

## Theology of Trinitarian Communion as Remedy to Insecurity in Africa



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**ABSTRACT:** God is a supernatural, Eternal and Omnipotent Being. The rich Christian theology presents God as perfect unity in tri-personal mode of operation. Using the transcendental and contextual method, the research examines the exposition of trinitarian communion as the apex of security, love, unity and tranquility. This notion is captured in the Greek terms of *perichoresis* and *Circumincession* – meaning the penetration of the inner coinherence within the psychology of the Trinity. The research assesses the inner dynamics that forms the unity of God in Tri-personal essence, making it serve as a theological discourse to create a culture of peace, love, unity and justice in Africa. These features of metaphoric-psychic-spiritual realities captured manifestly, the ideals of divine essence espoused to model the human domain; thus, serving as remedy against the prevalent culture of feud, conflict and war. In its conceptual womb, *Ubuntu* structures and tailors a common hegemony of the philosophy of unity to mediate peace in Africa. Thus, the inner coinherence present in the essence of the Trinity is faith-in-action; paving way to resolving concrete African issues on security, finance, agriculture and the likes. The Communion of God in the Trinity therefore, is elixir of unity.

**KEY WORDS:** Insecurity, Theology, Socio-political, Trinitarian Communion, Truth

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Trinitarian theology is at the core, apex and center of all doctrinal and intellectual discourse on the science and mystery of God. This discourse is a quest to analyze and explore the intricate and the strong bond existing in the essence of the trinity as *coinherence*, perfect communion. Doing a theology that explicates to capture the intrinsic mystery in order to appreciate the transformative power of the trinity espoused to nurture human security in existential space – African cosmology – is set as remedy against a trouble-laden world. In reality and in the past, some Western scholars and journalists have unleashed stereotypes that are gravely injurious. Like such negative perceptions, “Africa tends to be known through the bias of stereotypical images and sweeping generalizations as the place of malaria, mosquitoes, Ebola, HIV/AIDS, tropical heat, poverty, hunger, wars, refugees, wildlife, safaris...”<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, this backdrop paints a painful, ugly and disgusting scenarios of unequal space that the African person, youth or adult can hardly operate and succeed with their counter-parts in other continents in the world. Currently, some part of Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, are in war crises which is due to incessant economic, political, cultural and spiritual problems that are due to inter-tribal wars, corruption and bad leadership couple with the emerging effects of CORONAVIRUS and the raging war between Russia against Ukraine; it causes food shortages (short supply of wheats, grains and fertilizer); putting pressure on the poor.

### 2. AFRICA – THE QUEST TO DISCOURAGEMENT STEREOTYPES

Human life is full of meaning and is subject to either positive or negative interpretations. As human beings, we all suffer from these three negative applications: *mis-interpretation*, *mis-understanding* or *mis-representation*. These are toxic elements that destroy trust in building relationship. As today, the average African person or family living in Europe or America is directly a victim of one of the above negative variables.

It is within the law of nature to celebrate our common unity in God at creation. But invariably due to change in demographics in the world, erroneous mentalities are setting in, leading to xenomorphic clashes. In most cases, Africans suffer rejection by those who do not know them; as they inter-connect or inter-relate with other civilizations, these others either accept or reject us. Naturally as one civilization encounters another, it is either exploited or it is developed; it is either marginalized or secure to grow. Antecedent history available to us shows that, from records in scientific research and written history, Africa and Africans unfortunately it seems, are the most abused, exploited, suppressed and cajoled in the world. Molefi Kete Asante traces this obvious reality, “At the top of the twentieth century Africa remains the most misunderstood of continents, crippled in our imagination by

<sup>1</sup>Agbonkhanmeghe, E. Orobator, *Religion and Faith in Africa: Confessions of an Animist*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2018, p. 4

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images rooted in the minds of imperial Europeans who attempted to shape and invent an Africa useful to their political ambitions.”<sup>2</sup> Our quest in this essay is, constructing a theology of the trinitarian Communion to serve as remedy to insecurity in Africa which demands purity of intent and honesty of truth, knowing that “Theology is Faith seeking understanding”<sup>3</sup> reasons African Theologians are to develop and nurture a conversation and discussion with other civilizations, originating deliberately, a discourse on using the Trinitarian Communion as doctrinal metaphor of God’s love at creating all human beings to be equal.

It must be noted clearly that, stereotypes are complex realities nurtured, accepted and applied as defense systems of thought (Apartheid, Slave Trade, Xenomorphic attitudes) which arises probably due to either mental disorder or ego-centrism. It is a misfit of what human society need become in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Classifying further the long-recorded stereotyping that Europeans and American scholars had pigged Africa and Africans as inferior to them, Agbonkhianmeghe wrote: “Stereotypes of Africa have long history. Joseph Conrad called Africa the “Heart of Darkness”; William Whitaker Shreeve baptized it “The White Man’s Grave”; Henry Morton Stanley nicknamed it “The Dark Continent”; and The *Economist* magazines branded it “The Hopeless Continent.”<sup>4</sup> As we progress into the middle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, these ugly pictures, metaphors and literary miscalculations can no longer fit the truth emerging in Africa. We are wonderful people, this truth must be promoted by Africans, that it is a beautiful continent though saddle with its woes and victories over life.

Today, in Africa, the counter-narrative that emerges daily in the twenty first century is that it is a continent that is fast becoming the centre-piece and the economic treasure (untapped) of the world. It is the beehive of mineral and oil resources and reservoirs. “To attain a meaningful engagement with Africa, it is important to shed the misconception that Africa is a simple entity and to keep in mind the fact that Africa is a complex reality.”<sup>5</sup> Like the theology of the Trinitarian Communion serves as the best remedy to insecurity in Africa is itself a complex reality, but yet by the rich resources in the *coinherence* that is core to the mystery of the trinity; for by it, the *Circuminsession* transmits love, peace, unity, new life and creates harmony of existence reflecting the very image of the Supreme God. The act of engaging in this novel theological discourse – Trinitarian Communion – serving as the rich resource of the Christian Faith is the task and duty that befalls the African Theologians in their various setting, cultures, disciplines and locations.

African Theologians must continuously offer the theology of the trinitarian communion as a service of love to accompany the continent in this troubling times of political, economic, cultural and social ills. Stan Chu Ilo wrote: “In a sense, the art of accompaniment is properly modelled for the church and ministers through the trinitarian image of indwelling of the three divine persons. The three divine persons not only make a way for each other or travel with each other, but they participate in an intimate way in the life of each person of the Trinity in what traditionally has been called a sacred dance (perichoresis).”<sup>6</sup> This activity of the trinity as communion involves at the level faith confirm by pragmatic witnessing, an honest integration of faith and human efforts to remedy the insecurity in Africa by invoking spiritual power to subdue the evil elements of supernatural forces at war in Africa due to principally the agents of greed, corruption and ethnicity.

### 3. MAJOR ELEMENTS AND FORCES CREATING CONFLICTS IN AFRICA: GREED, CORRUPTION, ETHNICITY

There is an expression that holds ground that “what is one’s gift is ironically one’s cross.” Africa is a beautiful landscape occupied by many ethnic groups and people, yet remains one homogenous entity of resilient, powerful and is a complex whole. Agbonkhianmeghe seems to capture the meticulous yet intricacies that encapsulates the entity called Africa in these beautiful words:

To learn about Africa first entails a process of unlearning stereotypes, prejudices, and biases. Africa is not one thing. The African narratives is not a single story: it does not consist of one thing, and it means different things to different people. Africa is a million things: fifty-four countries, one billion people (and counting), and up to three thousand languages are compressed into one vast geo-political entity! By any calculation, that qualifies Africa as complex, if not bewildering.<sup>7</sup>

Yet as one can say, the rich elements of unity that holds Africa and Africans together, do exist in the pigmentation of skin, cultural ideology (*Ubuntu* Philosophy), the emotional synergy that connects one to the spirit of ancestral worship; nevertheless, lies the evil

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<sup>2</sup>Daniel M. Mengara, ed., *Images of Africa: Stereotypes and Realities*, Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2001, xiii

<sup>3</sup>Anselm of Canterbury, .....

<sup>4</sup>Agbonkhianmeghe, E. Orobator, *Religion and Faith in Africa: Confessions of an Animist*, 6

<sup>5</sup>Agbonkhianmeghe, E. Orobator, *Religion and Faith in Africa: Confessions of an Animist*, 6

<sup>6</sup>Ilo, Stan Chu, “Amoris Laetitia and the Logic of Mercy and Integration in an Illuminative Church,” in *Love, Joy and Sex: African Conversation on Pope Francis’ Amoris Laetitia and the Gospel of Family in a Divided World*, Paulines Publications West Africa, 2022, 294

<sup>7</sup>Agbonkhianmeghe, E. Orobator, *Religion and Faith in Africa: Confessions of an Animist*, 6

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merchant of death that comes in the form of greed, corruption and ethnicity. The distinguished ethnographer and historian, Horowitz wrote, in Africa, as elsewhere in the world, “In country after country, political parties and trade unions are organised ethnically. There are movements to expropriate ethnically differentiated traders and expel long-resident workers of foreign origin. Armed forces are frequently fractionized along ethnic lines.”<sup>8</sup> Reasons, the Trinitarian Communion, that is a supernatural force; that conquers and unites; that renews and transforms; that enables and ennoble is the best offer to remedy insecurity in Africa. Ilo lucidly wrote, “The Trinitarian origin of illuminative ecclesiology is the source of the “culture of encounters,” relationship, participation, and friendship.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, the Christian faith is not just an article of belief, but of justice, love, peace and unity. We expect the Catholic Church to train mortals (wider society) to raise their thinking faculties beyond worship, reflection, encounter but to participate in faith, to become disciples of love, peace, unity, healing, mercy and harmony.

African Scholars must rise to fight the biases that holds or cripples the rising positive image of Africa, Shabayang points to, “*The Paradox of Africa in the Light of History*” – which is an ancient civilization – amongst many in the world. He wrote that, “Africa, as a people and culture, pre-dates scientific maps, European and American exploration. From the measurement to ascertain the population of Africans to the Western weighing scales of objects and the discipline of psychological assessment of manners sometimes ravaged by conflicts, communal clashes and wars,”<sup>10</sup> she must be salvaged by decisive actions of both Christians and Muslims who called on the name of God by the signature of their character. Even though many Western Journalists still write as contained in books that “Africa is seen today in the world community as a continent of misery. Many statistics trumpet this reality.”<sup>11</sup> However, it is time to change the narrative. What is Time? Matthew Hassan Kukah quips in to say, “The notion of time is philosophy or sociology. Time naturally means different things to different people.”<sup>12</sup> As we move deeper into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the right time is now to change the ugly narrative of greed that causes poverty and fractious woes that divides can be prevented by ensuring quality scholarship and industry, by engaging in positive dialogue and labour, by sustaining scientific innovations and raising the bar of technological development higher. It is dangerous to wait, the time to act, develop, grow is now:

Time waits for no one, stops for no one. Excuses will not slow down time. Indecision will not slow down time. Complaints will not stall time. Regret will not turn back time. Don't waste your time in anger, regrets, worries or hate. Time will not turn around and cry along with you. It's time to let go of the past and stop worrying about the future. Your only time is now. So, make sure you spend your time with the right purpose, right deeds, right emotions, right thoughts and the right people. Time flies: You can. You will not pass this way again. Do what time does, keep moving.<sup>13</sup>

From the foregoing, it demonstrates that if time is gainfully used, planned and utilized, it will not only eradicate poverty, diseases, complaints or wars to create wealth against conflicts that are trumped up due to the crazy exercise of greed, corruption and the promotion of ethnicity in Africa. The quest of this conversation is to state that if doctrinal reality is firmly establish by faith, God as trinity brings security to human society by features of transparency and unity as enunciated.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, *Greed, Corruption and Ethnicity* are some of the major constructs that generate, create and sustain feuds, conflicts in this vast continent of Africa, irrespective of locus or creed. It is shameful but true to go down memory lane by recounting the worse scenario Africans have fought, killed, destroyed and annihilated persons, families or communities from existence on earth in the wanton display of the above. Some of the internal wars fought in Africa with or by Africans with details are as follows:

Chad-France, 1899-1900; Ethiopia (civil war), 1914-1917; Ethiopian-Italian War, 1935-1936; Rwanda (civil war), 1959-1961; Congo (civil war), 1960-1965; Angola-Portugal, 1961-1974; Algeria-Morocco, 1963; Kenya-Somalia, 1963-1968; Nigeria (civil war, 1967-1970); Ethiopia-Somalia, 1977-1978; Ethiopia (civil war), 1975; Tanzania-Uganda, 1978-1981; Uganda (civil war), 1987; Libya-United States, 1986; Rwanda (civil war), 1990-1994; Somalia-United States, 1992-1994; Sierra Leone, 1995-2002; Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, 1996-1998; Eritrea,

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<sup>8</sup>Horowitz, Donald, L., *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkely, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1985, 3

<sup>9</sup>Ilo, Stan Chu, *A Poor and Merciful Church: The Illuminative Ecclesiology of Pope Francis*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2018, 98

<sup>10</sup>Shabayang, Barnabas Samaila, “The Holy Spirit and the Future of Catholicism in Africa,” in *African Journal of Contextual Theology*, Vol. 6, June, 2016, 196

<sup>11</sup>Uzukwu, Elochukwu, E., *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, Enugu: SNAAP Press Ltd, 1996, 1

<sup>12</sup>Kukah, Matthew Hassan, “Nigeria What Time Is It & Where are We?” in *Broken Truths: Nigeria's Elusive Quest for National Cohesion*, Abuja: PCJ Press Ltd, 2022, 215

<sup>13</sup>The Right Use of Time, <https://youtube.com/watch?v=hOro8zP7sIY>, Accessed, 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2022

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Ethiopia, 1997-2002; Congo, Uganda, Rwanda, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Angola, Chad, Burundi (war), 1998; Rwanda, 1990; Burundi, 1988; Senegal (boarders clashes), 1989-1990; Sudan, 1983-2005.<sup>14</sup>

It is sad and shameful that some of these wars are currently going on in Nigeria, South Sudan, Congo DRC, Ethiopia. The question to ask is when is enough ever enough?

Africa is one homogenous people, though we differ in tongue, creed or gender, the myriad and cohorts of political thieves, driven by insatiable corruption practice by military agents, leading to the destruction of the fabric of society has caused feuds and wars as seen above. These irreligious and immoral behaviours of some adults and youth; caused by some Africans citizens and leaders must now change to create a culture and an identity of love, peace, unity, harmony link to the ancestral cult of worship of the One God. The oneness, unity, fortification by inner love found in the *Trinitarian Communion* can be envisaged in Africa. This faith-action connection to God who is manifestly a *Trinitarian Communion* in love is desire of lived African Community. South African columnist Sandile Memela sums up this conceptual frame work in these beautiful words:

I don't know if there is any single person who has authority and power to tell us what constitutes *Africanness*. But even if this elusive and essential African identity exists, it cannot be something static. It is dynamic, forward-moving, and undergoing constant change and transformation. This *Africanness* has not only connected the cultural preservationists who want to freeze culture into an unchanging pre-colonial mode, but integrates progressives who want to push its boundaries to the limits of postmodernism to absorb global influences and their elements. And this *Africanness* is not about the amount of melanin in your skin.<sup>15</sup>

We dare to state that this *Africanness* is contained in the rich signature of ancestral character. To each citizen of Africa, it is the quality of your character; the audacity of hope; the vision of courage and the transformation of that comes with hard work, industrialization, labour and productivity. These are the preventable indices that will create job for our youths; that will make adult politicians' honourable men and women; that will prevent "child-soldiers" and "*almajiris*" (young boys secluded for only Islamic or Quranic recitation) to become misfits on the streets of (major and urban cities) and in the society; that will stop and prevent sex-trade (prostitution) or child trafficking; that will stop tribal or ethnic wars in Africa.

### 4. MERCHANTS IN THE THEATRE OF WAR IN AFRICA

Africa is peace but can become a war zone based on conflictual interest, either within brothers and sisters fighting or by external elements due to the presence of rich mineral resources found in the continent. Some aspects of insecurity created in Africa had arisen not only by physical violence, but by "pen violence," reasons why Kukah<sup>16</sup> warns novelists, journalists or scholars who might want to give negative pictorial image of the African continent to the West to win admirable awards of literary prizes by portraying demeaning clues like what *Binyavanga* wrote though satirically as he writes:

Among your characters you must always included, The Starving African, who wanders the refugee camp nearly naked, and waits for the benevolence of the West. Her children have flies on their eyelids and pot bellies, and her breasts are flat and empty. She must look utterly helpless. She can have no past, no history; such diversions ruin the dramatic moment. Moans are good. She must never say anything about herself in the dialogue except to speak of her (unspeakable) suffering... Avoid having the African character laugh, or struggle to educate their kinds, or just make do in mundane circumstances. Have them illuminate something about Europe or America in Africa. African characters should be colourful, exotic, larger than life – but empty inside, with no dialogue, no conflicts or resolution in their stories, no depth or quirks to confuse the cause... Describe, in detail, naked breasts (young, old, conversative, recently raped, big, small) or mutilate genitals, or enhanced genitals. Or any kind of genitals. And dead bodies, or, better, naked dead bodies. And especially rotting naked dead bodies. Remember, any work you submit in which people look filthy and miserable will be referred to as the 'real Africa', and you want that on your dust jacket. Do not feel queasy about this: you are trying to help them to get aid from the West. The biggest taboo in writing about Africa is to describe or show dead or suffering white people.<sup>17</sup>

Following such painful and disgusting painting of Africa above, as miserable and backward, Kukah further reiterated that many African scholars or journalists have either in the past or currently might be tempted to write such narratives. He warns that "Almost

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<sup>14</sup>Isizoh, Denis Chidi, *Sharing the Good News of Christ in Dialogue: Collected Writings*, 150-151

<sup>15</sup>Sandile Memela, <https://www.news24.com/Archives/City-Press/The-new-Africanness-20150429>

<sup>16</sup>Cf. Kukah, Matthew Hassan, "Nigeria & the Future of Africa, in *Broken Truths: Nigeria's Elusive Quest for National Cohesion*, Abuja: PCJ Press Ltd, 2022, 21.

<sup>17</sup>Binyavanga, Wainaina, [www.granta.com/extracts/2615](http://www.granta.com/extracts/2615), Accessed, Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2022

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every nation's history today is the result of mythical construction, redefinition and repackaging by their (Western) scholars. Whether it be Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, or a Mungo Park, their stories shaped the way their people saw us and still see us. Sadly, we have not found our way out of this deliberately constructed prison."<sup>18</sup> Expressive reasons we are presenting the *Trinitarian Communion* as a strong model to remedy insecurity in Africa as a fresh initiative to counter-secular narrative on the basis of faith-dialogue.

In the African continent with special focus on the Sahel made of West and Central Africa; for over two hundred years, this region has been a landscape that has been bedeviled by the Arab Trans-Saharan slave drive, terrorism, banditry and kidnapping by extremist Islamic Fundamentalists who killed at random their victims. "The Sahel region, which encompasses Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan and Eritrea has faced violence facilitated by political crisis in the countries thereby offering a fertile ground for the proliferation of extremist groups."<sup>19</sup> In these killings, Christians, are special and sort targets of cruel and senseless murder – accounted by the gruesome murder of Priests, Religious, Laity, other Christian Pastors and baptized persons. This obvious case confirms the odds against Christians in the Northern part of Nigeria, as reported in an interview with a Catholic Priest in Kaduna: "The Herdsmen came in, in large numbers and began shooting at anything on sight," the Catholic Priest **told Middle Belt Times**, and added, "We have counted 30 dead bodies mostly women and children, three still missing while five are receiving treatment in the hospital." The Priest also confirmed that at least 20 houses were burnt during the two-hour attack."<sup>20</sup>

The trajectory of violence is human cruelty, but the panacea leading to a constructive peace and unity is the work of God who is perfect harmony of unity and justice. Thus, in this essay, setting God as the Supreme and Most Holy Trinity serves as a remedy; the trinity is the medicine to cure our ill-human and man-made-cruelty in the World today. The research is posing that by the assimilation of the contents of *Trinitarian Communion* serving as the basis of remedy to insecurity in Africa; it is a laudable theological initiative and praxis juxtaposing doctrinal intricacies of using the inner workings of the Trinity as Perfect Love and Harmony. This will serve as authoritative vehicle that helps to shape the metaphoric character, posing the Trinity as supernatural force that neutralizes conflict and becomes a panacea of the negative trends and evil that seeks to destroy the Perfect World God created at creation. The paper hopes to establish a serene and united God-world-order in the twenty-first century. The paper envisions creating and placing the Doctrine of the Trinity to serve as a bastion, centre, focus, model and organ of unity, harmony, love and peace in Nigeria, Africa or the World at large. In theological thinking and teaching, the Church places the *Trinitarian communion* as an elixir and the end-faith-desire of Christian communion; thus, a guarantee of security against the backdrop of constant insecurity, crises and culture of death in Nigeria, Africa or in the World.

### 5. JUXTAPOSING THE TRINITY AS MODEL TO REMEDY INSECURITY IN AFRICA:

The doctrine of the Trinity is the finesse and perfection of God's harmony, unity, love and smooth operation of effective leadership. The equality, co-inherence (*circummincessio*) and co-penetration (*perichoresis*) that exist in the Trinity, in that God as Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit operates without friction or disorder. The reasons this essay poses the *Trinitarian Communion* as model for all human leaders (African) to learn and exercise peaceful co-existence is the supremacy of God that is native to the African Culture. Trinitarian Communion is an attraction by divine invitation, and by cultural piety a communitarian oracle of love in the Town Hall meeting. According to *Leonardo Boff*, wrote that "John Paul II in his opening address to the Latin American Bishops assembled at Puebla, made a statement of fundamental importance (that) for our trinitarian understanding of God."<sup>21</sup> The essay accompanies it with these words: "Our God, in his most intimate mystery, is not a solitude, but a family. For he intrinsically contains paternity, filiation, and the essence of the family that is love: this love in the divine family is the Holy Spirit."<sup>22</sup> Unity, peace, love, justice and harmonious co-existence are basic ingredients of community life well sort after in Africa. It is built, earn, nurture and sustain by training in character, friendship and love. The soundness and doctrinal coherence of using *Trinitarian Communion* as model in promoting *Christian* and *Community* peaceful co-existence assumes the status of sacramental character is bequeathed by God by the very act of creation. The basis of the Trinitarian Communion is well founded on the intrinsic foundation that "God is Love" (1 John 4: 16f). The divine signature means:

As the communion of Persons in the Trinity is related to the Father, the eternal source of love, so the communion of the people on earth is related constitutively to God the Father, Lord of heaven and earth. This means that the

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<sup>18</sup>Kukah, Matthew Hassan, "Nigeria & the Future of Africa, in *Broken Truths: Nigeria's Elusive Quest for National Cohesion*, Abuja: PCJ Press Ltd, 2022, 22.

<sup>19</sup>Atemanke, Jude, reporting on Interreligious Dialogue Vital "in fight against terrorism in Sahel": SECAM PRESIDENT, Ouagadougou, 08 March, 2020/10:35pm (ACI Africa).

<sup>20</sup>Aineah, Agnes, *Attack in Nigeria's Kaduna State, "A Massacre against Natives"*: Catholic Priest, Kaduna, 29 September, 2021/9:35pm (ACI Africa) Accessed in: <https://middlebelttimes.com2021/09/27...>

<sup>21</sup>Boff, Leonardo, "Trinity," in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuria, eds, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996, pg.75

<sup>22</sup>John Paul II, *Address on the Liberative Power of the Trinity to Latin American Bishops*, Puebla, January 28, 1979.

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community is a communion of different springs of love, which must be related among themselves in order to become together a single wellspring of life and love.<sup>23</sup>

From the above, divine is the cognate that draws into being the weak and human love into the union of collaboration, dialogue and evangelisation to promote peace and mediate in conflictual situations in Africa.

The essence of theological studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is steering and raising the bar of effectual communion with God in text, prayer, devotion and ritual practices beyond the dry skeletons of emotional and frenzy spirituality commonly found in African Worship Centres. Stan Chu Ilo further illustrated that for this interlocution to take place, there must be an enigmatic intercourse of fraternity that yields results from the divine realm to the human domain; which springs well guided and tailored love. He poignantly captures this beauty in these words:

Love is, therefore, to be seen by all Christians and all men and women of goodwill as our origin and destiny. Thus, the proper *locus, means, and end* of all Christian vocation and the identity and mission of the church *ad intra* and *ad extra* is a loving relationship, expanding the horizon of love and relationship in the world, making people friends of God and friends of one another all built around the Holy Trinity.<sup>24</sup>

This expressive virtue of love, when harvested from the divine fountain, rightly executed in human existential experience, it serves as panacea to wanton violence in Africa; thus, becoming the counter-narrative to the scenario of ‘an-eye-for-an-eye’ tactical war zones in Africa. Trinitarian Communion express in love will become and form our human structure from the family setting, to the community and even in the political hierarchy a solid structure. Possibly, a single person can command the gains of authority as cognate to central community sharing of power in Africa.

The Trinitarian Communion is authentic oneness, a mystery and explicitly build on love. Thus, securing the theological position of Leonardo Boff once again which is instructive for our focus in this essay, we assert that “We shall have to begin with the major theo-logical datum of the Christian scriptures: that God is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in communion. The only God who exists is the Trinity of persons. The divine oneness is communitarian; each person subsists in total, absolute communion with the other two.”<sup>25</sup> The preceding assertion express the orthodox faith, it illustrates a well theological position, yet when we examine the concept of communion, we refer to the human perception of community which very much deals with mere physical cohesion and flawless harmony. The basis of this Trinitarian Communion is intrinsically, a mystery yet a sacramental reality of love and faith shared by all Christians in Holy Scriptures and the rich Sacred Tradition of the Church. Ilo asserted once again that, “Trinitarian Communion is the union of love, friendship, community solidarity, and divinity in the three Divine Persons and the participation of humanity and the entire creation in this community of love.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, in contextualizing this oneness of God’s unity in Communion, Boff further illustrated that “to be in communion implies that one person is present to another in radical reciprocity. It implies that one person is present to another in radical reciprocity. It implies that one person “opens” to the other in a self-bestowal without reserve.”<sup>27</sup> It is clear and instructive that the true interpretation of trinitarian communion becomes authentic act of modeling for all Christian Communities. It expresses the pragmatic-pastoral-theological existentiality of God’s presence in the world, in Africa and in the World.

The Trinitarian Communion serves as a panacea to remedy ugly instances of violence and brutal killings going on in Nigeria. Within theological framework, trinitarian communion is acquired by faith-dialogue-transmission. This author strongly asserted that ‘To say that God is a communion means that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are ever together, emerging as divine invincible source of unity to establish peace in conflictual situations. The scriptures proclaim this reciprocal communication among the divine persons in these terms: God is one God of life and of all life. Jesus himself, the eternal Son incarnate, presented himself as vessel of life. Jesus himself, the eternal Son incarnate, represented himself as a vessel of life, and of life in abundance (John 10:10)’<sup>28</sup> The abundance life that God gave us in Africa through varied religious expressions, demands that we become messengers, actors, promoters and apostles of peace. Shabayang further reiterated that, “Behind every disorder and conflict, divisions and wars, all hope is not lost, as peaceful resolution to conflict brings in key actors as mediators and reconcilers.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Forte, Church: Icon of the Trinity, 191

<sup>24</sup>Ilo, Stan Chu, *A Poor and Merciful Church: The Illuminative Ecclesiology of Pope Francis*, 99

<sup>25</sup>Boff, Leonardo, “Trinity,” in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, 84.

<sup>26</sup>Ilo, Stan Chu, *A Poor and Merciful Church: The Illuminative Ecclesiology of Pope Francis*, 98.

<sup>27</sup>Boff, Leonardo, “Trinity,” in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, 84.

<sup>28</sup>Boff, Leonardo, “Trinity,” in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, 84.

<sup>29</sup>Shabayang, Barnabas Sama’ila, *African Catholic Priest as Elder, Reconciler and Mediator: A Reflection of Christ’s Kenosis in the teachings of St. Pope John Paul II and the African Bishops*, Kaduna: Benwood Graphix, 2017, 383.

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The essence and the power of the trinity is best captured as a Communion which must be motivated and practice by the Nigerian Society. Life is the essence of God. And life is communion given and received. This kind of communion is love. Communion and love are the essence of God the Trinity. But due to the intricacies involved in the Trinitarian Communion, some scholars suggest that there must be some space, thus, Gunton wrote: "There is clearly space and space, and our requirement now is to find a conception which is correlative with that of relation."<sup>30</sup> Typically, every local community in Nigeria irrespective of being Traditional Religionists, Christianity or Islam is a community that is established by God's love by natural gift of life from God through biological parents that forms family, clans, villages and towns. Human structures can be transformed to reflect divine reality by character, exercise of will power, quest for dialogue and resolute promotion of African Cultural Metaphors bequeathed by ancestors on the platform of Community Hall meeting often held under the moon light spiced by the eating of cola nuts, watered by palm wine respecting traditional hierarchy of elders in council by seniority.

### 6. UNITY IN THE PERICHORESIS OF THE TRINITY PROMOTES ESSENCE OF LEADERSHIP

The Catholic Theological tradition begun exposition on the content of faith using the currency of ancient languages of *Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Coptic* as instruments of evangelization. Since Greek and Latin were the dominant languages, as the Church was born in the era of the Graeco-Roman civilization; the Fathers of the Church in both the West (Latin) and the East (Greek) midwived the content of faith that were highly nuanced by metaphysical symbols, enshrouded in mystery and expressed in metaphoric language to unveil the Christian faith. In fact, Simonetti wrote; "The community of Christians active in Rome (cir.A.D. 50) was made up of people who had come from the East and habitually spoke Greek; Greek was to be the official language of the community throughout the second century and beyond."<sup>31</sup> So, by catechesis, liturgical and pastoral care, the Church used plain words, symbols and metaphors to evangelize the Roman Empire. They were able to illustrate and espouse the essentials, the enigma of mystery, the core of sacramental truth to unveil the essential meaning of *Christian Teaching and Catechesis*. "The term (perichoresis) achieved its currency with St. John Damascene: "Perichoresis denotes, first of all, the action of involvement of each person with the other two. Each of the divine persons penetrates each of the others and allows itself to be penetrated by it. This phenomenon is the property at the centre of life and operation."<sup>32</sup> Thus, the fraternization of the *Trinitarian Communion* expressed in cultic liturgical rites gave the orthodox faith classic magisterial exposition; juxtaposing its richness in songs, arts, devotions, prayers, rituals and mysticism.

The Greek term *perichoresis*, therefore, fittingly captures the mystic and metaphoric nuances that demonstrates and espouses the inner-indwelling of the tri-personal Deity in the sacramental friendship celebrated in the ecclesial assembly in the daily life the baptize Christian. Miroslav captures these inner operations of the *Trinitarian Communion* at work in the *Ecclesial Assembly* as grace-action not based on human credibility but purely as the imaging of the *Triad*:

When I speak about human imaging of the Trinity, I mean that human beings receive themselves as created in the image of the Trinity by the power of the Spirit. Their imaging of the Trinity is the gift of God's movement out of the circumference of the Trinitarian life to create human beings and, after they have sinned, to restore them by dwelling within them and taking them into the perfect communion of love, which God is .... Because God has made us to reflect God's own triune being, our human tasks are not first of all to do as God does – and certainly not to make ourselves as God is – but to let ourselves be indwelled by God and to celebrate and proclaim what God has done, is doing and will do.<sup>33</sup>

It is then, in this perspective that the transmission of the *Trinitarian Communion* becomes the bestowal of pastoral charity to render effective kenotic leadership to enable and ennoble the vulnerable (who suffer in conflicts and wars) and the weak in African human society. The unfortunate constant exposure of many Africans to consistent feuds, conflicts and wars; has made them financially and spiritually poor. The Catholic Bishops in Africa, responding constantly to identifying themselves of the Poor and the Weak since the First (1994) and Second Synod (2009), stood with the poor, the abused and the weak. Currently, Pope Francis, made this appeal:

I want a church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. Not only do they share in the *sensus fidei*, but in their difficulties they know the suffering of Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them.

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<sup>30</sup>Gunton, Colin E., *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999, 109

<sup>31</sup>Simonetti, Manilio, "The Beginnings of Theological Reflection in the West," in *History of Theology: The Patristic Period*, Angelo Di Berardino, Basil Studer, eds., Volume I, Trans. Matthew J. O'Connell, Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997, 205

<sup>32</sup>House, H. Wayne, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine*, Michigan: Zondervan, 1992, 23

<sup>33</sup>Miroslav, Volf, "Being as God is: Trinity and Generosity," in *God's Life in Trinity*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006, 6-7

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The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the center of the Church's pilgrim way.<sup>34</sup>

Due to the cognate mystery that lies in the indwelling of the *Trinitarian Communion*; which encapsulates essence, the core friendship in love espouse in the Sacraments of the Holy Eucharist, it becomes the instrument of both evangelization and transmission of Divine Revelation.

The transposition of the *Trinitarian Communion* invokes faith, zeal, courageous witnessing that sometimes end in the high price of martyrdom. The reputable Jesuit and Theologian per excellence on St. Pope John Paul II, Gerard O'Collins wrote eloquently on the glory of martyrdom, that "when he spoke at the Coliseum (Rome) in May 2000, John Paul II remarked" in these words:

The experience of the martyrs and the witnesses to the faith is not a characteristic only of the Church's beginnings but (also) marks every epoch of her history. In the twentieth century, and maybe even more than in the first period of Christianity, there has been a vast number of men and women who bore witness to the faith through sufferings that were often heroic.<sup>35</sup>

As the hero of faith, evangelization, suffering and pain (in his personal life) Pope John Paul II registered by personal experience, the very essence of *Trinitarian Communion* in his papal ministry for over the twenty-six years of his pontificate. O'Collins corroborated to this assertive point as he wrote: "In what he said, wrote and did, John Paul II proved thoroughly innovative about Christian martyrdom."<sup>36</sup> This greatest act to Christian witnessing is the harsh reality many Christians and Catholics are experiencing in Africa today; as many Priests, Consecrated Persons (male and female) and baptize Lay Persons are suffering martyrdom due to the faith they profess openly and in their live styles. Osborn, illustrated in his writings the indispensable witness given by martyrs in the Church by stating that: "The Martyr is perfect in his (her) imitation of the crucified Lord and in his teaching of one God; nothing can surpass the peak of this perfection."<sup>37</sup> This is the crux of the matter in promoting christian evangelization, ecumenical movements and inter-faith dialogue in African countries like Burkina Faso, Chad, Congo DRC, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan and South Sudan to mention but a few.

In Africa, of the twenty-first century, despite the fact that almost all countries have attended political independence, the ethnic wars and divisions along tribal and political lane are the order of the day. These woes do cause fragmentations, totalitarianism, and incessant insecurity that bedevils the serenity of many countries within the continent. We assert here in this research, that God is unitive force, we too as Africans are strongly bond to one another by ancestral linkages. We set it as the standard that heals the ugly human extremism that dissonance into violence as a final resort to settle internal and external aggression. Apart from using the Trinity as the best model and remedy to violence in Africa, we had examined the vocal action words and ministry of Pope Francis, John Cardinal Onaiyekan, Christian Cardinal Tumi, Laurenti Cardinal Pesanya, Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama, Archbishop Peter Kwasi Sarpong, Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah, Prof. Patrick Lumumba, Nelson Mandela, *etc.* Their non-violent approach as remedy to conflict is an irreplaceable virtue. Their courageous act of "speaking-truth-to-power," to deal with the cruelty of violence, the persecution and death of their people, captures the essence of unity, justice and peace in Africa. Thus, by examining our existential socio-political and religio-economic set up, the positive and constructive activism of Bishops Matthew Hassan Kukah, Geoffrey Onah and Erkolano Lodu Tombe (South Sudan); these serve as evident that *Trinitarian Communion* can serve as panacea to remedy both cultural and political violence in the African Continent.

### 7. CONCLUSION – SETTING STRUCTURES OF LIBERATION AS WAY FORWARD

Africa as a continent is more than a geographical expression, it is life live by people who are envelop by a reality that expresses love based on the cultural unity and similarity, celebrated by the metaphoric bond of fraternity encapsulated in the *Ubuntu* philosophy of life ("*I AM Because We Are*") which expresses what lies at the core of the *Trinitarian Communion* serving as a remedy to incessant issues of insecurity in Africa. Professor Otonko wrote: "The concept of God in Theology is not isolated from a look into the nature of man, who is made in His image and likeness. Man, lives in the society so theology, also has a social dimension."<sup>38</sup> It is obviously the very nature of the social dimension of theology that is so relevant in our context that necessitated

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<sup>34</sup>Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, The Joy of the Gospel, no. 198, Apostolic Exhortation, 2013.

<sup>35</sup>Pope John Paul II, "Address at the Coliseum (7 May 2000); in AAS 93 (2000), pp. 677-679; *Origins* 30: 1 (2000), pp. 4-5

<sup>36</sup>O'Collins, Gerald, "John PAUL II and the Development of Doctrine," in *The Legacy of John Paul II*, eds. Gerald O'Collins and Michael A. Hayes, New York & London: Burns & Oates, 2008, 10.

<sup>37</sup>Osborn, "The Greco-Roman World: Challenge and Response," in *History of Theology: The Patristic Period*, Angelo Di Berardino, Basil Studer, eds., Volume I, Trans. Matthew J. O'Connell, Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997.

<sup>38</sup>Otonko, Jake Omang, *The Complexities of the Nigerian Nation: Interrogating Human Rights, Religion and Society*, Eiwa Press Nig. Ltd, 2020, 47



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using it as catalyst of engaging its constituency of supernatural power (Trinitarian Communion) to mediate issues of conflict to resolve gross insecurity problems in the African continent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Setting Liberation Theology as typology. For Gustavo, “no meaningful theology can be lubricated in disconnection from concrete history... a meaningful theological reflection consists in an expression, and a calling into question, of broad historical process.”<sup>39</sup> Our historical process in Africa is nuanced by the complexities that belied in ethno-religious pluralism; which need be resourceful for development, but rather became the seedbed of violence, insecurity and destructions. Setting the structures of liberation in place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century therefore, calls for type of *Liberation Theology* that is modelled by characteristics of *Trinitarian Communion*. Using Liberation theology here entails a typology that vivifies and saves, it “represents both a social and a theological movement that emerged principally in Latin America in the late 1960s.”<sup>40</sup> It means that African Theologians must contextualize and become pragmatic in not only locating; but using Trinitarian Communion as the best model typology for non-violent mediation in cases of feud, violence and insecurity in the continent.

The evil and oppressive structures of colonialization left behind by Western Powers since their exit (1960s), have not translated to economic gains and has not really been turned around by the cabal of the “new elites of political and economic saboteurs” of our God-given wealth in Africa. Today, the grave, harsh, cruel and demonic economic, physical, educational, structural and social poverty ravaging the African countries can be mainly trace to bad and poor political leadership. Stan Chu Ilo bitterly wrote: “... the poverty and the sinful social conditions of many Africans are not part of the divine plan for the unveiling of history in Africa.”<sup>41</sup> Quite true, a politico-cultural, economo-social campaigns being hinged on deep spiritual revival, based on the model of the Trinitarian Communion as the yardstick of effective leadership can and must lead to liberation. Reflecting on this dimension of time and memory, Gustavo Gutierrez writes:

Time acquires, in this way, an urgent, salvific, and human density. Far from being an abstract category, or from being limited to a tiresome chronological succession, time becomes, thanks to memory, a space where we encounter the fact of Jesus, the Son of God made flesh, and a space for encounter with others. In time are rooted two liberties, God’s free self-revelation in the gratuitousness of love and the human freedom to accept this gift; the first calls forth and constitutes the second.<sup>42</sup>

Time is medicine, it is eternal but above all, it is the instrument of evangelization rendered by agents, leaders and faithful citizenship. Africans, must rise above ethnic and cultural line, above political divide to creedal expressions to embrace the virtue of peace, love and harmony for peace and peaceful co-existence to reign in the Continent of Africa in the twenty-first century.

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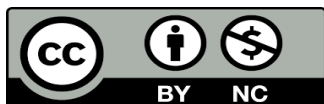
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<sup>42</sup>Gutierrez, Gustavo, “Prophecy and Memory,” in *The Option for the Poor in Christian Theology*, ed. Daniel G. Goody (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

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