



Research article



HOPE IN THE MIDST OF TERROR: A THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE RESILIENCE OF NIGERIAN CHRISTIANS IN THE FACE OF INSURGENCY

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ABSTRACT

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Using a qualitative research method, this paper explores the resilience of Nigerian Christians in the face of insurgency, focusing on theological concepts of hope through the lens of Moltmann's Theology of Hope. The insurgency led by groups like Boko Haram and the Fulani herdsmen has devastated communities, leading to widespread persecution, suffering, and death. This paper also aims to address the psychological and emotional toll of terrorism on Nigerians.

Keywords:

Hope, Theology of Hope, Jurgen Moltmann, Terrorism, Nigeria, Christians



Introduction

Terrorism and insurgency have been an insidious act and also an activity conducted daily over for a long period of time and has been responsible for the physical and structural violence experienced by many people in Nigeria. The effects of these act of terrorism and insurgency are the threat they posed to national security, peace, unity and development of the country. Nigeria is a complex society with about two hundred and fifty distinct ethnic groups, five hundred different languages and¹ a rapid growing population of over 200 million people.² The majority of people believe that Nigeria's past is one of violent conflict, anarchy, disorder, and regression. Ugwuala states that according to Akhin, despite being nothing new in Nigerian history, terrorism has gained popularity as a way to terrorize and attack the nation's inhabitants. Because it deters both domestic and foreign investment, insurgency poses a threat to a country's political, social, and economic stability and is a significant contributing reason to underdevelopment. Additionally, it lowers the standard of living, degrades social and human capital, ruins the relationship between the people and the states, and threatens democracy, the rule of law, and the nation's capacity to advance progress.³

The rise of terrorist activities in the northern portion of Nigeria in 2009 gave the many acts of violence that had occurred there since independence a new dimension. The Nigerian government and the international community have taken notice of this act of domestic terrorism, which is ascribed to an Islamic sect known as "Boko Haram," and are working to reduce the threat of terrorism. With an ideology rooted in extreme Sunni Islam, Boko Haram, which translates to "western education is forbidden," seeks to build an Islamic state in Nigeria and rid the nation of all Western influence. Boko Haram has claimed responsibility for a number of bombings, killings, shootings, kidnappings, and abductions in various parts of Nigeria in an attempt to establish an Islamic state there. One of the most notable of these was the vehicle bombing at the bus station on Workers Day in Abuja, which killed 19 people.

¹ Ugwuala, Ugwunna Donald PhD, "Terrorism and Insurgency: Implications for Socio-Economic and Political Development of Nigeria." <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/cajtns/>

² World Population Review, "Nigeria Population 2024." <https://worldpopulationreview.com>.

³ Ugwuala, Ugwunna Donald PhD, "Terrorism and Insurgency: Implications for Socio-Economic and Political Development of Nigeria." <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/cajtns/>



Additionally, on April 15, 2014, more than 250 Chibok schoolgirls were abducted and kidnapped.⁴ Recent years have seen a fresh surge of terrorism-related violence in Nigeria, which takes many different forms and occurs in various locations. These include bombings, killings, and targeting specific individuals as well as locations including places of worship, residences, businesses, telecommunications masts, government buildings and infrastructure, kidnappings, and depriving people of their rightful entitlements.⁵ In addition to Boko Haram, Fulani herdsmen pose a persistent security threat to numerous states in the nation. Attacks by herdsmen on several communities in Nigeria have been on the rise. Numerous states throughout the nation have seen an increase in the number of recorded attacks by Fulani herdsmen, who ruthlessly murder locals, especially women and children, in the invaded rural towns. Benue, Nassarawa, Plateau, Taraba, Kaduna, Adamawa, Zamfara, Oyo, Imo, Cross River, Abia, Ebonyi, and Rivers are among the states most severely impacted. Fulani herders typically target towns when they are most vulnerable, such during prayer days or at midnight, when they are in their churches. They constantly slaughter people with highly advanced weapons, pillage properties, and set houses on fire. Emmanuel states the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) reports that Fulani herdsmen are believed to have killed at least 1, 229 people in Nigeria in 2014.⁶

About half of the dangerous terrorist groups on earth are for the most part instigated by religious doctrines and concerns. Under religion as the political philosophy of terrorism,⁷ Hoffman pointed out that terrorists often believe their faith is universal and feel compelled to use violence to spread it if necessary. Their belief that their cause is a part of God's plan

⁴ Solomon Adebayo Adedire, Modupe Ake (PhD) & Olakunle Olowojolu. "Combating Terrorism and Insurgency in Nigeria: An International Collaboration Against Boko Haram." <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/162155808.pdf>

⁵ Ugwuala, Ugwunna Donald PhD. "Terrorism and Insurgency: Implications for Socio-Economic and Political Development of Nigeria." <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/cajmts/>

⁶ Emmanuel N. Iheanacho, "The Menace of Fulani Herdsmen in Nigeria: A threat to National Security." <https://journals.aphriapub.com/index.php/>

⁷ Ratzinger E.E. Nwobodo PhD, "Religious Liberty in Nigeria: A Case Study of Terrorism." www.albertinejournal.org



frequently justifies and legitimizes their acceptance of violence.⁸ The majority of these belief systems persuade its followers to use violent methods to eradicate problems as a test of their faith or as a component of God's plan. They consider their activities to be justified by God's command, which also serves to safeguard their faith both now and in the future. As a result, the need for vengeance serves as a catalyst for insurgency through imperialism, war against other religions, and suicide bombing. They view these actions as a test of their religious sincerity, their fulfillment of God's appointed tasks, their path to heaven, and their ability to fulfill God's plan.⁹ Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, there has been a consistent rise in verified reports of Christian murders, rapes, mutilations, and kidnappings in Nigeria, with a startling acceleration in recent years. Homes, churches, communities, and agricultural fields are often set on fire in tandem with these attacks. 1,202 Nigerian Christians were killed in the first half of 2020, according to news published on July 15, 2020.¹⁰ Furthermore, since June 2015, 11,000 Christians have been murdered. Expert observers and experts are warning of a progressive genocide, a slow-motion war that specifically targets Christians in Africa's largest and most economically powerful country, because the violence has escalated to this stage. It is accurate to state that the Boko Haram group is determined to lynch anyone who practices a different religion because of their frequent attacks. Or, more accurately, they are on a jihad to convert non-Muslims to Islam by force. This is accurate since they refused to free Leah Sharibu, a Christian who refused to convert to Islam, even when they freed the Chibok girls who had been abducted. They persisted in attacking Christian clergy, who have persisted in doing the same.¹¹ According to Patrick Egwu, armed men kidnapped and murdered Fr. Gbakaan. Additionally, he stated that in 2018, two priests and seventeen parishioners were slaughtered by armed herdsmen during morning Mass at St. Ignatius Quasi

⁸ Hoffman, B. *Inside Terrorism* (2nd Ed.), 26.

⁹ Ratzinger E.E. Nwobodo PhD, "Religious Liberty in Nigeria: A Case Study of Terrorism." www.albertinejournal.org.

¹⁰ Daniel, S. "Boko Haram targeting Christians to trigger religious war". www.vanguardng.com (Accessed on 19th October, 2024)

¹¹ Ratzinger E.E. Nwobodo PhD, Religious Liberty in Nigeria: A Case Study of Terrorism. www.albertinejournal.org



parish in a rural town in Benue state. He claims that throughout the previous five years, at least 20 priests had been kidnapped in Nigeria.¹²

Despite persecution and difficulties, Nigerian Christians remain strong and continue to share the gospel. Christians are motivated to labor toward the em(ancipation that the Kingdom of God brings by the hope that is based on the events of Jesus Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. Christians are able to hope for the world because of the Christian mission and hope. Christian faith and mission are based on the life of Jesus Christ, the crucified, the resurrected, and the one on the way. This is the reason for the Christian mission in the world.¹³ By exploring the resilience of Nigerian Christians in the face of insurgency, the researcher will focus on theological concepts of hope through the lens of Moltmann's Theology of Hope and address the psychological and emotional toll of terrorism and the role of the church in promoting healing and support systems.

Boko Haram

Boko Haram, founded in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf in northeastern Nigeria, is an Islamic sectarian movement that has committed significant acts of violence since 2009. The group originally sought to combat corruption and injustice in Nigeria, blaming these issues on Western influences, and aimed to establish Sharī'ah (Islamic law). Boko Haram, meaning "Western education is forbidden," reflects the group's anti-Western stance, with a specific focus on rejecting Westernization, which it claims corrupts Islamic values and contributes to Nigeria's socio-economic divide. The group gained international attention in 2009 after a clash with police escalated into a major conflict. Following the deaths of Yusuf and many of his followers during a military crackdown, Boko Haram briefly appeared disbanded. However, in 2010, Abubakar Shekau, Yusuf's deputy, assumed leadership and vowed revenge. The group quickly intensified its operations, targeting police officers, government institutions, and later Christian churches, schools, and Muslim critics. Notably, in 2010, the

¹² Egwu, P. "Nigeria's Catholic priests are in fear for their lives after a slew of kidnappings and attacks" <https://www.americamagazine.org/politicssociety/2021/02/22/nigeria-priest-murders-kukah-buhari-240068> (Accessed on 19th October, 2024)

¹³ Charles C. OSA, "The Significance of Jurgen Moltmann's Theology of Hope and the Cross for Christians in Nigeria Today." <https://acjol.org/index.php/jassd/article/view/3130/3078>



group attacked a prison in Bauchi, freeing over 700 inmates, and later bombed Christian churches on Christmas Eve in Jos, Plateau state, killing more than 30 people. As Boko Haram's attacks spread across Nigeria's northeast and central states, they became more violent and widespread, with suicide bombings, mass killings, and abductions. One of the group's deadliest attacks occurred in Kano in 2012, where over 185 people were killed in coordinated strikes on government and police installations. In 2011, Boko Haram hit its first major international target, bombing the United Nations headquarters in Abuja, killing at least 23 people. Boko Haram's structure became increasingly complex, with various factions emerging after Yusuf's death. Shekau's faction, known for its extreme violence, maintained links with other jihadist organizations like al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab. The group expanded its operations into neighboring countries like Cameroon, further destabilizing the region. Government efforts to quell the insurgency were hindered by Boko Haram's ability to regroup in rural areas, where they held control over local territories. The Nigerian military's strategy of indiscriminate force against civilians further escalated tensions and earned condemnation from human rights organizations.

In 2013, President Goodluck Jonathan offered amnesty to Boko Haram fighters, which Shekau rejected. Later that year, Boko Haram launched military-style raids in Bama, Borno state, killing over 50 people and freeing more than 100 prisoners. Despite large-scale military offensives, the group continued to carry out attacks, including on schools, contributing to over 1,200 deaths by the end of 2013. In 2015, Boko Haram pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (ISIL), adopting the name Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). By this time, a military coalition from Nigeria and neighboring countries had begun successfully driving the group from many of its strongholds. However, internal tensions led to a split in 2016. Shekau continued leading the original faction, Boko Haram (Jamā'at Ahl al-Sunnah li-l-Da'awah wa al-Jihād), while Abu Musab al-Barnawi, Yusuf's son, led the ISWAP faction. The split was partly due to disagreements over Shekau's use of indiscriminate violence, especially against Muslims. Despite the factional divide, Boko Haram, in all its forms, remains a formidable threat. The ongoing violence has displaced millions, killed tens of thousands, and continues to destabilize large parts of Nigeria and its neighboring countries. Government and



international efforts to combat the insurgency face challenges due to the group's adaptability, regional expansion, and the complex socio-political landscape that fuels its survival.¹⁴

Fulani Herdsmen

The threat posed by Fulani herdsmen throughout history demonstrates how the situation has evolved from simple intercommunal conflicts to coordinated armed conflict in its seeming degenerative tendencies. The phenomenon's most recent incarnation portrays a violent genre distinguished by massive weaponry and ruthless sophistication. Fulani herdsmen graze anywhere they choose, demolish corpses, obstruct traffic, rape women, assault hunters, and sometimes launch lethal attacks on people in areas where there is even the smallest opposition to their rapes. These activities occur in practically every state in Nigeria.¹⁵ Bolarinwa claims that between 1999 and 2012, Nigeria saw a number of violent confrontations in numerous rural communities. There have been documented conflicts that have claimed over 10,000 lives and internally displaced over 300,000 Nigerians. Since late 2012, the Middle Belt's Fulani herdsmen have been killing people in a methodical and systematic manner that increasingly resembles a calculated strategy to exterminate or displace local ethnic groups in order to seize control of the area's fields and lands. 18 people were killed on March 28, 2015, during fighting between Tarok and Fulani in Plateau State. Similarly, the clashes between Fulani herdsmen and natives in Bokkos areas of Bokko LGA in Plateau State led to the deaths of 18 persons.¹⁶ In the first half of 2014, around 5,000 people were killed in Benue state's ethnic clashes brought on by Fulani herders. Women and children were among the victims, and thousands of refugees were put into the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPS) camp in Makurdi after more than 100 towns were looted.¹⁷ Earlier more than 200 people were killed by Fulani herdsmen in Shengev Community in Gwer West

¹⁴ Britannica, "Boko Haram: Nigerian Islamic Group." Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Boko-Haram>

¹⁵ Emmanuel N. Iheanacho, "The Menace of Fulani Herdsmen in Nigeria: A threat to National Security." <https://journals.aphriapub.com/index.php/>

¹⁶ Bolarinwa, C. *Conflict resolution strategies among farmers in Taraba State*, 10

¹⁷ Nte, T. U. "Fulani herdsmen and communal conflicts climate change as precipitator", 27.



Local Government Council with strange substance that looks like bio-chemical weapons.¹⁸ The scenario is the same in Taraba, where Fulani herdsmen have also carried out a number of attacks and murders. The relationship between the Fulani and Tiv in Benue and Taraba States is becoming more strained due to the Fulanis' constant attacks on the Tiv, which have resulted in very human casualties and property loss. For a few months now, the southern senatorial zone of Taraba State has seen an unprecedented and abrupt influx of Fulani herdsmen.¹⁹ The Tiv from Taraba State had to flee their homes and look for other safe havens due to the loss of lives and property. Numerous people have been brutally murdered and property has been destroyed as a result of the communal disputes in Wukari that the Fulani herders have sparked. According to Agi, who was quoted by Nte, the Red Cross reported yesterday that roughly 77 persons died in Wukari, Taraba State, as a result of fighting between some Fulani herdsmen and the local indigenous population a few days ago. In the Maru local government area, around 40 individuals were receiving treatment "for various degrees of injuries sustained because of the attacks by Fulani herdsmen." Over 200 hundred villagers were reportedly slaughtered by Fulani herdsmen in Zamfara State during a three-day riot of violence. Dansadau and Yargaladima villages in the Dansadau Emirate of Maru local government region are among the most severely affected communities.²⁰

Jigawa State is not an exception; since the start of the 2015 growing season, over 70 conflict situations have been reported. These incidents involved farmers abusing cattle routes and cattle intruding into farmland. In Kaduna State, the situation is the same. According to reports, in June 2014, gunmen attacked seven villages in Kaduna State's Sanga Local Government Area massacred roughly 123 persons who were thought to be Fulani herdsmen. 38 people had previously been slain by Fulani herdsmen in the villages of Kabamu and Ankpong. Fulani herdsmen continue to pose a threat in eastern Nigeria. Fulani herdsmen are almost always present in a community. In certain areas of Abia State, these herdsmen's actions have grown concerning. This is due to the fact that these herdsmen's cattle have

¹⁸ Emmanuel N. Iheanacho, "The Menace of Fulani Herdsmen in Nigeria: A threat to National Security." <https://journals.aphriapub.com/index.php/>

¹⁹ Nte, T. U. "Fulani herdsmen and communal conflicts climate change as precipitator", 28.

²⁰ Ibid.



severely damaged farmlands and crops. Conflicts between farmers and ranchers have reportedly occurred throughout the state. For example, there have been fatal conflicts between these cattle breeders and rural farmers in the Abia settlements of Umuchieze in Umunneochi, Ebem and Akanu in Ohafia, and Uzuakoli in Bende Local Government Area. In Enugu State, the Fulani herdsmen threat has taken on a terrifying new dimension. For instance, the attacks of Fulani herdsmen have slowed down commercial and agricultural activity in the State's Ezeagu Local Government Area, which is home to over forty communities. The government is not doing anything significant to solve the issue, and the herdsmen are armed with highly advanced weapons. People in the Ezeagu community no longer go to the farm or get a good night's sleep because they are afraid of the herdsmen's violent attacks. In Enugu state, Fulani herdsmen recently killed a seminarian and wounded three Roman Catholic priests. It's a really unsettling situation. Four persons were killed in Anambra State's Ayamelum and Awka North local government areas, and farmlands were devastated as a result of Fulani herdsmen's aggressive actions. In Imo State, peasants and farmers have macabre stories to share. Tension was strong and emotions ran high recently as a large number of irate youngsters from the state's Irete village blocked the heavily traveled Owerri-Onitsha dual road in protest of the despicable actions of Fulani herdsmen in their neighborhood. The actions of Fulani herdsmen, who frequently turn violent at the "slightest provocation," are unpopular in Ebonyi State. Recently, the women demonstrated in Ishiagu's streets against the Fulani herdsmen's destruction of their crops. The threat posed by Fulani herders in Rivers State may have led to major intercommunal strife in the Obimma village in the Ikwere Local Government Area. The state government stepped in quickly to save the situation. The host community took the Fulani herdsmen's harassment of farmers and their animals, as well as the destruction of crops in the Obimma community, very seriously. A potential full-scale communal confrontation was averted by the governor's swift involvement. The infamous Fulani herdsmen's activities are also present in the country's western region. A farmer was killed and numerous others were injured by renegade Fulani herdsmen in the Ojo Adam area of Ogun State. The recent abduction of Chief Olufalae, the former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, by Fulani herdsmen, with whom he has been fighting for the past three years, brought the problem to a head. A statute regulating the activities of Fulani



herdsmen in Ekiti State was signed into law by the state governor as a result of the herdsmen's violent actions.²¹

Boko Haram Insurgency and Fulani Herdsmen Activities on Christians in Nigeria

Since 2003, Nigeria has been dealing with ongoing security issues, chief among them being the terrorism of Boko Haram and the violence committed by armed herders in the country's northeast and throughout the country. It is thought that Mohammed Yusuf, the leader of the sect, founded Boko Haram (which means that western education is a sin) in 2002 in the unrest-plagued city of Maiduguri in the northeast with the goal of enforcing a rigid interpretation of Islamic law. Over the years, these two gangs have operated and operated with impunity, leaving behind ruin, death, blood, and cries. The advancement and stability of not just their immediate victims but also the entire Northern region and Nigeria as a whole are severely impacted by these social, political, and economic factors. Some African nations that share borders with Nigeria, like Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, are negatively impacted by these incidences. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, there has been a consistent rise in verified reports of Christian murders, rapes, mutilations, and kidnappings in Nigeria, with a startling acceleration in recent years. Homes, churches, communities, and agricultural fields are often set on fire in tandem with these attacks. 1,202 Nigerian Christians were killed in the first half of 2020, according to news published on July 15, 2020. Furthermore, since June 2015, 11,000 Christians have been murdered.

Expert observers and experts are warning of a progressive genocide, a slow-motion war that specifically targets Christians in Africa's largest and most economically powerful country, because the violence has escalated to this stage. It is accurate to state that the Boko Haram group is determined to lynch anyone who practices a different religion because of their frequent attacks. Or, more accurately, they are on a jihad to convert non-Muslims to Islam by force. This is accurate since they refused to free Leah Sharibu, a Christian who refused to convert to Islam, even when they freed the Chibok girls who had been abducted.

²¹ Emmanuel N. Iheanacho, "The Menace of Fulani Herdsmen in Nigeria: A threat to National Security." <https://journals.aphriapub.com/index.php/>



They have persisted in attacking Christian clergy, who have also not stopped.²² Armed men kidnapped and killed Fr. Gbakaan, as Patrick Egwu recounted. Additionally, he stated that in 2018, two priests and seventeen parishioners were slaughtered by armed herdsmen during morning Mass at St. Ignatius Quasi parish in a rural town in Benue state. He claims that throughout the previous five years, at least 20 priests had been kidnapped in Nigeria. This heinous assault was expanded to include priests-in-training in January 2020.²³ Four pupils from Good Shepherd Major Seminary were taken hostage on January 9, 2020, when gunmen stormed the school in Kaukau, in the Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State, according to Olugbemi. One of the four Catholic seminarians, identified as Michael Nnadi, was slain after obtaining ransom after roughly three weeks of captivity.²⁴

Christian-sponsored publications with newsletters and websites typically provide news items about the attacks in Nigeria, which are rarely covered by mainstream media. Because of this, the murderous purpose of extremist Islamist organizations like Fulani jihadists, Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP), and Boko Haram has not received enough attention to warn authorities and forces throughout the world. Even worse, when these occurrences are recorded, they are frequently dismissed as the result of local conflicts, internal religious conflicts, or the effects of climate change, for which all parties are equally responsible. Throughout human and social history, religion has continued to be a powerful force. Religion is strong because it has the ability to influence its followers' attitudes, either favorably or unfavorably. The diversity of religions and religious beliefs found in Africa seems to support the long-held notion that people are profoundly religious; there are moderates and extremists, fanatics and relists, simple-minded believers and complex adherents, liberals and

²² Ratzinger E.E. Nwobodo PhD, "Religious Liberty in Nigeria: A Case Study of Terrorism." www.albertinejournal.org

²³ Patrick Egwu, "Nigeria's Catholic priests are in fear for their lives after a slew of kidnappings and attacks" <https://www.americamagazine.org/politicssociety/2021/02/22/nigeria-priest-murders-kukah-buhari-240068> (Accessed on 19th October, 2024)

²⁴ Olugbemi, A. "Kidnappers killed Nnadi after getting ransom, I pray God forgives them – Raphael, twin brother of slain Kaduna seminarian". <https://www.google.com/amp/s/punchng.com/kidnappers-killed-nnadi-after-getting-ransom-i-pray-god-forgives-them-raphael-twin-brother-of-slain-kaduna-seminarian/%3famp> (Accessed on 22nd October, 2024).



conservatives; all of these factors contribute to Nigeria's and Africa's multireligious character. Nigerian Christians now have more obstacles to stability and peace than in the past. The country's different regions—the Niger Delta, the South West, and the Northern half of the country—are a volatile combination of political instability, ethno-religious conflict, and insecurity. Conflicts between the two main religious groups, brought on by a variety of circumstances, have claimed thousands of lives. Following the arrest of a number of its members, the militant attacks mostly targeted government institutions, churches, jails, and police stations. The Fulani Herdsmen Islamic religion-organizational jihadists and Boko Haram Islamic are the two main lethal terror groups that dominate Nigerian insurgency. Fulani Herdsmen Islamic religious-organizational terrorism has been observed in states such as Enugu, Anambra, Ebonyi, Abia, Imo, and Rivers in Eastern Nigeria (Biafra). The Boko Haram has become known as a fringe Islamic sect brought into existence principally by the political and the socio-economic motivations for survival.²⁵

Logos in Christian Eschatology

The promise of the future and the hope it arouses are both included in eschatology, the doctrine of Christian hope. Fundamentally, Christianity is eschatological, forward-looking, and present-transformation oriented. This hope, which shapes everything through the prism of an anticipated new day, is not simply one facet of the Christian faith; it is the cornerstone of all Christian beliefs. The Christian faith, which is based on Christ's resurrection, looks forward to the realization of Christ's universal destiny. Eschatology is essential to Christian life, teaching, and the Church itself. It represents the intense desire for the Messiah. As the hope of the Old and New Testaments revealed something new and beyond our existing understanding, the problem of the future is the main concern in Christian theology. In His promises for the future, God—whom Rom. 15:13 refers to as the "God of hope"—is experienced. Consequently, an eschatological viewpoint must be the cornerstone of a sound theology rather than its conclusion. Since the future cannot be experienced in the present and is by definition uncertain, it is questionable how it can be properly explored. It is challenging to apply traditional "doctrine" (logos), which relates to what is known and recurrent, to the

²⁵ Ratzinger E.E. Nwobodo PhD, "Religious Liberty in Nigeria: A Case Study of Terrorism". www.albertinejournal.org



future, particularly if it introduces something completely new. However, Christian eschatology avoids making speculative predictions about the future. Rather, it discusses the future based on Jesus Christ's historical actuality. It offers hope and promises predicated on the resurrection of Christ and the destiny of the resurrected Lord. Regarding Christ, all comments suggest not only who he was and is, but also what he will become. He is "our hope" because of his resurrection, which gives us hope for the future (Col. 1:27). Eschatology, then, is a declaration of Christ's future rather than a speculative or idealistic concept. By giving believers hope, the promises of his return have an impact on the present and enable the future to start acting now.²⁶

The foundation of doctrinal truth is its congruence with the reality that we can perceive. The promises of hope, on the other hand, run counter to the state of affairs today and are not grounded in experience; rather, they open the door to new experiences. They suggest a change in the future rather than explaining the current state of affairs. Hope gives reality a historical direction and propels it onward. Resurrection, which affirms righteousness over sin, life over death, and peace over strife, is the foundation of Christian hope. The author claims that Calvin understood the tension in resurrection hope: we are promised riches while we experience need, righteousness despite sin, and eternal life amid decay. However, with the help of God's word and Spirit, hope propels us past the current darkness. This contradiction is the strength of hope. Eschatology must therefore be based on this tension rather than conjecture. Hope ought to be the cornerstone of theological thought, influencing how we perceive divine revelation, the resurrection, faith, and history, rather than existing as a distinct doctrine.²⁷

Moltmann's Theology of Hope

Moltmann's own experiences of pain and optimism gave rise to his theology. He was born in northern Germany and grew up looking out at the bright future with aspirations of studying physics and mathematics. But when he was drafted into the German army during World War

²⁶ Augsburg Fortress "Theology of Hope"
https://ms.augsburgfortress.org/downloads/9780800699895_Ch1.pdf

²⁷ Ibid



II, his life took a tragic turn. He was physically and psychologically scarred by the atrocities he witnessed, such as the destruction of his city of Hamburg by Allied bombardment. Moltmann was forced to face the truth about Nazi war crimes, including the Holocaust, after being captured and taken to a prisoner of war camp in Scotland. His hopes of youth appeared to have been dashed, and he was overcome with shame and despair. He was profoundly impacted by the generosity and forgiveness he received from his Scottish captives, though. They gave him a Bible, which was his first introduction to Christianity. Through it, he found a freeing hope based on love. Moltmann gave up his previous employment goals to pursue a doctorate in theology. He approached theology from a new angle, challenging conventional wisdom and working to reform theological thinking. The hardship and hope of his day influenced his *Theology of Hope*, which was published in the 1960s and gained international acclaim.

Moltmann became a pastor after World War II, devoted himself in theological studies, and eventually became a professor at the University of Tübingen. Drawing on the theological heritage of his era, he penned *Theology of Hope* there. Theologians such as Wolfhart Pannenberg, Gerhard Sauter, Karl Barth, and his instructors Ernst Käsemann and Gerhard von Rad all had an impact on his writing. Additionally, Moltmann gave credit to the Jewish intellectuals like Abraham Heschel, Franz Rosenzweig, and Martin Buber who influenced his ideas. According to Moltmann, the 1960s were a time of "outburst of hope," characterized by the civil rights movement and Vatican II. Although he criticized Bloch's conception of a world devoid of God and connected it to the biblical "God of hope" (Rom 15:13), Moltmann was affected by Ernst Bloch's *Philosophy of Hope* at this period. The assassination of Martin Luther King and the communist invasion of Czechoslovakia after this time of optimism caused Moltmann to turn his attention to misery. *The Crucified God*, his second significant work, examined God's role in suffering, particularly in relation to Jesus' crucifixion. Nevertheless, Moltmann's message of hope persisted, leading to Christ's resurrection.

Promise as Hope

"Biblically founded, eschatologically oriented, and politically responsible" is how Moltmann describes his theology. His theology of hope has its roots in the Hebrew Bible, where the



seeds of hope were sown by God's promises to His chosen people. Unlike the agrarian cultures that worshipped several gods for bountiful crops, these promises created a new religion founded on promise and hope. History is acted upon and changed by the God of Israel, a God of promise.

Biblical Foundation

From the outset of his Theology of Hope, Moltmann's work is clearly grounded in the Bible. Moltmann cites his first biblical passage, the New Testament phrase "God of hope" (Paul's letter to the Romans 15:13), within the first two pages. The resurrection of Jesus is central to Moltmann's theology of hope. "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope," Paul states in that same chapter of Romans. In other words, the "God of Hope" is the "God of Israel," and Moltmann initially looks to these "earlier days," or the Old Testament, to see where "we might have hope.

God of Promise

In order to support his theology of hope, Moltmann draws on three major themes from the Old Testament: revelation, history, and promise. The term "Revelation" describes how God revealed himself to his people. Promises are a manifestation of divine revelation, and history is shaped by these promises. In order to create a new tomorrow, people act in history and change it.

Agrarian People vs. Nomadic People

Moltmann used Abraham as the starting point for his consideration of God's "inexhaustible promises." Understanding the people of the time is crucial to comprehending the meaning of this heavenly promise. The fertile crescent region was inhabited at the time by two major groups of people: nomadic tribes (pre-Israelites) and agrarians (Canaanites). Farmers who were "locally bound" were known as agrarians. The prosperity of their crops, which were reliant on the yearly cycle of weather and seasons, was the foundation of their subsistence. Because they kept livestock (goats and sheep) as opposed to agrarian people, the nomadic people were less reliant on the weather, less stationary, and more mobile.



Epiphany Religion vs. Religion of Promise

The "epiphany religion," which the rural people worshiped, was based on natural principles. They offered offerings to gods they thought governed natural phenomena like floods and storms, and they celebrated holy festivals all year long. Certain locations, such mountains, trees, and stones, were thought to be portals to the divine presence, where the land was revered by the gods. Drawing on Victor Maag's idea, Moltmann explained that these faiths provided sporadic experiences of the divine, with these encounters being connected to the seasonal cycles that represented the gods' recurrent appearances and the promise of rebirth.

Nomadic People's Religion of Promise

Unlike agrarians, the nomadic people were not restricted by the seasons or holy sites. Before God stepped in, they were homeless, living on the periphery of society, and traveling aimlessly. God promised these "chosen people" a land "flowing with milk and honey" [Ex 3:8], blessings, and numerous progeny. He also promised to stay with them. God accompanied them on their path, guiding them toward a hopeful and meaningful future. The nomads discovered that God's promises, not particular locations or moments, were what made their interactions with Him meaningful. The "God of Promise" and "God of Hope" were revealed to these early tribes including Abraham and the Israelites in Egypt through their hardships and wanderings.

God of History

History is the primary distinction between the nomadic religion of promise and the agrarian epiphany religion. According to Moltmann, history encompasses not only the past but also the present and the future. In contrast to the immutable gods of the countryside, the God of promise creates and transforms history. By penetrating the present and guiding His people toward a new future, God's promise forges a hopeful future. History is actively shaped by God's self-revelation, in contrast to epiphany religions. Moltmann highlights that Karl Barth's theology is in opposition to this understanding of history, which holds that God intervenes and transforms it. This was personally experienced by the nomads, such as Abraham and Sarah, who traveled from Egypt to the promised land while being supported by the God of hope.



Resurrection as Hope

Promise of a Messiah

Through divine revelation, a succession of promises, and traveling with them to the promised land, we expand on our understanding of how the God of Hope operates throughout the history of the nomadic people. Jesus also makes his historical debut in the New Testament as the incarnate God, who not only makes good on the promises made in the Hebrew Bible but also forges new ones and a new future. Beyond the selected people, the global message of hope conveyed by Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection is applicable to all of humanity. The promises of the God of Israel are not just fulfilled by the resurrection; rather, they are reborn and made available to everyone. Christ's resurrection is not the "end of the promise," but "its rebirth, its liberation and validation."

Christ as Hope

In the sections of Theology of Hope dealing with the resurrection, Moltmann enters the realm of Christology by entering into "the mystery of Jesus." For while the Jewish roots of Moltmann's theology are foundational to his theology of hope, it is Christology especially Christ's resurrection that is at its heart and soul. The resurrection is central to Moltmann's theology of hope.

Resurrection as Promise

The resurrection of Jesus is God's ultimate promise for a new creation, offering a radical future for the whole world God's kingdom. This kingdom is both present and yet to come, urging believers to work towards the end times. Moltmann highlights that God's promises, rooted in Jewish theology, are fulfilled in Christ, as Paul states: "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him" [2 Cor 1:20]. Moltmann's eschatology differs from Karl Barth's, emphasizing that it's not just about the future but also the present. Christ's resurrection introduces both a new future and a transformed present. Moltmann concludes, "Christianity is eschatology, is hope."



Dialectic of the Cross and Resurrection

Moltmann's Christology focuses on the "dialectic of cross and resurrection," reconciling the suffering Jesus on the cross with the glorified, resurrected Jesus. The cross and resurrection represent total opposites; death and life, god-forsakenness and God's glory but it is the same Jesus. When Jesus cries, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" [Mk 15:34], Moltmann sees this as a moment of complete abandonment, identifying Jesus with all who feel forsaken. Through his suffering, Jesus aligns with all humanity, and since the same Jesus was resurrected, his hope extends universally.

Universal Suffering

The Bible claims that since Adam and Eve fell from grace, pain has been a component of human existence. God proclaimed physical anguish as a result of their disobedience: men would labor for food, and women would suffer throughout delivery [Gn 3:16–18]. Additionally, Adam and Eve suffered psychologically and spiritually after being kicked out of Eden. In Genesis, the expulsion of Cain and the wandering of tribes like Abraham's cause sorrow to shift from personal to collective. Job provides a profound discussion of pain, whereas Psalms reflect both individual and collective anguish, frequently with gratitude for God's response. The emphasis in the New Testament changes to how Jesus handled suffering. Through his death on the cross, Jesus identifies with all of mankind by healing, consoling, and eventually going through pain himself. His pain serves as a reminder that everyone experiences pain; it is not a punishment but rather a natural aspect of life. Reunification in God's kingdom is made possible by Jesus' death, which breaks down the wall separating people and God. This is furthered by Moltmann's *The Crucified God*, which contends that God experiences human suffering. This casts doubt on the conventional understanding of God's immutability. Since Jesus is both entirely divine and totally human, it is generally accepted that suffering is a part of his human nature.

Christ's Universal Message of Hope

Moltmann's theology emphasizes the universal power of Christ's message. He contrasts two traditional approaches: one viewing Jesus through perfection (Hellenistic) and another as a man in history. Both move from general concepts to specific interpretations of Jesus.



Moltmann reverses this, starting with two specific propositions: first, Yahweh raised Jesus from the dead, making God the God of the Old Testament and promise; second, Jesus was a Jew, representing the people of the original promises. Through the cross and resurrection, Jesus becomes the salvation for all, both Jew and Gentile. Moltmann concludes that Christ's message of hope is universal.

Centrality of the Resurrection

The centrality of the resurrection is one of the elements of commonality amongst the diverse Christian denominations. The Catholic Catechism asserts the centrality of the Resurrection, saying that "The Resurrection above all constitutes the confirmation of all Christ's works and teachings." And further, the Catechism quotes from 1 Corinthians: "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain." [1 Cor 15:14].

Universal but Distinct from Greek Mystery Religions

In Moltmann's Theology of Hope, he explores how followers of Christ maintained their distinct beliefs amidst Greek and Roman influences, much like the Hebrews preserved their faith against agrarian cultures. In both the Old and New Testaments, the key was God's promise and its fulfillment. In the New Testament, Christ's universal message extends to Gentiles, breaking barriers between people while forming a bond with God through promise. Christ's resurrection is central, as it renews the promise of the Old Testament and provides the foundation for Christian hope. Moltmann emphasizes that the same Jesus of the cross and resurrection extends God's promise to all humanity.

History as Mission

In the Old Testament, Abraham obediently followed the God of promise who asked him to leave his land and journey to a new promised land. In the New Testament, what has Jesus asked us to do what specifically are we asked to do as individuals and as a community of faith? Moltmann suggests we first look at history as mission. By history, he means both what is in our past and what history is being made today. The mission he refers to is both a responsibility of the community of Christians and a responsibility of individual Christians. In Western society, Christianity has had a longstanding tradition of being the soul and



conscience of society. Now, it is largely a private affair, limited to influencing the soul and conscience of individuals. As part of mission, we are called to help restore religion to its rightful place as an integral part of society. For while there are good things being done in the secular world, they alone will not lead us to the new promised land.

Modern Society

In the concluding chapter of *Theology of Hope*, titled "Exodus Church," Moltmann reflects on modern society, which he defines as shaped by the industrial system, focused on production and consumption. Unlike in the past, religion is now sidelined, becoming more of a private matter, while society remains neutral or indifferent toward it. Moltmann argues that hope has shifted away from the Church and often opposes it. Religion now exists on society's margins, leading to the concept of the "exodus church," where Christians, like pilgrims, follow Christ outside the camp, seeking a future city as described in Hebrews 13:13-14.²⁸

The Psychological and Emotional Toll of Terrorism

The goal of terrorism is to arouse public anxiety and doubt. Family members of victims and survivors, as well as those exposed through televised visuals, are among those impacted by this terror, which can spread quickly and is not just experienced by those who are directly witnessing the incident. After a terrorist attack, psychological pain is typically more common than physical harm. The country's efforts to create intervention methods at the pre-event, event, and post-event stages that would reduce the negative psychological impacts of terrorism depend heavily on its understanding of these psychological repercussions. For many years, researchers have been examining how traumatic experiences affect how people function. Most people believe that traumatic occurrences are intense, unexpected, and rare, and that they pose a threat to their lives. Nonetheless, traumatic incidents might recur in a society, and in certain settings, the threat might be accepted as normal. There is evidence to imply that the type of event often determines the type and intensity of outcomes. Exposure to a traumatic incident can have a wide range of individual effects, including physiological and psychological ones. The psychological reaction of an individual is influenced by a variety of

²⁸ Lawrence McIntyre, "The Role of Suffering in Jurgen Moltmann's *Theology of Hope*". https://open.library.ubc.ca/media/download/smc_2010_mcintyre



factors, including the social setting, biological and genetic composition, past experiences, and aspirations for the future. Acute stress disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), major depression, panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, and drug use disorder are all more common in people who have experienced a traumatic event.²⁹

Over 3.9 million people have been displaced in Nigeria as a result of the over one decade long Boko Haram insurgency and about 2.1 million of this population are internally displaced within the country.³⁰ Internally Displaced People (IDPs) are defined as "individuals or groups of individuals who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or man-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border," in accordance with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Attacks by the Boko Haram insurgency are common in Northern Nigeria, and states like Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa are seen to be particularly vulnerable. Many of the survivors, who frequently live in official camps as internally displaced people, have migrated to neighboring states in search of protection and a means of subsistence as a result of these attacks. The UNHCR defines internally displaced people (IDPs) as people who remain in their own nation and are protected by its government, having not crossed the border for their safety.³¹ Numerous studies have demonstrated that violence and conflicts have a substantial impact on victims' mental health since internally displaced people (IDPs) not only lose their ancestral homes but also their source of income, property, and loved ones. Given that 50% of mental disorders are established before the age of 14 and 75% of mental diseases emerge before the age of 24,

²⁹ Institute of Medicine (US) Committee on Responding to the Psychological Consequences of Terrorism; Stith Butler A, Panzer AM, Goldfrank LR, editors. *Preparing for the Psychological Consequences of Terrorism: A Public Health Strategy*. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); 2003. 2, Understanding the Psychological Consequences of Traumatic Events, Disasters, and Terrorism. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK221638/>

³⁰ Isaac I. Olufadewa, Miracle A. Adesina, & Ruth I. Oladele, "Mental Health Experiences, Challenges and Needed Support for Young Internally Displaced Persons in Northern Nigeria." <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666623522000447>

³¹United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) "Nigeria Emergency" <https://www.unhcr.org/nigeria-emergency.htm>



young individuals are often more susceptible to developing mental health disorders as a result of developmental factors and environmental stressors. Young people who live in IDP camps are considerably more likely to develop mental illnesses because, in addition to the aforementioned risks, they also have to deal with the detrimental impacts of environmental change, the death of loved ones, and other crippling consequences of violence.³²

Application of Moltmann's theology of hope to Nigerian Christian resilience:

- Suffering as a catalyst for faith: Nigerian Christians who have experienced terror have often deepened their faith and their relationship with God. They have found meaning and purpose in their suffering, believing that it is a test of their faith and a means of drawing closer to God.
- Hope for a better future: The hope for a better future, as articulated in Moltmann's theology of hope, has provided Nigerian Christians with a sense of resilience and determination. They believe that their suffering is not in vain and that God will ultimately bring about a just and peaceful society.
- The role of the church: Nigerian churches have played a crucial role in supporting Christians who have experienced terror. They have provided spiritual guidance, emotional support, and practical assistance, helping them to cope with their trauma and to rebuild their lives.
- Resistance against injustice: Nigerian Christians have often engaged in peaceful protests, advocacy, and community-building efforts to challenge the root causes of violence and to work towards a more just and equitable society. This resistance is rooted in their hope for a better future and their belief that they have a responsibility to speak out against injustice.

³² Isaac I. Olufadewa, Miracle A. Adesina, & Ruth I. Oladele, "Mental Health Experiences, Challenges and Needed Support for Young Internally Displaced Persons in Northern Nigeria." <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666623522000447>.



Conclusion

The Boko Haram insurgency and Fulani herdsmen activities have had a devastating impact on Nigerian Christians, resulting in widespread violence, displacement, and trauma. These attacks have been fuelled by religious and ideological factors, as well as underlying socioeconomic and political issues. Despite the challenges they face, Nigerian Christians have demonstrated remarkable resilience, drawing strength from their faith and their communities. Moltmann's theology of hope offers a powerful framework for understanding this resilience, emphasizing the transformative power of suffering and the promise of a better future.

Recommendations

1. **Comprehensive Security Measures:** The Nigerian government must implement effective security measures to protect citizens from Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen attacks. This includes increasing military presence in affected areas, improving intelligence gathering, and strengthening law enforcement capabilities.
2. **Addressing Root Causes:** The government should address the underlying causes of violence, such as poverty, unemployment, and inequality. This involves investing in education, healthcare, and infrastructure development, particularly in marginalized regions.
3. **Interfaith Dialogue:** Promoting interfaith dialogue and understanding can help to foster tolerance and cooperation between different religious groups. This can be achieved through educational programs, community events, and government initiatives.
4. **Justice and Accountability:** The perpetrators of violence against Christians must be held accountable for their actions. This requires a functioning justice system that can investigate and prosecute crimes effectively.
5. **Mental Health Support:** The psychological and emotional toll of terrorism on Nigerian Christians is significant. The government and humanitarian organizations should provide mental health support services to victims and survivors of violence.



6. Embracing the Theology of Hope: Nigerian Christians can draw strength from Moltmann's theology of hope, embracing the transformative power of suffering and the promise of a better future. This can be done through individual reflection, community gatherings, and spiritual practices.a

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