

A Biblico-Theological Approach to Hosea 1:2-9 and 3:1-5 on the Judgment and Mercy of God Towards Intertribal Reconciliation in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: Hosea, the prophet of God, was instructed by God to symbolically prophesy to the erring people of Israel on the impending devastation awaiting them, if they did not return to him (God). The stages of this prophecy are aptly represented in the marriage of Hosea to an adulterous woman, Gomer. Thus, God, represented by Hosea, had a covenant with Israel but the latter left him for other gods, entrusting their care and protection into the hands of other nations. Enraged by this, God prophesied through Hosea, the punishment meant for Israel for her intransigence and also his mercy on them, if they returned to him. God's judgment is not exclusive of his mercy. The above stated prophecy of Hosea to Israel is, in this write-up, situated in the Nigerian context especially, in the Nigerian tribal issues which are dragging the progress of the country to the mud. Thus, recognizing the method of *analogia limpit*,¹ this write-up tries to represent the Hosea-Gomer event in Nigeria-tribes event and happenstances wherein Nigeria marries the three major tribes in dispute, whose ideological reconciliation with Nigeria (or the spirit of mother Africa) would earn the country a greater favour from God than the present malediction ravaging it.

I. INTRODUCTION

Hosea, the prophet of God, was instructed by God to symbolically prophesy to the erring people of Israel on the impending devastation awaiting them, if they did not return to him (God). The stages of this prophecy are aptly represented in the marriage of Hosea to an adulterous woman, Gomer. Thus, God, represented by Hosea, had a covenant with Israel but the latter left him for other gods, entrusting their care and protection into the hands of other nations. Enraged by this, God prophesied through Hosea, the punishment meant for Israel for her intransigence and also his mercy on them, if they returned to him. God's judgment is not exclusive of his mercy. The above stated prophecy of Hosea to Israel is, in this write-up, situated in the Nigerian context especially, in the Nigerian tribal issues which are dragging the progress of the country to the mud. Thus, recognizing the method of *analogia limpit*,² this write-up tries to represent the Hosea-Gomer event in Nigeria-tribes event and happenstances wherein Nigeria marries the three major tribes in dispute, whose ideological reconciliation with Nigeria (or the spirit of mother Africa) would earn the country a greater favour from God than the present malediction ravaging it.

0.1 Background/Context

Apart from a bit of facts gathered in the Book of Hosea about his person and identity, nothing much is known about Hosea, the first son of Beer³. On the other hand, many important expectations of a good story are missing in Hosea's prophecy especially, on the part of Gomer. Thus, Gomer is mentioned but the name(s) of the paramour is (are) missing. Also, the place of their meeting (either at the temple for fertility rites or secretly in a private place) is found nowhere. His prophetic activity spanned, as stated historically, from the reign of Jeroboam II to the deplorable times that saw the loss of Israel from the political scene. Thus, as reflected in his oracles, the date and time of this writing spanned from ca. 750 until after 732.⁴ Some other authors argue that since it cannot be certainly ascertained that Hosea witnessed the fall of Samaria, broadly speaking therefore, the Prophet's public work appears set in a fifty -year period, from 760 – 710 BC, with the years 750 -725 as the most likely setting.⁵ In the situation of constant subjugation of Israel by Assyria portrayed in the sufferings Israel underwent, inflicted by Assyrians, under the reigns of Jeroboam II (786-746), Zechariah (746-745), Shallum (745), Menahem (745-737), Pekahiah (737-736), Pekah (736-732) and Hoshea

¹ Analogy does not represent things exactly but links things together.

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³ Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Old Testament-15: Amos, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk; Collegeville Bible Commentary*, (Mumbai: ST. PAULS, 2001) 36. The name Beer is not otherwise found for a person in the Old Testament, although a village located near Bethel had this name. Beer means "my fountain" or "O fountain".

⁴ Raymond E. Brown et al., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, (London: Burns and Oats, 1968) 217.

⁵ Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.) 79.

(732-724), the Book of Hosea was written.⁶ Hosea believed that all these calamities befell Israel because of her wrong doings especially, on the part of her religious and political leaders.

Israel had forsaken Yahweh, its true king and its salvation, to take up the cult of the fertility gods of Canaan, the Baals, so that it attributed its prosperity to this cult and not to Yahweh...little wonder that the prophet favours the form of a judgment (rib) for his oracles. This violent and ever-changing history is reflected on every page of his book. He condemns the empty pomp of Israel's purely external cult as well as the pride of the people in its wealth and military power. This denial can only reflect Hosea's reaction to the attitudes prevailing during the favoured days of Jeroboam II. But he has equally harsh words for the self-seeking and irresponsibility of Israel's kings and leaders, their quarrels and plots, and never ending revolutions and changes of government.⁷

Amidst the divine judgment he proclaimed on the people of Israel, he also played the role of a redemption preacher. Thus, as he promised the people God's judgment if they did not repent of their sins, he also promised them God's saving mercy, if they turned away from their sins. Thus, the name Hosea means "the act of saving" or simply "Saviour"⁸ depicting his salvific/redemptive preaching.

The first three chapters of Hosea (within which we shall be dwelling on) deals on Hosea's marriage with Gomer, the latter's infidelity and the doubtful paternity of their second and third children, and the application of this condition to the covenant between Israel and Yahweh. Noteworthy is the fact that in real life, Hosea was the faithful spouse and Gomer, the adulterous sinner, but in the application of this background to Israel, the ones targeted most as unfaithful harlots were the religious and civil leaders (particularly the former), all of the male sex.⁹ While reading these three chapters (1-3) of Hosea, one discovers that they basically say the same thing (but with a slight variance)¹⁰ but with the recurring religious symbolic representation of Israel and Yahweh, enduring to the extant life of Christians in relation to God. The limit of this work on discourse is indicated by the specificity in chapters as contained in the topic. Thus, the work is not all-encompassing but restricted to Hosea 1:2-9 and 3:1-5 respectively. Furthermore, the write-up includes a discourse on Christianity in the context of Nigeria, and the lessons Nigerians should learn by teachings of the above stated verses in Hosea. Thus, the reader is not expected to find all the available discussions on Hosea in this write-up neither should he/she expect to pin-point all issues as pertains to Christianity in Nigeria, herein. Above all, this work promises a succinct touch on the topic above-stated.

II. THE THEMES ON DISCOURSE

The themes that surround our discussion are those of God's Covenantal union with Israel. This is portrayed in the marriage between Hosea and Gomer, the adulteress. The punishment of God is depicted in the names given to their children (Jezreel, Loruhamah, and Loammi) and subsequently, the mercy of God is seen in the return of Gomer to her husband, Hosea. Furthermore, the brief discussion on Nigerian political context in relation to Hosea-Gomer event will be seriously considered.

0.3.1 Analysis of the verses: 1:2-9

Hosea 1:2-9 is a succinct account written in a third person prose that describes Hosea's marriage to Gomer, a woman of harlotry who subsequently bears three children with symbolic names. Both mother and child symbolize Israel in flagrant rebellion against Yahweh.¹¹ Before we proceed, it will be apt to state the content of 1:2-9.

...the Lord said to Hosea "Go and take for yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD". So he went and took Gomer daughter of Dibialaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. And the Lord said to him, "Name him Jez'reel, for in a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel." She conceived again and bore a daughter. Then the Lord said to him, "Name her Loruhamah, for I will no longer have pity on the house of Israel or forgive them. But I will have pity on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the Lord their God; I will not save them by bow, or by sword, or by war, or by horses, or by horsemen."

⁶Cf. Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Old Testament-15: Amos, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk; Collegeville Bible Commentary*, 32.

⁷Raymond E. Brown et al., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, (London: Burns and Oats, 1968) 218.

⁸In Greek, the initial "h" was reduced to a small apostrophe, called a rough breathing. These were customarily dropped when writing with only capital letters. The final "a" of the Hebrew name would have indicated feminine gender in Greek and so was changed to an "e". From the Greek came the spelling of this prophet's name in the Latin Vulgate and in the older Roman Catholic editions of the Bible, namely, "Osee". Cf. Ibid. 36.

⁹Cf. Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Old Testament-15: Amos, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk; Collegeville Bible Commentary*, 37. See also Hosea 4:4-11; 5:1-3.

¹⁰Ibid 37. While chapter One speaks about Hosea and the children, 2 consists only of Hosea's speech and 3 follows in an auto-biographical style. Chapter 3 is the most succinct and probably the oldest and could not sustain long explanation. Chapter 2 represents an outburst of violent emotion, again very near to the raw memory of what happened; 1 acclaimed to be written by a disciple can afford to be the most explicit about the meaning of the episode.

¹¹Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 80.

When she had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived and bore a son. Then the Lord said, “Name him Loammi, for you are not my people and I am not your God.”¹²

As the one called by God and given the task of proclaiming his word to the people, Hosea, as all the Old Testament prophets, received messages and instruction from Yahweh, even to the extent of choosing a life partner for him. Thus, the prophetic formula: **“the Lord said to Hosea. (vs. 2)”** It may not be doubtful that Hosea got his marriage arranged in his people’s traditional manner (may be by the parents) of marriage processes. But, considering the faith that the divine providence and plans regulate all life activities of man, the Lord instructed Hosea, to *order* his plans.¹³

The Lord further instructed Hosea to **“Go and take for yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD.”** (vs. 2) Some other translations may consider it as such **“Take a harlot wife and harlot’s children.”** The grammatical form of the noun “harlot” (in Hebrew, masculine plural) portrays a woman of harlotry possibilities. Note that Hosea did not, on his own, look for a prostitute to marry;¹⁴ his wife may have experienced strong temptations due to her initiation at the sanctuary’s fertility rites. Hosea was to go for a harlot¹⁵ in order to depict how God went for Israel even in their idolatry and dependence outside of God. **“Harlot Wife”** literally means “wife of harlotries.” In relation to the people of Israel, the offense against God is not literal harlotry but faithlessness or its like. Furthermore, “harlot’s children” does not imply children born out of harlotry but children of a harlot. To be specific, the statement: harlotry of the land means idolatry.¹⁶

Gomer (vs. 3) is the proper name of the woman, without any significance to the story of Hosea. It depicts a real marriage rather than a fictitious one or an allegory.¹⁷ As was customary in Israel’s tradition, the name, Gomer does not have a reference or link to Yahweh. Since it does not find its meaning in Yahweh, it may be portraying infidelity or service of Baal. **“Conceived and bore him a son”** implies that the son born was of the prophet and not the son gotten through adultery. By giving the child a name, it indicates that Yahweh apportions a function to the person which indicates Yahweh’s divine intentions.¹⁸ This is the only time that Hosea is clearly said to be the father of the child (compare verses 6 and 8).

0.3.1.1 God’s Punishment on Israel Indicated in the Names of Hosea’s Children

The divine judgment brought upon Israel is signified in the names of the children of Hosea. Each of the three children’s names has a double meaning, good in itself but also bad for Israel. The first among them is **Jazreel** (vs 4). Jazreel signifies the plain between Galilee, Samaria and the Jordan. It refers to the fertile valley stretching from Mount Carmel in the West to the hills above the Sea of Galilee in the east, literally a breadbasket of nourishment. It was also the site of many bloody battles (cf. Judges 4-5).¹⁹ V 5 gives another meaning of Jezreel as *break the bow*. This indicates the destruction of Israel’s power probably in the Assyrian invasion of 733. This may imply the fulfillment of curses that must follow covenant breaking (cf. Deut. 28).²⁰

Lo-ruhama (vs 6), as one of the names of Hosea’s children, means *she is not pitied or she no longer holds the love of the parents* (since *pity* in Hebrew carried the overtone of parental love. Instead of referring to the daughter of Hosea, “she” refers rather to the land of Israel.²¹ By this long suffering, God will have to punish His people. The lack of pity theologically negates one of the key qualities of Mosaic covenant, the Lord’s compassion. Thus, Hosea interprets this name to mean the end of the covenant. **Lo-ammi** (vs. 8) is a Hebrew name meaning *Not my People*. This depicts illegitimacy and ability of the boy to survive alone in this world despite all odds against him. Religiously, the name announces the end of Israel’s special privileges and places Israel at par with other nations.²²

For you are not my people and I am not your God: This depicts the rejection of God of the people of Israel. Thus God told them that “No longer am I ‘I am’ for you”.²³ As ‘I am’ God was the God who was always there with the people of Israel. Because of Israel’s infidelity to God, God laid down his punishments on her as the

¹² Hosea 1:2-9, cf. *The New Revised Standard Version; Catholic Edition* (Bangalore: Theological Publications, 2011) 1018.

¹³ Cf. Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Old Testament-15: Amos, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk; Collegeville Bible Commentary*, 37.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Gomer might have been a sacred prostitute at a Baal shrine, or at least a devotee of a Baal whose worship involves orgiastic rites. Although such conducts occurred certainly in Israel, we can hardly say it was ordinary in view of the Value put on virginity (Deut. 22:13-19). In fact, Idolatry itself was called harlotry so that merely joining the worshippers of Baal would be enough to earn the title. Cf. Raymond E. Brown et. al., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 220.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Cf. Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Old Testament-15: Amos, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk; Collegeville Bible Commentary*, 37.

¹⁸ Cf. Raymond E. Brown et al., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 220.

¹⁹ Cf. Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Old Testament-15: Amos, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk; Collegeville Bible Commentary*, 38.

²⁰ Cf. Raymond E. Brown et. al., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 220.

²¹ Cf. Ibid.

²² Cf. Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Old Testament-15: Amos, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk; Collegeville Bible Commentary*, 38.

²³ Ibid.

names of Hosea's children define. Thus, Israel would be punished by going into exile in Assyria; losing the pity of God and by losing their identity as the people of God.

0.3.2 Analysis of the Verses 3:1-5: God's Reconciliation with Israel

Hosea 3:1-5 is the first person prose account (as he delivers his own account of his marriage, unlike chapter 1. Here, the message is centered on the wife, not on the children) in which the prophet is commanded to acquire and love an unnamed adulteress. In her adultery, she too symbolizes Israel (as Gomer does). Discipline was prescribed to her (Israel because of her infidelity). While reading Hosea 1-3, some confusion is met. One of them is the identity of the promiscuously adulterous unnamed woman in chapter 3. Thus, is the Gomer of chapter 1, the mother of chapter 2 and the unnamed adulteress in chapter 3? Again, many scholars hold that chapter 3 precedes chapter 1. Going by this, there seems to be an agreement that Hosea married normally and his wife's promiscuity developed subsequently; or did the prophetic imperative come later than the woman/Gomer had already been involved in some kind of sexual misconduct? Furthermore, should this story be read symbolically as a parable, allegory, vision, or should it be considered an actual event in the life of Hosea, son of Beeri and his family?²⁴

This work does not affirm to answer all these questions posed above as they have been given series of responses by many exegetes. We shall be concerned more about making a biblical theology out of these verses of the prophet with a brief and concise exegesis on them.

(1) The Lord said to me again, "Go, love a woman who has a lover and is an adulteress, just as the Lord loves the people of Israel though they turn to their gods and love raisin cakes." (2) So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and homer of barley and a measure of wine. (3) And I said to her 'You must remain as mine for many days; you shall not play the whore, you shall not have intercourse with a man, not I with you'. (4) For the Israelites shall remain many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or teraphim. (5) Afterwards, the Israelites shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; they shall come in awe to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days.²⁵

As a symbol of God's love, Hosea is commanded to do something that the law forbade: live again with an adulterous former wife.²⁶ It might be argued that there is no indication that Hosea had ever divorced Gomer, which is central to the Deuteronomic prohibition. Nevertheless, it is plain that, at the least, what Hosea is commanded to do is irregular and distasteful, not to mention humiliating. If this was true for Hosea, how much more so for God? But his love impels him to "remarry" Israel.

This passage states the story of Hosea's reconciliation with Gomer. Applying this to God's covenant with Israel which Hosea continuously made reference to, it is important to know that Hosea never divorced Gomer nor is he marrying someone else.²⁷ Even after Hosea had brought his run-away wife back to his home, he still could not consummate the marriage. For Gomer, after such a severe estrangement, *intercourse* would be limited to a mere physical sexual act, no longer the one depicting love among married couple. Thus, Hosea said about her "*many days you shall wait for me...I in turn will wait for you*" (3:3). Verse 5 deals on the Southern kingdom of Judah, probably after the destruction of the north in 721 B.C.E. It reaffirms the promises to the Davidic dynasty at Jerusalem, and then extends to the promises into the *last days* (3:5).

The total price paid for Gomer's marriage was about thirty shekels, the value of a slave according to the rule in Exodus 21: 32. This suggests that she was to be deprived even of marital relations for a time, corresponding to the coming exile when Israel, deprived of the temple, could not worship her true Husband even if she wanted to. But this deprivation is temporary, and Hosea looks forward to the day when Israel will have renewed intimacy with God under a Davidic monarchy. This last comment is a telling one because it confirms that there were people from the northern kingdom who realized that there was only one true ruling family for Israel. The only complete fulfillment of this prophecy is through Jesus, since no Davidic monarch ruled Israel or Judah.

0Synthesis of Points

The infidelity to God, on the part of the people of Israel is represented in the marital relationship of Hosea and his wife, Gomer. Such symbolic representations are characteristic of some Old Testament prophets who were normally demanded by God to perform an apparent *queer* act in order to make manifest the message of God (which is usually an impending doom on Israel or other nations).²⁸ The same act was demanded of Hosea by God, to marry Gomer, an adulteress. The sin of adultery in this context represents the infidelity with which Israel responded to God's love for them, just like Gomer did to Hosea. Consequent upon this, God gave the

²⁴ Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, 81-82.

²⁵ Hosea 1:3-5, cf. NRSV, 1019.

²⁶ Cf. Deut. 24:1-4 which speaks against marrying again one's divorced wife (who has gotten married after the first divorce).

²⁷ Ibid. 41

²⁸ Cf. Isaiah 20:3-4: then the Lord said "Just as my servant Isaiah has walked naked and bare foot for three years as a sign and a portent against Egypt and Ethiopia, so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians as captives and the Ethiopians as exiles, both the young and the old, naked and barefoot, with buttocks uncovered to the shame of Egypt.

three children of Hosea²⁹ the names that implied judgment. Further in 3:1-5, God demonstrated his redemption to Israel by the return of Gomer (the adulterous woman) to Hosea, signifying the return of Israel to God. But even at this, certain disciplinary measures would follow before the eventual reunification between Hosea and Gomer (God and Israel). This deprivation is temporary, for Israel will return to Yahweh.

Above all, we should keep to mind that this prophecy was directed to the political and religious leaders of the time of Hosea, in Israel. In the same vein and by extension, the prophetic message speaks to all Christians in Nigeria, especially to Christian politicians and Christian religious leaders in this period of political *harlotry*.³⁰

III. RELEVANCE FOR NIGERIA: TOWARDS INTERTRIBAL RECONCILIATION

0.5.1 How Does Hosea's Prophecy Concern Us?

The Word of God has significance both in the old and new times; from the time of creation to the present time; from the time of creation of man to this time, after the redemption of man. Thus, the Word of God addressed to Adam is at the same time directed to all humanity because Adam is the federal headship/representative of the entire humanity. "Adam is neither a Hebrew name, nor an Israelite, but human being (humankind) generically, including both male and female, as explicitly stated in Gen. 1:26-27"³¹. As a representative of mankind, all blessings and punishments due to Adam are imputed on all human beings. In this same way, the punishments and blessings due to Israel are also relevant for the new people of Israel redeemed by Christ, i.e. the Christians of the present time.

Though, God revealed himself among the people of Israel (in the Old Testament), he, at the same time is both the God of Israel and the God of all the nations. Basing the argument on this, whatever he tells the people of Israel through the prophets is also a message for the entire humanity. Israel could be regarded a means through which God wanted to reach the entire humanity. All nations experience the Lordship of Yahweh as the earth is the Lord's. As the earth is the Lord's, the Lord dictates the meaning undergirding the history of all peoples and the whole creation. This expansion of Yahweh's Lordship over all peoples is symbolized in the widening historical vision in the glorious era of nationalism under David and Solomon.

Whatever tendencies may have existed in this direction during the earlier period, it was the great political achievements of these Kings, especially David that widened the political and cultural horizons of Israel. With this expanding national view went also an expanding view of Yahweh's lordship over the world, as expressed permanently in the Old Epic or Yahwist...³²

Furthermore, to demonstrate that God remains not only the God *for* Israel, and speaks not only to Israel through the prophets, but also to other people, He (God) proved His ownership of other nations by making them feel his sovereignty. He did this, either by punishing them in favour of Israel or using them to punish Israel.³³

The Ownership of God is lucid in Nigerian context. It must not be seen in the exact way the people of Israel experienced it. Most glaringly, it is seen in the people's religiosity (in Muslims, Christians or traditionalists), though many a time, there is discordance between people's religiosity and their actual day to day lives. Evidently and constantly, Nigerian streets and corners are filled with bellowing airs of worship and supplications from Christian worshippers and Muslim worshippers respectively. All of these invoke the name of God or Allah whom they regard as all powerful and all knowing, affirming the ownership of God over all things. Majorly, Nigerians invoke the name of God to gain favours from Him. They also could be invoking Him as a means of dealing with their adversaries especially, the major adversary to Christians who is Satan. Further, Nigerians represent this fact on their property (cars, houses etc) as they write on them some words that affirm the almightiness of God or Allah.

0.5.2 towards Intertribal Reconciliation

0.5.2.1 Motive of this Section

This section of the work does not subscribe for either secession or integrality of the major tribes of Nigeria, but seeks to use the prophecy of Hosea as a point of reference to the urgency of reconciliation between these tribes. Whether seceded or not, this work suggests that these tribes can be reconciled in the motherly

²⁹ Jez'reel, for in a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel; Loruhamah, for I will no longer have pity on the house of Israel or forgive them. But I will have pity on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the Lord their God; I will not save them by bow, or by sword, or by war, or by horses, or by horsemen; and Loammi, for you are not my people and I am not your God. The act of God naming prophet's children is also experience in Isaiah. But herein, the names are of positive significance, mainly: Shear-jashub, 'Remnant will return' (7:3; see 10:22) 'Only a remnant will return') and Maher-shalal-hash-baz, 'Pillage hastens, looting speeds' (8:1-4)

³⁰ Here, harlotry can mean any kind of ill.

³¹ Bernard W. Anderson, *From Creation to New Creation*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 5.

³² Ibid 5.

³³ God used other nations to punish Israel by making them win Israel in war and take her into captivity. But he would at the end punish those kings and nations he used against Israel (eg. Nebuchadnezzar/Babylon, Assyria etc.)

African communality which should be a guiding and unifying factor to all Africans. In all, these tribes should be reconciled in God, the beginning and end of all things created.

0.5.3 The Major Tribes in Nigeria

The major tribes of Nigeria are Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa. “The Igbo are a people principally located in Southeastern Nigeria, West Africa. They also extend to parts of the Midwestern and delta regions of Nigeria. The Igboland covers Imo, Enugu, Abia, Ebonyi, Anambra and the eastern part of Bendel. It lies between latitude 5 to 6 degrees north, and longitude 6.1 to 8.5 east”³⁴ Igboland is the home of the Igbo people and it covers most of Southeast Nigeria. This area is divided by the Niger River into two unequal sections – the eastern region (which is the largest) and the Midwestern region. The river, however, has not acted as a barrier to cultural unity; rather it has provided an easy means of communication in an area where many settlements claim different origins. The Igbo are also surrounded on all sides by other tribes (the Bini, Warri, Ijaw, Ogoni, Igala, Tiv, Yako and Ibibio).³⁵ Igbo are predominantly Christians.

The Yoruba are people living primarily in southwest Nigeria and eastern Benin who speak Yoruba, a Niger-Congo language. The Yoruba are predominantly town dwellers who practice hoe agriculture and are well known as traders and for their crafts. Yoruba artists have produced masterpieces of woodcarving and bronze casting, some of which date from as early as the 13th century. The Yoruba religion is animistic and numerous gods are worshipped³⁶. Some of them are Christians while some also are Muslims.

Hausa is the name and tribe of an African people of northwestern Nigeria and southwestern Niger. The Hausa are a racially diverse but culturally fairly homogeneous tribe. Hausa culture manifests a greater degree of specialization and diversification. Subsistence agriculture is the primary occupation of most, but other skills such as tanning, dyeing, weaving, and metalworking are also highly developed. They are predominantly Muslims. It should be observed that though these tribes are Africans, there are some fundamental cultural/ideological differences that govern their worldviews. These differences always serve as a linchpin to some quarrels noticed between them.

0.5.4 Amalgamation in 1914 and Independence in 1960

Ante- Amalgamation

Prior to the British takeover of Nigeria, Nigeria existed as a collection of autonomous entities with different systems of government. These autonomous entities were always brought together in terms of trade.³⁷ “Before even the British came into relation with our people, we were a developed people, having our own institutions, having our own ideas of government.”³⁸ Then, the Igbo were culturally homogenous as political authorities were shared among elders of the village. “The council of elders was among the groups that shared political authority among the Igbo. Among the *ofo* title holders there was the holder of the big *ofo* title who headed the council.”³⁹ Further, in the Northern protectorate, political and spiritual authority revolved around the emir who administered the emirate in accordance with the provisions of the Islamic and Sharia law. In exercising his administrative duties, the emir had a council of advisers to consult with.⁴⁰ During this time, in the western Nigeria, political administration revolved around the Oba. “He was supposed to have the power of life and death over his subjects. In fact, however, he was the hand of a system which was broad-based and complex, and his true position was more that of the symbol of authority than the instrument of execution.”⁴¹ The city states of the Niger- Delta had also its own organized political and economic life. King Jaja of Opobo had a strong grip in his kingdom, making it difficult for European intruders to penetrate. With palm oil, Niger-Delta states made ends meet. Their abundance of palm oil attracted the Europeans to them.⁴²

Nigeria Marries the Tribes

Britain acquired Lagos in 1861 and Yorubaland in 1893. In 1900, the two protectorates of Northern and southern Nigeria were formed out of the R.N.C. (Royal Niger Company) and Niger Coast Protectorate of Southern Nigeria was integrated with the colony and protectorate of Lagos. In 1914, these were amalgamated with the Northern Nigeria protectorate to form the colonial Nigeria.⁴³ Lord Lugard was responsible for this

³⁴ Emmanuel M.P. Edeh, *Towards and Igbo Metaphysics*, (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985) 8-9.

³⁵ <http://www.faculty.ucr.edu/~legneref/igbo/igbo1.htm>

³⁶ Cf. *Encarta Dictionary*, 2009.

³⁷ Anthony C. Ukaegbu, *A New Nigeria; Current Challenges and Tremendous Opportunities*, (Okigwe: Baresi Concept, 2011) 18.

³⁸ Rodney Walter, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa in A New Nigeria; Current Challenges and Tremendous Opportunities*, Anthony C. Ukaegbu, 18.

³⁹ A.O. Ojo, *Political Science and Government of Nigeria for West African States*, (Nigeria: 1973) 93.

⁴⁰ Anthony C. Ukaegbu, *A New Nigeria; Current Challenges and Tremendous Opportunities*, 19-20.

⁴¹ Crowde M. & Obaro I., ed., *West African Chiefs in A New Nigeria; Current Challenges and Tremendous Opportunities*, Anthony C. Ukaegbu, 20-21

⁴² Ibid. 21-22.

⁴³ Cf. Ibid. 27.

amalgamation and for the administration of this new colony. Thus, in the contextual language, he *wedded* Nigeria with these tribes. In this symbolic statement, this write-up does not question whether these tribes willingly got married to Nigeria (whether Lugard concatenated these tribes forcefully out of selfish interest or not) so as to share everything in common, or not - just as it is unclear whether Hosea willingly got married to Gomer (who was of a different character and likely to differences in these tribes) or not. What matters is that Hosea obeyed the ordinance of Yahweh in order to symbolize something just as these tribes acquiesced to Lugard's officiating roles in their marriage to Nigeria. Nigeria endured the lordship of Lugard until in 1960 when she got her independence. The husband and his wives now claimed viability. The marriage appeared a bit smooth though with some huddles as any normal marriage should be.

The unheeded Voice of Hosea

The leaders of Nigeria found it hard to adhere to the likely voice of Hosea that; since they had become unfaithful to Nigeria and Africa by being tribalistic, *they shall have a shattering war that would set back the whole country to the start*. Despite the promising start made at the independence in 1960, Nigeria was soon engulfed by an intense struggle between the country's three main political parties⁴⁴ (each representing a particular major tribe) for supremacy over the federal government. Because each region produced its own political party dominated by the major ethnic group based there, the struggle turned into ethnic combat.⁴⁵ Tribalism became the ideology of politics.⁴⁶ Nigerian politics became violent.

Northerners became afraid of any coalition with southerners which they thought could threaten their identity and independent way of life. The principal aim of North's powerful and autocratic premier, the Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, was to prevent the influence of skilled and enterprising southerners from spreading to the north. Northerners were determined to keep a tight grip over the federal system.⁴⁷ Having the feeling that the Igbo planned the bloody coup of 1966, the Hausas (civil servants and students) staged an anti-government (of Ironsi) demonstration during which they shouted *Araba* which means '*Let Us Part!*' The pungent smells of war went to crescendo as blood was spilled increasingly, among the three major tribes.

0.5.5 Post War Political Situations: Divine Judgment on Nigeria

Since the end of the civil war till date, Nigeria has become estranged from African communality and love. It is apparent whether the judgment of God has befallen Nigeria as it befell Israel which is symbolized in the names of Hosea's children (Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah and Lo-ammi). Thus, the bow or power of Nigeria has been broken because of her wrongdoings (Jezreel); God no longer pities her neither is the love of mother Africa glaring again (Lo-ruhamah); Nigeria is no longer the people of God whom he gave many natural resources for her survival but got them looted by their leaders out of selfishness. By this, God has chosen other nations who used theirs creditably well and who, with their wisdom, have enriched themselves with Nigeria's looted wealth.

The debris of the civil war is not only poverty but also entrenched tribalism and enmity. By this, a Hausa considers an Igbo as a greedy and domineering fellow who would find it worthwhile to do any ill for the sake of money. They also see the Yoruba as tricky people. In turn, Igbo would see Hausas as murderers who slaughtered them before, during and even after the war and as who can sacrifice anything for federal power. They see the Yoruba as dirty and cunning people who are specialists in sabotaging other tribes. The Yoruba also see Igbo as people whose *so called wisdom* boomerangs on them, selfish people and also domineering people. They see Hausas as illiterates but are to an extent linked with them in religion (Islam).

Amidst all these prejudices, there are some things these tribes are blind to: that they come from the same God/Allah; the same womb of Mother Africa; that they fight racism together and are respected, regarded and insulted together by certain non-Africans. They forget so soon that by all these, God has married them together. Even though they have all played *whore* to hateful sentiments, they still have the chance to return to God, their husband and maker by retuning to Nigeria and to Mother African communality. But this has not always been the case with these tribes.

Nigeria has remained, after the war, tribally disintegrated and at the brink of collapse. The difficulty in Nigeria has made Nigerians believe that they are on exile while still entertaining a shadowy existence in Nigeria. The political exile is so severe that the gap between the rich and the poor is without limits. Making a progress in Nigerian government is like trying to fill with air, a leaking tube. Nigerians experience at the current, the desert experiences of the people of Israel during which, because of their constant sins, they roamed about in

⁴⁴ In 1959 federal election of the National People's Congress (NPC), was controlled by Hausa-Fulani; the East's National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) was controlled by Igbo; the West's Action Group was controlled by Yoruba. Cf. Martin Meredith, *The State of Africa: A History of the Continent Since Independence* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2005) 195.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 194

⁴⁶ Ibid. 93

⁴⁷ Ibid. 197

the desert for forty years. Unfortunately, Nigeria has roamed aimlessly for fifty six years, since after her independence.

One may be surprised that amidst all Nigerian *religiosity*, this work still calls for repentance and reconciliation. Such a call is not out of place because the proliferation of churches, booming in Nigeria at the moment, together with its discordant concatenation of stunning practices with negative implications, stays very far from being regarded as a right spirituality but stops as mere shallow religiosity. This aberration is prominent in Christianity. By this, one can carefully pinpoint *many religions in Christian religion*, from the way these aberrations are fomented by some so-called religious leaders. This indicates an *idolatrous Christianity* not distanced from the idolatry/harlotry of Gomer (Israel) against Hosea (God).

The good news remain that there is still time to make amends with God as Gomer was privileged to do. Nigerians have experienced the wrath of God and are still doing so because they have refused to return to the Lord who has been waiting for their return as he waited on Israel (in the form of Hosea waiting for Gomer to return from harlotry). God has also promised Nigeria of acceptance when she returns but that she has to wait on the Lord as the Lord waited on her.⁴⁸ The greatest return Nigeria can make to God is return to herself (of all the tribes to the same goal to move forward, either as a united entity or seceded countries but under the motherhood of Africa). By this, reconciliation is implied in which all forms of tribalism are abolished and the African fraternal spirit reinstated in each of the tribes.

0.5.6 Need and Effects of Reconciliation with God

Reconciliation is well portrayed by the psalmist when he stated that;

Before I confessed my sins, my bones felt limp, and I groaned all day long. Night and day your hand weighed heavily on me, and my strength was gone as in the summer heat. So I confessed my sins and told them all to you. I said, 'I'll tell the LORD each one of my sins.' Then you forgave me and took away my guilt (Ps. 32:3-5).

This is a fact among Nigerians. Our differences and prejudices are now weighing down heavily on all us. Confession of sins could be a mental reunification and common understanding of our origin and goal/destination. By this, all atrocities that bellow down on Nigeria shall be paved away. May all Nigerians recall and meditate on the jubilatory feelings the country shared on October 1, 1960, when many threw parties in thanksgiving to God for making us independent. Many did not envisage our present ordeals which would not have come if many right things were done to impede them. Retrospection on October 1 and the present time, will make one understand that many things have changed for bad; that Nigeria's power as the giant of Africa is broken; that God who has been with us does not again pity us because of our intransigency; that we are no longer the people of that God who assembled us together for a purpose.

For all these, reconciliation with God is of paramount importance in order for Nigeria to regain all she has lost during the years. This reconciliation does not only happen in the church buildings but out there on the streets; at one's contact with people of other tribes; and particularly, out there in the government houses where Nigerian *rulers* drag Nigerians to economic, sociological and developmental dungeon with their unparalleled selfishness and greed.

0.5.7 Synthesis of Hosea's Marriage with Nigerian Tribal Issues

As Hosea married Gomer, so did Nigeria marry all the tribes in Nigeria; As Gomer either became an adulteress before or after her marriage with Hosea (as some exegete would argue), so did these tribes stray away from African communality, before or after their marriage with Nigeria in 1914. As God declared punishments on Gomer (Israel) for her whoredom, so had God been dealing with Nigeria because of her obstinacy to her *whoredom* of tribalism; As God promised reconciliation to Gomer if she changed her ways, so has he done to Nigeria if she does same. Very significant is the number of Hosea's children who stand for Israel's judgment. Hosea had three children and Nigeria has three major tribes. This does not mean that each tribe in Nigeria shares a particular punishment according to Hosea's children's names but that Nigeria shares the punishments as a whole. Nigeria's present condition had already been foreshadowed in the days of Hosea. This means that Nigeria is in the plan of God; in the plan of God's judgment and mercy.

IV. CONCLUSION

Eschewing Violence for Forgiveness and Peace

Where do these wars and battles between yourselves first start? Is it not precisely in the desires fighting inside yourselves? You want something and you lack it, so you kill. You have an ambition that you cannot satisfy; so you fight to get your way by force. It is because you do not pray and do not receive, it is because you

⁴⁸ *"Many days you shall wait for me...I in turn will wait for you"* (cf. Hosea 3:3).

prayed wrongly, wanting to indulge your passions.⁴⁹ This excerpt from the letter of St James is, in a special way, meant for Nigeria. Allowing ambitions that we cannot satisfy and undue desires in us to control our lives unchecked are issues every Nigerian should ponder upon. As such, there is need then for Nigerians to come back to the fraternal coexistence for which Nigeria/Africa is known. (What Nigeria ought to be as a nation) as one people of God by jettisoning all vices that are tributary to national disunity, chaos and anarchy. Gomer is back to Hosea and God has promised to have mercy on her, what of the three major tribes of Nigeria? All these boil down to forgiveness of the tribes on each other. Thus,

Forgiveness in fact always involves an apparent short-term loss for a real long-term gain. Violence is the exact opposite, opting as it does for an apparent short-term gain; it involves a real and permanent loss. Forgiveness may seem like weakness, but it demands great spiritual strength and moral courage, both in granting it and in accepting it. it may seem in some way to diminish us, but in fact it leads us to a fuller and richer humanity, more radiant with the splendor of the Creator.⁵⁰

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