridge, Modibbo Adama, au début de sa mission, ne faisait pas montre d'une autorité excessive et n'usait pas de son pouvoir vis-à-vis des autres chefs (Arden) peuls. Ce n'est qu'au bout d'un certain nombre d'années, lorsqu'il eut établi de solides liens entre lui et la plupart des chefs Wolarbé notamment, que, se sentant suffisamment fort, son attitude changea et qu'il se mit à vouloir faire usage de son autorité dans ses rapports avec les grands chefs peuls. Naturellement, il va se heurter à l'opposition des chefs yillaga dont les principaux lamidats de Tibati et de Ray-Bouba s'opposeront au pouvoir central de Yola pour affirmer leur autonomie (Mohammadou, 1979, p. 155).

Le Jihad au Cameroun semble ainsi reposer sur des bases non pas simplement ethniques, mais intra ethniques. Les rivalités, oppositions et tensions qui vont naître entre les Wolarbé et les Yillaga laissent penser que l'homogénéité ethnique n'est qu'une pure construction au service d'une idéologie. Dans son Histoire de Tibati, Eldridge Mohammadou nous laisse comprendre que les guerres fratricides qui ont marqué l'histoire des relations entre le lamidat yillaga de Tibati et celui wolarbé de Banyo, du temps des conquêtes, ont laissé des traces encore perceptibles au sein des deux populations aujourd'hui. Nos informateurs au Nord Cameroun par contre, nous faisaient remarquer que c'est le degré d'adhésion à l'islam et le degré de métissage, c'est-à-dire, d'ouverture aux autres, qui différencie fondamentalement les deux familles peules. Tandis que les Wolarbé répugnent au métissage et luttent pour affiner les valeurs et idéaux de vie peule, le Pulaaka, aux valeurs islamiques, les Yillaga, par contre, vivent dans une société sociologiquement plus évoluée, éclatée, parce qu'ayant dépassé le seul cadre restreint de l'ethnicité. Leur ambition est de caractère purement laïc, la religion ne constituant qu'un moyen privilégié d'asseoir leur ambition politique. Les Yillaga semblent donc n'avoir pour seule obsession que l'exercice et la conservation du pouvoir (Mohammadou, 1965, p. 72)

Il faut en effet reconnaître que les motifs de la migration des Yillaga vers l'Adamawa sont d'abord d'ordre politique. C'est suite à des rivalités dynastiques que les Yillaga seraient volontairement partis du Mali. Par conséquent, l'objectif de leurs migrations est d'abord de reconstituer de nouveaux Etats, par le biais non seulement de la diplomatie mais aussi'au moyen des armes et de la guerre. En bons stratèges, les Yillaga, peu nombreux, vont établir des alliances matrimoniales avec les tribus autochtones. De ces unions seront désormais issus les futurs chefs peuls et une partie des familles dirigeantes. Jean Hurault écrit d'ailleurs à ce propos :

> « À l'exemple des autres lamidats de l'Adamawa, il fut admis par un accord tacite qu'à l'avenir les fils du lamido nés de ses femmes libres ne pourraient prétendre au trône ; seuls pouvaient lui succéder les enfants de ses concubines esclaves. Cette disposition, observée depuis cinq à six générations, fait que désormais dans l'ensemble de l'Adamawa, les lamibé sont pratiquement des Noirs purs. » (Hurault, 1975, p. 12).

Les chefs peuls se sont donc trouvés aux prises avec une double épreuve : consolider leur pouvoir à travers la gestion externe de l'Etat ; et d'autre part, à l'intérieur, opérer une intégration ethnique et culturelle entre les éléments peuls et autochtones. Avec le risque de trahir ses origines et sa culture, de diluer la mission essentielle du Jihad dans ces contrées. A la question de savoir : Peul yillaga ou wolarbé, « qu'as-tu fait de ta mission ? » pourraient en résulter les grandes lignes de dissemblances entre les deux familles. Ce qui, sur le terrain, est nettement palpable, car nos indicateurs nous faisaient remarquer à ce propos qu'il n'y a pas de commune mesure entre les soins apportés à la construction et l'entretien des mosquées peules wolarbé et ceux des mosquées yillaga. Ces dernières étant souvent d'architecture quelconque, mal entretenues.

Il faut dire que la foulbéité yillaga transcende le cadre de l'ethnicité pour embrasser celui de la culture. A la question désormais de savoir : « qui est peul, qui ne l'est pas? Qu'est-ce qu'un Peul? » Mohammadou Eldridge répond sans ambages qu'est peul,

> « toute personne qui participe de la culture peule, sans distinction de son origine ethnique. Cette culture se caractérise essentiellement par une langue, le Fulfulde; une religion, l'Islam; et un ensemble de valeurs spirituelles propres à la Pulaaka. »

Il faut dire qu'il y a plusieurs siècles que la majorité des Foulbé ont dépassé le cadre de la tribalité et constituent un peuple dont le trait distinctif réside dans la culture (Adama et Mouctar, 2001, p. 19).

Cependant, Philip Burnham nous fait remarquer que s'il n'est pas difficile d'être admis au sein de la société foulbé, les jugements culturels implicites dans le code du Pulaaka permettent la différenciation sociale à l'intérieur de la catégorie, même quand un individu s'est assimilé à la catégorie sociale foulbé (Burnham, 1991). En d'autres termes, la culture ne suffit pas à elle seule pour gommer les traits caractéristiques de l'ethnicité peule. Bien au contraire, ces derniers s'en trouvent renforcés au sein de la foulbéité qui s'exprime désormais en des identités pyramidales. Certains Peul interviewés n'hésitaient pas à nous faire valoir l'idéal et la supériorité de vie peule au détriment des autres musulmans qui, à leurs dires, continuaient malheureusement de se comporter comme des païens :

> « Les gens confondent la foulanité à l'islam, nous faisait remarquer un interviewé peul, si bien que les caractères de vie peule sont confondus au caractère de l'islam. Les Peul sont de nature réservée, mais on aura tendance à croire que tous les musulmans le sont. Or à y regarder de près, certains Kirdi islamisés continuent à se comporter comme des païens. Vous verrez chez eux, par exemple, un père de famille qui apparaît torse nu, sans pudeur, en public. »

Cette rivalité intra-ethnique peulo-peule se dessine nettement à travers l'expérience des Mbororo. S'il faut croire que les Mbororo partagent avec les Peul yillaga et wolarbé le même héritage culturel, leur communauté a toujours été soumise au dictat et à l'autorité des autres Peul wolarbé et yillaga. Arrivés après le Jihad dans l'Adamawa, en provenance du Nigéria, les Mbororo vivant sur les territoires peuls de l'Adamawa étaient soumis à un système fiscal et administratif distinct avec un statut juridique et politique inégal imposé par les Peul. Marginalisés, humiliés, spoliés, maltraités, mis au ban de la société peule en particulier et de la société du Nord en général, les Mbororo vont verser dans le terrorisme transfrontalier et devenir les prometteurs du phénomène de « coupeurs de route ».

Le cas des rivalités intra-ethniques peulo-peules nous permet de comprendre que lorsque les crises, avec pour corollaire la marginalisation et l'exploitation tous azimuts d'un groupe par rapport aux autres, sont exacerbées à l'intérieur d'un même groupe ethnique ou d'une communauté, la porte reste ouverte à toute expression terroriste ou fondamentaliste comme seule voie désormais possible d'attirer l'attention de l'Etat sur ses souffrances et ses revendications.

2. Le problème Kirdi ou l'expression d'une rivalité inter-ethnique

Le problème Kirdi reste, à côté du problème peul, celui qui cristallise beaucoup l'attention des chercheurs. Ibrahim Mouiche nous fait comprendre que la population du Nord-Cameroun est abusivement divisée en musulmans d'une part et de Kirdi de l'autre, car les Kirdi constituent l'ossature numérique de la région, soit environ 73% de la population (Mouiche, 2000). Pendant notre séjour de recherche dans la partie septentrionale du pays, il nous a été donné de noter la répartition géographique des principaux peuples comme suit :

- *Adamaoua* : les Tikar, les Babouté (Mvouté ou Bouté), les Mboum, comme groupes ethniques principaux. Puis viennent les Baya, les Dourou, les Foulbés, les Haoussa et les Kanouri.
- *Nord* : les Mboum, les Dourou, les Namtchi, Foulbé, Haoussa, Kanouri, Bata, Lamé, Moundang, Fali, Gidar, Mambai, Daba, Ndgeng.
- *Extrême-Nord* : Moundang, Toupouri, Guiziga, Daba, Moufou, Mousgoum, Kotoko, Arabe-Choa, Mafa, Mandara, Foulbé, Haoussa.

Il ressort de cette répartition géographique sommaire que seuls les Peul se répartissent sur la quasi-totalité du territoire tandis que les autres ethnies ont une implantation spatiale réduite. Les Peuls semblent constituer, dans chaque province, le groupe le plus nombreux mais pris isolément, les peuples kirdis sont majoritaires. C'est à la faveur du Jihad que les Peul fondèrent une série d'Etats indépendants, les lamidats, à travers tout le Nord-Cameroun. Mais les structures de ces Etats allaient reposer principalement sur divers modes d'intégration des populations autochtones conquises, sous le prisme des idéaux de l'islam et la production de l'idéologie de la supériorité culturelle des Peul, le Pulaaka.

Cette hégémonie symbolique, nous dira Ibrahim Mouiche, se conjugue avec le contrôle de l'espace territorial où les terres les plus fertiles et les plus vastes appartiennent aux chefs peuls. Le Lamido reste le propriétaire de la terre qu'il peut attribuer à qui il veut, en fonction de ses humeurs. Là où existe un lamidat au Nord Cameroun, les dominants musulmans et bureaucrates habitent le centre et les dominés kirdi résident à la périphérie où ils disposent du monopole de ce qu'on a appelé l'industrie de divertissement qui englobe toutes formes de prostitution et de la production de la bière locale brassée illégalement.

Le problème Kirdi naît donc au contact des populations autochtones qui refusent l'assimilation à la culture peule ou foulbéisation. Le concept Kirdi semble avoir été forgé par les coreligionnaires de Mahomet afin de déstabiliser psychologiquement les autochtones qui refusaient de se convertir à l'islam et luttaient pour sauvegarder leur identité. Pour rendre sa domination parfaite, le Peul va attribuer au Kirdi des noms tels que païen, cafre, Kado, barbare, avatar, gendre de la sauvagerie, comme pour le marginaliser au cas où il ne se rallierait pas. Bien plus, les Kirdi seront divisés, avilis, désorientés, déboussolés, détruits sur plusieurs plans : culturel, moral, et religieux. C'est à bout de résistance qu'ils ont capitulé. Le poème Hommage aux Kirdi de Jean-Baptiste Baskouda, kirdi lui-même, exprime non seulement la désolation de tout un peuple asservi, mais aussi ses souffrances qui, « depuis plus de trois cent ans », perdurent :

> « Kirdi des stigmates, Kirdi des peines, Kirdi des remords,
> Kirdi d'asservissement, Kirdi d'humiliation, Kirdi des morts,
> Kirdi des regrets, Kirdi des trahisons, Kirdi des déracinements
> Kirdi d'agenouillements, Kirdi des peurs, Kirdi d'abâtardissements. »
> (Dama-Téyabé, 2008).

Cependant, le poète n'entend pas simplement s'insurger contre cet état de misère de son peuple, car dans le poème Kirdi est mon nom, il veut réhabiliter le Kirdi déshumanisé et lutter contre la soumission aveugle de ses frères. (Baskouda, 1993, p. 21). On comprend nettement le vibrant appel que Baba Simon adresse aux Kirdi en ces termes : « haïssez le qualificatif kirdi, qui aliène, déracine et frustre. Mais acceptez celui qui glorifie, honore et renforce votre identité culturelle ». (Baskouda, 1993, p. 22).

Si le pouvoir colonial a aboli l'esclavage et instauré la paix coloniale, il va quand même authentifier, sinon valider la suprématie peule sur les Kirdi. Le pouvoir peul sera en effet établi comme le relais du pouvoir colonial au sein des populations kirdi, dans un système d'administration indirecte. Ce qui, aux yeux d'Ibrahim Mouiche, va renforcer la prégnance du modèle peul au niveau de l'architecture, de l'organisation politique, de la langue, de la religion et même du vêtement. Cette nouvelle situation va davantage marginaliser les Kirdi et radicaliser leur résistance contre toute force extérieure au groupe. Baba Simon ne se trompe donc pas sur le traumatisme que vit ce peuple :

> «la résistance des Kirdi dans les montagnes, inaccessibles aux cavaliers foulbés et aux forces d'artillerie allemandes pendant la Première Guerre mondiale les a façonnés. Toute nouveauté se présente à eux comme une menace à repousser, quelle qu'en soit la forme, pacifique ou violente. »
> (Baskouda, 1993, p. 35).

C'est le processus de démocratisation, amorcé dans les années 1990 au Cameroun, qui va révéler au grand jour la question kirdi au Nord Cameroun et laisser éclater le cri de révolte d'un peuple longtemps déshumanisé. Un homme qui pleure n'est pas un ours qui danse. Sous le président Ahmadou Ahidjo, premier président du Cameroun indépendant, la foulbéisation est de nouveau renforcée. Elle devient même un investissement social car elle offre des avantages de distinction et de promotion sociale. Il en résulte non seulement une hétérogénéité de l'ethnie peule, mais aussi une complexité de son identité. Désormais, même les peuples christianisés useront de tous les subterfuges extérieurs pour se mouler dans l'identité peule et gommer tout aspect extérieur pouvant leur porter préjudice. L'islam va dès lors représenter pour les élites autochtones assimilées, un enjeu qui acquiert le statut d'un mal nécessaire. Même s'il faut recourir à sa propre religion, le paraître musulman est prééminent. Le Kirdi assimilé instrumentalise la religion musulmane, ce qui aboutit à une islamisation sans islam. C'est d'ailleurs le constat que fait Baba Simon, considéré comme le « Père des Kirdi », lorsqu'il déclare que : « quand les Kirdis deviennent musulmans, ils gardent leurs pratiques païennes. » (Baskouda, 1988, p. 64). Cette attitude sonne quand-même comme un cuisant échec pour les pasteurs peuls qui ont mené de grandes luttes pour imposer l'islam aux Kirdi. Mais c'était sans compter sur ce hadith du Prophète Mahomet qui affirme qu'il n'y a pas de différence entre un Arabe et un non-Arabe, ni entre le Blanc et le Noir – ni entre un Peul et un Non-Peul pourrions-nous ajouter– si ce n'est par la piété.

Ibrahim Mouiche nous laisse comprendre que l'équation du Nord ne peut se résoudre en une simple opposition ethnique foulbé-kirdi, car dans les faits, ces identités sont multiples tout comme les loyautés qu'elles appellent. Les Mbororo, Peul parmi les Peul, restent marginalisés parce que superficiellement islamisés. Quant-aux Kirdi, ils représentent une mosaïque humaine socialement hétérogène – sur le double plan linguistique et géographique – dont l'insertion au système d'inégalités varie d'un groupe à l'autre. Le problème kirdi se laisse plutôt ramener à l'hégémonie d'un « bloc au pouvoir », ethnique hétéroclite puisque l'on retrouve les grands notables peuls, comme les commerçants haoussa, les Kotoko, les Kanouri, les élites converties kirdis (Mouiche, 1988, p.64). La question reste donc de savoir ce qui fait la kirdité de toutes ces entités sociales hétérogènes que l'on intègre sous le vocable assimilateur de Kirdi. Le processus de construction d'une identité ethnique kirdi à partir d'une pluralité de groupes sociaux dont le dénominateur commun originel reste la non appartenance confessionnelle à la religion musulmane suffit-il pour redonner au Kirdi toute sa dignité et le sortir des voies de l'aliénation multiforme. Déjà sur le terrain, le concept de kirdité semble aujourd'hui être l'apanage des élites politiques kirdi, dans ce que Bayart qualifie de « politique du ventre » au Cameroun.

Il faut dire en guise de conclusion à cette partie que malgré la venue de la démocratie, les Kirdi, pourtant majoritaires, n'ont pas su exercer le droit de vote dont ils jouissaient pour venir à bout de la domination peule. Pourtant lorsque l'occasion leur fut accordée en 1959 lors du plébiscite du Nord-Cameroun britannique, ils firent nettement la différence à chaque fois. Que faut-il comprendre par cette allusion? Simplement que le droit de vote des Kirdi, 50 ans après, semble avoir été confisqué. Le pluralisme démocratique et le « one man one vote » restent la poudre aux yeux d'un système où les interférences de l'ethnicité gardent une emprise considérable sur la structure de l'Etat moderne. Le « printemps kirdi » n'aura donc jamais lieu par les voies démocratiques, si l'Etat au Cameroun n'assure pas le monopole du contrôle de la nation, c'est-à-dire, en réussissant à gérer les différentes identités tribales qui existent dans le pays et à les canaliser en cas de conflit. Favoriser une ethnie ou détriment des autres, c'est ouvrir la boîte de pandore, encore une fois, de tous les « ismes ». Il est quand-même inquiétant de constater qu'au Nord-Cameroun, tout le monde sait que le lamido est plus puissant que n'importe quel représentant de l'Etat qui officie dans la région. Les Gouverneurs, Préfets, Sous-Préfets, Responsables de la sécurité, etc., passent d'abord saluer le lamido, une fois qu'ils prennent fonction au Nord.

3. Le problème Arabe Choa – Kotoko ou l'expression d'une rivalité intra-musulmane

Le Logone et Chari qui constitue le cadre géographique de cette partie est un département de l'Extrême-Nord, allongé dans le lac Tchad et frontalier du Nigéria et du Tchad. La faiblesse des précipitations fait de cet espace un lieu écologiquement austère bien que la densité de sa population soit parmi les plus élevées du pays. Mais l'importance de la ville vient de sa position stratégique pour la pratique du commerce, à la croisée du trafic transsaharien des XIVe et XVe siècles. Le Logone et Chari est peuplé par deux principaux groupes ethniques : les Arabes Choa et les Kotoko, auxquels s'ajoutent d'autres groupes plus ou moins importants en nombre : Mousgoum, Kanouri, Bornouan, Mandara, etc. L'islamisation de cette région précède la période du Jihad lancé par Ousman Dan Fodio en 1804. Elle est l'œuvre de populations arabes, traditionnellement commerçantes, venues probablement d'Egypte et engagées dès le XIVe s dans ce qu'on a appelé le « commerce transsaharien ».

C'est dans cette perspective qu'il faudrait situer l'arrivée des Arabes Choa dans la région. Ils seraient probablement des descendants des métissés d'Arabes blancs, d'Ethiopiens, des Peul et des Noirs soudanais originaires de l'île de Choa dans la région du Nil en Egypte. Leur installation progressive par petits groupes dans le bassin du lac Tchad remonte vers le VIIIe s. Ils trouvent les Kotoko installés depuis des lunaires dans la région.

Les Kotoko seraient quant-à eux les descendants des populations Sao, peuple réputé pour sa brillante civilisation de la « terre cuite » et dont l'apogée fut atteint entre le IXe et le XVe s. Ils bénéficient ainsi d'un statut d'antériorité dans l'occupation de la région. Les Kotoko vont se baser sur cette autochtonie pour légitimer une certaine souveraineté dans la région face aux nouveaux arrivants arabes. Une prescription qui, loin d'être une simple villégiature, sera la pomme de discorde entre les groupes en présence, dans un contexte sahélien, faut-il le rappeler, où les ressources naturelles sont rares du fait de la précarité des conditions écologiques, et dès lors les conflits pour leur gestion multiples.

C'est ainsi que, comme dans un jeu de ping-pong où les parties se renvoient la balle mutuellement, le pouvoir bascule entre les mains des Arabes Choa vers la fin du XIXe s, à la faveur de la percée des cavaleries arabes menées par le conquérant Rabah. Dès lors dans le Logone et Chari, la diffusion culturelle va désormais s'effectuer à l'avantage de la culture arabe choa. Les arabes Choa vont rapidement dominer le commerce local, au point où la langue arabe, à l'origine langue du commerce, va devenir la lingua franca entre toutes les communautés et même entre les Kotoko. Mais contrairement au rapport Kirdi-Foulbé, le rayonnement de la culture arabe choa ne s'accompagne pas d'une influence socio-politique et économique des Arabes Choa. Ces derniers, pourtant majoritaires, restent largement victimes de la xénophobie des kotoko.

Dans son entreprise d'endiguement de l'influence arabe, le pouvoir colonial va s'appuyer sur les Kotoko au détriment des Arabes Choa. Rabah est défait en 1907 et le pouvoir remis aux Kotoko, qui vont constituer un réservoir d'hommes instruits et formés pour la première administration du Cameroun indépendant. Ahmadou Ahidjo, le premier président peul du Cameroun, poursuivra la politique coloniale française d'exclusion et de marginalisation à l'égard des Arabes Choa. Il nomme Ousmane Mey, d'ethnie Kotoko, comme « Gouverneur inamovible » de la vaste province du Nord Cameroun, ce qui contribua davantage à l'exclusion des Arabes Choa. La première confrontation ethnique postcoloniale entre Arabes Choa et Kotoko éclate en octobre 1979. Elle est l'expression du cri de révolte des Arabes Choa qui ne supportent plus les exacerbations multiformes auxquelles leur communauté fait face, alors même que le président Ahidjo se félicite partout de sa politique d'unité nationale sous le parti unique.

A la faveur de l'ouverture démocratique des années 90, la démographie deviendra le joker politique de la communauté Arabe Choa. Cette dernière, contrairement aux Kirdi, va user de son droit de vote pour reconquérir le pouvoir, de manière démocratique, face aux Kotoko minoritaires. Les Arabes Choa, dans une domination sans partage, entendent ainsi prendre leur revanche historique non pas seulement sur les Kotoko, mais aussi sur les Peul et les Kirdi. Alors que les Arabes Choa occupent désormais tous les postes clés de la région, on assiste au déplacement des lignes de clivage politique : celles-ci n'opposent plus frontalement les Arabes aux Kotoko mais opposent désormais des clans arabes entre eux sous le leadership d'élites de la communauté. En d'autres termes, l'unité arabe qui semblait inébranlable face à l'ennemi externe est mise à rude épreuve lorsque les hostilités cessent. Il y a comme un retour du refoulé de vieilles tensions intestines, latentes jusqu'ici. Dans ce jeu inter-ethnique et inter-clanique, l'appui des Kotoko est recherché par chaque clan désireux de disposer de la plus large coalition pour engranger le maximum de suffrages. On peut penser ici qu'on évolue vers une recomposition des alliances politiques qui ferait disparaître l'antagonisme frontal entre Arabes et Kotoko. Seulement, on est en droit de se demander dans quelle mesure les Kotoko pourraient s'accommoder d'une situation où ils sont désormais politiquement marginalisés, économiquement dominés et subissent par la langue, une relative hégémonie culturelle.

Au regard du combat hégémonique auquel se livrent les deux clans pour s'arroger le droit exclusif sur les ressources disponibles (terre, eau, pâturage) et sur l'exercice du pouvoir, on peut se demander quel rôle joue l'islam, attendu qu'il est la principale religion des deux communautés, dans la recherche d'une cohésion et harmonie régionales. Il faut dire que le fait religieux ne se situe pas au-delà du champ de combat. Il en constitue parfois le terrain privilégié où chaque clan veut marquer une ligne d'opposition nette avec le clan adverse. Ce qui peut aboutir à la transformation voire la déformation quotidienne de la pratique religieuse, marquée plutôt par le souci de distanciation et/ou de différenciation avec l'autre. C'est ainsi qu'on a pu observer que lors de la célébration de la fête du Ramadan de l'année 2010, un décalage de 24h est apparu entre la date retenue au Cameroun et celle du Tchad voisin, ce qui a créé des dissensions entre fidèles musulmans dans le Logone et Chari. Les Arabes ayant préféré célébrer à la même date que les musulmans tchadiens alors que les Kotoko se sont conformés aux prescriptions de la umma camerounaise. Cette extraversion qui a semé des troubles de plus au sein des deux communautés et fragilisé l'entente et la cohésion au sein de la communauté musulmane, inquiéta les autorités camerounaises qui pensent que de telles dissensions peuvent servir de terreau à la propagation de l'extrémisme religieux à partir d'un pays voisin comme le Nigéria. Certains adeptes, plus radicaux, d'un groupe ethnique pourraient appeler des renforts au Nigéria afin de prendre le dessus sur leurs adversaires, ainsi qu'on l'a vu dans le conflit entre les sunnites et les tidjanites à Yaoundé et Mbalmayo. L'Etat camerounais doit par ailleurs trouver des raisons de s'inquiéter davantage dans le fait qu'on note une forte détention illégale et incontrôlée d'armes à feu dans le Logone et Chari : « Chaque famille arabe possède une arme de guerre » peut-on lire dans l'étude sur le conflit Kotoko et Arabes Choa que dressent Claude-Richard Mbowou et Herrick Mouafo Djontu (Mbowou et Mouafo D). Un trésor familial acquis grâce au terrorisme transfrontalier qui assure la circulation des armes dans la région et des parentés transfrontalières, investies en cas de conflits ethniques.

4. Islam et christianisme au quotidien ou l'expression d'une rivalité inter-religieuse

Ahmadou Balla, spécialiste en développement d'entreprise, dont nous faisons la connaissance pendant l'émission-débat « Train du Paradis » sur la CRTV3 Garoua où nous avions été invités, nous dit, formel, pendant l'entretien :

> « Depuis les années 1990, c'est à cause du grand zèle des chrétiens, surtout des témoins de Jéhovah et des pentecôtistes, que le radicalisme musulman progresse ici au Nord, en guise de réaction et d'auto-défense, face à ce que les musulmans considèrent comme une agression... »

L'homme veut nous partager son expérience personnelle, afin qu'on comprenne mieux la situation :

> « Il y a quelques années, j'ai reçu chez moi la visite d'un des chrétiens qui se baladent avec la Bible en main. Pendant la discussion que nous eûmes ensemble, il me pria avec insistance d'abandonner ma foi musulmane parce que, selon lui, Mahomet était un menteur... »

Notre interlocuteur marque une pause comme pour calmer son émotion qu'on imagine encore vive. Puis il poursuit :

> « Face à de tels propos, j'ai failli perdre mon sang-froid. Une seule idée me trottait par la cervelle : rentrer dans ma cuisine et en ressortir avec un bon couteau pour l'expédier en Enfer. »

Il ne le fera pas. Heureusement. Au contraire, nous apprit-il,

> « par réaction à cette agression et humiliation à domicile, j'ai décidé d'en savoir plus sur le christianisme afin d'en faire une étude comparative avec l'islam. »

Combien de croyants musulmans, comme notre interlocuteur, sauront faire preuve d'une aussi grande maîtrise de soi ? Combien surtout voudront situer uniquement le problème au niveau du débat des idées : apprendre à mieux connaître l'autre, afin de pouvoir mieux débattre ? Ahmadou Balla nous l'apprendra plus tard que c'est cette étude personnelle qui lui permettra de savoir qu'il s'agissait d'un membre des Témoins de Jéhovah, qui partagent un certain prosélytisme avec les Pentecôtistes. Sinon, il aurait continué à traiter indifféremment les Chrétiens.

Devant le collège Mazenod de Ngaoundéré, nous nous entretenons avec une enseignante musulmane qui a tenu à garder l'anonymat. Elle nous déclare :

> « On ne sait pas ce que leurs responsables leur disent dans leurs églises – parlant des chrétiens – mais on a l'impression qu'ils nous considèrent tous

> comme des païens à christianiser maintenant. Cette attitude, si rien n'est fait pour la stopper, risque de déboucher sur un conflit ouvert. »

A Maroua, Aboubacar Moussa et Mohamed Garga me confirment la même chose : le prosélytisme des chrétiens au Nord exaspère les musulmans. Mohamed Garga tient à préciser :

> « Ce sont les chrétiens qui nous harcèlent chez nous. Ils viennent jusque chez nous à domicile pour essayer de nous convertir au christianisme…Un jour, finit-il par déclarer, ils trouveront ce qu'ils cherchent… »

C'est bien cette préoccupation que nous retrouvons chez l'archevêque de Garoua, Mgr Ntalou Antoine, lorsqu'il nous affirme que :

« Certains de nos coreligionnaires n'ont pas toujours conscience de leurs actions (…) Les chrétiens doivent éviter de ridiculiser les gens dans la pratique de leur religion. »

Et comme s'il faisait l'amalgame lui-même, le prélat se reprit très vite pour lever tout malentendu et préciser: « Quand on parle de chrétiens, de qui parle-t-on ? » La question qui nous aurait renvoyé à un cours de christologie, ne s'adressait heureusement pas à nous. On n'était donc pas obligés d'y répondre. L'homme de Dieu pourtant reprit : « L'Eglise catholique a des perspectives assez fermes dans ce domaine du dialogue inter-religieux, surtout avec Vatican II et les documents qui en sont issus ».

A la question de savoir ce qui suscite un tel zèle des chrétiens, le prélat nous répond sans hésitation : « les chrétiens au Nord ont de plus en plus conscience qu'ils sont chez eux ici et doivent manifester publiquement leur foi. » Une attitude qui, au regard de l'histoire des religions au Nord Cameroun, peut être considérée comme une véritable révolution. Maud Lasseur explique d'ailleurs que les choses ne furent pas toujours aussi simples pour les chrétiens dans cette région où le pouvoir du Lamido reste sans contrôle et où une politique d'islamisation forcée fut menée dans la région sous la présidence d'Ahidjo, peul originaire de Garoua. Et selon Maud Lasseur, des églises furent saccagées, des membres du clergé et des catéchistes assassinés, les chrétiens nordistes écartés des postes de la fonction publique…Gouverneurs, préfets, sous-préfets, commissaires, hauts gradés de l'armée dans le Grand Nord étaient alors tous musulmans.

Mais depuis 1990, à la faveur de la promulgation de la loi sur les libertés publiques qui permet à tous les fidèles de s'organiser en association cultuelle, le Cameroun connaît un véritable éclatement de son paysage religieux. Ceci se caractérise non seulement par la multiplication des associations cultuelles mais aussi par la lente décomposition des territoires ethno-régionaux que s'étaient appropriés les grandes organisations chrétiennes et musulmanes historiques, au profit des Nouveaux Mouvements Religieux (NMR). C'est ce que Maud Lasseur désigne par « les nouveaux territoires de Dieu » (Maud Lasseur, 2000). Et dans le Grand Nord, on assiste à un spectaculaire processus de dilatation de l'espace du Christianisme, qui sort de ses niches traditionnelles, pour aller à la conquête du monde musulman.

Pour le Prof Jean-Paul Messina, consultant auprès du Saint-Siège du dialogue inter-religieux au Cameroun :

> « Certains pasteurs pensent qu'il faut évangéliser les musulmans et n'hésitent pas à prendre des mesures en ce sens. La réaction des musulmans qui passe être une légitime défense plongerait le pays dans le cycle de la violence. »

L'éminent professeur recommande que l'Etat camerounais puisse définir les bornes d'action apostolique pour que ces NMR n'aillent plus provoquer inutilement les musulmans. Car, affirme-t-il :

> « les critères de légalisation des associations religieuses ne sont pas précisés. Un effort de légalisation de ces mouvements est à faire dans la prédication pour qu'on sache qui doit parler ou non, car cela pourrait créer avec le temps des problèmes. Les NMR manifestent un zèle parfois dangereux du fait qu'ils sont persuadés de posséder la vérité. »

Une attitude qui est partagée par de nombreux camerounais, notamment le président de l'Association des Imams du Cameroun, Cheikh Ibrahim Mbombo Moubarak, qui affirme que les religions sont pratiquées sans aucune autorisation et c'est la raison pour laquelle les mouvements extrémistes gagnent du terrain au Cameroun. Selon lui, avec une réglementation du secteur, il aurait été difficile pour les membres de Boko Haram de s'établir au Cameroun. Ce qui nous laisse croire que la secte Boko Haram a tiré parti de la loi de 1990 sur les libertés cultuelles et d'associations pour s'infiltrer dans le paysage religieux camerounais, en manque de règlementation, et nous oblige à y voir plus clair.

Le regain de tensions entre chrétiens et musulmans, notable au Nord-Cameroun, n'est donc pas seulement lié à une radicalisation de l'islam, quoique celle-ci soit nette. Le renouveau de l'islam au sud du Sahara ne doit pas être perçu de façon entièrement séparée de l'effervescence qui règne dans les églises chrétiennes et néo-chrétiennes dans d'autres parties du Continent. Musulmans et animistes sont aujourd'hui considérés par les chrétiens évangélistes comme des « peuples non-atteints », à évangéliser, les seconds devant en outre être soustraits à l'influence des premiers. Depuis 1990, on assiste à un véritable réveil du christianisme nordiste. Le retour à la liberté religieuse se traduit par la croissance du nombre de chrétiens mais surtout par un spectaculaire processus de dilatation de l'espace du christianisme, qui sort de ses « niches » traditionnelles. Toutes les Eglises du Nord présentent des effectifs croissants dans leurs statistiques annuelles. A titre d'exemple, l'UEEC annonçait 72 400 assistants au culte en 2001 contre 40 071 en 1993. Ce qui correspond à une hausse de plus de 80%, très supérieure à la croissance de la population.

Depuis quelques années, une tendance à la radicalisation du christianisme dans le Grand Nord se fait jour et tend à se diffuser au sein de toutes les Eglises nordistes. Ce mouvement, diffus, est animé par une constellation d'individus et d'organisations : pasteurs issus d'Eglises protestantes établies et animés par un certain esprit de revanche vis-à-vis des anciens dominants, musulmans convertis au christianisme, spécialisés dans l'évangélisation auprès de leurs « frères » musulmans, évangélistes, pentecôtistes s'adonnant au combat spirituel ou à des campagnes d'évangélisation en milieu « non atteint... » Tous entretiennent un esprit prosélyte et militant, par ailleurs appuyé par des organisations africaines, européennes et américaines. (Maud, 104).

Des documents de méthodologie en évangélisation des musulmans se diffusent partout dans le Grand Nord et certains jeunes pasteurs nordistes ont obtenu des bourses pour approfondir la question dans des universités théologiques nigérianes ou américaines. Quelques organisations étrangères contribuent également, sur place, à la diffusion de l'Evangile : La SIL (Société internationale de linguistique), d'origine américaine, et l'Alliance biblique universelle participent notamment à la traduction des textes sacrés en de multiples langues vernaculaires : ouldémé, mada, mofu... mais aussi kotoko, une langue pourtant parlée par un groupe exclusivement musulman.

Des pasteurs et jeunes américains ou européens, issus d'Eglises fondamentalistes, apportent, quant à eux, leur aide en matière de développement ou de santé à diverses institutions et ONG officiellement laïques. Des campagnes d'évangélisation sont également menées par des organisations multiconfessionnelles internationales, à l'instar de l'Association des Evangéliques d'Afrique (AEA), dont le siège est à Nairobi. En matière d'évangélisation, les échanges avec le Tchad et le Nigeria voisins sont fort développés, depuis le temps même des missions. Il y a donc lieu de s'inquiéter de la transposition des problèmes interreligieux que connaissent ces pays vers le Cameroun.

Dans cette montée d'un christianisme prosélyte, fondamentaliste, anti-musulman, extrêmement conservateur sur le plan éthique, on peut voir la réaction des chrétiens du Nord à un passé fait d'humiliations et de marginalisation face aux dominants musulmans. Toutefois, cette radicalisation est aussi la conséquence d'une exaspération plus récente. En dépit du changement politique au sein de l'Etat central en 1982, qui avaient suscité parmi les chrétiens du Nord un immense espoir, une grande partie des inégalités traditionnelles s'est en effet maintenue, aux dépens des non-musulmans. La question foncière contribue, elle aussi, à entretenir un climat de tensions constant, dans un Grand Nord où les lamibé restent les seigneurs des bonnes terres des plaines. Le climat géopolitique international, enfin, contribue à accroître le fossé interreligieux. Les chrétiens nordistes veulent réagir face à une da'wa musulmane restée active et issue des pays arabes.

Il apparaît au terme de cette partie que l'ethnicité semble être une constante, sinon la base des conflits et oppositions au Nord Cameroun. Faut-il pour autant s'en désoler et marquer le coup ? Que non, car comme le pense Lonsdale, cité par Antoine Sopca, « l'appartenance ethnique est un fait social universel : tout être humain crée sa culture à l'intérieur d'une communauté qui se définit par opposition aux « autres »…l'identité culturelle est ce que les gens font plutôt que le résultat d'une fatalité historique ». Raison pour laquelle pour Antoine Socpa, « l'ethnicité ne saurait être considérée comme un élément culturel atavique caractéristique des sociétés « primitives » dont celles de l'Afrique ». L'exemple du Nord Cameroun nous démontre que la conscience ethnique des peuples dits Peul, Kirdi, Kotoko ou Arabes Choa est une construction permanente et laborieuse en fonction des enjeux sociaux, culturels, politiques et économiques. Elle dépend autant des facteurs historiques, que des facteurs exogènes comme les élites (lamibé, prophètes, élites politiques). Dès lors, il serait imprudent de voir au travers des conflits ethniques au Nord Cameroun, la marque d'une fatalité propre aux pays africains, en particulier, qui n'ont pas franchi le pas de l'ethnie pour celui de la nation. Ces conflits sont davantage symptomatiques des carences de l'Etat en matière de gouvernance. Ils traduisent la faiblesse de l'Etat camerounais qui peine à assurer le monopole du contrôle de la nation, c'est-à-dire à gérer les diverses « identités tribales » qui composent la « nation building » camerounaise. Ce qui, au demeurant, favorise la résurgence du fait ethnique et son expression dans la sphère étatique. L'exemple de la confiscation du pouvoir au nord par les Peul contre les Kirdi et dans le Logone et Chari par les Kotoko contre les Arabes Choa en est une belle démonstration, sous le règne du président peul, Ahmadou Ahidjo. Sans toutefois tirer sur la sonnette d'alarme, il y a lieu d'insister sur la capacité de l'Etat camerounais à venir à bout de tous ces « ismes » en essayant d'unifier les diverses tendances vers la poursuite de mêmes intérêts et buts au sein de la nation camerounaise. La lutte contre l'extrémisme religieux, et notamment, Boko Haram, devrait être l'occasion de fédérer toutes les forces vives de la nation autour d'un ennemi commun déclaré « ennemi d'Etat ».

En fin de compte, il apparaît que le Coran ne joue aucun rôle primordial au-dessus de l'ethnie, quand il s'agit des rivalités intraconfessionnelles. Car ainsi qu'il apparaît clairement dans cette analyse, c'est l'ethnie peule et sa pulaaka qui passe au-dessus de tout. On comprend donc mieux pourquoi des rivalités intraconfessionnelles existent entre musulmans arabe-choa et kotoko d'une part et/ou entre musulmans kotoko et peuls, d'autre part. Par contre, pour ce qui est des rapports entre chrétiens et musulmans au cameroun, nul doute que les clivages religieux s'effectuent autour des livres sacrés que sont la Bible et le Coran, qui redessinent de nouvelles frontières du vivre-ensemble ou de la pratique religieuse. Car, c'est derrière la Bible que les chrétiens de toutes ethnies confondues forment un bloc monolitique face aux musulmans, de toutes ethnies confondues aussi. Preuve que si l'ethnie l'emporte dans les rivalités inter-confessionnelles, seule l'appartenance religieuse l'emporte dans des rivalités interreligieuses.

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Notes on the Contributors

Solomon **ADEMILUKA** is Associate Professor of the Old Testament at Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria. His area of research is OT interpretation in African perspective. E-mail: *solademiluka@gmail.com*

Dr Kudzai **BIRI** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Religious Studies, Classics and Philosophy, University of Zimbabwe. She can be contacted at *kudzibiri@yahoo.com*

Phillemon **CHAMBURUKA** is a Lecturer of New Testament in the Department of Religious Studies, Classics and Philosophy at the University of Zimbabwe. E-mail: pchamburuka@yahoo.com

Sheila Wimbai **CHAMBURUKA** is a PHD student at the University of Pretoria and also a lecturer of New Testament Studies in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, at Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University. E-mail: *sheilachamburuka@yahoo.com*

Dr Theophilus Ugbedeojo **EJEH** is a priest of the Catholic diocese of Idah in Nigeria. He studied and worked in Germany for several years. He holds a doctorate in OT studies from the Theological Faculty Paderborn (Germany) and is presently teaching Old Testament in St. Thomas Aquinas Major Seminary Makurdi, Nigeria. His area of research is OT hermeneutics in African perspective, with the special focus on theodicy in Scripture. E-mail: *ugbedeojo@web.de*

Stephanie **FEDER** is a PhD student at the University of Münster in Germany. She is researching on African and Western ways of reading the Bible, especially the Book of Ruth. For four years she taught Old Testament studies at the University of Münster. Nowadays she is working in the advanced training for pastoral ministers and priests in the Archdiocese of Cologne. E-mail: *s_fede03@uni-muenster.de*

Dr. Ottmar **FUCHS** is Prof. em. at the University of Tübingen in Germany, where he was holding the Chair for Practical Theology 1998-2015. Before that he was Professor at Bamberg University (1981-1998). In his numerous and highly influential publications he undertakes a reconstruction of Christian theology from the pastoral perspective of the Second Vatican Council (solidarity with the poor and oppressed), showing a special focus on biblical hermeneutics also. E-mail: *ottmar.fuchs@uni-tuebingen.de*

Dr Johannes **HUNTER** teaches Biblical Studies, Ethics, Philosophy and Religious Studies in the Department of Human Sciences at the University of Namibia. He holds a D.Litt. in Languages from the University of Stellenbosch, and has been exchange, research, and guest professor at Munich, Marburg and Bamberg, Germany; Vassar College, USA; Oxford, England; Nörköping, Sweden and Grahamstown, South Africa. Prof. Hunter is a five-time recipient of the Alexander von Humboldt Scholarship.
E-mail: *jhunter@unam.na*

Lucky **HWATI** is an independent researcher, with wide interests in the church, culture and development. He holds a BA (Hons) Economic History from the University of Zimbabwe, a B. Social Science (Hons) and a M. Social Science Development Studies, both with the University of Fort Hare (South Africa). He can be contacted at: *lmhwati@gmail.com*

Dr. Joachim **KÜGLER** holds the Chair for New Testament Sciences at Otto-Friedrich-University Bamberg (Germany) since 2008. Before that he was Professor at Bayreuth University (1999-2008). He holds a doctorate in NT Studies (1987) and is one of the founding editors of "Bible in Africa Studies" (BiAS) series. His research interests are focussed on the Gospel of John but comprise also pagan religions as context of the NT, theory of exegesis, and applied biblical studies. Kügler has published some monographs and a tremendous number of short articles, mainly for the non-academic public.
E-mail: *joachim.kuegler@online.de* | homepage: *www.joachim-kuegler.de*

Dr Francis **MACHINGURA** holds a PhD from Bayreuth University (Germany) and is a senior lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe in the Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum and Arts. He has taught in different Universities and theological colleges. His research interests include Bible and politics, economics, spirituality, reconciliation and education.
E-mail: *fmachingura@yahoo.com*

Nyasha **MADZOKERE** is an ordained minister in the Baptist Convention in Zimbabwe. He is a PHD student at the University of Botswana. He is also a lecturer of Biblical Hebrew and Old Testament Studies in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Great Zimbabwe University. He holds MA, BA(Hons) and Diploma in Religious Studies from the University of Zimbabwe. He also holds a Diploma in Theology from Baptist Theological Seminary in Zimbabwe. He has published on the Bible and its relevance to the Zimbabwean society. E-mail: *nyasha.madzokere@gmail.com*

Molly **MANYONGANISE** (a doctoral candidate) is lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies and Theology at the Zimbabwe Open University. She can be contacted at: *mollymanyonganise@yahoo.com*

Dr Obert Bernard **MLAMBO** is lecturer in Classics in the Department of Religious Studies, Classics and Philosophy at the University of Zimbabwe. He can be contacted at: *obertbernard@yahoo.co.uk*

Dr Canisius **MWANDAYI** is currently a lecturer in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at Midlands State University. He holds BA Hons (2002) and MA in Religious Studies (2006) from UZ. He received his doctorate in Theology of Cultural Encounters from Universität Bayreuth, Germany (2011). Bible related cultural encounters remain his area of interest. E-mail: *canisiusm@gmail.com*

Dr Jacques Fulbert **OWONO** holds a PhD in Intercultural Biblical Studies from Bayreuth University and is currently a postdoc researcher at the University of Bamberg (both Germany). His research interests are focused on the news islamics movements in central Africa (especially Cameroon), interreligious dialogue, and ethics of religion. E-mail: *owonoj@yahoo.fr*

Dr Jeremy **PUNT** is Professor of New Testament in the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University in South Africa, and currently chair of the Old & New Testament department. He holds a doctorate in New Testament (1999) and his research interests include hermeneutics and critical theory in New Testament interpretation in Africa. He has recently published *Postcolonial biblical interpretation. Reframing Paul* (Brill, 2015) and regularly contributes to academic journals and book publications. E-mail: *jpunt@sun.ac.za*

Dr Eben **SCHEFFLER** is a Professor of Old Testament at University of South Africa, Pretoria. He has been with the OT Department since 1980, and he is a scholar with varied interests. His Doctoral thesis was a study of how underprivileged people were portrayed in the Gospel of Luke, which also makes him a NT scholar. He can be emailed at *schefeh@unisa.ac.za*

Elizabeth **VENGEYI** was a Translation Officer of the Zimbabwe Bible Society. She is a doctoral candidate at the University of Bamberg (Germany), and can be contacted at *elizabethvengeyi@yahoo.com*

Pieter **VERSTER** (DD) holds two doctorates from the University of Pretoria (in Missiology and Religious Studies and also in Dogmatics and Ethics). At present he is Head of the Department of Missiology at the Faculty of Theology at the University of the Free State. He is a member and ordained minister of the Dutch Reformed Church. He is also a graded researcher of the National Research Foundation of South Africa (C3). E-mail: *versterp@ufs.ac.za*

Clive Tendai **ZIMUNYA** is a lecturer of Logic at the University of Zimbabwe in the Department of Religious Studies Classics and Philosophy. He is currently studying for a PhD at the University of Kwazulu Natal (South Africa). Research interests include: Logic, Epistemology, Philosophy of Religion and ethics. Clive can be reached at: *ctzimunya@gmail.com*

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BiAS 20 contains papers presented at the BiAS meeting 2014 in Windhoek (Namibia), with some additional contributions. Scholars from Nigeria, Cameroon, Botswana, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia and Germany are dealing with the urgent question of how the Bible is involved in the widespread use of violence in political, social, religious, and gender conflicts. One leading question is how to deal with the textual representation of violence in the Bible. It is taken up by more general hermeneutical contributions. The other leading question is how biblical texts and/or concepts are used to cause and justify violence. This is taken up by a greater number of articles which deal with concrete societal and political contexts in Zimbabwe and other African countries. The conference in Namibia was supported as a Humboldt-Kolleg on the Bible and Violence in Africa by the German *Alexander von Humboldt Foundation*.

The editors and contributors
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