

African Christianities and the politics of development from below

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Religion and development are two ambiguous phenomena, yet we can map their creative interaction and intricate interconnectedness. In public discourse, ideas about development generally undermine the complex role of religion, or it is assumed that religion would be relegated to a matter of private belief in Africa, as secular states burgeoned, or even saw religion as an obstacle to development. Development was largely conceived of primarily in economic terms or as economic development. In contemporary era, the concept of human development has come into vogue, accentuating aspects of people's lives that go beyond the economic dimension. There is no gainsaying in the fact that religion has been a dynamic entity and remains a growing force in public life in Africa. This article critiques vague definitions of religion and development and contends that human development should be understood as including the religious and spiritual dimension of life. Drawing upon concrete examples from my religious ethnography, the article seeks to explore the ambivalent role of religion in Africa's development, and Africa's development within the purview of the everyday lived religious and spiritual dimensions of life.

Introduction

Academic researchers and development entrepreneurs, more than ever before, are paying more attention to religion, to the extent in which religious people, practices and organisations are gaining increasing visibility in research on international development initiatives. Offutt, Probasco and Vaidyanathan (2016) made a clarion call, in their recent article, for further research on religion and development by sociologists, particularly at a time when the landscape of development practice is shifting, from changes in funding sources and priorities to competition between religious and secular organisations (2016:207–215). They point to three promising directions for social scientific research at the intersections of religion and international development, highlighting: religious affiliation, beliefs and economic growth; non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and organisational theory; and poverty, culture and religion as significant themes 'in which social science has particular potential to theoretically and empirically enrich our understanding of the interplay between religion and development' (Offutt *et al.* 2016:211). This article sets the pace for two other articles in the same journal issue, by Allison Schnable (2016:216–232) and LieErin Probasco (2016:233–249), in offering complementary insights into the intersection of religion and development. Both take a lived religion approach, drawing on the textures of local experience and everyday practice to highlight the contradictory, complex and cross-cutting relationships religion has with development goals and values (Offutt *et al.* 2016:212). Schnable and Probasco not only illuminate ways religious resources are deployed to further development goals, but also posit problems that religion can create. This approach demonstrates an ambivalent positionality in delineating the complex interconnection between religion and development.

Religion and development are two enigmatic phenomena to define, comprehend and operationalise, yet we can attempt to map their creative interaction and intricate interconnectedness intelligibly. In public discourse, ideas about development generally undermine the complex role of religion, or it is assumed that religion would be relegated to a matter of private belief in Africa, as secular states burgeoned, or even saw religion as an obstacle or barrier to development. Development was largely conceived of primarily in economic terms or as economic development. More in-depth, local case studies are needed to unpack the discursive stance of religion and development. It is expedient that scholars explore religion as development and development as religion; just as further problematising the concept of 'development as religious discourse' and 'religion as development discourse'. Rather than simply foist definitions and concepts on religious peoples and institutions, it is imperative on scholars and development actors and agencies to

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auscultate how and to what extent religious actors and their institutions may define, critique, conceptualise and theologise development, human progress and flourishing not only through abstract, metaphysical and canonical expressions, but also in concrete, prosaic, lived experiences. Such a learning curve can enrich our object of study and help to defray the ethic meanings, interpretations and intellectual pride that academic and development entrepreneurs sometime impose on religious persons and institutions. To what extent can religion serve as a touchstone, to measure and understand the hitherto underplayed cultural and symbolic aspects of development or of the resistance to development? In what sense can we see religion as an all-encompassing category under which even the idea of development, the specific activities undertaken in the name of development, can be subsumed?

Development discourse is not unconnected with the history of colonialism and imperialism where the African continent that has been mostly exploited for centuries is now been castigated and condemned as undeveloped or underdeveloped. We quickly forget sometimes how 'developing or non-developed' countries, sometimes called 'third-world nations', have experienced and still continue to suffer from the deleterious effects of Western colonialism and neo-colonialism. Africa was divided not only into artificial geographical boundaries to facilitate political subjugation, economic exploitation and expropriation, but in a sense the partition transcended geographical, political and economic terrains to include religious divisions. African philosophies, cultures and indigenous religions were suppressed, ignored and often ridiculed (Adogame, Gerloff & Hock 2008b:2).

The historical trajectory of the study of religions in Africa has evolved through several phases, each involving different purposes and points of view. Platvoet categorises these overlapping epochs paradigmatically, as 'Africa as object', when its religions were studied virtually exclusively by scholars and other observers from outside Africa, and as 'Africa as subject', when the religions of Africa had begun to be studied also, and increasingly mainly, by African scholars (1996:105). Descriptions and theories of Africa's religious history have been the essential elements of the cultural contacts since the very first encounters and remain so up to the present (Ludwig & Adogame 2004:2). Within these historical phases, the colonial and missionary machineries invented and produced ways of knowing and meaning-making that anchored and facilitated processes of subjugation, exploitation and expropriation (Adogame 2015). Particular alien forms of reasoning were entrenched while also laying claims to a 'civilising mission'. The 'European' knowledge that was introduced into Africa came on a collision course with indigenous knowledge systems in a spate of ideological contestation culminating in a bricolage of knowledges. The knowledge funnelled through the colonial process took centre stage, assuming a dominant epistemology that marginalised and almost silenced alternative worldviews and conceptualisations of the universe. Such a hegemonic way of knowing and meaning-making was even presumed to be capable of turning indigenous epistemologies on their head.

Legacies of the European Enlightenment filtered thought patterns that legitimised tropes of otherness and binaries of difference espoused as tradition versus modernity, primitive versus civilised, superiority versus inferiority complex, developed versus underdeveloped into the very fabric of the dominant knowledge. It was characteristic of the forms of reasoning that was privileged and superimposed on other cultures. This dominant knowledge was not only liberating and transforming but also entrapping. The contestation that ensued in the production of religious knowledge produced a chasm of epistemological richness and bankruptcy at the same time (Adogame 2015). It was against this backdrop that Africa was first seen, by travelogues, missionary and the colonial historiography, to be bereft of any modicum of religiosity. Even when arm-chair ethnographers and evolutionary anthropologists conceded, they produced a barrage of opprobrious labels including animism, fetishism, idolatry, primitivism, totemism, superstition, heathenism and magic to designate the indigenous religions of Africa. These incongruous terms stamped indigenous religions of Africa with appearance of sameness and primitiveness, and a stigma of inferiority, especially in comparison with Islam and Christianity. Nonetheless, African Christianities, African Islam and Indigenous African religions were and continued to be denied their ingenuity and authenticity.

Without heaping total blame on Western countries for the continent's economic and political woes, we must not escape to indict Western imperial hegemony for their conspicuous contribution to lingering poverty, socio-economic and political crises in several African countries. Thus, reimagining colonial history and its concomitant exploitative and expropriative predilection leaves us to challenge the accepted wisdom of what development is. What implications does the dark colonial and neo-colonial experience have for our understanding and measurement of development? We need to re-interrogate and reinterpret definitions of 'development from above' against the backdrop of colonialism and the economics of unequal exchange.

My appropriation of 'development from below' therefore implies local epistemologies of development, human progress and flourishing. It also captures the everyday lived experiences of people and how they navigate the exigencies of life to make sense of their existence. Many Africans are defining and critiquing development in the light of their socio-economic and political realities and deserve to be understood and interpreted within the parameters of these existential palpability. Often, much of this narrative falls outside the radar of global, human development reports (HDRs) and indices. Development from below is the type of development that, so far, sounds unimaginable to big-time development entrepreneurs such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund or some NGOs and scholars of development. Essentially, this is grassroots development that is associated with people's lived experiences. This also has to do with people's religious

sensibilities, how religious bodies or persons imagine and engage in development. It also involves the religious or spiritual, moral and cultural dimensions that are inseparable from other spheres of society. Indigenous cosmologies are sophisticated systems for moral and cultural development, although they are now grossly neglected and ignored. But what concrete structures and strategies do religious persons and institutions put in place to ensure human progress and flourishing?

The rest of the article will address, firstly, some attendant complexities that may accompany methodologies for gauging human development and for measuring the importance of religion in people's daily lives around the world, and how this complicates our understanding of the intermix between religion and development. Secondly, the burgeoning discourse on the nexus between religion and development in sub-Saharan Africa is creatively enriching and controversial at the same time. I shall draw brief glimpses from the historiography to demonstrate how varied conceptions of religion and development implicate on the questions we pose, and also the tendency to conjecture religion simply as a boon or bane for Africa's development. Thirdly, I will demonstrate with concrete examples from my religious ethnography, drawing from the fabric of local expressions, experiences and everyday practice within African Christianities and their engagement in the politics of development, albeit from below. This will help to shed some light on the antithetic relationship between religion and development, religion as development and religion in defined development agendas, goals and ideals.

Gauging human development: An enigma?

The maiden HDR is of a seminal nature, making a useful contribution to the definition, measurement and policy analysis of human development (1990:iii). The report introduced a new way of measuring development by combining indicators of life expectancy, educational attainment and income into a composite Human Development Index (HDI). The HDR attempted to infuse a human face to the conceptualisation of development by defining human development 'as a process of enlarging people's choices' (HDR 1990:1). In principle, these choices can be infinite and change over time. But at all levels of development, the three essential ones, are for people to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. If these essential choices are not available, many other opportunities remain inaccessible (HDR 1990:10).

According to this Report:

... But human development does not end there. Additional choices, highly valued by many people, range from political, economic and social freedom to opportunities for being creative and productive, and enjoying personal self-respect and guaranteed human rights. (HDR 1990: p. 10)

In this Report, human development is also seen to have two sides:

... the formation of human capabilities – such as improved health, knowledge and skills – and the use people make of their acquired capabilities – for leisure, productive purposes or being active in cultural, social and political affairs. If the scales of human development do not finely balance the two sides, considerable human frustration may result. According to this concept of human development, income is clearly only one option that people would like to have, albeit an important one. But it is not the sum total of their lives. Development must, therefore, be more than just the expansion of income and wealth. Its focus must be people. (HDR 1990:10)

The breakthrough for HDI was the creation of a single statistic which was to serve as a frame of reference for both social and economic development. The HDI sets a minimum and a maximum for each dimension, called goalposts, and then shows where each country stands in relation to these goalposts. This invented parameter is both illuminating and problematic against the backdrop of comprehending development holistically.

Almost a decade and half after the first HDR, the 2013 HDR, *The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World*, looks at 'the evolving geopolitics of our times, examining emerging issues and trends and also the new actors which are shaping the development landscape' (HDR 2013:ii). This report makes a significant contribution to development thinking by describing specific drivers of development transformation and by suggesting future policy priorities that could help sustain such momentum. The report argues that the striking transformation of a large number of developing countries into dynamic major economies with growing political influence is having a significant impact on human development progress. However, the report notes that, over the last decade, all countries accelerated their achievements in the education, health and income dimensions as measured in the HDI. A key message contained in this and previous HDRs is that economic growth alone does not automatically translate into human development progress. Pro-poor policies and significant investments in people's capabilities – through a focus on education, nutrition and health, and employment skills – can expand access to decent work and provide for sustained progress. Thus, the report identifies four specific areas of focus for sustaining development momentum: enhancing equity, including on the gender dimension; enabling greater voice and participation of citizens, including youth; confronting environmental pressures; and managing demographic change (HDR 2013:ii).

The frame of reference for measuring social and economic development, called goalposts, resulted in the HDI 2012 ranking of 185 countries under four rubrics: Very High-High-Medium-Low Human Development (see the 2012 HDI rankings in HDR 2013:15–19). Under the 'Very High HD', 47 countries were listed with no African country except Seychelles mentioned as ranking 46th. Forty-seven countries were listed under the High HD. Three African countries, viz.

Mauritius (80th), Algeria (93rd) and Tunisia (94th), fell under this category. The Medium HD again listed 47 countries with rankings as Gabon (106th), Egypt (112th), Botswana (119th), South Africa (121st), Namibia (128th), Morocco (130th), Cape Verde (132nd), Ghana (135th), Equatorial Guinea (136th) and Swaziland (141st). Lastly, 44 countries fell under the Low HD, with 34 African countries dominating this group. The other non-African countries in this group come from the so-called two-thirds world. The rationale and indices for ranking countries in terms of their social and economic development are rather vague and sweeping. Nonetheless, the report identifies more than 40 developing countries that have done better than expected in human development terms in recent decades.

It is rather intriguing that such a detailed report that espouses the enlargement of people's choices escaped any mention of religion or spiritual life in considering human development; nor does it consider, in any way, religious development as analogous to and essential for human development. As Ellis and Ter Haar aptly noted, 'A major obstacle to investigating the role of religion in development is a widespread misunderstanding about what religion actually is' (2004: 11–26). Religion is a human meaning-making activity or enterprise that is intricately linked to other spheres of development, social progress and human flourishing. The perception of religion as a phenomenon completely separate from culture is not a suitable reflection of the embedded nature of 'religion' in African worldviews. Religion is variously conceptualised as a spiritual, epistemological and philosophical phenomenon (Adogame 2007a:528). 'The concept of religion is a sufficiently artificial or synthetic construct that its very creation is itself an implicit theorization of cultural realities' (Arnal 2000:22). Beyond the typical focus on religion as a coterie of belief and ritual patterns, the treatment of religion as an epistemological phenomenon further helps to shed new light on studies of African cultures and societies. Religion viewed in this way allows for a deeper understanding of the complex interaction between Africans and non-Africans such as Europeans, an encounter largely based on frequently incompatible worldviews. As a category of analysis to the study of culture and society, religion is therefore quintessential to our understanding of African cultures in a global context (Adogame 2007a:528).

Elsewhere, Ter Haar and Ellis considered how the concept of development may be viewed through the prism of religion and successfully demonstrated what actually constitutes religion for most people in the so-called developing world, including Africa (2006). Arguing in the case of Africa, they demonstrate how religious and spiritual resources produce a type of knowledge that is, or could be, relevant to development. In this very thoughtful article, they illustrate with brief examples from Africa of how religious ideas are relevant to development (Ter Haar & Ellis 2006:356–362). They contend that:

if poor countries are to develop, it is not so much new policy instruments that are needed, but rather a new vision of what

development means, and how it should be implemented. People's full range of resources should provide the foundation for any development strategy. (Ter Haar & Ellis 2006:362)

They conclude that people's religious and spiritual resources, in addition to material and intellectual resources, play a role in the quest for peace and security, the quality of governance, economic growth and health and education – widely considered as key to development.

In sub-Saharan Africa, religion now forms arguably the most important connection with the rest of the world (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004). The potential role of religion as an agent of development in this vast area, until recently, is no longer escaping some leading European donor agencies such as the UK's Commission for Africa and Department for International Development, and also non-governmental agencies and main international financial institutions concerned with development, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Commission for Africa 2005:127–129; Ellis & Ter Haar 2004:352; Marshall 1998; Marshall & Keough 2004; Tyndale 2001).

Another puzzle has to do with the subjective relationality established between poverty and religion that often skews our grasp of the intricate nexus of religion and development. For instance, in an attempt at gauging the significance of religion in the daily life of people globally, the Gallup Poll is suggestive of how religiosity is highest in the world's poorest nations. In 2009, the Gallup surveys in 114 countries show that religion continues to play an important role in many people's lives worldwide (Crabtree 2010). Each of the most religious countries is relatively poor, with a per-capita GDP below \$5000. This reflects the strong relationship between a country's socio-economic status and the religiosity of its residents. In the world's poorest countries – those with average per-capita incomes of \$2000 or lower – the median proportion which says religion is important in their daily lives is 95%. In contrast, the median for the richest countries – those with average per-capita incomes higher than \$25 000 – is 47% (Crabtree 2010).

The Gallup survey report corroborates social scientists who have put forth numerous possible explanations for the relationship between the religiosity of a population and its average income level. One theory is that religion plays a more functional role in the world's poorest countries, helping many residents cope with a daily struggle to provide for themselves and their families (Crabtree 2010). Arguably, a population's religiosity level is strongly related to its average standard of living. Gallup's World Poll, for example, indicates that 8 of the 11 countries in which almost all residents (at least 98%) say religion is important in their daily lives are poorer nations in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the 10 least religious countries studied include several with the world's highest living standards, including Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Hong Kong and Japan (Crabtree & Pelham 2009). Sierra Leone, Congo and Malawi which top the world's religiosity list are among the world's

20 least developed countries. At the same time, Norway, Sweden, Japan, France and Denmark are among the world's 20 most developed countries, yet they feature in the 11 least religious countries.

However, one limitation of the Gallup Poll as the report notes is that these data only compare the importance of religion in people's lives; they say nothing about what being highly religious means in different parts of the world and among different faiths (Crabtree & Pelham 2009). This leaves the results of this survey robustly speculative and imprecise. Perhaps one can ask the question: Are Africans as religious just as the continent is relatively underdeveloped? What is the relationship between the actual practice of religion and development in Africa? Are Africans more religious because it is a way to cope with the hardships associated with underdevelopment? Is Africa more underdeveloped because of religion? These questions look rather puzzling, more like chicken-and-egg questions.

The agglutination of high levels of religiosity with development fiasco or simply as a barricade to development is rather lopsided and incoherent. In his most recent book, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa*, Gifford (2015) remarks that contemporary African Christianity encompasses at least two profoundly different conceptions of religion, with important implications for development and modernity on the continent. In his consideration of the impact of religion on development in Africa, he observed that 'African Christianity' comes in very different forms, with very different consequences for development. The book centres on the argument that there is a perceptibly major difference between an African 'enchanted imaginary' typified in African Pentecostalism and a development-oriented Christianity epitomised by African Catholicism. 'There is an important if largely unremarked diversity within African Christianity; on the one hand, an enchanted Christianity that views the world as pervaded by spiritual forces, and on the other a disenchanting Christianity that discounts them' (2015:front flap). According to Gifford and I will quote generously here from the front flap:

An enchanted Christian sees his glorious destiny threatened by witches, spirits, and ancestral curses. Churches catering for this worldview lay bare the workings of this spirit world, deliver those suffering from spirit attacks, and equip members to combat them. This enchanted imagination, along with the prosperity gospel, and emphasis on the pastor's 'anointing', are the principal characteristics of much African Pentecostalism. Gifford argues further that 'the enchanted religious imagination militates against development by encouraging fear and distrust, and diminishing human responsibility and agency. The prosperity gospel of 'covenant wealth from tithes and offerings' is the antithesis of Weber's Protestant ethic; and to magnify the person of the pastor is to perpetuate the curse of the 'Big Man.' Official Catholicism, totally disenchanting, long associated with schools and hospitals, is now involved in development, from microfinance to election monitoring, from conflict resolution to human rights. This 'NGO-isation of Catholicism,' made almost inevitable by funding from secular donors like the EU and the

UN, even if defended theologically, comes at the price of failing to address the 'religious' needs of so many African Christians'. (Gifford 2015:front flap)

Gifford's book makes a useful observation about the booming of Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa describing it as, 'perhaps the most salient social force in sub-Saharan Africa' (2015:12). This book presents somewhat robust data that betray the author's chutzpah in unleashing an intellectual genealogy renowned with the ability of tapping from selected data to draw cursory conclusions and outlandish generalisations about a rather complex African Christianity. Earlier, Gifford's *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (1998) has attempted, in what turned out an overtly ambitious project in tackling its public role and engagement with civil society (Adogame 2008a). He denied Africa's 'new churches' of having any 'conscious social agenda' in mapping their 'direct political involvement, strategies for entering the political arena and the attenuated political theology that they canvass' (Gifford 1998:341). In a critical response to Gifford, I demonstrated that the civic role of African Christianity can not only be better understood with hindsight of the historical, contemporary socio-political complexities of each local context, but also underscored the need to explore the 'indirect political involvement' and beyond politics to other socio-economic templates that are in themselves intricately connected (Adogame 2008a:225–240).

While Gifford's *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa* challenges scholars to undertake critical reflection on the role not only Christianity, but also other religions, have played or failed to play in Africa's quest for sustainable development, some brief comeback is imperative here. Gifford's caution on the risk of essentialising our understanding and interpretation of African Christianities is a pertinent one indeed, although he himself seems to have been trapped in that essentialism, both in this book and the ones before it. Essentialism is not limited to how Gifford describes it; it could also emanate from the extreme tendencies to homogenise and heterogenise a religious phenomenon. This could also result from a denial of the lived realities of people, where scholars base their data analysis mainly on official pronouncements or authoritative sources, books, pamphlets, creeds, doctrinal statements, media reports and are deaf to or silence the voices and narratives of members, religious adepts. What shapes individual's perceptions of progress, human flourishing and development in contradistinction to official definitions? By silencing the voices of members and informants, Gifford in a sense seems to privilege discursive reasoning (logos) over narrative (mythos) as an epistemological instrument for deciphering development. These dimensions are even far from being mutually exclusive.

Firstly, the binary opposition of an 'enchanted' Pentecostal religious imagination and a 'disenchanted' Catholic imagery of Christianity are both an artificially rigid dichotomy and a distorted reality. The fact that Gifford essentialises the

enchanted and disenchanted religious imaginations, demonising the former as dysfunctional, deplorable and dangerous and the latter as pro-development and as 'the biggest development agency on the continent', is suspect. This is perhaps indicative of how 'out-of-touch' the author is with both the official and popular, grassroots Pentecostal and Catholic versions of Christianity in Africa, and the fluid religious identities that characterise these local versions of Christianity, albeit claims to long-term experience on the field. The suggestion that all Catholics, in Africa or even beyond, are somewhat disenchanted is startling. One simply needs to visit Catholic churches in different parts of the world, including Europe and North America, to observe what happens within grassroots and popular Catholicism. Also, by pinning down African Pentecostalism with an enchanted religious imagery, Gifford is insensitive to common traits which some Pentecostals and Charismatics share across the globe.

Gifford interprets a denial of the spiritual realm to be necessary for progress and development in Africa, even though he feigns a grasp of resilient indigenous worldviews and sensibilities in African Christianities. To prescribe African Pentecostal Christianity's abandonment of its 'enchanted dimension' (p. 105), namely, those beliefs and practices that are rooted in the belief in the pervasiveness of the spiritual realm, and then turn around to lambast the Catholic Church, with its somewhat secularised development cynosure, of its disregard for and inability to provide alternative panacea to the enchanted religious needs of African Catholics beats any imagination.

The fact that Gifford refutes any compatibility between 'the two worldviews, that of functional rationality and that of enchanted forces', even shows how far he continues to be locked in a Western mind set and values in his vision of a modern world, especially relating to the definition and constitution of human development articulated in the HDR discussed above. While Gifford propanagised and vaguely catalogued the development focus and achievements of the Catholic Church in Africa, 'claiming that no other organisation can match this involvement in development', it takes only arm-chair ethnographers to sidestep the public role and social engagement of several Pentecostal and mainline churches that the author has chosen to caricature. Even if one were to take Gifford's idea of development and modernity with a pinch of salt, it is evident that some African Pentecostal and charismatic churches have made and continue to make giant strides in this direction – as sustainable health care providers and purveyors of education. Other indicators of socio-economic and political development they engage in the areas of microfinance, youth mobility and women empowerment, democratic politics, conflict management and service delivery sometimes surpassing the perceptibly doyen of development, Catholicism (cf. for instance Adogame 2007b, 2008a, 2010, 2012, 2013a, 2014; Bompani 2010; Carpenter 2003; Englund 2011; Kalu 2008; Marshall 2009; Maxwell 2006; Ranger 2008).

Although Gifford wholly condemns African Pentecostalism as posing a hindrance to modernity and development, on account of its spiritual emphases, the debate about whether religion in general or African Pentecostalism in particular impedes or advances development or modernity hardly merits a straightforward or dismissive answer. Any response to such questions, as whether African Pentecostalism enhances or hinders development, should be treated on a case-by-case basis rather than making any huge generalisations. Such treatment will focus on a specific Pentecostal church or group, its interaction with other religious bodies and the wider society in historical perspective to reveal its public role, civic engagement or the lack of it contemporaneously. Alkire contends that contemporary intersections between religion and development can be examined and mapped from a variety of perspectives, which inevitably overlap to some degree (2006:502–510). According to her:

Religion is no panacea, but aspects of it can complement as well as motivate development. It can also obstruct or undermine. The avenues by which religion influences development activities in different faiths and regions are haunting in their complexity. (Alkire 2006:502)

There is no doubt that that some religious bodies, including African Pentecostals and African Catholics, contribute to development in many ramifications, but they also inhibit it depending on a multiplicity of local–global factors (cf. Goody 2003:64). Thus, scholars must pay eagle-eyed attention to the historical roots and local variations of religious traditions in order to grasp these realities rather than rely on grand narratives.

In spite of the hubris with which Gifford has simplified a stark religious complexity, the scholarship on religion and development in sub-Saharan Africa is hardly a totally gloomy one. At least in the South African context, the discourse on development has attracted some considerable interest. Swart (2006, 2010, 2012) has explored the discourse on church and development extensively. His empirical research focuses on how the local churches, faith-based organisations (FBOs) and the voluntary sector have contributed or failed to contribute to service delivery, social welfare and development in present-day South Africa have shaped theoretical debates on religion and development debates within sociological and practical-theological research considerably. Bompani (2010) analyses independent churches' developmental role and ethos, showing how African Independent Churches are involved in important economic activities such as savings clubs, lending societies, *stokvels* (informal saving funds) and burial societies that encompass millions of South African rand. She demonstrates how these communities play a strong and supportive role among black Africans in a deprived economic situation in which there are few other development agencies or organisations operating on a wider scale (p. 310). Klaasen (2013) interrogates, from a missiological perspective, the interplay between theology and development, showing how theology can be related to development in post-modern society.

Engaging the public sphere

Religion remains a dynamic, growing force in private and public lives in Africa and its diaspora. This is what makes new African Christianities tick. Religious institutions, such as African Christianities, play a distinctive role within specific local contexts where those constituencies such as governments, trade unions, blue-collar workplaces that previously generated trust and sustained broad social networks have deteriorated. It is within this context that we interrogate how and to what extent African Christianities generate religious and social capital while in the midst of social and cultural flux (Adogame 2013b:101–122).

Here, I shall use the case example of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) as a typical example of an indigenous Pentecostal church, which has spread globally from Nigeria to about 120 countries with over five million members scattered within Africa, North America, Europe, Asia, Australia and the Middle East. RCCG's vertical and horizontal growth is best captured not simply by its demographic spread, but it has carved out a niche for itself in terms of its public role, social relevance and local–global impact in Africa and beyond (Adogame 2014). The RCCG not only contributes enormous bridging, bonding and linking social capital, but also confronts barriers to development and civic engagement. Its spaces of worship are not simply religious places, they are also spaces of socialisation where business, politics, education, music, home country and food cultures, even gossip, are engaged and negotiated. Such spaces often transcend socio-ethnic, race, class, gender and intergenerational boundaries. People meet others from different backgrounds, they share activities and build trust in one another, albeit temporarily. They facilitate bridge-building and links-building with others, thus generating local–global networking trends, new forms of association, and engendering trust in shared community initiatives. Their landscapes of worship can be a source of cohesion or conflict among members, not only between the leadership and the followers, but also between these religious communities and their neighbourhoods.

In Europe and the USA, churches and FBOs register under government corporate affairs departments. In the UK, the RCCG and most African-led churches register with the charity commission as charitable, not-for-profit organisations. They take up charitable initiatives and actively promote civic engagement through micro-finance programmes, supporting thrift shops, providing soup kitchens, warm clothing and blankets to the vulnerable during winter season, language classes and tutoring for children and youth. They also provide training geared towards self-employment and poverty alleviation, youth and women empowerment and making contributions to the welfare of their constituency through a multiplicity of spiritual and social resources. Initiatives to lift members out of poverty are savings and credit schemes, where well-trusted principles of reciprocity assist people to establish small businesses. Through services

such as loans, savings, insurance and remittances, many women involved have become self-reliant and have built their own economic base and to complement that of their husbands. Some have started small-scale businesses, even buying and selling within the church precincts.

The RCCG is increasingly taking up extra-religious functions such as social welfare programmes within African and the diaspora context. Thus, its focus is not only the spiritual wealth of members but their social, material and psychological well-being as well. Beyond their church vicinity, they have taken up functions such as the regeneration and rehabilitation of drug-ridden youth in the society, the socially displaced and under-privileged refugees and asylum seekers. RCCG members display a significant model of African Christianity in the way they organise themselves, with features emanating from both their new contexts as well as their African heritage.

On 15 January 2010, the Nigerian Compass Magazine reported how the RCCG blazed the trail as one of the first religious institutions to contribute aid and relief efforts following the terrible earthquake that left most of Haiti in ruins. The news reported that RCCG North America with the approval of the General Overseer donated \$50 000 to Haiti at a time when many African and Western governments were still contemplating whether and how to respond to the emergency situation. To examine its socio-religious impact further, I shall focus on only two examples owing to space constraints: structures established by the RCCG to combat HIV on the one hand and the mechanisms of recovery from dependent drug use on the other hand. In terms of public involvement, the RCCG is largely interested in social work – schools, orphanages, health institutions; outreaches to drug addicts, 'area boys' (street urchins), prostitutes and HIV-infected people. To these features I shall now briefly turn.

In this section of the article, I shall focus on the religious ferment in HIV Discourse (Adogame 2012). In the ensuing robust, competing discourses on HIV in Africa, social science, development and biomedical scholarship largely ignore and, until recently, undermine the place of religion – Indigenous religions, Christianity, Islam, religious NGOs or FBOs as change agents and agencies. Indigenous religious conceptualisation of disease, healing is central to understanding responses and measures in combating HIV. In tackling health, illness and disease, scholarly perspectives neglect religious doctrines and faith central to worldviews and praxis of religious groups. Both aspects are quintessential for religious groups and individuals affected by HIV. Generally, indigenous religious NGOs, Christian and Islamic, are increasingly assuming prominence and visibility within African development discourse and practice, and also as policy instruments and actors in a period where religious faith and sentiment is sometimes the pivot on which public policy and discourse revolve.

Specifically, religious organisations and their developmental roles, or the lack of it, have assumed significance in an era

where several African societies continue to experience unprecedented socio-economic crises, political uncertainties, ecological disasters, war and health crises such as the scourge of HIV. While respective national governments, NGOs, international bodies and agencies have adopted measures towards mitigating the impact of the infection, the role and impact of religious groups have not been sufficiently captured. However, the literature on the interconnectedness of religion and HIV in Africa and their impact is burgeoning steadily (Adeboye 2007; Adogame 2007a; Mahlangu-Ngcobo 2001; Prince, Denis & van Dijk 2009). Below I shall draw instances from the perceptions, strategies and responses mainly from new forms of African Christianities.

HIV discourse in African Christianities

The diversity and variety of African Christianities make generalisation about their engagement with AIDS suspect. Responses or the lack of it to HIV will vary based on institutional stature, definitional and doctrinal emphases, mission goals, operational strategies and social remit. There are both churches consciously engaging AIDS and those that do not. Here, I will highlight some general attempts at exploring this interaction on a comparative basis, but will focus below on a single case example to tease out how a specific Christian Pentecostal church conceives and combats HIV and AIDS.

Ruth Prince *et al.* (2009) explore and analyse ways in which Christianity is becoming one of the most influential factors in the engagement of HIV in some African countries. The special journal issue offers insight, reflection on the interrelationships of Christianity, HIV and society in African countries through three themes: firstly, the ways in which people are dealing with illness and death, treatment and care for the sick, and questions of morality, kinship, gender relations and sexuality; secondly, the place of religion in the public sphere, in relation to civil society and government, development and public health; and thirdly, transformations within Christian practices and worldviews in Africa (2009:v).

Olufunke Adeboye (2007) illustrates religious NGO or FBOs' commitment to the prevention and management of the epidemic and demonstrates how their response to HIV has been more spontaneous than that of national governments. She remarks that the churches' current response is prefaced by an initial denial, which transformed to stigmatisation and later softened to concern. As Adeboye notes, the change of perception was owing to the realisation that the epidemic has gained in-roads into the church; government or NGOs campaign against stigmatisation and media criticism of churches' lukewarm response and attitude towards those infected with HIV. Christian intervention came from church congregations, various categories of FBOs or faith-based NGOs. She outlines three main strategies: prevention campaigns; treatment and care; and mitigation of impact. The first involves reduction of stigma and the breaking of

silence, awareness generation and the promotion of behavioural change. Treatment and care involves voluntary counselling and testing (VCT); post-test counselling and pastoral care; medical care and treatment; and promotion of mental health and restoration of hope to 'people living with HIV and AIDS' (PLWHA). And mitigation of impact involves techniques such as the care of orphans and vulnerable children and widows – establishment of special orphanages; nutritional assistance (food donations), counselling and free medical treatment for the children and their caregivers; and combating poverty are given prominence by and within different religious and faith-based constituencies.

Elsewhere, I explored in more detail how African-led Pentecostal churches such as the RCCG contextualise HIV, cope with the epidemic and join other stakeholders in combating the pandemic (Adogame 2007b). I demonstrated that their contribution to prevention is partly visible in terms of broader development issues such as education and social services with, and the emphasis on, abstinence and faithfulness as exclusive strategies for HIV prevention.

One basic feature that reveals an affinity and continuity between the RCCG and African (Yoruba) indigenous cosmologies is the belief in spiritual forces. Linked to this is the tenacity with which ritual enactments take place. Indigenous religious epistemology makes sense in African Pentecostal ritual sensibilities. Basically, they share a similar mentality in their belief tradition, employing an indigenous hermeneutic of spiritual power but casting it within new conceptual frames of reference. Metaphorically, the RCCG refer to HIV as a demonic spirit and those afflicted by the illness as victims of spiritual demonic attack. Their conceptualisation of disease and healing is quintessential in grasping the combined strategies adopted in coping with HIV. Such understandings of disease and healing must be located within the wider realms of personhood, society, life and thought. Healing takes on a holistic trend bordering on the physical, psychological, spiritual, mental, emotional and material dimensions.

The quest for spiritual fervour led to the personification of certain illnesses as the outright manifestation of the Devil. There are frequent references to the spirit or demon of disease, illness, HIV, barrenness, death, doubt, adultery, poverty, lying, drunkenness, etc. Thus, RCCG's liturgical tradition is a highly expressive action characterised by a heavy dose of rituals enacted to resolve individual and collective existential problems. Members engage in deliverance and healing rituals, night vigils, prayer and fasting rituals to counteract Satan's evil machination. RCCG rituals are packaged to handle spiritual attacks such as sickness, HIV, unemployment, social insecurity, death, emotional stress, hunger, poverty, barrenness and virtually all life vicissitudes.

The RCCG has assumed one of the powerful media for breaking the silence on HIV. They engage theotherapy

(spiritual healing) providing spiritual succour, moral advocacy activities and medical help with the provision of drugs, facilities and funds to the infected and the affected. African Missions (AM) was initiated in 1996 to 'support the RCCG in reaching its vision for Africa in fulfilment of its end time mission of saving souls, particularly the oppressed and under-privileged ... to educate and reduce the spread of the AIDS epidemic in many African countries'. AM has both expanded its scope beyond Africa to Europe and the USA and embarks on projects to raise awareness and financial assistance for persons living with HIV in Africa. On 11 July 2003 AM North America in collaboration with CitiHope International donated AIDS drugs valued at \$1.5 million to Nigeria for use in treating HIV-related complications (Adogame 2007b:480).

RCCG operates an office, the Redeemed AIDS Programme Action Committee (RAPAC) to deal with HIV from the spiritual and medical angles. RAPAC is a religious NGO that defines itself as 'a non-profit, non-governmental, FBO with primary focus on creating awareness, educating on prevention, provision of spiritual support and counselling for PLWHA, People Affected by AIDS (PABA)'. RAPAC also promotes sexuality and reproductive health programmes for youths/adults through training to improve the quality of life within the church by the provision of spiritual support and counselling for PABA.

RCCG strategies have been both precautionary and therapeutic through spiritual and medical means. On the spiritual level, HIV becomes personified as one of the several demonic spirits, which populate the cosmos and is dealt with theotherapeutically. On a more pragmatic level, RCCG has launched other programmes to combat AIDS. Funds have been generated locally/internationally for procuring HIV-related drugs. They evolve programmes, which involve youth in HIV prevention and encourage creative activities diverting youth from a way of life that would lead to its acquisition. In this way, RCCG's public role becomes visible and its extra-religious functions complementary in socio-contexts where efforts by local, international agencies have proved insufficient to combat the spread and impact of HIV.

Generally, tackling the HIV crisis in Africa is a long-term task that requires sustained effort and planning by all stakeholders – both within African countries and the international community. One of the most important elements in negotiating HIV is the prevention of new HIV infections. The other main challenge is providing treatment and care to those living with HIV in Africa, in particular Antiretrovirals (ARVs), which can allow PLWHA to live longer and healthier lives. Many African governments and religious bodies – Christians, Muslims and adherents of the indigenous religions – have made significant progress in their treatment programmes in combating HIV. In the last section I shall explore how RCCG engages drug use and abuse.

Combating drug use and abuse

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Nigeria (2004) reported that there were 72 drug treatment and rehabilitation facilities in Nigeria. These facilities included government-owned specialised units for the treatment and rehabilitation of drug-dependent persons in psychiatric and general hospitals, NGOs and traditional healing centres. Here, I briefly examine some strategies undertaken by RCCG faith-based organs and treatment agencies such as the Wellspring Rehabilitation Centre in Ojodu and the Christ Against Drug Abuse Ministry (CADAM) in Ikeja (see Adogame 2014:54–57). Other related faith-based treatment agencies are the House of Joy, Surulere, and the New Life Drug Addicts Rehabilitation Centre, Lekki. All these RCCG-owned agencies are situated in different locations in Lagos, Nigeria.

The Wellspring Rehabilitation Centre (RCCG) is a Christian faith-based residential centre with programmes of treatment from drug dependency. It is a registered NGO established in 2003 in Nigeria. The agency is an arm of the welfare ministry of the RCCG (Apapa family, an umbrella term for a collection of parishes within the RCCG). The agency is devoted to meeting the spiritual, recovery, vocational and resettlement needs of dependent drug-using individuals, in particular, those living on the streets, popularly known as 'area boys'. The Centre provides a system of care which incorporates Pentecostal Christian faith-based models of drug treatment of drug dependency, vocational training, social re-integration and aftercare. The Wellspring's Centre's programme for Recovery and Social Re-integration is organised in two phases. The first is a 5-month treatment programme in two stages: 2 weeks of detoxification from drugs and four and a half months of training and counselling interventions. The second phase offers a 6-month to 2-year vocational training programme focusing on skills acquisition, preparing service users for a new, drug-free life and for playing a full part in society (Wellspring Rehabilitation Centre 2003).

Comfort Jinadu's recent in-depth qualitative investigation contributes to the understanding of recovery from dependent drug use by exploring the experiences of service users in Wellspring Rehabilitation Centre, owned by the RCCG in Lagos (Jinadu 2011). The study explored the ways in which dependent drug users recover from drug dependency. Three stages of the recovery process were explored: motivation for recovery, disengagement from drugs and maintenance of recovery. In each of these stages, psychological, socio-environmental and spiritual elements were identified as significant factors in the recovery process. The offer of treatment from a Christian faith-based agency seemed to be the most important factor in motivating informants to engage in treatment in the first place. At the disengagement stage, psychological and socio-environmental issues came to the fore, with a personal commitment to change and support from significant others including peers becoming important. Spiritual factors played a significant part at this time, however, including teaching and Bible reviews and prayers.

Maintenance of recovery was found to be facilitated by psychological strategies such as positive self-talk and avoidance of triggers of drug dependency; by socio-environmental factors including supportive relationships; and by spiritual elements, which centred on the adoption of a Christian lifestyle. The findings conclude that although recovery from drug dependence is achieved through various routes, the most significant factor for the informants was the spiritual intervention received. The study illuminates the significant role of faith and spirituality in recovery from drug use, a spiritual dimension to drug dependency and recovery which should not be ignored by policy makers and practitioners. The study has demonstrated that Pentecostal Christian interventions such as salvation, prayer and training in Biblical principles contributed immensely to recovery from dependent drug use.

CADAM, the second treatment agency, is a fully registered faith-based NGO in Drug Demand Reduction (DDR) activities founded in the 1980s in Nigeria. The menace of drug abuse and its associated problems in Nigeria provides ample opportunity for CADAM which is the social arm of RCCG responsible for rehabilitation of drug addicts. CADAM recognises the holistic care delivery to drug addicts and ex-drug addicts. The understanding is reflective of their integrative approach to delivery of health and spiritual care to drug addicts. CADAM ministry is led by Dr Dokun Ayodeji, a medical practitioner. The corporate headquarters is currently at the RCCG (Dominion Sanctuary) Ogba-Ikeja. CADAM currently runs three residential houses, as the rehabilitation centres, located in Araga, Poka and Eredo all within the Epe axis of Lagos State. The process of rehabilitation starts with personal care and medical treatment for residents of Jubilee House (hostel for addicts). The integrative nature of CADAM activities entails post-traumatic assistance to residents of Jubilee House. Those who have demonstrated significant behavioural changes with positive physiological assessments ready to be integrated into the community are transferred to another home in Akute, Lagos, to undergo vocational training (Adogame 2014:56).

CADAM is recognised by both local and international agencies and organisations including the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, the Vienna NGO Committee and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. CADAM has enjoyed tremendous referrals throughout Nigeria. Adeboye quotes one RCCG publication as follows:

People who have attended the rehabilitation programmes are many and diverse, including an American-based professor, who is also a medical practitioner, but became a drug addict, went through the programme, and he is completely 'washed' (drug free). He is back in America and he is doing very well. A pastor now based in Norway and a pilot are some of those that have been saved (converted to the Christian faith) through the programme. (Adeboye 2007:37)

The impact of CADAM is not restricted within the borders of Nigeria which validates the fact that the transnational status of RCCG provides ample leverage to contribute significantly

to human development through the CADAM initiative globally as well as among Nigerians (Adogame 2014:57).

The 'House of Joy' is one of the social responsibility arms of the RCCG, Lagos Province 34 (Apapa Family), established in June 2009 with a mission to reform and reintegrate drug-dependent persons into the society through proper approach to treatment and rehabilitation (Adogame 2014:57). The initiative started in October 2006 following Shola Balogun's (pastor-in-charge of province 34) visit to Akala, Mushin, a suburb of Lagos known for a high percentage of drug users, where she saw over 20 girls and boys below the age of 17 smoking marijuana mixed with heroin powder. House of Joy thus became involved in creating public awareness and enlightenment on drugs and drug abuse. The hospitals, clinics, maternities, faith-based agencies and rehabilitation centres built and owned by RCCG evince their roles and stamina in ways that the social services they offer supplement and challenge the inadequacies of local government health care schemes besides providing employment opportunities for members and non-members alike.

Conclusion

I have demonstrated in this article that the interpretation and valuation of development 'from above' such as the HDR and the HDI of the UNDP, and also other international organs such as the World Bank's World Development Indicators (2016), can potentially be enriching and useful on the one hand, but they are also controversial and delimiting, not only in relation to understanding indigenous epistemologies of development but also developmental processes, strategies and models in Africa. The new concepts of human development and sustainable development which have come into vogue enable us to explore vital aspects of people's lives that are not limited to economic connotations of development. I have teased out how the everyday lived religious and spiritual dimensions of life is quintessential to the understanding of development in Africa, what I have partly referred in this article as 'development from below'. Much more importantly, paying more attention to how these religious persons and groups articulate development, human progress and flourishing can shape our understanding significantly. At the same time, scholars should, through fieldwork research, keep track of how people concretely negotiate the exigencies of everyday living shaped by their socio-political and economic realities, rather than rely on grandiose explanations that often undermine the real existence of religious communities. More in-depth, local case studies are imperative to analysing and interpreting the ambivalent positionality of religion and development in Africa. In sum, economic and social indicators for measuring development are helpful in so far as they are conterminous with religious/spiritual, cultural, moral variables in understanding how people eke out a better living or in pursuit of the 'good things in life'. To uncouple them, in the case of Africa, would lead to a tangential caricaturing of development, its complex meanings, practices, strategies and sustainability.

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