RETHINKING CHRISTIAN IDENTITY: AFRICAN REFLECTIONS FROM PAULINE WRITINGS

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ABSTRACT. Despite its existence for over a century in Africa and statistics putting the Christian populations at average 80 percent mostly in sub-Saharan African countries, Christianity has not managed to provide an alternative identity to ethnicity as issues of identity continue dogging the continent. Many African societies remain divided and at war on the basis of identities, be they racial, tribal, creedal, gender, class, language or other identities. Surprisingly, this state of affairs is also found even within the precincts of the church. Many churches remain divided along racial, ethnic, tribal, and other identities. One does not need to look far and wide to acknowledge this reality. Does Christianity have an identity? Could the writings of Paul address the issues of Christian identity? Or do the writings address this problem at all? These are the questions at the heart of this paper. Making use of Pauline texts such as Galatians 3:28 and scholarly works such as those of Buell and Hodge (2004:237), I discuss Paul's understanding of Christian identity and its implications for Christian identity in Africa today.

KEY WORDS: identity, ethnocentrism, Ubuntu, race, tribe, gender

Introduction

Identity is very central to human existence. Family, tribe, ethnicity, nationhood, and religion are all forms of identity that shape individual self-understanding and behavior. In Africa, we can add totemism as another form of identity marker and individuals derive pride from belonging to a particular totem. Thus, totemic praise poetry is prevalent in most African communities (Pongweni 1983:16). As Thomas Kochalumchuvattil (2010: 109) has correctly pointed out, identity brings significance and meaning to human life, which points to the reason, especially in Africa, identity has always been a key issue facing humankind. But, although identity provides significance and meaning to human beings' lives, it has also been a source of crisis in Africa. Many African societies remain divided and at war on the basis of identities, be they racial, ethnic, tribal, creedal, gender, class, language, and other identities. Particularly, ethnic identity is the major culprit.

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In light of this, scholars have struggled to find the root causes of these identity problems with some suggesting colonialism and neo-colonialism as major contributing factors (Maathai 2009:12). Finding the causes is, however, beyond the scope of this paper. Rather we focus on possible solutions. Many African philosophers and theologians have called for the revival of the African philosophy of *ubuntu/unhu/botho* (humanness) as the solution to a number of African problems including identity related struggles. Nisbert Taringa (2007:185-196), for example, suggests *ubuntu* as a cultural resource that can be used to promote intercultural dialogue in Africa because *ubuntu* inspires people to expose themselves to others, to encounter the difference of their humanness so as to inform and enrich their own. Defining *ubuntu* (while calling it *botho* from the Setswana language) from a metaphysical perspective as human being-hood or the essence of being a human person, Gaie (2007:29-41) believes that it is a concept that can be used for effective HIV and AIDS response. On the other hand, Tambulasi and Kayuni (2009:427-440) cite Nussbaum who believes that *ubuntu* expresses our interconnectedness, our common humanity and responsibility to each other that deeply flows from our deeply felt connection. They call for the amalgamation of *ubuntu* and democracy and governance in Malawi. *Ubuntu* calls for individuals to put the interests and good of others before theirs as they find their welfare in others' welfare. Although some scholars have pointed out some weaknesses of *ubuntu* in solving Africa's problems, I am of the opinion that re-emphasizing the concept of *ubuntu* is one way of resolving Africa's problems (Kochalumchuvattil 2009:108).

I, however, take seriously the criticism that *ubuntu* pays scant attention to self-individualization as it places too much emphasis on the community. The reality in Africa today is that, through the influences of Western culture brought by colonialism, Christianity, and globalization, many people now consider individual good before the community. Instead of the traditional 'I am because we are and because we are therefore I am' (Mbiti 1969), people are now asking, 'What is in it for me?' Cash economy and the capitalist economic system which is practiced by many states emphasize individual gain and profitability at the expense of the community. We therefore need to consider new solutions that respect both the welfare and the good of the individual as well as those of the community. From this perspective, I suggest Christian identity as found in the writings of Paul as possible solution to resolve Africa's problems caused by issues of identity. I do so in view of the fact that Christianity, in its various manifestations and practices, continues to have significant influence on the lives and practices of many individuals and societies in Africa today. With statistics putting Christians at around 80 percent in most sub-Saharan African countries, social solutions underlining Christian values are likely to have significant influence. This is because the

church continues to play a key role in influencing human behavior in this part of Africa. Thus, this paper attempts to interpret Pauline texts that have a bearing on Christian identity in a bid to highlight them for Christian identity formation that can help resolve social problems caused by issues of identity in Africa.

Earlier attempts on the need for a Christian identity have been made (Kamaara 2010, Torimo 2008). This paper adds a voice to these works by interpreting specific Pauline texts that can be used in developing an African Christian identity. I am also cognizant of the fact that sometimes Christian identity causes its own problems as in the case of Central Africa Republic, Nigeria, and other African countries where there are serious Christian-Muslim conflicts. I therefore argue for a Christian identity that is tolerant of other religious traditions. The paper is divided into three sections. In the first section that follows this introduction, I highlight recent African problems that have been caused by issues of identity. This is to make the reader appreciate the magnitude of problems caused by identity issues. In the second section, I discuss Paul's understanding of Christian identity. Here, I look at how some New Testament scholars have interpreted these texts bringing to the fore my own understanding of these texts. This is meant to prepare for section three in which I will then reflect on how the Pauline teaching on Christian identity formation can be of use in a society that generally claims Christianity as its religion. A conclusion will wrap up the central arguments of the paper.

Identity Issues in Africa

Africa has been described as 'a continent in turmoil' (Bujra 2002:1), due to many conflicts and crises that the continent experiences. Often these conflicts have something to do with identities, particularly, tribal or ethnic although others have been on the basis of religion, politics, and social class. In this section I will give examples of recent conflicts showing how issues of identity have been central in these conflicts.

Beginning with the year 2012, the Central African Republic saw a wave of violent armed conflicts between Muslims and Christians. The conflicts displaced tens of thousands of people (Global Conflict Tracker 2015). Christian-Muslim clashes have also characterized religious conflicts in Nigeria. We, however, pay close attention to ethnic based conflict among Christians as this paper suggests the use of Christian values for peaceful co-existence amongst predominantly Christian societies.

The Rwandan genocide of 1994 stands out as one major ethnic conflict that shook the world. The conflict that lasted from April to July 1994 saw the death of more than 800 000 people (Longman 2001:164). A result of the ethnic conflict between the Hutu ethnic majority and Tutsi minority,

the majority of the people murdered were Tutsi. When the Tutsi led Rwandese Patriotic Front eventually gained control of the country in July 1994, this resulted in another humanitarian crisis as millions of Hutu fled the country.

In the past few years, Africa has witnessed a number of other ethnic based conflicts. Following the elections of 2006 in the Democratic Republic of Congo, ethnic based conflicts arose as the Tutsis realized that their representation in government had been reduced through loss in the elections. They believed their future lied not in elections but in fighting. This saw the outbreak of ethnic wars that have not been fully resolved to date.

In addition, still fresh in the memories of many is the ethnic conflict in Kenya following the election results of 2007. John Oucho (2002) gives a detailed analysis of ethnic conflicts in the Rift Valley in Kenya. He shows that ethnic conflicts have been part of Kenya's history for a long time. The 2007 conflict was, however, quite widespread and possibly one of a kind that the post-independent country had not witnessed. The conflict resulted in loss of hundreds of lives, exodus of a quarter of a million people and widespread destruction of property (Oucho 2002). So deep rooted were ethnic feelings that at a conference in Uganda in 2012, one Kenyan participant told me that she would find it difficult to forgive those of the other ethnic group that massacred her relatives. Even now, ethnicity is central in Kenya that even voting patterns in elections follow ethnic lines. There were ethnic clashes during the presidential elections in 1992, 1997, and 2002 (Kanyinga 2010).

In Zimbabwe, we have witnessed both racism and ethnicity in the recent conflicts that the country has experienced. Whereas the Gukurahundi atrocities[1] of the early 1990s were ethnic based, the recent conflicts between the blacks and whites over land, have been racist. Such conflicts have even been experienced in the church, for example, the case with the Zimbabwe Anglican Church in which the church got divided between those who followed bishop Nobert Kunonga on the one hand and bishop Chad Gandiya on the other (Gunda 2008:299).

There are many other ethnic conflicts that have recently taken place in Africa. Surprisingly, in the examples we cited above (and this is generally the trend elsewhere), these ethnic conflicts happen in countries with high numbers of Christians. In Rwanda, Christian population is put at more

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1   This was a conflict between the government of Robert Mugabe (predominantly Shona) and Zimbabwe African People's Union or ZAPU (predominantly Ndebele political party). The 1997 Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace report provides details of the conflict.

than 90 percent (Longman 2001:164). Despite this and in apparent contradiction, most of the people killed during the genocide were killed in churches with church officials being involved in the commission of the genocide. Research by Timothy Longman (2001:163-186) shows that Christians were deeply involved in the 1994 genocide. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Christian population is put at 96 percent, while in Kenya it is estimated at 82 percent and standing around 80 percent in Zimbabwe (Gundani 2000:176).

Although some political scientists see religion as an aspect of social identity that defines an individual as part of a social group (Longman 2001:164), it appears Christianity has not quite played that role in most parts of sub-Saharan Africa.[2] In predominantly Christian countries such as Rwanda, religion has not played that role of identity formation. Thus, in the case of Rwanda, Longman (2001:165) writes that 'religious affiliation is not a significant signifier of group identity. Ethnicity and region are far more significant as ascribed identifiers…' In a way, one can actually observe that instead of Christian churches helping in producing Christian identities that cut across ethnicities, ethnicities have helped create certain Christian identities. There are churches that are known to belong to specific ethnic groups in Africa. This is probably a result of the missionary approach of avoiding missionary conflicts by agreeing to allow different missionary groups to operate in different parts of the country. In Zimbabwe, for example, the Karanga ethnic group was evangelized by the Dutch Reformed Church while Ndau ethnic group was evangelized by the United Church of Christ. If one is a member of the Dutch Reformed Church, very high chances are that he/she is Karanga or is of some Karanga ancestry. I have observed the same pattern in Botswana. Ethnic based Christian groups are much more common among African Independent/Initiated Churches (AICs).

It is in this light that I propose here a Christian identity based on the teachings of Paul. I do so, quite aware of the huge cultural and historical gap between the Pauline Christian communities of the first century of the Common Era and African Christian communities of the twenty first century. However, despite this huge cultural and historical gap, it is common practice by Christian communities to close this gap by employing hermeneutical approaches that see the beliefs and practices of the first century Christians as examples to be emulated by Christians of each generation and era. Viewing the Word of God in the Bible as inspired, Christians believe it is the one

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2   Except for the Christian-Muslim conflict in Central African Republican where Christians have formed a Christian political identity against Muslims.

that should guide their conduct every day and that the conduct of the members of the biblical times should always be emulated.

Paul on Christian Identity

A huge body of literature exists on early Christian identity formation. David Horrell (2007:361-381) discusses the formation of Christian identity focusing on the term '*Christianos*' as used in the New Testament (Acts 11:26, 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16). He dwells much on its possible Latin origin. Judith Lieu has two books on the subject of Christian identity: *Neither Jew nor Greek? Constructing Early Christianity* (Lieu 2002) and *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Greco World* (Lieu 2003). In these two books, Lieu discusses how Christian identity was constructed in the complex environment of the Hellenistic world. She shows that that world saw not only Christians defining themselves but also the Jews and people of other religions. It is in *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Greco-Roman World* (2003) that Lieu discusses Paul on Christian identity formation. She focused on Galatians 3:28 concluding that Paul relativized circumcision as an identity marker. For him Christianity provided a new identity that accommodated both Jews and Gentiles, the circumcised and the uncircumcised. It is this line of argument that we seek to pursue and highlight in this paper. As Buell and Hodge (2004:236) also note, earliest Christianity as found in the writings of Paul can be conceived of as 'a universal, voluntary movement that specifically rejected the significance of ethno-racial identification for membership and thereby "broke" from its Jewish roots'. This is very clear in the Galatians 3:28 text where he says, 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Jesus' (Revised Standard Version). Commenting on this text Samuel Ngewa (2006:1422) refers to baptism which is mentioned in the previous verse (Galatians 3: 27). He says that in the early church, baptism signified identification with Christ meaning that all who had received the baptism were the same as they took on the characteristics of Christ. Thus Christian identity therefore took precedence over racial, status or gender identities, it can be argued. Michael Gorman, for instance (2004:210), underlines that being in Christ (through baptism) in Galatians 3:27 means the erasure of all distinctions used to identify and separate human beings, be they ethnic/racial, socioeconomic or gender. Gorman goes further to interpret this text together with other Pauline texts. He makes a very important observation though when he says that 'this (being in Christ) is not to say that these distinctions actually disappear, but that they no longer matter and must not be allowed to divide communities in Christ' (Gorman 2004:210)

That being in Christ does not mean total disappearance of other identity markers is confirmed in other Pauline texts. 1 Corinthians 12 talks of the

church using the analogy of different parts of the body. Verses 12-13 say though the church body is one, it is made up of different members. The same idea surfaces in Colossians 3:11 (Martin 2003:113).[3] Distinctions that originally defined identities are therefore relativized by being in Christ. Thus 1 Corinthians 5:17 is another Pauline key text in identity formation. In this text Paul says being in Christ brings about new creation, one who is in Christ therefore becomes a new creature. Although the newness described by Paul can be understood eschatologically (Ladd 1993:522), the basic meaning of this text is that being in Christian or being a Christian calls for a new identity. Ladd (1993:521) comments in relation to the new person in Christ that 'all of the desires and appetites of this unregenerate individual have passed away and have been replaced by an entirely new set of desires and appetites' (Ladd 1993:521). Newness calls for new identity expressed in uprightness in the life of the new creature. Thus interpreting Galatians 3:28 against the circumcision covenant, Troy Martin says that 'Paul's communities are indeed a new creation compared to the old communities shaped by the covenant of circumcision' (Martin 2003:119).

Paul's use of the word '*ekklesia*' (church) further shows his understanding of Christian identity. Appearing 62 times in the Pauline corpus, the word *ekklesia* is the one Paul prefers in describing the corporate identity of those who belong to Christ. As Galatians 3:28 and the other texts we discussed above show, this Christian identity is universal as it relativizes previous identity formations. This is more explicit in Ephesians 2:11-14 where Paul reminds his Gentile readers that at the cross, Jesus brought together Jews and Gentiles who were once known for hostility, by abolishing the dividing wall of the law, 'but now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ' (verse 13). Thus, according to Paul, 'Christ's kingdom brings belonging, membership, communion, equality, common purpose, and familial bonds' (Sivasundaram 2008).

Paul also tells us a lot about his own identity (particularly ethnic) from which we can learn more about his views on Christian identity. We will limit ourselves here to the work of Dennis Duling (2008:814). Duling discusses ethnicity and Paul's self-identification in Philippians 3:5-6 concluding that although Paul knew much of his ethnic background, he no longer valued it. Instead of the Jewish ethnicity, it appears that 'Paul believed that he had

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3   Scholars have noticed that in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 and Colossians 3:11 the baptismal formula underlining Christian identity differs slightly from that of Galatians. For example, the Corinthian formula lacks the gender antithesis while the Colossians one adds other antitheses like the barbarian/Synthian. Context has been identified as one of the causes of the differences together with the possibility that Colossians was not written by Paul (Martin 2003:113).

entered another ethnos, which had its own boundaries, its own values, and its own symbols' (Duling 2008:814).

Lastly, in Romans 9-11 Paul describes Judeans with specific reference to Judean history, practices, and ancestry. He shows that all of these special privileges convey their special standing as God's chosen people. Israelite identity is rooted in the stories of their ancestors, the covenants and promises that established them as adopted sons of God, and the law and cult service that mark this relationship and govern their lives as a people (Romans 9:4-5). Paul, however, does not consider these special anymore in Christianity. Talking about himself (and this can be extended to all Jews) in Philippians 3:5-10, Paul said he counted these as loss for sake of knowing Christ.

Rethinking Christian Identity in Africa:
Reflections from Pauline Writings
The problems caused by issues of identity in Africa, especially in the form of ethnicity, are abundantly clear. As we rethink Christian identity in Africa for peaceful coexistence, it is important to understand what social scientists mean by social identity. This is because in this paper, I am advocating a Christian social identity. To be more precise, according to Bruce Malina and John Pilch (2006:400), social identity has to do with an individual's perception of belonging to a social in-group. They say it results from a 'process whereby an individual patterns thoughts, feelings and actions after the thoughts, feelings and actions attributed to significant group members and has incorporated these as a mental image' (Malina and Pilch 2006:400). Social scientists regard a group of people who share a social identity as an in-group. It is important to cite Malina and Pilch (2006:400) on this concept of in-group:

> An in-group is a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category (cognitive dimension), share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves (affective dimension), and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and their membership in it (evaluative dimension).

I should also add that identity, which is often a result of ethnicity in Africa, is socially constructed and that of late, a number of scholars have paid attention to it (Smith 1991, Searle 1995). Although some of these scholars argue that ethnicity is not socially constructed as it is based on blood relations, the general trend in Africa shows ethnicity as a socially constructed identity marker manipulated by some people for political gain. In fact, one can argue that ethnicity on its own without politicization does not lead to any conflicts. Rather politically influenced ethnic defined identities in Africa result in many social ills apart from ethnic wars. Once ethnicity has become the

major identity marker, the result is the distribution of national resources along ethnic lines; the offering of jobs by managers to members of their ethnic groups, the offering of schools and university places along ethnic lines, the application of laws selectively depending on which ethnic tribe one comes from and ethnic based corruption in general. No wonder, in many African modern states, ethnic groups compete to provide the state president from their ethnic group. Nationalism therefore comes second to ethnic identity. The president, once in office, therefore has to loot the state resources for the benefit of his/her ethnic members. The same is true of all other structures of power and influence. Thus Lamb (1984:9) appears to be correct when he says of most African presidents that they:

> …are more ethnic chieftains than national statesmen… For a political leader to choose his closest advisers and bodyguards from the ranks of his own ethnic group is not patronage, it is a good common sense.

In light of these problems caused by ethnic based identities, scholars have suggested a number of solutions. Aquiline Tarimo (2008) for example suggests the idea of the common good. He says that 'the task of African societies is to formulate an inclusive concept of the common good based upon ethnic identities, political consensus, and consent'. For him the idea of political consensus can articulate new perspectives and preferences which will eventually enter into the balancing process by dissolving ethno-political competition and creating institutions that can guarantee equal citizenship, participation, and justice. Policies such as regional integration, regional autonomy, promotion of cultural pluralism and multiculturalism together with affirmative action for underprivileged ethnic groups are some of the policies that could be used in the process of building identities that can peacefully co-exist (Torimo 2008). On the other hand, others have suggested that ethnic identities shall finally be overcome by urbanization (Mamdani 1996:185), a position that is quite questionable considering the existence of strong ethnic identities in most African urban areas. Be that as it may, the promotion of Christian identity is one such approach we believe can contribute towards dealing with identity related conflicts in Africa.

The preceding sections have shown two realities: the strength of Christianity in Africa and the prevalence of identity related conflicts in the continent. One thing stands out from these two realities: Christianity is failing to promote peace amongst the adherents of the religion. Being a culprit of ethnocentrism itself, the church has failed to promote an identity that overcomes ethnic and other identities. The Christian statistics that we pointed out above, show that when conflicts arise in sub-Saharan Africa, it is almost obvious that those in the warring parties would be Christians. Thus Aquiline Tarimo (2008) quotes the popular adage in relation to the church's

failure to address ethnicity that 'the blood of ethnicity is thicker than the water of baptism'. This is, in a way, surprising since religion is generally known to arouse such strong feelings of common identity among members that have caused many wars worldwide when the religious feel or perceive their religious identity to be tampered with. The reason why Christianity fails to create such feelings of interconnectedness and therefore to overcome identities that promote peaceful coexistence is probably its failure to produce a Christian social identity in Africa, an in-group in social scientific terms. It is therefore my intention in this section to show that early Christian writings, specifically Pauline writings, call for a Christian identity that can encompass all other identities in Africa and therefore promote peace. I also explain why a Christian identity is best placed to play that role.

The Pauline texts that we have discussed above show that disparate groups are unified in new creation (Galatians 6:15) to live in faith, hope, and love (Galatians 5:5-6). Also if Paul is interpreted as having defined religiosity as distinct from ethno-racial identifications, then identities, practices, and structures that contribute to racist and ethnocentric conflicts and oppressions can be viewed as contravening universalistic and egalitarian ideals inherent in earliest Pauline Christianity (Buell and Hodge 2004:236-237). As we have seen in his own example, Paul did not consider his ethnic background to be an important identifier or identity marker. Instead, for him, being in Christ is the major source of Christian identity. It makes all with different backgrounds, one in Christ. I believe that this kind of universal and inclusive Christianity advocated by Paul can go a long way in creating a Christian identity that can unite people from different ethnicities, people of different gender, people of different races, and all other forms of identity that have created conflicts that ravaged the African continent. Thus the Pauline teachings and their subsequent interpretations as we have seen above, offer an alternative vision for human community, in which differences are transcended, made irrelevant, or obliterated by being in Christ (Buell and Hodge 2004:237).

Most of the conflicts in Africa show that Christianity has not been taught as a form of identity. For that reason it would appear as 'Christian' is not an identity that people uphold. Ethnicity, region, race, and other identities influence people's identity formations more that Christianity. The Pauline texts go contrary to this. Focusing on ethnicity, Buell and Hodge (2004:243) argue as I do here, namely that Paul's letters generally depict his ideal religion as separate from ethnicity. Paul crafts arguments that portray religious practices as creating, maintaining, or transforming ethnicity. Christianity thus becomes a new ethnic group for Paul as members of the church (*ekklesia*) become brethren. This is the teaching I believe need to be emphasized for Christians in Africa. Ethnic groups that traditionally had certain privi-

leges, be it because of numbers or any other factors, must consider all those privileges lost for the sake of Christ. Christianity should give them a new identity that goes beyond traditional identity markers.

There are other reasons why Christianity has a potential to provide a solution to identity conflicts in Africa. Nationalism and other modern forms of identity such as complex and integrated societies have failed to provide an identity that promotes peaceful co-existence. Perhaps this is because human beings feel safe in small intertwined communities instead of large loosely defined identities. In this case, Christianity provides an alternative identity as it provides both the universal identity in the form of Christian teaching on neighborliness and brotherhood/sisterhood. It also provides the small intertwined identity group in the form of small Christian communities or what Pentecostal and other evangelical groups call cell groups. These are smaller groups in which Christians meet weekly often in their homes for fellowship and Bible study. These communities provide for individual support and care and in urban areas where kin are few (Bourdillon 1993), they actually can substitute one's ethnic group. Therefore if such Christianity identity is underlined, chances of creating peaceful and co-existing communities are heightened. In addition, culture is at the centre of ethnic identity. As John Mbiti (1969:102) points out, ethnic identity is based on sharing of a common ancestry, language, symbol, and territory. Ethnic identity serves to provide people with a support base be it physical, spiritual or emotional. It is therefore a symbol of security and solidarity. Since Christianity assumes a universal culture, a Christian identity would be defined by tenets of Christian culture that include love, tolerance, forbearance, humility, and so on.

We should, however, end this section by noting that the church in Africa itself has been caught in ethnocentrism. Our analysis of Pauline texts in this paper have shown that Christianity provides a universal identity and therefore should not promote negative ethnocentrism.

Conclusion
The Bible continues to have a significant influence in Christian beliefs and practices in Africa. For this reason, Christians should continue tapping from it lessons that can help resolve some of the problems the continent is facing. In this paper, I have focused on the continental problems caused by issues of identity. We have identified ethnicity as one major source of conflicts in Africa. Using the writings of Paul that show that Christian identity overcomes all other forms of identity, the paper has argued that this Pauline teaching should be highlighted in African Christian communities to promote a Christian social identity that can be used to achieve peaceful coexistence. These texts should first be highlighted in church so as to get rid of ethnocentrism there before the church takes the same message to all other

members of their communities. It is only when Christianity forms a social identity, an in-group, that Christians can be fully brothers and sisters in word and indeed. As Malina and Pilch (2006:400) put it, 'in-groups develop sets of norms or values used to direct the behavior of members of the group toward each other as well as toward outsiders'.

I need, however, to point out in conclusion that in promoting and calling for a Christian identity, I am not dismissing African culture and traditions. Instead I make the proposal in light of the numbers of people who subscribe to the Christian religion as well as the attempts made by African scholars to inculturate Christianity (Chiromba 1989). In other words, the Christian culture that should be promoted for identity formation should be an inculturated Christianity that promotes African traditional values. As Aquiline Tarimo (2008) says: 'the process of building democratic institutions will succeed insofar as it starts with what people are and from where they are.'

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