RECREATING COMMUNITY LIFE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN TIV SOCIETY, NIGERIA: “THE NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH” (IS 65:17-25)

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Community life is valued in most African societies. Among the Tiv, an ethnic group in central Nigeria, a sense of community is declining, as it is in many other African societies. Young people offer an opportunity to bring about social transformation in Tiv society in a way that increases integration and social solidarity while decreasing gangs and political manipulation. Effective forms of education include religious education emphasizing a future as found in Isaiah’s powerful vision of a “new heavens and the new earth.” In this way, young people will no longer be drawn to gangs but rather to create communities of people in relationships of mutual support and solidarity in the manner of the relational Trinity. The vision of an eschatological community realized at the consummation of history can also provide real power and motivation to rebuild societies in the present in light of God’s promise for the future.

Introduction

Community life is profoundly cherished among the Tiv people of central Nigeria. When things move in a positive direction, all enjoy a rich communal life, with those in privileged positions supporting the underprivileged in their hardships. However, when people experience difficulties in acquiring the basic necessities of life, they often resort to individualistic way of life, leading to an intense struggle for survival of persons without regard for others. Tiv people reject individualism, and Tiv culture is grounded in the idea that Tiv life flows from communal praxis. As described in a classic account of Tiv values:

The fortunes of the individual were reflected in the lives of all other members of the community, and each had a stake in the destiny of the other. Individualism was minimized, at least outwardly, in the interest of the clan (Yuhe 1978, 86).

Today, however, young people are vulnerable when they are frustrated in their life goals, often failing to find a sufficient level of community support or care. These young people have a high risk of deviancy. Some simply withdraw to a life of self-centredness, but others create gangs that in turn separate themselves from the larger society and disrupt
harmony within Tiv life.

This current work focuses on building communities among young people in Tiv society, a critical part of the future of the Nigerian nation. Tiv are the fourth largest ethnic group in the country and their experience represents those of Africans in transition and struggle throughout the continent. Young people are ready tools for disgruntled elements but at the same time they could also be protagonists to transform Nigeria through mutual community relations. Building on the praxis correlation method of practical theology, the concept of the “new heavens and the new earth” (Is 65: 17-25) offers a vision for building such a community in the image of the relational Trinity. This work also looks at the eschatological dimensions of community life.

A Social Analysis of the Tiv Context Vis-a-vis Nigeria

During the pre-colonial period, most African societies operated on a relatively egalitarian system. People lived within an extended family and clan system, where the needs of everyone were taken care of by the whole community, and there were no cases of extreme poverty or excessive wealth in the hands of a few (Zinkuratire 2004, 186). In the case of Tiv people, Yuhe (1978, 85) notes that community life was egalitarian, and there was no elite class which took decisions on behalf of the rest of the families in the community. The Ityo (community) reflects a fully egalitarian democratic community. In the Ijir Ityo (the traditional council) decisions were arrived at by consensus. Wegh affirms this social system as he maintains that “Tiv egalitarianism is demonstrated clearly in decision-making processes. During traditional council meetings, decisions are arrived at by consensus of elders who represent their various communities” (2003, 51).

Colonialism distorted these systems, which were at once cultural, political, economic, and religious. The way religion is understood and used in Nigeria today is the opposite of traditional Tiv understanding where religion is not a separate sphere distinct from the social,
political, economic and moral spheres. Tiv community life is deeply embedded with socio-religious values such as respect, honour, love, truth, equality, justice, peace and harmony. Disregard for the sacral order of the Tiv society threatens both one’s personal well-being and the harmony of the whole communal, cultural structure (Atel 2004, 25). Religion, in this sense, unites Tiv people and through this religious worldview, which deeply pervades everyday life, they live in solidarity with one another.

In Nigeria today, however, ethnic and religious divisions are rising, and in recent times violence such as that represented by the deadly Boko Haram (“western education is sin”), Islamic jihadists, have emerged, becoming a major personal and collective security challenge. These are often portrayed as religious conflicts, though their roots typically lie elsewhere. In discussing religious conflict in Nigeria, Gotan (1998, 92) observes that religion has been so politicized, militarized, and manipulated by unscrupulous politicians to fan the embers of rivalry, political antagonism, and ethnic discrimination that it now poses the greatest threat to national understanding and peaceful co-existence. Such co-existence, so vital for such a rich multi-ethnic country as Nigeria, is a prerequisite for unity, progress, and development. Thus, a paradox emerges: though religion creates intentional communities, it is instead shattering the communal of life of the people. This creates fear, and Tiv today live under the threat that they could be attacked by the jihadists, which in turn heightens fear and insecurity, affecting their communal life. Politicians do not help matters when they use churches within Tiv society during political campaigns, sometimes to give financial support to churches and their work, and at times to seek financial assistance or support from powerful churches. In the process, they make speeches that further create rivalry, which widens the gaps between different political affiliates who happen to be members of those churches.

Nigerian politics includes election rigging and even the use of hired thugs, resulting in the further diminishment of people’s political voice. When some politicians fail to win a
majority in Tivland, they still insist on holding on to power, and so resort to using Tiv youth to rig elections. As the Tiv put it, *ya na angbian*, “one eats and gives one’s kin.” Political leadership rotates across families out of a sense of consensus and sharing. Not surprisingly, Tiv are always ready to resist imposition of a political leader on them and such an imposition has a dramatic effect on the harmonious life of the community.

[The] readiness of the Tiv to expose the wrongs of those in authority should not be misconstrued as a demonstration of hatred for those people. Instead, it must be understood in the context of Tiv culture which emphasises the principle *ya na angbian* (eat and give your kin). The principle is opposed to any attempt by an individual to accumulate material wealth for himself without sharing it with others (Wegh 2003, 50).

A political climate that draws legitimacy from democratic principles yet imposes electoral candidates without free and fair elections produces illegitimate leaders. Olusegun Obasanjo, a former president of Nigeria, speaking at the Fourth Annual Conference of the Academy for Entrepreneurial Studies Nigeria (AES) in Lagos city, described legislators at the state and federal levels as “rogues and armed robbers” who have usurped public offices (Jibueze 2012). Such sentiments are common in Nigeria.

The judicial sector itself often demonstrates blatant disregard for the rule of law. It instead protects the wealthy and tramples on vulnerable members of society. For example, on June 8, 2012, the Supreme Court of Nigeria ruled that 180 days had elapsed and that litigations regarding the Benue State gubernatorial elections would no longer be accepted.¹ This has far-reaching implications for Tiv society as well as Benue State and Nigeria in general. Since the door of justice has been slammed in the face of the opposition party, the electorates will now move to developing creative ways of protecting their votes, which may

¹ The case was filed by Steve Ugba of the opposition Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) against the incumbent government of Gabriel Suswam of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).
end in violence against those who steal the ballot. This inhibition of justice is particularly critical for the Tiv, who have a very strong communal sense of justice. The head of the home called or ya is responsible for the daily peace-keeping and settlement of differences in matters of debt, theft, and domestic disputes, including domestic violence. Punishment is meted out to offenders accordingly and directly. Thieves are flogged publically and made to pay restitution (Wegh 2003, 57). In Nigerian society, these traditions are gradually eroding but the sense of a “moral economy” remains strong.

Of course, the country can truly develop only when its systems and institutions are strengthened. Eminent Nigerians, including former presidents, have emphasized the importance of a reliable judiciary that guarantees democratic, economic and socio-political development (Jibueze 2012). Unfortunately, law-makers who dispense the law have seemingly sold justice to the wealthy and the powerful, who use their power to snatch land from the poor and deprive them of their property (Akaabiam 2011, 156).

Colonialism disrupted the harmony of Tiv society. Colonial-era taxation subjected Tiv people to personal and physical assaults, and has been a collective traumatic memory. Wegh (2003, 134) recalls that people selected as tax collectors by British authorities went from house to house, beating those suspected of evading taxes and even torturing them through exposure to the scorching sun. As Tseayo argues, the introduction of taxation tightened the influence of the compound head over his people, since he was made responsible for ensuring that those under his control paid their taxes (Wegh 2003, 136). A cash economy developed around the same period as a result of the taxation of the colonial power. Introduction of cash crops and the involvement of young men in the construction of the rail line in the early 1920s led to many economic changes as well as shifts in the social structure and family life. Wegh (2003, 186) argues that young men who had acquired wealth as railway workers and cultivators of benniseed for export started pressing for social and institutional reforms. The
workers wanted the *yam she* tradition ("exchange marriage," whereby one exchanged his sister for a wife) abolished and bride-price introduced. Exchange marriage knitted extended families together because even those who had no sister to exchange could receive a sister or *ngyôr* from a relation who had more. In other words, the cash economy under colonialism damaged Tiv community life. In Nigeria today, as the economy continues to grow, income gaps continue to widen creating misery and social division. Corruption has become more prevalent; the rich are getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer.

Tiv culture is strongly patriarchal, and more so now than before the colonial period. The woman is inferior and subordinate to the man, preventing the possibility of mutuality in marriage. Many Tiv cultural practices are oppressive towards women. If a woman does not give birth to any male children, she is blamed. Worse still, if she is barren, she is asked to quit the marriage. Most families do not extend the right of inheritance to a female child. Similarly, a widow has no right to inherit her late husband’s property and in some cases, she is even accused of his death. After the burial of the deceased husband, she is obliged to mourn her late husband for a maximum period of one year. During this time, she dresses in mourning clothes. A man may marry as many wives as he wishes and even keep concubines outside the matrimonial home in order to satisfy his sexual desires, but a woman’s extramarital affair is considered the worst crime.

This subordination of women can be found throughout Africa and is not confined to Tiv society. Oduyoye (1995, 39) observes that women lack the capacity to challenge African culture, even when they have judged its practices to be inhuman and unjust. Only on very rare occasions have African women challenged African cultural practices, as in the case of the Presbyterian women of Kenya who, as far back as 1922, formed the Council of the Shield to resist female circumcision (1995, 39).
Youth Employment as Means of Social Integration

Young adults constitute a sizeable portion of the working population and there is great need for their integration into mainstream society. Ruhl (N.d.), World Bank Country Director for Nigeria, Africa Region makes reference to the Nigerian Youth Policy Document which defines youth as persons between ages 18 to 35 years. For the purpose of this paper and in line with international practice, a young adult is a person between ages 18 and 24 years. In Nigeria, any person who reaches the age of 18 is legally considered a young adult with voting rights. They normally would have completed secondary education, and many are in institutions of higher education such as the university. They need access to education and employment as well as reproductive health information and services.

Education can be a major factor in enhancing social integration. Through education, people come to accept new experiences that prepare them to participate in social and economic life. Furthermore, the desire for education can prompt a decision to migrate to the city. A basic primary education makes many young people dissatisfied with rural life, and opens their eyes to the opportunities in the city. Most importantly, the decision to migrate is seen as a further step in a socialization process. Those sent to school by rural parents are expected to seek work in the city upon completing their education (Wegh 2003, 194-195). Ruhl’s argument that young people migrate to the city to remake themselves corroborates with Wegh’s (2003, 196) finding that Tiv youth increase the social status of their families when they migrate to the city to look for jobs or to pursue higher education. When young people find themselves in the city, they either stay with their relatives or friends where they have access to free housing, and free food. This shows a strong continuing notion of solidarity and community life emanating from relationship with people in the city.

In Nigeria, young people of working age are confronted with personal challenges in
security, including often overwhelming economic challenges. Many roam the streets unemployed, effectively excluded from mainstream society, unable to achieve self-reliance. Some members turn to escapism through drugs and alcohol. Others attempt to remake themselves in other anonymous urban settings. In areas of political and social fragility, some join rebel groups or armed militant gangs. Many unemployed young Nigerians have become involved in ethnic militia and other forms of militancy because these promise much deeper means of empowerment than life on the streets (Kakwagh and Ikwuba 2010, 1). Such involvement provides quick returns without any serious capital investment. Most of the street youth who became combatants can hardly read or write. Many are from disadvantaged or marginalized ethnic groups.

Since opportunities to earn a livelihood are inadequate, many urban youth have turned to gangs. Most have distinct sub-cultures with well developed social structures guarded by a clear hierarchy (2010). The proliferation of youth gangs in Nigeria creates problems for the larger society as well as the youth themselves. Society suffers from the effects of gang-related crimes such as robbery, kidnapping, rape, and murder, and gang members miss opportunities for education, which is necessary for their development as good citizens.

The principal factor that propels youth restiveness in Nigeria is the simple reality of the systematic neglect of the youth (Ubhenin an Enabunene 2011). Young people have great promise, but this promise remains idle due to serious social problems. For example, Adebanwi (2005) examined the cultural repertoires of the youthful, ‘militant’ faction of the Oodua People’s Congress (OPC) in Nigeria and concluded that youth were very effective in negotiating the identity of Yoruba people of Western Nigeria.

**Young People: A Pro-active Population Segment**

Young people in Nigeria often lead demonstrations and protests, both peaceful and violent. At the beginning of 2012, Nigerians came together to resist dramatic increases in
prices for basic needs. When President Jonathan announced the deregulation of the
distribution of gasoline and other petroleum products, leading to considerable suffering for
ordinary Nigerians, protests spontaneously occurred throughout the country. The President
confirmed the vociferous protests across the nation when he stated that, “since the
announcement, there have been mixed reactions to the policy” (2012, No. 4). Young people
reported that students and youths took to the streets to protest the removal of fuel subsidy.
The leader of the Students’ Youth Coalition, urged students not to rest until the fuel subsidy
was reinstated. The consequence of their determination was the loss of lives. For instance, in
Niger State within central Nigeria, two youths, Yahaya Adamu and Rabiu Abubakar were
murdered by police with live ammunition following a protest at Lambata in Gurara Local
Government Area, while 212 were arrested in another day’s protest in Minna, the State
Capital (Suberu, Ebhuomhan, Dennis, Lawal, Oyeweso, and Olaitan 2012). Even though the
government used force, the peaceful demonstration was successful: the total removal of the
fuel subsidy was reversed.

The peaceful protest of youth in Nigeria correlates with the experience of insurgence
of the 200 Chosun University students in Korea who led antigovernment demonstrations
(Moon 1999, 107). As the insurrection continued, over 200,000 people joined to publically
register their grievances (1999, 108). It was basically economic and political marginalization
that formed the foundation of the antigovernment movement. The minjung in Kwangju
challenged the individuals and social structures that maintain and sustain sin and evil
governments. In Moon’s perspective, the multitude of protesters taken as a corporate
Suffering Servant in Isaiah 52:13-53:12, had to suffer on behalf of the people of Korea; “they
were wounded for the transgressions of others” (1999, 111).

In another report by Ojo (2012), a group identified as Niger-Delta Youth Awareness
Council (NDYAC) urged the legislators in the National Assembly in Nigeria to impeach President Goodluck Jonathan to save the country from total collapse. Some of the reasons they proffered include the President’s unilateral decision to deregulate the downstream sector of the petroleum industry, and his inability to curb the activities of the deadly *Boko Haram* Islamic sect that is bombarding and killing innocent people. Seen as a nation of people who are proactive in transforming society corroborates with what happened in Nicaragua where the Sandinista Front was instrumental in overthrowing the leader of Government. This proactivity was borne from the conviction that the coming to awareness of themselves as a people with the potential for doing what seemed impossible, that is, to defeat a powerful army, the National Guard (Pixley 1999, 98). The step taken towards recreating their nation was the literacy campaign embarked upon by the leadership of the Sandinista Front. Not only did this literacy lower illiteracy drastically, “but it also brought the country together, as young people in the cities devoted one school year to travel to remote regions and live with isolated peasants in order to teach them to read and write (1999, 98).” This strategy made them grow in solidarity with the peasants, and consequently enhanced community life.

**The Social Context of the Book of Isaiah**

When God constituted the nation of Israel, it was initially a theocratic nation. However, when the people demanded a king, kingship was institutionalized. Monarchy in Israel brought so many changes in the nation just as colonialism brought changes in Tiv society. Zinkuratire’s study of Isaiah 1-39 (2004, 186) supports the view that the society Isaiah addressed in the eighth century had undergone great socioeconomic and political changes since the introduction of monarchy. He viewed these changes against the background of the social organization of Israel as a people. Before the institution of monarchy, there was tribal confederation, and the population was predominantly peasant living in egalitarian communities under the leadership of elders. This system promoted strong community ties to
provide for the welfare of everyone, especially the weaker members of society, such as widows and orphans.

Under the monarchy, the economy was centralized under the control of the ruling class. The powerful accumulated more wealth while ordinary citizens were impoverished through unjust and exploitative practices (Zinkuratire 2004, 186). Although monarchy brought some advantages such as political organization, some of the kings were corrupt. The eighth century was marked by prosperity. However, the true health of the nation cannot be measured merely in terms of its total wealth but also from its moral pulse (Craigie 1984; Akaabiam 2011, 150). In this latter sense, the nation was on the verge of collapse. Socioeconomic ills had created a gulf separating the rich from the poor, though Yahweh’s covenant did not allow for this. Power and wealth were in the hands of a few, and the populace was oppressed and exploited. The nation had departed from the fundamental norms of mispat (justice) and tsedakah (righteousness), leading them into disobedience and, ultimately, exile.

Observing the effect of elite system, Zinkuratire (2004, 187) notes that the transition from egalitarian system to the modern elite system has weakened African values and strengthened the present system of secularization. In both the biblical situation and that of the Tiv people today, there is the implicit rejection of God’s absolute sovereignty as human beings rely heavily on political, economic, and military might, as well as trust in foreign alliances.

**Interpretation of Isaiah 65:17-25**

In biblical hermeneutics, social location is an indispensable element. The social location of the interpreter to a large extent influences his or her interpretation of the Bible. This view is supported by Lee who says,
[Very] few will deny that, no matter how objective we claim our biblical interpretation to be, we are bound by our own background and that our own context either sets limits to our understanding or enables us to gain insight that would otherwise be hidden from us (1995, 98).

Commentators have associated third Isaiah (56-66) with the Persian or postexilic period 538-450 B-C-E). The text under consideration is assumed to be located within the period between the Edict of Cyrus (538 B-C-E), and the completion of the second temple (515 B-C-E). The texts are best understood as pointing toward the final completion of the temple. Chan conjectures Isaiah 65 and 66 arise from the historical context of the second temple building (2010, 449).

In interpreting the text, Brueggmann (1993, 78) favours an inter-textual approach that views Isaiah 65:17-25 in relation to 1:21-26 where the oracle in the first part of Isaiah finds fulfilment in Trito Isaiah. This presupposes that in order to understand the context of the “new heavens and the new earth” in Isaiah 65:17, it is appropriate to take a step backward and look at God’s initial intention for the city of Jerusalem and Israel as a people. This verse is not viewed in isolation but in the general context of Isaiah 65: 17-25.

Brueggmann (1993, 77) lays the background to understanding the book of Isaiah in the context of God’s recreation agenda. In Isaiah, and particularly in 1:21-26, we are given a synopsis of the whole history of the city of Jerusalem as a model of urban crisis and possibility. The book of Isaiah maps this in three different rhetorical moves. The city intended by God is for (i) faithfulness, justice, and righteousness, (ii) social relations, and (iii) structures that work for the good of all. That is, the city is a place of rightly deployed resources. But the city runs amok, becomes a whore, forsakes justice and righteousness, and then becomes a place of murder, bribes, and disregard of widows and orphans. This sorry state will eventually lead to suffering, displacement, and exile. After these experiences, vision of recreation breaks in. The oracle asserts a third season of the city which comes “afterward.”
The city will become the city of just social relations promised in the first place. It will be mindful of widows, and orphans, and God’s resources will be managed for the well-being of the weak and the marginalized. The poem of 65: 17-25 at the end of the book of Isaiah serves as fulfilment to God’s intention to recreate Israel.

This passage highlights two principal ideas. First, it stresses the concept of newness. Whatever God creates in the future is going to be substantially different than what existed previously. This new creation of God involves several new things: a new cosmos (verse 17), a new nation (verses 18-19), and a new humanity (20), a new lifestyle (21-22), a new relationship with God (23-24), and a new environment (25). This eschatological work of God, first conceived in Isaiah 4:2-6, comes to full fruition with the creation of new realities (Marbud 2001, 132-133).

As Goldingay (2001, 368) notes, if this text is read out of the context of Isaiah, Yahweh’s description of the new heavens and a new earth (v.17) sounds like an abandonment of this cosmos for the creation of a new one. Instead, verses 18-25 make clear that the language refers to a radical transformation of this cosmos, especially of the city in which the people live. Creating a new heavens and new earth suggests “recreating.” In Watts’ (2005, 924) opinion, the word creating can be used only with God as subject. It appears nine times in Genesis, and nineteen times in Trito Isaiah including three times in 65: 17-25.

Tiv society is in need of creation of community life especially among young people as referenced in verses 23-24 in the creation of new relationships.

**Community Life among Young People in Tiv Society**

The effects of colonialism and the Nigerian civil war call for building new community relations among youth in Tiv society of central Nigeria. Alec Motyer (1993, 529) connects Isaiah’s heavens and earth as representing the totality of things. Herbert (1975, 187) says they refer to this physical world in which people will be free from the hardships of life. When
applied to Tiv society, it implies the reign of peace in all facets life.

Those who fought for Nigeria’s independence had the intention of building the country with economic prosperity. This benefited Tiv society as well. Particularly with the subsequent creation of Benue State, its capital, Makurdi city, grew rapidly. Young people started migrating to the city in search of educational and economic opportunities. Communal life gradually emerged. Young people who came to the city stayed with relations and received room and board. The spirit behind this cohabitation was to assist migrant youth find their way so they could be of help to others and thus reduce the circle of poverty in Tivland. Today, young people who live together in most cases are students who pool their resources together for communal use. They adopt a common use of toiletries, share clothes among themselves, and eat together, cooking for each other in turns. Their sense of community life is strong.

As people of heterogeneous family backgrounds, schools foster the socialization process by aiding young people to cultivate enduring social relationships. In order to ensure respect for oneself and others, one needs an education that enables learners to think beyond their individual and ethnic interests (Yusuf, 2005, 10). Wegh (2003, 186) suggests that education is correlated with modernization because it brings new attitudes, values, and forms of behaviors. Education also helps to boost self-esteem and self-worth, which makes the learning environment very important in this regard. In Tiv society, where children learn under trees shades while sitting on logs, the lack of access to comfortable classrooms continues to hamper the full development of the human person and proper integration into the community.

The greatest danger to community life among Tiv youth is the precarious condition of economic hardships that most of them undergo. Such challenges make young people resist anti-student government policies. Education is a right and government must provide access to this basic right. When the government fails to do so, mutual support of the youth is
imperative. This corroborates with the Tiv saying, *avenge waren iorov uhar hen tine kon ga*, “a lizard does not escape two people around the trunk of a tree.”

Most Tiv youth in tertiary institutions come from backgrounds of low economic status, which makes it hard for them to afford accommodations and other needs. In the present circumstances, national wealth goes to other purposes, often to corrupt politicians, and the government cannot fund education adequately to help needy students. Confronted with such realities, Tiv youth form relationships, and strategies to help themselves. Instead of forming gangs, such unity and solidarity promotes community life. Those who can will in conscience support those in need so that together they have the privilege of going through higher education without dropping out. The support for needy students is imperative. In this regard, the relational Trinity provides the basis for community life.

Another important strategy that helps to build communities for young people in Tiv society is creating places of recreation or voluntary social organizations. In those places, young people play together and form social responsible groups. This includes social groups like Able Ladies, a group of young unmarried Tiv women who come together to cultivate character and virtue among themselves. There is another group called Humble Friends whose members are made up of young boys and girls who pool resources together to help each other in times of need. Social relations of these kinds help to integrate young people into the society.

This way of life may be understood against the background of the concept of the Trinity found in Christian tradition. This brings fresh insights into discussion on relationship and community life among young people in Tiv society. Drawing from the ground-breaking work *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* by Catherine Mowry LaCugna, Cahalan (2010, 149) argues that who God is, is in essence, what God does. Contemporary theologians are retrieving ancient insights into God as relationship, communion, and unity in love and
mission. They offer a way of thinking about God in relationship to the concept of practice in fresh ways. Contemporary theologians have retrieved the Cappadocian fathers’ (Saints Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory Nazienzus) insight that God is three persons in relationship, a divine communion of three persons understood as relational and actively engaged with the universe. This insight counters Hellenistic-influenced theology that speaks of God as a pure being that is immutable, distant, static, and unmovable (2010, 152). This implies that the divine reality is relational. The distinction between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is not their nature or substance but their personhood. To be a person is essentially relational, and the distinctions between the three persons are defined by relationship (2010, 153). In a similar way, youth in Tiv society are called to share a relationship of unity, equality, and harmony.

As Augustine notes,

In the father is unity, in the Son is equality, in the Holy Spirit the harmony of unity and equality; and these three attributes are all one because of the father, all equal because of the Son, and all harmonious because of the Holy Spirit (2009, 5).

The similar Tiv concept of community life Atel (2004, 23) locates this concept in sayings like kon mom ngu lun ikyọ ga, “a single tree does not make a forest,” and ka tyem imọngu Mbagbera ve fe iwa ye, “it is only by sitting together have the people of Mbagbera come to know the art of blacksmithing,” and ya na angbian, “eat and give to your kin.” All these express the fact that no Tiv person is an island. In the context of young people, these maxims serve as basis through which they must view themselves with reference to the community into which they were born, and to look at existence from the point of view of communal relationship which does not place some members of the group above others.

When young people in privileged positions imagine themselves to be superior, it creates a harmful attitude to community life. Johnson (2007, 223) has rightly observed that harmful attitudes and practices have arisen in church and society because one group imagines
itself superior to another. Such breaks in community totally oppose God’s own way of relating, therefore, people of faith have compelling reasons to behave otherwise. Since people of faith are called to be a symbol of love, they are a community of equal persons related in profound mutuality, pouring out praise of God and care for the world in need. Only then can such a group of believers correspond to the triune God they purport to serve. The vision for such a community is realized at the eschatological community in heaven.

**Eschatological Notion of Community Life**

Eschatology is the Christian doctrine of the “last things” (Grenz, 1994, 743). These last things include death, judgement, heaven or hell. Attainment of heaven in this sense is the goal of every Christian. This doctrine speaks about God’s goal or purpose for God’s activity in the lives of individuals, human history, and creation. There are three dimensions of eschatology which include personal eschatology, corporate eschatology, and cosmic eschatology (Grenz, 1994, 743). Eschatology is either viewed as a present or future reality. Boda (2007, 2) cites Rose and Collins who speak of a future eschatological figure, and Collins particularly characterizes this future as qualitatively ‘eschatological’ and at the ‘end time.’ The end time cosmic aspect of eschatology looks to the eternity that lies beyond history. God is directing all creation towards the final goal, namely, the eternal community of the new heavens and the new earth (Grenz, 1994, 744).

Koch (1990, 8) makes a connection with Isaiah 1:21-26 and eschatology as it mentions implicitly of condemnation and salvation which resonates with God’s justice. In this case, young people who establish good human relationships among themselves and others will be rewarded, and those who behave waywardly will be punished. In this text, the main objective is God’s desire not to destroy but to recreate Jerusalem. This implies that the ultimate goal of the text is not the severe critique of Jerusalem and by extension, the contemporary society with the consequences of decline and devastation, but instead the
announcement of the creation of a state of salvation. This text makes reference to an eon that situates God’s faithful people in a comfortable state of existence. Salvation in Isaiah embraces the big story of humanity and its relationship with God, or what Koch calls metahistory. This means that in order to recognize the essence of God and his attitude toward his human creatures, it is necessary to look not only at the present situation but also to become aware of the past and the future viewed from religious and moral vantage points (1990, 8). Isaiah 51:4-8 makes reference to God’s salvation which is for all generations. God is faithful in saving God’s people. However, this salvation must be accompanied by righteous deeds on the part of the people. God’s creation is not merely a thing of the past and present but rather has eschatological dimensions (Marbud, 2001, 128).

Isaiah 65:17-25 places creation squarely in the future as an eschatological fulfilment. This passage is clearly eschatological and the eschatological framework of Isaiah 40-66 comes into full view in that the prophet envisages a new creation, a universal new beginning (Marbud, 2001, 136). Grenz (1994, 839) submits that God’s purpose for creation has not been realized. At the appropriate time, God will inaugurate the glorious new order in which all creation will reflect its divinely intended form. Through Isaiah, God declared, ‘[behold] I will create new heaven and new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind’ (Isaiah 65: 17) (1994, 839-840). Building on Isaiah, John saw this vision which transcended judgment, ‘[then] I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away’ (Rev. 21:1) (1994, 840). In the new creation, God will banish all that is harmful, and humanity will enjoy an environment that is free from decay, disease, and death (Rom. 8:21; Rev. 21:4), and there will be no more dearth of the necessities that sustain life (1994, 841).

Ultimately, the new creation is the presence of the new community in its fullness. One of the characteristics of this community is that the eternal community will be a place where
God is present. It will mark the completion of the promise that runs throughout the entire Bible that God will be present among God’s people (1994, 842). The renewed cosmos will be a community in the highest sense, for it will be home not only to creatures but to the triune God as well. The One who throughout eternity is the community of persons will also be present in this eschatological community (1994, 843).

Another important characteristic of this community is that it be a place of fellowship. Because of the presence of God, the new creation will usher peace, harmony, love, and righteousness, which will be founded everywhere without exception. Humanity will be reconciled with God, and enjoys fellowship with each other, since the eternal community is also a social reality. There will also be fellowship among all creation in such a way that even animosity among animals will cease. Isaiah thus talks of the wolf learning to feed with the lamb (Isaiah 65: 25). “No longer will fear and competition exist among any of God’s creatures. Instead all creation will know the peace that results from the cosmic liberation from the effects of our alienation from God” (1994, 844).

The third characteristic of the eschatological community is that it is a place of glorification. The final judgment will effect an eternal glorification in which all the inhabitants of the new creation will participate. The Holy Spirit will bring humanity into perfect conformity with Christ, thereby effecting in human beings the fulfilment of God’s purpose for human kind. In this place God is glorified, humanity offers God praise and worship, and indeed the whole creation is glorified. In the eternal community, the Father’s glorification of the Son and the Son’s glorification of the Father are accomplished by the work of the Holy Spirit. This brings to an end the consummation of history. “In this way, the Spirit eternally glorifies the Father and the Son both within the divine life and by completing the mission of God in bringing creation to share in eschatological glorification” (1994, 845).
Conclusion

This paper analyzes social conditions in Nigeria that affect the social integration and cohesion of youth in Tiv society. Limited employment opportunities and social amenities have led to unprecedented cases of gangsterism, ethnic militia, poverty, and other social vices, which have made it imperative to promulgate a theology of community life among young people anchored on mutual support. The only way to make Tiv society a better place is to give young people the attention they deserve. Just as God revealed Godself in a particular historical context, this paper begins with Tiv youth of central Nigeria. Even when government fails in providing the basic necessities of life, Tiv youth have to learn to be supportive of one another thus forming a community of persons in relationship as depicted by the nascent Jerusalem community whereby “[All] who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need” (Acts 2:44-45). A society of this sort, where welfare conditions reflect Trinitarian relational models, points to the vision of an eschatological community realized at the consummation of history.
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Clement Terseer Iorliam is a Catholic priest of the diocese of Makudi in central Nigeria. He is currently a Ph.D. student in Practical Theology at St Thomas University, Miami Florida. His research interests are youth, culture and religion. He is also interested in ecology, family life, and pastoral practice. He has rich experience of working with youth in public institutions in Nigeria.

Email: gyata1@yahoo.co.uk