

## **New Religious Movements and the Phenomenon of Cosmic War: Seeking Justice through Contextual Theology A Reading of *Sama Ambe's Cries of Restoration* and co texts (media reports)**

**Banla Samuel Fonyuy**  
*University of Bamenda, Cameroon*

---

**Abstract:** The rise and proliferation of New Religious Movements and their puritanical non-conformist evangelism poses a danger to the history and heritage of African tribes especially as far as the conflict between African Traditional Religion and extremist Christianity is concerned. While this phenomenon has started receiving attention from theologians, literary critics are somewhat mute as far this trend is concerned. This is so because few African literature works have addressed such thematic issues leading to lack of corpus for literary essays targeting New Religious Movements, cosmic wars as well as contextual theology. However, thanks to New Historicism, one can correlate works of fiction with non-fiction to assess the ramifications of these, thereby contributing to literary research. What are cosmic wars and how can contextual theology help evade them? What justice or injustice do extremist Christian denominations do to African Traditional Religion and Culture in African Tribes? How is contextual theology a way of ensuring social justice as far as religion is concerned in contemporary Africa? This study sets out to attempt a correlation between New Religious Movements and Cosmic Wars with reference to Sama Ambe's *Cries of Restoration* and co-texts. It seeks to establish that religious intolerance and the attack on ATR by NRMs is injustice and finally to propose contextual theology as a way out of cosmic wars and also a means for ensuring social justice as far as religion is concerned. The use of New Historicism as a critical theory permits the discussion of the *Cries of Restoration* and other documents that are considered as co-texts in the analysis that follow. Other concepts like Juegensmeyers' Cosmic War Theory and Stephen Bevans's Models of contextual theology are also relevant to the study.

**Key Terms:** African traditional religion, new religious movements, New Historicism, Cosmic wars.

---

### **Conceptual definitions and background to the study**

#### **African Traditional Religion**

J. O. Awolalu opines that African Traditional Religion is:

the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the Africans. It is the religion which resulted from the sustaining faith held by the forebears of the present Africans, and which is being practiced today in various forms and various shades and intensities by a very large number of Africans, including individuals who claim to be Muslims or Christians. (1976:1)

African Traditional Religion is seen therefore as per Awolalu to be embedded in the fabric of African culture both at the individual and communal levels be they converted to alien religion (Islam and Christianity) or not. The aspect of being transferred by forebears necessitates a look at the mode of transmission from ancestors to subsequent generations. Thus another important point that comes out glaring is the fact that ATR is orally transferred from one generation to the other. Concerning the nature of ATR as oracular, Aloysius M. Lugira posits that :

Oral traditions are passed on in a variety of forms—in myths, legends, stories, and proverbs. Stories generally say something about life in order to educate and entertain the community. Myths deal with the divine. They have religious subjects, such as the origin of the universe and of nature. They address and answer questions like, where did humankind come from? How are human beings expected to act as they travel through life? What is the destiny of the human race? Legends are a body of stories about families, people, and particularly heroes of the community. Often based on real people and facts, they have been told and retold until they become part of the lore of the community as a whole. Proverbs are short statements that express wisdom about creation and human experience. (2009 :28)

The quote above elaborates on the various modes of transmission of ATR which are essentially by word of mouth and confirms the oracular nature of the tradition and religion. The first implication to draw is the absence of documentation since it is simply transmitted by word of mouth and thus leading to many assumptions

about it. This makes ATR vulnerable to predator religions including all alien categories and especially New Religious Movements that are well documented and have various propaganda outlets.

Aloysius M. Lugira's submission above is also significant for evoking key doctrines of ATR. One of such doctrines is the concept of the creator and the Creation Myth which culminates in the worship of the Supreme Being. Myths of creation always concern the sacred beginnings of the people and usually concern the Supreme Being who according to African Oral Tradition created the world and its people. This Supreme Being (God the Builder) is at the center of ATR. It is important however to note that the belief in the Supreme Being does not presuppose the singularity or the plurality of the concept of God/gods in Africa. In line with this Aloysius M. Lugira posits that; "In Western religion religious systems are usually classified as either monotheistic, that is, believing in one God, or polytheistic, believing in many gods. In African religion monotheism and polytheism exist side by side" (2009:36). Monotheism in Africa avails itself on the African notion of the hierarchy of gods. God the builder or Supreme God is at the top of the paradigm and is single thus monotheism is part and parcel of ATR. The Supreme Being presides over a number of deities and divinities (gods) and thus polytheism also abounds in ATR. This explains why Monotheism and Polytheism both exist side by side in Africa.

### **Rites and Rituals in ATR**

To Africans, life without religion is impossible. As J S Mbiti notes, "the African is notoriously religious" (1979:np). The implication is that for an African to think and act, religious implications must be taken into considerations. Such adherence to religion necessitates all forms of prayer and prayer intentions which are offered through rites, rituals and incantations. Aloysius M. Lugira explains that:

To Africans belief without ritual action would take away much of religion's natural power. Rites and ritual punctuate all aspects of African religious life. Religion is so deeply ingrained in the daily life of traditional Africa that it is all but impossible to separate it from other aspects of the culture. In an African community religion is the strongest influence on people's thoughts, acts, and lives. Rites of passage and other communal rites are the clearest examples of how religion permeates all aspects of African life. (2009:64)

With such tendency for religious rites and rituals, the importance of shrines and "holy places" cannot therefore be over emphasized as one cannot make a ritual or offer a sacrifice without an altar.

### **Sacred Places and Spaces**

Aloysius M. Lugira (2009) postulates that where the rites and rituals are made are known as African Sacred Spaces or Places. Some are constructed like huts while others are simply natural spaces like stones, caves, giant trees etc. Because of the religious importance of these sacred places, the African guards these places jealously which implies that an attack on any of these places is not considered as an attack on the site but also on their religion but also on their world view and identity. It is important to note here that such attacks by mostly puritanical alien religions provides potential for religious conflicts in Africa, conflicts which take the form of cosmic wars.

### **New Religious Movements**

Peter B. Clarke presents a definition of NRM from the perspective of its characteristics. He submits that NRMs "...provide in each case new foundations for being religious, introducing new beliefs and practices, often by reshaping and transforming the purposes of old ones, and act as catalysts for change within the older religions. This includes not only change in beliefs and practice but also change at the epistemological level" (2006:x). By virtue of these features, NRMs have a tendency to spring up from any religion be it Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and even ATR itself.

Nmah, Patrick Enoch (2017) in "*What Is New In "New" Religious Movements In Africa? An Analytical Approach*" presents another profound perspective from which NRMs can be viewed. He begins by speculating on a number of reasons for which NRMs are on the rise in Africa. The reasons include: quest for spiritual power, cultural identity, ethnical identity, health, economic emancipation, security, false prophecy, ecclesiastical maladministration and judging from these dynamics, he presents an alternative name to NRMs which he also refers to as African Initiated Churches (AICs). These churches according to Patrick Enoch (2017) can be divided into two categories. The first category refers to those for various reasons abandoned Christian Missionary founded Churches and are thus called "schismatic" or "separatist" movements and operate independently though they maintain certain aspects of the mother church despite the enormous changes internally. The second category are those that are founded by independent charismatic leaders with no link to any mother Church. They could be referred to spiritualists or "spiritist" because of their addictive usage of

glossolalia and spiritual healing. The second category is suitable for this essay. This study will therefore regard a NRM as a radical Christian denomination that is relatively new in its doctrine and practices. The NRM in question is Kingship Ministry International that came to be in the early 2000s in Cameroon (operating in Douala and Bamenda) and proposes a radical change in the worship system of people in various communities using diverse means. Their puritanical sermons account for the various conflicts that occur between them and ATR and will be discussed with special attention to the attack on Ndela-Mbue's shrine in Bafut in 2012, the shrine that SamaAmbe's *Cries for Restoration* presents its origin and value.

### **Cosmic Wars**

The word cosmos has to do with the universe or the world where as war refers to physical or spiritual battle between opposing camps. An etymological definition of a cosmic war then is something closer to a war fought between "worlds". Despite how odd the war between worlds may sound, when looked upon from the religious and cultural perspective "these worlds" do exist within the world (universe or cosmos). Often, we have heard of the Christian world, Muslim world and or Jewish world. Worlds here are synonymous to world views thus a cosmic war is a war fought between world views with religion as a major constituent of the world view. Mark Juergensmeyer defines a cosmic war as:

A "cosmic war" is an imagined battle between metaphysical forces—good and evil, right and wrong, order and chaos—that lies behind many cases of religion-related violence in the contemporary world. These transcendent spiritual images have been implanted onto the social and political scene, magnifying ordinary worldly conflict into sacred encounter. There is nothing specific to Christianity, Islam, or any other religion about this idea of cosmic war. (2016:1)

As evident in Juergensmeyer's quote above, the idea of cosmic war is usually between two realms; that of good and that of evil, the physical and the spiritual realms. This phenomenon is common in all religions in so far as they preach for good and against evil. They are not struggles at the individual level but struggles between cultures and religions and generally between people or communities with different ideologies especially those ideas concerning God and worship. Juergensmeyer further describes the cosmic war in this light as thus: "I call ... such "cosmic" because they are larger than life. They evoke great battles of legendary past, and they relate to metaphysical conflicts between good and evil"(2000:146). Thus, cosmic wars are fought at religious community levels with a possibility for such wars to transcend political boundaries depending on the religious affiliations of the countries concerned. Fox and Sandler gives an example of such "For example, the rebellion by Muslims in the Kashmiri province of India has contributed to sporadic military conflict between neighboring Pakistan, which is religiously and ethnically similar to the population in the province"(2004:71). The example above shows that a cosmic war is actually a conflict by people who have specific values that make them distinct from other groups of people; that is why an uprising concerning Muslims in India is able to trigger the same effect in Pakistan. This demonstrates the fact that cosmic wars have the potential to penetrate national borders and can spread even around the world.

The Cosmic war is always an ideological war which when looked upon from the material level could be seen to be a venture nearer to stupidity as the belligerents never have a prospective of a material gain but have the aim of seeing the idea of what they consider as good triumph over evil. To see what is considered the divine command come to fruition. Mark Juergensmeyer makes this clear when he states that the enemy of the warring factions is: "Anyone imagined to be engaged with the shadowy forces of evil are potential foes. There is no gray area between opposing camps, but the determination of who is on whose side often seems arbitrary. What the supporters of these movements are clear about, however, is the idea that they are at war" (2016:2). This war cannot be won physically but contextual theology provides a possible way out.

### **Contextual theology**

A possible way out of comic wars is usually interreligious dialogue or contextual theology as in the case with the clash between ATR and KIM in Bafut. Contextual theology stands in favor of localizing the teachings of the church rather than subjecting various church practices to universal doctrines which often cause a number problems at the level of reception. According to Stephen Bevans, "Contextualization," or notions that approximate its meaning like "incarnation," "indigenization," "inculturation" or "constructing local theology,"(1985:8) is a process that only relatively and recently has come to full self-consciousness among theologians. They view it as not only interesting but also as vital and indispensable to the theological enterprise". The tendency for "inculturation" becomes important in the theological enterprise of the contemporary world because of increased literacy rate among the population and the consequent resistance against all forms of colonialism including religious and cultural colonialism through especially applying western theology in Africa. To corroborate this, Bevans in a latter publication demonstrates the need for contextual

theology by using the example of the response he received from a Christian after the sermon he presented in Rome titled “the sun” in which he made reference to the famous song of the Beatles titled “Here Comes the sun”.

Stephen Bevans (2008) recounts that after the sermon he felt elated for in his mind he had delivered the greatest of all his homilies because in his imagination and as presented in the song by the Beatles, the sun actually represented Christ in many ways. Yet he became surprised when an Indian walked up to him to say

The sun is not a very striking symbol for the coming of Christ into the world. In India the sun is an enemy. It is not something that brings refreshment; it is something that brings unbearable heat that is to be escaped by staying in the shade. The sun’s heat makes men and women thirsty, and too much exposure to the sun causes sunstroke. (2008:xix)

This particular incident gave Stephen Bevans the understanding that some predominantly western and northern liturgical concepts are totally meaningless in other cultural contexts thus demonstrating the need for contextual theology. This concept is relevant to this study as it will guide the understanding of the causes of the inter religious conflict in Bafut and also the point to the ways by which the conflicts can be resolved. More on this will be seen under the chapter on theory.

### **The history of the Shrine of Ndelah Mbue as seen in Sama Ambe’s the Cries of Restoration**

Sama Ambe’s *Cries for Restoration* tells the story of Ndela’ah Mbue the famous woman who founded the present settlement area for the Bafut people. As the story goes, calamity had befallen the Bafut people at various places during the period of tribal migration such that searching for an area for solace was of great need to the people. Ambe creates scenes in which these calamitous days in the Bafut Kingdom are represented. In Scene Four of his one act play, the stage direction is as follows: “The body of the prince is lying on a mat with the elders and first wife standing round. The priest and the doctor are performing ritual healing” (Ambe, 25) Marveled at the fact that his attempt at reviving the Prince is not working, he makes the following declaration:

**Doc:** (shaking his head) All these days we have been running a race with the dead Old One. Who can win such a race?” As if to answer his question on the negative, the Priest after hearing several wailing outside makes the following sinister declaration “This time many children are certainly being born in this fondom. This kind of squealing should only be from the sorrowful voices of new borns. Go and see which new child has seen death at birth... the corners of the earth are red” (Ambe, 25).

When the doctor returns to say that the Queen has been stung by a snake and that she is becoming stiff as time goes by, the atmosphere becomes even more sorrowful. The choice of words as in “the sorrowful voices of new borns” and the red corners of the earth captures a gloomy picture of the various mishaps that befell the Bafut people at their place of settlement before the discovery of the present site of settlement. At the end of this scene, the Priest concludes thus:

Every beginning has an end and we can never end if we don’t begin. But who can say which is which when we don’t even know the beginning nor the end? Like aimless ants we keep going in this world till of a sudden we are stopped. Yet we must keep going. Let us go. This day is hot; we must check our heads slowly. (Ambe, 25)

These utterances coming from the greatest spiritual leader in the tribe signifies doom and a sign of acceptance of defeat by the people. Even as they resolve to leave the area as was the case in primitive Cameroon when calamity caused tribes to leave from one area to settle in another, it is still sad because they “don’t even know the beginning nor the end”. This in traditional Africa, is a sign of abandonment or hatred from the gods of certain area and only powerful divine intervention can free them.

In Scene Five, the joy of the people is restored when an old woman comes to the Fon’s palace to announce that she had in a vision been shown a suitable side where the people can migrate to and live in peace. She recounts that after a long day of wondering into the bush along the banks of the river to fish, she is forced to rest under a tree in the afternoon when of a sudden someone appears to her claiming to be a bearer of a message good news for the people and for the royal house.

**Old Man:** This land where we stand is no man’s land. It had been royal land from times immemorial promised to our heirs and us. It is rich in food and drink; it is smooth and tender even to the feet of those that are ageing. The royal house must continue its journey to where it was destined to stay. No more must it hunger and thirst on the tops of rocks; no more must the old and tender continue to roll off the tops of stones. There is more than enough here for everybody. This land has all the plains that will cause even the old to be hungry for a stroll, without any guides to lead them. This is the land where

royal children will rejoice on smooth grounds in the day and under the moonlight; where the spirits of the silent ones will sail gently over every roof without the fear of being swept down dangerous hills; where royal power will grow strong and touch all the corners of the fondom, and grow to reach the tops of all fondom hills. Stand up and look around. (Ambe, 35)

Because of the disregard of women in some African cultures and metaphysics, most of the elders initially oppose the idea to follow the old woman's proposal that about the new settlement area. However signs begin to occur that finally convince them. What is essential to this study is the fact that when the people finally migrate to the area, they are so happy that they attempt to reward the Old Woman with a title, a situation that some people considered to be controversial and that is why they conspire and finally instead of crowing the woman, they kill her.

After one week of settlement everyone is contented and according to the dictates of the tradition/religion, they must first consecrate the area to the gods/God.

**Fon:** We have a more important reason for meeting here today. Now we all know that we are at the point of consecrating this new place and dedicating it to our fathers and the gods. Much work has been going on to see that everything goes well. I want to know whether in your various places you have offered the prayers of thanks giving to the fathers for bringing us here.

The offering of sacrifices and prayers here signifies the attachment of the people to religion which in this case is African Traditional Religion; It conforms with J. S. Mbiti's submission that African's are notoriously religious. It is also coincidentally during the general sacrifice that this woman is expected to be rewarded with a title yet because of jealousy and some signs of misogyny, some elders conspire and say controversial things about the woman. First Elder for example reacts to the fact that the Old Woman should rest from doing work in the palace by saying that "She is not different from any other woman doing her share of work in the palace. Palace work is the kind that knows nor young nor old. Everybody has his or her share". (Ambe, 52). When the Fon tries to convince them convince them about the special place the woman holds in the tribe for having discovered their place of settlement, Third Elder responds by undermining her achievement thus: "Its like children carrying water and expecting a red feather". The outrage by the elders and with the conspiracy of jealous palace women culminates in a plot to kill her on the day of consecration of the new settlement site. On this day she is to be killed as **First Elder** intimates that: This is the day; maybe the silent ones need to be made to understand that there are still men to defend the masculine sanctity of the throne. (Ambe, 68). They were executed by burying the old lady alive but before she died, she curses the tribe one more time....

**Old Woman:** H-E-A-R (All stop). You sacrilegious people, you profane generation of this fondom. Your irreligious sacrifices and praises laugh blood down the waters of these valleys. From this day on the rays of the sun will never smile on the soils of this land again. The calm peace will forever drum disquiet in your heads and minds. Bear you this mark on your name: the doors of fortune and progress are forever locked before you and generations upon generations to come. They are forever locked. B-u-f-e-u-h! Our fathers bear me witness.

The Fon is terrified at this event and with conviction about the innocence of the woman, he declares that "Her grave must be where she lies; there, at Nsanimunwi. The trees that will grow there will proclaim her glory over the generations". These trees mark the creation of the shrine and the ancestral tree that was cut by Profet Frank of Kingship International Ministry in 2014, an event that forms the core of the investigation in this essay. The shrine materializes during the sacrifice of appeasement that saw the restoration of Nde-elahMbueh. The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics defines sacrifice as a rite in the course of which something is forfeited or destroyed, its object being to establish relation between a source of spiritual strength and one in need of such strength, for the benefit of the latter (Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics Vol.11 p.1). James (1962) defines sacrifice in terms of its purpose, according to him, sacrifice involves the destruction of a victim for the purpose of maintaining or restoring a right relationship of man to the sacred order. It may effect a bond of union with the divinity to whom it is offered or constitute a particular expiation to cover, wipe out, neutralize or carry away evil guilt contracted wittingly or unwittingly (James, 1962 :7) The sacrifice in this case was meant to seek solace for diverse worries of the Bafut people. The pronouncements of the Fon during the sacrifice thus:

We have come here for one reason – to see Nde-elahMbueh reborn and by that to tell our fathers to lie in peace. Let me make this clear to all who are here today. We have lived through times, which we cannot pray to come again. We have lived with people we cannot pray to be born again.... May the rebirth of Nde-elahMbueh be a new bridge between this land and the protective land of the silent ones. (Ambe, 101)

---

Alongside restoring the post of Nde-elah, a shrine was erected in her honor where libation is poured annually to appease her spirit and to seek for intercession in various difficult moments.

### **New Historicism and the Concept of Co texts**

New Historicism, is one of the most innovative critical movement, that came in existence in 1980 because of the critical manifesto of Stephen Greenblatt, “an award winning literary critic, theorist and scholar” who coined this very term New Historicism for the first time with an intention to propound new critical methods for interpreting the Renaissance texts (“Stephen J. Greenblatt” Wikipedia). New historicism is a form of literary theory whose goal is to understand intellectual history through literature, and literature through its cultural context, which follows the 1950s field of history of ideas and refers to itself as a form of "Cultural Poetics". Based on the literary criticism of Stephen Greenblatt and influenced by the philosophy of Michel Foucault, New Historicism acknowledges not only that a work of literature is influenced by its author's times and circumstances, but that the critic's response to that work is also influenced by his environment, beliefs, and prejudices. A New Historicist looks at literature in a wider historical context, examining both how the writer's times affected the work and how the work reflects the writer's times, in turn recognizing that current cultural contexts color that critic's conclusions. <https://www.aresearchguide.com/new-historicism.html>

Barry Peter opines that “Typically, a new historical essay will place the literary text within the 'frame' of a non-literary text. Thus, Greenblatt's main innovation, from the viewpoint of literary study, was to juxtapose the plays of the Renaissance period with 'the horrifying colonialist policies pursued by all the major European powers of the era' (chp.8.np)”. Barry Peter goes further to elucidate on how exactly such studies are to be carried out. He recounts that Greenblatt (pioneer New Historicist critic) often “draws attention to 'the marginalization and dehumanizing of suppressed Others' (Grady) usually by starting an essay with an analysis of a contemporary historical document which overlaps in some way with the subject matter of the play. (np)”. These dramatic openings often cite date and place and have all the force of the documentary, eyewitness account, strongly evoking the quality of lived experience rather than 'history'. Since these historical documents are not subordinated as contexts, but are analysed in their own right, we should perhaps call them 'co-texts' rather than 'contexts'. The text and co-text used will be seen as expressions of the same historical 'moment', and interpreted accordingly.

In order to understand exactly what the New in historicism is and the concept of co-text, a cursory look at what makes the “old” distinct from the “new” is necessary. According to Barry Peter, “Old historicism prioritized the literary text and treated the history of the time as the background with no textual equivalence. On the other hand, New historicism gives equal value”. Barry therefore concludes that; “The practice of giving 'equal weighting' to literary and non-literary material is the first and major difference between the 'new' and the 'old' historicism” (np). To understand the opinion above, it is important to recall the fact that History under old historicism was considered largely as the context of the art piece (novel, play, poem) and thus was not given much attention to, in the process of analyzing those texts. The tendency to ignore or give less attention the historicity of the text, minimized the feature of literature as a mirror to society culminating in the consideration of literature by skeptics as mere works of fiction that deserved little or no attention.

Roshni Duhan argues against such reductionist attitude toward Literature by arguing strongly that:

That literature is a reflection of the society is a fact that has been widely acknowledged. Literature indeed reflects the society, its good values and its ills. In its corrective function, literature mirrors the ills of the society with a view to making the society realize its mistakes and make amends. It also projects the virtues or good values in the society for people to emulate (1).

The argument above dismisses allegations by skeptics who think that literature is fiction and corroborates a new historicist approach of analyzing works of literature. Since “Literature reflects society...” it is logical to correlate the society's history to what obtains in the literary text under study. This is why the second difference according to Barry Peter is “embedded in the term “historical continuum” which indicates that New Historicism is a “historicist movement” and not a historical movement. This connotes the fact that “it is interested in history as represented and recorded in written documents, in history-as-text...so that the real living individual is now entirely superseded by the literary text which has come down to us” (ch.9). This tendency reiterates the importance of history to the analyses of literature. Historical continuum here also implies a possibility of follow up to how those historical events have developed up till date and how they influence the reality in the “living text”. The aspect of the “living text” and “historical continuum” provides opportunity for critics to even investigate not only texts of the period in which the text was written but also recent history to see the developments in the events presented in works of fiction – in real life. It is against this backdrop that I consider the correlation of the April 14<sup>th</sup> 2012 attack on Nde-elah Mbueh's shrine in Bafut

important to the understanding of religious conflicts and cosmic wars towards seeking social justice through contextual theology.

### **Media reports on the Attack on the Shrine by Kingship ministry International**

As reported by the Cameroon Postline of 13<sup>th</sup> April 2012, a self-proclaimed prophet was granted bail for 200,000fcfa from the Bamenda High Court. The reporter Michael Ndi reported that:

He was charged with assault on FonAbumbi II of Bafut and some 13 others, organizing a meeting under an illegal association (The Kingship International Ministries) and felling a 100 years' old ancestral tree..

After the incident on Saturday March 31, 2012, Prophet Afanwi and his kingship International Ministries' faithful intimidated the press that they felled the ancestral tree because it was a curse to the sons and daughters of Bafut. CameroonPostline.com gathered that some 150 years ago, the founder of Bafut village, a then 19-year-old girl, was buried alive by the men who feared that the girl was going to exploit her foundership of the Bafut village to be the leader or sovereign of the Bafut fiefdom. A tree was then planted on the girls' grave as a tomb. Before the girl gave up the ghost, CameroonPostline.com was told that she cursed the Bafut land saying that they shall know no peace generation after generation. Since then, Bafut people have been conducting sacrifices round the tree to appease the girl every year. To mitigate the situation, Prophet Afanwi who came in from Douala to heal the sick in Bafut, took upon himself to fell down the ancestral tree and destroyed the shrine. It was on this premise that the Fon and his subjects entered into a scuffle with Prophet Afanwi and his faithful. In the course of the fracas, several people were wounded and others hospitalized. <http://cameroonpostline.com/born-again-prophet-in-court-for-destroying-bafut-ancestral-shrines-brutalising-fon/>

This event of 2012 relates to Samba Ambe's *Cries of Restoration* though the lady in the report is a 19 years old girl instead of the Old Lady Ambe's play. Despite the disparity in the ages, what remains clear is the fact that a lady founded Bafut and was later killed and before dying had cursed the tribe. It is also a fact judging from the text and the Cameroon Postline report that calamity befell the people and there was need for appeasement. While the traditional people under the dictates of ATR sought peace by erecting the shrine of NdelahMbue, the NRM of Prophet instead saw the shrine as a reminder of the curse and the reason for which calamity continued till date. This notion legitimized his act of violence against ATR by desecrating and vandalizing the shrine. The two conflicting views represents different worldviews and the religious conflicts that ensued represents cosmic war and a situation of social injustice (the attack). By virtue of the history of the shrine as recorded in SamaAmbe's play, the attack represents a form of social injustice to African Traditional Religion in Bafut, a situation that is recurrent and deserves attention towards ensuring social justice.

### **The religious scuffle in Bafut as a Cosmic war**

The Cosmic war is always an ideological war which when looked upon from the material level could be seen to be a venture nearer to stupidity as the belligerents never have a prospective of a material gain but have the aim of seeing the idea of what they consider as good triumph over evil. The idea good triumphing over evil is considered the divine command which one of the warring parties always hope to see come to fruition. Mark Juergensmeyer makes this clear when he states that the enemy(ies) of the warring factions is/are; "Anyone imagined to be engaged with the shadowy forces of evil are potential foes. There is no gray area between opposing camps, but the determination of who is on whose side often seems arbitrary. What the supporters of these movements are clear about, however, is the idea that they are at war" (2016:2). This is very prominent among members of various new religious movements including KIM since they under their alleged anointing function on the basis of a myth of answering "God's call". The call to liberate the Bafut people by cutting down the ancestral tree symbolizes an attack on evil (shrine) which qualifies the attack therefore a cosmic war. The concept becomes more imminent considering the fight that was put up by youths and most Bafut traditional authorities and even the Fon.

### **Contextual theology**

The activities of KIM include Sunday preaching, healing of the sick, organization of crusades for mass deliverance and especially the destruction of ancestral shrines which Prophet Frank believes is the root cause of the bondage that many people in the various villages live. He has destroyed shrines in the villages of Akum, Pinyin and Bafut in the North West Region of Cameroon. Before destroying each shrine, he always

exposes the foolishness of worshipping idols and also the punishment that God promises to inflict on idol worshippers. As seen here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIYM-b5WFPC> and other CD recordings, he always gives a biblical justification for the destruction of ancestral shrines by making reference to Bible quotations such as:

- Exodus 20:3-6) where God warns the Israelites against idol worship for he is a God who does not like competition.
- Deuteronomy 12: 1-3 where God's command on the destruction of various shrine is made explicit in the following words: " 2 In the land that you are taking, destroy all the places where the people worship their gods on high mountains, on hills and under green trees. 3 Tear down their alters and smash their sacred stones to pieces ...". With this he preaches as well as believes that the destruction of ancestral shrines is therefore executing divine command.
- 1 Kings Chapter 18:1-46 where God disgraces the 450 prophets of Baal in order to vindicate his prophet Elijah causing the people of Israel to surrender themselves to the worship of only one God the God of Elijah.

Armed with these scriptural commands his preaching on occasions in which he is to destroy an ancestral shrine always focusses on exposing "the foolishness of worshipping idols" as seen in the on his YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIYM-b5WFPC>. There he castigates the worship of carved entities the offering of sacrifices to such gods and expresses his firm resolve to follow the divine command in Deuteronomy 12: 1-3.

His preaching above represents the fact that he uses the translation model of preaching which perceives Christianity as being supra-cultural, a situation which is bound to bring conflict. As Stephen Bevans argues, contextual theology can help evade such conflicts. In his article titled "Models of Contextual Theology", Stephen Bevans (1985: 186) asks and answers the question on the what of contextual theology. What, then, is contextual theology? It is a way of doing theology that takes into account four things:

- (1) the spirit and message of the Gospel;
- (2) the tradition of the Christian people;
- (3) the culture of a particular nation or region; and
- (4) social change in that culture, due both to technological advances on the one hand and struggles for justice and liberation on the other.

Bevans presents two ways by which this model can be understood. The first perspective sees this model as the social science of anthropology since it targets the cultural identity of the Christians. The second perspective focuses on the literary meaning of theology and traces it down to the Greek word 'anthropos' meaning the 'human person' (188). Synthetically therefore the two perspectives present this model as that model which takes into consideration the cultural identity of the 'human person' to whom the gospel is preached. Bevans (2012:188) himself precise that this particular model focuses on the human person and human experience and not "some scriptural expression or tradition formula-that forms the criteria of theological truth". Be it from the cultural identity or from the perspective of the human person and human experience, contextual theology is theology in which context affects content. This model of preaching can actually evade such attacks leading to the preservation of ATR and African culture. Contextual theology can also be viewed as a means of doing social justice to ATR which is victim to attacks by puritanical nonconformist Christian denominations.

### **Conclusion**

This essay has examined the definitions of African Traditional Religion, Cosmic War and Contextual theology and has argued that religious conflicts especially minute ones like the case of the one in Bafut, orchestrated by New Religious Movements deserve to be researched not only in theology but also in literary criticism. Exploiting the dynamics of New Historicism, the story of NdelahMbue in SamaAmbe's *Cries of Restoration* was correlated with the Cameroon Postline Report of 2012 in which Prophet Frank cut down the ancestral tree that symbolized the appeasement of the spirit of Nde-elahMbueh. The scuffle that ensued from the event was interpreted as a cosmic war that can be evaded through contextual theology which is also a way of ensuring social justice to African Traditional Religion which is currently victim of Christian based New Religious Movements in Africa.

**Works Cited**

- [1]. Ambe, Sama *The Cries For Restoration*. Bamenda: Maryland Publishers. 2008.
- [2]. Awolalu J. O. *What is African Traditional Religion? Studies in Comparative Religion. Vol.10, No.2.* (Spring, 1976). World Wisdom, Inc. www.studiesincomparativereligion.com
- [3]. Bevans, Stephen (2008). *Models of Contextual Theology*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books. Clarke, Peter. *New Religions in Global Perspective: A Study Of Religious Change In The Modern World*. Routledge. Retrieved from <http://www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk/>. 2006. Chunyuy Shwei Emmanuel. Conflict Between New Religious Movements and African Traditional Religion in the Bafut Community The Clash Between Kingship International Ministries and African Traditional Religion. An unpublished dissertation. 2015.
- [4]. John Samuel Mbiti. *African Religion and Philosophy*. London: Heineman. 1969.
- [5]. Mark Juergensmeyer. *Terror in the Mind of God The Global Rise Of Religious Violence*. University Of California Press Berkeley I Los Angeles I London 2000
- [6]. Nmah, Patrick Enoch. (2017). *What Is New In "New" Religious Movements In Africa? An Analytical Approach*. Department of Religion and Human Relations Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Nigeria.
- [7]. Ndi Michael. Born Again Prophet in Court for Destroying Bafut Ancestral Shrines, Brutalising Fon April 13, 2012. [https://mfopen.mf.no/mfxmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2611038/3506\\_Emanuel%2c%20Chunyuy%20Shwei.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://mfopen.mf.no/mfxmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2611038/3506_Emanuel%2c%20Chunyuy%20Shwei.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)
- [8]. Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. 11, p.1 . James E.O. 1933.